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U.S. Presidents, the Foreign Policy Agenda, and U.S.
-East Asian Relations

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Abstract

Agenda setting is central to presidential leadership in the U.S. system. Only recently have scholars begun to analyze the agenda-setting influence of presidents, with mixed results. This paper extends analysis to an issue important to recent U.S. presidents: American relations with East Asia. Specifically, we examine the dynamics of attention by the president, the Congress, and the American media to U.S. relations with East Asia for the period 1984 to 1995. The findings suggest that actors other than the president and events exogenous to the U.S. system have been instrumental in pushing East Asia on to the systemic and policy agendas in American politics. In particular, congressional attention to East Asia has been instrumental in driving the president's public attention and media coverage. However, presidents are not without formidable agenda-setting tools, including travel abroad, which can draw significant media attention to a foreign policy issue.

Keywords: agenda setting, foreign policy, U.S.-East Asia policy, presidential-congressional relations, presidential travel, television news, presidents, media, Congress.

I. Introduction

Political scientists have long held that influencing the policy agenda is an

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important source of political power, especially for American presidents (Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Cohen 1995; Kingdon 1984; Light 1991). Persuading others to focus on presidential priorities is of primary importance in presidential leadership and influence (Neustadt 1960). The traditional model of agenda setting suggests that presidents are influential—indeed the most influential—agenda setters in American government (Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Kingdon 1984; Neustadt 1960). There is also a tendency for presidents to dominate foreign policy, particularly relative to Congress (Peterson 1994). Enhanced diplomatic and military powers of the presidency suggest that presidents may have their greatest agenda-setting influence in foreign policy.

Influence over the systemic agenda keeps the presidency at the forefront of national policy-making. Presidential success in Congress and influence over the policy process is likely to increase if the president is able to dictate which important issues are on the congressional agenda. Furthermore, the ability of presidents to influence the media's agenda or the public salience of issues is vital to the public support presidents receive (Edwards, Mitchell, and Welch 1995). By increasing public attention to an issue, presidents can also influence which issues make the agenda of other actors in Washington.

Although the literature finds that presidents can set policy agendas (Cohen 1995), mounting evidence indicates that presidents are more limited in their ability to do so than our traditional understandings of presidential power indicate. American media are not the most compliant partners in agenda setting (Baum and Kernell 1997; Kingdon 1984), and presidents rely upon the media to get their policy messages out to the public. Additionally, other institutions, including Congress, compete with the presidency for influence over the direction of the foreign policy agenda (Peake 2001). Policy entrepreneurs in Congress or elsewhere in Washington are sometimes able to expand the conflict surrounding an issue (Schattschneider 1960), perhaps attracting media attention, providing additional opportunities for opponents of presidential foreign policies to influence policy outcomes (Baumgartner and Jones 1993). Finally, the "economy of attention" governs the dynamics of foreign policy agenda setting, making uncontrollable foreign events instrumental determinants of the attention given different foreign policy issues (Wood and Peake 1998). This, in effect, handicaps presidents from dictating the issues that receive attention in the U.S. system.

This paper extends previous analyses of presidential agenda setting in foreign policy (Peake 2001; Wood and Peake 1998) to issues of U.S. relations with

East-Asia.¹⁾ U.S. policy toward the nations of East Asia is significant and warrants attention by scholars. Policies enunciated by the president or legislated by Congress significantly impact the relationships between the U.S. and East Asia, and can have significant effects on the economies of all involved. For example, interactions between the Clinton administration and Congress led the U.S. to granting permanent most-favored-nation trading status to the People's Republic of China, and eventually led to the inclusion of China into the World Trade Organization. Presidents Ronald Reagan and George Bush spent a great deal of political capital thwarting congressional efforts to impose quotas on imports from East Asia. U.S. policies toward East Asia have important security implications as well. Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, for example, have focused U.S. attention on the dangers of nuclear proliferation on the Korean Peninsula.

Using Vector Auto-regression techniques, we test the degree to which presidents are able to influence the dynamics of congressional and media attention to East Asia. Additionally, we analyze what factors influence public attention by the president to these policies. Explaining the president's agenda is as relevant to the question of agenda setting as the influence of the president's agenda. If the president's own priorities are shaped by media and congressional attention to issues, can he in turn influence the agendas of the media and Congress? The results indicate that congressional attention to East Asia (between 1984 and 1995) was instrumental in driving both presidential and media attention. In contrast, public statements by the president have no statistical effect on congressional or media attention. Presidents are not without their agenda-setting tools, however. Presidential trips to the region have clear significant effects on the attention given East Asia by the media. Even so, the general conclusion of the analyses is that presidents often compete and lose control of the policy agenda for these vital issues.

II. Agenda Setting Theory and Literature

Agenda setting consists of the activities that influence which issues come before government, how the issues are defined, and which policy proposals are likely to be taken seriously as possible solutions (Kingdon 1984, 3). Agenda setting is critical to

1) East Asia is operationally defined as relations with China, Japan, Korea, and nations of South East Asia. See the Appendix for a list of keywords used in the analysis.

the public policy process. E. E. Schattschneider (1960) succinctly stated the importance of agenda setting when he wrote, "The definition of alternatives is the supreme instrument of power" (68). Influencing attention to policy issues is central to agenda setting (Baumgartner and Jones 1993).

Despite its importance in the policy process, political scientists have only recently addressed agenda setting systematically in relation to foreign policy. Wood and Peake (1998) analyze media and presidential attention to several foreign policy issues, and surprisingly find minimal presidential influence on media attention. However, they do not examine the congressional role in this important process, choosing instead to discount the role of Congress and focus on the presidential-media relationship. In a broader study, Edwards and Wood (1999) find only a minimal agenda-setting role for Congress. Their analysis of congressional hearings is limited, however, in that it does not account for much of the congressional activism that takes place outside of the formal legislative and oversight process. Other researchers (Burgin 1997; Lindsay 1994) suggest that hearings are only one aspect of multi-faceted congressional activism, which has seen an increase in recent years.²⁾ Research using a broader measure of congressional attention finds a greater role for Congress in influence over issues of foreign trade and aid (Peake 2001).³⁾

Recent research on Congress and foreign policy suggests that Congress can play an important agenda-setting role, especially in highlighting the importance of an issue presidents might prefer to ignore (Burgin 1997; Hinckley 1994; Lindsay 1994). Most research, however, suggests that presidents dominate the process. In describing the president's role in the process, Baumgartner and Jones argue: "No single actor can focus attention as clearly, or change the motivations of such a great number of other actors, as the president" (1993, 241). Kingdon (1984) concludes "there is little doubt that the president remains a powerful force in agenda setting, particularly when compared to other actors" (1984, 25). Presidential agenda setting in Congress becomes a test of presidential leadership where the president must convince congressional leaders that his proposals are important enough to warrant serious

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- 2) The main problem with using hearings only to measure congressional attention to foreign policy is one of validity. While clearly a reliable measure, hearings fail to measure congressional activism outside the formal legislative process. Also, Congress may respond to presidential attention in foreign policy beyond hearings, through protest or media appearances, which are traditional methods of expanding the conflict beyond traditional policy venues.
 - 3) Peake (2001) content codes Congressional Quarterly Weekly Reports in order to measure attention given an issue by Congress. The measure accounts for congressional actions outside the formal hearing process which might impact the attention given various foreign policy issues.

consideration (Edwards and Barrett 2000). For example, presidents speak out on initiatives, which may draw public attention, providing an incentive for congressional action (Canes-Wrone 2001).

The ability of Congress to set its own agenda, independent of the president, is not lost among political scientists. Party leaders and committee chairs have powerful tools to control the agenda (Cox and McCubbins 1993) and their proposals make up a significant portion of the legislative agenda (Taylor 1998). Charles Jones (1994) argues that presidents often adopt proposals and ideas from the ongoing legislative agenda. Also of importance is the fact that presidential proposals must compete with congressional initiatives for attention in a crowded agenda space. Light (1991) argues that presidents search for ready-made policy ideas to place on their agenda that will advance the presidential goals of reelection, building an historical legacy, and good public policy. Often, those ideas come from Congress.

Lindsay (1994) argues that congressional action shapes presidential foreign policy by influencing the president to attend to problems he might prefer to ignore or keep within private administration channels. Congressional activity, such as floor debate, procedural legislation, hearings, action on unsuccessful legislation, member attempts at personal diplomacy, and membership appearances in the media might lead to presidential responses through adjustment of the president's agenda. These attempts may keep difficult problems on the foreign policy agenda or may frame the issue in a certain way that favors congressional initiatives and disfavors the president's position. Lindsay (1994) suggests that presidents cannot just ignore these congressional concerns; to do so, would be to jeopardize their tenuous relationship with Congress.

Wildavsky (1966) contends that environmental factors in foreign policy may frustrate presidential leadership by keeping issues the president would prefer to handle through back channels on the public agenda. Domestic environmental factors include Congress, interest groups, and public opinion. International factors include "situations," or international events.

The fact that there are numerous foreign and domestic policy situations competing for a president's attention means that it is worthwhile to organize political activity in order to affect his agenda. If a president pays more attention to certain problems he may develop different preferences; he may seek and receive different advice; his new calculations may lead him to devote greater resources to seeking a solution. Interested congressmen may exert influence not by directly determining a presidential decision, but indirectly by making it costly for a president to avoid

reconsidering the basis for his action. For example, citizen groups, such as those concerned with a change in China policy, may have an impact simply by keeping their proposals on the public agenda (Wildavsky 1966, 25).

Recent empirical research confirms expectations that presidents are often constrained in foreign policy by environmental factors. Wood and Peake's (1998) examination of foreign policy agenda setting found that the president is highly responsive to shifts in media attention and international events. An "economy of attention" constrains the president's choices when deciding which issues to address in foreign policy because he cannot address all of the issues all of the time. Issues compete for attention in a limited agenda space and the president's choices of which issues to address are often made for him by critical events and media attention to those events. Events draw attention by the media, the president, and Congress, increasing the importance of related foreign policy issues relative to competing issues. The media's impact on both the public agenda and the policy agenda is well documented by scholars (Cohen 1963; Iyengar and Kinder 1987; McCombs 1976), so it is not surprising that the media often impact the policy agenda in Washington.

The president's agenda leadership in foreign policy is also limited by the persistence of certain foreign policy problems. Such persistence provides political incentives to members of Congress hesitant to challenge the president's leadership in foreign policy, as significant constituency groups become interested in an unsolved policy problem. For example, since the Tiananmen Square massacre in 1989, U.S. policy toward China framed in terms of human rights has remained on the agenda and presidents have had little choice but to deal with the issue given the importance of the relationship and the attention the issue receives in Congress. Opponents to opening U.S. trade relations with China have expanded the conflict to include Congress and the media, making presidential efforts to control the policy agenda more difficult. As a result, presidents have had to react to legislative encroachments in this area. For example, President Bush, in an unpopular move, vetoed two bills which would have sanctioned China for the 1989 Tiananmen massacre.

III. Hypotheses

Given the above discussion, the analysis tests the following hypotheses. *Conflict Expansion Hypothesis*. Members of Congress remain outside the formal foreign

policy making channels according to the conventional wisdom of presidential dominance in foreign policy. Therefore, members may seek to expand conflict through their public and legislative activity in order to influence the president's agenda, and indirectly influence presidential decisions regarding a foreign policy. Successful expansion of the conflict results in increased media attention (as a proxy for the public agenda) as well as increased presidential attention. The conflict expansion model predicts that *as congressional attention to East Asia increases, presidential and media attention should increase as well.*

Presidential Agenda Setting Hypothesis. Presidents, traditionally, are considered effective agenda setters, particularly in foreign policy. The conventional wisdom suggests that presidents should have little trouble getting Congress to focus their activity on issues presidents consider important. Also, presidents seek to influence media coverage of issues, in an effort to influence what the public considers important. According to this argument, *as presidential attention to East Asia increases, congressional and media attention should increase as well.*

Environmental Hypotheses. We take into account several environmental influences on institutional attention. Controlling for the context is critical in ironing out attention dynamics surrounding an issue. Accounting for the media, events, and previous attention is important if we are to make any conclusions regarding who leads whom. According to Cohen (1963, 13), the media "may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about." The media also influence what policymakers consider as the important issues warranting attention (Wood and Peake 1998). Therefore, *as media attention to East Asia increases, congressional and presidential attention should increase as well.* Events are also important determinants of attention by policymakers (and the media) to foreign policy issues (Wood and Peake 1998). *As the number of events related to East Asia increases,* attention by the president, Congress, and the media increase. Finally, previous presidential, congressional, and media attention to an issue is likely to result in future attention to an issue. Attention to policy issues is inertial, and history must be accounted for (Edwards and Wood 1999; Wood and Peake 1998).

Beyond speaking on an issue, presidents might influence the attention given a foreign policy issue through diplomatic activities, including travel abroad. Previous analyses of foreign policy agenda setting have not accounted for such presidential drama, however (Edwards and Wood 1999; Peake 2001; Wood and Peake 1998). Brace and Hinckley (1993) found that travel abroad can impact a president's approval

ratings. Certainly presidential travel contributes to the spectacle of the American presidency (Miroff 1990), and therefore should increase the attention that related issues receive. We hypothesize that trips abroad are likely to have a significant short-term effect on media and congressional attention, but that the effect beyond the time of the president's trip is seriously limited by the "economy of attention." In other words, once the trip ends, media and congressional attention are likely to shift very quickly to other pressing issues, thus limiting the impact of this sort of presidential spectacle.

IV. Research Design

We use time series modeling (VAR) to assess the relative impacts of presidential and congressional attention upon one another, while controlling for media coverage and world events. To test the influence of presidential travel to East Asia on attention given by the media and Congress to the issue we use Box-Tiao impact assessment methods. The variables for the analysis include weekly measures of congressional, presidential, and media attention and international events related to East Asia from 1984 to April 1995.⁴⁾ The Appendix describes the measurements of each variable. VAR takes into account the possibility that the relationships are reciprocal, and allows for each of the attention measure to impact the others. Thus, we are able to test all of the aforementioned hypotheses in the same time series model. VAR methods are the appropriate approach to ironing out the dynamics of issue attention in the U.S. system (Edwards and Wood 1998; Wood and Peake 1998).⁵⁾

Using VAR, we are able to determine the relationships guiding institutional attention without imposing restrictions upon the parameters of the system, as more conventional structural equation methods require. VAR can be viewed as a multivariate extension of the Granger (1969) approach to causal inference. Each endogenous variable is regressed on lagged values of itself, as well as lagged values

4) We restrict our analyses to this time period due to data availability issues. Specifically, our events data (see the Appendix) relies upon the PANDA events data set, which only dates back to 1984, and was no longer collected after 1995. The time period is similar to previous analyses of foreign policy agenda setting (see Peake 2001).

5) For a more complete discussion of the use of VAR and this approach, see Freeman, Williams, and Lin (1989) and Simms (1980). The statistical model was estimated using WinRats, version 3.2.

of the other endogenous variables in the system. The method provides an excellent control for history by taking into account several lags of all of the endogenous variables in the system. We determined lag lengths empirically using methods based on Simms (1980). Relationships are evaluated by conducting joint hypothesis tests for the blocks of lags associated with each variable.⁶⁾ Since events in this particular analysis are a priori exogenous, the events variable is included only as an explanatory variable, with no lags. Examples of important events that influenced attention to East Asia include reports of human rights violations occurring within China, suspected arms deals between China or North Korea and rogue states, and other issues where an agent of the United States was not involved.⁷⁾

To simplify the discussion, VAR can be represented as a series of regression equations where each dependent series is set equal to all of the other series in the model, lagged values of the other series, and lagged measures of the dependent series. Events are treated as exogenous and entered into the equation with no lags. The VAR system consists of three equations in this case, with each equation representing one of the endogenous variables: congressional attention, presidential attention, and media attention.

Box-Tiao impact assessment techniques allow us to assess the impact that presidential trips abroad have on media and congressional attention to East Asia. The specific models follow from the subsequent general equation:

$$Y_t = f(I_t) + N_t \quad (1)$$

Where Y_t = weekly media (or congressional) attention to East Asia

I_t = intervention events (presidential trips) at time t

N_t = noise model for stochastic components

6) VAR methods exhibit high colinearity due to the multiple lags included for each variable in the system of equations. VAR is autoregressive in nature, making regression coefficients erratic and difficult to interpret. Instead, analysts that use VAR examine the Granger F-tests to test causality and Moving Average Response (MAR) rates to determine the direction of causality. MAR involves introducing a shock to a variable in the system and tracking out movements in the other variables using the VAR estimates for computing a forecast. Shocking a variable means increasing the independent series by one standard deviation and estimating the impact the increase has on the other series in the system (Wood and Peake 1998). Using MAR, we can also determine the direction of the relationship.

7) Presidential events, including visits by foreign dignitaries and presidential (or presidential envoys) trips to East Asia are not exogenous and excluded from this variable. These presidential events are accounted for in the measure of presidential attention, and tested more explicitly in the Box-Tiao impact assessment analyses.

Impact assessment models are parsimonious and advantageous to modeling theoretically relevant events that may affect the direction and magnitude of a time series. Moreover, they are very conservative. The interventions can only be influential after controlling for the history or noise components. Given the time points for the analyses, furthermore, the null is not likely to be rejected due to random chance or a stochastic process in the time series. So long as hypotheses have been identified a priori to identification of the time series (as they have been), then we can surmise a high likelihood that the intervention produced the change in the dependent variable. Because these time points are very refined, spuriousness in a statistically significant relationship is unlikely in this quasi-experimental design. If a trip abroad in a week, for example, has an impact on media attention to East Asia, then we can infer that the trip affected the dependent variable; it is highly improbable that another factor may have caused the identical shift. Our series are sufficiently long to account for the history of each dependent variable and determine if the president's speech had a short-term impact on media attention to the four policy areas. Moreover, we add a control variable for the amount of attention drawn to East Asia by the events in Tiananmen Square (May and June of 1989).

V. Dynamics of Attention to East Asia

Table 1 shows the Granger F-tests for the three variable VAR system. Essentially, the F-tests tell us whether or not a significant causal relationship exists between the variables, while controlling for history and exogenous events. Figure 1 shows plots of the moving average response (MAR) rates. These provide greater insight into the dynamics of each of the relationships. MAR allows researchers to estimate the impact of a significant change in an endogenous variable upon the other variables in the system. The MAR's shown in Figure 1 plot responses to one standard deviation increases in the variables.

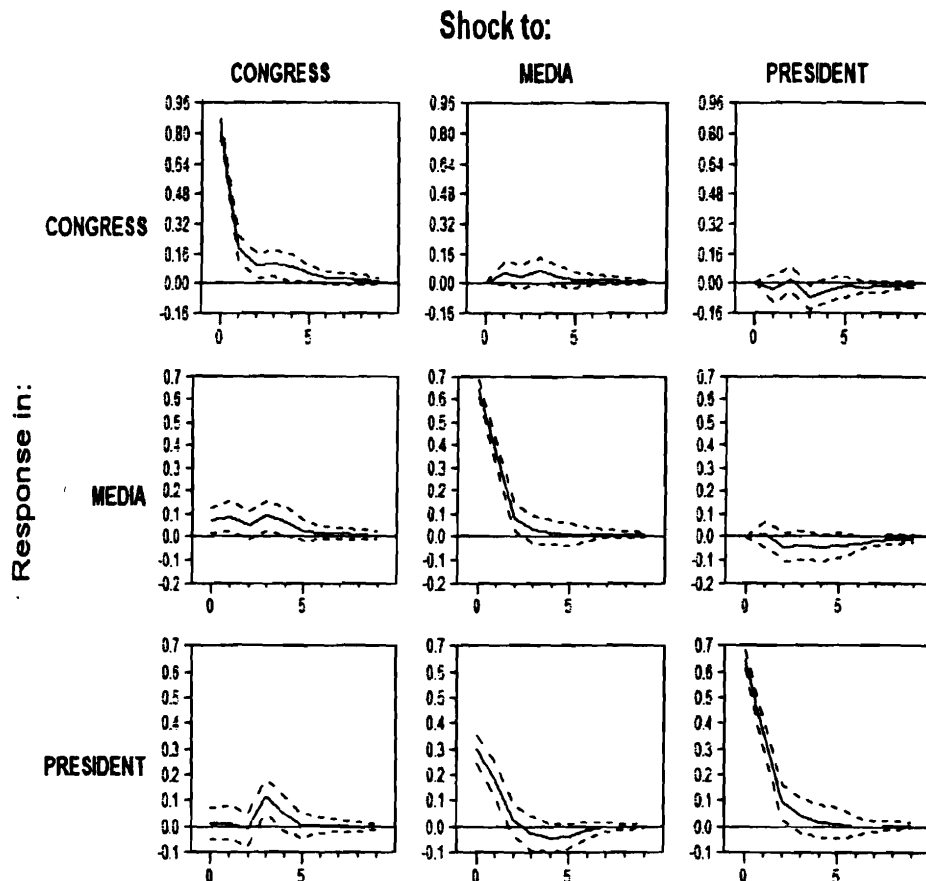
The statistical results support the conflict expansion hypothesis. The hypothesis states that congressional attention to East Asia leads to increases in presidential and media attention to East Asia. The results suggest that presidential attention is highly responsive to Congress, as the F-test shows that congressional attention is a significant indicator of presidential attention. The direction of the response by the president is positive as well. The bottom left graph in Figure 1 shows the simulated

<Table 1> Granger Exogeneity F-Tests for the Dynamics of Attention to East Asia, Controlling for Exogenous Events

Dependent Variable	F-Statistic	Causation?	Dependent Variable
Presidential Attention	1.13 (.34)		Media Attention
Media Attention	43.60 (.00)	→	
Congressional Attention	2.71 (.03)	→	
Exogenous Events	9.19 (.00)	→	
Presidential Attention	1.48 (.21)		Congressional Attention
Media Attention	2.74 (.03)	→	
Congressional Attention	11.37 (.00)	→	
Exogenous Events	0.68 (.49)		
Presidential Attention	40.26 (.00)	→	Presidential Attention
Media Attention	2.28 (.05)	→	
Congressional Attention	4.59 (.00)	→	
Exogenous Events	4.12 (.00)	→	

Note: Table entries are F-statistics testing causation between blocks of coefficients of the independent variable (with 4 weeks worth of lags) on the dependent variable in time 0. *P*-values are in parentheses. Exogenous Events at lag 0 are included as exogenous variables to control for the contemporaneous effects of events outside the U.S. system. The *N* is 591 weeks (1984 through April 1995). The values entered for Exogenous Events are *t*-statistics.

response by the president to a one-standard deviation shock in congressional attention. Although the presidential response appears delayed by a few weeks, the simulation suggests that when Congress increases its attention to East Asia significantly, the president is likely to respond by increasing his public attention to East Asia. The one standard deviation increase in congressional attention is followed by about a 0.15 standard deviation positive response in presidential attention by week three, and a cumulative response of about 0.3 standard deviation over five weeks.



Note: Each graph represents the response (measured in standard deviations) in the row variable over 10 weeks to a one-standard deviation shock in the column variable, controlling for exogenous events. Congress is the weekly number of columns devoted to East Asia in the Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report. Media is weekly minutes of evening network television news coverage devoted to East Asia (from the Vanderbilt Television News Archive). President is the weekly number of paragraphs devoted to East Asia in the Public Papers of the President. One standard deviation is 20 for Media, 16 for President, and 3.2 for Congress. The time frame is from the first week in 1984 through April 1995.

<Figure 1> Moving Average Response Graphs

Increased congressional attention leads to a statistically significant response in media attention to East Asia as well. The F-statistic for the impact of congressional attention on media attention reported in Table 1 is statistically significant. The media's reaction to Congress is not as apparent as the president's, as indicated by

the slight positive response shown in Figure 1 (the middle left graph). However, the response by the media appears to be immediate, and the simulations suggest that a one-standard deviation increase in congressional attention leads to about a 0.5 standard deviation response by the media over 5 weeks.

Agenda dynamics are often reciprocal (Wood and Peake 1998), so it is important to examine the effects of presidential attention as well as its determinants. The presidential agenda-setting hypothesis states that presidential attention to an issue leads to increased congressional and media attention. The data lend no support to the presidential agenda-setting hypothesis. The results indicate that congressional attention is exogenous to presidential attention, suggesting that when presidents speak publicly on East Asia there is no significant response in Congress. The media, as well, do not appear to respond systematically to increases in presidential attention. The F-statistics in Table 1 are insignificant, as is the response by the media to an increase in presidential attention graphed in Figure 1.⁸⁾

As expected, the environmental hypotheses are generally supported by the data. Historical trends in attention to East Asia are important in determining current attention to the issue. The F-statistics indicate that attention to East Asia is inertial, meaning attention to the issue by an institution at one point is strongly related to previous institutional attention. Events play an important role in determining both presidential and media attention as well. The test statistics indicate that current international events related to East Asia strongly influence presidential and media attention to East Asia, but do not appear to impact congressional attention.

Media coverage of East Asia appears to influence congressional and presidential attention to East Asia. In both cases, the media F-statistics are statistically significant. The president is particularly responsive to heightened media attention, given the results of the MAR plots in Figure 1 (bottom center graph). The president's response to media attention is both positive and immediate. Congressional attention to East Asia is more likely when the media coverage turns to East Asia, as indicated by the significant F-statistic and the positive response shown in Figure 1

8) Moving average responses are sensitive to variable ordering (however, the F-tests are not). By convention, variable ordering is decided based on exogeneity as determined by the F-tests. Variables which prove to be exogenous are placed first. In this analysis, joint causality (between the media and other variables) makes the decision of which variables to place first more problematic. The reported variable ordering is: Congress, media, president. We placed the Congress first because congressional attention has a significant influence on both the media and the president, according to the F-tests. We changed the order to check for changes in the direction of the relationship and found none. Only one set of MAR graphs is reported due to space constraints.

(top middle graph). It appears that members of Congress are more likely to attend to East Asia when it is a prominent public issue. Increased media attention provides political incentives for members of Congress to challenge the president's policy toward East Asia. Overall, the congressional agenda is based more on independent decisions by members of Congress following their own concerns and possibly public concerns regarding policy toward East Asia than on decisions to follow the president's lead. In turn, congressional focus appears to bring about increased presidential and media attention to the issue.⁹⁾

VI. The Effects of Presidential Trips Abroad

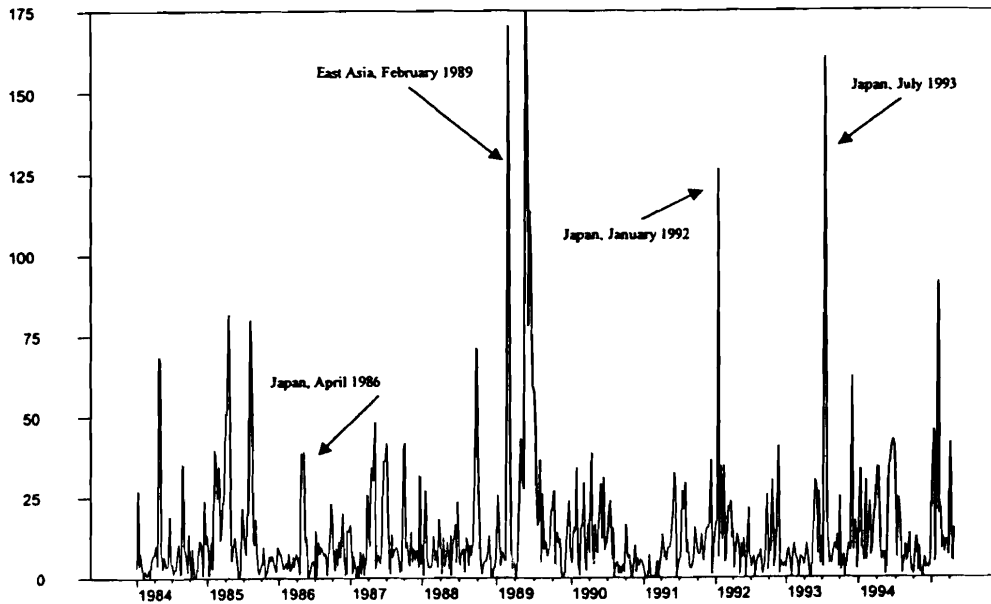
As head of state, American presidents may impact the attention given foreign policy issues through travel abroad. Presidential missions to East Asia are especially significant, given the importance of the U.S. relationship with nations of the region. For instance, in 1984 Ronald Reagan was the first U.S. president to visit China since Richard Nixon. To assess the impact of presidential travel on attention to East Asia we conducted impact assessment analyses on the media and congressional attention time series. The primary independent variables for the analyses include presidential trips to the region. We also control for the effects of the Tiananmen Square event of 1989.

1. Impacts on Media Attention

Presidential visits abroad receive broad coverage by the American news media. As Table 2 demonstrates, this is not different regarding presidential visits to East Asia. Between 1984 and 1995, all presidential visits to East Asia, except Reagan's visit to Japan and Korea in April 1986, had a substantively significant impact on media attention to news stories regarding East Asia. Equation 1 mathematically represents the model reported in Table 2.

9) We reanalyzed the data, examining the dynamic relationship between presidential and congressional attention before and after the Tiananmen Square uprising in May of 1989. The results indicate that congressional attention was an instrumental (and exogenous) causal determinant of presidential attention to East Asia in both time frames. Although the Tiananmen Square incident was important in bringing issues related to East Asia to the forefront of the policy agenda, Congress has been a critical player in the process both before and after the critical event.

$$\begin{aligned}
 \text{Media} = & \frac{w_{01}}{1 - \delta_1 B} I_{1t} + \frac{w_{02}}{1 - \delta_2 B} I_{2t} + \frac{w_{03}}{1 - \delta_3 B} I_{3t} \\
 & + w_{04} I_{4t} + \frac{w_{05}}{1 - \delta_5 B} I_{5t} + \frac{1}{1 - \phi_1 B} \alpha_t
 \end{aligned} \tag{1}$$



<Figure 2> Media Attention to East Asia, January 1984–April 1995

In Figure 2 we graph the media series, indicating the presidential trips to East Asia that we test. The series average 13 minutes of network television news per week, and significant spikes in attention are clear when presidents take trips to East Asia. Additionally, it is obvious that the media responded to the dramatic events of May and June 1989 in Tiananmen Square, as the spike in attention is very clear.

Although they differ slightly in durational effects, all presidential visits that affect media attention had generally short-lived impacts. Reagan's 1984 visit appears to have had the most lasting effect ($\delta_{01}=.53$), which is not unsurprising given the diplomatic significance of this event. President Clinton's visit to Japan in July 1993 had a sizeable impact on news stories about East Asia. His visit led to a nearly 150 minute increase in news coverage, an astounding 11 times greater amount of media attention as compared to the series' average. However, in the week following Clinton's visit, media attention had receded to only 1.6 times greater than the

average. Bush's 1989 and 1992 trips had similarly large impacts that also faded rapidly. Reagan's visit to China in 1984 leads to an increase of about 60 minutes of network news coverage for the week of his visit. The delta coefficient indicates a more gradual decline, about one week, to the pre-visit mean of media coverage.

<Table 2> Impact of Presidential Visits to East Asia on Media Attention to East Asia

	<i>Parameter Estimates</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t statistic</i>
Reagan 1984, w_{01}	61.01*	12.24	4.98
Reagan 1984, δ_{01}	0.53*	0.16	3.38
Bush 1989, w_{02}	157.11*	12.22	12.85
Bush 1989, δ_{02}	0.19*	0.08	2.39
Bush 1992, w_{03}	104.91*	11.61	9.04
Bush 1992, δ_{03}	-0.22*	0.10	-2.31
Clinton 1993, w_{04}	148.67*	11.29	13.16
T-square May (step), w_{05}	90.90*	9.19	9.89
T-square May, δ_{05}	0.25*	0.08	2.96
AR1	0.42*	0.04	10.96
Constant	11.39*	0.88	13.02
Mean of dependent variable	13.15		
SEE	12.23		
Q(36)(critical $\chi^2 \approx 43.77$)	27.25		

* $p < .01$

Note: Reagan's 1986 visit to Japan and Korea is statistically insignificant and excluded from the model. The following trips were analyzed:

Reagan's trip to China, 4/24/84-4/30/84

Reagan's trip to South East Asia and Japan, 4/27/86-5/07/86

Bush's trip to Japan, Korea, China, 2/24/89-2/27/89

Bush's trip to East Asia, 1/4/92-1/10/92

Clinton's trip to Japan and Korea, 7/5/93-7/11/93

Not surprisingly, a key event during this time period — the Tiananmen Square standoff in China — also positively affected media coverage. Coverage of East Asia increased by about 90 minutes of weekly network news coverage over the time span

covered by the step function: the week of May 14, 1989 through June 4, 1989. Media attention quickly declines after the week of June 4. Even after controlling for this important event, presidential visits to East Asia still have a significant impact on media attention to East Asia.

2. Impacts on Congressional Attention

Events and presidential visits to East Asia may also increase congressional attention to issues pertinent to East Asia. Although no presidential visit between 1984 and 1995 had a statistically significant impact on congressional attention to East Asia, the Tiananmen Square massacre led to statistically significant increases in congressional attention. The intervention analysis is represented mathematically as follows:

$$Congress = \bar{w}_{01}I_{t1} + \bar{w}_{02}I_{t2} + \frac{\bar{w}_{03}}{1 - \delta_{03}} + (1 - \theta_2 B^2)(1 - \theta_3 B^3) + \alpha_t \quad (2)$$

<Table 3> Impact of Presidential Visits to East Asia on Congressional Attention to East Asia, January 1884-April 1995

	<i>Parameter Estimates</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t statistic</i>
T-square May (step), w_{01}	3.90*	1.92	2.03
T-square May (pulse), w_{02}	8.04*	3.42	2.35
T-square June (pulse), w_{03}	9.89*	2.59	3.82
T-square June, δ_{03}	0.80*	0.08	10.21
MA 2	0.10*	0.04	2.36
MA 3	0.09*	0.04	2.18
Constant	1.91*	0.15	12.67
Mean of dependent variable	2.03		
SEE	3.02		
Q(36)(critical $\chi^2 \approx 43.77$)	33.07		

* $p < .05$

Note: All presidential visits are statistically insignificant and excluded from the model.[Table 3 here].

The event had both short-term and sustained effects on congressional attention to East Asia, according to the results in Table 3. According to the first pulse function, Congress responded at the beginning of the event by initially increasing attention to East Asia by about 400% over the series' mean. Congress also maintained attention to East Asia at about double the series' mean from the beginning to the end of the event. Congressional attention peaked at nearly 500% over the series' mean during the last week of the standoff. According to the significant delta coefficient, Congress continued to attend to East Asia at a higher than average rate for about 2-3 weeks after the final event. The results demonstrate that Congress alters its agenda when significant foreign policy events occur. However, in light of the non-findings of the impact of presidential trips to East Asia on congressional attention, it is clear that Congress does not alter its focus when presidents travel abroad. Clearly, the president's role as head of state has little impact on Congress' business concerning that part of the world.

VII. Conclusions

Our analyses suggest that recent American presidents have had difficulty dictating the dynamics of congressional and media attention given to U.S.-East Asia relations. The analyses demonstrate that presidents are instead responsive to increases in attention by the Congress and the media, and that congressional attention is instrumental to the dynamics of presidential and media attention to East Asia. Whereas American presidents typically dominate the decision phase of American foreign policy (Peterson 1994; Wildavsky 1966), in terms of the dynamics of agenda setting in foreign policy, Congress may substantially increase attention by other political institutions and the public to a pressing issue.

The preceding analysis suggests that the U.S. Congress can significantly influence the foreign policy agenda, which may allow those opposed to presidential policy to frame the policy debate. While direct legislative policy change may fail, the president must take into account congressional concerns when making foreign policy outside of the legislative process, whether through diplomacy or executive orders. The ability of the Congress to control its own agenda and highlight important foreign policy issues constrains the president's agenda in foreign policy. A constrained agenda contributes to the reactive nature of the presidency in foreign policy (Edwards and Wood 1999;

Peake 2001; Wood and Peake 1998).

Certainly, future analysis of American foreign policy making should recognize the important, albeit limited role Congress plays in the foreign policy process. Congress has played an important role in keeping issues related to East Asia at the forefront of the policy agenda. This may, in turn, increase the stakes and political costs for presidents to continue policies opposed by significant minorities in Congress, such as trade and diplomatic engagement of China. Congress has shown similar patterns of keeping a variety of issues on the agenda, to the detriment of presidential policy. President Reagan was considerably frustrated in pursuing his Central American policies to the point that members of his administration attempted to do an end run around Congress, leading to the Iran-Contra scandal that seriously threatened his administration. Reagan shifted his position on Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines following high profile protests by Senator Richard Luger on the rigging of elections (Lindsey 1994, 136). Congressional activism, even outside of the legislative process, can have important effects on presidential foreign policy.

VII. Methodological Appendix

1. Presidential Attention Measure

We use public statements by the president to measure the president's agenda. We employ the same approach as previous research measuring presidential attention to foreign policy issues (e.g. Wood and Peake 1998). The weekly measure gives a more complete picture of the president's agenda as compared to measures focusing on snap-shots of attention using the State of the Union Address (Cohen 1995; Hill 1998). A complete record of presidential statements is available in the Public Papers of the President. We searched the subject index of each volume for keywords representing each of the issues and then read each reference in the body of the documents. We counted the number of paragraphs during each week of each year (1984 to 1995) of the Papers devoted to East Asia. We read each entry to ensure that it was pertinent to the keyword entry and the concept under investigation. The keywords used to search the index included: People's Republic of China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan, Democratic Republic of Korea, Republic of Korea, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Philippines.

2. Media Attention Measure

Only certain types of media organizations are likely to have an affect on presidential or congressional attention or be influenced by presidential attention in foreign policy. These organizations include the national newspapers and national television news networks that focus much of their attention on national politics and foreign events. Newspapers and television networks define their institutional agendas by making choices on what stories to print or broadcast. We measure attention to foreign policy by the national news media by content coding the ABC, CBS, and NBC nightly television news programs. Specifically, we count the number of minutes devoted to each issue by the networks using the Vanderbilt Television News Archives available on-line at <http://tvnews.vanderbilt.edu>. We searched the Archive using keywords relevant to East Asia, including China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Beijing, Peking, Tiananmen, Japan, Tokyo, Korea, Seoul, Pyongyang, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Philippines. We examined each "hit" for validity concerning whether or not it dealt with some facet of East Asia. The method adopted here is the same approach used by Edwards and Wood (1999), Wood and Peake (1998), and Peake (2001).

3. Congressional Attention Measure

Legislative activity (hearings, votes, etc.) gives an indication of what the Congress as a group feels is important. Beyond formal activity, there are individual press conferences and television appearances by members, particularly the leadership, that give an indication of what Congress considers important in national politics. Instances of attention to foreign policy by Congress provide indicators of the congressional foreign policy agenda. A measure of congressional attention should take into account both formal and informal congressional activity since congressional activism in foreign affairs comes in many forms (Burgin 1997; Lindsay 1994). The Congressional *Quarterly Weekly* Report provides the database used to measure congressional attention to the foreign policy issues. *CQ Weekly* is the major periodical that focuses on Congress. Each issue is essentially a recap of what occurred on Capitol Hill the previous week, along with ongoing issue discussions in Congress and the administration and journalistic analyses. As with the other

databases, we used keywords related to East Asia in the subject indexes for each yearly volume of the *CQ Weekly Reports*. The keywords include People's Republic of China (all subheadings), Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan, Democratic Republic of Korea, Republic of Korea, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Philippines. We read each story indicated in the indexes and counted the number of columns (typically 3 per page) that were relevant. We did not count articles that made sole reference to the presidential administration. We counted only columns mentioning activity or attention by Congress or by members of the legislature. We adopt the same approach used by Peake (2001).

4. Events Measure

To develop a time series measure of exogenous foreign events related to China, We rely on the PANDA data set developed by the Program on Nonviolent Sanctions in Conflict and Defense, in the Center for International Affairs at Harvard University. PANDA uses an artificial intelligence program (KEDS) to code discrete events from Reuters news leads. PANDA events are reports of discrete actions by a source country (or nationality) toward a target country or discrete actions completely within a single country, such as a civil war or rights violation (Bond and Bond 1994). It is important to recognize that one singular event in a foreign nation is likely to receive several reports on the Reuters news wire as the event unfolds and develops. Therefore the severity of the event is represented by the actual number of reports.

We excluded from our events series events where the United States is listed as the source country to ensure the events measure was exogenous from the U.S. institutional system. We then counted the events by week to create a measure of exogenous events. The keywords include the names each East Asian nation.

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