4

The Sources of Affect in Interstate Friendship

Lucile Eznack and Simon Koschut

Introduction

The idea that states can be friends, that they can have emotions and emotional relationships, and, more generally, that affective factors can influence the conduct of international affairs, is increasingly accepted in International Relations (IR). Yet, despite recent advancements, the literature on emotions and friendship in IR still lacks theoretical and empirical development. In particular, we need to further open the friends ‘black box’. While states are able to form regionally integrated spaces, such as security communities or zones of stable peace, that differ significantly from their neighbouring environment, relationships within these regionally integrated spaces also differ in terms of the value that individual states attach to these relationships. Indeed, not all friendly interstate relationships are the same, and these differences can lead the states concerned to behave differently towards each other as well as on the international scene more generally (Eznack, 2011, 2012). In this chapter, we argue that the degree and intensity of affection and affective value that agents attach to their friendly relationship can account for these variations. The aim of this chapter is thus to contribute to filling a gap in the literature on friendship in IR by studying the sources of affect in bilateral interstate relations: Why is it that some relationships are more affectively charged than others? Which factors contribute to the development of affect and to what extent?

That said, the aim here is not to leave aside or minimise the impact of material and strategic interests in interstate relations. As we show in this chapter, instrumental and affective factors cannot be fully dissociated, and instrumental calculations do play a role in the development of affect in interstate friendship. Without any material or strategic

S. Koschut et al. (eds.), Friendship and International Relations
© Palgrave Macmillan, a division of Macmillan Publishers Limited 2014
interest involved (at least in the initial stages), a bilateral relationship is unlikely to become affectively charged. Yet, the main argument of this chapter is that for a highly affectively charged relationship to develop, such as the one enjoyed by the United States and the United Kingdom, there has to be some foundational moment(s) in the relationship that, when commemorated and regularly referred to by the states, will act as a value multiplier.

Affect in this context is different from emotions, the latter being understood as reactions to external stimuli. Affect refers to the long-term, underlying affective appraisal of a specific object; here a bilateral interstate relationship (Eznack, 2013). That a relationship is affectively charged means that the states are strongly attached to the quality of their ties, and that the value they attach to these ties is higher than simply the sum of the material and/or strategic benefits that they derive from them (Eznack, 2011). This affective charge of a particular relationship may then lead to experiencing (positive or negative) emotions in reaction to external stimuli that touch upon this relationship (Koschut, 2014). From this perspective, states are not viewed only as abstract, corporate actors, but also as entities represented by individuals, who act and feel as the state (Eznack, 2012, p. 17). Affect impacts on the way these states act and react to each other’s behaviour, and thus on the conduct of international affairs (Eznack, 2012). Hence, because not all friendly interstate relations are affectively charged in the same way, knowing more about the sources of affect should enhance our understanding of international relations more broadly.

This chapter focuses on the case of the United States and its friendly bilateral relations because the United States enjoys a high number of friendly relations with other states (Schoenbaum, 1998, p. 273). Yet despite the fact that they are often labelled in the same or similar ways, these relationships are different from each other, thus offering a good basis for comparison.

The chapter is divided into three parts. The first part focuses on the need for a more thorough examination of affect in friendly interstate relations, and briefly presents recent developments in the literature. In the second part, we further develop the link between affect and friendship based on the moral philosophy of Francis Hutcheson. In the third part, we turn to the sources of affect in friendly interstate relations. Based on our previous line of reasoning, we put forward the argument that while material and strategic interests are important, they are not determining factors in the development of affective interstate relations. Other factors play a key role in the degree to which a particular relationship