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Role Strain in Foreign Policy: Analyzing the Carter Doctrine

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Abstract

This study employs role theory to examine the complexities of foreign policy decision-making, focusing on the Carter Doctrine as a case study in United States (US) hegemony and great power dynamics. By analyzing the historical precedents, geopolitical shifts, and domestic political pressures, the concept of role strain, the conditions that led to it and its implications for US foreign policy are investigated. We uncover the tensions between promoting liberal internationalism and prioritizing domestic concerns within the context of the Carter Doctrine. Our findings underscore the nuanced interplay between hegemonic aspirations and pragmatic political imperatives, shedding light on the challenges of balancing competing role expectations in foreign policy decision-making. In essence, this interplay brings together conflict, overload, ambiguity and lack of influence, rendering the existing inter-status conflict unmanageable.

Keywords: Foreign policy analysis, Role theory, Hegemony, Great Power Politics, Domestic vs. International Interests

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Introduction

During the Syrian Civil War, the Obama administration felt a strong moral imperative to intervene in Syria, to prevent mass atrocities and support the democratic aspirations, consistent with its liberal internationalist values. However, there was also significant domestic opposition to another military intervention in the Middle East, supported by economic priorities which were focused on post-recession recovery. The ultimate decision was to pursue a diplomatic solution with Russia, and to force a dismantling of Syria's chemical weapons instead of direct military intervention. Alternatively, while there was a hegemonic ambition, such as the promotion of democracy, underpinning the 2003 Iraq War, the backdrop shaped by the events of 9/11 cannot be overlooked. Although

the rhetoric surrounding the war may have been hegemonic, President Bush's widely broadcast statement at the time calling for a "war on terror" more accurately reflected the interests of the nation-state he led. How did the conflict arising from the dual status of hegemon and great power manifest itself as an apparent strain within the decision-making mechanism? To accurately analyze this situation, it is essential to employ a role strain framework which both elucidates this process and interprets decisions made within the realm of foreign policy. Such a framework should thoroughly examine the dynamics both between and within foreign and domestic politics.

While the conflicting major roles of hegemonic power, with its global concerns, and great power, focused on pursuing national interests, are inherently at odds with each other, they may not always result in overt role strain. In this study, we aim to apply role theory to analyze the Carter Doctrine — a pivotal moment in United States (US) foreign policy history. By examining how role strain is manifested within the context of the Carter Doctrine, we seek to illuminate the intricate dynamics of US hegemony, and the challenges faced by policymakers in balancing domestic and international demands. Through a comprehensive analysis of historical documents, scholarly literature, and theoretical frameworks, we endeavor to deepen our understanding of the forces shaping global politics, and offer insights into decision-making in the vertically contested realm of domestic politics. The primary roles a nation plays in its foreign policy, their location on a time scale, the present-day context, the internal power struggles among domestic elites aiming for efficacy in foreign policy, and the president's role in navigating these dynamics should be considered.

Our findings highlight the strain on policymakers, as they navigate conflicting international and domestic demands, often prioritizing external ramifications over internal considerations. This tension manifests itself in the Carter Doctrine's evolution from a promotion of international cohesion to a more coercive approach, aimed at preserving great power status. Our study's primary contribution lies in uncovering the role strain inherent in the doctrine, and exploring how it affected the horizontal dynamics between the US and the Soviet Union, as well as its vertical interactions within international and domestic arenas. Two key factors, which are listed according to both their order of importance and their chronological sequence, contribute to the administration's experience of role strain: firstly, the jeopardy faced by components essential for hegemony, such as oil availability, economic stability, and military security; and secondly, the overlapping roles of the administration, which must balance a representation of liberal internationalism with the imperative of political survival. Role strain, inherent to actors juggling multiple roles (in this instance, hegemony versus great power status), arises from their intersection, and escalates to a point of visibility and unmanageability. Strategies akin to external maneuvers (such as foreign economic aid provision) that overlook domestic policy dynamics are rendered unfeasible in this scenario, leading to decisions divergent from the initial intent.

In the first phase of our investigation, we will delve into an exploration of role theory and its implications within foreign policy literature. Subsequently, we will frame the concept of role strain and its manifestation within the foreign policy framework. Specifically, this section will elucidate the role strain encountered by hegemonic powers, a focal point of our

study. Following this, empirical evidence from the Carter Doctrine will be analyzed, to align with the theoretical constructs discussed earlier.

Role Theory in Foreign Policy

According to role theory, individuals' behaviors are not independent of their environment and the time period they are in. There is *status(es)* rather than a fixed position and *enacting* a role rather than occupying it (Holsti 1970). Status is "a location in the social structure defined by expectations for performance by an incumbent.... The status dimension is correlated with legitimate power and social esteem" (Sarbin and Allen 1968: 551-552). Having more than one status and performing a role occurs by being in a social organization (Elgström and Smith 2006; Thies 2010). Here the ego has a grasp of itself or its social position along with others' (alterable) position(s) and expectations. The way in which the ego perceives its own position, responsibilities, and the behaviors suitable for itself are role expectations (Walker 1979). There are two important concepts to consider here: *role cues* are actions taken by others in a situation that either support or hinder the behavior associated with a role chosen by an actor, whereas *role demands* are extra aspects of the situation, like the audience composition, that impact on an actor's choice and performance of a role.

The use of role theory in foreign policy analysis (FPA), that is, the international system, is viewed as a societal framework in which every nation is assigned specific social positions or national roles (Wish 1980). Foreign policy behaviors of governments (e.g., attitudes, decisions, responses, functions and commitments) constitute national role performance, which can also be called role enactment. This behavioral element, which is a dependent variable, has a constitutive impact; more performed roles mean that the actor has higher social capacity in that group (Mead 1934). When a role is selected, how well it is performed is determined by (1) the number of roles, (2) the effort expended upon a role, and (3) the time spent in one role in comparison to other possible roles (Sarbin and Allen 1968: 491-497).

Both ideational factors such as prevailing norms, history, beliefs, preferences, religion and cultures, and material conditions such as the country's age, size, location, economic condition, alliances, and its resulting relative power in the international system are factors that should be taken into account to determine national role conception and role enactment (Breuning 2011; Akbaba and Özdamar 2019). These factors exist not only in terms of the international system, the top level (level 3), but also at the domestic or state level (level 2), and are also substantive for individual decision-makers (level 1) (Below 2015: 20). Here, the inclinations of the decision-makers themselves, decision-makers' understandings of both tangible and intangible frameworks, and the inclinations and understandings of others matter. Role theory moves across the different levels of analysis (Kaarbo and Cantir 2013: 467).

While highlighting the interaction between agency and structure, this theory operates within the premise that identity serves as a constraining factor on agency (Breuning 2011; Wehner and Thies 2014). However, identity is constantly formed. Without action, identity cannot be decisive (McCourt 2011; Wehner and Thies 2014). Social identity is the process

itself that starts with role location[1] and ends with role enactment (Sarbin and Allen 1968: 514). Both Waltz's neorealism and Wendt's constructivism have a static structure that excludes time factors, as they define the structure in this way. However, "roles and identities are co-constituted" in an intersubjective sense (Nabers 2011: 82). "A self always needs the other in order to construct a role" (Thies and Wehner 2019: 719). As much as the international system is anarchic, the interaction of roles within this system may occur hierarchically. Under hegemonic conditions, this type of hierarchical structure can occur as reducing the hegemon's costs and efforts (Ikenberry and Kupchan 1990: 292-293). This study distinguishes between great power and hegemony as major roles or status.

With the interpretation of hegemony as a much broader area of influence with leadership, a distinction emerges between the hegemonic role and the great power role. "Some national roles are clearly not economic, political, military, or ideological. They seem to focus on universal values, such as defending or promoting justice, peace, or racial harmony" (Wish 1980: 539). When examining US hegemony, Cronin (2001) calls these two different roles "the paradox of hegemony". Maull (2011: 169), who analyzes this issue with a more recent and more appropriate perspective of role theory, finds the following characteristics in the US's core norms of role conception: "America as leader… America as a pragmatically internationalist power in global order… America as an ego-centric maximizer of national interest… America as enforcer…. America as democratizer". Thies (2013a), who does not focus on the framework of hegemony in his work examining the evolution of the foreign policy doctrines of US Presidents in the Cold War, states that the roles of bloc leader, liberation supporter, and defender of the faith adopted by the Truman doctrine prior to the bipolar distribution of capabilities, were reflected during the Cold War. Being a great power or a hegemon are different statuses or constitute major roles (i.e., overarching) that they accepted, but in addition to these, there are also auxiliary roles (i.e., embedded inside) that are expected and shaped by others (Thies 2013b; Wehner 2015).

In this study, the role strain between the hegemony and great power roles of the US in the Carter Doctrine will be revealed. Therefore, we should first examine the negative effects that may arise from assuming multiple roles and how role strain occurs. Subsequently, it should be demonstrated how this dynamic can impact on the functioning of hegemony the versus great powers in FPA. This also requires analysis of how role strain arises. This study aims to look at dynamics which lie beyond systemic pressures and affect state leaders, unlike Cronin's study (2001: 109, footnote 20), which does not comply with role theory.

Role Strain

Difficulty in fulfilling role obligations is known as role strain (Goode 1960: 483). In fact, role strain is an inevitable situation for actors with multiple roles[2], as each role has its own organizational goals, norms and values (Marks 1977: 923). Actors with more than one obligation

1 Role location is the dynamic process where individuals actively select or find roles that align with their capabilities, preferences, and the demands of the situation, during social interactions.

2 Multiple roles are different from role sets, in which role and counter-role are congruent.

make selections between different role behaviors, while trying to reduce role strain in their role relationships, in which these selections are an ongoing process. "Role strain occurs at the level of rationality (purposefulness) when role demands frustrate Ego's goal of enactment of a single role" (Walker 2011: 277). The one who is more responsible for this relationship (supervisory responsibility) experiences it more (Snoek 1966). However, role strain is fundamentally based not only on excessive role demands, but also on the individual's commitment to their social roles (Marks 1977). Factors that create a contradictory role in any situation are: the social actor's norm commitment (some roles have much greater salience for the actor than others), the estimate of reward or punishment by the role partners, and the estimate of the reactions of a third party or an audience (Sarbin and Allen 1968: 539).

For Snoek (1966: 370-371), this difficulty occurs or is reflected in four ways: through *conflicts*, which are incompatible expectations from two or more role senders; *overload*, which is a condition where all demands exceed total capacity; *ambiguity*, where individuals lack clear or well-defined expectations regarding their responsibilities, tasks, or behaviors within a particular role; and *exerting influence without legitimate authority*, which occurs in relationships in which there is no provision for the exercise of legitimate authority. As a result of these states, the unbearable expectations and obligations cause the existing strain - which is natural for actors with multiple roles - to become visible. Thus, role strain is different from these conditions, but it is not discrete. There is an interplay between them. Although this sense of unbearability is a perceptual sensation, its trigger is material incapability, which can emerge within the evolutionary process, and/or can be caused by exogenous shock(s).

This can be reduced with two techniques (Goode 1960: 486-489); (1) "determining whether or when the role occupant will enter or leave a role relationship" and (2) "proceeding with the actual role bargain which the individual makes or carries out with another". For the first one, the individual can ignore the inconsistency in the situation they are in (*compartmentalization*); can *delegate* the role to someone else; can *eliminate role relationships*; can *extend* his role connections to justify commitments as a rationale for not meeting certain responsibilities (*extension*); can be *expanding their role system* and thereby diminishing the level of required performance for any one of their obligations. The latter entails a shift/modification in auxiliary roles, whereas the former involves a choice between primary roles. In the latter, the existing role strain persists to some extent, whereas the problem is completely resolved by abstaining from enacting any ego role in the former. In other words, the situation in which role strain is perceived/becomes unmanageable is related to the inability to fulfill the requirements of major roles.

Therefore, role conflicts can occur between major roles or with a major role's own auxiliary role/function (Evan 1962). "In a society as a whole, status occupants tend to develop a commitment to subunit goals and tasks"; however, these commitments may not always comply with the goals and demands of the entire organization (Evan 1962: 346). When an auxiliary role is inconsistent with a major role, there will be pressure to abandon the former (Thies 2013b). However, to reduce strain, auxiliary ones can also be modified and they "may persist over long periods of time and become institutionalized, despite their incompatibility with central roles" (Breuning and Pechenina 2020: 24). These methods may change the cause

of existing strain in a given state, but new strains are possible in the future. Considering that both dominance and context play crucial roles in multiple tasks, it is essential to also recognize the variability of external contexts as a factor to be considered (Busch 2023).

From here, we can move on to discussion of how well a state's foreign policy decisions comply with the international community or what its commitment constitutes. If role expectations are interpreted only as an external source, that would be a structuralist approach that ignores the domestic sphere. Not only the role of the state in the international system but also the influential elements of domestic politics (societal actors and state elites) are effective on decision-makers. Society has tangible (political and economic) and intangible (ideological and ideational) demands. In the absence of overwhelming domestic consideration, decision-makers can easily ignore domestic demands (as a method of resolving role strain) and focus on a policy that responds to a more global definition of the state's role in using the strain reduction techniques mentioned above.

Role strain, which becomes unbearable under changing conditions, creates ambiguity in the decision-making mechanism for leaders. Especially in such situations, decision-makers' choices are not healthy, because even though they think they are interpreting the situation objectively, their mental shortcuts and biases can lead them to irrational conclusions, as human beings (Kahneman and Tversky 1979). Decision-makers are more risk-averse in the domain of losses and more risk-acceptant in the domain of gains (McDermott 2004). This is observed in foreign policy decision-makers straining between domestic role contestation and international role engagement in a condition where there is a lack of legitimacy.

There are some other studies focusing on the conflicting role conceptions in FPA (Özdamar, Halistoprak and Sula 2014). Barnett (1993) shows us the clash between the two prevailing roles imposed on those states: as sovereign states and within pan-Arabism, whereas Tewes (1998) explores Germany's interrole conflict, balancing its role as a catalyst for deeper integration among existing EU members, while advocating for the expansion of EU membership. In studies that touch on the distinction between vertical and horizontal role contestations, it is emphasized that the acceptance of unitary national role conceptions is wrong (Cantir and Kaarbo 2012; Özdamar 2016). "More leaders than citizens tend to be 'internationalists' at least in the simple sense that they say they favor the United States taking an 'active' part in world affairs" in vertical contestation (Page and Barabas 2000: 344), whereas the lack of consensus among decision-makers on what the role of the state should be is a matter of horizontal role contestation.

For a study aiming to analyze the role strain experienced by US hegemony and the great powers, it is essential to define what these terms represent and how they operate. Hegemony involves a unique set of challenges, as the hegemon must balance the demands of global leadership and stability with the expectations and pressures from other states and the international community. By examining the specific roles and behaviors that define hegemonic power, we can better understand the sources and implications of role strain for the hegemon. This analysis will set the stage for a detailed exploration of how the US has navigated these complexities in its foreign policy, particularly in the context of the Carter Doctrine.

Role Strain for Hegemon

Gilpin's (1981) definition of hegemony is the control or domination of one state over others. Similarly, in Nye's work (1990: 185-186) there is an emphasis on the powerful controlling the others in unequal power relations. This emphasis on control is identified with aggressive military power (Doran 1971: 70) or economic power (Keohane 1984: 32). There is also a distinction made between political/military hegemony and economic hegemony (Goldstein 1988: 281). Wallerstein's (1984: 87) definition of hegemony is wider as the imposition of hegemony by one power "its rules and its wishes... in the economic, political, military, diplomatic, and even cultural arena". The necessity of intangible points as well as tangible points is also discussed. Cox (1981) bases his definition, similar to this, on the Gramscian notion of hegemony, that is emphasizing ideas and consent in addition to material capabilities. Achieving cultural and ideological influence is achieved through institutions, and the use of military force only takes a backseat in this influence. This hegemon "is enough to ensure conformity of behavior in most people most of the time" (Cox 1983: 164). In achieving and maintaining this, cohesion creation is at least as important as coercion, which is achieved through leadership. If such a distinction is not made, hegemony and imperialism would be much more difficult to distinguish from each other, as observed in Gilpin's work (1981: 29).

While the definition of hegemony may vary, two points are commonly agreed upon: firstly, the most powerful state in the system establishes rules that others adhere to, and secondly, it identifies itself with this system. For instance, following World War II, the US emerged as the dominant hegemonic world power, presiding over a relatively stable and expanding democratic order (Ikenberry 1990: 123). What other states expect from the hegemon who identifies with the system is to provide collective goods. This is achieved through institutions that have recognized roles, generally accepted practices and designated norms (Keohane, 1988). Institutions reflect what the hegemon represents. Whether or not to be a part of it is a major variable in defining your role within the system (e.g., NATO vs. Warsaw Pact).

Therefore, the hegemon's role involves not only dominating the international landscape but also providing leadership and stability, often acting as the primary architect of global institutions and norms. In contrast, great powers, though highly influential, operate within a system where no single state can unilaterally dictate terms (DiCicco and Onea 2023). Great powers maintain significant regional influence and contribute to the global order, but their roles are more collaborative and competitive, sharing responsibilities and influence with other great powers. The distinction between hegemon and great power roles extends to their auxiliary roles, which are shaped by the expectations of other states and the international community. For example, while a great power may be expected to assume a helper role in regional affairs, it is not necessarily identified as a hegemon with global dominance.

The auxiliary roles do not singularly dictate global norms and institutions; rather, they also engage in a dynamic interplay with other states and actors. The auxiliary roles of a hegemon are comprehensive and global in scope. These roles collectively reinforce the hegemon's status by promoting and institutionalizing its values and norms worldwide. These might be those encompassing military protection, economic leadership and stabilization, promotion of ideologies and culture, and innovation on a systemic scale. For example, during the Cold War,

the US not only served as a military protector and economic leader but also actively promoted democratic values and cultural trends, thereby shaping global institutions and norms. The behavioral implications include providing global security guarantees/preventing any challenge to hegemony, setting economic standards, and spreading cultural and ideological norms (Cox 1983).

Conversely, the auxiliary roles of great powers tend to be more specific and regionally focused. They are the roles to be followed in any effort to gain supreme power and status in a system or regional subsystem and, if necessary, at the expense of others (DiCicco and Onea, 2023). While they may see them act as economic expansionists, regional security providers, and diplomatic mediators, their influence is often more localized and less encompassing than that of a hegemon. For instance, Russia's "great power status is closely tied to its ability to control both the energy resources and pipelines of Central Asia and the Caucasus" as stated in Layne's (2009: 153) review of the National Intelligence Council's report on "Global Trends 2025: A Transformed World". Behavioral implications may involve securing regional dominance, engaging in diplomatic negotiations, and promoting cultural ties within their region.

In the process of role change, becoming a hegemon as the next stage of being a great power do not preclude the latter entirely. Even with the establishment of global concerns and objectives, it remains undeniable that the latter serves as the representative and decision-maker of a particular nation. The hegemon experiences great power status due to their military capabilities, which have been demonstrated in the past and can potentially be used at any time. Were the use of force to occur, however, the expectations and commitments of others would change, as this relies on others' consensus and collusion (Cox, 1983). While the hegemon who determines the rules and institutions introduces them as embodying the system itself, it plays an inclusive role whenever possible, but if it adopts the approach of protecting the greater power and greatest capabilities that enabled it to evolve into this role, it becomes exclusionary, not inclusive. Cronin (2001: 113) correctly interprets this as an oscillation between unilateralism and multilateralism: "while a hegemon may in the abstract support such principles as free trade and non-aggression, they also may find that in particular circumstances these principles are not consistent with their immediate preferences".

However, the aspect which we see differently from Cronin is that what constitutes dual logic here is that the domestic factors which shape the role conception (e.g. popular opinion, historical memory, norms, values, and elites) might lead to visible strain under certain conditions. Decision-makers lose their determination regarding their purposefulness in times of crisis and make irrational decisions. Those who can normally resolve the role strain, change the definition seen in their profit-loss perceptions in cases where the strain cannot be overcome. To explain it through findings from social psychology: when the leaders of a hegemony, inherently based on the conflict of two major roles, cannot clarify or secure their own positions in domestic politics and vertical contestation, the existing strain becomes unmanageable. Conflict, overload, ambiguity, and influencing incapacity are all important factors contributing to the formation of role strain, but they are not sufficient on their own. Just as the great powers that enable the establishment of global hegemony are nourished by power and unitarity in tangible and intangible areas, the dissolution of hegemony will leave

decision-makers with no direction as to which role they will adopt. This study discusses how the roles of America as a hegemon and America as a great power emerged as a strain reflection in the Carter Doctrine.

Hegemon vs. Great Power: Carter Doctrine

The Carter Doctrine, in terms of the context in which it emerged, is the embodiment of the administration acting as a *great power*, which came to power with ideas of the reconstruction of the *hegemony* of the US, which was at that time in hegemonic decline. Two factors were effective in the administration's experience of this strain; (1) The great sense of powerfulness (in terms of oil, economic and military security) that is one of the components of creating hegemony was in danger, (*role conflicts*) (2) The *overlap*, which leads to *overload*, between the role of the administration representing liberal internationalism and the role of being the protagonists as politicians trying to stay in power. While hegemony, which by its very nature always carries role strain due to conflicts between major roles, is in decline, external crises have mobilized all fault lines against the state leader, thus creating *ambiguity* and undermining *legitimate authority*. Overlapping firstly serves as an outcome and subsequently acts as a trigger of this process.

In his State of the Union Address on January 23, 1980, US President Jimmy Carter (1977-1981) declared that the US would employ military force against any country that attempted to gain control of the Persian Gulf region. The contents of the speech addressed 3 main challenges:

> "the steady growth and increased projection of Soviet military power beyond its own borders; the overwhelming dependence of the Western democracies on oil supplies from the Middle East; and the press of social and religious and economic and political change in the many nations of the developing world, exemplified by the revolution in Iran" (Carter 1980).

When examining these points highlighted by Carter, it is crucial not to overlook the significant events of 1979. The Iranian Revolution resulted in the ousting of the Shah in February and the occupation of the US embassy in November. Simultaneously, a messianic-vigilante faction, advocating for the revitalization of Islam, seized control of the Grand Mosque in Mecca. Furthermore, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in December. The Persian Gulf region had gained immense importance, with President Carter stating that "an attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be considered as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America" due to the region's possession of "more than two-thirds of the world's exportable oil" (Carter 1980). The US hegemony/leadership role of exporting global harmony and common understanding was clearly damaged. The military protector role promised by US hegemony could only be realized if it provided security as a great power. "Either external or domestic events, or a combination of the two, can prompt the increased visibility of an auxiliary role, which will expose its incompatibility with the state's master role" (Breuning and Pechenina 2020: 25). However, what makes this case unique is that the hegemon had not just one major role, and therefore had two different sets of auxiliary roles at the same time.

The commitment to the symbol of US prestige and the determinant of American capabilities (e.g. the Truman Doctrine) had switched to the opposite stance to what had been observed since World War II (Leffler 1983). The roles of defender of the faith and supporter of liberation were replaced by a much more limited objective, oil (Thies 2013a), because US national security was closely identified with access to Middle Eastern oil. The reason behind this was that the American economy had been strongly affected by the 1973 Arab oil embargo and the 1979 oil shock. Due to oil's connection with the macroeconomy, inflation in the US increased by almost 10% after the embargo, and purchasing power resultingly decreased by an average of 9% (Beaubouef 2007: 17-18). Thus, as two major roles became conflicting and experienced overlap, the two different sets of auxiliary roles (i.e., the systemic prestige of the US, providing global military protection vs. the relatively stronger energy and economic security role, as regional security provider) also created an overload.

However, dependency on foreign oil is not only an economic and political issue for the US, but also retains a social and identity value. There is a "myth of energy dependence" (Luft and Korin 2013). Cars running on internal combustion engines are an important issue for US citizens. Oil affects America's fundamental lifestyle, because the automobile is not just a means of transportation (Zaretsky 2007). Production methods changed with the advent of oil: cars running on oil provide the autonomous power of citizens (especially the middle class); and a new life pattern has emerged. There is a "hydrocarbon society" reality (Herbstreuth 2016: 79). Despite the Persian Gulf accounting for a relatively small portion (2,049 thousand barrels per day [mb/d]) of the US's total oil imports in 1979 (6,519 mb/d) (EIA 2024), the combined impact of the oil embargo, the Watergate scandal, and the Vietnam War raised questions about the decline of American power (Herbstreuth 2016: 83).

Although the US dependence on Persian Gulf oil was not excessive, the Trilateral Commission's other two complements, Japan and Europe, which are US allies, were extremely dependent on oil from the region. While much more international diplomatic activism was promised for the reconstruction of *hegemony*, it was considered preferable to save the hegemon's allies by promising more military activism, because the domestic constraints were also unmanageable. The inclination of decision-makers and expectations of others (US allies and the domestic audience) had become three different realities. This situation met all the conditions in terms of the context that lead to the occurrence of role strain: difference in committed norms, estimate of punishment and reactions of third party/audience. There were attempts at further expectations being met for less punishment, seen as risk-averse behavior to avoid ambiguity. Adopting the auxiliary role of protecting the free trade market as a hegemon also provided practical and direct benefits to Carter in domestic politics.

Similar to every new administration following a change in political tenure, the Carter administration approached the foreign policy challenges inherited from the previous administration in contrasting fashion to the policies of its predecessor, namely the Nixon-Kissinger administration (Osgood 1981). Instead of the Kissinger approach, which centered on US-Soviet equilibrium, a much more internationalist liberal stance came into being in an attempt to restore US prestige in the post-Vietnam era. Indeed, the initial commitments were

fulfilled: there were reductions in Pentagon spending and a distancing from support for Third World dictators. The administration's early years reflected Carter's stated post-Cold War vision before coming to power (Rosati 1994).

This approach, which took into account economic and social dynamics rather than political and military competition, was compatible with the principles of the Trilateral Commission, of which Carter was a member and some of whose members he took into his administration (Zbigniew Brzezinski - Carter's National Security Adviser, Cyrus Vance - Carter's Secretary of State), prioritizing the interests of transnational finance capital. The Trilateral Commission, which can be interpreted as an attempt at reconstruction of US hegemony in the political economic sphere (Cox 1983: 171), encountered the above-mentioned Cold War realities, especially in 1979. Later, the foreign policy of the Carter period was transformed in a different direction, embodied in the Carter Doctrine. "The assertion of the Carter Doctrine allegedly embodied the transformation of the Carter Administration's foreign policy stand" (da Vinha 2017: 3).

To implement the Carter Doctrine, the rapid deployment joint task force (RDJTF) was deployed and a permanent US naval presence was established in the Gulf Region. This was a product of Carter's changing policy, and he said in 1977, "we can no longer expect that the other 150 nations will follow the dictates of the powerful..." (Skidmore 1989: 37). The military budget, which was reduced in the first two years of the Carter administration, was increased by much more than it was reduced in the last two years of the administration (Skidmore 1989: 179-180). Although there was no initial desire for direct confrontation with the Soviets, the focus shifted to resisting Soviet expansion; while there was once more an effort made to disengage from Third World political dynamics, Middle East security and stability was now closely linked to US security. The Carter government, which came to power in already changing conditions in terms of the power of hegemony, experienced the changing Ego's position through the strain that took place. Cues of the hegemonic position remained present in the overwhelming demands both internally and externally. Not the nation-state per se but the administration itself was concerned with establishing legitimate authority in the absence of such.

However, the political elites of the period cannot be isolated from involvement in this process. The Camp David Accords, moves toward majority rule in Zimbabwe, the Panama Canal Treaty and SALT II processes showed that the pressure on the administration was high on issues that required Congressional involvement. Skidmore (1989; 1996) examines the political battles of this period through the competition and disagreement between Conservative Internationalists (abiding the tenets of the Cold War paradigm), Liberal Internationalists (beginning to formulate an alternative set of rationales on détente, and the Third World) and Non-internationalists (with less interest in international involvement). The developments in 1979 were such that they strengthened the hand of Conservative Internationalists in domestic politics, because American public opinion could easily be influenced by the dealings with the Soviet Union, Iran and fears for energy security (Skidmore 1989: 245-250). In the case of Iran, which may be considered the least influential of them all, "the hostage crisis in Iran was one of the most reported events in the United States since the Vietnam War" (Palmerton 1988: 108). There was uncertainty over the national role performance.

Leading opposition groups such as The Committee on the Present Danger (CPD) and the American Security Council (ASC) continued their heavy campaigning and lobbying against SALT II (Skidmore 1989; da Vinha 2017). These developments even strengthened some Democrats (e.g., the Coalition for a Democratic Majority) in the administration, who followed a far from liberal foreign policy approach. The debates about what kind of *hegemon* or what kind of *great power* they wished to be essentially reflected a debate within the US political elites themselves. The initial challenges faced by the Administration made it challenging for Carter to adhere to his own principles and those advocated by liberal internationalists within his circle. These ideas had not yet been fully embraced as fundamental values, even within his own political party. If there was vertical harmony on this issue, domestic constraints could be sacrificed and hegemonic efforts could be continued, but the strain was so high that domestic pressure determined the final policy. Thus, in resolving the strain, pragmatism against the status was also given importance, but this was determined by the existence of vertical contestation in addition to horizontal.

Therefore, during the emergence of the Carter Doctrine, material and ideological conditions, external events and domestic constraints, the ideology of the group from which the President emerged, and the wishes of the opposition party triggered each other. As a result, the Carter Doctrine had a responsive character. Carter, who came to power with the emphasis on the aim to "ease the strains brought about by selective American retrenchment from costly commitments abroad" accompanied by renewed diplomatic activism (Skidmore 1989: 155-156), moved to ease the strains on himself during the subsequent developments of 1979. While the US itself did not overly rely on Persian Gulf oil, the dependence of American allies like Japan and Europe on this region, coupled with the hegemonic US inclination to safeguard them and make commitments involving military intervention, reflects not a *hegemonic* stance but rather *a great power* attitude. The main reason why the hegemonic role means that leaders resort to such an auxiliary attitude is not because of the key importance of the function in itself, but because it is a reflection of the unclear path caused by conflictual major roles. While attempting to act hegemonically, a decision was made as though coming from a great power because its status as a great power was at risk. The instinct to compensate for the hegemonic decline, more frequently discussed after Vietnam and Iran, played a role in this. Additionally, there was also an effort to resolve the strains on the administration itself, whose ideas when it came to power did not correspond with public opinion.

When role strain became unmanageable, and the role occupant was unable to determine what kind of role relationship to follow, it was decided to proceed with the second solution for managing role strain: carrying out the actual role bargain. This was achieved by further prioritizing the auxiliary roles of the great powers in military, economic, and ideological terms. This is a behavior compatible with strain allocation (Goode 1960: 488). The existing role structure is not directly destroyed but is manipulated to reduce the strain.

Conclusion

This research illustrates how the role-based theoretical framework can have elucidated the Carter Doctrine, reflecting shifts in a government's foreign policy stance. Central to this demonstration is the concept of role strain, a relatively underexplored aspect of role theory.

By applying role strain to the Carter Doctrine, the study illustrates how the US roles as both a hegemon and great power, along with changing circumstances, influence the balance between international and domestic demands. This analysis highlights the strain placed on policymakers, and demonstrates how crises can obscure decision-making cues, leading to a prioritization of other's (US allies and rival domestic foreign policy groups) ramifications over egos. Consequently, the traditional role of a hegemon promoting international cohesion has shifted toward a more coercive approach, driven by a decision-making process focused on preserving great power status. The role strain, which would have dissipated had any status been relinquished, prompted the creation of the Carter Doctrine in an attempt to uphold both.

This study's primary contribution to the literature lies in elucidating the role strain inherent in the Carter Doctrine, shedding light on its intricate internal and external dynamics. It explores not only the horizontal dynamics between the US and the Soviet Union but also the vertical interactions within the international and domestic arenas, encompassing the relationships between US hegemony, its allies, the administration, foreign policy elites, and the domestic audience. Given the variability of these interactions and their influence on identity and the international structure, predicting the actions of an incoming government becomes challenging. Decision-makers, burdened with multiple roles, struggle to discern both personal and national positions clearly. The Carter Doctrine's emphasis on using military force for assisting US allies and providing security reflects both hegemonic inclusivity and great power exclusivity, embodying a paradox that mirrors the strain inherent in such roles. By highlighting this paradox, the study offers a fresh theoretical perspective on the Carter Doctrine, revealing it as both a reflection of and a reinforcement for the US's wavering leadership.

If only structural constraints (i.e., neorealism), or only identity decisiveness (i.e., constructivism), or only changing conditions over time (i.e., neoliberalism) were taken into account in the analysis of the Carter Doctrine, these would be insufficient. This study offers a much more comprehensive perspective in terms of showing the increasing power of domestic pressure groups, the identity bond of society with oil, and the motivation to use military force when required. It is necessary to emphasize the following: that intangible goods also change, just as tangible goods do. For example, in a context where electric vehicles dominate the market, oil's symbolic significance may not be such a strong variable for the US audience. Moreover, the formation of the hydrocarbon society is not a topic that can be considered separately from the great power of the US. The fact that a country that was once rich in energy and economy rather than experiencing energy poverty and suddenly becomes weak, shows this identity. While a constructivist approach may appear internally consistent in explaining the Carter Doctrine, the role strain mechanism proposed in this study offers a more broadly applicable framework, given the emphasized dynamics. Moreover, considerations of identity should extend beyond citizens to include the decision-makers themselves. The president, a member of The Trilateral Commission, introduced a doctrine contradicting the Commission's emphasis on interdependency, aiming to solidify and extend US hegemony. This underscores the need to consider both societal and institutional influences on decision-making processes.

It is clearly seen that the national role performance behind the Carter doctrine is a reflection of strain. The Carter Administration was concerned about both maintaining the

US hegemony/preventing its decline while also maintaining great powerhood. When the US aims to establish and guide a unified global community, as a powerful entity ensuring lesser vulnerability, and the foreign policy elites endorsing this notion and the society overlooking the sacrifices required for dominance fail to align, this leads to role strain. Consequently, the government's stance undergoes a significant shift, often revealing a contrasting doctrine. Since more supervisory responsibilities allow for more strain, the pressure created by these two roles in the Carter Doctrine was one of the easiest cases to work on. In this regard, the case study provided no evidence that it diverged from the theoretical framework of role strain.

However, there is a further point that attracted our attention. When a crisis occurred, an option such as a complete exit from the hegemonic role or proceeding with the actual role bargain were not even considered. Attempts were made to reconcile hegemonic duties with domestic politics, a typically overlooked aspect in favor of maintaining hegemony. This effort can also be viewed as potentially eliminated through role strain reduction techniques. The government, which was under unbearable role strain, tried to fulfill two different roles equally, which brought a difference in the methods of defining leadership as focusing on coercion. While the role strain reduction techniques related to hegemony and great power dynamics is a clear point to investigate, conducting analyses across various case studies will enhance the depth of literature on this framework. The point to focus on here is why a given president does not give up on a nation's dual major roles; and what determines policy choice. Certainly, the discrepancy between Obama's pragmatic choice in the case of Syria and Carter's choice over Iran can indeed be attributed to the erosion of the major role of hegemony over time. In the period from Carter to Obama, shifts in global dynamics, changes in international relations, and evolving domestic priorities likely contributed to the diminishing influence and efficacy of the role. As a result, Obama's approach may have been less hegemonic compared to Carter's. Nonetheless, conducting such an analysis necessitates a more thorough investigation into the domestic policy dynamics of the period.

The post-Obama era also highlights how American presidents continue to navigate the enduring strain between hegemonic responsibilities and domestic priorities. Trump's "America First" policy can be seen as an outcome of the historical strain within US hegemony. Conversely, Biden's efforts to restore alliances and reassert US global hegemony, as exemplified by his commitment to reengage with international institutions like NATO and the Paris Climate Agreement, reflect the ongoing challenge of balancing these competing roles. These examples underscore the persistent role strain in US foreign policy, illustrating the cyclical nature of this dynamic in shaping the nation's global engagement.

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