

The Diplomatic Core: The Determinants of High-Level US Diplomatic Visits, 1946–2010

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Face-to-face diplomacy is an important feature of international relations. But when and why do high-level diplomatic interactions occur? We examine different theoretical perspectives using a new dataset of diplomatic visits by the US President and Secretary of State. We argue for assessing these visits along two dimensions. First, we posit that the degree of discretion or constraint in the diplomatic calendar falls along a spectrum. Strategic and domestic factors are at opposite extremes while diplomatic routines fall in the middle. Second, we consider the convergence in the relative influence of these sets of factors across the President's and the Secretary's calendars. We develop and test hypotheses about the determinants of visits by the President and Secretary of State across twelve presidencies from 1946 to 2010. Overall, the travels of the President and Secretary converge to serve a set of priorities that derive from a fairly stable set of national interests and from diplomatic routine. We observe that the President effectively retraces the footsteps of the Secretary more than the reverse. We find some evidence of domestic (including individual-level) influences on diplomacy, but only limited evidence that times of crisis produce distinct patterns in face-to-face encounters.

In April 2014, Barack Obama embarked on a trip to Asia, only to encounter criticism when the trip was beset by distractions in other parts of the world and ultimately failed to produce a major trade deal. Obama (2014) defended his approach to foreign policy by arguing that “You hit singles, you hit doubles; every once in a while we may be able to hit a home run. But we steadily advance the interests of the American people and our partnership with folks around the world.” This emphasis on patience and long-term relationships—without frequent dramatic results—echoes one side of the debate over the diplomatic legacy of Hillary Clinton, Obama's first Secretary of State. Clinton famously logged nearly a million miles during her tenure. But some compare her record unfavorably to that of her more activist successor, John Kerry. Clinton's globe-trotting left her open to charges that her accomplishments merely amounted to “a lot of miles traveled” (Chozick 2013; see also Landler and Chozick 2014). Clinton's defenders maintain that she engaged in important outreach to the world, brought needed attention to new issues such as women's rights, and set the stage for future US foreign policy accomplishments (see Rohde 2013; Glasser 2013).

This debate—over whether diplomacy should produce dramatic results and resolve crises or patiently tend to national interests—provokes important scholarly questions. Is diplomacy largely the product of strategic

interests that transcend administrations, personalities, and immediate events? Or do skilled leaders and foreign ministers use diplomacy to shape international outcomes? These questions inspire other basic questions about the nature and purpose of diplomatic visits: How do states use high-level diplomacy, and what explains how these high-level visits—a limited resource—are distributed?

The literature on the nature and purpose of diplomacy, albeit sparse, suggests a range of explanations. A strategic choice approach implies that diplomatic interactions reflect and serve state interests. This approach reflects the longstanding tendency to treat diplomacy as largely superfluous. But two strands of recent scholarship put the spotlight more directly on the nature and function of diplomatic interaction. One characterizes diplomacy as practice and highlights the social nature of diplomatic interactions. The other views diplomacy in political-psychological terms, placing the focus on variation in tendencies and biases across diplomatic actors, as well as their interpersonal interactions. Scholars usually study the three approaches to diplomacy separately. This tradition obscures the conditions under which high-level diplomacy is conducted or how high-level visits are allocated.

We assess these approaches as explanations for the distribution of high-level diplomatic visits. Focusing on the United States, we analyze a new dataset from the US State Department's Office of the Historian (US Department of State 2013) that includes all foreign visits by the US President (since 1901) and Secretary of State (since 1861). The data trace these high-level official travels across space and time—in peace and war—allowing us to test predictions on the post-World War II period from several perspectives on diplomacy. We argue for assessing these visits along two dimensions: first, the degree of discretion or constraint in the diplomatic calendar, which falls along a spectrum with strategic and domestic factors at opposite extremes, and diplomatic routines in the middle; and second,

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convergence in the relative influence of these factors across the President's and the Secretary's calendars.

We test our arguments using cross-sectional time-series logistic regression models of bilateral visits across twelve presidencies in what we believe is the first study to explore the determinants of both presidential and secretarial visits over the full post-World War II period (1946–2010). We find considerable evidence that the travels of the President and Secretary converge to serve a set of priorities rooted in fairly stable national interests and in diplomatic routine: the President effectively retraces the footsteps of the Secretary, more so than the reverse. Understanding the distribution of face-to-face interactions usefully complements the valuable in-the-room perspectives that emerge from case studies of diplomacy that focus typically on times of crisis. Leaders appear to fall back on regular patterns and diplomatic partners even in extraordinary times.

Diplomacy as an Object of Study

Despite diplomacy's central importance to international relations, scholars rarely treat it as a subject of study in its own right. They often use the term "diplomacy" interchangeably with "foreign policy" (Jönsson 2002, 213), which robs the term of analytical utility. Indeed, realists largely ignored diplomacy for decades. Some realists accept that diplomacy exerts an independent influence on global politics (see Morgenthau and Thompson 1985, ch. 24). But their approach implies that slowly changing strategic interests largely predetermine diplomatic interactions. Two strands of literature reinvigorated the study of diplomacy as an independent force in world politics, from very different perspectives. First, scholars adopting an agent-driven approach draw on the political psychology literature to highlight how individual diplomats and leaders change international outcomes through face-to-face diplomacy (Hall and Yarhi-Milo 2012; Holmes 2013; Rathbun 2014; Yarhi-Milo 2014, 4). In so doing, they suggest connections to broader research on domestic politics and foreign policy, such as studies emphasizing partisanship and domestic veto players like Congress (e.g., Howell and Pevehouse 2007), the role of individual presidents' beliefs (Saunders 2011), and bureaucratic and organizational influences on policy (Allison and Zelikow 1999; Halperin 1974; Wilson 1989). Second, scholars who highlight the role of the routine in international politics view diplomacy as acts of international "practice" or "habit" (see, for example, Mitzen 2006, 271–73; Adler-Nissen 2008, 668–70; Pouliot 2008, 258; Hopf 2010; Adler and Pouliot 2011, 8–9). Scholars in this vein differ, however, in their emphasis on structure or agency.

The three approaches—strategic interests, domestic influences, and international practice—contribute to our understanding of diplomacy as a phenomenon, but each captures only part of the overall diplomatic picture. These arguments have unfolded mainly in parallel; they have only rarely engaged with each other. Additionally, the two newer literatures have not completely reconciled their arguments with realist claims that strategic interests retain primacy. Yet the strengths of any one approach can potentially address the limitations of the others. A strategic interests approach, for example, rightly appreciates that countries vary in their importance to US foreign policy but leaves little room for creativity or transitory influences in diplomacy. Conversely, the focus on individuals or bureaucracies in the domestic approach arguably understates the strategic and international constraints on diplomatic action. The literature on

practice and habit recognizes the more regular features of diplomacy and underscores the often-unconscious ways in which diplomatic actions persist, but has difficulty integrating the volitional and the deferential aspects of diplomacy. Assessing the relative explanatory power of these three approaches—while acknowledging their complementarity and overlap—is the logical next step in analysis (on the relational aspects of different elements of diplomacy, see Sending et al. 2015).

For that purpose, we must settle on an appropriate unit of diplomatic analysis. Although diplomacy arguably subsumes all direct nonmaterial interactions between governments that are meant to influence or acquire information about their behavior, the face-to-face diplomacy literature tends to focus on specific episodes or crises, or interactions between particular states locked in ongoing conflict. In contrast, as Sending et al. (2015, 9–10) note, other recent work tends to document new forms and sites of diplomacy, beyond traditional interactions among state actors and representatives. Both a focus on critical cases and alternative forms of diplomacy inadequately attend to the high-level bilateral visit, which has actually become an increasingly prominent feature of contemporary diplomacy (as we discuss below in introducing our data). Even as states extended their range of options to communicate and negotiate, they have continued to invest scarce diplomatic resources in such visits, prioritizing certain destinations or diplomatic opportunities over others. Through these face-to-face encounters, US leaders can send signals, share information, and coordinate postures and positions. No less importantly, as a scarce resource, the fact of a high-level bilateral visit itself is often the message, as was clear from the uproar over the failure to send a high-level US representative to Paris in the wake of the 2015 Charlie Hebdo attacks. We therefore limit our analysis to high-level visits—in our study, those by a state leader or top foreign policy official (the Secretary of State, in the US case). This approach facilitates an apples-to-apples comparison across the theoretical perspectives, each of which makes a core claim about high-level state action.

Our focus on high-level visits could be challenged on the two interrelated grounds that diplomacy is conducted at various levels in various settings. For example, lower-level political appointees (e.g., Deputy or Assistant Secretaries of State) and diplomats in civil service positions conduct much of the hard work of diplomacy out of view. Additionally, the proliferation of NGOs and multilateral venues for diplomacy has introduced a growing number of diplomatic actors, as chronicled in the literature on the "new diplomacy" (for a discussion, see Sending et al. 2015, 14–15). Indeed, some argue for curtailing secretarial travel, leaving diplomacy to professionals. No less a diplomatic eminence than George Kennan reportedly wrote Colin Powell before the start of Powell's tenure as Secretary of State, warning against too much travel at the expense of serving as an effective foreign policy adviser—presumably in Washington. As Kennan put it, "This office has in recent decades, in my view, been seriously misused and distorted" (quoted in Rohde 2013). Some might argue that this advice is even more relevant in an age when telecommunications technology or other forms of digital diplomacy allow for quick and direct contact between governments or between governments and foreign publics, possibly rendering travel obsolete.

Despite these concerns, we treat leaders and their top diplomatic deputies as distinctly important diplomatic players who are subject to unique constraints and

influences. If diplomacy, at its core, is a “communicative channel” (Sending et al. 2015, 22), then studying interactions within channels that only high-level actors, like leaders and foreign ministers, possess is critical for understanding the sources and purposes of diplomacy. While those who labor at lower levels within government or in newer, non-traditional diplomatic roles make critical contributions by forging connections or generating deliverables, an official visit bestows special importance and legitimacy on diplomatic outcomes. Indeed, some apparently new forms of diplomacy may simply build on or reinforce traditional diplomacy. Notably, one study of digital diplomacy, focusing on social media in British and Canadian diplomacy, found that “digital diplomacy is simply ‘business as usual’” (Clarke 2015, 125). As Sending et al. note, “As much as there is a diffusion of authority and new roles for heterodox diplomatic agents, we are not moving towards a world where diplomats are rendered obsolete” (Sending et al. 2015, 13). They rightly argue that studying how both traditional and “new” diplomatic actors actually conduct diplomacy is crucial (Sending et al. 2015, 11).

For assessing the sources of these high-level bilateral visits, the centrality and scope of US global involvement makes the US case especially useful. Probing high-level US visits provides an opportunity to disaggregate state-level action, to explore convergence and divergence in diplomatic behavior within the top circle of US leadership, and to reveal a possible division of labor or delegation of tasks within government.

Theoretical Models and Hypotheses

In this section, we develop a framework for comparing models of diplomacy, as drawn from the three theoretical approaches, to explain the global and temporal distribution of high-level diplomatic visits. We argue that the three theoretical perspectives—strategic interests, international practice, and domestic influences—fall along a spectrum of discretion and constraint in the diplomatic calendar but that they provide complementary explanations for variation and continuity in the travel itineraries of the US President and Secretary of State.

At the most constrained end of the spectrum, a focus on strategic interests suggests that preference on the diplomatic calendar goes to consultations with key allies, trading partners, major powers, and other states with an outsized strategic impact. Although the particular countries visited over the years might rotate within a category (e.g., Norway versus Belgium), the character of the visited countries (e.g., NATO) remains relatively stable over time. At the other, more malleable end of the spectrum, domestic actors might have more discretion and flexibility over scheduling. We characterize this end of the spectrum as “domestic influences,” which encompass factors derived from several literatures, including individual-level, foreign policy, and domestic political approaches. The diplomatic schedule of the President or Secretary can stem from domestic political needs or priorities that shift from administration to administration, or from political and organizational influences at home, such as the polarization of US politics. Even within the confines of domestic constraints, however, US leaders can still pursue their own priorities, as agent-driven approaches suggest.

Visits associated with practice fall somewhere in the middle of the spectrum. Visits undertaken to reproduce or draw on the performance of diplomatic practice might

shade closer to the strategic-interest end of the spectrum. For example, once-strategically important countries remain useful diplomatic interlocutors despite their declining power or changing US interests. Conversely, practice-driven visits may at least partially reflect domestic influences that provide an innovative push to diplomacy, as the changing formula of the P5 + 1 negotiations over the Iranian nuclear program illustrates. Such innovation may itself lead to newly institutionalized forms of practice, as scholars of practice recognize (e.g., Adler and Pouliot 2011, 29; Sending et al. 2015, 17–19). But locating the origins of practice in interests or innovation does not negate the independent influence of practice on diplomacy.

Placing the perspectives along a spectrum of scheduling discretion highlights their diverging assumptions about not only the sources of diplomatic behavior but also its underlying purpose and role. From a strategic perspective, diplomacy constitutes a means through which states bargain, coordinate positions, and implement agreements to realize strategic interests. From a foreign policy or domestic perspective, diplomacy allows leaders or their top representatives to adopt proactive or preventive approaches to policy problems or seek to achieve policy success for political benefits at home. From a practice perspective, diplomacy facilitates the reinforcement, reaffirmation, or validation of existing relationships, even as state representatives might also pursue new forms or develop new sites of diplomacy.

Given that extant research establishes that all perspectives matter theoretically and empirically in international politics, assessing their relative influence can provide leverage for understanding not only how visits are distributed, but also how these logics might coexist and interact to explain diplomatic action toward any given state. If, for example, leaders and foreign ministers spend much of their diplomatic time meeting under routine, peacetime conditions, then diplomats in times of crisis may fall back on diplomatic practices cultivated in more normal periods. Likewise, if most face-to-face meetings occur among allies, then leaders and diplomats may be less skilled in dealing with adversaries with whom they share fewer interests and are in far less regular contact. Of course, a synthetic effort has its challenges. Despite their diverging assumptions, these perspectives offer somewhat overlapping explanations (similar issues are addressed in Meernik, Krueger, and Poe 1998, 68). The line between strategic interests and diplomatic routine, for example, is especially porous. Some countries (or types of countries) are visited over and over again precisely because they are strategically important. These perspectives are also potentially complementary, especially in times of international crisis. A crisis can emerge from the novel actions of national leaders, the biases or shortfalls of existing practice, or challenges to the strategic interests of states. Thus, how crises are understood—much like diplomacy in more peaceful times—is a matter of emphasis and theoretical perspective.

In the following sections, we develop hypotheses from three models that we derive from the three theoretical approaches—strategic interests, domestic influences, and international practices—to explain: a) the probability of an official country visit and b) the convergence or divergence in the pattern of presidential and secretarial visits. We discuss these models in turn.

Strategic Interests Model

Drawing from realism, the Strategic Interests (SI) Model, as we term it, stresses that states use diplomacy to pursue

interests that are determined by the military, economic, and political character of other states. Diplomacy thus reduces to an exercise in formalities (on this view of diplomacy, see Sharp 2009, 54–55). Insofar as strategic interests change slowly over time, the destinations of official visits remain relatively stable: high-level visits will consistently feature the same countries, or classes of countries. These arguments do not mean that diplomacy is unimportant. Even some realists such as Morgenthau argue that diplomacy—presumably as engineered at the highest levels of government—has added value. In Morgenthau’s classic formulation, diplomacy is “the brains of national power,” which makes the various elements of national power “an integrated whole, gives them direction and weight, and awakens their slumbering potentialities by giving them the breath of actual power” (Morgenthau and Thompson 1985, 155). But given the overriding importance of interests, the sources of diplomacy exist independent of diplomatic actors in this framework. The United States presumably gives favorable consideration to allies, powerful states, and trade partners as it tries to avoid confrontations, coordinate policies, and reap the benefits of cooperation.¹ In its strongest version, the model assumes that states act as coherent actors and, in consequence, predicts little variation between the behavior of presidents and their top subordinates. A weaker version of the model allows for some level of divergence in effort, since not all presidents will empower secretaries to the same extent and might delegate some lesser priorities. But when circumstances demand it—as when US interests are at stake—the President and Secretary presumably act as one, especially given institutional features that tie the State Department closely to the White House (Arel-Bundock, Atkinson, and Potter 2015, 6). Thus, in its weaker version, the model predicts that the behavior of the President and Secretary is more similar than dissimilar, and divergence will tend to occur for less frequent, lower-priority influences on high-level diplomacy.

In its strong or weak form, the Strategic Interests Model assumes that strategic interests are a strong and consistent influence on presidential and secretarial travels, leading to the following hypotheses:

SI1: The President’s visits are determined by strategic factors, including security and economic interests.

SI2: The Secretary of State’s visits are determined by many (if not all) of the same strategic factors that influence presidential visits.

SI3: The President’s and Secretary of State’s visits to a country are not determined by its domestic governance or political practices.

Domestic Influences Model

At the opposite end of the spectrum, national leaders and their representatives exhibit discretion in the pursuit of diplomacy. Even realists acknowledge the volitional basis of diplomacy and recognize that US leaders have used their positions to transform global relationships, as Nixon

and Kissinger did with the opening to China in 1972, or as Secretary of State Kerry tried to do in his effort to forge a peace deal between Israel and the Palestinians early in his tenure. This view of diplomacy has gained traction in the literature given the newfound prominence of writings that center on how agents—diplomats or national leaders—engage in bargaining, often in a crisis setting. This research builds on rationalist approaches that explore how diplomatic communication aids in crisis bargaining (e.g., Sartori 2005; Trager 2010). Yet much of the relevant work is rooted in psychology. For example, two recent studies (Hall and Yarhi-Milo 2012; Holmes 2013) draw on advances in neuroscience to show how personal interaction can help leaders assess the sincerity of their counterparts’ intentions even absent costly signals. In a similar vein, Rathbun explores how individuals vary in their approach to diplomacy, arguing explicitly that a “theory of diplomacy must be a theory of agency” (2014, 1). Although rigorous and nuanced, these studies often focus on high-profile, adversarial interactions, such as Neville Chamberlain’s assessment of Hitler (Hall and Yarhi-Milo 2012, 564–67; Holmes 2013, 848–50) or Reagan’s perceptions of Gorbachev (Hall and Yarhi-Milo 2012, 567–71).

A less psychologically-based version of this approach, which still points to variation among diplomatic actors, stems from the literature on domestic politics and foreign policy. In these writings, US leaders serve their bureaucratic constituencies, organizational imperatives, or domestic political interests in ways that may override international imperatives. We therefore characterize this model as a broader “domestic influences” perspective that includes individual-level factors but acknowledges that bureaucratic, organizational, and domestic political forces shape and constrain the prerogatives of high-level actors.

Evidence that presidents and secretaries vary their conduct from administration to administration would provide strong support for the Domestic Influences (DI) Model. Such variation might stem from individual-level differences, as Rathbun (2014) contends. Ideological or partisan differences pertaining to the use of force and diplomacy (e.g., Howell and Pevehouse 2007, 72–73; Gowa 1998, 308) might also lead to differences across parties in terms of how much the President and Secretary engage in personal diplomacy, as well as where they go (for instance, to countries with particular domestic characteristics). Thus, we have the following hypotheses:

DII: The amount and destinations of travel of the President and Secretary of State vary significantly by administration.

DI2: The amount and destinations of travel of the President and Secretary of State differ between Democratic and Republican administrations.

Of course, US leaders must cope with domestic political forces. Although diplomacy can have a domestic audience (e.g., Putnam 1988), the President seems unlikely to receive much of a domestic boost from trips to particular nations, apart from travels to high-profile destinations that deliver significant accomplishments, which by nature are rare. Thus, even if political considerations tell the President to get on a plane, they generally do not tell him where to go. We study domestic political influences,

¹ Although the few studies of diplomacy have tended to concentrate on political and military interests, business and economics have always been a key impetus behind diplomatic activity. See Lee and Hudson 2004, 346–350.

accordingly, by augmenting the longitudinal dimensions of the model to reflect changing political circumstances. We speculate that foreign travel allows a President to develop a track record of accomplishment or build a legacy when other avenues are blocked, especially when the President faces divided government (Kelley and Pevehouse 2015; Howell and Pevehouse 2007) or struggles to overcome second-term, “lame-duck” status (Canes-Wrone, Howell, and Lewis 2008, 5). We thus have the following hypotheses:

DI3: The level of presidential and secretarial travel is higher when the President’s party does not control the Congress.

DI4: The level of presidential and secretarial travel is higher in a second than in a first term.

Top US officials might also exhibit diverging priorities because of their positions in government. The literatures on bureaucratic politics and organizational behavior, despite their varying emphases (Allison and Zelikow 1999; Halperin 1974; Wilson 1989), stress that the leaders of government agencies and Departments wear two hats: they are formally beholden for their positions to the President and embrace the long-held preferences of the organization that they head. From a bureaucratic perspective, Secretaries of State recognize that their political clout derives at home and abroad from a “healthy” Department that can claim governmental and budgetary resources and defend its bureaucratic turf. From an organizational viewpoint, secretaries accept the responsibilities that go with the position and might act on the basis of organizational preferences—here, which countries are deserving of prioritized treatment—even if these preferences clash with presidential priorities (on the State Department’s organizational culture, see Wilson 1989, 94–95). Secretaries of State might thus prioritize visits to certain types of states—such as US allies—that serve as traditional lynchpins of the US diplomatic approach (just as Secretaries of Defense place a premium on working with countries with which the United States has security relationships). Alternatively, the Secretary might expend diplomatic energy on states that have good human rights or democracy records, have recently democratized (for an analogous hypothesis, see Meernik, Krueger, and Poe 1998, 66–68), or have less-developed economies. Such peculiarities in the Secretary’s diplomatic calendar might result from a division of labor with the President (whose more limited travel schedule favors other, perhaps more strategically important countries). Hence we hypothesize:

DI5a: The Secretary of State’s visits are determined by a narrow set of strategic factors (e.g., focusing on US allies), when compared to the set of factors influencing presidential visits.

DI5b: The Secretary of State’s visits, more so than the President’s, are determined by the domestic characteristics of potential destination countries.

Domestic influences, including those attributable to individuals, surface in normal times and in crises, as highlighted by the literature on face-to-face interactions. Crises

can open up space for individual action, perhaps prompting leaders to reject their typical priorities and routines. Under these conditions, a President will likely rely on the Secretary of State to do the legwork through travel to affected countries (as Secretary Kerry did during the Ukraine crisis). Even in crises, presidents are burdened with other priorities, prevented for security reasons from traveling without advance preparation, lacking in expertise to deal with the intricacies of the crisis, or justifiably concerned that the moment is not ripe to invest the prestige of the presidency in diplomacy. These arguments underlie the following hypothesis:

DI6a: The Secretary’s (and to a lesser extent, the President’s) travel destinations will be affected greatly by a foreign crisis.

At the same time, the strategic interests and international practice literatures (as discussed below) suggest that crises reinforce rather than change the conduct of diplomacy, because leaders choose to rely on allies or safeguard their primary interests when under stress or because leaders defer to existing contact networks and coordination channels to manage and resolve conflicts. These possibilities inspire an opposing hypothesis, which we list here because it is the natural opposite of DI6a (although it has connections to other models).

DI6b: The Secretary’s (and the President’s) travel destinations will not be affected greatly by a foreign crisis.

International Practice Model

An alternative theoretical approach derives from the literature on international practice or “habit,” as found in sumitry (Adler and Pouliot 2011, 8–9) and peaceful interactions within a security community (Pouliot 2008, 258). For example, Mitzen traces the origins of face-to-face diplomacy to the Concert of Europe, where “forum effects” helped diplomats manage the balance of power and keep the peace (Mitzen 2013, 49–51; see also Finnemore 2003, 113–17). More generally, the literature on international practice emphasizes that diplomacy is a social institution, defined “through the practices that are socially recognized as such” (Sending et al. 2015, 13–14). Diplomacy thus helps “produce and reproduce” order in world politics through the “continual use or performance of the material and symbolic resources that are recognized as being vested in these institutions” (Sending et al. 2015, 14). Diplomatic practice defines and reinforces the nature of relationships between states—including institutions like alliances, patron-client hierarchies, and informal consultative networks. Scholars in this literature debate the degree of agency involved, with those writing about “habits” stressing the automaticity of behavior (e.g., Hopf 2010; in a US foreign policy context, see Howard 2015). Others recognize that different agents can emerge as authoritative diplomatic actors and in turn, alter the form of diplomacy itself (Sending et al. 2015, 11–12). Still, practice scholars portray international behavior that is largely reflexive rather than deliberate or calculated, such that it varies over time less in kind than in scale. In a study of diplomatic practice in Norway, for example, Neumann notes that “9/11 was an extraordinary event,

and so was the activity that it spawned in two hundred MFAs [Ministries of Foreign Affairs] around the world. It was extraordinary not in the sense that the activity was different from what the MFAs usually did, however, only in the sense that there was more of it” (Neumann 2012, 12).

Although change in diplomatic patterns is certainly possible, habits or practices reinforce and validate existing ties, rendering patterns somewhat more “sticky” than individual approaches might suggest. The diplomatic interlocutors of the past are important to US policymakers, then, even as interests and presidential priorities shift. States might interact through trusted third parties when direct contact between them is impeded (e.g., the Swiss role in facilitating US-Iranian interactions). They might consult regularly with states that punch above their proverbial weight (e.g., the UK). They might also address conflicts that arise in various parts of the world through repetitive interactions with countries—like those in the Middle East—that appear weak (and thus unimportant) on static measures yet could drag big powers into conflicts or otherwise complicate their policies. In sum, a focus on international practice highlights consistencies over time in the pattern of presidential and secretarial travels, even after accounting for strategic interests. Thus, we have an accompanying hypothesis:

IP1: The President (Secretary) is inclined to travel repeatedly to the same countries independent of strategic interests.

Notwithstanding presidential visits to places where presidents are expected to travel, a focus on practice shifts the emphasis to the behavior of the Secretary of State. The Secretary works closely with policy professionals (inside and outside the Department of State) who understand the implicit and explicit rules of practice concerning which countries to visit and when to visit them. Because the Secretary acts for the President, however, the President will presumably “validate” the Secretary’s travels through his own subsequent travel. Such follow-on travel would support the Practice Model as distinct from the Domestic Influences Model, since the bureaucratic and organizational dimensions of the latter imply that Foggy Bottom might pursue separate priorities. Thus, we have our final hypothesis.

IP2: The President’s visits are preceded by the Secretary of State’s visits (rather than the reverse).

Research Design, Data, and Measurement

Although the domestic influence- and practice-driven approaches have generally relied on case studies given the empirical demands of testing those arguments and the secretive and individualized nature of diplomacy itself, assessing the relative influence of the three models on diplomatic visits lends itself to a large-N analysis. Some large-N studies have employed diplomacy, broadly understood, as an explanatory variable in analyses of other international phenomena, including deterrence (Sartori 2005), trade flows (Nitsch 2007), civil-war termination (Regan, Frank, and Aydin 2009), international status that gives rise to aggressiveness or war (Renshon *Forthcoming*), and changes in foreign public opinion

(Goldsmith and Horiuchi 2009). But little research has sought to explain where and when diplomacy occurs to determine its emphasis and scope. The few studies of diplomacy as a dependent variable have focused on the determinants of diplomatic exchange (e.g., Kinne 2014) or aggregate presidential time spent abroad (Potter 2013).²

The Dependent Variable: Visits

We employ data on diplomatic visits by the President and Secretary of State that the State Department’s Office of the Historian provide (2013). The data for presidential travel date to the beginning of the twentieth century, starting with Theodore Roosevelt, and continue through President Obama’s term. The data for secretarial travels begin in 1861 with the tenure of William Henry Seward. The resulting sample yields a dataset of 692 presidential and 2,609 Secretary of State visits.

The original data list the country and “locale” (usually the city) of the visit, the date (at the level of days, allowing us to code the number of days spent in-country), and “remarks” that provide brief information about the nature of the visit. For example, Obama’s first trip was to Ottawa, and the “remarks” state that he “Met with Prime Minister Harper.” The remarks also usually indicate whether the meeting involved officials (leaders or ministers) from third countries—i.e., multilateral meetings—or an international institution such as Obama’s attendance at the NATO Summit in April 2009 (in France).

To facilitate analysis, we coded each visit’s characteristics, including whether it was bilateral or multilateral (or both), whether the President or Secretary of State met with a foreign leader or foreign minister, attended a conference, took a vacation, or engaged in a stop-over (see [Supplemental Appendix](#), Table A1 for coding details). We then aggregated the data into categories (“solely bilateral,” “bilateral and multilateral,” etc.). Since we are primarily interested in the distribution of face-to-face visits and because bilateral visits played a significant role in both the Cold War and post-Cold War periods, we focus our analysis for 1946–2010 on any visit with a bilateral component, which includes all visits in which the President or Secretary met with leaders or nationals of the host country. We therefore include bilateral encounters even if the visit also had a multilateral component (such as a meeting with leaders of other countries, as at multilateral summits). We dropped only a “vacation” or “stop-over” from this bilateral analysis. Because the findings for these various types of visits are far more similar than dissimilar, we report the results in the main text only for the inclusive set. We employ a binary dependent variable that indicates whether or not a bilateral visit to a given country occurred in a given year. Its value, lagged one year, is included in the analysis for preliminary tests of the effects on visits of diplomatic routine (IP1 and IP2). In subsequent tests, the lag term acquires more elaborate form (as discussed more fully in the empirical analysis section below).

Inevitably, the original data have their limits. Although we can typically judge whether the President or Secretary met with their opposite number (i.e., a head of state or foreign minister), in some cases we cannot know specifically with whom they met (in lieu of or in addition to any national

² The State Department data were employed in prior studies (Goldsmith and Horiuchi 2009; Nitsch 2007; Potter 2013), but not to explain the frequency of travel and countries visited.

leaders) or what they discussed. The “remarks” section sometimes lists the general topic, as in frequent references to discussions about the Gulf Crisis in the travels of Secretary of State James Baker in 1990. In a small number of cases, the “locale” of the visit is a third-party host for a bilateral meeting—such as Reykjavik (Iceland) for the Reagan-Gorbachev summit—although subsequent summits are captured more logically, as when the two leaders met in Moscow. Many of the multilateral meetings—especially in the post-Cold War period—are dual-purpose visits, where the President or Secretary held bilateral talks with host-country officials, as in Obama’s trip to London in late March 2009 when he met with Queen Elizabeth and Prime Minister Gordon Brown, and also attended the G-20 Economic Summit (where appropriate, a single event can receive multiple codes, reflecting these dual purposes). Despite some degree of noise, the data provide a rich picture of how Presidents and Secretaries of State wield diplomacy as a tool.

Figure 1a and 1b record total presidential and secretarial trips, both total and strictly bilateral, in a given year. Immediately apparent is that foreign travel by the President and his Secretary of State remained modest even after Eisenhower’s presidency until Kissinger broke a barrier of sorts, in the early 1970s, through his frequent travels. Although Secretaries of State continued to travel abroad far more often than the President did, travels by both remained at fairly constant levels until the Cold War’s end. In the post-Cold War era, both traveled more consistently, with the Secretary of State visiting approximately three countries for each one that the President visited. The number of visits by the President and Secretary of State increased over time and the Cold War’s end brought major growth in the number of presidential visits that were partly or purely multilateral in nature (the latter are indicated in the figure by the gap between the lines for bilateral and total visits). Presidential travel primarily for multilateral conferences is largely a feature of the post-Cold War period. Bilateral rather than multilateral visits thus serve as a bridge between the Cold War and post-Cold War periods. Indeed, the numbers of bilateral visits by the Secretary of State continued to increase in the post-Cold War years, often exceeding the total number of presidential visits in the peak years of the post-Cold War period (as Figure 1b shows).

A cross-sectional perspective on the data is provided by the shaded maps in Figure 2, which show the distribution of visits by the President and Secretary of State, in the Cold War and post-Cold War periods.³ During the Cold War, the President focused his visits on Latin America, NATO countries, and East Asia; in the post-Cold War period, the President took many additional trips to non-NATO (former Eastern bloc) portions of Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. Similar trends are observed for post-Cold War

Secretaries of State. But in each period the Secretary and President favored some regions over others, and many of the same countries topped the list of most-visited countries in the Cold War and post-Cold War periods.⁴ Indeed, the maps speak to the consistent importance of NATO Europe and the increasing importance of the Middle East and big powers, as official travel destinations. They also suggest a closer alignment between the President’s and Secretary’s travels with the end of the Cold War.

The Independent Variables

The independent variables in the model pertain primarily to strategic and domestic influences on visits. Table 1 presents the variables, measures, and data sources that we use in the analysis. Most of the independent variables are lagged one year to address potential problems of simultaneous (reverse) causation. A lag is also necessary to account for the delay that occurs in preparing for official—and especially presidential—travels, which have become well-choreographed affairs that require intense security planning. The first set of independent variables address strategic influences, and include military, economic, and political factors (SI1-3). We assess the military importance of a country by its overall military spending, receipt of US military aid, whether the country has a non-NATO defense treaty with the United States, whether it is a European member of NATO, and whether it provides troops to support an ongoing US war effort. We measure the economic importance of a country by the US trade (export) dependence on that country and its development level.⁵ We measure the political importance of a country using its vote similarity with the United States in the UN General Assembly, regular participation in UN General Assembly voting, and Permanent Membership in the UN Security Council, plus Germany and Japan (to measure “major power status”).

Turning to our hypotheses related to domestic influences, we include dummy variables for each presidential administration (DI1), Democratic vs. Republican administration (DI2), divided government (DI3), and whether a given year occurs within a presidential second term (DI4). In follow-on analyses, we also test for interaction effects between the administration and various country domestic characteristics (as discussed below) to see if differing administrations emphasize different priorities. Potential divergence in the Secretary’s calendar due to a focus on a narrower set of strategic priorities (DI5a) is tested through separate analyses of strategic variables on the President’s and Secretary’s visits. To test whether divergence stems instead from the Secretary’s attention to the domestic characteristics of potential visited countries (DI5b), the analysis includes a set of ideational variables: democracy level, human rights practices, and political ideology (i.e., a left- or right-wing executive). Since many US political allies and trading partners share US liberal norms and US political leaders have shown an affinity toward foreign leaders who share their own political ideology, these variables toughen the test of the Strategic Interests Model. We also include dummy variables to control for the overall importance of a particular region. To assess the influence of crises (DI6a and DI6b), we augment the model with yearly

³ Visits to a country appear in these maps only if the country existed in the relevant period (Cold War or post-Cold War). For instance, a trip to Czechoslovakia in the early post-Cold War period would not count in the map as a trip to either the Czech Republic or Slovakia. But in the early post-Cold War period, a trip to any part of the Soviet Union, when it still existed, would count as a trip to Russia. Maps combining visits by the President and Secretary of State in the Cold War and post-Cold War periods are found in the [Supplemental Information](#).

⁴ Indeed, closer inspection of the data reveal that the largest number of visits took Cold War-era Presidents to the UK, Mexico, Canada, France, Italy and (West) Germany and post-Cold War-era Presidents to the UK, Russia, France, Germany, and Italy, in that order (with the top-10 most visited countries looking very much the same in both periods); the largest number of visits took Secretaries of State to a mix of NATO and Middle East countries in the two periods, with the UK and Israel being the most visited countries in the Cold War and post-Cold War years, respectively.

⁵ We used a cube-root transformation on military spending and trade ratios to resemble the effects of the logarithmic transformation that we employed for other variables in the model. Substituting the square root for the cube root of the trade ratio had no effect on the statistical significance of the findings for these variables.

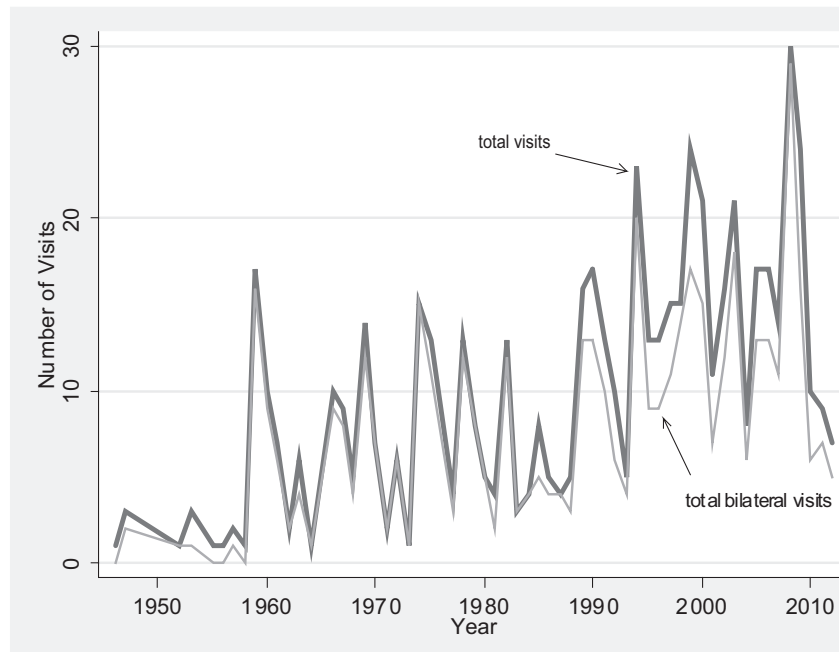
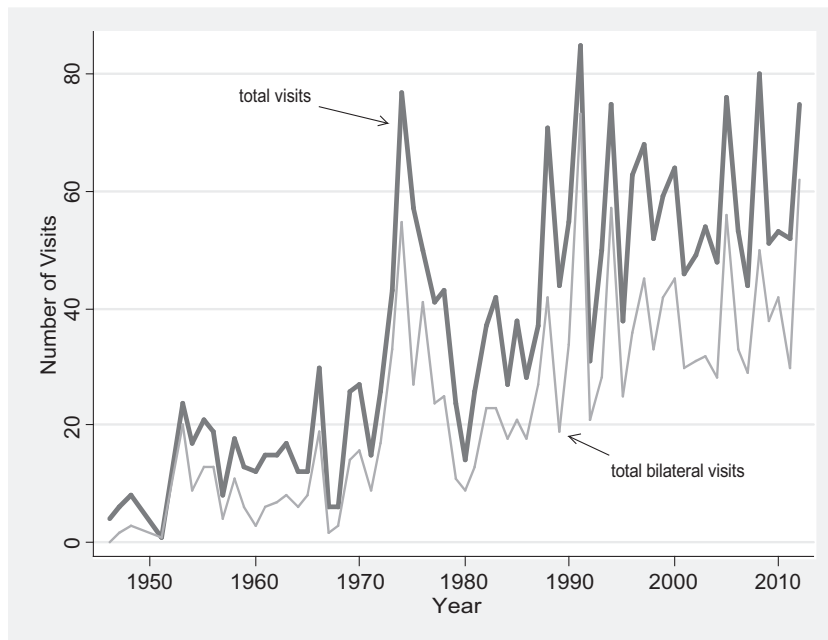
(a) President**(b) Secretary of State**

Figure 1. Foreign travels by the President and Secretary of State: Bilateral content of visit

dummy variables and interaction terms for specific years and regions.

We conducted analysis on the full post-World War II period and the post-Cold War period alone due to the enormous increase in official travel in recent decades. The data sources vary across the Cold War and post-Cold War periods and some ideational variables are omitted entirely from the full-period analysis, because data are unavailable for some variables for some years and we sought to cover at least part of the Obama administration. The separate post-Cold War analysis (1989–2010) is based on data that are available up through 2009 (given

the one-year lag); the “full” post-World War II analysis (1946–2008) relies on data available through 2007.⁶ Given space limitations, the results of the analysis on the Cold War period alone (1946–1988) are found in the [Supplemental Information](#), Appendix B, though these findings generally echo those for the full period.

⁶ We refer to this as the “full” period for convenience though it does not cover 2009–2010 (owing to limited data availability for certain variables). These years are covered, however, in the post-Cold War analysis.

(a)

Presidential Cold War Visits**Secretary of State Cold War Visits****Figure 2(a)** Foreign visits by the President and Secretary of State, Cold War (1946–1988)

(continued)

Empirical Analysis and Findings

We employ logistic regression to estimate the effects of factors—as expressed in the hypotheses that we draw from our three models—on the annual probability of a bilateral diplomatic visit. To assess the relative influence of key variables, we also calculate the probabilistic impact of consistently significant variables across a range of values (as reported in [Supplemental Information](#), Appendix B), holding the values of other variables constant to their respective means or modes. We derive separate estimates for visits by the President and Secretary of State, in the 1946–2008 and 1989–2010 periods, and report the results in two tables ([Table 3](#) and [4](#)) for versions of the model that differ only in their lag effect. We divide the analysis this way because the findings proved somewhat sensitive to the

inclusion of a strong lag that accounts for diplomatic routine with the number and duration of presidential or secretarial visits in multiple prior years.⁷ We place the findings for the impact of changing administration priorities, as hypothesized in the Domestic Influences Model, in the [Supplemental Information](#) (Appendix C) since the results rely on a large number of interaction terms and track the findings in the main tables.

[Table 2](#) presents a summary of the results. Two features stand out: first, the Strategic Interests and International Practice models receive strong support in the analysis. But the findings, as reported in [Tables 3](#) and [4](#), also provide reason to acknowledge the role of domestic influences on high-level visits. We now turn to a detailed discussion of these results.

[Table 3](#) presents the findings when employing a one-year (binary) lag effect that treats a visit to a country by the President or Secretary as a response to a prior-year visit by the same official. The findings for all the models in the table strongly support the Strategic Interests

⁷ The longer lag term takes account only of prior strictly bilateral visits so as not to attribute days spent in lengthy multilateral meetings to diplomatic routine.

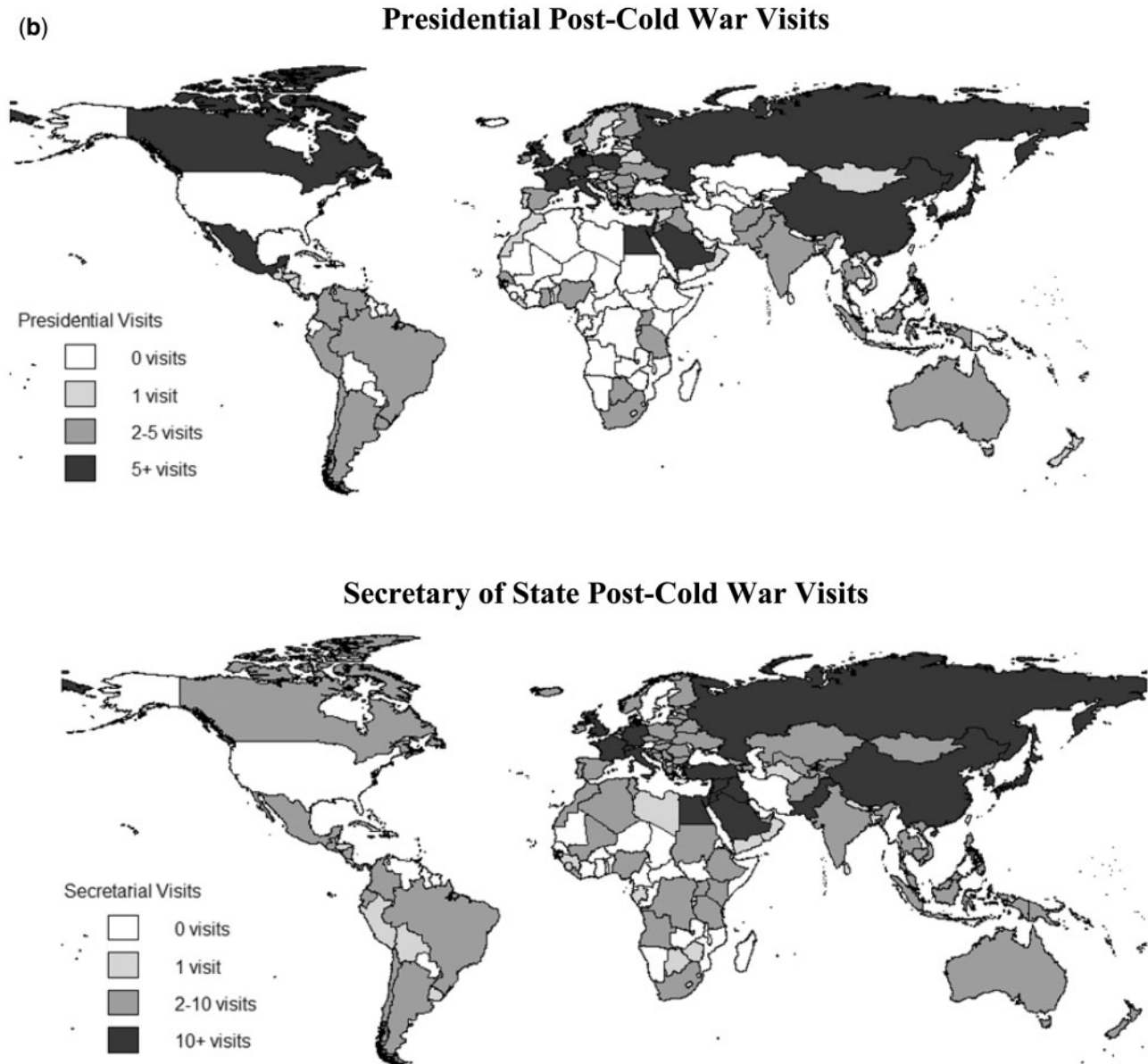


Figure 2(b) Foreign visits by the President and Secretary of State, post-Cold War (1989–2010)

Model. In every analysis, US security and economic interests increase the probability of a visit to a country by either the President or Secretary: the coefficients for US trade, US military aid, and country military spending are positively signed and statistically significant in every model. The findings point further to the somewhat lesser importance of US political allies in driving the diplomatic calendar: based on UN voting patterns, allies received favorable presidential treatment during the full period, though not specifically in the post-Cold War period. In all periods, however, allies were part of the Secretary of State's consultative network. The influence of military, economic, and to a lesser extent, political considerations on presidential and secretarial visits suggests that strategic considerations exert a strong and consistent influence on the actions of the President, which supports SI1, and the Secretary of State, which supports SI2. Of these variables, US trade dependence and a country's military spending most strongly affect the probability of a country visit by the President or Secretary (estimates are obtained for the model variant in Table 4

and presented in Supplemental Information, Appendix C). The effects of strategic variables are largely felt at the high end of the scale, however, with critical US trading partners and big military spenders. The finding that strategic factors have a consistent influence on diplomatic behavior is more noteworthy in light of the relatively minor impact in the analysis of a country's domestic governance and practices, which are assessed fully as determinants only in the post-Cold War period (for which the data are available). A country's human rights observance and level of democracy have no discernible positive effect on the probability of visits in the model: supporting SI3, less (not more) democratic countries tend to receive visits by a Secretary of State in the 1946–2008 period which suggests that the Secretary of State is delegated the task of dealing publicly with less savory governments.

Does the President or Secretary of State nevertheless retain latitude to act as predicted by the Domestic Influences Model? Providing some support for DI1, we find variation (in Tables 3 and 4) in foreign travel by presidential

Table 1. Variables, measure construction, and data sources

Variable	Period	Measure construction	Data source
Dependent			
Visit	FP	1 = Visit to given country in a given year (see text) 0 = No visit	State Department, Office of the Historian
Independent			
<i>Strategic</i>			
Military Spending	F	Military spending: Ratio of Total World Military Spending, cube root to reduce outliers	Correlates of War, NMC data
	P	Military spending (2011 dollars); log (1 + amount)	SIPRI
US Military Aid	FP	Total US military aid (2011 dollars); log (1 + amount)	US Overseas Loans and Grants Data Set
US War Alliance	FP	US and country provide troops to same side of conflict; updated by authors through 2010	UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Data Set, Version 4-2009
US Defense Pact	FP	Otherwise 0, dummy variable = 1 with US defense pact	Correlates of War, Alliance Data, version 4.1
	FP	Interaction with Europe region (for NATO Europe)	
US Trade	FP	Trade with Country/Total US Trade; exports, cube root to reduce outliers	Correlates of War, Bilateral Trade Data
Development	F	Yearly rank: Energy Consumption per capita	Correlates of War, NMC data, Version 4.0
	P	GDP per capita (2005 dollars); log (1 + amount)	World Bank (Open Data)
US Alignment	FP	UN vote similarity (Signorino and Ritter 1999)	Erik Voeten Dataverse (UN voting data)
UN Participation	FP	Ratio of General Assembly votes cast to possible votes	Erik Voeten Dataverse (UN voting data)
Major Power	FP	P-5 Member of UN Security Council, Germany, and Japan	—
<i>Domestic Influences</i>			
Administration	FP	Otherwise 0, the respective dummies = 1 per administration; the GHW Bush administration = reference category	—
	FP	Administration dummies interact with region dummies	
Second-term	FP	1 = Year of presidential second term 0 = Year of presidential first term	—
Crisis Shocks	FP	Otherwise 0, dummies = 1 for each year of a crisis, when US = crisis actor; violence > minor; serious clashes or war occurred	International Crisis Behavior Project
	FP	Yearly dummies interact with region of crisis (with 1956, 1967, and 1973 added as crisis years for the Middle East)	For regions, see below
Democracy	FP	Polity IV indicator: combined democracy score minus combined autocracy score	Center for Systemic Peace, p4v2012
Human Rights	P	Political Terror Scale (1 = best rights score, 5 = worst)	Political Terror Scale
Left/Right Wing	P	Otherwise 0, the respective dummies = 1 for country with a left-wing and right-wing executive	World Bank (DPI)
<i>International Practice</i>			
Prior Visit	FP	Dependent variable lagged one year (base model)	State Department, Office of the Historian
	FP	Number of days a country was visited: a) 1-4 years prior; b) 5-8 years prior (together, the length of two administrations)	
<i>Controls</i>			
Region	FP	Otherwise 0, the respective dummies = 1 for a country in Europe, Africa, the Middle East, South/Central Asia, and East Asia/Oceania. The Americas = reference category	—

Period: F (full: post-World War II, 1946-2008); P (post-Cold War, 1989-2010); all continuous independent variables are lagged one year.

Center for Systemic Peace: www.bsos.umd.edu/cidcm/inscr/polity

Correlates of War: www.correlatesofwar.org

Erik Voeten Dataverse: <http://thedata.harvard.edu/dvn/dv/Voeten>

International Crisis Behavior Project: <http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/icb/data/>

Political Terror Scale: <http://www.politicalterrorsscale.org/>

State Department: <http://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/travels>

SIPRI (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute): www.sipri.org

UCDP/PRIO http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/datasets/ucdp_prio_armed_conflict_dataset/

US Overseas Loans and Grants Data Set (Greenbook) <http://www.usaid.gov/developer/greenbookapi>

World Bank (DPI) Data Base of Political Institutions: <http://econ.worldbank.org>

World Bank (Open Data): <http://data.worldbank.org>

administration. Echoing the previously-discussed descriptive results, the coefficients tend to have larger negative values—with accompanying, negative probabilistic effects (as apparent in [Supplemental Information](#), Appendix C)—in the earlier post-World War II period relative to the reference administration (the George H.W. Bush administration, which oversaw the post-Cold War transition). In contrast, the large, significant and positive coefficient for

the Obama administration indicates that Hillary Clinton traveled frenetically as Secretary of State even by the high post-Cold War standard. Still, the coefficients for each administration (for both the President and Secretary) do not differ significantly in size (and probabilistic effect) over successive administrations, suggesting that the coefficients are capturing period effects rather than changes across administrations.

Table 2. Summary of findings

Hypotheses	Supported
<i>Strategic Factors:</i>	
SI1: Strategic factors significantly determine the President's travel destinations.	Yes
SI2: Strategic factors significantly determine the Secretary's travel destinations.	Yes
SI3: Country domestic factors do not determine travel destinations.	Yes
<i>Domestic Influences:</i>	
DI1: Travel amounts and destinations vary significantly by administration.	Weakly
DI2: Travel amounts and destinations vary between administrations by Party.	No
DI3: Travel amounts increase with divided government.	No
DI4: Travel amounts increase in a presidential second term.	Yes
DI5a: Compared to the President's, the Secretary's travel destinations focus on a narrow set of strategic factors.	No
DI5b: Compared to the President's, the Secretary's travel destinations focus more on a country's domestic character.	Weakly
DI6a: The Secretary's (and to a lesser extent, the President's) travel destinations are greatly affected by crisis.	No
DI6b: The Secretary's (and President's) travel destinations are not greatly affected by crisis.	Yes
<i>International Practice:</i>	
IP1: The President (and Secretary) return to the same countries.	Partly: for Secretary
IP2: The Secretary's visits anticipate the President's visits.	Yes

Do these similarities that we observe for levels of travel apply also to destinations of travel? In another test of DI1, we augmented the model (as estimated in Table 4) with interaction terms to ascertain whether administrations might vary in their embrace of ideological goals, and accompanying deference to the domestic character of a country. We re-estimated the models (in Table 4) after incorporating interaction effects between the administration dummies and the democracy and human-rights indicators and, in another analysis, interaction effects between these dummies and the development indicator (as found in Supplemental Information, Appendix B). We found limited evidence in these analyses that administrations varied in their inclination to schedule visits to countries based on with their domestic makeup.⁸ Tests for interaction effects between administration and region did reveal significant differences among administrations in their regional preoccupations, with strong probabilistic effects on the likelihood of a country visit. Although these effects could well reflect the policy preferences of a given administration (e.g., Obama's alleged pivot toward Asia), they also reflect the unplanned challenges that administrations encounter in conflict and diplomacy (e.g., Obama's continuing preoccupation with the Middle East). Given these possibilities, we should not overstate the importance of these findings, but they do suggest an avenue to investigate in future research.

Turning to DI2, we found no evidence that partisan outlook affected diplomatic travel for presidencies of different parties. A dummy variable for Democratic presidents was statistically insignificant in the models. Of course, political constraints might affect travel regardless of

partisanship if futility at home provoked an administration to turn to diplomacy for policy success. Thus, to test DI3, we inserted dummies in the model with a value of 1 in years of "divided government"—defined, in one analysis, by whether the President was of a different party than the majority in the House and Senate and, in another, in the House or Senate. In an alternative specification, we used the average polarization score for the House and Senate. The polarization and divided government measures were positive and significant in almost all the models for secretarial travels, and the model for the 1946–2008 period for presidential travels, even when retaining the administration dummies in the model. But these variables are consistently insignificant when the dummy variable for the second term—arguably a precursor of divided government and polarization—remains in the model. By contrast, the second-term dummy remains significant in all the models in Tables 3 and 4. In fact, the coefficient for the second presidential term was positive and significant in all models (except the Cold War-era only models, as reported in the Supplemental Information, Appendix B) despite controls for presidential administration. These findings, which validate DI4, suggest that presidents turn to foreign policy in their second term. That the finding persists for both secretarial and presidential travels indicates that the visits are more about obtaining foreign policy success and less about the public photo opportunities and press clippings that come with presidential travel itself.

As for division of labor between the President and Secretary of State, we note that some differences between the presidential and secretarial models are apparent in Tables 3 and 4. US war allies were beneficiaries of visits by the President—not the Secretary—in the post-Cold War period. Although both the President and Secretary of State favored the big powers (the Permanent Members of the UN Security Council, Germany, and Japan) in the post-Cold War years, only the Secretary of State made these powers a consistent destination for travel throughout the Cold War and post-Cold War years (based on the findings in Table 3). Of course, these differences do not override the central finding that both leaders tend to visit countries of strategic interest to the United States, thus suggesting less support for the hypothesis that the Secretary pursues a narrow set of strategic interests compared to the President (DI5a). Indeed, differences between their travel priorities appear in the Secretary's visits

⁸ In the presidential analyses, the democracy interaction terms for all but the Eisenhower administration were insignificant. Somewhat more variation in the relevant coefficients is observed in the Secretary of State analyses: secretaries in the Truman, Carter, Ford, and Reagan administrations appeared to favor visits to more democratic countries, whereas secretaries in the Eisenhower and Nixon administrations—joined by secretaries in the Clinton, George W. Bush, and Obama administrations in the post-Cold War analysis—seemed to favor outreach to less developed countries (compared to the reference administration, the George H.W. Bush administration). Although these findings support DI1, we note that the interaction term coefficients in the Secretary of State models tend toward statistical insignificance in both periods and exhibit similar signs and magnitudes over successive administrations. (Interacting administration and human rights produced one significant coefficient, for the George W. Bush administration, in the analysis for the post-Cold War period.) These findings provide little reason to suspect, then, that administrations differ in their willingness to employ diplomacy to further ideological goals.

Table 3. Logistic analysis of bilateral visits by the US President and Secretary of State, simple lag term

	Post-World War II: 1946–2008				Post-Cold War: 1989–2010			
	President		Secretary of State		President		Secretary of State	
	Coef	SE	Coef	SE	Coef	SE	Coef	SE
<i>Strategic</i>								
Military Spending	4.18*	1.13	5.18*	1.20	.46*	.08	.25*	.11
US Military Aid	.05*	.01	.05*	.01	.04*	.01	.04*	.01
US War Alliance	.24	.25	.01	.17	.37*	.20	–.11	.19
US Defense Pact	.12	.28	.07	.25	.01	.40	.24	.38
x Europe	–.36	.36	.12	.30	–.59	.46	.04	.39
US Trade	5.71*	1.23	4.14*	.84	4.90*	1.00	4.07*	1.22
Development	–.00	.00	–.00	.00	–.15	.11	–.20	.10
US Alignment	.72*	.20	.60*	.23	–.58	.36	1.03*	.40
UN Participation	–1.76	1.19	–.98	.59	–.44	1.07	–.80	.67
Major Power	.19	.32	.58*	.29	.60*	.29	.66*	.27
<i>Domestic Influences</i>								
Second Term	.33*	.12	.35*	.08	.31#	.17	.41*	.11
Truman	–3.95*	.86	–3.57*	.58	.	.	.	.
Eisenhower	–2.06*	.37	–1.61*	.39	.	.	.	.
Kennedy	–1.89*	.42	–1.84*	.36	.	.	.	.
Johnson	–1.76*	.42	–1.91*	.36	.	.	.	.
Nixon	–.94*	.30	–.29	.26	.	.	.	.
Ford	–.98*	.44	–.27	.30	.	.	.	.
Carter	–.94*	.32	–.82*	.26	.	.	.	.
Reagan	–1.36*	.29	–.20	.19	.	.	.	.
Clinton	–.20	.22	.13	.19	.12	.22	.23	.20
GW Bush	–.13	.23	.16	.18	–.22	.23	.38*	.19
Obama	.	.	.	.	–.39	.27	1.04*	.25
Democracy	–.02	.02	–.02*	.01	.03	.02	–.03	.02
Human Rights	.	.	.	.	–.07	.09	.03	.09
Left-Wing	.	.	.	.	–.24	.21	–.29	.19
Right-Wing	.	.	.	.	.11	.21	–.29	.19
<i>International Practice: Prior Visit</i>								
President/Secretary, 1 year	–.48*	.21	.43*	.08	–.59*	.20	.50*	.11
Secretary 1–4 years	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
President 1–4 years	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Secretary 5–8 years	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
President 5–8 years	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
<i>Regional Controls</i>								
Europe	.73	.39	.44	.30	1.11*	.50	.47	.49
Africa	–.42	.45	–.31	.33	.45	.51	–.23	.46
Middle East	.07	.37	1.03*	.29	.42	.45	1.04*	.41
South/Central Asia	–.05	.46	.52	.32	–.85	.51	.28	.42
East Asia/Pacific	–.08	.30	.10	.26	–.03	.39	.17	.39
Constant	–4.20	.53	–3.72*	.42	–6.38*	1.17	–3.28*	1.22
N=	7029		7029		3159		3159	
Chi-Sq	755.69*		754.26*		453.23*		477.32*	

Two-tailed test: * $p \leq .05$ (# $p \leq .10$ is listed for hypothesized covariates only), Robust standard errors, clustering on country.

to less democratic countries (as observed above), a finding which offers some support for DI5b, albeit in a somewhat backhanded way.

These analyses, by construction, provide no information about the influence of crisis-related shocks on the travels of the Secretary or President. To extend the analysis to include these shocks, we added dummy variables to the basic model which took a value of “1” for each year in which a crisis occurred. In addition, we posited interaction effects between the relevant crisis-year dummy and regional dummy to account for more localized crisis effects. In a more demanding test, we included a dummy in the model for every year in the analysis to capture year-to-year irregularities owing to significant year-to-year perturbations (with the administration and second-term dummies removed to avoid multicollinearity problems). These analyses only

reinforced our reported findings, suggesting that the regularized patterns that we discern are not products of crisis diplomacy and that crises do not strongly affect the results (supporting DI6b rather than DI6a). Of course, shocks to the system can take other forms, such as dramatic changes in the internal politics and practices of other countries (for example, changes in the human rights practices within a given country and region).⁹ We might expect to see the Secretary traveling to countries or regions to head off human catastrophe, or perhaps even the President visiting a country or region where rights practices have vastly improved—a “positive” shock of sorts—in order to “ratify” these changes for symbolic effect. Still, incorporating a change in country-rights practices—and accompanying

⁹ For these analyses, we employed the Political Terror Scale (see Table 1).

Table 4. Logistic analysis of bilateral visits by the US President and Secretary of State, full set of lag terms

	Post-World War II: 1946-2008				Post-Cold War: 1989-2010			
	President		Secretary of State		President		Secretary of State	
	Coef	SE	Coef	SE	Coef	SE	Coef	SE
<i>Strategic</i>								
Military Spending	2.75*	1.13	4.14*	1.02	.41*	.08	.20 [#]	.11
US Military Aid	.04*	.01	.05*	.01	.04*	.01	.03*	.01
US War Alliance	.36	.25	.07	.17	.44*	.20	-.01	.19
US Defense Pact	.24	.25	.07	.24	.10	.37	.16	.37
x Europe	-.46	.31	.10	.27	-.60	.42	.12	.39
US Trade	5.33*	1.12	3.60*	.78	5.08*	1.07	3.35*	1.28
Development	.00	.00	-.00	.00	-.13	.11	-.15	.10
US Alignment	.25	.24	.43*	.22	-1.19*	.42	.82*	.40
UN Participation	-1.70	1.17	-1.03	.58	-.52	1.08	-.75	.66
Major Power	-.02	.31	.47 [#]	.25	.39	.27	.45	.30
<i>Domestic Influences</i>								
Second Term	.31*	.12	.31*	.08	.29 [#]	.15	.35*	.12
Truman	-3.12*	.95	-3.15*	.60	.	.	.	.
Eisenhower	-1.34*	.43	-1.30*	.41	.	.	.	.
Kennedy	-1.23*	.44	-1.72*	.39	.	.	.	.
Johnson	-1.19*	.45	-1.72*	.37	.	.	.	.
Nixon	-.44	.30	-.15	.27	.	.	.	.
Ford	-.66	.42	-.17	.31	.	.	.	.
Carter	-.68*	.31	-.94*	.27	.	.	.	.
Reagan	-1.26*	.28	-.24	.21	.	.	.	.
Clinton	-.02	.22	.18	.20	.39	.23	.28	.21
GW Bush	-.19	.23	.05	.18	-.17	.23	.24	.19
Obama	.	.	.	.	-.39	.28	.91*	.26
Democracy	-.01	.02	-.02	.01	.03	.02	-.02	.02
Human Rights	.	.	.	.	-.11	.10	.02	.09
Left-Wing	.	.	.	.	-.21	.21	-.31	.18
Right-Wing	.	.	.	.	.10	.21	-.34	.19
<i>International Practice: Prior Visit</i>								
President/Secretary, 1 year	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Secretary 1-4 years	.07*	.02	.13*	.02	.07*	.02	.14*	.03
President 1-4 years	-.03	.04	.10 [#]	.05	-.13*	.06	.12	.08
Secretary 5-8 years	.04	.03	.04	.02	.03	.03	.04	.02
President 5-8 years	.01	.03	-.02	.03	-.02	.04	.03	.05
<i>Regional Controls</i>								
Europe	.86*	.35	.42	.28	1.29*	.47	.31	.49
Africa	-.33	.41	-.30	.32	.50	.48	-.28	.46
Middle East	.02	.34	1.10*	.30	.37	.42	1.11*	.41
South/Central Asia	-.04	.38	.47	.29	-.86	.44	.22	.40
East Asia/Pacific	-.01	.24	.02	.23	-.03	.34	.06	.39
Constant	-4.52*	.49	-3.72*	.43	-6.60*	1.09	-3.21*	1.23
N=	7029		7029		3159		3159	
Chi-Sq	795.48*		1152.40*		494.97*		431.96*	

Two-tailed test: * $p \leq .05$, ($\#p \leq .10$ is listed for hypothesized covariates only), Robust standard errors, clustering on country.

variables for the average directional change in rights practices for each region—failed to produce statistically significant effects in the analysis.

Do the observed effects of strategic interests on high-level visits mean then that the President and Secretary of State eschew the routine that is featured in the International Practice Model? Table 3 provides a partial answer in establishing that the Secretary of State tends to visit the same countries over successive years. This result, which supports IP1, is hardly surprising given ongoing diplomatic challenges and established channels of communication that have the Secretary of State traveling, for example, to Israel and thus also to Egypt and Jordan, or to London with stops in Paris and Berlin. In contrast, judging from the negative and significant endogenous lag effect in the model, the President is disinclined to return to countries

that he visited in the prior year. Presidential visits appear less about regularized consultation and more about distributing attention, reflecting the “scarcity” of the good.

But spreading out the President’s attention does not mean that presidential visits are directionless, or that the President seeks to maximize global coverage. On the contrary, Table 4 shows that presidential visits fit a telling diplomatic pattern when incorporating separate lag effects for the total number of days that the President and Secretary visited a country over the previous four years, and another set of matching lags for the President and Secretary for the preceding four-year period.¹⁰ Even over

¹⁰ The insignificant coefficients for the 1-4 year period in the Cold War-era analysis (in the Supplemental Information, Appendix B) establish that the pattern is strongest for presidential visits in the post-Cold War era.

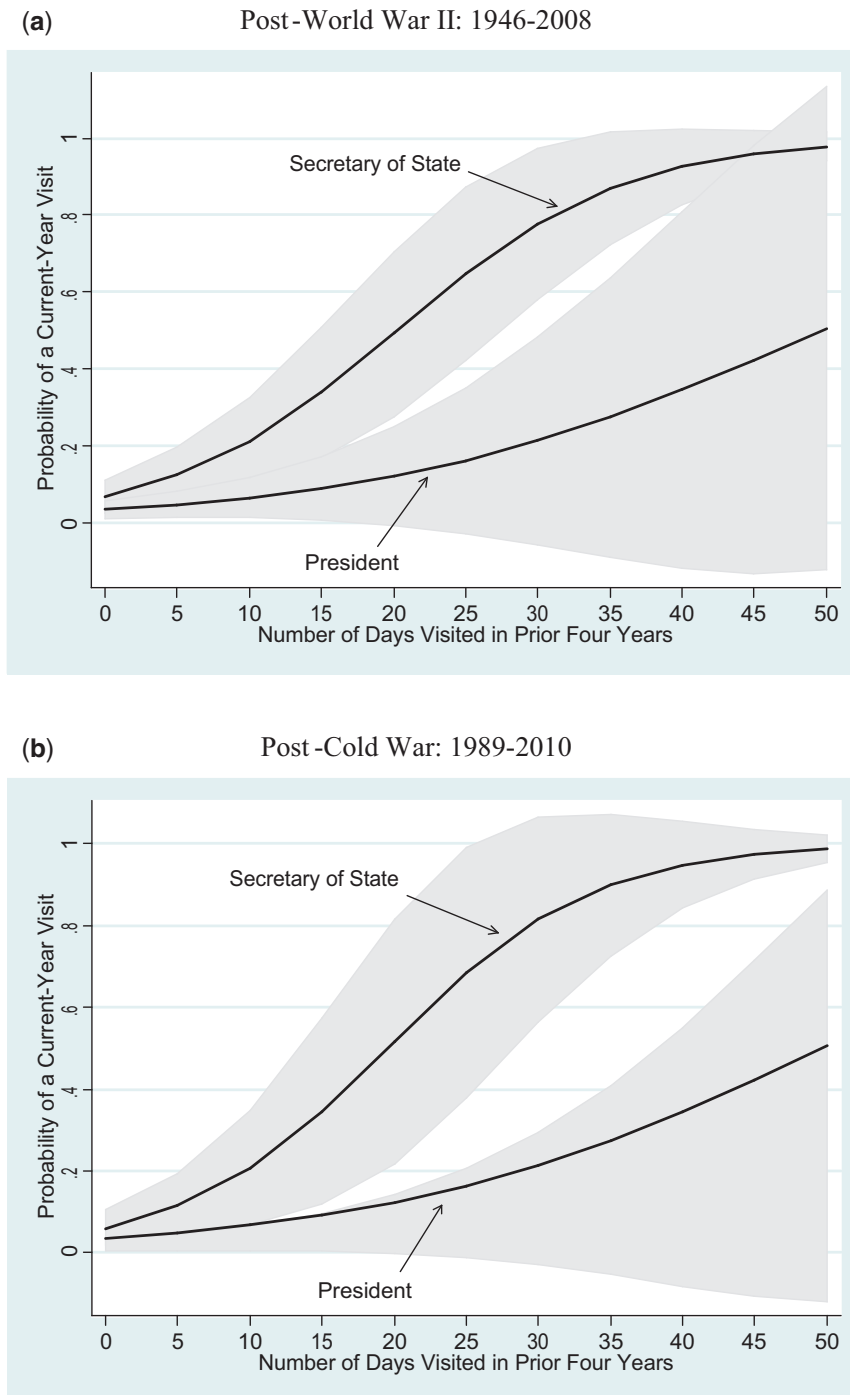


Figure 3. Probability of a current-year visit per number of days that the secretary of state spent in country in prior four years

the longer term, presidential visits appear not to follow their own routine: in fact, in the post-Cold War period, a significant, negative coefficient indicates that the President did not return to countries that he visited in the prior four-year period. In contrast, the Secretary of State does follow a routine by returning to countries that received more secretarial visit time in the prior four years. Importantly, the President is more likely to visit the countries visited by the Secretary (supporting IP2), while a return effect for the Secretary of State is observed only in the full-period analysis, with a loss of statistical significance in the post-Cold War years.

Secretarial routines can strongly boost the probability of a presidential and secretarial visit to a country. They have, by far, the strongest influence on the probability of a secretarial visit in the 1946-2008 and 1989-2010 periods, regardless of the number of days a country previously has been visited. Whereas a country that went unvisited by the Secretary of State in the prior four years had only a very small probability of hosting either the Secretary or the President in the current year, Figure 3a shows, for instance, that a country that hosted the Secretary of State an average of five days a year had roughly a 40-percent chance of hosting the Secretary in the current year. The

effects of prior secretarial visits on presidential travel appear muted by comparison given that the President tends to visit far fewer countries than the Secretary. But, as Figure 3b indicates, the President is responsive to secretarial travels at the low end of the scale, where the marginal probabilities are statistically significant—albeit no more responsive to these travels than to the strategic variables. This effect speaks to the Secretary's (presumably delegated) role in shaping the President's schedule. Thus, supporting IP2, the President over recent decades appears to serve as the "closer." Although secretaries like Hillary Clinton sometimes went off the beaten path, "miles logged" are perhaps an important feature of US diplomacy and contribute to its regular functioning, in ways that dovetail, rather than compete with, White House priorities.¹¹

Still, the analysis leaves an important question unanswered. Do the effects of regularized diplomacy swallow up previously discerned strategic effects when considering the impact of deeper routines? More specifically, is traveling to countries of strategic interest to the United States part of its diplomatic routine? The results suggest a qualified "yes." The incorporation of a long-term lag effect tends to weaken the influence of the core-interest variables slightly in the analysis of the Secretary of State's travels: the major powers and country military spending coefficients are now only significant to the .10 level in the full and post-Cold War periods, respectively. But the findings should not be read to indicate that secretaries spurned US core interests in the recent period. Instead, they indicate that attention to powerful and like-minded countries became regularized: "doing the rounds" to key countries of US strategic interest was now important to US face-to-face diplomacy. The President continued to travel to countries of strategic value to the United States: in the presidential models, a country's military spending, military aid receipts, and US trade contribution remain positive and significant travel predictors, as does the coefficient for US wartime allies in the post-Cold War years—though, with the Cold War's end, the President is shown to visit countries that do not align (in UN voting) with the United States. Presumably, the end of the Cold

War opened the door to US political outreach (as exemplified by presidential travels to Africa).

Thus, these findings point to both strategic interests and routine as strong and consistent influences on high-level US diplomatic travels.¹² By the same token, they reveal that the line between the strategic and routine in high-level diplomacy can become blurred.

Conclusion

Taken together, our results answer two fundamental questions about diplomacy. First, does the conduct of diplomacy—in the form of high-level diplomatic visits—owe more to strategic interests, routine, or domestic influences? Our analysis establishes that relatively stable influences, at least in the US case, drive high-level official diplomacy. That the typical face-to-face meeting occurs in a strategic or routine setting lends support to realist assertions that much of international politics is exogenously determined, but also to the admonitions of practice scholars who maintain that the traditional focus ignores critical endogenous influences on international behavior. To be sure, administrations retained latitude for action. Certain regions of the world gained or lost prominence in US diplomacy with a change in administrations but not so dramatically as to affect the core of diplomacy. As White House Chief of Staff Denis R. McDonough put it in the context of the Middle East peace process, "There's core-course curriculum, and then there's extra credit" (quoted in Landler and Chozick 2014). Indeed, the findings indicate that diplomats draw on established partners and routines even in times of crisis. Although fine-grained analysis of cases remains critical for understanding the causal effect of personal diplomacy in crises, our results suggest that analyses should attend to preexisting patterns and practices on which leaders might rely even in challenging times.

Second, do the President and Secretary operate from a similar playbook? The results demonstrate that strategic and routine factors are enduring influences on both the President's and the Secretary's travels, across presidential administrations in both the Cold War and post-Cold War years. The analysis also suggests, however, that the President and Secretary of State divide labor in offering the scarce commodity of a high-level diplomatic visit to other countries. In anticipating Presidential visits, the Secretary's travels appear to serve White House priorities, even when not dramatic or newsworthy events. Thus "miles traveled" provides a key measure of performance for a Secretary of State, whether they subscribe to the Clinton-globetrotting model, the Kerry-activist model, or some less-active variant. Whatever their predispositions, secretaries and presidents have harnessed the valued resource of a diplomatic visit to work toward a similar and consistent set of enduring national priorities.

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¹¹ Notably, official routines persist over long periods, as the 5–8 year lag term remains positive and significant (as does a 9–12 year lag term) when the shorter-term lag terms are removed from the model. Moreover, the 5–8 year lag term for secretarial visits is a significant driver of presidential and secretarial travels in the Cold War-era analyses, even when including the 1–4 year terms, indicating that Cold War-era travels were embedded in established routine (see the Supplemental Information, Appendix B).

¹² As reported in the Supplemental Information, Appendix B, we performed additional robustness tests on the post-World War II period to assess the sensitivity of our main results to spatial correlation whereby visits concentrate in certain geographic regions or countries due to unrecognized regional or country attributes. In the first test, we incorporate prior-year regional means for country military spending, US military aid, and US trade into the models to explain visits, directly and in interaction with prior visits (see Neumayer and Plümper 2010); in the second test, we perform fixed-effects estimates that essentially wash out cross-sectional variation in the models and drop countries that were unvisited or always visited in the years of our analysis. The core interest variables retain their positive sign and statistical significance in all the regional-means models but a number of these variables lose statistical significance in fixed-effects estimates for presidential visits. We attribute that result to the loss of around 40 percent of our cases, when countries were dropped from the analysis, and the selectivity of presidential travel: the President presumably visits countries for their overall, not changing, importance. But the statistically significant, positive lag effect fails to survive these tests. Diplomatic practice appears, then, to owe less to a temporal effect by which officials return cyclically to previously visited countries and more to regular consultation by which officials travel to key interlocutors (e.g., the United Kingdom) in critical regions (NATO Europe).

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