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Thesis: Sometimes Enemies, Sometimes Friends

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Abstract

Political polarization and the growing power of the presidency have created new incentives for political actors in the realm of foreign policy that have not existed prior in American history. I argue that these new incentives in formulating foreign policy has created repeating and predictable trends in how America relates to various regime types (here meaning all ruling governments, regardless of political system) due to shared ideological concerns. The foreign policy pushed by the Democratic Party places emphasis on democratization and human rights in the post-September 11th period, which leads to improved relations between America and like-minded liberal left-leaning regimes. Similarly, Republican Party foreign policy, which prioritizes security above democratization and human rights promotion, allows for improved ties between America and like-minded right-leaning regimes. Through examining the case studies of American relations with Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, and the Philippines in the post-September 11th period, I find that American relations with liberal democracies - Indonesia, the Philippines pre-Duterte - improved with the Obama administration's foreign policy, and have worsened under the Bush and Trump foreign policies. Likewise, American relations with authoritarian nations - Thailand, Vietnam, and the Philippines under an increasingly-brazen Duterte - have improved with Republican Party foreign policy, especially in the areas related to security at the cost of democratization efforts and human rights promotion.

Keywords: Polarization, Foreign Policy, Human Rights, Democratization, Authoritarianism

Introduction

What dynamics drive U.S. cooperation with nations? Why does the U.S. cooperate more efficiently and less acrimoniously with some nations than others? While some might answer that necessity is the reason - for instance, we disapprove of the actions of Saudi Arabia, yet hold our noses due to their value as a regional ally - I would suggest that the reason for cooperation is ideological similarity. The closest allies of the United States - Canada, Germany, Australia, Britain - are all liberal democracies much like ourselves. Comparatively, the United States' greatest enemies - Russia, China, and North Korea amidst others - tend to be varying shades of authoritarian. This ideological difference leads to different foreign policy priorities - for instance, supporting the spread of democracy is a priority for liberal democracies, but not authoritarian China - and inherent suspicion over the sheer 'ideological difference' separating the United States from other, less liberal and democratic countries.

But why now is the United States increasing military cooperation with communist Vietnam, or coup-ridden Thailand? Why is Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte, a notorious human rights abuser who has murdered thousands of his own people and came under withering criticism from President Obama now showered with effusive praise by President Trump? The latter has gone so far as to say, "I just wanted to congratulate you because I am hearing of the unbelievable job on the drug problem" (Wojcik, 2017).

This is not to claim that the president is the sole creator and arbiter of foreign policy, but the presidency has amassed the majority of power in the foreign policy process and typically, if his party has control of congress, can pursue foreign policy as he or she sees fit. If congress and the presidency are controlled by the same party, other institutions, such as the State Department and the Joint Chiefs of Staff almost always follow the president's lead. This is doubly true in today's era of homogenization within the two separate parties.

Consequently, this paper argues that political polarization has drastically increased in American in the post-September 11th period, and this polarization has created several separate paths for American foreign policy, each pursued by one of the two main American political parties. Relations between the United States and other countries change in predictable ways due to this increase

in domestic American political homogenization and the other country's regime type. This paper focuses on Southeast Asia for evidence due to its political diversity and geopolitical variation, as well as relative American neglect until recent years. This dynamic is important as Southeast Asia was, in effect, a comparatively blank slate for U.S. foreign policy since the end of the Vietnam war until President Bush identified the region as a second front in his War on Terror. This pushed the region to the fore of U.S. foreign policy.

That America's relations with another country might change due to that country's regime type is not news in and of itself. However, domestic partisan pressures determining the nation's foreign policy toward another country is a new, and troubling, trend. The period this paper examines - America's foreign policy post-September 11th 2001 is a unique period of change, both in America's foreign policy priorities (the War on Terror, the war in Afghanistan, a focus on security for the homeland) and in American politics (due to increased and nationalized political polarization combined with increasing power over the executive branch over foreign policy). Democrats and Republicans are further apart and more antagonistic to each other than ever before even in the realm of foreign policy, unlike earlier eras when "politics stopped at the water's edge", as said Senator Arthur Vandenberg, meaning that partisan tensions had no place in foreign policy (United States Senate, 2019). Polarization and the nationalization of politics have created a unique political environment that has not existed prior in modern American political history, as partisan divides today are not due to an issue, but based on cultural differences that lead to entirely divergent worldviews. Candidates, and the parties more generally, rarely attempt to reach out to the other side of the aisle, removing the impetus for compromise or centrist policies. Polarization has made the two dominant political parties race towards opposite ends of the ideological spectrum, attempting to boost turnout of their own core base. As a result, split down-ballot voting has experienced significant decline, further increasing the political divide between Republicans and Democrats.

These trends of polarization (largely fueled by inequality) and nationalization of politics has coincided with another, longer-lasting trend in the federal government: the increasing power of the executive branch over foreign policy. Following the end of World War II, Congress delegated much of its constitutional control over foreign policy to the executive branch. Efforts to limit executive

control over foreign policy have periodically gained steam in recent eras, but such efforts have been limited in the Trump era, mostly to tariffs.

These two trends - increasing polarization and executive control over foreign policy - have created what essentially amounts to several foreign policies for America, depending on which party controls the executive branch. These two foreign policies - what I call Republican Party foreign policy and Democratic Party foreign policy - have very different priorities. Foreign policy is now used to accomplish domestic partisan goals at home, and the different goals of each party's respective base is the main motivator for each party's foreign policy track. These divergent foreign policies have had strong impacts on America's relations with different types of countries based on the regime type of those countries, and also harm the credibility of America's long-term international agreements when the executive branch changes party hands.

All political parties have different goals when in power. However, what makes the current political situation regarding foreign policy unique is the sheer distance between Democratic and Republican priorities. These different priorities can be summarized as a greater emphasis on security and combating terrorism for the Republican party at the cost of promoting human rights and democratization, which have remained priorities for the Democrats along with the integrity of multinational institutions; Pew Research Reports that only 11 per cent of Republicans say democracy promotion should be a top foreign policy priority, and 20 per cent for promoting and defending human rights in other countries (Pew Research Center, 2018*a*). Evidence supports that regimes on the right-hand half of the political spectrum (the shades closer to authoritarianism) approve of Republican presidents and Republican Party foreign policy. American diplomatic ties with those countries generally improve under Republican administrations regardless of a regime's undermining of democracy or recent human rights violations. Likewise, regimes on the left hand of the political spectrum (the shades closer to liberal democracy) approve of Democratic presidents and the Democratic Party foreign policy. Ties between America and these countries improve under Democratic administrations.

The September 11th terrorist attacks pushed this phenomenon of polarized foreign policy to the fore after gestating for years. And while the Middle East is the region that receives the bulk

The Political Spectrum
Source: Author

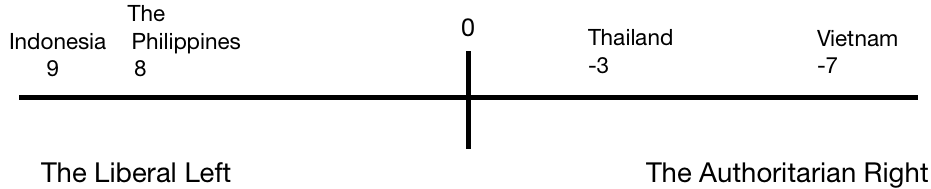


Figure 1: The Political Spectrum With Case Studies

of American foreign policy attention post-September 11th, this paper chooses to instead focus on Southeast Asia. There are a variety of reasons for this decision.

First, the political diversity found in the Southeast Asia is greater than almost anywhere else on the planet. For the sake of this paper, Southeast Asia is defined as the region north of Australia, south of China, East of India, and west of the Philippines, including that country. The region boasts of countries with every form of government from flourishing liberal democracies to religiously dominated kingdoms and communist states. This diversity makes Southeast Asia the ideal testing ground for examine how regime type affects relations with America. Further, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) prefers not to promote any one specific ideology or system of governance due to the diversity of its member nations, instead viewing itself as primarily an economic and geopolitical multilateral institution.

Secondly, Southeast Asia was largely marginalized in modern American foreign policy prior to September 11th; only after it became an arena for Bush's War on Terror, and also as a staging ground for pushing back against China's geopolitical and economic clout did it become relevant. Unlike the Middle East, where tensions against the United States have been inflamed in recent decades (due to tensions with Iran since the revolution in 1978, the first Gulf War in 1990, support of Israel and so on), outside of the Vietnam War which ended over twenty-five years ago, the United States has largely ignored Southeast Asia. This lack of attention and interference resulted in a 'clean slate' for the imposition of polarized U.S. foreign policy following September 11th, as

there had been minimal U.S. interaction in the decade beforehand.

Lastly, Southeast Asia is among the most important future geopolitical regions for the interests of the United States going into the 21st century. The ideological battle brewing between China's controlled, government-led society and America's brand of liberal democracy and capitalism will be fought there much as the fight between communism exported from the Soviet Union and American democracy came to loggerheads in Europe in the years following World War II. Economic growth in the region is robust and increasing, riding a global trade boom. Southeast Asia has a population of 593 million, a figure that has increased 48 per cent since 1985 (Jones, 2013: p.3). China has been aggressively expanding its presence in the region (look no further than the reacquisition of Hong Kong and Macau in the 1990's, and infrastructure and loan programs today), and the U.S., until recently, was attempting to do the same via the Trans-Pacific Partnership and a number of other initiatives. The region has a robust economy and an increasing population and will increase in global importance. Yet, unlike Europe in aftermath of World War II with its widely shared consensus for democratic governance, there are no political norms in Southeast Asia across all countries. It is vitally important for the U.S. to understand how to navigate the myriad of different types of governments based on ideological differences and agreements, and to know how America's domestic political situation affects those relations, in order for the U.S. to succeed in regional competition with China.

This paper focuses on American ties with Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, and the Philippines since September 11th. These countries were selected due to each occupying a different space on the ideological spectrum. Indonesia has been and looks to continue into the future as a liberal democracy; Vietnam is a authoritarian, communist society; the Kingdom of Thailand has a king, a parliamentary democracy and numerous political coups in the past few decades, and the Philippines has been a relative democratic success story until recently with the ascent and reign of President Rodrigo Duterte. This paper examines U.S. ties to these nations since September 11th, looking at how relations have changed with Republican versus Democratic foreign policy with the goal of establishing a generally-applicable system for predicting U.S. relations to a country given its regime structure and the party of the occupant of the Oval Office.

In the following pages, this paper will first critically examine existing literature on American polarization, inequality, relations to the countries in question, and explore what gaps in knowledge or theory it hopes to be able to fill. After summarizing the existing literature, the theory of the paper as well as the research design and methodology will be summarized. The four separate case studies will be examined in detail, along with summaries of the findings and both recommendations for further research and other issue areas in which these findings may be applicable.

Literature Review and Theory

To understand how American foreign policy became subject to partisan tensions, several political trends beginning many years ago need to be closely examined. That American politics in recent years have become incredibly gridlocked is not news to anyone - Abramowitz and Webster call increasing polarization in the American electorate “one of the most important trends in American politics over the past several decades”, pointing out how all politics are now nationalized. This trend has been coupled with an increasing in oppositional feelings to the other party (Abramowitz and Webster, 2016: p.12). In recent years, this polarization has spilled over into foreign policy, affecting the perception and reliability of the U.S. everywhere in the international arena, but perhaps nowhere more significantly than Southeast Asia. But what are the primary drivers of American political polarization?

Building off of research done by Abramowitz, I conducted my own research further into polarization. The chart below uses data from the American National Elections Survey. Voters were asked to give their political orientation on a seven-point scale, from extreme liberal to extreme conservative. y2 was coded as a variable representing the number of individuals self-identifying as extreme liberal or extreme conservative as a portion of the entire electorate in that given election.¹

This chart adds to the increasingly substantial evidence showing an increase in polarization among the American electorate. Although only two per cent of voters in 1986 self-identified with ‘extreme liberal’ or ‘extreme’ conservative, that per centage had climbed to twelve per cent by 2012. Figure 2 also contains no data on voters who self identified as ‘2’ or ‘6’ on the scale, which correlates to ‘strong liberal’ or ‘strong conservative’, which could reasonably be assumed to have

¹*American National Election Studies Time Series Cumulative Data File 1948-2016* (2018)

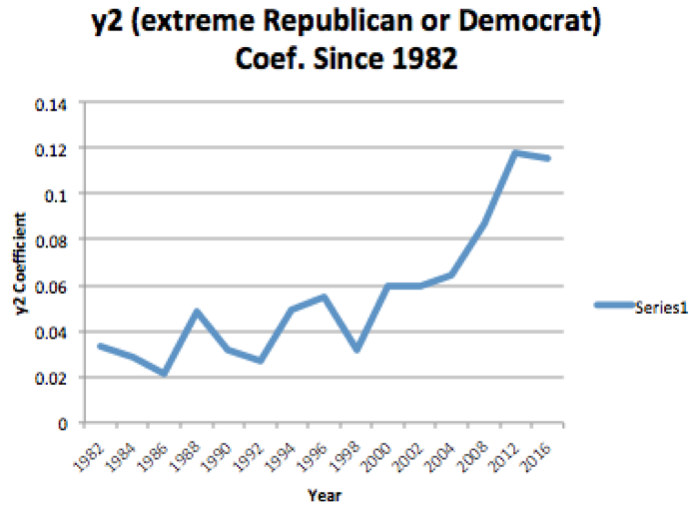


Figure 2: Increasing American Polarization

similar growth as extreme liberals and conservatives.

55 per cent of Americans identify as Democrat or Republican (*Party Affiliation*, 2019). If half of each party self-identifies as extreme, that affects both which and how candidates run in elections, skewing the platforms and policy towards the wishes of the highly-motivated and highly-polarized voters at the cost of moderates. Compared to 2002, 2012 had an electorate that was more than 100 per cent as polarized.

More importantly for the sake of this paper, the above chart shows a remarkable quickening in political polarization since the September 11th terrorist attacks. This is consistent with what other scholars have shown, but important for the argument of this paper as only unprecedented levels of political polarization could make possible the phenomenon of polarized foreign policy occurring today.

Very little time passed after the terrorist attacks before there was an extreme increase in either loyalty to the Bush and his War on Terror, or for those who disagreed with the war or its methods to quickly coalesce into the opposition. Afghanistan would quickly become a divisive partisan issue, a perception that would spill over into many of the administrations other actions, both domestically and abroad (Beinart, Hirsh, and Rodman, 2007: p.15). Emboldened, Democrats moved to oppose these actions wherever possible.

The September 11th terrorist attacks poured fuel on the embers of partisan foreign policy. The conflict over the correct responses to the terrorist attacks in the following year accelerated and worsened the phenomenon of partisan foreign policy (Beinart, Hirsh, and Rodman, 2007: p.16).

A brief mention as to what other external causes led to increased polarization in the American polity here is necessary. As is well documented, income inequality has been increasing in the United States since the eighties; the Bush tax cuts and 2008 financial crisis only exacerbated this trend. Using the American National Elections Survey and data from the U.S. Census Bureau, inequality - represented by the U.S.'s yearly gini index score, has a much greater impact on a given American's likelihood to self-identify as an extreme liberal or conservative than religion, region, or education.² These findings are largely in line with Richard Posner's findings (Posner, 1997). He writes "Among the wealthy nations of the world, the United States and Switzerland appear to have the most unequal income distributions. . . income level, a society's average or median income, does affect political stability. . . Being badly off, the people are likely to feel (though often wrongly) that they have nothing to lose from a change in the system of government" (Posner, 1997: p.349).

Foreign policy has long been perceived to be separate from the gridlock that is the new norm in domestic American politics, but this is no longer the case (Lieberman, 2018). For long periods of American history, this trend has been true. James McCormick and Eugene Wittkopf (1990) indicate that between 1945 and 1964, "congressional voting behavior. . . strongly supported the proposition that a consensus [in foreign policy] did indeed exist".³ However, the belief in the independence of foreign policy from domestic political polarization has changed in recent years, with McCormick and Wittkopf writing in their piece *Bipartisanship, Partisanship, and Ideology in Congressional-Executive Foreign Policy Relations, 1947-1988*, that "studies. . . consistently demonstrate that ideology is a potent factor in explaining foreign-policy voting in Congress and that significant issues along partisan lines also exist".⁴ Jeffrey Peake (2002) furthers the analysis of polarization in the arena of foreign policy, stating ". . . as partisanship in Congress has increased, opposition parties

²According to these regressions, a single point increase in the gini coefficient for the U.S. makes a given individual 208 per cent more likely to self-identify as either an extreme liberal or conservative, compared to less than a high school education (1.7 per cent), if they were protestant (4.9 per cent), or a host of other factors.

³(McCormick and Wittkopf, 1990: p.1079)

⁴Ibid, 1080

in Congress have forwarded their own foreign policy agendas”, before summarizing that “gridlock caused by party differences carries over into foreign policy”(Peake, 2002: p.70). These findings strongly support the theory that a Pan-American non-partisan foreign policy used to exist, but does no longer. What was once considered too important and delicate to be subjected to partisan tensions is now primarily done by partisans hoping to advance their foreign policy priorities at the expense of the opposition, and as a method to rile up their own supporters - a far cry from Senator Vandenberg’s idealistic statement in 1947 (Lieberman, 2018).

But, according to the literature, what is political polarization, who controls polarized foreign policy, and why does it matter? Esteban and Schneider (2008) define polarization as “the extent to which the population is clustered around a small number of distinct poles”, before going on to note that polarization is maximized when the distribution of a population is bimodal around two poles (Esteban and Schneider, 2008: p.133). Ominously, they go on to note that “The process of increasing social and political polarizarion seem to go hand in hand with economic polarization” (p.132). This is the definition of polarization used throughout the rest of this paper.

The constitution formally delegates most aspects of foreign policy to Congress, and specifically, the Senate. However, in the post-World War II aftermath, Congress began delegating more and more of its foreign policy decision-making to the executive branch. Robert Dallek expands on this topic, writing “. . .the President’s control over foreign affairs has been growing since the Theodore Roosevelt administration (and still grows today)”, before surmising that “by the early 1960s, the president had become the undisputed architect of U.S. foreign policy” (Dallek, 2011). The Council on Foreign Relations concurs, writing that ”Congress has passed legislation giving the executive additional authority to act on...foreign policy issues” (Council on Foreign Relations, 2017). Kenneth Schultz (2017) shows how this growing control over foreign policy has become institutionalized beyond the purviews of Congress, writing “As with the use of force, presidents have unilateral powers that allow them to make international agreements without Congressional approval. Executive agreements serve many of the same functions as treaties, but do not require ratification [from Congress]. The use of executive agreements has exploded since World War II, and around 94 per cent of international agreements take this form” (Schultz, 2017: p.15). So complete

has executive branch control over foreign policy grown that nothing but overwhelming congressional support against proposed foreign policy actions can limit a president's foreign policy aims, as Schultz continues to write, "...inability to get bipartisan support does not necessarily prevent a policy from being enacted since the president has considerable unilateral powers deriving from his position as commander-in-chief", such as Bush's unilateral decision to issue a national security waiver over objections from Congress to resume arms sales and training exercises to Indonesia in 2005.⁵

The transition away from congressionally-led foreign policy to policy being directed by the president has occurred during the same time as polarization increased in American politics. Polarization has had created a dynamic in both local and national elections where the amount of supporters from one party supporting a candidate from the opposing party has significantly dwindled (Abramowitz and Webster, 2016: p.12). This change has the effect of there being little to no incentive for candidates to try and woo voters from the other party. Instead, they attempt to play to the extremes of their own party in order to shore up support. Abramowitz and Webster describe this phenomenon by saying "Recent elections in the United States have been characterized by the highest levels of party loyalty and straight-ticket voting since the American National Election Studies first began measuring party identification in 1952" (p.12). They summarize by indicating,

Representation today means almost exclusively partisan representation. There is little or no incentive for most members of the House or Senate to consider the views of supporters of the opposing party because it has become very difficult to persuade these voters to cross party lines and because few members need the votes of opposing partisans in order to secure reelection. For the most part, Republican members are only interested in the views of Republican voters and Democratic members are only interested in the views of Democratic voters (Abramowitz and Webster, 2016: p.21).

The presidency was designed to represent all Americans, yet increasingly in the political environment since September 11th, presidents have been responsive only to their own party interests knowing that obtaining support from the opposite side of the aisle is borderline impossible. Brett

⁵Ibid, p.13.

Leeds writes that with regards to agreements, treaties, and alliances with other agreements with foreign powers, “. . . states that feature higher degrees of accountability to domestic groups (democracies) face high costs for breaking promises” (Leeds, 1999: p.989). So for the presidency in this modern context, there is no cost to abandoning outreach efforts to the other party since no members of that opposing party will support the current administration anyway; presidential foreign policy decisions are now largely made with interest towards appeasing one’s base without a thought to the opposition.

Erik Gartzke and Kristian Gleditsch touched upon this exact phenomenon when they write, “. . . governments that are answerable to popular preferences face a dilemma when confronted by popular alliance commitments. Attending to domestic demands will occasionally anger strategic partners, while contradicting the wishes of citizens is only ever easy when the public has little say” (Gartzke and Gleditsch, 2004: p.776). If the foreign policy decision-maker is answerable only to their own party, and their party’s priorities in foreign policy are different or contradictory to those of the party that preceded it, having only pressure to appease one’s own base often means taking actions directly contradictory to policies pursued by their predecessor. However, there is a key difference from the situation Gartzke and Gleditsch are writing about and the reality in the United States today: the government of the United States is no longer answerable to the entirety of the citizenry; only to the ruling party’s base. This further hurts America’s further political standing as deals made by one administration that run contrary to the wishes of the opposition may be scrapped immediately upon ascension of the opposition to power (i.e., the Trans-Pacific Partnership or the Iran deal). Doing business with a partner whose commitment to upholding a deal only lasts as long as the current congress or presidential term is not a recipe for long-term faith and stability internationally.

Kenneth A. Schultz expands on the deleterious effects of a polarized foreign policy, writing:

Polarization has also decreased presidents’ willingness to appoint members of the other party to the foreign policy bureaucracy, a strategy for building bridges to the opposition and co-opting potential critics. At the same time, increasing distrust makes members of the opposition party less willing to share any “ownership” of the president’s initiatives.

In a period when there was greater agreement over the ends and means of foreign policy, there was considerable deference to the executive on matters of national security; deference is harder to find these days, replaced instead with an instinct to attack. Partisan warfare also incentivizes the opposition to deny the president any victories (Schultz, 2017: p.11).

Not only do these studies of political polarization in foreign policy suggest that we are developing a presidency that makes decisions ignoring of the wishes of the opposition, but the current dynamics of the system also incentivizes the opposition to attack any action taken by the presidency that could reasonably be deemed a ‘victory’, regardless of whether or not the action taken was actually beneficial to the nation as a whole. Schultz summarizes the overall, final impact of polarization in foreign policy by plainly stating, “The risk of dramatic policy swings from one administration to another of the opposite party complicates our ability to make long-term commitments to allies and adversaries” (Schultz, 2017: p.9).

But the changes wrought by polarization to American foreign policy don’t end there: the very institutional mechanisms built into the core functioning of the government have been undermined and weakened by this debilitating political force. For much of America’s history, domestic institutions actually helped the credibility of our international agreements, or as Peter Cowhey wrote in 1993, “...certain U.S. political institutions (namely, the division of power between the legislative and executive branches) enhanced the credibility of its multilayer commitments after 1945” (Cowhey, 1993: p.300). However, due to polarization, the legislative branch has largely surrendered its oversight and limiting role over the executive branch, especially when the entirety of the federal government is controlled by one party; even when the legislative and executive branches are held by different parties, knee-jerk attack instincts from each side prevent any compromise or lasting agreement simply due to partisan disagreements. As Fleisher et al. writes, “Congress jealously guards its foreign policy prerogatives and majority party leaders are less likely to defer to a minority president. Studies that show...an increase in partisanship in foreign policy indirectly suggest that gridlock caused by party differences carries over into foreign policy” (Peake, 2002: p.70). Rather acutely, Brett Leeds hits the nail on the head when he surmises that parties

tend to back collective goods in foreign policy if those collective goods help their domestic political reputation (Leeds, 1999). Now, unlike before, backing collective goods to bolster one's political reputation means exclusively appealing one's own base, rather than the country as a whole. This is the very foundation that partisan foreign policy is based on: if all Republican voters want one action, individuals attempting to govern the Republican coalition have no choice but to play to that desire, even if it runs directly contradictory to what the Democratic half of the country wants.

This paper uses the terrorist attacks of September 11th as a starting point for its examinations of American foreign policy in Southeast Asia because September 11th was the primary shaping event in forming each party's foreign policy for the 21st century and for the large variations in polarization levels domestically since the attacks. As Peter Beinart said in a Brookings Institute panel in 2007, "Just to say, it [bipartisan foreign policy consensus] takes a long time through World War I and the Cold War for this bipartisan consensus to crack. It cracks very, very quickly. The War on Terror consensus cracks very, very quickly. I think it - there's a consensus for about a year, from the fall of 2001 until the fall of 2002" (Beinart, Hirsh, and Rodman, 2007: p.15). Kenneth Schultz goes a step further and says, "In the 2000's, the unity created in the wake of the September 11th terrorist attacks quickly gave way to stark partisan division over the Iraq War, as President George W. Bush backed a more robust assertion of U.S. power, even in the absence of international consensus" (Schultz, 2017: p.10-11).

The September 11th attacks spawned the War on Terror by the Bush Administration, and the administration would frequently adopt a unilateral, preemptive strategy to deal with perceived American threats. Countries and regions that were pariahs to the United States previously were now welcomed into the fold regardless of their domestic political situations so long as they assisted with the War on Terror. To this effect writes Hang Nguyen of the the second Bush administration, "The George W. Bush administration (2001-2008) initially paid little attention to Southeast Asia... Southeast Asia garnered President Bush's attention in the wake of the September 11th attacks. The region was considered as a "second front" in the Bush administration's global war on terror" (Nguyen, 2016: p.41). U.S. modern-day involvement in Southeast Asia began largely with the Bush administration's globe-spanning war, with Simon saying as much when he writes "In the

decade after September 11th, Southeast Asia became a kind of second front after west Asia with respect to radical Islamic violence” (Simon, 2017: p.48).

September 11th, combined with the growing trends of polarization and control over foreign policy coming from the executive branch, created a perfect mix of events for Bush to launch his war, a war that would be fought over American security concerns. Democrats, after initially backing Bush’s efforts to combat terror following September 11th, would quickly deviate to form their own foreign policy - to be enacted under Obama’s presidency - that placed greater emphasis on multilateralism, democratization, and human rights as a strategy to combat the spread of terror rather than relying on a security-centric strategy.

Understanding this phenomenon’s effect in Southeast Asia is particularly important. Not only is the region quickly increasing in population and economic prowess, but it is to be the future battle ground - like Europe in the early stages of the Cold War - between China and the United States (Weatherbee, 2009: p.4-6). The political complexity of the region means there is no one-size-fits-all strategy that will work to further American interests, like the Marshall Plan in Europe; American foreign policy decision makers need to understand how to communicate with all different kinds of regimes and understand their worries and goals in order to craft an effective policy to deepen U.S. ties in the region and help the country achieve its objectives.

Fortunately, there is already significant and substantial literature that touches upon how regime similarity and difference affects relationships between countries. Again in *Domestic Political Institutions, Credible Commitments, and International Cooperation*, Brett Leeds argues that “that domestic political structure, and particularly dyadic similarity in domestic structure, does have an impact on levels of cooperation and that both jointly democratic and jointly autocratic dyads tend towards higher average levels of cooperation than do states with different domestic political structures” (Leeds, 1999: p.981). This is, he suggests, because “The domestic accountability of democratic leaders and the lack of policy-making flexibility characteristic of democratic states to assure others of their future intentions. Thus, jointly democratic dyads find it easier to overcome the problems associated with the lack of external enforcement of international agreements”. In short, domestic politics and priorities matter. The United States, as a democracy, should and does

internationally cooperate better with democracies than non-democracies for a variety of reasons, among them being shared domestic pressures and understandings. However, President Obama is noticeably more popular in democratic countries than both his predecessor and successor, with Pew Research reporting, “During the Bush era, opposition to U.S. foreign policy and rising anti-Americanism were widespread in many regions of the world, but Obama’s election in November 2008 led to a significant improvement in America’s global image” (Wike, Poushter, and Zainulbhai, 2016). Europe in particular, viewed Obama higher than his predecessor, as can be seen from their global attitudes data sets available for download. Using their datasets, the charts below were constructed which shows the confidence rate foreign countries have in the given U.S. president to do the ‘right thing’.⁶ These data were then compiled into the dataset, which was then charted out, separating Obama’s approval in democratic and authoritarian countries (regrettably, there is only limited data for the case study countries in this paper).

Obama significantly helped the U.S.’s global standing in the eyes of democratic countries (Wike, Poushter, and Zainulbhai, 2016). This popularity is in largely due to Obama’s greater respect for multinational institutions, priorities, and policies; it is also worth noting that Obama and his Democratic Party foreign policy were further to the left and more similar to the liberal democracies of Europe than the Republican parties of Bush or Trump. This trend continued to Southeast Asia, where Obama continued his emphasis on multilateral diplomacy and institutions, with Sutter writing in 2010, “The United States [under Obama and Sec. Clinton] joined ASEAN’s Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in a step that improved U.S. relations with Southeast Asian countries and offered possible U.S. participation in the Asian Leadership Summit conveyed by the ASEAN-anchored East Asia Summit forum” (Sutter, 2010: 45). This trend of democratic foreign policy being more popular amongst fellow democracies also continues to Southeast Asia; in Indonesia, 64 per cent of Indonesians viewed Obama favorably, compared to 23 per cent for Trump (Simon, 2017). Obama’s support for the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a sweeping and revolutionary trade agreement

⁶Pew’s data is gathered by national samples via in-person interviews or telephone interviews. And while their method for collecting data for their 2016 Global Attitudes Survey differed slightly by country, all countries with effective phone systems used a Random Digit Dial probability sample and by talking to the youngest adult male or female in the household. In countries without adequate phone systems, primary sampling units were utilized. Interviews were done in native languages, and sample sizes for most countries numbered around the 1,000 mark.

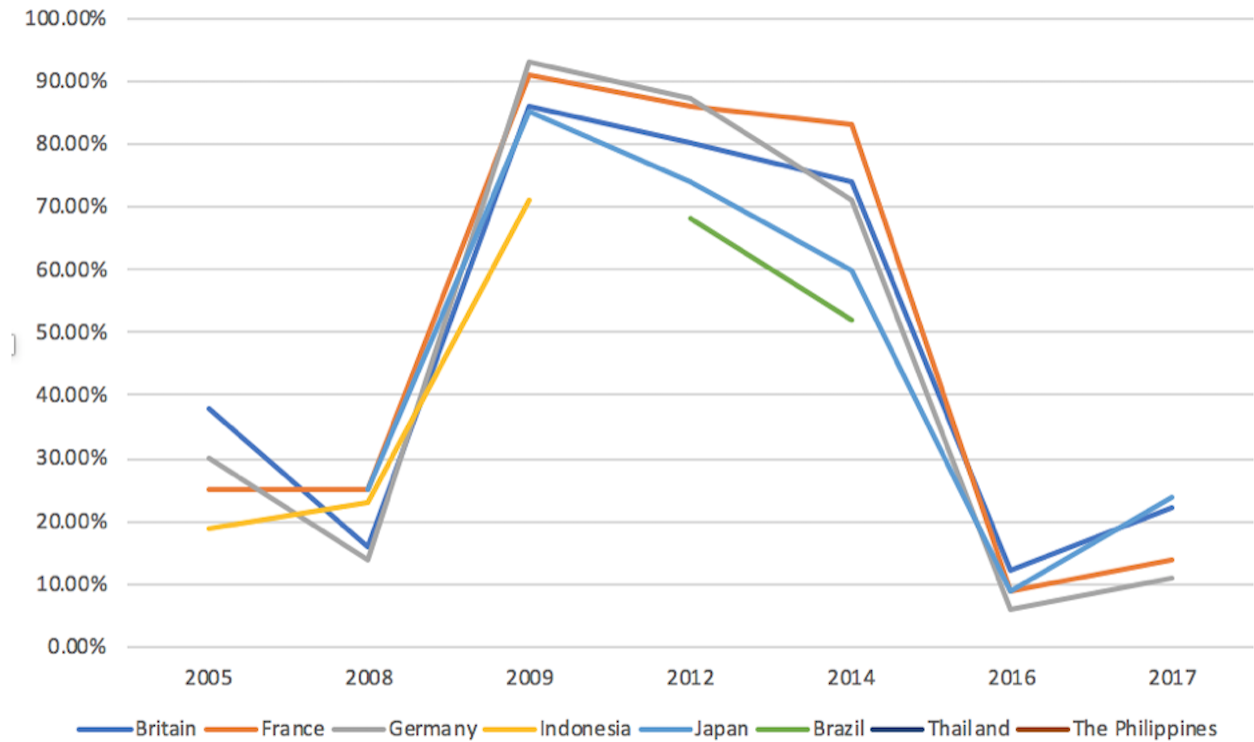


Figure 3: U.S. Approval in Democratic Countries

between many member nations also likely played a positive role in his standing in the region.

It is also worth noting that Obama’s popularity was significantly comparatively lower in more authoritarian countries, such as China, Jordan, and increasingly-autocratic Turkey. Perhaps indicatively, “Vietnam is the only one of the three where positive views of the US have increased since Trump took office”, with 71 per cent believing he is well qualified to be president (Simon, 2017: p.45). Vietnam is, of course, still controlled absolutely by the Communist Party of Vietnam that denies basic freedoms and human rights to its people, instead placing emphasis on stability and security.

Unlike the well-established liberal democracies in western Europe that the United States counts among its closest allies, Southeast Asia is more of a mixed bag. Countries span the entire spectrum from totalitarian to democratic; correspondingly, different countries have different levels of freedom and respect for human rights. The Trump administration’s return to the Bush unilateral, security-based foreign policy has played well among the certain, generally more authoritarian, countries in

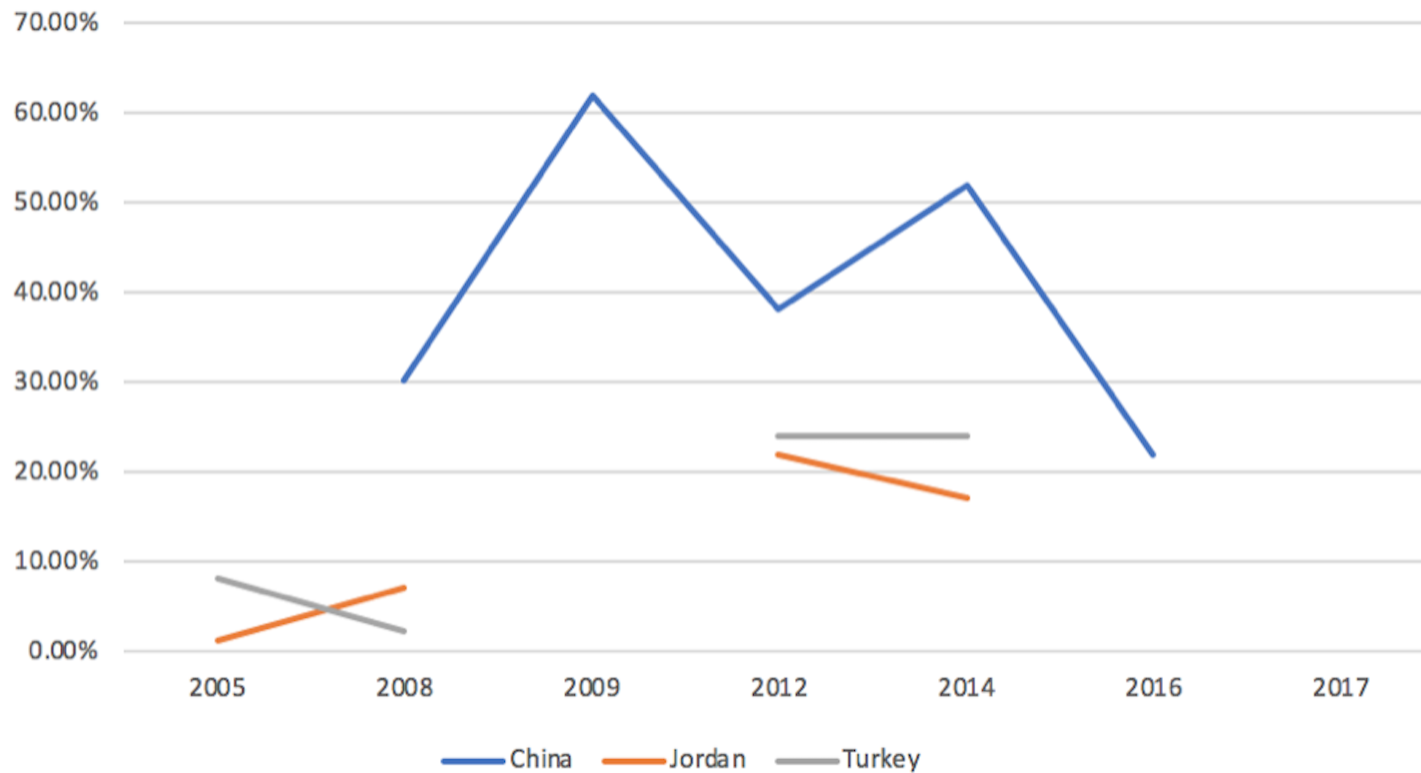


Figure 4: U.S. Approval in Authoritarian Countries

Southeast Asia while others have been dismayed at these priority changes. Proof that the Trump administration has less of an interest in human rights and democracy could hardly have been less subtle; Simon writes in 2017 that, “Secretary Tillerson...told a gathering of State Department employees that human rights concerns will be subordinated to US national security and economic interests” (Simon, 2017: p.44). Further proving that Republican foreign policy is more centered on unilateral actions to bring about peace and stability, Simon writes in the article *Abandoning Leadership*, “The one domain in which the US remains engaged in Southeast Asia is defense cooperation. Yet, even here, US actions are unilateral or bilateral, not multilateral with a couple of exceptions such as the annual Cobra Gold military exercise and the biannual Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) naval exercise” (Simon, 2018: p.43).

This lack of prioritization of human rights has benefited the United States’s relationship with Vietnam. As Weatherbee writes, “The Socialist Republic of Vietnam is organized as a Marxist-

Leninist one-party state that does not allow political opposition. Basic democratic liberties are denied. No domestic or international human rights groups are permitted to operate” (Weatherbee, 2009: p.262). Given this domestic political setup and the rightward tack of the Trump administration’s foreign policy, it is unsurprising that the countries have become and will be becoming closer, as now “Secretary of Defense Mattis, in discussions with Vietnamese counterpart Ngo Xuan Lich in Washington on Aug. 8, promised a visit by a US aircraft carrier in 2018 and deeper defense cooperation” (Simon, 2017: p.47). Similarly unsurprising is that “President Trump is more popular in Vietnam than he is in the United States. A 2017 Pew survey found that 58 per cent of Vietnamese were confident in President Trump’s ability to guide US foreign policy, and 84 per cent had general confidence in the United States” (Simon, 2018: p.49). Regimes and ideologies that have similar goals or at least distinct motives that lead to the same goals - such as the Vietnamese government and society and Republican Party foreign policy, which both prize security and stability - get along more readily than Democratic Party foreign policy and those same authoritarian nations. Yet, there is a more ominous development underneath this energized friendship: “. . . the human rights issue was notably absent from Vietnam-US discussions during Trump’s visit except for one short sentence in the joint statement: “The two leaders recognized the importance of protecting and promoting human rights.” The U.S. House of Representatives, however, had urged the president to raise “Vietnam’s dismal human rights record” during his talks. There is no evidence that he did so” (Simon, 2018: p.49).

The U.S. - Indonesian relationship has at times been strained as the country struggled to consolidate its democracy after the fall of Suharto and his “New Order” in 1998; however, and predictably, even as Indonesia struggled to deal with power-hungry and corrupt politicians, rebellions, human rights and military atrocities, the Bush administration was more than happy to work with the country to promote security:

In November 2005, the Bush administration exercised a national security waiver to remove sanctions on the military relationship, resuming arms sales and training exercises over strong opposition from human rights groups and many in Congress who argued that Indonesia had failed to comply with the Leahy Amendment. Congress succeeded

in retaining a ban on Kopassus, the Indonesian Special Forces most directly implicated in military atrocities (Murphy, 2010: p.374).

The election of Obama served to help rehabilitate the image of America in the eyes of Indonesians; according to the Pew Research Center, the percentage of Indonesian's who viewed America in a positive light increased from 37 per cent before the election (during the end of Bush's presidency) to 63 per cent afterwards. This is in part due to a foreign policy that better prioritized Indonesia's formulating democracy and human values, and an administration that valued Indonesia for more than its ability to be a partner in the global war against terror, or as Ann Murphy put it, "Under the Obama administration policy towards Indonesia has been driven... by shared democratic values and interests" (Murphy, 2010: p.362). In light of the flourishing relationship, in the National Security Strategy for 2010, the Obama administration described Indonesia thusly: "Indonesia - as the world's fourth most populous country, a member of the G-20, and a democracy - will become an increasingly important partner on regional and transnational issues... With tolerance, resilience, and multiculturalism as core values, and a flourishing civil society, Indonesia is uniquely positioned to help address challenges facing the developing world" (*National Security Strategy*, 2010: p.380). It again bears notice that when Obama passed power to Donald Trump and over the course of the following year, the favorability ranking of the United States in Indonesia declined from 62 per cent in 2015 to 48 per cent in 2017, and that Trump's own favorability ranking is only 23 per cent (Simon, 2017: p.45). Of course, Trump's past statements and actions in office towards Muslims have also had their toll on his standing in that country, but President Bush's similar lack of popularity - while not saying anything derogatory towards Islam - indicates that it is Indonesian disapproval of Republican foreign policy, not Trump's statements, that is responsible for his lack of popularity in Indonesia.

The United States and Thailand share a long and convoluted history that can be described as 'two steps forward, one step back' or, as Paul Chambers states, "common interest have led to warmer ties [between Thailand and the United States] while certain strains remain" (Chambers, 2004: p.460). This pattern has continued into the 21st century where Thai-U.S. relations were frequently challenged or put on hold due to military coups. In addition, the U.S. limited the

cultivation of a friendly relationship due to Thailand's questionable record on human rights , or as Simon writes, "Thai-US relations have been strained since the May 2014 coup that deposed a democratically elected government and brought the military to power again. . . US officials during the Obama years criticized Thailand for human rights shortcomings and the absence of democratic processes" (Simon, 2017: p.49). Ties only began to resume when "The Thai premier also confirmed Thailand had a road map for the return of democratic rule" (Simon, 2017: p.49-50).

However, with the election of Donald Trump and the implementation of the Republican Party security-centric foreign policy, pressure for Thailand to democratize in order to improve ties was lifted, or as Simon writes, "Thailand and the US restored military relations with the Trump administration abandoning Obama's pressure to restore democratic processes" (Simon, 2018: p.48). This change began when President Trump invited Thai Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha to the White House; Prayut is a retired officer in the military and is the head of the National Council for Peace and Order; perhaps more tellingly, is no friend of democracy and has delayed the elections meant to restore Thailand to a democracy. Even more telling was that, when the meeting did occur, "The Trump administration did not complain about the Thai military junta's suppression of free speech, banned political activities, or imprisoned dissidents" (Simon, 2018: p.48).

The case of U.S-Philippine relations is perhaps the most telling of this trend where Republican Party foreign policy justifies the rollback of democracy and human rights in the name of security and 'law and order'; the U.S. has elected a president to whom security and stability are his ultimate priorities. Rodrigo Duterte shares these priorities, as evidenced by his policies towards perceived drug abusers.

Filipino democracy, until Duterte, had been a moderate success story of democracy in the region. Its governmental structure has been historically influenced by and structured by the United States', owing to its past colonial experience, even having a very similar role for the President in the constitution. And after success at increasing and consolidating democratic advances in recent years in the Philippines, the election of Rodrigo Duterte came as a shock. A greater shock was perhaps the speed with which he undermined the rule of law in the Philippines to establish a brutal war on drugs, killing thousands of his own citizens in extrajudicial assassinations. As Duterte's

war in his own country continued, relations between the United States and the Philippines soured to the point of Duterte calling Obama both a “son of a bitch” and a “son of a whore” when Obama criticized Duterte’s human rights violations and killings of his own people. But the election of Trump, ironically, made for better relations between the two countries, or as Simon contends,

President Duterte clashed with President Obama over the human rights violations that have been a central feature of the Philippine president’s anti-drug campaign. Some 8,000 extrajudicial killings of alleged drug traffickers have occurred since Duterte took office in 2016. Yet, bilateral relations have improved under Trump, who has ignored Duterte’s egregious human rights practices, while praising his anti-drug policy (Simon, 2018: p.45).

Under Trump, U.S. - Filipino ties have improved to the point where military exercises between the two countries have resumed (cancelled by Duterte after a particularly vibrant speech responding to Obama’s criticisms of his drug war), new defense agreements are being implemented (the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement), and President Trump even went as far as inviting Duterte to the White House (Simon, 2017). The Republican Party foreign policy so values security and anti-terrorism operations that the party standard bearer is willing to invite a leader who has killed over eight thousand of his own people to the White House.

These two trends, increasing homogeneity of voters within the parties coupled with increasing power in constructing and advancing foreign policy from the executive branch, have combined in recent years to create partisan foreign policy. If only one process had occurred in the absence of the other - increasing political homogeneity sans the increasing power of the executive, or vice-versa - this modern phenomenon of polarization foreign policy, or foreign policy being driven primarily by partisan domestic political concerns, could not have occurred. While these trends have been studied separately, focused scholarship on the effects of both trends together is lacking and almost non-existent. This confluence of long-lasting trends in American politics is one of the holes in existing knowledge this paper seeks to address.

Scholars have largely failed to explore or understand how this dynamic has affected the United State’s foreign policy goals systematically around the world. It is this gap in the knowledge that this

paper attempts to fill by focusing on discovering a systematic link of shared interests between both dominant parties in the American political system and different types of regimes on the political spectrum. Through examining U.S. ties with Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, and the Philippines, this paper will explore how relations have changed during both fluctuations in polarization in the U.S. domestically, but also with these countries - all of different regime types - throughout their own political evolutions as some have moved from liberal to authoritarian or the opposite, or even both.

Research Design and Methodology

With these two interconnected and foundational theories - variation and increasing polarization domestically and growing power in the executive branch over foreign policy - now established, the next stage of this paper will first devote itself towards creating a methodology that closely analyses the relationships between the aforementioned countries - Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, and the Philippines - for evidence of polarized foreign policy interacting with different regime structures, ranging from the very liberal to the very authoritarian. First, the paper will briefly summarize the causal reasons why the relationship between the U.S. and a country improves or worsen, before presenting a table displaying Polity's dataset tracking the case country's position ideological place on the spectrum through time and in comparison to each other. After, the paper presents another table displaying the predicted relationship changes between the U.S. and the case study nations if the causal systems and incentives this paper hypothesizes drive foreign policy today are accurate. This section also includes the evidence I search for and would expect to find if the causal story between polarized foreign policy and the U.S.'s relationships to the case study nations is accurate.

Today's Republican Party foreign policy views American security as the primary priority of American foreign policy, in contrast to the Democratic Party foreign policy priorities of human rights promotion and democratization. We see the Republican Party foreign policy being enacted today in a number of ways: aggressive steps to curb North Korea, a more belligerent pose towards Iran, and even Trump praising the Philippine's increasingly-autocratic Rodrigo Duterte for his extra-judicial killings of thousands. Due to shared interests and priorities, one would expect to see relatively closer ties between governments with autocratic governments and leaders and Republican

presidents than when compared to a Democratic administration.

Likewise, a lack of concern or interest in human rights violations would be expected between a Republican president and an autocratic country; pressure to democratize would decrease, and political ties would warm as opposed to with Democratic Party foreign policy. If the autocracy is genuinely supported by the people, and the regime allows polling, favorability rankings of the United States are used as evidence and expected to rise during a Republican administration compared to a Democratic administration. If the regime does not allow polling, state media would be expected to give relatively better statements regarding the U.S., and this is used as evidence. The leaders of the countries, or appropriate ministers and generals, might even go out of their way to praise the other; speeches and official statements are also used as evidence of strengthening or weaken ties between the U.S. and the case study nation.

However, while relations to liberal democracies may suffer under Republican Party foreign policy, they would be expected to improve with Democratic Party foreign policy. This is due to Democratic Party foreign policy's and liberal regimes' shared emphasis on democratization, human rights, to the utilization of other strategies besides pursuing greater security to ensure a peaceful world. One would expect to see more work and communication via multilateral institutions. One would also expect to see increased support for the United States via polling in liberal democracies when a Democrat is president of the U.S. due to these aligned interests. All of this is used as evidence in the rest of the paper. In liberal democracies, in theory the electorate holds the power and can place those that mirror their views into positions of power in the government. If the electorate of a given country is supportive of democracy, human rights, and multilateralism, then not only would a relative increase in support for the US with a Democratic president relative to a republican president be expected, but the citizenry of those countries would be expected to elect leaders whose goals and views aligned with the U.S. interests. Again, this is relative compared to with a Republican president. The hypothesized general relationship this paper expects to find are below:

In democratic countries, a leader's preferences are largely shaped by the voters that put the leader in office. If the leader wishes to win reelection, their policies and decision must be at least

	Republican	Democrat
Authoritarian	Improve	Worsen
Democratic	Worsen	Improve

Figure 5: Predicted Relationship Changes

somewhat representative of the wishes of the electorate at large. This is why leaders in democratic countries tend to support human rights and democratization - a leader in Britain or Indonesia who outwardly supported the jailing of ethnic minorities and journalists would likely lose their next election. However, in autocratic countries, this relationship doesn't exist as the ruler derives power from sources other than the people - either claiming a divine mandate, in some cases popularity with the people, or sometimes just sheer control of the state security apparatus. Due to this disconnect between the wishes of the leader and the people in autocratic countries, for this paper, relationships between the United States and the autocratic countries being examined - Vietnam and occasionally Thailand - will be judged on the basis of either the leader's or the ruling elites' relationship with the United States. In addition to the rulers holding political power, in Thailand and Vietnam it often proved impossible to get large-scale data on the attitudes of the citizenry on human rights and democratization due to repression and limitations on polling and expression, both on the questioners and the respondents.

To establish a common basis for judging just how authoritarian or liberal a state is, this used Polity's IV Annual Time-Series Dataset as a baseline. This dataset codes democratic and autocratic "patterns of authority" for all world countries with more than 500,000 citizens. Figure 6 tracks the case study nation's location on the ideological spectrum from 2000 to 2017, allowing for comparisons between different nations and times. Figure 7 shows the expected changes to the U.S. relationship with the case study countries, taking into account the levels of American political polarization at that time, and the ideological bent of the case study nation. In Figure 6, higher scores coincide with increased levels of democratization and freedom, while negative scores align with the opposite. On the second table, an entry that says "Relative Improvement" or "Relatively Worse" generally

means the White House switched party hands in the United States, or the case study country has undergone some dramatic change. For example, Indonesia, a democracy, did not change its level of democracy during the end of Bush's presidency and the beginning of Obama's, yet relations between the United States and Indonesia would be hypothesized to improve when Obama assumed power due to him being a Democrat, whereas Bush was a Republican.

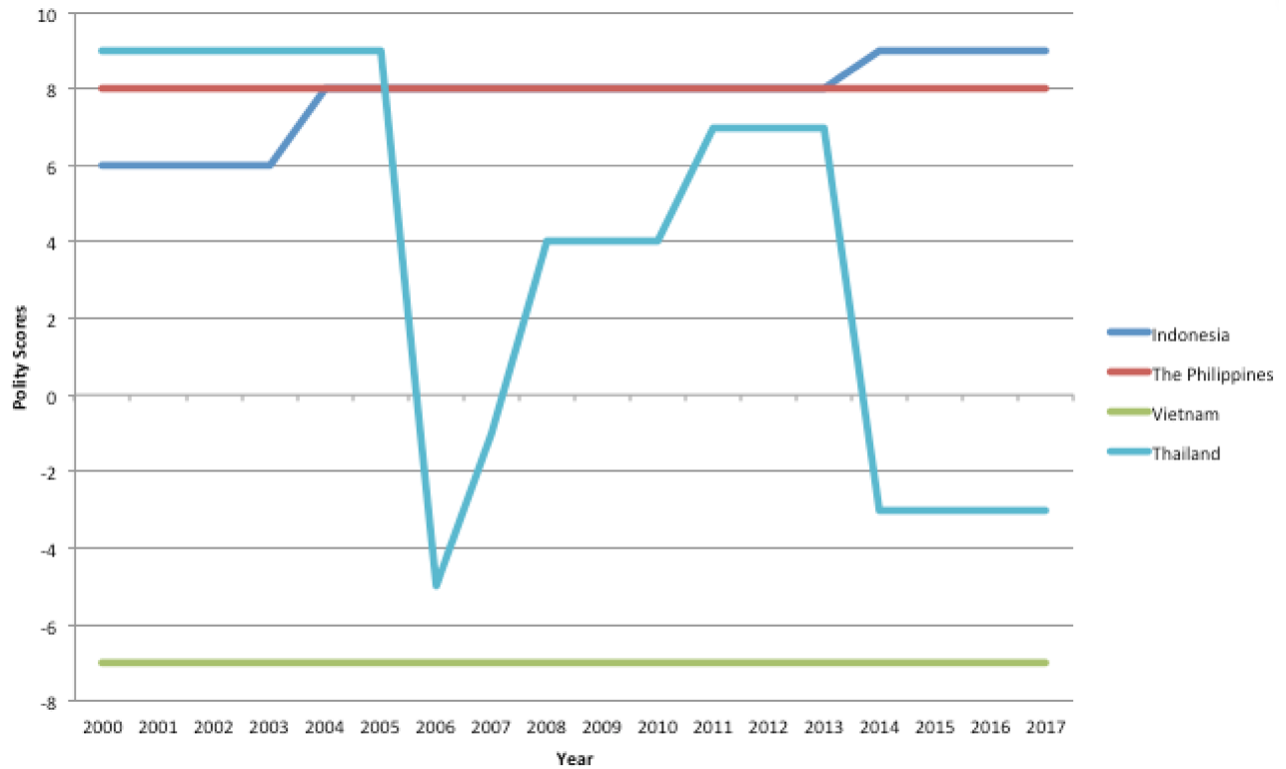


Figure 6: Country Polity Scores, 2000-2017

A relationship between two countries is amicable and cooperative if there is significant progress made on the shared priorities of those countries. If the U.S. and Thailand take successful steps towards improving economic ties and military sales and have successful state meetings then they had prior, I counted the relationship as productive and cooperative. In contrast, if the U.S. challenges Thailand's government due to recent actions on human rights violations as the results of a coup, this relationship is not cooperative as no progress is being made towards shared priorities: rather, Thailand's priority in the above scenario is security and stability, whereas the U.S.'s at this hypothetical point in time is human rights and democratization. During these case studies, this

	Bush 2000-2004	Bush 2004-2008	Obama 2009-2012	Obama 2012-2016	Trump 2017-
Indonesia	Relatively Poor, then Worsen	No Change	Relative Improvement	Slight Improvement	Relatively Worse
Vietnam	Relatively Good	No Change	Relatively Worse	No Change	Relative Improvement
Thailand	Relatively Poor	Large Improvement	Large Improvement	Slight Improvement, Then Drastic Worsening	Relative Improvement
The Philippines	Relatively Poor	No Change	Relative Improvement	No Change	Relatively Worse

Figure 7: How Ties Are Predicted to Fare

paper look for evidence of shared priorities and progress towards priorities to decide if the U.S.'s priorities are shared or not with the case study country.

Before this paper begins examining individual case studies, the changes in American foreign policy priorities by different years should be summarized; how the U.S.'s relationship with a case study nation changes can then be attributed, at least half causally, because of U.S. foreign policy priority changes. With the U.S. side of the equation summarized, the case studies can focus themselves on how the interplay of a case study's individual foreign policy priorities - stemming from that country's regimes' place on the ideological spectrum - interplayed with the American priorities.

The second Bush administration took a no-holds-barred approach towards combatting terror around the world. The administration was willing to work with less-than-savory characters that prior had been anathema to America in order to combat terror; Paul Chambers shines light on this intentional blindness by pointing out how after September 11th, 2001, "Secretary of State Colin Powell announced that Washington would now judge countries by their willingness to help" (Chambers, 2004: p.465). Countries' stances on human rights, democratization, and freedom of the press were no longer priorities to the administration; these core ideals were replaced with a new foreign policy priority: security, and at whatever cost necessary.

Many countries previously not in the good graces of the United States would take advantage of situation to improve their relations with the U.S. by both helping the U.S. crack down on terrorism abroad, but also used terrorism as an excuse for silencing dissent domestically at home, oftentimes as a tool of repression. Many countries with less-than-stellar histories on human rights would become key U.S. allies in the War on Terror, and the U.S. would look the other way when those same countries committed their own human rights abuses or used the War on Terror as an excuse for domestic political repression.

Obama would reverse this trend as much as possible when he assumed office, instituting Democratic Party foreign policy for the first and only time since September 11th. The National Security Strategy from 2010 made that clear when it stated

The United States supports the expansion of democracy and human rights abroad because governments that respect these values are more just, peaceful, and legitimate. We also do so because their success abroad fosters an environment that supports America's national interests. Political systems that protect universal rights are ultimately more stable, successful, and secure. As our history shows, the United States can more effectively forge consensus to tackle shared challenges when working with governments that reflect the will and respect the rights of their people, rather than just the narrow interests of those in power (*National Security Strategy*, 2010: p.37).

American priorities would change upon the Trump administration's inauguration. These priorities would revert back to a security-centric approach, abandoning the priorities of human rights and democratization in favor of the no-hands-barred approach towards security. Countries the Obama administration had shied away from doing business with were invited back in the fold; any ideological hold-ups America may have had from doing business with authoritarian regimes quickly was replaced with a desire to ensure America's safety, both domestically and around the globe. This new philosophy is, again, perfectly encapsulated with Secretary Tillerson's statements that "human rights concerns will be subordinated to US national security and economic interests" (Simon, 2017: p.44).

I. Case Study: Indonesia

In the wake of Suharto's fall, Indonesia bore all the hallmarks of becoming a failed state. In 1998, after President Suharto's resignation, the economy collapsed by 13.8 per cent, and multiple ethnic groups would engage in bloody standoffs with both other groups and state security forces (Murphy, 2010: p.362-363). Many in the United States were worried about the future of Indonesia, yet these worries turned out to be unfounded: as Ann Murphy writes, "...Indonesia overcame its challenges. Post-New Order governments restored macroeconomic stability...sectarian violence has declined dramatically; and Indonesia has adopted a strong counter-terrorism policy. Indonesia embarked on a messy but ultimately successful transition to democracy" (Murphy, 2010: p.362).

This unexpected flourishing, both economically, civically, and democratically, laid the groundwork for a similarly healthy relationship with the United States. This was reflected in the 2002 National Security Strategy, where it is written that,

Indonesia took courageous steps to create a working democracy and respect for the rule of law. By tolerating ethnic minorities, respecting the rule law, and accepting open markets, Indonesia may be able to employ the engine of opportunity that has helped lift some of its neighbors out of poverty and desperation. It is the initiative by Indonesia that allows U.S. assistance to make a difference (The White House, 2002: p.10).

This happy beginning to the relationship, before the contrast between Republican foreign policy and Democratic foreign reached its zenith and before polarization had yet to make its impact felt to the extreme it would in later years, would be born out in more than just words in the National Security Plan. An interesting dynamic appeared between the United States and Indonesia (and the region more broadly) in the immediate aftermath of the September 11th terrorist attacks. Satu Limaye refers to this dynamic in "Minding the Gaps":

First, early Bush administration approaches to foreign and security policy were adjusted as reflected in the new National Security Strategy. Second, the U.S. war on terrorism cast a new importance to terrorism in Southeast Asia. Third, Southeast Asian countries,

confronted with terrorism, and desirous of maximizing opportunities from constructive relations with the U.S., sought to buttress ties with Washington (Limaye, 2004: p.73).

Cast in this view, the relative popularity of both the United States and President Bush personally makes sense and is consistent with the hypothesis of this paper. Prior to the rise of the United States's debilitating partisanship, and thus the true divergence of Republican foreign policy priorities and Democratic foreign policy priorities, the goals of the two parties were closer together. Indonesia, as a democracy, could support the early foreign policy consensus of President Bush, a Republican, as long as the consensus on Bush's foreign policy strategy last between the parties, of which there is evidence it did so for a little bit more than a year (Beinart, Hirsh, and Rodman, 2007: p.15).

Indonesia had a strong working relationship with the United States initially. As the divide between the President's foreign policy and that of the Democrats, or the foreign policy establishment more broadly had not yet reached the extreme it would, the ideological difference between the desires of the Indonesia people, and thus its government, was not yet divergent from the goals and targets of the Bush administration. However, this period of cooperation was not fated to last long term. As Peter Beinart said, the War on Terror consensus collapsed very quickly. And with the collapse of this consensus, and the chasm between the Democratic Party foreign policy and the increasingly security-centric, unilateral Republican Party foreign policy, U.S.-Indonesian relations would suffer.

With the collapse of the War on Terror consensus, and the relative rightward shift of the Bush administration's foreign policy (both in methods and priorities), the wishes of the Indonesian people became divergent from the wishes and actions of the Bush administration. Just quantitatively, this can be seen with President Bush's levels of support across the country. In 2006, according to 1,022 adults polled by Pew, 20.94 per cent of Indonesian's polled had confidence in the president to "do the right thing regarding world affairs". In 2007, this number dropped to a dismal 14.39 per cent, before rebounding slightly to 24.2 per cent in 2008 (Pew Research Center, 2018*b*).

This decline in support for President Bush can be tied to his increasingly unilateral War on Terror policies, which flew in the face of the previous priorities of American foreign policy, such as democratization, human rights, and multilateral institutional cooperation. A good example of

Bush's transition away from more established U.S. foreign policy came in 2005, when he issued a National Security Waiver to give military equipment to Indonesia to help quell unrest in Indonesia's Aceh region, overcoming objections from both Congress and a number of Indonesian human rights groups. Democratic Senator Patrick Leahy, an author of legislation tying U.S. military assistance to a country's actions of human rights - even went so far to say about the waiver, "To waive on national security groups a law that seeks justice for crimes against humanity... makes a mockery of the process and sends a terrible message. The Indonesians will see it as a clean bill of heath" (Kessler, 2005). Interestingly, the article also notes that "counterterrorism cooperation" and "renewed cooperation" with the FBI helped convince the administration to restore military ties. It is also worth noting that this normalization of ties occurred only when President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, a retired general, was elected president of Indonesia. Further, the Bush administration pressed for removal of restrictions on U.S. support for the Indonesian army's special forces, called Kopassus, but these calls were unsuccessful. Kopassus was convicted of human rights violations in 1998 and earlier, terrorizing civilians, and kidnapping as well as murder of activists as late as 2002. At the time, John Miller who served as the National Coordinator of ETAN, the East Timor and Indonesia Action Network, said that "Working with Kopassus, which has a long history of terrorizing civilians, will undermine those fighting for justice and accountability in Indonesia and East Timor" (Asian American Press, 2010). The Bush administration proposed restarting U.S. training of Kopassus in 2008, but the legal council of the State Department ruled the Leahy Amendment made this action illegal and no training ever took place. Many of the decisions Bush made regarding foreign policy to Indonesia remain relevant today, as "the United States and Indonesia have a defense relationship that has included a range of interactions including visits, exchanges, and regular exercises, with previous major restrictions in place... largely lifted under the George W. Bush administration" (Parameswaran, 2018).

The Kopassus incident and the Bush administration actions more broadly during the divergence of Republican and Democratic foreign policies show the Bush administration priorities no longer existing in lockstep with the desires of the Indonesian populace, but are far from being the only examples. For instance, even as Indonesian's soured on President Bush in 2006, 2007, and 2008,

he continued pursuing his Republican, security-centric foreign policy, increased military assistance, and increasing unilateralism - policies that democratic Indonesia didn't support or want to be a part of. And though the two countries were allies, in addition to poor poll numbers, Indonesia was able to register their dissatisfaction with President Bush's administration in other ways, such as disagreeing with the United States by voting against them in the United Nations General Assembly. A chart showing the contrast between levels of agreement between Indonesia and the Clinton administration, the early Bush administration, and later Bush administration reveals that Indonesia agreed with the United States' foreign policy under Clinton and, to a lesser degree, early Bush, before support dwindles. These later Bush years in the chart coincide with increasing levels of polarization domestically in the United States, as well as the widening divergence between Republican foreign policy and Democratic foreign policy. Indonesia's voting percentage with the United States in the United Nations General Assembly "decreased 52 per cent, from 32.8 per cent in 1997 to 15.1 per cent in 2008." Further, "The per centage of important votes decreased 72 per cent, from 27 per cent in 1997 to 8.3 per cent in 2009." Incredibly, "Indonesia did not at all agree with the United States on any important UNGA votes in 2001, 2006, and 2007" (*Graphics: US-Indonesia Relations*, 2010: p.404).

Fortunately for both Indonesia and the United States, the headwinds of the relationship between the two democracies would undergo a reversal with the incoming administration of President-elect Obama. When asked the same question about Obama as was posed as about Bush - whether Obama would "do the right thing regarding world affairs" - 70.6 per cent of Indonesians polled said that they had confidence in the new U.S. President, a steep contrast from the 24.2 per cent a year earlier for his predecessor.

While Obama may have benefitted from personal ties to Indonesia in that question - he spent four of his childhood years in Jakarta - these ties cannot explain more than perhaps a small portion of the massive uptick in positive views of Indonesians of the American president. In all democracies, the election of Obama helped restore faith in the American government, to a much greater degree than in more authoritarian countries. Rather, this paper posits that the improvement in relations happened due to the realignment of the interests between both the democratic polity and

government of Indonesia and the like-minded priorities of the new Democratic president.

Instead of a foreign policy with exclusive focus on security and pursuing Muslim extremists by any means necessary, Obama made democratization, education, multilateralism, and trade centerpieces of American foreign policy. Specifically in the case of Indonesia, this realignment took the form of the Comprehensive Partnership, which negotiation began on in 2009. The centerpieces of the agreement were over 165 million USD guaranteed for a Higher Education Partnership, 136 million USD towards environmental programs and cooperation to lessen greenhouse emissions, measures to strengthen democratic institutions and good governance, and promote free trade (White House Press Secretary, 2010) (Murphy, 2010: p.380). These are priorities that were shared by both the Democratic foreign policy and the democratic citizens and government of Indonesia.

Under Obama, relations between the two nations remained strong. The lowest rating Obama received to the “faith in world affairs” question during his presidency was 52.9 per cent (Pew Research Center, 2018*b*). During his time in office, Obama’s administration would pursue closer ties with Indonesia on all fronts, not just security, and this led to him leaving office with a confidence rating in that country just shy of when he entered, 65.8 per cent (Pew Research Center, 2018*b*).

In the short amount of time that President Trump has been in office, limited data has been collected on his standing in Indonesia, though the preliminary results do not look promising for the future of U.S./Indonesian relations. For instance, according to a poll conducted in 2016, only nine per cent of Indonesians said Trump is better for Indonesia’s national interests, and only ten per cent of Indonesians said they would have voted for Trump; an even more mediocre eight per cent said Trump was better for Asia (Jaipragas, 2017). Pew found in 2017, only twenty-three per cent of Indonesians have faith in President Trump to do the right thing (Pew Research Center, 2018*b*).

Trump’s deep personal unpopularity in Indonesia has to do in large part due to his attacks on Muslims and the religion of Islam more broadly; having re-engaged in the Bush global security foreign policy, albeit in a more xenophobic and nativist way, Trump has inflamed anti-American sentiments across the whole of the Muslim world. Trump’s comments have not played well in Indonesia, the world’s most populous Muslim country. Many of the core disagreements between the denizens of Indonesia and President Trump are the same disagreements they had with the

second President Bush, namely the security-centric foreign policy. However, overt anti-Muslim attitudes and verbiage now work further against the young administration.

The Trump administration has so far mostly been worried about trade deficits and security arrangements between the United States and its allies. President Trump's priorities seem to be out of lockstep with the desires of the Indonesian people and government - such as defense of human rights and of democracy - resulting in a regression away from the heights of friendship experienced between the two countries during the Obama administration. However, Brian Harding and Trevor Sutton argue that:

... elite Indonesians and Malaysians perceive Trump and his Cabinet as less likely than prior administrations to press them on human rights, corruption, and environmental issues. In fact, many of our interlocutors remarked that political elites in both countries related favorably to Trump's blatant embrace of conflicts of interest and hoped it was a sign that the U.S. president was amenable to a more transactional, less values-driven bilateral relationship (Harding and Sutton, 2017).

Indonesia, a presidential republic according to the CIA World Factbook, shares more values with the Democratic Party's foreign policy than with the Republican policy, which is further to the right on the ideological spectrum. And while the two countries have a working relationship regardless of the party in charge of the White House, these different shared points of emphasis allow for progress in different areas with different parties. Progress on both security and national defense is a top priority of the Republican foreign policy, whereas education, human rights, climate change, democratization, and other areas are the focuses of the more multifaceted Democratic foreign policy, allowing for progress on a greater range of issues, as well as greater faith in the intentions of the American government. Summarizing the relationship between Indonesia and the United States, Ann Murphy writes that "The dynamics of US-Indonesian relations, therefore, are a function of the extent to which Indonesian domestic and foreign policies are congruent with US strategic doctrine: cooperation and amity prevail when they are, and conflict arises when they are not" (Murphy, 2010: p.365). To this point, half of this paper's hypothesis appears to be confirmed: democratic countries

get along better with the Democratic Party's foreign policy than the Republican Party's foreign policy.

II. Case Study: Vietnam

U.S.-Vietnam relations were normalized fairly recently, only in 1995 by President Clinton. The circumstances surrounded this normalization, however, are slightly different than those surrounding the flowering of the U.S.-Indonesian relationship. Vietnam today is "governed by a one-party, authoritarian system that suppresses dissent, including from the political opposition, independent religious communities, bloggers, journalists, and human rights advocates and lawyers" (Albert, 2018). Elections are managed by the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV), where only pre-approved candidates can run. Critics of the government are liable to disappear, and opposition parties are barred from competing in elections (Freedom House, 2018).

The stark contrast in political systems, governance, and ideology between Indonesia and Vietnam have resulted in a unique type of relationship between Vietnam in the United States. This difference, largely explained and complicated by the unique history of the United States in Vietnam, makes it surprising that a seemingly amicable relationship has developed between the two countries.

Due to Vietnam's authoritarian orientation, that relationship is in many ways the opposite of the one seen with Indonesia and the United States. Vietnam's authoritarian government has much more in common with, and more to gain from, the Republican security-centric foreign policy; therefore one would expect that ties between the countries would improve under Republican presidents since September 11, and suffer under Democratic presidents.

One difficulty in analyzing Vietnam is that the government strongly limits polling or other forms of political expression by its citizens. Unlike Indonesia, Pew only has data on the opinions of the Vietnamese polity from 2014, 2015, and 2017, making earlier analysis of U.S./Vietnamese relations slightly more challenging. However, this problem can be overcome when the framework is slightly changed. Vietnam's regime, as a one-party communist dictatorship that nips any potential opposition in the bud, is much less responsive to the wills and desires of its citizens than a democratic government. As such, popular support matters less to the decision-makers of the Vietnamese

government when constructing policy or conducting foreign policy - the leaders are more insulated. Therefore, the lack of public polling data is inconvenient, but not problematic. What matters are the sentiments and actions of the CPV leaders.

Vietnam had undergone drastic economic reforms prior to Bush's inauguration. Vietnam's corresponding rapid economic growth, growing middle class, and the rising specter of China's increasing geopolitical clout to the north made improved Vietnamese ties with both the United State's government and economy important to Vietnam's future. High-level talks between Vietnamese government officials and the Bush administration focused on trade and security, specifically with regards to terrorism and China, the rise of the latter also motivating Vietnam to seek greater ties with the United States regardless of ideological differences between the democratic country and the authoritarian one. President Bush in particular would fail to use this advantageous situation in a way that furthered the cause of democratization and human rights in Vietnam.

In 2007, well after the partisan divide regarding the War on Terror and each party's respective foreign policies began to reach maturity, President Bush hosted Vietnamese President Minh Triet to the White House. It was the first time in over thirty years that a Vietnamese president was invited to the White House. The talks centered on trade and security, and though President Bush stated he raised human rights, the Vietnamese President Triet apparently had a different takeaway from the conversation, saying,

Mr. President and I also had direct and open exchange of views on a matter that we remain different, especially on matters related to religion and human rights, and our approach is that we would increase our dialogue in order to have a better understanding of each other...And we are also determined not to let those differences afflict our overall larger interests (Associated Press, 2007).

This lack of emphasis placed on human rights and democratization follows the trends of the Bush administration's Republican foreign policy, which placed participation in American-led attempts to fight terrorism worldwide above all other priorities. Vietnam was one of a handful of countries that used the opportunity these changed ideals presented to obtain closer ties with America while simultaneously using this newfound goodwill and changed American foreign policy priorities to crack

down at home. In the Congressional Research Service's 2009 report on U.S.-Vietnam relations, the report notes that in 2007 - the same year as President Triet's visit to the White House - the number of arrests of political dissidents in Vietnam increased, indicating a worsening human rights situation (Manyin, 2009). Further, the report states that "...the government has become more restrictive toward criticism of the government over the past two to three years. Since early 2008, for instance, press freedoms reportedly have been curtailed and prominent journalists arrested" (Manyin, 2009: p.11).

In summary, under the Bush administration, ties between Vietnam and the United States improved drastically, but only in issues the Vietnamese government and Republican foreign policy had in common. Issues that were priorities previously in American foreign policy, such as democracy promotion and human rights, were now merely given lip service, but were largely ignored by the United States. In response, they began to be rolled back in many places.

President Obama's personal popularity also carried over into Vietnam, where what little evidence that exists suggests he was well-liked and his election well-received. It is worth noting that Vietnam had long had pro-democracy protests, indicating a desire by at least some segments of the population for a more democratic form of government and more personal rights; however, these protests were quickly put down, as in 2007, and a stronger state-led security apparatus was instituted. Thus, although Obama and his foreign policy priorities may have been popular with the Vietnamese people, they were at odds with the wishes of the Vietnamese government elites. And since the average Vietnamese citizen has little ability to make their voices heard to the government, it is the opinions of the governing elite in Vietnam that determined relations between Vietnam and America during President Obama's eight years in office.

However, the sheer importance for Vietnam in obtaining better ties with the United States - both out of economic considerations and Chinese geopolitical fears - allowed President Obama to exact some concessions from the Vietnamese government. The United States launched the U.S.-Vietnam Comprehensive Partnership in 2013 with the goal of furthering America's relationship with Vietnam and vice versa. This agreement centered on a number of things - improving economic engagement, actions to limit Chinese influence, fighting climate change - but also a critical emphasis on the

promotion of human rights. In 2014, the government of Vietnam signed the Convention Against Torture, and invited the U.N. Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief to visit the country (U.S. Department of State, 2013). Both of these vital steps were highly out of character for a country that had been trending towards greater limitations on human rights, not less.

The likely reason for these surprise changes have to do with the value the Obama administration placed on human rights and democratization, pressure that wasn't there during Bush's presidency. Unlike during President Triet's visit to Washington, President Obama was willing to push his Vietnamese counterpart hard on the issue of democratization and human rights during his 2016 visit to Vietnam.

President Obama and Secretary of State Kerry invited a number of civil leaders in Vietnam for a meeting "intended to send a message to the Vietnamese government leaders and public about the need for democratic reforms" (Nakamura, 2016). Further, when several invitees - a journalist and a candidate for the National Assembly who was under house arrest - were prevented from coming, President Obama issued the following statement:

... your people's potential, in part, derives from their ability to express themselves and express new ideas, to try to right wrongs that are taking place in the society. And so it's my hope that, increasingly, the Vietnamese government, seeing the enormous strides that the country is making, has more confidence that its people want to work together but also want to be able to assemble and participate in the society in ways that will be good for everybody in the long run (Nakamura, 2016).

Further, the date itself of Obama's visit, initially scheduled to coincide with Vietnam's elections for its National Assembly and corresponding protests over corruption and pollution on May 21-23 2016, was moved likely out of fear that the U.S. president would further inflame the passions of pro-democracy protests, very clearly at loggerheads with the wishes of the Vietnamese governing elite.

It is true that the military and security aspect of the United State's relationship with Vietnam also progressed under President Obama; in 2014, the United States partially lifted its arms embargo

on Vietnam. However, the lifting of this embargo, and other actions taken by the Obama administration, were not done in a vacuum; rather, as Carl Thayer writes, “It has been long-standing U.S. policy to link lethal arms sales to Vietnam’s human rights record. Since the lifting of the arms ban there has been intense discussion about these two intertwined issues” (Thayer, 2016). Although the arms embargo was lifted, in addition to Vietnam’s decisions to both ratify the Convention Against Torture and invite the U.N. Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief (promises made by Vietnam to the United States when the Comprehensive Partnership was written that were kept), Vietnam added amendments to its constitution on “human rights, freedom of religion, and free speech, press, access to information, assembly, association, and demonstration” (Thayer, 2016). The penal system was updated, and other steps taken to modernize Vietnam’s society. And while the progress may not have been as transformative as the Democratic Obama administration would like to have seen, substantial progress was made and made due to the pressure exerted by the Democratic Party foreign policy.

It is also important to indicate that, although relations warmed between the two countries, relations between the regimes remained cool. President Obama and members of his administration would harshly criticize Vietnam’s government for human rights violations multiple times throughout his presidency. In addition, it is likely that very few in the Vietnamese government agreed with and were excited about Obama’s push for greater democratization and human rights in Vietnam. However, the United States was a necessary ally to have against China, and due to the priorities of the Democratic Party’s foreign policy, some concessions with regards to civic freedoms needed to be made. The relationship was one of necessity and convenience, not pushed by ideological similarity and affinity, as with George W. Bush in the latter years of his administration.

This relationship between the Vietnamese government and America, turned on its head when Obama inherited power from Bush, again underwent a drastic shift with the election of President Trump. And as expected, Trump’s Republican Party foreign policy has played very well in Vietnam. According to Pew, “84 per cent of Vietnamese view America favorably. . . [up] 6 percentage points from the end of the Obama years” (Taft, 2017). Further, “Vietnam is among seven out of 37 surveyed countries where a majority of the population says they like Trump”, with the other countries being

Israel, Kenya, Tanzania, Russia, Philippines, and Nigeria (Taft, 2017). It is worth noting that these are all countries struggling with threats to their democracies, and have suffered from democratic declines, just as Vietnam has undergone since Trump's election.

The Trump administration has removed the pressure Vietnam's government faced during the Obama years to improve human rights and democratization. Human Rights Watch states that "Vietnam's repression of human rights and democracy activities increased significantly in 2017" (Human Rights Watch, 2018). Vietnamese authorities

engaged in a renewed crackdown against rights activism, arresting dozens of bloggers and activists and sentencing many to long prison terms. Basic rights including freedom of speech, assembly, association, movement, and religion remain severely restricted in Vietnam's one-party state. State-sanctioned thugs often attacked dissidents, while police brutality, including deaths in police custody, remains a serious problem Human Rights Watch (2018).

Also echoing President Triet's visit to the White House in 2007, President Trump would come under fire while attending a state dinner with Vietnamese President Tran Das Quang. In addition to congratulating the Vietnamese president on an "outstanding" job, when asked if he thought it was necessary to bring up human rights violations in Vietnam, President Trump said "Well, I do. But I also raise issues on many other things" (Shelbourne, 2017). There is no evidence that he ever actually raised human rights at all.

Human rights and democratization were not significant priorities of the Bush administration, and even less in the Trump administration. During both of these administrations, human rights and democracy suffered assaults which, to a large degree, were somewhat reversed under the Obama administration's foreign policy priorities. The same divide between Republican and Democratic foreign policies that came into play in Indonesia also came into play in Vietnam. The difference between the two examples is that Indonesia is a democracy with a different set of preferences that much more greatly align with the Democratic foreign policy, and Vietnam is an authoritarian one-party state which has preferences that much more greatly align with the Republican foreign policy. This means, unlike Indonesia, relations between America and Vietnam are much more ideologically

similar with Republican control over foreign policy, as evidenced by the quick rollback of human rights upon the end of Obama's terms in office, and subsequent blossoming of security ties.

III. Case Study: Thailand

Thailand has undergone more political transition than any of the other countries in this study. Thailand is primarily a constitutional monarchy, but this statement is a gross oversimplification. Thailand has had over seventeen constitutions and nineteen military coups, and the country has ricocheted aggressively between being very democratic and very authoritarian. For the first part of President Bush's presidency, Thailand was a very open and democratic system, though this would undergo an abrupt reversal with the 2006 Thai coup d'état, with the military replacing the government and forcing Prime Minister Thaksin into exile. Prior to fleeing, Thaksin was the first democratically elected prime minister of Thailand, and had been reelected in 2005. During his time in office, Thaksin pursued policies to expand healthcare coverage and reduce poverty, amongst other priorities. The King during this period, King Bhumibol Adulyadej, would die in 2016.

The military, which had committed the coup, essentially made Thailand a dictatorship overnight: upcoming elections were cancelled, martial law declared, and all political activity was banned, including protests. More ominously, the leaders of the coup abolished the cabinet and parliament of Thailand (BBC, 2006*b*).

Coups in Thailand are viewed differently than coups in many other countries. The monarchy in Thailand is viewed as the only governmental absolute, and is hugely respected and influential. The monarchy of Thailand is essentially sacrosanct, with every other part of Thailand's government fluid and subject to change. King Bhumibol was among the most revered in recent times (BBC, 2006*b*). It is telling that one of General Sonthi Boonyaratglin's first moves upon seizing power was to visit the king and declare loyalty to him: the coup was not an attempt at seizing absolute power, but merely the restoration of 'stability' to Thailand and the government under the king. This is the key difference between Thai coups and coup in the normal sense of the word: Thai coups are perceived by Thais as never about absolute power, but promoting stability and peace of the country. As such, coups aren't viewed in the same light by Thai citizens as we would expect in other countries: they are part of the natural ebb-and-flow of governance. It is, however, disappointing that a

coup was launched during Thailand's longest uninterrupted period of substantive improvement in democratization, preventing the necessary norms and values from taking root.

Those elements involved in conducting the coup viewed themselves not as power hungry warmongers, but as forces of stability, progress and fairness. The leaders of the coup would release a number of communiques, with one reading,

It has been clear that the administration of the country's affairs by the current caretaker government has created conflicts and division, and sowed discord among the people of the nation. It is unprecedented in the history of the Thai nation that groups were determined to win through ways and means. The trend is getting more violent every day... It is necessary for the Administrative Reform Group under the Democratic System with the King as the Head of State, comprising commanders of the armed forces and the National Police Bureau, to seize national administrative power from now on. In so doing, the Administrative Reform Group under the Democratic System with the King as the Head of State wishes to reaffirm that it has no intention to become the administrators of the country. The administrative power under the democratic system with the king as the head of the state will be returned to the Thai people as quickly as possible (BBC, 2006*a*).

This was a rare coup where the promise of a quick return to the pre-coup status quo was actually achieved by the incoming regime. In addition, it is rumored that the king himself played a key role in encouraging the coup, disgruntled with Prime Minister Thaksin's actions while in office.

Thailand would make substantial progress improving its democracy and democratic freedoms in the aftermath of the 2006 coup, remaining a democracy through the remainder of Bush's presidency and through all of Obama's first term and half of his second, with the next lapse into authoritarianism coming with another coup in 2014. This coup was allegedly prompted by perceived inefficiencies and power struggles within the government headed by Yingluck Shinawatra. This time, the effects of the coup would be much more protracted and the junta, especially after the election of Trump, felt no pressure to immediately restore democracy, repeatedly deferring the dates of future national elections.

Thailand represents the extremes of both ends of the political spectrum. According to Polity, Thailand has been both more democratic than Indonesia from 2000-2005, and almost as authoritarian as Vietnam in both 2006 and 2014-on. This situation allows for a unique case study of how these differing levels of having either an authoritarian or democratic regime affects ties with the United States. It is also worth noting that democracy isn't viewed as the ultimately desirable form of government in Thailand - it is viewed as more of an indulgence allowed by elites in the military and the monarchy. Democracy, to many Thais, is something the people want, but just like parents limit candy with children, elites need to limit and control it as democracy can ultimately be unhealthy in too large doses. This viewpoint has had a substantial impact on how democratic freedoms and human rights are viewed by many Thais.

When President Bush began took office, he was dealing with a reportedly democratic Thailand. Diplomatic relations began to deteriorate as Thailand experienced its 2006 coup, largely brought on by by Prime Minister Thaksin's policies, which were redistributive and liberal in nature, reflecting Thaksin's immense popularity with the poor and more rural sectors of Thai society.

It is against this background that ties between the two countries seemed to be on a downward trajectory with Paul Chambers writing, "Three years ago [2001], the United States and Thailand seemed headed for a more strained and distant relationship" (Chambers, 2004: p.460). The liberal bent of Thaksin's policies, combined with his populist, nationalist and anti-foreign platform wedged a divide between Thailand and the United States. Thaksin was elected in 2000, prior to the final divide between Republican and Democratic foreign policies due to both polarization and the War on Terror; human rights and democratization were still shared priorities in both foreign policies, explaining why when Thaksin's administration began "de-emphasizing human rights and democratization", a Republican president (President Bush) took issue with these changes and the relationship between the two countries deteriorated.

After an initial, and somewhat muddled, response to the United States following the September 11th attacks, Thaksin and his government began assisting the U.S. with its War on Terror and diplomatic ties began to improve. Although outwardly expressing sentiments towards neutrality (necessary due to Thai Muslims, a substantial voting bloc), Thaksin "pledged full support for the

United States in whatever action it intended to take against terrorist groups.” Thailand “granted the U.S. over-flight rights, the right to refuel aircraft and allowed U.S. ships to visit Thai ports all in support of U.S. Operation “Enduring Freedom” (Chambers, 2004: p.466). Thaksin would visit Bush in 2001 and promise further Thai cooperation in the War on Terror. Yet, despite these acts, Thaksin foot-dragged where possible, hoping to appear helpful to his main ally yet remain officially unaligned. The Thai posture was insufficient for the Bush administration, and the situation changed in 2003 following several terrorist attacks and incontrovertible evidence that Al-Qaeda and its affiliates were operating in Thailand. Thaksin would even send several Thai battalions to Iraq, and another 443 troops in 2003 (Chambers, 2004: p.469).

Thaksin, a shrewd manipulator in his own right, recognized that his alliance in Bush’s war allowed him freedom to operate at home, and he took full advantage launching campaigns to control both Thailand’s domestic and foreign media, and beginning a large, extra-judicial “war against drugs”. And, although other members of the United States government complained about these human rights violations, Thaksin gambled correctly that the head of the American government - President Bush - would not. During Thaksin’s 2003 visit to Washington, “President Bush did not publicly mention the extra-judicial killings, instead praising the campaign’s success. Washington appeared willing to ignore Thailand’s human right record in return for closer cooperation against terrorism and Iraq” (Chambers, 2004: p.472).

Participation in the War on Terror was the most important issue for the Bush administration when it came to deciding if a country was friend or foe. Thailand’s participation and assistance made them, at least until 2006, a steadfast American ally even as Thailand’s human rights situation deteriorated. However, the Thai military’s seizure of, and then unwillingness to hold power long-term doesn’t make Thailand an autocracy: it was merely not a democracy. Bush would finish his term in office with Thailand’s reliability as an ally, or even future, in great doubt.

President Obama took a different tact towards Thailand during his tenure in office. Rarely would he or members of his administration discuss Thailand without mentioning the importance of a return to democracy and human rights in that country. The reaction by the Obama administration to Thailand’s 2014 coup was different than that of the Bush administration. Many had seen the Bush

reaction as lacking, given that funding for “law enforcement training, counterterrorism” and other initiatives remained in place, even during a coup (Chanlett-Avery, Dolven, and Mackey, 2015: p.3). In 2014, the United States immediately ended 4.7 million USD in military assistance and training exercises with Thailand, and also cancelled visits from Thai military leaders (Parameswaran, 2015). This occurred immediately after U.S. military funding to Thailand returned to 2006 levels, following Thailand’s return, at least somewhat, to democratic rule.

In addition, strong calls for a return to democracy following the 2014 coup were made by very prominent members of Obama’s administration, such as John Kerry who stated “There is no justification for this coup. . . I urge the the restoration of civilian government immediately, a return to democracy, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, such as press freedoms” (Chanlett-Avery, Dolven, and Mackey, 2015: p.2). In fact, the pressure exerted by Washington on Thailand due to its suppression of democracy, the media, political expression, and other rights would push the 180 year old U.S.-Thai relationship to what some people considered a breaking point: statements made by Daniel Russel, U.S. assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, condemning restrictions on civil liberty, the political process, and an end to martial law, would elicit a strong and angry response from the normally soft-spoken junta leader General Prayut Chan-o-cha. President Obama would continue to push the issue, with it being written in his 2015 National Security Strategy that “We will uphold our treaty obligations to. . . Thailand, while encouraging the latter to return quickly to democracy” (*National Security Strategy*, 2015: p.24).

The pressure exerted by the Obama administration for Thailand to return to a democratic path dissipated the moment President Trump was elected. Sheldon Simon writes that “Thailand and the US restored military relations with the Trump administration abandoning Obama’s pressure to restore a democratic process” (Simon, 2018: p.48). Elections previously planned to restore Thailand to a democracy following the 2014 coup were repeatedly delayed. They were held on February 24th in 2019, but were neither free nor fair, with the military retaining power. A joint statement released by President Trump and Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha included only a single reference to democracy in a document filled with platitudes praising the military alliance and the need to confront terrorism and insecurity wherever it may be. The sentence was “President

Trump welcomed Thailand's commitment to the roadmap, which, upon completion of relevant organic laws as stipulated by the constitution, will lead to free and fair elections in 2018", yet as soon as General Prayut landed back in Thailand, the Prime minister clarified that "President Trump didn't ask me about the issue" (White House Press Secretary, 2017) (Cochrane, 2017).

Under Trump, ties between the ruling elites in both the United States and Thailand, specifically in the form of the military junta, have improved markedly in the areas of security, combatting terror, and other important areas. Similarly, relations between the two nations improved under President Bush, especially after the commencement of the War on Terror. However, the cost of improved ties in these areas has been complete abandonment of any pressure for a return to a democracy or improvement in human rights from the United States, such as imposed during the Obama administration. The stark contrast between Republican foreign policy priorities and Democratic foreign policy priorities are clearly understood by Thailand's leadership.

IV. Case Study: The Philippines

The United States and the Philippines have a very long and interconnected history. Initially ceded to the United States following the Spanish-American war, the United States would suppress efforts for Philippine independence in 1899. After a short Japanese occupation in World War II, the Philippines would gain their independence from the United States in 1946. The origins of the relationship left a strong impact, and the Philippines would adopt a governmental structure very similar to that of the United States, and this democratic system would work well until the election of Ferdinand Marcos. When Marcos was forced out of office in 1986, the democratic system would resume. This system has continued to this day, though it has recently come under attack from the current president of the Philippines, Rodrigo Duterte.

This cultural affinity, combined with the Philippines being the only majority-Christian country in the region (excepting East Timor), serves as the bedrock of the Philippine-American alliance. The Philippines were one of the first countries around the world to answer the United States's call for assistance in the War on Terror, granting both over-flight rights for military aircraft, as well as air fields and Subic Naval Base for refueling. This quick agreement with American foreign policy priorities earned Philippine President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo high praise from President

Bush himself; he singled her out in a six-month anniversary speech of the September 11th terrorist attacks as “Courageously opposing the threat of terror”. Further, President Bush proposed a further 92.3 million USD in military equipment to increase the Philippine’s counterterrorism capabilities (Banlaoi, 2002). Decisions made by both leaders prompted Rommel Banlaoi to write that “President Arroyo’s full support for the U.S.-led war on terrorism and strong commitment to the United States in combating the terrorist network in Southeast Asia reinvigorated Philippine-American ties” (Banlaoi, 2002: p.295).

As mentioned previously, Republican and Democratic foreign policies didn’t diverge until the War on Terror reached a more mature phase: during the initial stages, President Bush’s efforts to combat terror worldwide were supported by a large bipartisan majority. As such, there was little divergence between Republican and Democratic foreign policy, meaning the priorities of President Bush’s Republican foreign policy and the country more broadly matched President Arroyo’s neatly. Further, President Bush’s reputation as a “crusading Christian cowboy” was not a weight around the neck for him in the Philippines as it was in other countries, due to the Philippine’s religious makeup. The United States would also launch multiple joint-operations with Filipino special forces in Philippine territory to neutralize numerous terror leaders.

This extensive cooperation, combined with the Philippines managing to avoid the global economic downturn of 2008, and combined with the Philippine’s Christian background, all helped keep approval of both President Bush and the United States higher than in other countries. There were few human rights violations in the Philippines to test this relationship and possibly antagonize, and as a result, the divergence in Republican and Democratic foreign policies that proved so salient in other situations failed to play a substantial role in the Philippines. This is evidenced by the Philippines being one of only two nations polled by the BBC out of twenty-one countries that said President Bush’s reelection was a net positive for peace and security in the world (62 per cent answered this way) (Program on International Policy Attitudes, 2014).

Yet, even as external events helped support President Bush’s flagging approval figures in the Philippines relative to the rest of the world, that figure is much lower than the rockstar approval figures President Obama would obtain in the Philippines - at the highest point, President Obama

obtained an incredible 94 per cent confidence rating in the country. This proves that even though Bush remained more popular in the Philippines than in almost any other democracy around the world, the divergence between his views and emphases on issues such as human rights and democratization (and other issues) continued to contrast with those of the citizens of the Philippines, despite unusually high support for a Republican president (due to external and unique factors) and their foreign policy priorities in a democratic country.

Yet for Obama's high popularity in the Philippines, the country and administration had minimal pressing issues to attend to, and the relationship remained amicable until the election of Duterte. Jeffrey Bader writes that, prior to 2013, "The administration had no urgent matters to attend to in the Philippines" (Bader, 2012: p.101). Prior to this point, the United States and the Philippines worked in lockstep both to limit China, fight terror, and promote democracy and human rights. Obama met with Presidents Arroyo and Aquino in 2009 and 2010 respectively. In joint remarks, Obama and Arroyo both commented on the importance of pushing back against human rights violations; in his presser with President Aquino, topics ranged from environmental protections to trade and promoting good governance. There was very little disagreement between the two countries, either rhetorically or in actuality, as the priorities shared by the democratic government of the Philippines saw eye-to-eye with the priorities of Obama's Democratic foreign policy.

However, the tranquility in relations between nations was not to last the entirety of Obama's second term: the Philippines would have their Trump moment before America, electing bombastic firebrand Rodrigo Duterte. Similar to Trump, Rodrigo Duterte was elected on a 'law and order' platform. Despite the Philippine's successful democracy, crime and corruption are parts of daily life in the Philippines, and Duterte was elected as the antidote to these problems. A former mayor of Davao City, Duterte cut his teeth as a politician by brutally cracking down on crime, both in the city and nationally. In both instances, he was very public about his enthusiasm for extrajudicial killings; according to some estimates by major news outlets in the Philippines, Duterte is responsible for more than twelve thousand deaths (Suerte-Felipe, 2018).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, President Obama and President Duterte had a poor relationship after Duterte called Obama a "son of a whore" after Obama criticized his extrajudicial killings. He has

since apologized (Associated Press, 2016).

There is global consternation as to the long-term effects Duterte's presidency will have on the Philippine's democracy, but he appears to accept the Philippine's current system and doesn't wish to change it. He has gone so far to say that "I have no illusions of occupying this office one day longer than what the Constitution under which I was elected permits or under whatever constitution there might be" (Placido, 2018). However, even if he accepts the current political order, he has authoritarian tendencies and has found a close friend in Trump. Their priorities - combatting terror and insecurity through whatever means necessary - has led to close agreement ideologically, even as both presidents are hemmed in by the political systems of their countries. President Trump has said he and Duterte "had a great relationship", briefly endorsed Duterte's tactics of death for dealing drugs, and has repeatedly expressed sympathy for and agreement with his Filipino colleague. Crucially, when visiting Manila, human rights were not raised at any point in conversations between the two leaders (Holmes, 2017).

However, despite its president's actions, the Philippines are still a democracy, and despite their president's affinity for Trump, Trump is much less popular in the Philippines, and many fewer Filipinos have faith in him when compared to his predecessor. In 2015, Pew recorded confidence in Obama to do the right thing by Filipinos at 94 per cent; Trump would begin 2017 at 69 per cent (Pew Research Center, 2018*b*). And despite Duterte's best attempts to pour cold water on the Philippines's relationship with America, polling shows that "Philippine confidence in US leadership remains strong... Similarly, the AFP [Armed Forces of the Philippines] remain stalwarts of the US-Philippine alliance". And despite Duterte's stated desire for all US Special Forces personnel to leave the country, there to fight terror, they remain.

The relationship between the United States and the Philippines illustrates an interesting aspect of this paper's hypothesis: what happens when two countries have political systems and citizens that tend to believe one foreign policy path or ideological belief, but have leaders that don't? The United States is a country in which the majority of Americans believe in democracy and human rights, yet has a president that doesn't place great emphasis in either. The Philippines are in the same boat. When both countries had leaders that shared these beliefs, for instance Obama

and Aquino, relations were good. Both countries are still democratic and believe largely the same thing, yet leaders have arisen that don't. So far, Trump and Duterte have been contained by the democratic systems they inherited. This divide lays bare the impact of specific leaders on foreign policy versus political systems and the beliefs of a country's population at large. So far, the latter has proved dominant.

Summary, Conclusions, and Major Findings

The case studies critically examined in this study, relative to Democrats, Republican presidents in the post-September 11th era cooperate more readily and easily with authoritarian regimes due to ideological and governing orientation of Republican Party foreign policy. Compared to Democratic Party Presidents, Republican Presidents appear to enjoy a better rapport with the authoritarian leaders - whether they head an authoritarian country, or have the same beliefs as an authoritarian leader - whereas Democratic presidents get along better with democracies, both in actuality and ideologically.

It is important to state that these comparisons are relative, i.e. Obama is more popular in Indonesia relative to Trump; both could still be unpopular or popular. In the case studies above, this rarely is the case but I believe this trend will hold true to other countries and regions of the world if further research is done. One must be careful of factors specific to a certain country - the predominantly Catholic population of the Philippines matching well with President Bush's 'crusading Christian cowboy' global reputation, for instance - possibly affecting this relationship, but the underlying pillars of the relationship still exist.

Further, the above hypothesis posits an interesting addendum to the overarching theory of ideological difference: namely, countries that are on the same end of the political spectrum from authoritarian to liberal tend to feel greater affinity for and less suspicious of countries that are similar to them: the United States, for instance, cooperates better with Canada than with North Korea. This paper finds an important addendum. The opinions of political leaders or parties, and the ideologies they represent, matter. It is possible for a country on one end of the spectrum - a country like the United States, which is fundamentally a democracy - to vacillate between which countries it feels most comfortable 'doing business with'. Government structure isn't everything:

leaders and their beliefs, parties, domestic situations, and ideology matter.

But the above changes are insignificant to the more important takeaway from this paper: polarization in the United States has permeated American governance to such a degree that half of the country is alright doing business with one half of the ideological spectrum, and the other half isn't and vice versa. While domestic politics have always affected foreign policy, Senator Vandenberg expressed the dominant thinking of his era well when he said politics ended at the water's edge, at least on substantive matters. That attitude no longer exists. Foreign policy should benefit the country, not just a party. But now the party in charge, and its ideology, determines what deals are made, how they are made, and with whom. Deals made by the preceding administration are now fair game to re-negotiate or outright cancel if they are contrary to the wishes of the base of the new ruling party. More crucially, other countries understand this dysfunction in American government and know, instantly, if they should expect an acrimonious relationship with the the President elected in any cycle, or a cooperative one.

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