Presidential Effort and International Outcomes: Evidence for an Executive Bottleneck

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Abstract

In this paper, we identify and test an implication of the claim that chief executives are uniquely effective diplomatic actors. To the extent that a leader's time is valuable and non-substitutable, there will always be more diplomatic problems that could benefit from a leader's scarce time than he or she can possibly address. This executive bottleneck should tighten when the opportunity cost of spending time on diplomacy rises, leading to decreased time spent on diplomacy and a consequent reduction in outcome quality. Using newly-collected data, we test for the existence of this bottleneck in American foreign policy. We demonstrate a large, persistent decrease in presidential time spent on foreign policy immediately prior to presidential elections and show that this corresponds to a substantial increase in the level of conflict within the American bloc, where our framework predicts an indicative effect. We rule out prominent competing explanations for this distraction-conflict link.

A recent body of research investigates the influence of individual leaders on foreign policy both directly, through the selection of particular policies, and indirectly, through influence over the bureaucracy and the national agenda (Downs and Rocke, 1994; Wood and Peake, 1998; Edwards and Wood, 1999; Peake, 2001; Byman and Pollack, 2001; Cohen, 2002; Darden, 2010; Chiozza and Goemans, 2011; Jervis, 2013). Within this tradition, scholars have established that leaders have some ability to bend foreign policy towards their preferences. In general, this work focuses on characteristics that vary across leaders, such as beliefs, personality, or priorities, and the way that these characteristics lead to different policy outcomes depending on who is in power.

Here, in a different but related direction, we examine variation in a given leader's diplomatic effectiveness at different points in his or her tenure. In particular, we examine how time spent and effort exerted affect an American president's effectiveness in international diplomacy.

Our overarching theoretical claim is simple and generic – if the president is a uniquely effective diplomatic actor, then, whatever the president's diplomatic goals, he or she can more effectively accomplish them through a greater exertion of time and effort. We begin by identifying three non-substitutable roles for the president in diplomacy: his unique skills in personal diplomacy, his importance as a manager and coordinator of the bureaucracy, and his status as the ultimate decision-maker. All of these roles can not easily be filled by other actors and require substantial presidential time and attention.

Next, we identify a theoretical consequence of the president's unique capabilities, which we label the executive bottleneck: a great number of diplomatic problems could benefit from the president's direct involvement, but the president's time is scarce, so he cannot address all of them. When the president has more time available, he will be more able to address these

problems, but when he has less time available, he will be less able to engage in diplomacy, and consequently the quality of international outcomes across diverse issues should fall.

We test for the existence of this bottleneck by examining a shock to the supply of presidential time that is unlikely to have a large effect on the demand for presidential involvement in diplomacy. Election periods are long-term, substantial, and conform to the supply-demand separation of our theoretical framework, so we test for a distraction effect in these periods, along with midterm election periods that can serve as a placebo test if the president is *not* distracted. We show that the amount of time the president spends on foreign policy declines markedly during the months preceding a presidential election and does not decline prior to an approaching midterm.

Theoretically, we predict that this shock to presidential time spent on foreign policy should lead to a similar decline in diplomatic quality across the population of problems where presidential involvement is valuable. Consequently, we focus on testing the prediction in a class of diplomatic interactions where presidential preferences are relatively straightforward and the quality of outcomes is easily measured: relations among countries internationally aligned with the United States. The United States has a clear interest in promoting cooperation and preventing conflict among friendly countries, so a shock to the supply of presidential time should lead to decreased cooperation and increased conflict in this group.

We find, as predicted, that interactions within the American bloc become less cooperative and more conflictual during the period of presidential distraction associated with presidential elections. We are able to rule out a number of alternative explanations for this link by examining the midterm placebo and other types of international interactions.

In short, we find that a decrease in the president's level of involvement in foreign policy predicts diplomatic outcomes that are less positive for the United States. These negative outcomes for the United States are not well explained by competing theories.

The Unique Presidential Role in Diplomacy

The theory of the executive bottleneck begins with a simple observation - presidential time is scarce and uniquely valuable, so its allocation is important. The scarcity of the presidential time is commonsensical (there are only twenty-four hours in a day), but its value is contested. A number of scholars have dismissed the idea that individual leaders have a meaningful independent role in international affairs either because they are heavily constrained by the international system (Waltz, 1979), overpowered by the bureaucracy (Neustadt, 1960), or compelled to act in certain ways by either the nature of domestic politics or its interaction with the international environment (Putnam, 1988). On the other hand, theories of agenda setting tend to incorporate an assumption that presidential time is valuable (Wood and Peake, 1998; Jones and Baumgartner, 2005), and both historians and practitioners often emphasize its effects. For example, Ann Lewis, who served as Counselor to the President during the Clinton administration, has expressed the bottleneck phenomenon quite succinctly, telling an interviewer: "the most valuable resource we have is the president's time and we'll never have enough of it" (Kumar and Sullivan, 2003, p. 275).

In their accounts, former practitioners often attribute foreign policy success to direct presidential involvement, while attributing failure to a lack of involvement. Samuel Lewis, who served as U.S. Ambassador to Israel at the time of the Camp David Accords, credits Carter's success in large part to the fact that he "invested unprecedented time, effort, and scarce political capital" (Lewis, 1988, p. 220) in the negotiations, while also arguing that Carter's "inability to continue that intense level of personal involvement clearly was one factor in the failure to complete the second phase [i.e., an agreement on permanent status for Palestinians]" (p. 228). Similarly, Dennis Ross, who served as director of policy planning in the State Department during the Bush administration, argues that a key ingredient in successful German unification within NATO was "the enormous time and the energy the

president and secretary of state spent in personal diplomacy with their counterparts" (Ross, 2007, p. 46), while attributing the administration's failure in other areas to the fact that "the leaders of the administration and those immediately around them were consumed by German unification," thus leaving "little time for anything else" (p. 136).

While the president is supported by a large foreign policy bureaucracy, he plays at least three unique roles. First, he can personally serve as a singularly effective diplomat. Second, he has the sole authority to coordinate and oversee the diverse agencies involved in formulating and executing foreign policy. Third, he is ultimately responsible for making the most important foreign policy decisions. In all of these roles, as well as others not mentioned, the president will be more successful when he spends more time and exerts more effort.

First, the president has particular personal capabilities as a diplomat. Presidents are inevitably politicians of great skill, who speak with unparalleled authority, and possess easy access to foreign leaders. The scarcity of presidential time also means that any personal involvement by the president in diplomacy is inherently a signal of American interest, while the president's stature and legitimacy allow him to provide a high level of political cover to foreign leaders, reducing the costs they pay for backing down (Beardsley, 2010). Foreign leaders have often recognized the singular presidential role; for example, Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan said of Carter's role at Camp David: "Were it not for him – were it not for the U.S. but first and foremost were it not for him, were it not for his adherence and persistence to the matter and the understanding he showed, and the depth – I do not see that there would have been any possibility of arriving at this agreement within those 12 days" (Dayan and Weizman, 1978). Similarly, during the 1999 Kargil conflict, Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was so desperate to secure the political cover provided by direct presidential involvement that he flew to Washington uninvited in order to secure a meeting with Bill Clinton and agreed to unilaterally and unconditionally withdraw his troops in return for nothing more than a public promise by Clinton to "take a personal interest" in

negotiations between India and Pakistan (Talbott, 2004, pp. 160-168).

Direct presidential effort is crucial in managing and setting the agenda for the bureaucracy. Only the president has sufficient authority to coordinate and oversee the actions of the many agencies with a stake in foreign policy. Cottam (1977, p. 10) argues that this task requires constant activity, writing: "as soon as presidential attention shifts, bureaucratic policy once again prevails in the previous area of focus even though it may in serious respects contradict presidential policy of only days before." Former officials note the same tendency. Citing his experience in the Balkans, Holbrooke (1998, pp. 81-82) writes that he "observed the value of - indeed the necessity for - direct, personal presidential involvement to overcome bureaucratic stalemates or inertia."

Beyond the roles of diplomat and bureaucratic manager, the president plays a crucial role as a decision maker. Both constitutionally and practically, many key foreign policy choices require an explicit decision by the president, and the cognitive literature supplies many reasons to expect that increased time and attention should lead to better decisions (Jervis, 1976; Maoz, 1990; Mintz, 2004). Policymakers share the view; for example, Kissinger (1982, pp. 77-78) argues that Nixon's preoccupation with Watergate led to a deterioration in foreign policy, writing: "I found it difficult to get Nixon to focus on foreign policy ... it was difficult to get him to address memoranda. They came back without the plethora of marginal comments that indicated they had been carefully read." In theory, the president's role here may be more substitutable than his role as a diplomat or manager, given that the president can simply accept the recommendations of his advisors. While this is conceivable, no president has ever delegated all of the responsibility for diplomatic decision-making to his advisors. Decisions about a president's leadership and advisory styles are undoubtedly consequential (Johnson, 1974; Hermann and Preston, 1994), but we argue that, given any set of decision-making arrangements that a president might choose, he will be more successful when he has more time available to spend on the decisions he makes.

The Executive Bottleneck Theory and Testable Implications

An executive bottleneck will exist whenever an executive's time is scarce, valuable, and imperfectly substitutable through the efforts of others. Such bottlenecks are not likely to be unique to diplomacy; instead, the bottleneck may be inherent to large organizations. Given that a day contains only twenty-four hours, leaders can hardly change the fact that their time is scarce, while reducing the value of a leader's time would be a cure worse than the disease. Consequently, while delegation can exacerbate or ameliorate the bottleneck, the president's unique capabilities mean that it can never be eliminated. Even in the presence of an efficient system for delegation, other agents are unlikely to be able to compensate for reductions in presidential activity. If other agents (e.g., the national security advisor) can offset the loss associated with a reduction in presidential involvement, then this would imply that they must be operating below capacity in "ordinary" times, which would not be a reasonable arrangement – the president has every incentive to ensure that he obtains maximal performance from all of his agents at all times.

Given the bottleneck, a strategic president will allocate a marginal time where it will matter most. Under any optimal allocation, the marginal utility to the president's time must be (roughly) equal across policy areas where time is being spent (if this were not the case, then a strategic president would always reallocate time from the lower marginal return issue to the higher marginal return issue). The president's marginal utility with respect to a given issue will be the product of the marginal impact of his time on a given issue (e.g., his ability to influence outcomes) and the importance of that issue (i.e., how much the outcome matters to the president). Thus, the impact of a marginal hour on the *outcome* of a given issue should be lower when the outcome is more important because a smaller change in the outcome will produce a larger change in utility when an issue is more important.

Under these conditions, increased presidential time spent on foreign policy should lead

to an improvement in outcomes across a variety of policy areas, through the channels identified in the previous section (personal diplomacy, bureaucratic management, and decision-making). We note further that presidential attention to a problem can set the agenda, attracting increased attention to the same problem from the bureaucracy, Congress, the media, and the public, so that the impact of a single presidential hour may actually be quite large (Peake, 2001). Consequently, if we were able to hold all other factors equal, we would expect to see an improvement, perhaps a dramatic one, in the quality of foreign policy outcomes when the president spends more time on foreign policy.

All else, of course, is never equal. One of the largest influences on the attention paid by the president to foreign policy is world events themselves (Wood and Peake, 1998). Thus, analyzing the level of attention to a particular problem or to foreign policy generally alongside outcomes will not give meaningful results because there is no way to ascertain whether events drive attention or attention drives events, so we design a research design that handles this problem.

Before proceeding, we note that our theory suggests that presidential involvement is both effective and beneficial. While we have contrasted this primarily to the view that presidential involvement is ineffective, it is also possible that presidential involvement is effective but detrimental. That is, perhaps an attentive president will be meddlesome rather than helpful, will interfere in areas best left to bureaucratic experts, or will unnecessarily politicize issues. For example, an influential, though sharply contested, interpretation holds that American failure in Vietnam resulted from presidential micromanagement, while success in the Gulf War resulted from from "benign operational and tactical neglect by an enlightened civilian leadership" (Cohen, 2002, pp. 3-4). If this is true and characterizes the general effect of presidential involvement, then we would expect less time spent on foreign policy to correspond to an improvement in international outcomes. Ultimately, this is an empirical question, so we now move towards generating testable hypotheses.

7

Generating a testable prediction

Moving from our general theoretical prediction that more time spent on foreign policy will lead to higher quality outcomes to a testable hypothesis requires two things. First, we must find a way to measure the quality of outcomes. Second, to address the endogeneity problem between attention and outcomes, we must identify an exogenous shock to the supply of presidential attention, which should reduce attention to foreign policy independently of any demand-side factors.

The theoretical framework allows us to generalize from a specific test because strategic allocation predicts similar effects across areas. This prediction is important because, although we would expect the president to most directly influence US interactions, established tools measure events on a conflict-cooperation scale and the president's success in international affairs is not related to conflictualness of American interactions, as we will discuss in more detail below. We therefore begin here by developing a novel way to measure the quality of outcomes, then consider several "distractions" (shocks to the supply of presidential time).

We will argue that the level of cooperation and conflict among countries internationally aligned with the United States (i.e., the American bloc) is a simple, unambiguous measure of diplomatic quality. Briefly, the most important advantage of this measure is that conflict among friendly countries is a negative for the United States as such, while cooperation within the American bloc is a positive as such. This stands in contrast to events involving the United States directly, where conflict is sometimes a good and sometimes a bad outcome (i.e., it may be necessary for the United States to use force in order to achieve its goals) and the relevant question is who gains or loses, not whether conflict occurs. In Table 1, we display American preferences in third-party interactions on the basis of whether or not the involved countries are internationally aligned with the United States.

In interactions among countries aligned with the United States, the American preference is to prevent or reduce conflict, and to encourage cooperation. Conflict, in general, has

		State A Type	
		Aligned with U.S.	Not Aligned with U.S.
State B Type	Aligned with U.S.	Prevent/Reduce Conflict Promote Cooperation	Victory for A
	Not Aligned with U.S.	Victory for B	Unclear

Table 1: American Preference in Third Party Interactions

substantial negative externalities (Glick and Taylor, 2010), and the United States has particularly strong reasons to prevent conflict among countries aligned with its interests. First, harmonious relations among friendly countries make it easier for these countries to work as a group to promote their shared interests. Along these lines, conflict within the Western bloc during the Cold War was often seen as inviting Soviet aggression, so the United States consciously designed a system to promote cooperation among capitalist countries (Wallander, 2000). Second, as Lake (2009) argues, countries align with the United States and pursue pro-American policies in part because they receive security from the United States in return; conflict prevention is part of this bargain. Third, and perhaps most importantly, in a potential conflict between two states who are both within the American bloc, the United States is less likely to have strong preferences for one or the other to prevail. When two countries are valued about equally, the United States will likely be indifferent to the manner in which potential disputes are resolved and will primarily be interested in whether or not they are resolved.

Having established this American preference, our framework requires the assumption that states within the American bloc have some degree of divergence in their preferences that might lead to conflict or inhibit cooperation among them. If alignment with the United States were the only dimension of international politics, then states aligned with the United States would have no disagreements, so there would be no conflicts for the president to prevent and no otherwise neglected opportunities for cooperation for him to promote. In

fact, however, countries closely aligned with the United States often face significant bilateral tensions unrelated to overall alignment choices. South Korea and Japan, for example, face significant tension related to treatment of Korea during and before World War Two and their competing claims to the Liancourt Rocks (Lee, 1985). Likewise, Iceland and the United Kingdom had highly conflictual relations with one another from the 1950s to the 1970s as the result of maritime disputes, eventually escalating to the use of naval force and breaking off of diplomatic relations between the two in the so-called "Cod Wars," which seriously threatened NATO's ability to operate against the USSR in the North Atlantic (Jonsson, 1982). These are not isolated cases. Over the period studied here (1946-1993), the Issue Correlates of War Project codes 75 territorial disputes between pairs of states both of whom are within the American bloc (as it will be defined below) as well as 61 such riverine or maritime disputes (Hensel et al., 2008).

Even in the absence of a direct dispute that might lead to armed conflict, countries within the American bloc have often failed to productively cooperate. For example, Japan complied with the Arab boycott of Israel for several decades, inhibiting economic relations between the two. This state of affairs was harmful both to American business interests (Ikeda, 1993, pp. 166-168) and to broader American interest in promoting ties between two of its closest allies Shaoul (2004). High level American officials pressured Japan on the issue throughout the 1980s, but commentators generally agree that a major breakthrough on the issue came when President Bush directly called on Japanese Prime Minister Kaifu of Japan to end the boycott at a summit in 1991, leading to a change in Japanese behavior and a rapid increase in economic ties between Israel and Japan (Goldstein, 2014; Shaoul, 2004).

Cross-bloc no effect prediction

When a potential dispute involves a country that is aligned with the United States and another that is not, the United States will have much stronger distributive preference than its

preferences in purely in-bloc interactions. Concretely, imagine a Cold War dispute between a Western (Capitalist) bloc country and one from the Eastern (Communist) bloc. In such a dispute, the United States would clearly prefer a victory for the capitalist country, rather than preferring to avoid the conflict - a preference clearly expressed in the Truman Doctrine. When the United States intervenes in such disputes, then, it will do so with the goal of promoting outcomes that favor the country aligned with it, rather than with the goal of preventing conflict. Because the president will use his influence to secure better outcomes for the the friendly country, a tightening in the bottleneck will mean worse outcomes for that country. In terms of conflict, this should increase the unfriendly country's willingness to initiate disputes and decrease its willingness to make concessions, while decreasing the friendly country's willingness to initiate disputes and increasing its willingness to make concessions. On net, these effects should offset each other and we should observe no change in the level of conflict in these dyads, although, if measurable, we should be able to detect changes in which side is favored by the outcome.

The American preference in potential disputes between pairs of countries outside the American bloc is unclear. In the Cold War context, the United States may sometimes have preferred an increased level of conflict within the Communist bloc (consider, for example, American policy towards Soviet relations with China or Yugoslavia), but when the externalities for conflicts outside the American bloc rise high enough, this might create an incentive to prevent them, so the overall prediction is ambiguous.

A recurring and substantial distraction from foreign policy

As discussed above, we cannot safely draw conclusions by comparing the issues where the president spends more time to issues where he spends less, as he may spend more time on precisely the issues where his impact is largest (or perhaps even spend time unproductively on issues where he knows success is already likely in order to claim credit afterwards), which

might create a spurious positive relationship between attention and outcomes. Conversely, an international crisis may force the president to spend time on issues where outcomes are likely to be unfavorable in order to prevent them from becoming even more so, so that we might observe a spurious negative relationship between attention and outcomes.

For this reason, we focus on shocks that decrease the aggregate supply of time available for diplomacy; that is a tightening in the bottleneck as a whole, rather than merely the process of substitution between issues. A variety of events might restrict the president's supply of time available for diplomacy, including periods of illness, attempts to pass major legislation, domestic crises, or time spent campaigning. While any reduction in the supply of time should have an effect on diplomacy, fleeting distractions are unlikely to have a discernible impact. Instead, it is necessary to focus on prolonged, substantial reductions in available time.

Similarly, it is highly desirable to focus on sources of distraction that restrict the supply of presidential time but do not otherwise change American diplomatic capabilities or anticipated international outcomes. Economic shocks, for example, may tend to distract the president from foreign policy by diverting his attention to the economy, but these will also affect trade, economic growth in foreign countries, and other related variables that are highly likely to affect the behavior of foreign countries and the American ability to exert diplomatic influence.

The best candidates, then, are elections (which cannot be rescheduled) and sustained periods of illness. We should observe, in these two cases, a substantial reduction in time spent on foreign policy as more time is instead spent campaigning or recuperating and a corresponding diplomatic effect as described above. Historical case studies of illness have often documented effects consistent with the bottleneck hypothesis (Gilbert, 1992; Ferrell, 1998; McDermott, 2008), but periods of prolonged illness are too rare for systematic study given available data, so we focus primarily on elections. We also consider the distraction and conflict effects of natural disasters and economic recessions in the United States in the appendix (Tables 16 and 17).

Tests of the Theory and Alternate Explanations

Following from the theoretical setup, we aim to test two hypotheses: that elections distract presidential attention from foreign policy and that these distractions lead to increased conflict and decreased cooperation within the American bloc.

The first step is straightforward, and we test whether presidents spend less time on foreign policy in the six months (June to November) proximate to a presidential election. The second step is somewhat more involved as we must consider and control for alternative links between elections and conflict among allies.

An impending presidential election may distract Congress, voters, and political elites in addition to the president and may change the incentive structure in U.S. foreign policy. We test for this by examining the effect of Congressional midterm elections, which should influence domestic political conditions in a generally similar way to presidential elections, particularly with respect to Congress, but do not distract the president (in the attention tests, we empirically confirm this).

A nearby U.S. election may shape the incentives of other countries to engage in conflictual behavior more generally. For example, foreign countries might "make trouble" during elections either to influence the outcome of the election or in order to take advantage of the president or public's distraction. We test this alternative by examining the effect of presidential elections on cross-bloc dyads (where only one country is in the American bloc) as we have hypothesized that the level of conflict in these dyads should not change.

Explanations drawn from "diversionary war" theories suggest incentives for the president to behave more aggressively prior to elections (Smith, 1996). Such aggressive behavior might spill over into more conflict among allies. While some of the tests above address this, we examine this by directly looking at the level of American aggressiveness. The nature of the dependent variable is also helpful in ruling out some challenges. It is, for example,

unlikely that the American electorate is strongly affected by international conflicts in which the United States is not a party, so we view it as correspondingly unlikely that the intensity of the president's preference for preventing these conflicts changes meaningfully during the months before an election, except to the extent that it is crowded out by competing priorities (especially time spent campaigning).

In our empirical tests, we also include a variety of fixed effects to address other concerns. First, there might be seasonal variation in the data unrelated to elections - for example, if presidents spend less time on foreign policy in the spring or international conflict falls during the winter. To deal with these, we include month fixed effects in all of our models, removing any such seasonal variation. Second, there might be variation over time in the amount of time presidents spend on foreign policy, the level of conflict within the American bloc, or the effectiveness of time spent on foreign policy (e.g., if certain presidents are more talented diplomatically than others, or if changes over time in the apparatus surrounding the president - such as growth in staff, improvements in communications technology, etc. - have made the president's time more or less valuable). We address these challenges flexibly, with a variety of different fixed effects - we include two-year, four-year, and presidential term fixed effects. In nearly all of our models, the results for these various specifications are quite similar.

The Distracting Effect of Presidential Elections

We construct a measure of the president's level of attention to foreign affairs using declassified versions of the "President's Daily Diary." In contrast with past work using public statements (Wood and Peake, 1998), these diaries provide minute-by-minute accounts of the president's actual activities. We obtained digital images of this resource from the websites of the various presidential libraries for the years 1933 through 1952 and 1964 through 1990, and, to verify

consistency across an additional eight years, presidential schedules for 1953 through 1963 (these are complete private schedules, not the publicly released partial schedules), a period during which the diaries are unfortunately unavailable. We obtained text from these images through optical character recognition (OCR) software and parsed these results to split the diaries into individual entries and to detect the start and end times for each entry. The scan quality during the Kennedy administration was too poor to permit reasonable accuracy, so we exclude this data from our analysis (although inclusion does not alter our results). From the remaining diaries, we extracted a total of 295,737 individual entries across 633 distinct months, or slightly more than 90% of all months in the 1933-1990 interval.

Our primary concern is to measure time devoted by the president to foreign policy. The diaries record the names and titles of individuals who met with the president, but contain relatively little additional information. Thus, we code a meeting as relevant to foreign policy on the basis of its attendees. First, we code a meeting as relevant to foreign policy if it included senior U.S. foreign policy officials, such as the National Security Advisor or Secretary of State; we specifically detect the presence of the names of these officeholders across the period in question. We also code meetings as relevant to foreign policy on the basis of titles or names of agencies relevant to foreign policy (e.g., the word "ambassador" or the phrase "Central Intelligence"). Finally, we include a variety of generic keywords (e.g., "national security"), as well as the names of foreign countries in cases where these are not ambiguous. While this measure is crude, and inevitably introduces some error, this error is likely to be white noise and unrelated to proximate presidential elections. In the supporting information (Figure 2), we display an example diary page and provide a further discussion of the coding rules.

After coding foreign policy meetings, we aggregate to the monthly level for all analyses. This both helps to reduce the level of noise and allows a cleaner focus on the relevant constructs (i.e., day-to-day variation most likely captures scheduling idiosyncrasies, etc.).

15

Unfortunately, there is some variation over time in the total number of minutes per month successfully extracted by automated parsing (Figure 3 in the supporting information shows absolute variation over time), but this variation is unrelated to the occurrence of presidential elections. Consequently, in Figure 1, we plot the ratio of presidential time spent on foreign policy to the total time accounted for in the parsed diaries.
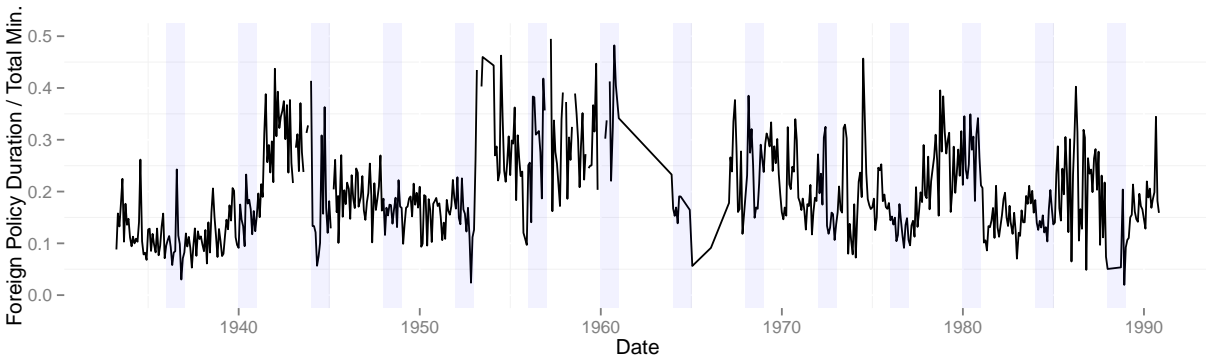
Figure 1: *Proportion of Time Spent on Foreign Policy.* This figure shows the proportion of the president's time spent on foreign policy, according to our parsing of the "president's Daily Diary". The 1953 through 1960 interval is based on Eisenhower's scheduled official activities, rather than his actual and complete activities, leading to a higher apparent baseline.

This figure displays some intuitive variation. For example, the maximum level of foreign policy activity is recorded in December 1941, when president Roosevelt spent over 9,000 minutes (150 hours) on foreign policy, and a general spike associated with World War Two is visually apparent. Indeed, we find that Roosevelt spent an average of 26.4 hours per month on foreign policy prior to the September 1939 outbreak of World War Two in Europe, 45.9 hours per month on foreign policy between the outbreak of the war and Pearl Harbor, and an average of 63.7 hours per month from Pearl Harbor until his death. It is these changes in demand associated with international conditions that make it so important to focus below on elections, whose occurrence is unrelated to international events.

While the primary competing demand associated with an election is the need for an incumbent seeking reelection to campaign (although incumbents may also spend time cam-

16

paigning on behalf of a potential copartisan successor), the decision about whether or not to seek reelection may be endogenous to international conditions, so we focus on simply estimating the causal effect of the occurrence of presidential elections. Our dataset includes 14 presidential elections (1936, 1940, 1944, 1948, 1952, 1956, 1960, 1964, 1968, 1972, 1976, 1980, 1984, and 1988). In two of these, a president eligible for reelection chose not to run (1952 and 1968), and in both cases these decisions were explicitly linked to international conditions. In two further elections (1960 and 1988), the incumbent president was ineligible for reelection due to term limits, but this small number of elections does not give us enough power to credibly estimate a difference between elections where the incumbent was running for reelection and ones where he was not (although we provide exploratory evidence about the difference in the supporting information, suggesting that only elections where the president is running are significant distractions).

Distraction effect estimates

We begin with simple t-tests. First, we confirm that total recorded activity in our data does not change between election years (an average of 204.8 hours per month of recorded activity) and non-election years (an average of 203.6 hours per month). Average monthly attention to foreign policy, however, falls from 40.1 hours during non-election years to 35.1 hours during election years, a significant difference ($p = 0.03$). This difference should be largest in the months immediately proximate to the election (we define these throughout as June-November). When restricting the sample to only these months (in both election and non-election years), we find that the mean decreases from 39.5 hours during non-election years to 31.6 hours during election years, which is again significant ($p = 0.01$).

In Table 2 we regress attention to foreign policy against a dummy for the six-month (June-November) period of election years, which we label "Proximate Election". We include month effects in all models to control for seasonality, as well as a variety of additional fixed effects.

17

First, we include presidential term effects (i.e., a fixed effect that changes whenever there is a change in president or an incumbent is inaugurated for a subsequent term). This controls for both president-to-president differences in baseline attention to foreign policy (either as the result of actual differences or measurement differences) as well as differences that may be associated with a reelected president (e.g., a tendency to devote more attention to foreign policy in a second term). We also include biennial fixed effects for a two year period beginning in odd numbered years (i.e., a biennial effect for 1951-1952 and a different effect for 1953-1954). This both controls for shorter-term time trends, as well as substantive differences in the American political system associated with changes in Congressional composition every two years. We do not use single year fixed effects, because these will tend to bias our estimates downward given any distraction prior to June. We show these models in Table 2.

Midterm placebo

We also include a separate variable of interest, "Proximate Midterm", which is an indicator for the June-November period of midterm Congressional election years, and in the supporting information, we display models including indicators for reelection campaign years. These results show that midterms do not distract the president from foreign policy, and provide evidence that presidents are not substantially distracted during election years in which they are not running for reelection. Because we find that presidents are not distracted during midterms, we use these elections in placebo tests for the effect of the president's attention on diplomatic quality.

In all of these models, we use heteroskedasticity and autocorrelation consistent standard errors, following the method of Andrews (1991) as implemented in R by Zeileis (2004). To test for stationarity, we perform an Augmented Dickey-Fuller Test, which rejects the null hypothesis of a unit root (in favor of an alternative hypothesis of stationarity) at 95% confidence (specifically, we compute a value of -3.55, corresponding to a p-value of 0.038).

Consequently the standard errors we have calculated are consistent, even in the presence of autocorrelation. There is missing data in this time series, so we adopt the "equal spacing" estimator recommended by Datta and Du (2012).

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Proximate Election	-7.79	-9.08	-7.65	-8.42
	(3.17)	(2.60)	(3.16)	(2.63)
	0.01	*<0.01*	*0.02*	*<0.01*
Proximate Midterm			0.41	3.18
			(2.87)	(2.55)
			0.89	*0.21*
Month Effects	Y	Y	Y	Y
Presidential Term Effects	Y	N	Y	N
Biennial Effects	N	Y	N	Y
n	633	633	633	633

Standard errors in parentheses; p-values in *italics*. All models fit via OLS with heteroskedasticity and autocorrelation consistent standard errors.

Table 2: *Relationship Between Elections and Presidential Time Spent on Foreign Policy (Hours).* This table shows the declines in presidential attention to foreign policy June through November during election years.

We note that the coefficient estimates are directly interpretable in numbers of hours; thus, we are estimating a monthly reduction in time spent on foreign policy of roughly eight or nine hours (against a baseline of about 40 hours). If anything, this estimate is likely to understate the true effect size given measurement error and the fact that we have not extracted all activities from the diaries.

The President's Effect on U.S. Diplomatic Effectiveness

We hypothesize above that presidential elections, and the associated diversion of presidential attention, will reduce the effectiveness of U.S. diplomacy, and that this reduced effectiveness will be measurable in an increased level of conflict and decreased level of cooperation among

countries aligned with the United States. We emphasize that cooperation in these US bloc interactions is more uniformly favorable to the US and therefore a more objective measure of diplomatic quality than conflict in US interactions, but that the results here, following the marginal utility framework in the section on generating this testable prediction, are generalizable to US diplomatic activity more broadly.

The appropriate operationalization of this aligned conflict measure requires integrated data on both conflict and cooperation as ignoring either half of this spectrum can lead to faulty inferences (Pevehouse, 2004), so we turn to "events" data, rather than single-purpose datasets on particular forms of conflict or cooperation. In order to avoid truncation bias, we also wish to examine the full spectrum of interactions, rather than only extreme events (Mitchell and Moore, 2002). Because no existing events dataset covers our time period of interest, we constructed one as described below encompassing a full spectrum of conflict and cooperation. We also must measure alignment with United States. For this purpose we use a dataset of "state positions towards the U.S. led liberal order" constructed from U.N. voting data (Bailey, Strezhnev and Voeten, Forthcoming). This data accurately captures alignment with American interests, and importantly, provides a measure that is consistent over time. This measure is available starting in 1946, which limits our empirical scope to the post-WWII period.

We use alignment rather than formal alliances because the measure is more precise and more accurately captures the relevant construct. Several countries closely aligned with the United States were not formally allied with the United States for most or all of the period in question, most notably Israel. On the other hand, many countries allied with the United States on paper were hardly allied in practice. For example, the Sandanista regime in Nicaragua was a formal ally of the United States, despite the fact that the United States was actively supporting its armed overthrow. As noted by others, using alliances in an attempt to capture alignment can yield results lacking in face validity; Signorino (1999)

observes that Britain and France were both allied with the USSR but not the United States in 1947 (and in fact up until the very moment the North Atlantic Treaty was signed). In the supporting information, we compare the analysis presented here to one based on formal alliances. As one would predict given the high level of measurement error associated with alliances, using alliances to measure alignment attenuates the coefficient of interest (Table 19), but we further show that when countries aligned with the United States based on the U.N. voting data are added, the results gradually converge towards those presented here (Figure 11 and Figure 12).

In all of our statistical models, we use either biennial or quadrennial fixed effects. These effects will control for any changes associated with periodic changes in the composition of the bloc as well as controlling for president-to-president variation in either effectiveness or priorities and controlling for change over time in the nature of relations within the bloc. We note that the quadrennial effects are substantially equivalent to the presidential term effects used in the previous section (the only difference is that the presidential effects change at the deaths of Roosevelt and Kennedy, while the quadrennial effects do not; using the presidential effects make no substantive difference in comparison to the quadrennial effects).

Construction of the dependent variable

Our events data cover the years from 1946 (the first year of alignment data) to 1993 (the last year of the Bush administration, which is the last administration for which we have attention data) and is drawn from the lead sentences of articles from ten news sources, selected on the basis of available digital archives. Four of these are major American newspapers: *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, and *The Wall Street Journal*. Five are non-American newspapers: *The Canberra Times*, *The Straits-Times* (Singapore), *The Jerusalem Post*, *The Times of India*, and *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto). The final source is the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, an international news agency serving

Jewish community newspapers. We automatically coded events from these sources using the TABARI program, which independent researchers have found to be roughly as accurate as hand-coding of news stories (Best, Carpino and Crescenzi, 2013). This automated coding procedure identified roughly 2.8 million events, of which approximately 365,000 are international events between two identifiable actors. Table 5 in the supporting information shows the number of events drawn from each source, while Table 6 displays the number of events by country. Although our coverage varies somewhat over time, we identify at least 4,500 international events in each year. TABARI codes events according to the CAMEO framework (Gerner et al., 2002), and we measure the conflictualness-cooperativeness of these interactions on the Goldstein scale, which was originally developed for WEIS data (Goldstein, 1992). In its application to CAMEO, this produces scores ranging from -10 for the most conflictual events to 10 for the most cooperative. This method of scaling correlates strongly with other attempts at scaling the CAMEO categories on a conflict-cooperation continuum (Thomas, 2015).

Given this events data, we could perform a dyadic analysis, but such designs tend to overstate the statistical power of the analysis (Erikson, Pinto and Rader, 2014) and introduce conceptual problems given that "events" of any kind are rare in relation to the number of dyad-years or dyad-months (Xiang, 2010; Braumoeller and Carson, 2011). Consequently, we make the statistically conservative choice to aggregate the interactions within each month. Specifically, we split the events into four categories: events in which both actors are within the U.S. bloc, events in which both actors are not within the U.S. bloc, events where one actor is in the U.S. bloc and one is not, and events where the United States is one of the two actors. After splitting, we take the mean value on the Goldstein scale for all of the interactions within each category for each month. This gives us a monthly-level time series of the overall level of conflict-cooperation among states in each category. Consequently, we can observe change over time in the average level of conflict or cooperation within the

22

American bloc, which serves as the dependent variable for our primary analysis.

We use an ideal point distance to the United States less than or equal to 1.78 (the median value of distance to the United States over the full period averaged across interactions) as our cutoff for membership in the American bloc (we show in the supporting information that the findings are robust to changing this cutoff). States this close or closer to the United States are considered members of the bloc, while states further from the United States are not.

One potential concern with this method is that states may selectively move closer to or further from the United States. We might even suspect that conflict with other states in the American bloc would drive states further from the United States. Fortunately, the research design rules out most challenges associated with movement in or out of the American bloc. As with many other threats to inference in our setup, movement in or out of the American bloc is problematic if and only if it is related to the occurrence of presidential elections.

We see no evidence of any such relationship in the data, but out of an abundance of caution, we choose not to allow alignment to vary annually. Instead, we assign countries to an alignment status based on their average score at the quadrennial level, corresponding to each presidential term (e.g., 1953-1956 or 1969-1972). Consequently, by construction, countries cannot move in and out of the American bloc in a way that relates to the occurrence of elections as we keep the composition of the bloc constant over each four-year period. That is, in effect, we compare interactions among the same countries in the first three years of a presidential term to those during the terminal (election) year. Figure 6 in the supporting information shows the countries included in the U.S. bloc for each four year period under this measure.

Diplomatic quality tests

Before proceeding to regression models, we provide simple comparisons. First, we examine the number of events. In non-election years, we observe an average of 76.4 events within the American bloc per month; in election years the monthly average is 80.7 (there are a total of 44,662 interactions in the full period). When limiting to the six-month window, we observe a monthly average of 78.4 interactions in non-election years and 80.0 in election years; neither of these differences is statistically significant. Turning to the conflict-cooperation scale, we find a mean value of 1.79 in non-election years and 1.60 in election years ($p < 0.05$), while limiting to the six-month window gives means of 1.75 and 1.51 ($p < 0.05$).

We next fit regression models via OLS, using heteroskedasticity and autocorrelation consistent standard errors as above (although there is no missing data in these specifications). All specifications include month effects to address seasonality. We begin with the simplest specification (only the "Proximate Election" indicator and month effects), then add biennial and quadrennial fixed effects. We repeat the same tests after including an indicator for midterm elections. For reference purposes, we also repeat the same tests (Table 11 in the supporting information) separating reelection campaign years. As before, our standard errors are consistent in the presence of autocorrelation if the time series is stationary. We perform an Augmented Dickey-Fuller Test, which rejects the null hypothesis of a unit root in favor of the alternative of stationarity at high confidence (calculated value of -7.01, corresponding to $p < .01$).

Across models, we find a substantial increase in conflict within the American bloc associated with presidential elections, corresponding to a change of about -0.25 on the aggregate Goldstein scale; this effect is significant at the conventional level. We find no effect for midterm elections (our placebo test), estimating an effect of roughly zero magnitude, with an inconsistent sign across specifications. We also find suggestive evidence, though underpowered and inconsistent across specifications, that presidential election years in which a

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Proximate Election	-0.24	-0.23	-0.27	-0.22	-0.23	-0.25
	(0.10)	(0.11)	(0.10)	(0.12)	(0.11)	(0.11)
	0.02	*0.03*	*<0.01*	*0.06*	*0.04*	*0.03*
Proximate Midterm				0.09	-0.00	0.06
				(0.14)	(0.11)	(0.11)
				0.52	*0.98*	*0.63*
Month Effects	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Biennial Effects	N	Y	N	N	Y	N
Quadrennial Effects	N	N	Y	N	N	Y
n	576	576	576	576	576	576

Standard errors in parentheses; p-values in *italics*. All models fit via OLS using heteroskedasticity and autocorrelation consistent standard errors.

Table 3: *Relationship Between Elections and Conflict Within American Bloc (Average Goldstein Scale).* We note that the quadrennial and biennial fixed effects used here control for both time period variation and president to president variation.

sitting president is campaigning are more conflictual than ones in which the president is termed out or has chosen not to run (shown in the supporting information). Turning to the magnitude of the primary effect, we find that the estimated effect is equivalent to moving from the median value of the monthly conflict/cooperation scale to roughly the 36th percentile. As a more substantive comparison, this effect is comparable to the change in US-French relations associated with the presidency of Charles de Gaulle, a period of notable acrimony during which France withdrew from the integrated military command of NATO – Reyn (2009, p. 15) writes that "no [other] debate between Atlantic allies has matched the range and depth of the Franco-American dispute" during this period. We show further comparisons in Table 12 in the supporting information.

In Figure 14 in the supporting information, we show the effects of removing individual countries from our data on the election-conflict estimate and compare these estimates to null distributions removing an equivalent number of events from our data. These results suggest

that our estimates do not overly rely on the election conflict of any specific country.

Tests of Alternate Causal Pathways

We now turn to the analysis of other sets of interactions. As discussed above, many competing explanations for the link between conflict within the U.S. bloc and elections imply different rates of conflict among other groups of states. Our theory suggests that the level of conflictualness/cooperativeness in interactions across blocs (dyads where one state is in the American bloc and one state is not) should be unaffected by changes in the level of presidential attention, so observing a significant difference in these interactions associated with elections would tend to give support to counter-explanations of our finding. We have not directly theorized about interactions in which the United States is a party, but "diversionary war" explanations for conflict within the American bloc rely on an increased level of American conflictualness in direct interactions associated with elections, so we test for this as well. We observe a total of 67,193 cross-bloc interactions and 141,250 interactions in which the United States is a party. As above, we find no meaningful difference in the number of events reported in election and non-election years. Table 4 shows our results in estimating the effect of elections. We report three specifications for each group: one with only month effects, one with biennial effects, and one with quadrennial effects.

In short, there is nothing here to suggest an increase in American aggressiveness that would spill over into increased conflict within the American bloc. Similarly, the finding of no meaningful change in cross-bloc interactions is both consistent with our theoretical predictions and suggests that countries within the American sphere of influence are not simply becoming more aggressive or conflictual during the period in question; only their relations with other countries in the American bloc are changing.

	Cross-Bloc Interactions			Direct US Interactions		
Proximate Election	0.09	0.10	-0.02	-0.03	-0.04	-0.01
	(0.17)	(0.15)	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.08)	(0.08)
	0.60	*0.51*	*0.85*	*0.82*	*0.64*	*0.88*
Month Effects	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Quadrennial Effects	N	Y	N	N	Y	N
Biennial Effects	N	N	Y	N	N	Y
n	576	576	576	576	576	576

Standard errors in parentheses; p-values in *italics*. All models fit via OLS along using heteroskedasticity and autocorrelation consistent standard errors.

Table 4: *Effect of Election Years on Conflict Among Other Groups (Average Goldstein Scale).*

Discussion and Conclusion

In our results, we have shown that presidential attention to foreign policy declines markedly during the months preceding a presidential election and that this same period is strongly associated with a decrease in our measure of diplomatic quality – an increased level of conflict among countries aligned with the United States. A series of related tests discredit the most plausible alternative explanations linking elections to this conflict pattern, suggesting that the main causal driver of the relationship is presidential time, effort, and attention. At a general level, this validates the existence of an executive bottleneck in American foreign policy and supports the claim that direct presidential involvement is an important factor in formulating and executing a successful foreign policy, at least in the short-term.

This carries substantial implications for the body of work suggesting that leaders' beliefs and incentives matter (Darden, 2010; Chiozza and Goemans, 2011; Saunders, 2011). As Jervis (2013) notes in a review of this literature, it is difficult to determine whether or not leaders' beliefs matter because leaders are selected, in no small part, because of their beliefs. Similarly, given that beliefs vary leader-to-leader, it is difficult to control for related variables, such as skill and personality, or other variables that change with the leader, such

as the staffing of key posts. We have shown that a leader's actions, particularly those involving the direct use of his time, matter for outcomes, thus validating the second step in a pathway running from beliefs/incentives to actions to outcomes. Presidents can matter merely by deciding how to allot their own effort, and this choice is generally exercised at the president's discretion.

The argument that presidents matter, generating an executive bottleneck, has two general bodies of detractors as noted at the outset. Our findings strongly contradict the claim that American behavior is purely dictated by the international environment. By showing that the occurrence of elections in the United States strongly and significantly influences third-party interactions, we have demonstrated that American behavior is not merely given by the external environment. Weaker states may find themselves more constrained by the environment than a superpower, but the American freedom of maneuver is still important.

The results also reveal that the president is not entirely constrained by the bureaucracy or domestic conditions; his own involvement matters. We do not mean to claim that these do not matter. In fact, it is likely that, say, how the Secretary of State spends her time is also consequential, but whatever the effects of these actors, we have shown that the president's role is *independently* consequential. These results also intersect with work on the president's role in setting the foreign policy agenda. Within this literature, Wood and Peake (1998) develop a theory similar to our own, focusing on the the constraints imposed by competing issue area demands on the president. They then examine presidential public statements to measure attention to particular foreign policy issues. We advance this research program by focusing on international outcomes (conflict/cooperation in the American sphere), rather than just inputs (the president's time or public statements), and show that the input of presidential attention matters for these outputs, thus emphasizing the importance of studying what is on the president's agenda.

The importance of the president to foreign policy also helps to sustain a bedrock assump-

tion of many principal-agent theories as applied to international relations: namely that the president has the ability to exert effort at cost to himself in order to deliver better outcomes for the nation. Lake (1992) and Bueno De Mesquita et al. (2003) have mostly prominently advanced this line of reasoning. In a nutshell, they argue that certain institutional arrangements lead to more successful foreign policy by incentivizing leaders to "try harder". In general, the conceptualization of effort deployed has been a financial one: leaders try harder by spending more money on foreign policy goals (most notably in contrast to rent-seeking), but this is a very limiting construct for effort; thus, we have importantly shown here that another form of effort, and one that is firmly under any leader's control, leads to more successful outcomes.

In addition to the implications for the study of foreign policy, our results speak to the nature of relations among countries in the American bloc and hold implications for theories of hegemonic management. We have shown that relations in the American bloc are responsive to purely domestic American conditions. This suggests a relatively large American role in these relationships and implies that active American involvement is necessary to maintain peace within the American sphere of influence. Our findings do not directly speak to the issue of whether U.S. power is stabilizing or destabilizing in grand systemic terms because the U.S. existed as the preeminent power throughout the timespan of our analysis (Wohlforth, 1999; Monteiro, 2011), but they do suggest that over the short-run, increased U.S. activity promotes peace among a certain subset of states. Further, our findings suggest that if U.S. power is stabilizing, then it requires a sustained engagement to have maximal effect.

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31

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Supporting Information

Presidential Daily Diary

Our attention data comes from the "Presidential Daily Diary." We show an example page from this record in Figure 2. We identify four of the meetings on this page as relevant to foreign policy. The first is a two-minute phone call between President Carter and Secretary of Defense Harold Brown. We code this as relevant to foreign policy on the basis of the name "Harold Brown" and the keyword "Secretary of Defense". The second is a five-minute meeting between Carter and Zbigniew Brzezinski, which is coded as relevant to foreign policy on the basis of the name "Brzezinski" and the keyword "National Security". The third is a subsequent meeting with Brzezinski, and the fourth is a meeting involving Carter, Walter Mondale, two Chinese officials, and Secretary of State Cyrus Vance. We identify this a relevant to foreign policy on the basis of the name "Cyrus Vance", the keyword "Secretary of State", and the keyword "China." The only distinction we make among meetings is whether or not they pertain to foreign policy. We do not, for example, count the phone call with Harold Brown in a different way than we would count an in-person meeting. We also make no distinction on the basis of the time of day. While a phone call in the middle of the night likely signifies something different than a scheduled meeting in the middle of the day, we do not have clear *a priori* reasons to believe that the effectiveness of presidential attention is higher at one time than the other.

The quality of presidential daily diary data varies somewhat over time, partially as a result of missing or incomplete records from the presidential libraries and partially as a result of error introduced through the OCR and automated parsing process. In Figure 3, we plot the total number of minutes of recorded activity in our dataset at the monthly level. This measure is relatively constant over time, with the exception of substantial drops in the middle of the Johnson administration, throughout the Eisenhower administration, and at

the end of the Reagan administration, along with a somewhat substantial spike during the Ford administration. We note that variation in the total recorded duration is mostly related to measurement issues; that is, a lower duration for a given month likely does *not* reflect an overall decrease in presidential activity.

As a second measure, in Figure 4, we crudely approximate the level of OCR error in the data by computing the percentage of words in the OCR results found among the 333,333 most common words of the Google Web Trillion Word Corpus, composed of English language words on public web pages. This measure is imperfect, both because the fact that a word occurs in the corpus does not indicate that it was read correctly and because uncommon proper nouns (e.g., names of certain advisors such as Ford Press Secretary Jerald terHorst or Roosevelt Secretary of State Edward Stettinius) are not included in the corpus. Thus, the measure is approximate, and is more comparable within administrations than across them, given that the relative frequency of uncommon last names in the diaries varies dramatically. We further note that this measure does not reflect cases in which OCR simply fails to recognize the existence of text. All in all, however, this measure indicates fairly stable performances over time, with the exception of brief periods in the 1960s and 1980s where performance is quite poor.

THE WHITE HOUSE	THE **DAILY DIARY** OF PRESIDENT **JIMMY CARTER**

LOCATION
THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON, D.C.

DATE (Mo., **Day, Yr.**)
FEBRUARY 8, 1977

TIME   DAY
6:30 a.m. TUESDAY

TIME		PHONE P=Placed R=Rec'd	ACTIVITY
From	To		
6:30		R	The President received a wake up call from the White House signal board operator.
6:58			The President went to the Oval Office.
7:18	7:20	P	The President talked with Secretary of Defense Harold Brown.
7:30	7:35		The President met with his Assistant for National Security Affairs Zbigniew Brzezinski.
7:45	7:48		The President met with his Assistant for Congressional Liaison, Frank Moore.
7:48	7:51		The President met with Mr. Brzezinski.
8:00			The President went to the Cabinet Room.
8:00	9:10		The President hosted a breakfast meeting for Democratic Congressional leaders. For a list of attendees, see APPENDIX "A." Members of the press, in/out
9:03		R	The President was telephoned by Secretary of the Interior Cecil D. Andrus. The President's Personal Secretary, Susan Clough took the call.
9:10			The President returned to the Oval Office. He was accompanied by Senator Hubert H. Humphrey (D-Minnesota).
9:10	9:22		The President met with Senator Humphrey.
9:22	9:40		The President met with: Representative Frank Horton (D-New York) Mr. Moore
10:00		R	The President was telephoned by Senator John Sparkman (D-Louisiana). The call was not completed.
10:03	11:30		The President met with: Walter F. Mondale, Vice President Huang Chen, Chief of the Liaison Office of the People's Republic of China (PRC), Washington, D.C. Tsien Ta-yung, Counselor of the PRC Liaison Office, Washington, D.C. Cyrus R. Vance, Secretary of State

<div align="right">continued</div>

Figure 2: *Example Page from the President's Daily Diary* The image displays the first page of Carter's daily diary for February 8, 1977. We have highlighted the meetings identified by our method as relevant to foreign policy.
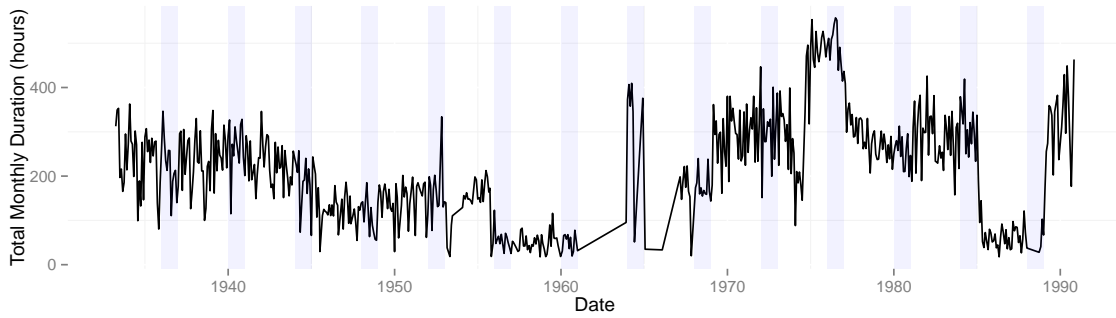
Figure 3: *Total Recorded Activity in Daily Diaries*
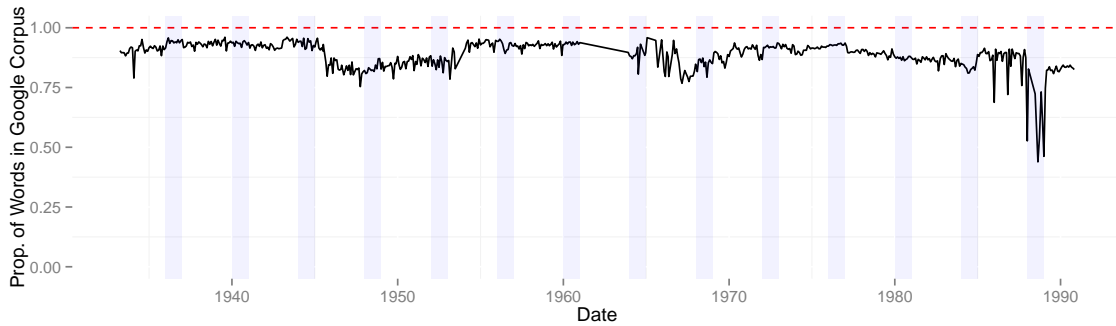
Figure 4: *Approximate Measure of OCR Quality*
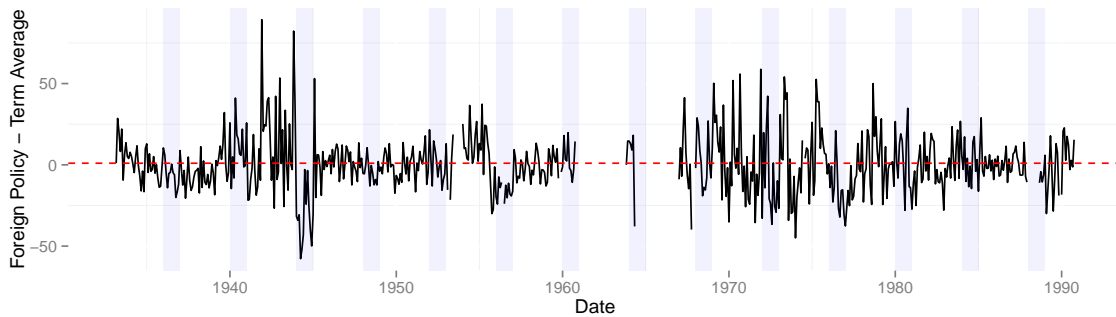
Figure 5: *Presidential Attention to Foreign Policy.* This figure shows the president's monthly hours spent on foreign policy compared to the term average number of hours spent on foreign policy, according to our parsing of the "president's Daily Diary". According to our estimates (as a reference here), the president spends on average around 8 fewer hours per month on foreign policy during the last six months of the presidential campaign season.

Events dataset descriptive statistics

Newspaper	Event count	Event count (in US bloc)
Globe and Mail	22221	8951
Straits-Times	42061	8297
Canberra Times	15248	6345
New York Times	19391	5670
Jewish Telegraph Agency	15155	5520
Jerusalem Post	9815	2753
Los Angeles Times	14093	2638
Christian Science Monitor	4730	1678
Wall Street Journal	5835	1652
Times of India	7671	1118

Table 5: *Counts of events by source* This table displays the number of international events drawn from each of the news sources included in our analysis and the number of these events that include two countries within the US bloc.

Country	Event Count (in US bloc)	Event Count (not in US bloc)	Distance Weighted Mean (not in US bloc)	Distance Weighted Mean (in US bloc)	Terms Aligned
United Kingdom	17726	12401	0.50	0.39	13
Canada	9580	5412	0.96	0.64	13
France	8956	5581	0.79	0.74	13
Israel	8569	20386	0.64	0.72	13
Australia	7742	5540	1.21	0.66	11
Japan	4057	5051	1.32	1.15	10
New Zealand	2512	1054	1.38	0.78	11
Italy	2388	1555	0.95	0.78	11
Netherlands	2084	1272	0.66	0.64	13
Malaysia	1985	7817	2.48	1.46	3
Belgium	1778	560	0.74	0.63	13
Greece	1535	1750	1.73	0.81	10
Ireland	1486	856	1.78	1.02	8
Turkey	1298	2004	1.82	0.49	7
Spain	1076	1340	1.64	1.10	8
Thailand	1006	4944	2.52	1.16	7
Philippines	992	1945	2.34	1.30	7
Denmark	849	340	0.99	0.81	13
Norway	817	269	1.18	0.85	13
Argentina	774	1499	2.60	0.81	7
Austria	712	1146	1.51	1.02	8
Brazil	673	724	2.60	0.82	8
Sweden	639	621	1.57	0.81	10
Pakistan	559	3300	2.56	1.36	5
Mexico	505	1319	2.83	1.24	7
Portugal	459	602	1.17	0.83	11
Chile	381	563	2.29	1.11	8
Cyprus	319	1195	2.69	1.46	2
Lebanon	316	5861	2.83	1.37	4
Iraq	279	5809	3.67	1.42	3
Jordan	279	4515	2.74	1.48	1
Egypt	244	12912	2.70	1.18	1
Finland	241	355	1.71	1.07	8
Cuba	200	1776	3.95	0.93	4
Guatemala	177	276	2.63	1.12	9
Peru	157	683	2.80	0.69	6
Congo	156	232	2.65	1.41	2
Tunisia	150	620	2.65	1.34	2
El Salvador	146	499	2.64	1.00	9
Honduras	143	365	2.56	0.86	9
Panama	135	376	2.58	0.84	7
Colombia	113	488	2.70	0.87	8
Jamaica	103	327	2.52	1.51	3
Nicaragua	101	729	3.52	0.43	8
Costa Rica	97	275	2.40	0.77	8
Myanmar	93	1189	2.43	1.74	2
Fiji	92	242	2.52	1.57	3
Ecuador	73	217	2.83	0.99	7
Libya	39	1988	3.50	1.70	2
Ethiopia	33	868	3.13	1.37	4

Table 6: *Counts of events involving countries within the US bloc.* Means are weighted by number of events. "in US bloc" limits event counts and weighted means to interactions involving two countries both aligned with the United States and "not in US bloc" limits event counts and weighted means to interactions involving at least one country not aligned with the United States at the time of the event.

Construction of the Dependent Variable

Our dependent variable is an aggregation of Goldstein scale scores for dyadic events. Goldstein (1992) originally constructed the scale for 61 WEIS event types through a poll of international relations experts, who were asked to rate events on a -10 (most conflictual) to +10 (most cooperative) scale. The results produced category-level codings running from -10 (for military attack) to +8.3 (for extending military assistance). The CAMEO framework includes substantially more categories than WEIS, consequently it spans the full -10 to +10 theoretical range of the Goldstein scale. To assist readers in interpreting the scale, Table 7 displays selected events from our data corresponding to various points on the scale.

Ultimately, we take these dyadic codings and aggregate them by taking a simple mean for each group of states (US bloc, non-US bloc, cross-bloc, direct American interactions) within each month. Consequently, we have a monthly-level measure of the overall level of cooperativeness or conflictualness within each group.

Argentina
Australia
Austria
Belgium
Bolivia
Brazil
Canada
Chile
Colombia
Costa Rica
Denmark
Dominican Republic
Ecuador
El Salvador
Finland
France
German Federal Republic
Greece
Guatemala
Haiti
Honduras
Iceland
Iran
Ireland
Israel
Italy
Japan
Laos
Liberia
Luxembourg
Mexico
Netherlands
New Zealand
Nicaragua
Norway
Pakistan
Panama
Paraguay
Peru
Philippines
Portugal
South Africa
Spain
Sweden
Taiwan
Thailand
Turkey
United Kingdom
Uruguay
Venezuela

45–48 49–52 53–56 57–60 61–64 65–68 69–72 73–76 77–80 81–84 85–88 89–92

Figure 6: *Top 50 countries aligned with US, by term.* Our alignment measure is drawn from ideal point estimates using United Nations voting data by Bailey, Strezhnev and Voeten (2013). The cutoff for aligned vs. not aligned is the median, term-averaged ideal point distance between the United States and interacting countries in the events data. We average ideal point distances over four-year terms to rule out possible country cutoff jumping effects around elections. These are the top (by years aligned) 50 countries aligned with the United States.

8
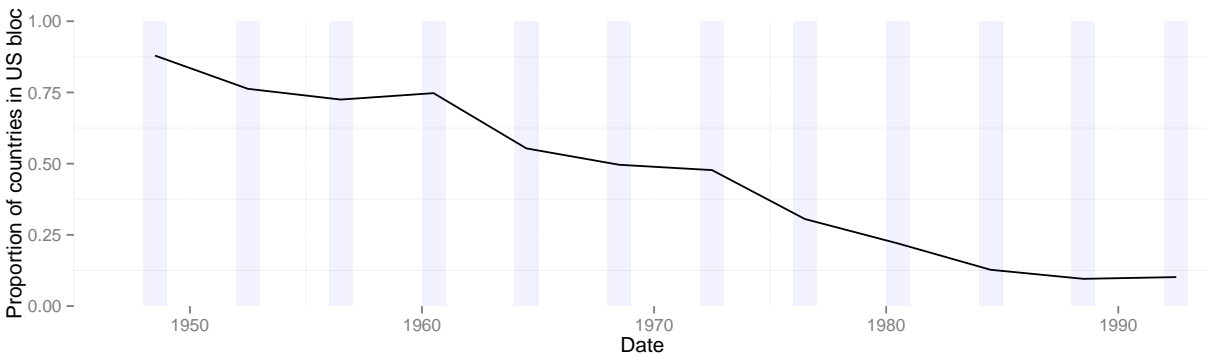
Figure 7: *Proportion of countries in US bloc, by term (displayed at election year).* The decline in this proportion in the 1960s is driven by a larger number of independent states in that period.
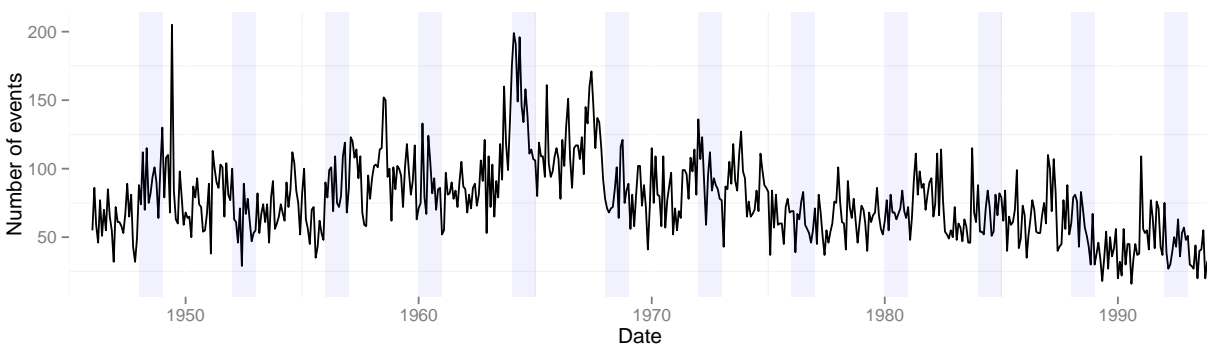
Figure 8: *Number of events in US bloc, by month*
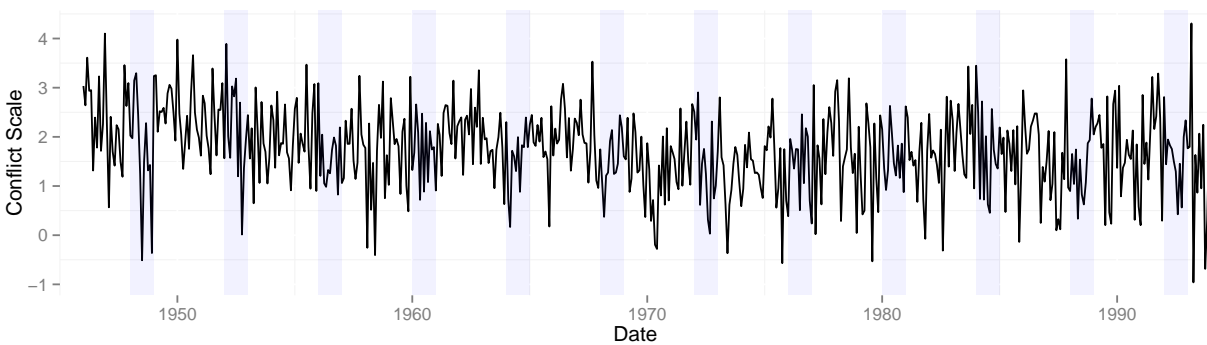
Figure 9: *Conflict level in US bloc, by month*

Scale Value	Category	Example Event
-10.0	Fight with small arms and light weapons	"Turkish and Greek border patrols on the Evros River exchanged shots today." - *The Straits Times, August 1956*
-8.0	Impose embargo, boycott, or sanctions	"Malaya announced today that it would ban the import of all South African goods from August 1." - *The Times of India, July 1960*
-7.2	Mobilize or increase armed forces	"The Congo Government sent more troops to Kasai Province today in an apparent build-up for an invasion of Katanga" - *The New York Times, August 1960*
-5.0	Impose administrative sanctions	"Japan, who will host the third Asian track and field meet here from May 31-June 3, will bar Israel from taking part." - *The Straits Times, February 1979*
-2.0	Complain officially	"Sweden has protested to Turkey over the arrest of Captain Oscar Lorentzon of the Swedish ship Naboland which was in collision with a Turkish submarine in the Dardanelles last week." - *The Straits Times, April 1953*
2.8	Host a visit	"French President Vincent Auriol of the Fourth Republic is paying a state visit to London on the completion of 50 years of cordial relations between Great Britain and France." - *The Los Angeles Times, March 1950*
5.2	Express intent to cooperate economically	"Japan will discuss possible voluntary restraint on car exports to Canada." - *The New York Times, May 1981*
7.0	Apologize	"The British Embassy apologised to the Philippine Government today because a Royal Air Force jetbomber intruded in Philippine air space and said the incident resulted from administrative error." - *The Straits Times, October 1971*
7.4	Cooperate militarily	"Canada is joining the United States and Australia in development of a new system of communications, using satellites, for use by land forces on the battlefield." - *The Globe and Mail, April 1967*
10.0	Retreat or surrender militarily	"Britain was today withdrawing its three frigates from the disputed fishing waters off Iceland but the Government here will be keeping an anxious eye on the trawlers they leave behind." - *The Globe and Mail, October 1973*

Table 7: *Example events within the US bloc for representative points on the Goldstein scale.*

Additional Tests

	Model 5	Model 6
Proximate Reelection	-10.41	-9.75
	(3.93)	(3.24)
	<0.01	*<0.01*
Proximate Not Reelection	-0.90	-5.12
	(4.21)	(3.12)
	0.83	*0.10*
Proximate Midterm	0.41	3.17
	(2.84)	(2.55)
	0.89	*0.21*
Month Effects	Y	Y
Presidential Term Effects	Y	N
Biennial Effects	N	Y
n	633	633

Standard errors in parentheses; p-values in *italics*. All models fit via OLS with heteroskedasticity and autocorrelation consistent standard errors.

Table 8: *Relationship Between Elections and Presidential Time Spent on Foreign Policy (Hours).* This table shows the declines in presidential attention to foreign policy June through November during election years, separating those where the president is running for reelection from those where he is not. These results should be interpreted with caution because we have only four total elections in which the president did not seek reelection and in two of these cases (1952 and 1968) this decision was explicitly linked to international conditions. Furthermore, we are missing presidential diary data for some years of the Johnson administration and have very little diary information from Reagan's last year in office.

	Attention to foreign policy / Term average attention (scaled)
Proximate	−0.25
	(0.09)
	<0.01
Year	0.33
(scaled)	(0.56)
	0.56
Proximate election:Year	−0.02
	(0.09)
	0.86
n	633

Standard errors in parentheses; p-values in *italics*. All models fit via OLS with heteroskedasticity and autocorrelation consistent standard errors, and term fixed effects.

Table 9: *Election-Attention Estimate with Linear Time Trend Interaction.* This model shows that attention to foreign policy during election periods does not significantly increase or decrease over time. We divide monthly attention by a president's term average attention so that all coefficients are interpretable as a within term attention change effect. The dependent variable and time (year) variables are scaled by their standard deviation and centered at zero.

	Time Spent on Foreign Policy (hours per month)	
Proximate Election	−8.12	−10.55
	(3.44)	(3.44)
	0.02	*<0.01*
Month Effects	Y	Y
Presidential Term Effects	Y	N
Biennial Effects	N	Y
n	479	479

Standard errors in parentheses; p-values in *italics*. All models fit via OLS with heteroskedasticity and autocorrelation consistent standard errors.

Table 10: *Relationship Between Elections and Presidential Time Spent on Foreign Policy (Hours), Conflict Observation Period.* We replicate here our election-distraction estimates for the 1946 through 1990 conflict data observation overlap period.

	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9
Proximate Reelection	−0.30	−0.28	−0.31
	(0.12)	(0.13)	(0.13)
	0.02	*0.03*	*0.03*
Proximate Not Reelection	−0.05	−0.18	−0.08
	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.16)
	0.79	*0.32*	*0.61*
Proximate Midterm	0.09	0.05	−0.003
	(0.14)	(0.11)	(0.11)
	0.52	*0.64*	*0.98*
Month Effects	Y	Y	Y
Quadrennial Effects	N	Y	N
Biennial Effects	N	N	Y
n	576	576	576

Standard errors in parentheses; p-values in *italics*. All models fit via OLS using heteroskedasticity and autocorrelation consistent standard errors.

Table 11: *Relationship Between Elections and Conflict Within American Bloc (Average Goldstein Scale).* The models in this table separate elections where the incumbent president was running for reelection from those where he was not. Like the results in Table 8, these estimates should be treated with caution because we have only four total elections in which the president did not seek reelection and in two of these cases (1952 and 1968) this decision was explicitly linked to international conditions. The comparison of reelection years vs. non-reelection years is underpowered, but these models, at the very least, suggest that the overall estimates are not driven by the years in which the president was not running for reelection. Further, there is suggestive evidence here that there is not a conflict effect in non-reelection years (or at least that this conflict effect is attenuated).
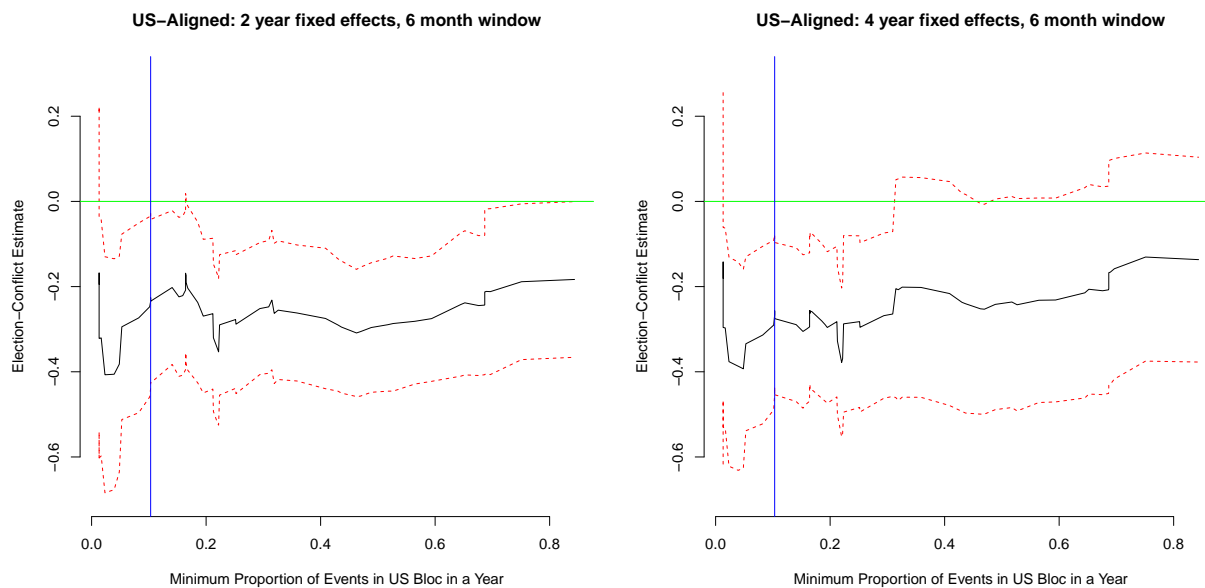
Figure 10: *US Bloc Cutoff Insensitivity.* These figures show that our distraction-conflict estimates are insensitive to the choice of ideal point distance cutoff for the US bloc. The first figure displays biennial fixed effects and the second figure displays alternate quadrennial fixed effects. As in the main paper, these models were also estimated with month fixed effects and heteroskedasticity and autocorrelation consistent standard errors. The blue line is the estimate at the chosen cutoff: the median ideal point distance between interacting countries in the events dataset. The x-axis is the smallest proportion of events in the dataset between two countries *both* below the relevant cutoff in any year (1946 to 1993) and the y-axis is the election period conflict level estimate for these events.

Diplomatic Shift (Dyad)	Estimated Magnitude	Pre-Event Average (Years Used)	Post-Event Average (Years Used)
Camp David Accords (Egypt and Israel)	3.23	-0.55 (1948-1978)	2.68 (1979-1993)
US Opening to China (US and China)	2.23	0.54 (1950-1971)	2.23 (1972-1988)
Release of Nelson Mandela (US and South Africa)	1.35	0.13 (1977-1989)	1.49 (1990-1993)
Chinese reforms (China and Japan)	0.59	2.06 (1949-1976)	2.65 (1977-1993)
Rise of Deng Xiaoping (China and Japan)	0.16	2.91 (1972-1976)	3.08 (1977-1984)
Election of De Gaulle (US and France)	-0.25	2.11 (1948-1958)	1.86 (1959-1969)
Election of De Gaulle (UK and France)	-0.35	2.25 (1948-1958)	1.89 (1959-1969)
End of Détente (US and USSR)	-0.86	1.65 (1969-1979)	0.79 (1980-1984)
Cuban Revolution (US and Cuba)	-1.08	1.57 (1946-1959)	0.48 (1960-1993)
Islamic Revolution (US and Iran)	- 1.71	2.30 (1946-1978)	0.59 (1979-1993)
Islamic Revolution (Iran and Iraq)	-3.40	-0.56 (1946-1978)	-3.96 (1979-1993)

Table 12: *Size of Major Diplomatic Shifts on Average Goldstein Scale of Interactions within Dyads.* To assist readers in interpreting the magnitude of the election effects reported in the paper, we provide a measure here of the shift in the average Goldstein scale of various dyads in response to major diplomatic events. We remind readers that the estimated effect of elections on U.S. bloc conflict is roughly -0.25 to -0.30, and that more negative values indicate more conflictual interactions. Thus, the effect of elections most closely resembles the magnitude of the change in US-French relations associated with the presidency of Charles De Gaulle. We note, however, that the shifts in this table reflect a variety of factors and are not intended to represent causal effects.

	Conflict / Term Average Conflict (scaled)
Proximate Election	−0.23
	(0.12)
	0.06
Year	−0.04
(scaled)	(0.04)
	0.32
Proximate Election:Year	0.10
(scaled)	(0.12)
	0.37
n	576

Standard errors in parentheses; p-values in *italics*. Model fit via OLS along with an intercept and month fixed effects (now shown) using heteroskedasticity and autocorrelation consistent standard errors.

Table 13: *Election-Conflict Estimate with Linear Time Trend Interaction.* This model shows that increased conflict during election periods does not significantly increase or decrease over time. We divide monthly conflict by a president's term average conflict so that all coefficients are interpretable as a within term conflict change effect. The dependent variable and time (year) variables are scaled by their standard deviation and centered at zero.

	Conflict
Proximate Election	−0.23
	(0.12)
	0.06
Presidential Approval	0.01
(scaled)	(0.04)
	0.78
Proximate Election:Presidential Approval	−0.01
(scaled)	(0.11)
	0.92
n	499

Standard errors in parentheses; p-values in *italics*. Model fit via OLS along with an intercept and month fixed effects (now shown) using heteroskedasticity and autocorrelation consistent standard errors.

Table 14: *Relationship Between Presidential Approval during Presidential Campaign Season and Level of Conflict Within US Bloc.* This table shows that the increased level of conflict within the US bloc is not greater when the president's approval rating is lower. This suggests that the election-conflict result is not driven by the probability that the president will lose office. We do not have presidential approval for seventy-seven months and we drop these months, however, linear interpolation to impute missing data between surveys does not alter the results.

	Conflict	Conflict$_t$ - Conflict$_{t-1}$
Presidential Attention	-0.03	
(scaled)	(0.06)	
	0.54	
Attention$_t$ - Attention$_{t-1}$		-0.06
(scaled)		(0.05)
		0.25
n	479	466

Standard errors in parentheses; p-values in *italics*. Model fit via OLS along with an intercept, month, and presidential term fixed effects (not shown) using heteroskedasticity and autocorrelation consistent standard errors.

Table 15: *Relationships Between Time Spent on Foreign Policy and Level of Conflict in US Bloc.* This table shows that monthly time spent on foreign policy by the president is not significantly associated with conflict levels in the US bloc. As we note in the text, there is likely substantial reverse causality between attention and conflict as well as a variety of omitted variables that influence each of these, so we caution against drawing causal conclusions from this result. We also are missing attention data for fifty-nine months of the conflict-attention data overlap (mostly from the Kennedy administration). Imputing missing data (for administrations other than Kennedy) does not meaningfully alter the results.

	Time Spent on Foreign Policy (hours per month)	
Proximate election	−7.80	−7.87
	(3.17)	(3.97)
	0.02	*0.06*
Recession	−0.16	
source: BLS	(2.35)	
	0.95	
Natural disasters		−1.53
(scaled)		(1.22)
source: FEMA		*0.22*
n	633	395

Standard errors in parentheses; p-values in *italics*. All models fit via OLS with heteroskedasticity and autocorrelation consistent standard errors, along with month and presidential term fixed effects (not shown).

Table 16: *Other potential predictors of presidential attention to foreign policy.* This table shows that economic recessions (from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)) and natural disasters (measured through federal disaster declarations, *starting in 1953*) do not significantly alter presidential time spent on foreign policy. We might not expect the president to substitute time spent on the economy for foreign policy time because the marginal benefit of time spent on the economy is not likely substantially larger during a recession than at other times and the president always has a substantial interest in maximizing economic performance. We would, however, expect the president to spend less time on foreign policy following natural disasters (and the estimate here is negative), however, the effect is perhaps not sufficiently large to be statistically significantly in this shorter timeframe. FEMA disaster declarations are counts of declarations by month, scaled by their standard deviation, and centered at zero.

	Conflict among countries US bloc	
Proximate election	−0.28	−0.16
	(0.10)	(0.10)
	0.01	*0.10*
Recession (US)	−0.21	
source: BLS	(0.09)	
	0.02	
Natural disasters (US)		−0.07
(scaled)		(0.04)
source: FEMA		*0.06*
n	576	492

Standard errors in parentheses; p-values in *italics*. Model fit via OLS along with an intercept, month, and quadrenniel fixed effects (not shown) using heteroskedasticity and autocorrelation consistent standard errors.

Table 17: *Relationships between potential presidential distractions and conflict in the US bloc.* This figure shows that economic recessions are significantly associated (from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)) and natural disasters (Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and predecessors', disaster declarations) are weakly and insignificantly associated with increased conflict in the US bloc. US and worldwide recessions may directly cause conflict in the US bloc, rather than through a presidential distraction effect, especially given that we observe no decline in presidential attention to foreign policy during recessions. In Table 16, we observed a statistically insignificant decline in presidential attention to foreign policy surrounding FEMA disaster declarations, and here we find a negative, but also statistically insignificant, increase in conflict levels within the American bloc. These results are consistent with our theory, but not nearly as strong as those for elections. FEMA disaster declarations are counts of declarations by month, scaled by the standard deviation of the variable, and centered at zero.

Country	Added Events (allied to aligned)	Country	Distance Weighted Mean (in US bloc, allied or aligned)
Israel	9288	United Kingdom	0.41
United Kingdom	6618	South Africa	0.45
France	2578	Turkey	0.50
Malaysia	2019	Luxembourg	0.53
Australia	1842	New Zealand	0.62
Canada	1839	Belgium	0.64
Ireland	1495	Netherlands	0.66
Spain	1095	Australia	0.68
Thailand	1012	Peru	0.70
Austria	745	Canada	0.71
Netherlands	730	Israel	0.71
Turkey	708	France	0.75
Philippines	685	Malta	0.79
Sweden	659	Argentina	0.82
Greece	587	Sweden	0.83
Italy	586	Italy	0.83
Japan	574	Brazil	0.83
Pakistan	543	Denmark	0.83
New Zealand	520	Taiwan	0.85
Belgium	519	Norway	0.86
Iran	503	Portugal	0.91
South Africa	457	Greece	0.93
Argentina	414	Uruguay	1.00
Denmark	357	Ireland	1.02
Norway	334	Austria	1.02
Cyprus	319	Finland	1.08
Lebanon	316	Congo, Democratic Republic of	1.09
Iraq	279	Spain	1.15
Jordan	279	Thailand	1.17
Brazil	274	Chile	1.17
Finland	248	Egypt	1.18
Egypt	244	Japan	1.19
Mexico	236	Mexico	1.24
Laos	226	Philippines	1.30
Congo	157	Germany	1.32
Portugal	150	Tunisia	1.34
Tunisia	150	Pakistan	1.36
Germany	144	Lebanon	1.37
Chile	117	Iran	1.37
Luxembourg	115	Liberia	1.38
Malta	110	Congo	1.41
Fiji	94	Iraq	1.42
Myanmar	93	Cyprus	1.46
Jamaica	84	Malaysia	1.46
Uruguay	82	Jordan	1.48
Taiwan	75	Jamaica	1.51
Liberia	63	Laos	1.52
Peru	62	Fiji	1.57
Congo, Democratic Republic of	61	Sri Lanka	1.70
Sri Lanka	60	Myanmar	1.74

Table 18: *Events Added Between Alliance Only and Alliance Plus Aligned US Bloc, by Country.* This table shows the number of in-bloc events and alignments of countries added to the US bloc from the allied only to the allied plus alignment subset of our events data (limited to the top fifty countries with the most added events). The addition of these interactions is the most important distinction between the alignment events and allied events because allies who are not aligned with the United States make up a relatively small portion of the covered events. The in-bloc alignment numbers differ slightly from Table 6 because of the inclusion of allies throughout the observation period and added events include those from months in which the United States had not yet entered formal alliances.

	Alliances Only			Alliances Plus Aligned		
Proximate Election	−0.10	−0.16	−0.12	−0.23	−0.30	−0.25
	(0.12)	(0.14)	(0.12)	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.09)
	0.38	*0.25*	*0.31*	*0.02*	*0.005*	*0.01*
Month Effects	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Quadrennial Effects	N	Y	N	N	Y	N
Biennial Effects	N	N	Y	N	N	Y
n	566	566	566	576	576	576

Standard errors in parentheses; p-values in *italics*. Model fit via OLS along with an intercept, month, and time fixed effects (not shown) using heteroskedasticity and autocorrelation consistent standard errors, and weighted by the square root of the number of interactions in each month.

Table 19: *Relationship Between Elections and Conflict Within American Bloc (Average Goldstein Scale), Alliances and Alliances Plus Aligned.* This table shows election-conflict estimates among countries with a defense pact with the United States (left) and among countries with a defense pact with the United States plus all aligned countries (right). The allied restriction excludes some years of interactions with aligned countries who later enter an alliance with the United States. Table 18 lists added interactions by country in an allied plus aligned measure, and Figures 11 and 12 show convergence from the allied only to allied plus aligned estimate showing that no single country drives the estimates. These models are weighted by the square root of the number of in-bloc interactions in each month because the number of interactions in the allied only subset, unlike the aligned subset, is highly imbalanced across the time period.
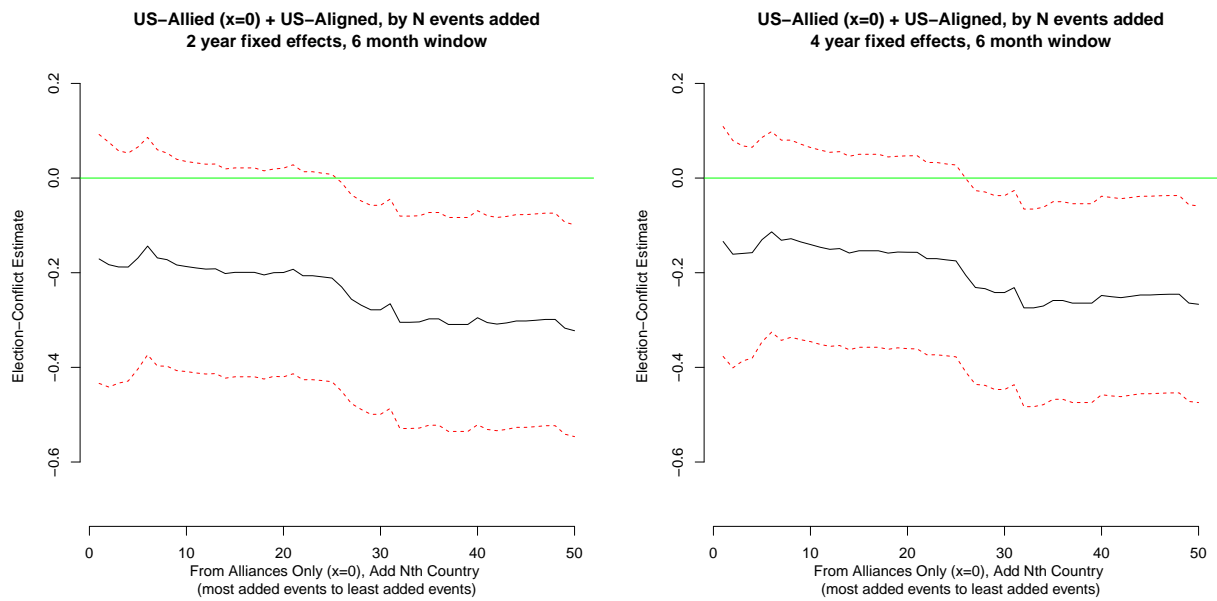
Figure 11: *US Bloc, Allied to Aligned (by Number of In-Bloc Events).* This figure shows convergence in our election-conflict estimates from alliances only to alliances plus aligned countries estimates. We add countries (and all their in-bloc interactions) to the data by the number of events added between the allied and allied plus aligned subsets to show that convergence is smooth (i.e. the effect is not limited to a single country). The left-hand side of Table 18 gives the country order.
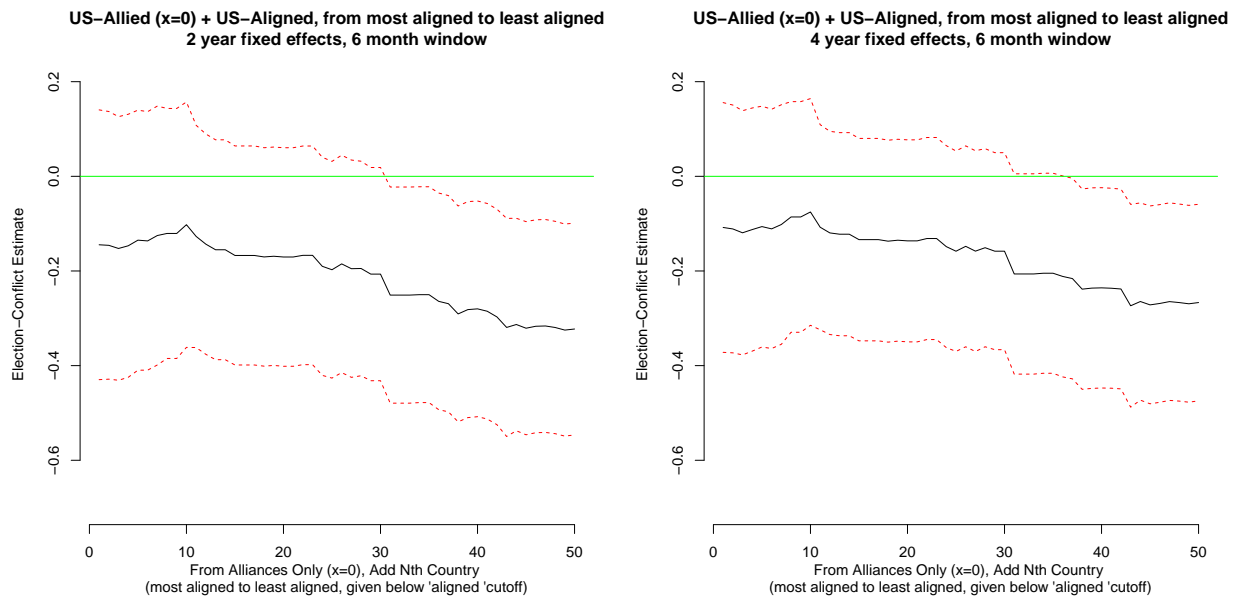
Figure 12: *US Bloc, Allied to Aligned (by Alignment Order).* This figure shows convergence in our election-conflict estimates from alliances only to alliances plus aligned countries estimates. We add countries (and all their in-bloc interactions) to the data by their closeness of alignment to the United States to show that convergence is smooth (i.e. the effect is not limited to a single country). The right-hand side of Table 18 gives the country order.
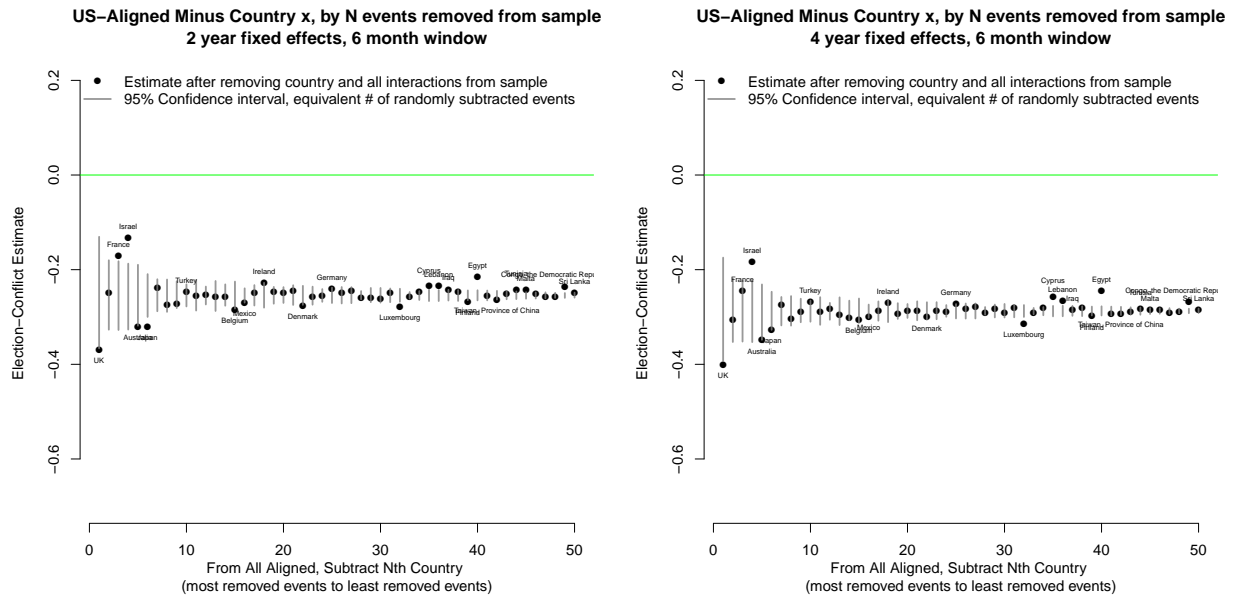
Figure 13: *US Bloc, Country-by-Country Jackknife.* This figure shows the change in our election-conflict estimate when removing countries one-by-one. The gray bars represent a null distribution, calculated as the 95% range of the change in the estimate when removing an equivalent number of events from the data completely at random (and repeating 1,000 times) and are provided to give a rough estimate of whether or not the effect of removing a country is unusually large. Points above the red line (e.g., France) indicate that removing a country makes the estimated election conflict result smaller, while points below the red line (e.g, the United Kingdom) indicate that removing a country makes the estimated election conflict result larger. Overall, the results suggest that our estimates do not overly rely on the election conflict of any specific country.
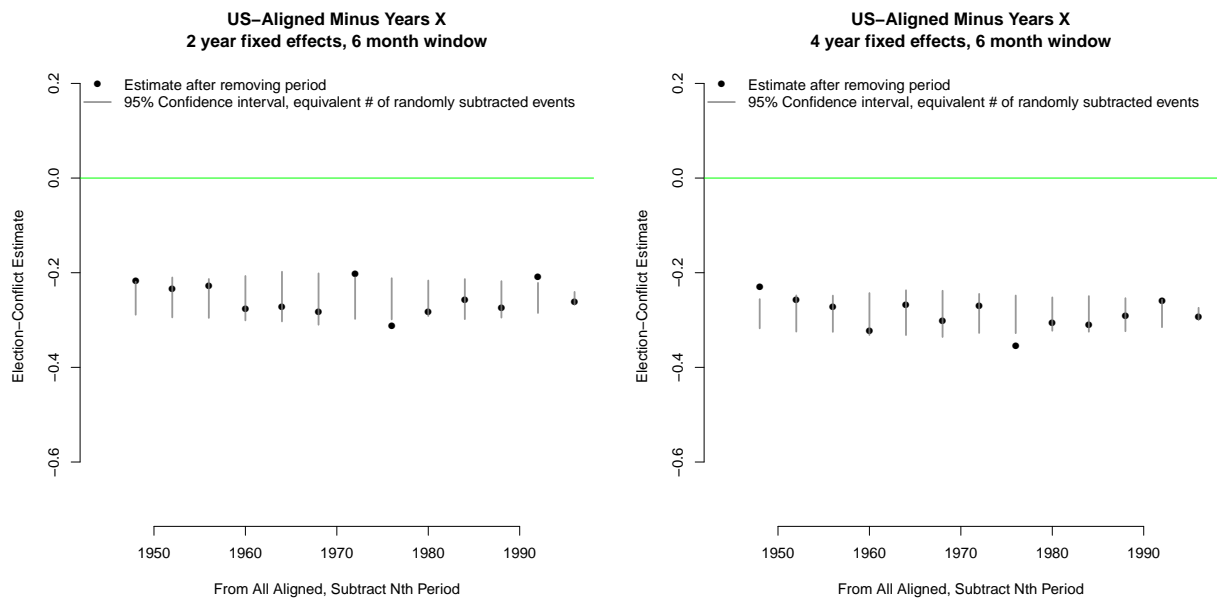
Figure 14: *US Bloc, Period-by-Period Jackknife.* This figure shows the change in our election-conflict estimate when removing four year periods one-by-one. The gray bars represent a null distribution, calculated as the 95% range of the change in the estimate when removing an equivalent number of events from the data completely at random (and repeating 1,000 times) and are provided to give a rough estimate of whether or not the effect of removing a four year period is unusually large.