Foreign Policy Analysis (2021), orab017

Foreign Policy Entrepreneurs, Policy Windows, and "Pragmatic Engagement": Reconsidering Insights of the Multiple Streams Framework and the Obama Administration's 2009 Policy Shift Toward Military-Run Myanmar

Jürgen Haacke
Department of International Relations London School of Economics and Political Science, UK

This article aims to contribute to the evolving dialogue between foreign policy analysis and public policy with reference to John Kingdon's multiple streams approach. It problematizes how one of the key concepts of MSA—policy windows—has been used in applications to foreign policy and suggests that policy windows may be more difficult to exploit than illustrations of successful foreign policy entrepreneurship indicate. Indeed, the article argues that policy windows can be either small or large; their size will likely differ not least because policy windows are situated within numerous contexts. With reference to instances of foreign policy redirection, the article highlights four such contexts: the placement and access of foreign policy entrepreneurs; the level of contestation surrounding a problematic but prevailing policy; geopolitical pressures; and ideas guiding foreign policy. The article moreover suggests that by contextualizing policy windows and considering also how contingency may affect policy windows, it seems possible to integrate insights from foreign policy analysis into current theorizing about foreign policy entrepreneurship drawing on the multiple streams framework. The empirical illustration examines the policy window that opened up for policy entrepreneurs to recast longstanding US policy toward military-run Myanmar as the Obama administration took office.

Cet article a pour objectif de contribuer à l'évolution du dialogue entre Analyse de la politique étrangère et Politique publique en faisant référence à l'approche des courants multiples de John Kingdon. Il problématise la manière dont l'un des concepts clés de l'approche des courants multiples—celui de fenêtres politiques—a été utilisé dans des applications à la politique étrangère et suggère que les fenêtres politiques peuvent être plus difficiles à exploiter que les illustrations d'entreprise de politique étrangère réussie l'indiquent. En effet, cet article soutient que les fenêtres politiques peuvent être petites ou grandes ; leur taille sera susceptible de varier, notamment car elles interviennent dans de nombreux contextes. Il fait référence à des cas de réorientation de politique étrangère et met en évidence quatre de ces contextes : le placement et l'accès des entrepreneurs de politique étrangère, le niveau de contestation autour d'une politique problématique mais dominante, les pressions géopolitiques et les idées guidant la politique étrangère. Cet article suggère en outre

Jürgen Haacke is an Associate Professor in the Department of International Relations, London School of Economics and Political Science.

Haacke, Jürgen (2021) Foreign Policy Entrepreneurs, Policy Windows, and "Pragmatic Engagement": Reconsidering Insights of the Multiple Streams Framework and the Obama Administration's 2009 Policy Shift Toward Military-Run Myanmar. *Foreign Policy Analysis*, doi: 10.1093/fpa/orab017

qu'en contextualisant les fenêtres politiques et en prenant également en considération la façon dont la contingence peut affecter les fenêtres politiques, il semble possible d'intégrer les renseignements issus de l'analyse de la politique étrangère à la théorisation actuelle de l'entreprise de politique étrangère en s'inspirant du cadre des courants multiples. L'illustration empirique qu'il inclut est une observation de la fenêtre politique qui s'est ouverte aux entrepreneurs politiques pour remanier la politique américaine de longue date envers le Myanmar sous régime militaire lorsque l'administration Obama est entrée en fonction.

El objetivo de este artículo es contribuir al diálogo en evolución entre el Análisis de la Política Exterior y la Política Pública con referencia al Enfoque de Corrientes Múltiples (MSA) de John Kingdon. El artículo problematiza la forma en que se ha utilizado uno de los conceptos clave del MSA (la ventana de oportunidad) en las aplicaciones a la política exterior y sugiere que las ventanas de oportunidad política pueden ser más difíciles de explotar de lo que indican los ejemplos ilustrativos de la política exterior empresarial. De hecho, el artículo sostiene que las ventanas de oportunidad política pueden ser pequeñas o grandes; su tamaño probablemente diferirá, entre otras cosas, ya que las ventanas de oportunidad se sitúan en numerosos contextos. Con referencia a los casos de reorientación de la política exterior, este artículo destaca cuatro de estos contextos: la ubicación y el acceso de los emprendedores de políticas exteriores; el nivel de impugnación que rodea a una política problemática pero predominante; las presiones geopolíticas y las ideas que guían la política exterior. Además, el artículo sugiere que al contextualizar las ventanas de oportunidad política y al considerar también cómo la contingencia puede afectar a las ventanas de oportunidad, parece posible integrar las ideas del análisis de la política exterior en la teorización actual sobre el esquema empresarial de la política exterior basándose en el marco de las corrientes múltiples. La ilustración empírica examina la ventana de oportunidad política que se abrió para que los emprendedores de políticas reformularan la antigua política de EE.UU. con respecto a cuando los militares gobernaron Birmania cuando la administración de Obama asumió el cargo.

Introduction

Among actor-centered perspectives deployed in international relations (IR), the role of policy entrepreneurs in bringing about significant policy change has received intermittent attention. Existing scholarship on foreign policy entrepreneurship tends to draw on John Kingdon's insights, even if the extent to which scholars invoke the multiple streams approach (MSA) with which he is associated varies. Key contributions include Checkel's (1993) study of policy entrepreneurs influencing Gorbachev to shift Soviet grand strategy; Daalder's (2000) examination of the US policy shift undertaken in relation to the Bosnian crisis in the mid-1990s; and Mazarr's (2007) study of the Bush administration's decision to wage war against Iraq. Blavoukos and Bourantonis (2012) as well as Zahariadis (2005) and Blavoukos (2019) have explored foreign policy entrepreneurship in relation to significant foreign policy decisions taken in Greece and Israel. The range of country applications suggests that in principle Kingdon's insights are applicable to not just different pluralistic political systems but also less pluralistic political systems with respect to foreign policy. Given Valerie Hudson's call for actor-specific theory development (Hudson 2005), it is thus perhaps surprising that in foreign policy analysis (FPA), the study of foreign policy entrepreneurship—not least with reference to Kingdon's insights—has to date remained limited. That said, the cross-disciplinary dialogue between FPA and public policy, the field in which work on policy entrepreneurship emerged, has recently gained more traction (Brummer et al. 2019).

This article aims to contribute to this cross-disciplinary dialogue by problematizing the general understanding and operationalization of the concept of policy window. The rationale is four-fold: first, policy windows merit attention as opportunities policy entrepreneurs exploit to recast the policy agenda. In Kingdon's framework, the policy window occupies a central place. Second, policy windows, which are said to have objective features but clearly can also be perceived differently by those involved (see Doeser and Eidenfalk 2013), are nevertheless more often than not assumed to be structurally alike. Yet, it is not clear why different policy windows should be considered to afford the same opportunities, not least in relation to foreign policy. By not focusing on the size of policy windows, analysts are unlikely to fully appreciate policy entrepreneurship if and when it is successful. Third, there are open questions in relation to applications of Kingdon's insights to FPA. For instance, should policy windows primarily be seen to arise from major systemic change as several works suggest? What factors bear down on a foreign policy entrepreneur's ability to make use of an open policy window? How could opportunity windows narrow or close in relation to foreign policy entrepreneurship? Fourth, there are perhaps still open questions about whether Kingdon's framework can accommodate processes of foreign policy agenda setting and decision-making and what adaptations, if any, might be useful. This article's starting point is thus that a greater focus on policy windows is warranted as the dialogue between public policy and FPA continues with reference to Kingdon's MSA.

The article will offer two arguments: first, as interest in foreign policy entrepreneurship and the application of Kingdon's insights grow, it seems important to appreciate that policy windows are not just there for the taking, notwithstanding the impression that may be created by studies showcasing the agency of successful foreign policy entrepreneurship. Specifically, it would seem important to capture key foreign policy–related contexts that foreign policy entrepreneurs navigate as they make use of policy windows, as these contexts will impact the size of the policy window available. Such a focus should naturally complement the focus on the strategies that foreign policy entrepreneurs employ to influence the policy agenda and decision-making. Second, contingency merits more explicit attention from those studying foreign policy entrepreneurship, including policy windows.

To illustrate these arguments, the article explores the case of a major Western democracy and its reengagement with a so-called "pariah state." This is a case of foreign policy being redirected (Hermann 1990). Specifically, the article will analyze Washington's 2009 decision to reengage with Myanmar's senior political leadership following many years in which the United States used sanctions and an isolation strategy to bring to an end military rule and to "restore democracy." This particular case merits attention for three reasons: first, the decision has not yet been explored as a case of foreign policy entrepreneurship. Second, there is no scholarly consensus at present on how we are to understand or explain Washington's "pragmatic engagement" vis-à-vis Myanmar at this juncture. And, third, the case of US reengagement vis-à-vis Myanmar is likely to provide useful insights on policy windows and policy entrepreneurship that could also be relevant when studying instances of foreign policy entrepreneurship with reference to relations with other states, not least so-called adversarial or rogue states, particularly at a time of increased geopolitical competition.

The structure of the article is as follows: first, I will briefly review key aspects of Kingdon's multiple streams framework and how its insights have been applied to FPA. Second, I will problematize how the literature has dealt with the concept of "policy window." Third, I set out four contextual factors that stand to impact the size of policy windows when foreign policy entrepreneurs aim to shift the direction of a bilateral relationship. Fourth, focusing on the opportunity window provided by a change in administration, the article examines the empirical case of US

reengagement with Myanmar in 2009. Finally, I will offer some concluding thoughts on the implications of my arguments and empirical findings.

Policy Entrepreneurship and the Multiple Streams Approach

Policy entrepreneurship is recognized as an enduring practice in public policy making where it is linked to policy innovation. Notably, the concept of policy entrepreneurship is not per se tied to a particular theory of policy change; the idea and practices of policy entrepreneurship are compatible with several theories of policy change (Mintrom and Norman 2009), such as Paul Sabatier's theory of advocacy coalitions (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993). However, for many scholars the theoretical starting point for analyzing policy entrepreneurship is John Kingdon's MSA outlined in *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies* (Kingdon 1995; also see Zahariadis 2015). This work focuses on predecision policy processes. It is fundamentally about how certain issues make it onto the government's decision agenda given that decision-makers operate under significant time constraints and often have only opaque policy preferences. Notably, having impact on the agenda is different than having control over policy alternatives, let alone outcomes.

Given that Kingdon's model is well known, only a brief overview is required here. Essentially, it identifies three largely independent streams of activity relating to the recognition and identification of policy problems; the generation of alternative policy options; and political activities, developments, and dynamics. As far as the problem stream is concerned, the argument is that conditions and policies stand to receive attention from decision-makers only when they are recognized as problematic. This may happen because of focusing events (e.g., a crisis situation) and policy feedback, for example. Meanwhile, in the policy-generation stream, members of the policy community advocate and compete for the adoption of their particular policy ideas and proposals. The political stream "encapsulates the sociopolitical environment within which policy-making is taking place, the organized political forces that cast their support or opposition to the various policy proposals, and developments at the government level" (Blavoukos 2019, 23). For Kingdon, "[p]roblems or politics by themselves can structure the *governmental* agenda. But the probability of an item rising on the *decision* agenda is dramatically increased if all three streams-problems, policies, and politics-are joined" (Kingdon, 1995, 178, emphases in original). The coupling of the streams occurs as policy windows open up; Kingdon locates these primarily in the problems and political streams. Policy entrepreneurs are seen as bringing about the coupling of the three separate streams, allowing them to act as agents of policy change. As Kingdon (1995, 20) puts it, policy entrepreneurs are responsible "for coupling solutions to problems and for coupling both problems and solutions to politics."

Importantly, policy entrepreneurs are not necessarily the authors of the ideas they push. As Kingdon (1995, 72) maintains, "Ideas come from anywhere, actually, and the critical factor that explains the prominence of an item on the agenda is not its source, but instead the climate in government or the receptivity to ideas of a given type, regardless of source." Policy entrepreneurs thus advance rather than necessarily generate particular ideas as solutions to policy problems. The qualities of successful policy entrepreneurship include a claim to be heard, political connections, and persistence (Kingdon 1995, 180–81), while Zahariadis has also emphasized manipulation (Zahariadis 2005). Who would be considered a foreign policy entrepreneur? Here, Kingdon focuses on members of policy communities, i.e., networks of specialists and experts in particular policy fields. Significantly, however, Kingdon has opted to include in these networks administration officials, members of Congress (and their staff), representatives of think tanks, and academics, as well as experts working for nongovernmental organizations (Kingdon 1995). Indeed, Kingdon suggests that "[f]or one case, the key entrepreneur might be a cabinet

secretary; for another, a senator or member of the House; for others, a lobbyist, academic, Washington lawyer, or career bureaucrat" (Kingdon 1995, 180).

There have been numerous useful refinements and extensions of Kingdon's insights since the original publication in 1984. For instance, Roberts and King (1991) introduced a useful distinction of different types of public entrepreneurs (political, executive, bureaucratic, and policy entrepreneurs), and noted the reality of collective entrepreneurship. They and many others have also detailed the strategies policy entrepreneurs primarily adopt. According to Michael Mintrom, for instance, "Policy entrepreneurs tend to work hard at (1) defining and framing problems, (2) building powerful teams that tap relevant knowledge networks, (3) amassing evidence to show the workability of their proposals, and (4) creating strong coalitions of diverse supporters" (Mintrom 2015, 104; also see Mintrom and Norman 2009). Notably, the framing by policy entrepreneurs does not merely involve strategic action of a manipulative kind. As Dewulf and Bouwen argue, framing also occurs in interactional ways (Dewulf and Bouwen 2012) whereby the meaning of situations is constructed in discussion with others (Mintrom and Luetjens 2017, 1366). As Mintrom and Luetjens put it, "Policy entrepreneurs discover what others are looking for and shape their proposals for policy innovation and change accordingly" (Mintrom and Luetjens 2017, 1373).

In more recent years, there have also been major efforts to apply, adapt, and refine MSA (e.g., Cairney and Jones 2016). Among other insights, this scholarship has posited the applicability of Kingdon's insights at the decision-making stage of the policy process rather than only for agenda setting (Zahariadis 2003; see also Herweg, Huß, and Zohlnhöfer 2015). This has also led to a greater concern about how to integrate institutions into the multiple streams framework as institutions are seen as relevant if not to agenda setting then certainly to decision-making. This focus has been reinforced to better accommodate parliamentary systems where party political experts play key roles in the development of policy, and coalition governments are the norm (e.g., Zohlnhöfer and Rüb 2016). This extension of MSA also leads to distinguishing agenda coupling from decision-making coupling. New hypotheses have also been put forward, about when the three streams in the MSA are "ripe" for coupling by policy entrepreneurs. For instance, with regard to the political stream, the suggestion is that "the political stream is ripe when the government embraces [a]proposal" (Herweg, Huß, and Zohlnhöfer 2015).

Applications to Foreign Policy Analysis

One of the strongest arguments for the portability of the entire multiple streams framework to FPA has been made by Zahariadis (2005, 5), who maintains that "[f]oreign policy is the result of the coupling of three streams—problems, policies, and politics—by policy entrepreneurs during open policy windows." To date, however, extending Kingdon's insights to FPA has prompted only a small number of theoretical adaptations and refinements as well as empirical applications. For instance, pointing to differences between decision-making in relation to domestic and foreign policy in the United States, Durant and Diehl maintained that the model should accommodate both incremental *and* nonincremental processes of policy alternatives specification processes (Durant and Diehl 1989, 181). Some authors have even found the framework transferable to US foreign policy making while dismissing the significance of policy entrepreneurs (Travis and Zahariadis 2002), a move that seems at odds with arguments about Washington as a "penumbra of transnational power" (Calder 2014), and the related literature on advocacy coalitions and norms entrepreneurs (e.g., Busby 2010). Beyond extensions to US congressional foreign policy (e.g., Carter and Scott 2009), several empirical applications have focused on US national security and foreign policy decisions (e.g., Goldgeier 1999; Daalder 2000; Mazarr 2007). As regards policy windows, a key concern of this

article, numerous works on foreign policy entrepreneurship have focused on leadership changes and crises (e.g., Blavoukos 2019; Daalder 2000). Significantly, neither the theoretical literature nor empirical applications have problematized policy windows in relation to foreign policy agenda setting and decision making, despite there being several reasons to do so.

Problematizing the Policy Window

Open policy windows are important opportunities for policy entrepreneurs to elevate particular policy proposals to the decision agenda. Not surprisingly, policy windows also occupy a central point in Kingdon's model where they identify the moment allowing for the coupling of the three streams. As such, policy windows provide a useful explanation for the timing of policy change (Gustavsson 1999, 86). Conceptually Kingdon differentiates between predictable and unpredictable policy windows. Whereas the former are linked to political and reporting cycles, the latter are contingent on developments in the problem and politics streams. Changes of administration, new political majorities, or major shifts in mass public opinion as well as crises or focusing events thus for Kingdon are all open policy windows. Notably, Kingdon moreover assumes that policy windows are short. Scholars who extend MSA to decision-making differentiate between agenda windows and decision-making windows.

There are at least four reasons to problematize policy windows. First, the literature tends to take policy windows to be structurally alike in the sense that they are usually seen to allow one or more particular policy entrepreneur(s) to successfully push policy ideas in response to a problem that has been highlighted by focusing events. However, it is not obvious why policy entrepreneurs or scholars examining policy entrepreneurship should take policy windows to offer the same kind of opportunities. Instead, policy windows are bound to come in different sizes that depend on circumstances and context. Differentiating between micro-windows and macro-windows, Keeler has for instance argued that "a government's prospects for achieving dramatic policy innovation are largely shaped by the size of the window for reform . . . and that window size is itself determined principally by the size of the mandate that the government enjoys and the severity of the crisis present" (Keeler 1993, 436). Whether or not the size of policy windows generally simply reflects the mandate achieved by a new government need not contain us; the key point here would be that policy windows have different sizes because of their context. Second, by treating policy windows as if they were all alike, not least when they may also be perceived differently by those involved, analysts are likely not to fully appreciate policy entrepreneurship in the event it is successful. If even small windows can be successfully exploited by policy entrepreneurs, this would suggest quite effective entrepreneurship. By implication, assessments of foreign policy entrepreneurship depend on appropriately taking account of relevant contexts,[1] as well as related understandings of the foreign policy entrepreneur.

Third, policy windows are more often than not taken to arise from major geopolitical or systemic change, sometimes to the point where the two are equated. For instance, even Checkel (1993, 279) argued that "the concept of policy window is a way of linking domestic levels of analysis to the international setting." Blavoukos similarly says he captures both "systemic and conjectural parameters of foreign policy analysis" (Blavoukos 2019, 36) as he partly seems to locate policy windows in large-scale changes in the international environment. This not only obscures the

[1]Analyzing how transnational advocacy groups produce policy shifts by the foreign policy elite, Busby (2010) identified several contextual factors determining when foreign policy entrepreneurship is likely to be successful, such as a permissive international environment, focusing events, credible information, the balance of material incentives, cultural resonance of the message, and the number and preferences of gate keepers. Also, see Thies (2018) on institutional contexts of foreign policy entrepreneurship.

importance of routine policy windows. There is also tension between Kingdon's assertion that policy windows are of short duration and the idea that longer term international developments or geopolitical shifts make for a policy window. Nevertheless, these international dynamics should of course be considered as possible context.

Fourth, as it stands, MSA does not explicitly include or accommodate foreign relations or international politics as part of the political stream. After all, the political stream in Kingdon's model is designed to narrowly capture only certain political factors, i.e., electoral, partisan, or pressure group factors (Kingdon 1995, 145), following an "intra-Washington" colloquial definition of "political." By comparison, works in FPA tend to see decision-making processes influenced by a range of international and domestic factors. As noted, various theoretical refinements of MSA have taken place but they generally leave open the question whether and how the "politics" stream can accommodate or extend to foreign policy.[2] Significantly, drawing on the concept of policy windows may help grounding the connection. After all, policy windows that policy entrepreneurs seek to exploit do not exist independently of foreign policy contexts. Zahariadis (2005, 25) may have appreciated this when he suggested, without further elaboration, that policy windows "describe the context within which choice is made."

In short, greater focus on policy windows is warranted. In part, because policy windows may be narrow or wide, which will affect the chances of successful policy entrepreneurship. But, also, because thinking about policy windows more deeply may help us to address questions left unanswered given Kingdon's understanding of the political stream.

Factors Influencing Policy Windows

Assessing the size of policy windows available to policy entrepreneurs is a serious challenge. As Zohlnhöfer and Rüb (2016, 7) maintain, "the very idea of a window of opportunity seems to defy operationalization; it seems much too contingent and, in many cases, is essentially socially constructed." While this suggests perhaps that attempts to contextualize policy windows should also be treated with caution, this caveat should not stop us thinking about what factors most likely impact the size of foreign policy windows. That said, I will aim to offer only a preliminary argument, involving an illustration that can be subsumed under Hermann's notion of major foreign policy change (Hermann 1990). Such foreign policy change occurs, for instance, when one state decides to recast the nature or direction of a bilateral relationship or, put differently, when it significantly changes the course of relations pursued vis-à-vis another state. This would involve ties being markedly upgraded or downgraded, entailing for instance the normalization of bilateral relations, or changes in alignment, or similar decisions. As we shall see later, the illustration used in this article focuses on the foreign policy of a major industrial democracy vis-à-vis a so-called "pariah state," i.e., a state that has a particularly poor human rights record and tends to be run by authoritarian regimes.

In MSA, policy entrepreneurs exploit ephemeral opportunities to connect problems with policy and politics under conditions of ambiguity and complexity, above all at the time of changes in government or personnel turnover. Notably, although policy windows are generally understood to be short, in the case of a governmental transition the policy window is actually better measured in weeks or even months. According to Kingdon: "The first year of a new administration is clearly the prime time for preoccupation with the subject of change." (Kingdon 1995, 154). In the United States, presidential transitions are understood to comprise three phases: the preelection and postelection phases *and* an often lengthy post-inauguration

[2]The question of how understandings of "politics" might be updated has also been asked in strategic studies with reference to Clausewitz (see Dimitriu 2020).

phase. Campbell and Steinberg (2008, 3) have thus posited that " . . . it has long been recognised by practitioners and scholars alike that the transition really begins during the campaign itself . . . and continues for many months into the new administration." Incoming governments are generally also known for their willingness to reassess existing policies. Indeed, new governments may conduct specific policy reviews. These arguably formalize policy windows that open up because new governments take charge. In principle, such reviews may effectively even extend windows that open up because of a new government entering office, as the policy window will generally stay open until the review is completed. Policy reviews can be part and parcel of political transitions in Western democracies as well as other parts of the world.

While a policy window that opens up because of a new administration assuming power might in theory be substantial, its actual and perceived size is an empirical question. In the United States, it is likely to depend on at least four factors as far as significant foreign policy decisions, such as those over redirecting policy toward a "pariah state," are concerned: first, the position of the foreign policy entrepreneur; second, the level of policy conflict and stakeholder's views on the issue concerned; third, dominant geopolitical assessments; and, fourth, the administration's own key policy beliefs or grand strategic orientation.

Position of Policy Entrepreneur

Open policy windows will look different depending on the entrepreneur's position and the ease of access to the main foreign policy makers and advisers. Foreign policy entrepreneurs already working for or having the ear of a leadership are likely to possess an advantage over those that do not. This applies also to cabinet members or high-level officials, both in terms of their own access and access to them. For many foreign policy entrepreneurs, the ease of access can change significantly as a consequence of a new administration coming into office. Who the policy entrepreneur is will likely matter especially if ideas for policy change are to be pushed onto the agenda in relation to controversial foreign policy issues. In the United States, the success of policy entrepreneurship with reference to redirecting bilateral relationships that are in the public eye, such as ties with "pariah states," will normally depend on backing from the White House, if not the president personally.

Policy Contestation

The size of a policy window will also depend in other ways on levels of policy contestation in relation to the foreign policy issue concerned. Even when existing policy has demonstrably failed, policy change will seem and be more difficult if there is significant conflict about the effectiveness or morality of existing policy (see Weible and Heikkila 2017). Foreign policy entrepreneurs face potential veto players and existing stakeholders. Not only in the United States are veto players, both institutional or individual (e.g., particular members of Congress), but also important other stakeholders able to potentially sink specific proposals for policy change (Tsebelis 2002; Busby 2010) and therefore persuading or neutralizing by policy entrepreneurs may be needed. These points seem particularly pertinent in relation to "pariah states" that make for emotive policy issues. In such circumstances, even members of a new administration may find it difficult to capitalize on a policy window for executive-led foreign policy entrepreneurship.

Geopolitical Context

The size of a policy window that foreign policy entrepreneurs would like to exploit to reorient foreign policy toward a target state is also likely to be shaped by

dominant assessments of prevailing political-security challenges and the wider strategic and geopolitical context. Geopolitics is primarily associated with great power relations (e.g., Grygiel 2006), but geopolitical and geostrategic considerations may also come into play as far as relations with secondary states are concerned. Certainly, in the absence of "geopolitical slack" (Trubowitz 2011) major powers should be expected to approach policy problems and possible solutions with respect to a secondary state in the light of its relations with other major powers. In the case of the United States, geopolitical concerns have repeatedly overridden other US interests. During the Cold War, for instance, the perceived Communist challenge led the United States to support authoritarian and even dictatorial regimes in Southeast Asia although democracy promotion was understood to be America's mission (Bonner, 1988; Scott 1996; Smith 2012). While the absence of great power competition in the immediate post-Cold War period translated into room for a more differentiated national security policy, concerns about primacy have remained pronounced among the US foreign policy establishment (Porter 2018), leading recent administrations to increasingly decide policy toward other regions and countries with China's rise in mind. In short, assessments of "geopolitical slack" may narrow or widen the policy window available to a foreign policy entrepreneur.

Policy Ideas/Grand Strategy

A related, fourth context impacting the size of policy windows is provided by the key policy ideas incoming governments want to implement. Here, I focus on the new policy ideas incoming administrations are eager to pursue in relation to foreign policy. For many countries, these ideas form part of a grand strategy. Though a grand strategy may reflect the relative balance of power, strategic threats, and security challenges, it also expresses core ideas about how to achieve policy ends (Dueck 2006; Trubowitz 2011; Silove 2018). Grand strategic ideas are often stable, but where international circumstances allow, incoming governments are likely to refocus or rebalance existing foreign policy and security priorities, possibly also to create distance between the incumbent and the preceding administrations. For example, the Clinton administration pursued "democratic enlargement" and a greater resort to multilateralism, but also targeted "rogue states" (Litwak 2000). By comparison, the subsequent Bush grand strategy emphasized unilateralism, the proactive doctrine of preemption and a preference for democratic regime change (Daalder and Lindsay 2003). For the Obama administration, whose grand strategy was associated with the retrenchment of US military power and international accommodation (Dueck 2015), engagement and dialogue replaced more coercive measures to achieve foreign policy goals. At times of presidential transition, any reshaping of grand strategy is hardly set but nevertheless already stands to influence the foreign policy agenda.

Policy Windows and Contingency

In addition, it is important to recognize the impact contingent developments may have on policy windows. The multiple streams framework recognizes contingency, not least with reference to focusing events that demonstrate the failings of existing policy. However, the framework is largely silent on how unexpected events impact policy windows. Yet, in international relations, policy windows may either change in size or close quickly because of new developments. For instance, even policy windows that opened up as a consequence of a new administration taking office could suddenly wither away because of international developments. In the same vein, unanticipated events may obviously also prolong policy windows. Also, policy windows that in principle allow for a new steer in bilateral ties are normally also

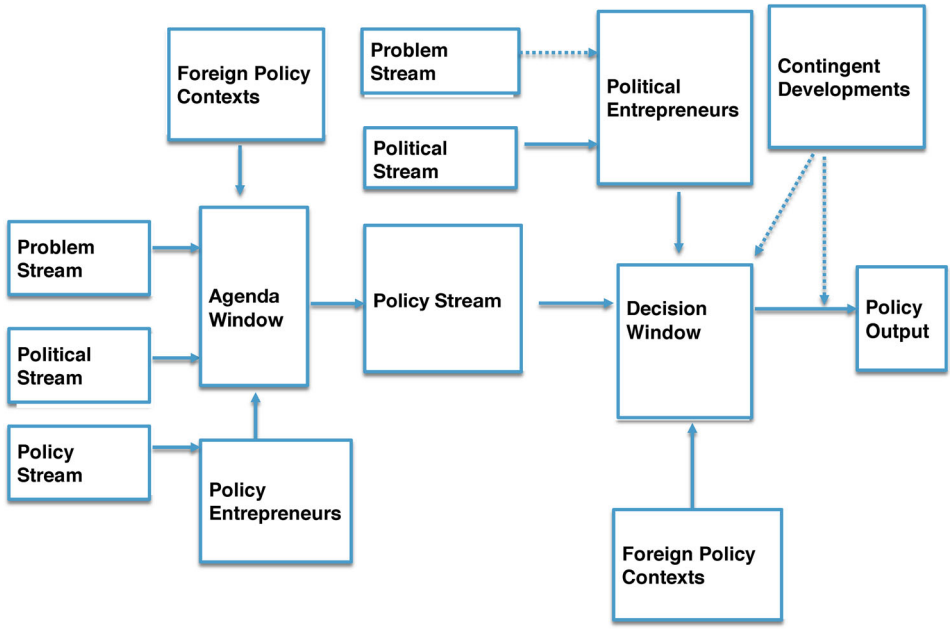

Figure 1. A modified multiple streams framework for foreign policy processes adapted from Herweg, Huß, and Zohlnhöfer (2015).

likely to be assessed with reference to what the target state does or does not do in terms of signaling.

In short, while this paper accepts that presidential transitions in principle provide foreign policy entrepreneurs with an important window of opportunity to affect policy change, it argues that several foreign policy contexts will determine the size of the policy window, including geopolitical assessments and policy ideas underpinning the practice of grand strategy. The wider the policy window, the easier it will likely be for one or more policy entrepreneurs to couple the independent streams MSA identifies. The smaller the window, the more the policy entrepreneur may struggle if not in bringing a proposed policy change onto the agenda, then certainly in successfully proposing that decision-makers commit to it. Policy windows should also be understood to be subject to contingency. Significantly, incorporating these points, which could help further refine MSA when applying the model to foreign policy (see figure 1), should hopefully allow us to produce a deeper empirical account of foreign policy entrepreneurship.

US Reengagement of Myanmar

To illustrate these points, I examine the foreign policy entrepreneurship to redirect US relations with Myanmar that resulted in reengagement with the military regime then in power in September 2009. In this regard, I focus on the policy window that opened with the presidential transition from Bush to Obama. For years, Washington had (1) cast Naypyidaw as an "outpost of tyranny" (Rice 2005) and (2) imposed an increasing array of sanctions, comprising five federal laws,[3] several

[3]Section 138 of the Customs and Trade Act of 1990 (Section 138) (P.L.101–382); Section 307 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (Section 307) (P.L. 87–195) as amended by the Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Years 1994 and 1995 (P.L. 103–236); Section 570 of the Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act 1997 (Section 570) (P.L. 104–208); Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act of 2003 (2003 BFDA) (P.L. 108–61); Tom Lantos Block Burmese JADE (Junta's Anti-Democratic Efforts) Act of 2008.

executive orders,[4] and additional presidential determinations.[5] Labeled "pragmatic engagement," the September 2009 policy shift preceded by two years the period of bilateral rapprochement and "calibrated engagement" with the nominally civilian government of President U Thein Sein.[6] There are two key reasons why US reengagement of Myanmar makes for a relevant and intriguing case. First, though it is well known that Hillary Clinton initiated a Burma policy review in February 2009, the Obama administration's decision to diplomatically reengage Myanmar has yet to be analyzed as a case of foreign policy entrepreneurship. Second, the literature has also yet to offer a compelling account of reengagement. Some scholars suggest US reengagement happened because the Obama administration sought to counter China's growing influence in Myanmar (e.g., Fiori and Passeri 2015; Chow and Easley 2016). Others argue that Burma policy shifted because Washington wanted to put the relationship with ASEAN on a new footing, which also required a new approach toward Myanmar (Clapp 2010a, 411–14; Haacke 2015). Yet other scholars link pragmatic engagement to President Obama's preparedness—as formulated in his inaugural address—to offer a hand in friendship if dictatorial regimes were willing to "unclench" their fist (Liow 2017, 205). Significantly, while these explanations may capture important motivations behind the US policy shift toward military-run Myanmar, they do not explain the timing of either the initiation of the review or the decision to diplomatically reengage at a senior level. By early 2009, there was no evidence that Myanmar's military leadership, headed by Senior General Than Shwe, was considering, let alone making, the political concessions that previous US administrations had demanded as a prerequisite to reconsidering their policy of isolation and sanctions. Also, the earlier explanations ignore the serious setback to US–Myanmar relations in May 2009 as a consequence of the so-called John Yettaw incident, which saw Aung San Suu Kyi sentenced to three years of hard labor in August 2009.[7] Yet, the Obama administration decided to reengage Naypyidaw weeks later. How was it that reengagement at that point was even still on the decision agenda? In studying the foreign policy entrepreneurship culminating in the administration's September 2009 decision to reengage military-run Myanmar, the article draws both on the recently unclassified primary sources available in the State Department's Virtual Reading Room, and wide-ranging interviews conducted in Washington with policy officials, congressional staffers, and other stakeholders.

The Presidential Transition and US Burma Policy

US Burma policy under Presidents Clinton and Bush had failed to "restore democracy" in the sense that the military regime had neither stepped aside in favor of the National League for Democracy (NLD), nor entered into a "meaningful dialogue" with the political opposition and ethnic groups. Indeed, notwithstanding US pressure, the military violently quelled the so-called Saffron Revolution in the Fall of 2007. Also, the regime rejected US proposals to provide direct humanitarian assistance to the survivors of Cyclone Nargis, which devastated much of the Irrawaddy Delta in May 2008. These developments showed that the US policy of sanctions and international isolation seemed to have run its course as it deprived Washington of influence in Myanmar.

[4] E.O. 13047, May 20, 1997; E.O. 13310, July 28, 2003; E.O. 13448, October 18, 2007; E.O. 13464, April 30, 2008.

[5] Presidential Proclamation 6925 of October 3, 1996; Presidential Determination 2009–11, January 15, 2009.

[6] On US–Myanmar relations during the Obama administration, see Martin (2013) and Haacke (2015). For accounts of Myanmar's political transition, see Taylor (2012), Mullen (2016), Ye Htut (2019), and Ruzza, Gabusi, and Pellegrino (2019).

[7] The Yettaw incident saw the American citizen John Yettaw swim across Inya Lake to warn Aung San Suu Kyi of an apparent danger to her life. Daw Suu allowed Yettaw to recuperate at her house before alerting the authorities, thereby violating conditions of her house arrest.

Obama's electoral victory in 2008 created a policy window on Myanmar. Notably, at the outset of his presidency, President Obama was not personally invested in US Burma policy. By comparison, Hillary Clinton had longstanding interests in Burma's struggle for democracy and had joined the Senate Women's Caucus on Burma while in Congress (Clinton 2014). While committed to the idea of achieving political change in Myanmar, based not least on the input she received from her own senior officials and from critics of US Burma policy such as Senator Jim Webb (D-Virginia),[8] she appreciated that relying on sanctions and isolating Myanmar had proven ineffective in moving the military regime to meet US demands for political change (Clinton 2009, 2014, 105).[9]

Policy Window to Redirect US Burma Policy: Narrow or Wide?

Though she clearly favored a different policy, Clinton found that even as Secretary of State she only had a limited window to redirect US Burma policy. To be sure, Obama trusted Clinton to develop the administration's Southeast Asia policy. Also, Clinton apparently received a signal from the transition team whereby even US Burma policy could be reassessed in the context of promoting deeper US–ASEAN relations (Interview 1). Also, importantly, there were no veto players within the National Security Council (NSC), although concerns in relation to Burma were entertained by individuals such as Samantha Power, Senior Director for Multilateral Affairs and Human Rights.

However, a strong consensus had existed for years in Washington that, if anything, more rather than less pressure should be applied vis-à-vis Myanmar's military regime, and that sanction loopholes should be closed. This consensus was shared right across the Burma policy community by Burmese exiles, multiple congressional staff, staff working for major pro-democracy organizations like the US Campaign for Burma or the National Endowment for Democracy, the International Republican Institute, Human Rights Watch, and numerous other NGOs. Moreover, on Capitol Hill, the making of Burma policy was largely owned by Senator Mitch McConnell, who for years leveraged his considerable influence to enact legislation designed to pressure and isolate the regime given its repressive policies. Reacting to human rights abuses in ethnic areas, the failed Saffron Revolution, and the regime's mismanagement of Cyclone Nargis, First Lady Laura Bush had also promoted a very critical stance on Myanmar's military government still in 2008.

To be sure, US Burma policy was by early 2009 challenged by several individuals who were themselves policy entrepreneurs. For instance, the academic David Steinberg (e.g., Steinberg 2010) suggested that US policymakers were uncritically buying into Aung San Suu Kyi's assessments and policy preferences. Priscilla Clapp, the former Chargé d'Affaires (1999–2002) at the US Embassy in Yangon, suggested even before the "Saffron Revolution" that political transition in the not-too-distant future was inevitable in Burma and that Washington and the international community should prepare to build appropriate capacity in the country (Clapp 2007). Also, in a perceived bipartisan act of policy entrepreneurship, Mike Green—former senior director for Asia in George W. Bush's NSC—and Derek Mitchell recommended that Washington should lead "a coordinated international initiative" vis-à-vis Myanmar, also involving ASEAN, China, India, and Japan, to set a new road map for Myanmar's State peace and Development Council (SPDC) (Green and Mitchell 2007, 155), which would require the United States "to relax its strict prohibition on official high-level contact with the SPDC" (Green and Mitchell 2007, 157).

[8]These officials included Deputy Assistant Secretary of State and Ambassador to ASEAN, Scot Marciel, who had been open to a new US Burma policy already in 2007 (US Senate 2007). Incoming Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and the Pacific, Kurt Campbell, seems to have initially approached US Burma policy with Derek Mitchell's policy analysis and ideas in mind. Mitchell himself joined the Obama administration as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense before becoming in 2011 the first Special Representative and Policy Coordinator for Burma.

[9]For assessments of the effectiveness of sanctions against Burma/Myanmar, see Pedersen (2008) and Jones (2015).

Furthermore, a willingness to question the effectiveness of US Burma policy had slowly also gained some traction in Congress. Notably, Committee Chair John Kerry came to share the assessment of key staffers serving the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Frank Jannuzi and Keith Luse, that US Burma policy was problematic, however complex. This was significant at a time when the Foreign Relations Committee regained ground on shaping views on Burma policy in Congress. Meanwhile, against the backdrop of the passing in February 2008 of Tom Lantos, who had founded the Congressional Human Rights Caucus in 1983 and in whose name the 2008 Block Burmese JADE (Junta's Anti-Democratic Efforts) Act had been adopted, the House of Representatives lost one of its most influential voices on human rights violations generally and especially with respect to Myanmar. Even some advocacy groups were by 2008 encouraging a reassessment of US Burma policy, not least to facilitate donor support in Myanmar (Refugees International 2008).

However, the majority of stakeholders within the wider Burma policy community in Washington remained averse to reengagement with the military regime by the time of President Obama's inauguration. From Clinton's perspective, the policy conflict between those holding deeply embedded critical views regarding Burma, not least major stakeholders in Congress, and those calling for a different Burma policy significantly reduced the size of the policy window available to shift US Burma policy. However, important aspects of the foreign policy context facilitated at least lifting US Burma policy onto the decision agenda and moving forward with a policy review.

Geopolitics Reassessed

Since the early 2000s, Senator Webb had emphasized the strategic consequences of US pressure on Burma, namely the latter's embrace by China. Though Webb's views on Burma were largely disregarded at this juncture, an increasing number of East Asia experts and policy analysts in Washington suggested by the mid-2000s that the United States was losing out to China regionally, particularly in Southeast Asia. As Kurt Campbell, then affiliated with CSIS, and O'Hanlon put it: "As a result of its military operations in the Middle East, the United States is dangerously distracted from the rapidly changing strategic landscape of Asia at a time when China is making enormous strides in its military modernization, commercial conquests, diplomatic inroads, and application of soft power" (Campbell and O'Hanlon 2006, 189). To be sure, there was then not yet a consensus on whether the wider regional balance was significantly at risk. Evaluating America's relations with regional allies and security partners (Japan, South Korea, Australia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Singapore) in the context of the impending presidential transition, RAND analysts (Medeiros et al. 2008, 232) for instance argued that fears about China eclipsing or marginalizing America in East Asia were premature, though Beijing's regional influence was increasing.[10] There was, however, a growing consensus on the policy recommendation in response to geopolitical change in East Asia in terms of rebuilding relations with Southeast Asia. For instance, the Center for a New American Security, which Kurt Campbell cofounded in 2007, suggested that Washington invest diplomatic capital to counter perceptions of US indifference toward East Asian multilateral institutions steered by ASEAN (Cossa et al. 2009). In a major study on US–Southeast Asia relations, Derek Mitchell moreover concluded that there was much potential for bilateral partnerships to be strengthened but that US–ASEAN relations were held hostage by the Burma issue (Mitchell 2008). This broader understanding of how the United States should react to East Asia's evolving geopolitics came to shape the incoming administration's regional policy. As NSC Senior Director for Asia, Bader (2012, xvii) put it: "Our objective was . . . to present a responsible Asia

[10]Evan Medeiros in 2009 joined the White House's National Security Council (NSC) as director for China policy.

policy . . . embodying leadership, a greater presence in the area, strengthening of relationships with allies, a realistic approach toward China, openness toward multilateral institution building in the Asia-Pacific, and increased attention to Southeast Asia." Indeed, the US goal was to develop a stronger relationship with Southeast Asia, as well as ASEAN, as "an end in itself and an underpinning of a broader Asian equilibrium" (Bader 2012, 8). The State Department was to be at the heart of this effort. Notably, Clinton's first visit abroad in February 2009 took her to Indonesia, including a visit to the ASEAN Secretariat. Plans were for the United States to accede to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation—ASEAN's regional code of conduct—during Clinton's attendance of the July 2009 ASEAN-led meetings (with an interagency process for accession being announced by Clinton in February), and for President Obama to attend the APEC Summit in Singapore in November 2009 (Marciel 2009; U.S. Department of State 2009a), with the possibility of an Inaugural US–ASEAN Leaders Meeting to boot. Notably, President Bush had previously postponed such a meeting because of Burma.

Emerging Grand Strategy

When assuming office, the Obama administration lacked a clearly fleshed out grand strategy. In his campaign, Obama (2007) had focused on winding down wars, reinvigorating American diplomacy, and renewing American leadership in the world. As regards East Asia, Obama (2007) promised a "sustained, direct and aggressive diplomacy" toward North Korea, while professing interest in an "inclusive infrastructure" and more "effective framework" for US relations with the region. In his inauguration speech, Obama also rearticulated a preparedness to diplomatically engage rogue and pariah regimes if their leaders turned over a new leaf. Although Obama did not personally focus on Myanmar, his preparedness to stretch out a hand to authoritarian regimes as part of his emerging grand strategy meant that the opportunity window to shift US Burma policy on the basis of a policy review was greater than it would otherwise have been.

Clinton's Entrepreneurial Strategy

From the start, Clinton built a coalition of support for the review, including from the White House. In this context, she relied in part on her Deputy Chief of Staff, Jake Sullivan, as well as Ben Rhodes, who was then deputy director of White House speechwriting and senior director for speechwriting for the NSC, and who had advocated reaching out to closed societies. Second, Clinton approached key Burma stakeholders in Congress. As an effective veto player, Senator McConnell's support for the planned review was essential. Speaking about an "unusual meeting" on Capitol Hill in January 2009 with the Senator (Clinton 2014, 104), Clinton (2014, 105) said: "I told Senator McConnell I wanted to take a fresh look at our Burma policy, from top to bottom, and I hoped he'd be part of it. He was skeptical but ultimately supportive." McConnell's endorsement gave Clinton important political breathing space; it implied a measure of bipartisan support for her initiative, but also temporarily removed McConnell as a medium of blowback from advocacy groups. Clinton similarly secured an understanding with Congressman Crowley (Clinton 2014, 105), who was then the most vocal on Burma in the House of Representatives. Senator Webb not only agreed with the idea of conducting a review but also indicated he would himself push for policy change on the Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee he was then heading.

In addition, there was an international dimension to Clinton's outreach involving Southeast Asian governments, which clearly welcomed the policy review. Notably, Indonesian President Yudhoyono unambiguously encouraged a new approach toward Burma. The Singaporean leadership did likewise. The State Department also

invited experts and stakeholders from Washington's Burma policy community to discuss policy toward Naypyidaw. Thus, Clinton consulted widely before and during the policy review which, in the words of Priscilla Clapp (2010b, 44), "was perhaps the most thorough and far-reaching policy review of U.S. relations with Burma that has been undertaken by the U.S. government in recent memory."

Clinton next also looked for signals from Naypyidaw indicating commitment to improved relations. The review had started against the backdrop of the US Embassy in Yangon learning about unconfirmed offers by the junta to engage Aung San Suu Kyi in a dialogue, and the further release in February 2009 of political prisoners. However, soon thereafter the regime seemed bent on introducing new visa authorization arrangements that stood to impact the humanitarian assistance provided in the Irrawaddy Delta. This worried US officials. In late March, Clinton opted to send to Myanmar an emissary, Stephen Blake, whose rank allowed the State Department not to insist on him meeting with detained NLD leader Aung San Suu Kyi. Having met Myanmar foreign minister Nyan Win, Blake returned with a positive message regarding Naypyidaw's interest in improved bilateral relations.

Soon thereafter though, the NLD's Shwegondaing Declaration of late April 2009 set out conditions for the NLD's participation in political dialogue with the regime and in the 2010 elections. Indirectly, it also hinted at reservations about wider international reengagement with the military regime. The NLD's stance indeed highlighted the question as to whether the Obama administration should have considered redirecting US Burma policy without the regime first taking steps such as releasing Daw Suu. Clinton informed her Singaporean counterpart, George Yeo, that she was looking for gestures from the Burmese side (U.S. Department of State 2009a).

A Closing Policy Window?

As Daw Suu was put on trial in mid-May for her role in the John Yettaw affair, the opportunity to bring the policy review to a conclusion along lines favored by Clinton began to rapidly narrow. Suu Kyi's arrest and trial provoked strong reactions, including from President Obama, and Clinton came under pressure to abandon the policy review. An indignant US Senate called for Suu Kyi's unconditional release, while condemning and deploring the "show trial" and demanding "a genuine roadmap for the transition to civilian, democratic rule" (US Senate 2009a). When the regime denied UN Secretary General access to Daw Suu during his visit to Myanmar in early July, Senator McCain opined that her trial was "the latest sign that meaningful engagement" was not on the junta's "list of priorities" (US Senate 2009b). Senator McConnell argued unequivocally that for Congress a policy change vis-à-vis military-run Burma "would be premature" and that "sanctions against the junta should remain in place until such time as the regime truly commits itself to a course of democratization and reconciliation" (US Senate 2009c).

Although Clinton paused the policy review (Clinton 2014, 107), the challenge, as Campbell (2009a) suggested in June, was still to "come up with practical, realistic ideas on how we can best encourage Burma to move in a more positive direction." The rather pressing reason: concerns about Pyongyang proliferating nuclear and missile technology to Naypyidaw. For years, suspicions had been raised about Burma's military and nuclear ties with North Korea. However, Pyongyang's second nuclear test in May 2009 and a North Korean ship, the Kang Nam I, taking course for Myanmar a month later, prompted urgent questions about the military relationship between Naypyidaw and Pyongyang. As some sources suggest, this issue saw Burma policy "moved from Pile B to Pile A" in terms of significance for the administration (Interview 2). Notably, as regards the implications for US Burma policy, Senator McConnell suggested the links between North Korea and Myanmar were a reason to maintain the existing policy toward Naypyidaw. For Clinton, however, the

unknowns of this relationship constituted a major security policy reason for diplomatically reengaging Myanmar. A policy shift toward reengagement with Myanmar thus remained on the administration's decision agenda.

However, Secretary Clinton suggested that the Obama administration was only "willing to have a more productive partnership with Burma if they [Myanmar] take steps that are self-evident" (quoted in Landler 2009). She even hinted at US investments in Burma if the regime released Aung San Suu Kyi. Notwithstanding US and wider international appeals, Daw Suu was sentenced to three years of hard labor in early August however, while Yettaw was jailed for seven years. The ramifications were again far-reaching. Though Senior-General Than Shwe immediately commuted Daw Suu's sentence to eighteen months house arrest, the renewed house arrest seemed designed to prevent her from standing in the 2010 elections.[11] Senior members of the administration were appalled. Also, this development suggested that the policy window for recalibrating US Burma policy had effectively shut.

Jim Webb's Policy Entrepreneurship

It was at this moment that Senator Webb proved useful for the administration. As noted, Webb had for years been concerned about rising Chinese influence in Myanmar. He had argued for so-called "affirmative engagement" along lines pursued with Vietnam. In late 2008, Webb was already making plans to visit Myanmar (Webb 2012) ahead of him assuming the Chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs. However, objections by administration officials caused him to postpone. When Webb finally traveled to Myanmar in August, he had three objectives: to achieve Yettaw's immediate release, to meet Daw Suu, and to discuss allowing her a role in the country's unfolding political process. Conducting this personal diplomacy at some considerable political risk, Webb's visit proved a success. It resulted in the release and repatriation of John Yettaw on humanitarian grounds. Beyond meeting with Prime Minister Thein Sein, Webb was also able to call on Myanmar's most senior military leader, making him the highest ranking US official ever to have been received by Than Shwe. Webb argued that he was seeking a new approach on sanctions but that Aung San Suu Kyi's trial had made politically difficult any change in US Burma policy. For their part, Myanmar's leaders affirmed that Naypyidaw was seeking better bilateral ties with Washington, including "direct relations" (U.S. Department of State 2009b). To underscore this point, the regime granted Webb's request to meet Aung San Suu Kyi, who clarified that she was not in principle opposed to Washington reaching out to Myanmar. Daw Suu taking this position was of great significance to the administration as it could justify reengagement, not least in the absence of tangible political reforms by the military government. Following Webb's visit, the US Embassy in Yangon was also able to report on further developments and signals: there was qualified support for a political dialogue between Washington and Naypyidaw among NLD leaders, and the regime had decided for Thein Sein to lead the Myanmar delegation to the UN General Assembly (U.S. Department of State 2009c). In the estimation of Clapp (2010b, 45), "Webb's unusually cordial reception by the SPDC created the impression that U.S. relations with Burma had suddenly reached a turning point...." The regime sent a further signal by including around 250 political prisoners among the 7,114 released on the twentieth anniversary of the military regime taking power. For Clinton, these signals were sufficient to end the review on a positive note.

[11] Following Aung San Suu Kyi advice, the NLD in March 2010 decided not to re-register as a political party and did not participate in the 2010 elections.

Deciding on Pragmatic Engagement

With the UN Group of Friends of Burma ministerial meeting on September 23, 2009 seen as a cutoff date for the decision to finalize the review, the question for the administration was no longer whether but how to reengage with Myanmar. Two broad alternatives remained: engagement without preconditions including the immediate reduction of sanctions (Webb 2009), and a more cautious reengagement. The administration preferred the second alternative. Webb's implicit suggestion that the US was not as interested as before in promoting democracy and human rights in Myanmar (Rogin 2009) was not acceptable, in part also given continued congressional, civil society, and Burmese concerns. Consequently, sanctions were to be maintained even as diplomatic reengagement would immediately begin. Campbell presented to Congress a four-point argument to explain and justify this reengagement: (1) neither sanctions nor engagement had succeeded in changing the deplorable political and humanitarian conditions in Burma; (2) Burma posed problems for the region and the world at large; (3) there were questions swirling around Burma's relationship with North Korea; and (4) there was an active interest on the part of the Burmese leadership to engage with the United States (Campbell 2009b). Importantly, the purpose of reengagement was still to bring about political change in Myanmar, although no longer by forcing regime abdication. This approach took its cue from the principled policy ideas floated originally by Green and Mitchell (2007), without initial reliance on the congressionally mandated position of a Special Representative and less embeddedness in a multilateral approach. In practice, it would be led by the State Department, not Congress, notwithstanding Webb's policy entrepreneurship.

Conclusions

The starting point of this article was that policy windows deserve greater attention in the ongoing cross-disciplinary dialogue about how to draw on Kingdon's insights to study foreign policy entrepreneurship. In part, this argument responds to how the concept of policy window has been employed or taken for granted in the past. It also speaks to the need, as I see it, to locate foreign policy entrepreneurship within distinct foreign policy making contexts that stand to shape the actual and perceived size of policy windows. In relation to the kind of foreign policy issue examined here—the recasting of policy toward a "pariah state," I have identified four such contexts likely to shape policy windows in relation to foreign policy agenda setting and decisions: the placement and access of foreign policy entrepreneurs, levels of political contestation amid a dominant perspective, geopolitical pressures, and policy ideas linked to adjustments in grand strategy. The suggestion is that by contextualizing and thus problematizing policy windows, we avoid simply seeing the latter as a moment in time that will routinely allow policy entrepreneurs to succeed. I moreover argued that contingency may also affect foreign policy windows in important ways. Contingency can in principle widen or extend policy windows that may work in favor of policy entrepreneurs, but the opposite effect is also possible.

The illustration focused on US Burma policy in 2009. The policy window available to Secretary Clinton in early 2009 to move beyond a policy she saw as having failed was initially limited by considerable continuing support for existing US Burma policy across Washington, even as other contexts seemed to provide for substantial opportunity: her institutional role, the changing geopolitical context in Southeast and East Asia, and the administration's planned adjustments to US grand strategy. Consequently, Clinton announced a policy review rather than a new policy. Winning a broad buy-in for this policy review that was designed to lead to some form of reengagement then became a crucial plank of Clinton's policy entrepreneurship. That said, the account provided shows that successful foreign policy

entrepreneurship may depend on the efforts by several policy entrepreneurs, and this is demonstrated by highlighting the extremely significant role later played by Senator Webb. Indeed, Webb helped to re-enlarge and extend a policy window that seemed to have almost closed.

As far as contingency is concerned, this article has pointed to the impact that sudden and unexpected domestic political developments in the target state and wider security dynamics and interests preoccupying policymakers may have on policy windows. The policy window available to redirect Burma policy twice narrowed considerably given the junta's response to the John Yettaw incident, and, again, three months later, when Daw Suu was sentenced. However, precipitous high-priority developments relating to proliferation issues involving North Korea and Myanmar at least allowed Secretary Clinton to only pause the Burma policy review. Jim Webb's consequential policy entrepreneurship and, importantly, the military regime's positive signaling in response then provided the basis for taking up the policy review again, and to work out a carefully crafted policy shift.

Contextualizing foreign policy windows while also allowing for contingency to affect them could be a useful way to adapt Kingdon's model for applications in relation to FPA without overburdening it. Importantly, the argument outlined here would seem broadly transferable to a number of other US bilateral relationships with various secondary states, including adversarial states. Broadly speaking, these arguments also seem as portable to other states with pluralistic political systems as the "universal concepts" that define MSA.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Professor Chris Alden and the anonymous referees for their helpful comments. I would also like to acknowledge the financial support received from the LSE Saw Swee Hock Southeast Asia Centre for this project, which enabled me to conduct interviews in Washington, DC.

References

Bader, Jeffrey A. 2012. *Obama and China's Rise: An Insider's Account of America's Asia Strategy*. Washington, DC: Brookings.

Blavoukos, Spyros. 2019. "The Multiple Streams Approach in Foreign Policy." In *Foreign Policy as Public Policy? Promises and Pitfalls*, edited by Klaus Brummer, Sebastian Harnisch, Kai Oppermann and Diana Panke, 21–40. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Blavoukos, Spyros, and Dimitris Bourantonis. 2012. "Policy Entrepreneurs and Foreign Policy Change: The Greek–Turkish Rapprochement in the 1990s." *Government and Opposition* 47 (4): 597–617.

Bonner, Raymond. 1988. *Waltzing with a Dictator: The Marcoses and the Making of American Policy*. New York, NY: Vintage.

Brummer, Klaus, Sebastian Harnisch, Kai Oppermann, and Diana Panke, eds. 2019. *Foreign Policy as Public Policy? Promises and Pitfalls* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Busby, Joshua W. 2010. *Moral Movements and Foreign Policy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cairney, Paul, and Michael D. Jones. 2016. "Kingdon's Multiple Streams Approach: What is the Empirical Impact of this Universal Theory?" *Policy Studies Journal* 44 (1): 37–58.

Calder, Kent E. 2014. *Asia in Washington: Exploring the Penumbra of Transnational Power*. Washington, DC: Brookings.

Campbell, Kurt M. 2009a. Confirmation Hearing Statement, 10 June 2009. Accessed March 17, 2021. https://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/CampbellTestimony090610a.pdf.

———. 2009b. Statement Before the Subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs Senate Foreign Relations Committee, September 30. Accessed March 17, 2021. https://2009-2017.state.gov/p/eap/rls/rm/2009/09/130064.htm.

Campbell, Kurt M., and Michael E. O'Hanlon. 2006. *Hard Power: The New Politics of National Security*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Campbell, Kurt M., and James B. Steinberg. 2008. *Difficult Transitions: Foreign Policy Troubles at the Outset of Presidential Power*. Washington, DC: Brookings.

CARTER, RALPH G., AND JAMES M. SCOTT. 2009. *Choosing to Lead: Understanding Foreign Policy Entrepreneurs*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

CHECKEL, JEFFREY T. 1993. "Ideas, Institutions, and the Gorbachev Foreign Policy Revolution." *World Politics* 45 (2): 271–300.

CHOW, JONATHAN, AND LEIF-ERIC EASLEY. 2016. "Persuading Pariahs: Myanmar's Strategic Decision to Pursue Reform and Opening." *Pacific Affairs* 89 (3): 521–42.

CLAPP, PRISCILLA. 2007. *Building Democracy in Burma*. Washington, DC: USIP Working Paper. Accessed March 17, 2021. https://www.usip.org/publications/2007/07/building-democracy-burma.

———. 2010a. Prospects for Rapprochement between the United States and Myanmar. *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 32 (3): 409–26.

———. 2010b. "Burma's Political Transition: Implication for U.S. Policy." In *Ruling Myanmar: From Cyclone Nargis to National Elections*, edited by Nick Cheesman, Monique Skidmore and Trevor Wilson, 32–51. Singapore: ISEAS.

CLINTON, HILLARY R. 2009. "Remarks at Town Hall, Tokyo University." February 17. Accessed September 25, 2020. https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2009a/02/117615.htm.

———. 2014. *Hard Choices*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

COSSA, RALPH A., B. GLOSSERMAN, M. A. MCDEVITT, N. PATEL, J. PRZYSTUP, AND B. ROBERTS. 2009. *The United States and the Asia-Pacific Region: Security Strategy for the Obama Administration, February 2009*. Center for a New American Security.

DAALDER, IVO H. 2000. *Getting to Dayton: The Making of America's Bosnia Policy*. Washington, DC: Brookings.

DAALDER, IVO H., AND J. M. LINDSAY. 2003. *America Unbound: The Bush Revolution in Foreign Policy*. Washington, DC: Brookings.

DEWULF, ART, AND RENÉ BOUWEN. 2012. "Issue Framing in Conversations for Change: Discursive Interaction Strategies for 'Doing Differences'." *The Journal of Applied Behavioural Science* 48 (2): 168–93.

DIMITRIU, GEORGE. 2020. "Clausewitz and the Politics of War: A Contemporary Theory." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 43 (5): 645–85.

DOESER, FREDERIK, AND JOAKIM EIDENFALK. 2013. "The Importance of Windows of Opportunity for Foreign Policy Change." *International Area Studies Review* 16 (4): 390–406.

DUECK, COLIN. 2006. *Reluctant Crusaders: Power, Culture, and Change in American Grand Strategy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

———. 2015. *The Obama Doctrine: American Grand Strategy Today*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

DURANT, ROBERT F., AND PAUL F. DIEHL. 1989. "Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policy: Lessons from the U.S. Foreign Policy Arena." *Journal of Public Policy* 9 (2): 179–205.

FIORI, ANTONIO, AND ANDREA PASSERI. 2015. "Hedging in Search of a New Age of Non-Alignment: Myanmar between China and the USA." *The Pacific Review* 28 (5): 679–702.

GOLDGEIER, JAMES M. 1999. *Not Whether But When: The U.S. Decision to Enlarge NATO*. Washington, DC: Brookings.

GREEN, MICHAEL, AND DEREK J. MITCHELL. 2007. "Asia's Forgotten Crisis: A New Approach to Burma." *Foreign Affairs* 86 (6): 147–58.

GRYGIEL, JAKUB J. 2006. *Great Powers and Geopolitical Change*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

GUSTAVSSON, JAKOB. 1999. "How Should We Study Foreign Policy Change?" *Cooperation and Conflict* 34 (1): 73–95.

HAACKE, JÜRGEN. 2015. "US–Myanmar Relations: Developments, Challenges, and Implications." In *Myanmar: The Dynamic of an Evolving Polity*, edited by David I. Steinberg, 289–318. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.

HERMANN, CHARLES F. 1990. "Changing Course: When Governments Choose to Redirect Foreign Policy." *International Studies Quarterly* 34 (3): 3–21.

HERWEG, NICOLE, CHRISTIAN HUB, AND REIMUT ZOHLNHÖFER. 2015. "Straightening the Three Streams: Theorising Extensions of the Multiple Streams Framework." *European Journal of Political Research* 54: 435–49.

HUDSON, VALERIE M. 2005. "Foreign Policy Analysis: Actor-Specific Theory and the Ground of International Relations. *Foreign Policy Analysis* 1 (1): 1–30.

INTERVIEW 1, 24 March 2016.

INTERVIEW 2, 2 November 2016.

JONES, LEE. 2015. *Societies under Siege: Exploring How International Economic Sanctions (Do Not) Work*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

KEELER, JOHN T.S. 1993. "Opening the Window for Reform: Mandates, Crises, and Extraordinary Policy-Making" *Comparative Political Studies* 25 (4): 433–86.

KINGDON, JOHN. 1995. *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, 2nd ed. New York, NY: HarperCollins.

LANDLER, MARK. 2009. "Clinton Cites Concerns of Arms Aid to Myanmar." *The New York Times*, 21 July. www.nytimes.com/2009/07/22/world/asia/22diplo.html.

Liow, Joseph C. 2017. *Ambivalent Engagement: The United States and Regional Security in Southeast Asia after the Cold War*. Washington, DC: Brookings.

Litwak, Robert S. 2000. *Rogue States and US Foreign Policy: Containment after the Cold War*. Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center.

Marciel, Scot. 2009. "US Policy toward ASEAN, Remarks at the Institute of Security and International Studies." February 26. Accessed March 17, 2021. https://2009-2017.state.gov/p/eap/rls/rm/2009/02/119967.htm.

Martin, Michael F. 2013. *U.S. Policy towards Burma: Issues for the 113th Congress*, CRS Report No. R43035. Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service.

Mazarr, Michael J. 2007. "The Iraq War and Agenda Setting." *Foreign Policy Analysis* 3: 1–23.

Medeiros, Evan S., Keith Crane, Eric Heginbotham, Norman D. Levin, Julia F. Lowell, Angel Rabasa, and Somi Seong. 2008. *Pacific Currents: The Responses of U.S. Allies and Security Partners in East Asia to China's Rise*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND.

Mintrom, Michael. 2015. "Policy Entrepreneurs and Morality Politics: Learning from Failure and Success." In *Entrepreneurship in the Polis: Understanding Political Entrepreneurship*, edited by Inga Narbutaité Aflaki, Evangelia Petridou and Lee Miles, 103–17. Farnham: Ashgate.

Mintrom, Michael, and Joannah Luetjens. 2017. "Policy Entrepreneurs and Problem Framing: The Case of Climate Change." In *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space* 35 (8): 1362–77.

Mintrom, Michael, and Philippa Norman. 2009. "Policy Entrepreneurship and Policy Change." *Policy Studies Journal* 37 (4): 649–67.

Mitchell, Derek J., ed. 2008. *The United States and Southeast Asia: Toward a Strategy for Enhanced Engagement*. Conference Report. Washington, DC: CSIS.

Mullen, Matthew. 2016. *Pathways that Changed Myanmar*. London: Zed Books.

Obama, Barack. 2007. "Renewing American Leadership." *Foreign Affairs*, 86 (4): 2–16.

Pedersen, Morten B. 2008. *Promoting Human Rights in Burma: A critique of Western Sanctions Policy*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Porter, Patrick. 2018. "Why America's Grand Strategy Has Not Changed: Power, Habit, and the U.S. Foreign Policy Establishment." *International Security* 42 (4): 9–46.

Refugees International. 2008. Burma: Building Upon Success, 5 September 2008. Accessed May 4, 2021. www.refworld.org/docid/48d223102.html.

Rice, Condoleeza. 2005. "Opening Statement, Senate Confirmation Hearing." January 18. Accessed March 17, 2021. www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/RiceTestimony0501181.pdf.

Roberts, Nancy C., and P. J. King.1991. "Policy Entrepreneurs: Their Activity Structure and Function in the Policy Process." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 1 (2): 147–75.

Rogin, Josh. 2009. "Webb Fires Back at Critics to Burmese Outreach." *Foreign Policy: The Cable*, September 18. Accessed May14, 2016. www://foreignpolicy.com/2009/09/18/webb-fires-back-at-critics-of-his-Burmese-outreach/.

Ruzza, Stefano, Giuseppe Gabusi, and Davide Pellegrino. 2019. "Authoritarian Resilience through Top-Down Transformation: Making Sense of Myanmar's Incomplete Transition." *Italian Political Science Review* 49 (2): 193–209.

Sabatier, Paul A., and H. Jenkins-Smith. 1993. *Policy Change and Learning: An Advocacy Coalition Approach*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Scott, James M. 1996. *Deciding to Intervene: The Reagan Doctrine and American Foreign Policy*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Silove, Nina. 2018. "Beyond the Buzzword: The Three Meanings of 'Grand Strategy'." *Security Studies* 27 (1): 27–57.

Smith, Tony 2012. *America's Mission: The United States and the Worldwide Struggle for Democracy* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Steinberg, David I. 2010. "Aung San Suu Kyi and U.S. Policy toward Burma/Myanmar." *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Studies* 29 (3): 35–59.

Taylor, Robert H. 2012. "Myanmar: From Army Rule to Constitutional Rule?" *Asian Affairs* 43 (2): 221–36.

Thies, Cameron G. 2018. "Policy Entrepreneurs and Foreign Policy Decision Making." In *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Foreign Policy Analysis*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Online.

Travis, Rick, and Nikolaos Zahariadis. 2002. "A multiple streams model of U.S. foreign aid policy." *Policy Studies Journal* 30 (4): 495–514.

Trubowitz, Peter. 2011. *Politics and Strategy: Partisan Ambition and American Statecraft*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Tsebelis, George. 2002. *Veto Players: How Political Institutions Work*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

U.S. Department of State. 2009a. "Secretary Clinton's April 27, 2009 Conversation with Singaporean Foreign Minister George Yeo, 29 April." Unclassified: Case No. F-2014-22125 Doc No C05761970, 11 August 2016.

———. 2009b. "Burma: Senator Webb's Meeting with Prime Minister Thein Sein, 16 August." Unclassified: Case No F-2014-22125 Doc No C05762089, 11 August 2016.
———. 2009c. "Burma: MOFA Contact on Webb Visit and the GOB's UNGA Delegation, 25 August." Unclassified: Case No F-2014-22125, Doc No C05762095, 11 August 2016.
US SENATE. 2007. Burma's Saffron Revolution, Hearing before the Subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs, 3 October 2007, S. Hrg. 110–505.
———. 2009a. S. Res. 160. Congressional Record 155, No. 79, 21 May. S5877.
———. 2009b. National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010, Congressional Record 155, No. 106, Senate-15 July. S7527–S7530.
———. 2009c. Renewal of the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act, Congressional Record 155, No. 112, Senate-23 Jul. S8061.
WEBB, JIM. 2009. "We Can't Afford to Ignore Myanmar." *The New York Times*, 25 August.
———. 2012. "Remarks at the Myanmar Conference@CSIS." September 25. Accessed March 17, 2021. https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/event/120928_Myanmar-WEBB_SPEECH%20_0.pdf.
WEIBLE, CHRISTOPHER M., AND TANYA HEIKKILA. 2017. "Policy Conflict Framework." *Policy Sciences* 50: 23–40.
YE HTUT, 2019. *Myanmar's Political Transition and Lost Opportunities (2010–2016)*. Singapore: ISEAS.
ZAHARIADIS, NIKOLAOS. 2003. *Ambiguity & Choice in Public Policy: Political Decision Making in Modern Democracies*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.
———. 2005. *Essence of Political Manipulation: Emotion, Institutions & Greek Foreign Policy*. New York: Peter Lang.
———. 2015. "Ambiguity and Multiple Streams." In *Theories of the Policy Process*, 3rd ed., edited by Paul A. Sabatier and Christopher M. Weible, 25–58. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
ZOHLNHÖFER, REIMUT, AND FRIEDBERT W. RÜB, eds. 2016. *Decision-Making under Ambiguity and Time Constraints: Assessing the Multiple-Streams Framework*. Colchester: ECPR Press.