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Health Challenges from COVID-19 in Rural Areas: Comparative Lessons from the United States and Japan

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The COVID-19 outbreak has posed critical challenges to rural health in the United States. As the number of patients with COVID-19 sharply increases, healthcare facilities in rural areas have been struggling to meet the challenges. The lack of centralized authorities in healthcare has caused various problems in rural health in the United States, making it difficult to deliver healthcare for those who desperately need it. The case of Japan provides an important contrast to the situation of rural areas in the United States. The universal healthcare system in Japan has provided healthcare to virtually all of Japanese citizens, keeping the costs of healthcare low. Similarly, governments at different levels in Japan have jointly addressed the issue of physician shortage in rural areas, which established the condition in which patients with COVID-19 can seek medical treatment. Finally, the national government in Japan played an essential role in controlling the initial surge of COVID-19, guiding Japanese citizens' behavior. A comparative analysis on these two cases provides critical implications that are highly valuable in improving healthcare in rural areas.

Introduction

Health policy is shaped by political reactions to real or perceived stresses on healthcare. Catastrophic events expose the strengths and weaknesses of formal healthcare policy. Albert Camus (1948) provided a grim picture of the medical and political failures associated with a dreadful virus in the classic, *The Plague*. The pandemic of 1918 illustrates the lingering policy implications of unrelenting disease. Parmet and Rothstein (2018) aptly remark: "After 100 years, the 1918 pandemic remains a defining moment for public health in the United States and indeed the world. With unprecedented severity and speed, the H1N1 influenza virus spread across the globe to virtually every part of the Earth, killing at least 50 million people."

Health science aside, the health data offer a compelling need to evaluate healthcare policy. Indeed, the COVID pandemic underscores the need for analyzing the current state of health policies. The COVID-19 outbreak has dramatically affected the way people live their lives. Having spread quickly to different countries, the novel coronavirus has shaken healthcare systems around the world. As of July 2021, there have been more than 4 million deaths along with almost 200 million cases of infections in the world (New York Times 2021, July 30). The United States has suffered from the highest death toll, which has exceeded 610,000 as of July 2021 (New York Times 2021, July 30). As one can see in the case of New York City (NYC), the healthcare system in the United States was not fully prepared to deal with the problem of COVID-19 (Marquez and Moghe 2020). Witnessing the chaotic situation in NYC, some observers pointed out the fundamental problems of the healthcare system in the United States (Scott 2020). However, the policy implications go well beyond the urban environments. The breadth of implications includes the push for vaccination, especially in rural America. At the time of this research rural Americans were being vaccinated at a low rate. As observed by Murphy and Marema (2021):

> The pace of new Covid-19 vaccinations in rural counties
> faltered last week… As of July 22, 35.8% of the rural
> population was completely vaccinated for Covid-19. That's
> an increase of 0.3 percentage points from the previous week.
> In mid-April, the rural vaccination rate was increasing by
> more than 2 percentage points a week. The metropolitan rate

of completed vaccinations stood at 46.8% of the population last week, an increase of 0.6 percentage points from two weeks ago. The metropolitan vaccination rate is currently 11 percentage points higher than the nonmetropolitan vaccination rate.

Inevitably, rural communities in the United States have been struggling to meet the challenges posed by the coronavirus. The predicament of rural health is nothing new.

The vaccine rates in rural America underscore the on-going challenges confronted in the rural setting. Rural populations have been persistently stressed by COVID. As noted in the New York Times (2020, October 22), "Since late summer, per capita case and death rates in rural areas have outpaced those in metropolitan areas." The rural health data reveals the persistent reach of COVID. The serious situation underscores the inadequate resources afforded to rural populations as well as the impact of state and national health policies. Health policy in the time of COVID amplified the gaps associated with rural health policy.

The election of President Biden will likely increase the pace and uniformity for COVID relief. Yet, the pressure to address rural gaps is being pushed at the national level. Bipartisan support for rural populations has captured the attention of Senators Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), Maggie Hassan (D-NH), Senators Joe Manchin (D-WV), Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), Jon Tester (D-MT), Kevin Cramer (R-ND) and Angus King (I-ME). In a February 7, 2021 public release, the aforementioned U.S. Senators urged the following: "With the very concerning trends in rural America, additional resources are needed to ensure that health providers and health departments have the funding necessary to address the COVID-19 pandemic. This Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund set-aside should be distributed to support rural and underserved communities across the United States as quickly as possible" (Target News Service 2021, February 7). This policy position and funding is essential for the well-being of rural citizens. The need for the rural areas is well established. The Biden Admiration's push for COVID relief as well as the legislative push from the 116th Congress ought to provide positive policy changes for rural COVID health. The situation demands greater attention and scrutiny well beyond the moment of this research.

In order to understand the root problems of healthcare in rural areas, it is important to analyze healthcare systems across countries. Scholars have pointed out differences between rural health in the United States and Japan. One of the most important factors that account for the differences is the government role in healthcare. The healthcare system in Japan provides universal healthcare for all Japanese citizens. The equality principle has been a central element of the healthcare system in Japan, making it possible for Japanese citizens to access healthcare at low costs regardless of their levels of income or locations of residence (Ikegami and Anderson 2012; Shibuya et al. 2011). Similarly, political intervention tends to be successful in Japan in promoting equal distribution of physicians within the country, equipping rural medical facilities with more sophisticated medical devices (Matsumoto et al. 2004a; Matsumoto 2011). The vaccination rates for those over 65 years old in rural prefectures tend to surpass those of prefectures with large populations (NHK 2021a, July 30). Finally, observers suggest that the Japanese government has effectively managed the initial surge of COVID-19 by issuing a clear message to the public, thus enhancing awareness among the Japanese population (Inoue 2020; Sayeed and Hossain 2020; Tashiro and Shaw 2020).

The main goal of this study is to speculate how rural health in these two countries can deal with global pandemics such as COVID-19. Since the situation surrounding COVID-19 in the United States is drastically different from that in Japan, it is not easy to compare the performances of rural health across these two countries on the issue of COVID-19. The difference in death tolls cannot be solely attributed to characteristics of rural health. Yet, it is important to obtain insights into how various elements of rural health can effectively cope with global pandemics. By dissecting the way rural health in these two countries functions, the present research generates important findings that are highly useful in improving healthcare systems in rural settings.

This study proceeds as follows: First, the importance of comparative public policy will be reviewed; second, we examine the case of the United States regarding how rural health deals with COVID-19; third, we investigate the Japanese cases and analyze the differences between these two cases; fourth, we conclude this study by summarizing the findings and discussing practical implications obtained from the comparative COVID policy analysis.

Case Selections: The United States and Japan

The present research compares healthcare systems across the United States and Japan. Scholars have widely recognized the importance of comparative analysis in public policy. Heidenheimer et al. (1990) provided an enduring text for comparative public policy, which includes analyses from America, Europe, and Japan. Similarly, Gupta (2012) encourages scholars to adopt a comparative method in order to better understand the policy-making process. There is considerable value in assessing public policies, especially health policy, through comparative lenses. In a health policy text, Bodenheimer and Grumbach (2020) utilize the health policy lessons from Germany, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Japan and observe "Examining their diverse systems may aid us in our search for an improved healthcare system for the United States" (p. 169). These studies highlight the critical importance of comparative studies on healthcare systems across countries.

In conducting comparative studies, it is essential to select cases carefully. For this purpose, we chose cases by focusing on two points. First, this study highlights the important effect of political systems on healthcare. While the United States employs a federal system, Japan adopts a unitary state. One can assume that the difference in political systems can lead to divergent outcomes in health policies. The federal structure in the United States tends to undermine governments' efforts at different levels to address the problem of COVID-19 (Beland et al. 2021; Gordon, Huberfeld, and Jones 2020; Huberfeld, Gordon, and Jones 2020). However, the national government of Japan was relatively successful in curbing the initial surge of COVID-19 (Inoue 2020; Tashiro and Shaw 2020). Considering these contrasting pictures, it is imperative to carefully analyze the dynamics surrounding political structures and government response to the pandemic.

Closely related to the first issue, the present research focuses on the issue of physician distribution. It has been widely reported that COVID-19 has posed serious challenges toward residents in rural communities in the United States (FoxNE 2020, June 27; Stavola 2020). Rural communities suffer from the shortage of physicians since healthcare professionals tend to choose to practice in urban settings rather than rural areas (Chaudhary et al. 2017; Machado, Jayawardana, and Mossialos 2021). The case of Japan presents a different picture. The problem of physician distribution seems to be less

serious in Japan due to effective political intervention (Matsumoto 2011). As a result, the pandemic has not seriously impacted rural communities in Japan. These differences between the United States and Japan warrant special attention.

As these two points above suggest, Japan offers many important and possible avenues for Americans to consider. Comparative public policy has value as we search for better public policies. Utilizing the American COVID experience as compared to the Japanese COVID experience will offer pathways for policy improvements. The next section analyzes how the healthcare system in the United States has dealt with the problem of COVID-19.

The Case of the United States

The COVID-19 pandemic clearly displays the powerful and deadly forces associated with the fiercely independent forces of nature. Rural landscapes offer no place to hide from the pandemic. A look back to the Pandemic of 1918 underscore the daunting prospects for rural residents. The following provides a snapshot from the Pandemic of 1918 illustrating health issues that confronted rural America:

> In rural communities, the service infrastructure is very different; there is no long-standing bureaucracy for organizing and delivering services, including those needed in a pandemic. Service areas are much larger than the immediate rural community, making transportation an issue and cultural expectations and norms (how services are accepted) can be different from those in cities. In rural areas one normally sees a personal and household independence theme. (Watkins 2015: 5)

The aforementioned passage was referring to the Pandemic of 1918, but eerily, the passage could be adapted to the current COVID-19 pandemic. The grim harshness of the 1918 pandemic seems to be very similar to COVID-19. Indeed, it seems nearly a century later, the rural population is similarly impacted by COVID-19. There is heightened concern with COVID-19. While relatively little is known about the novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19, current information indicates that adults over the age of 65 and individuals of any age who have underlying medical conditions, such as severe obesity, heart disease and diabetes, are the most at risk for severe illness from

COVID-19 (CDC 2020, June 25). Since rural populations tend to be older and have a higher prevalence of many underlying health conditions, the novel coronavirus is troublesome for rural areas. Additionally, fewer than 50% of counties in the United States have Intensive Care Unit (ICU) beds (Schulte et al. 2020). This will spell trouble for rural healthcare systems and the more than 7 million people over the age of 60 living in those counties as disaster strikes (Schulte et al. 2020).

The disaster continues to negatively impact rural America. An example from Kansas is one of many illustrations:

> For many states and counties in the U.S., the dark days of the coronavirus pandemic in April unfolded on their television screens, not on their doorsteps. But now, some places that appeared to have avoided the worst are seeing surges of infections, as worries shift from major cities to rural areas. While much of the focus of concerns that the United States is entering a dangerous new phase has been on big Sunbelt states that are reporting thousands of new cases a day — like Texas and Florida — the worrying trend is also happening in places like Kansas, where livestock outnumber people. (FoxNE 2020, June 27)

A common variant in the multitude of variables is the processing of livestock which has led to a cluster of COVID-19 outbreaks throughout the rural areas. The economic demands to process meat stressed the human need of survival. A vivid glimpse is captured in the following situation involving National Beef in Liberal Kansas and Seaboard Foods in Guymon, Oklahoma:

> A hospital in Guymon - struggling to cope with 116 positive COVID-19 cases among workers at a nearby meat processing plant - recently sent several coronavirus patients to Alliance Health Woodward due to the local facility's designation as a regional hospital for pandemics. Alliance Health is often tasked with taking patients from smaller hospitals that can't care for those cases. Texas County Emergency Manager Harold Tyson said the Guymon hospital only has one isolation room, which needs a separate air circulation system or air purifiers. (Fogleman 2020)

The rural hospitals were stressed as limited resources coupled with the influx of COVID-19 patients stressed the healthcare providers. In a region where individualism and frugality often dictate political outcomes, the deadly virus could not care less about the political culture.

The impact has been harsh. The continuation of the coverage reveals the less than ideal healthcare system and harsh outcomes:

> Being a community hospital can have its setbacks. Southwest doesn't have access to the resources, such as shared staffing and equipment, that the hospital systems in Finney and Ford counties do. After making a specially designed unit walled off by plastic barriers, Southwest had the capacity to hold 22 patients: 10 in the intensive care unit and 12 in the designed unit. On May 3, the hospital, which had few ventilators, was able to get an emergency shipment of four more. The National Guard flew them in by helicopter after calls were made to U.S. Rep. Roger Marshall. Between May 3 and May 4, when the hospital hit its capacity, it had to transfer some patients to other hospitals. During the period of maximum capacity, nine of the 10 patients on ventilators were linked to the meatpacking facilities — five to National Beef and four to Seaboard Foods — Kamath, the Seward County physician, said. (Stavola 2020)

COVID-19 is leaving a devastating impact on rural and urban populations. The lack of healthcare resources exacerbates the plight of rural areas. As stated by one writer for the *Los Angeles Times:* "Rural hospitals nationwide are bracing for a wave of high-risk coronavirus patients that could break an already fragile healthcare system, one facing shortages of supplies and a scarcity of doctors so dire that some centers might have to shut down if a single physician contracts the disease" (Wilber 2020).

Further, COVID-19 exposes the shortcomings U.S. health policy in rural areas. This goes beyond the region to a universal observation for rural America:

> There are many reasons why these smaller, mostly independent hospitals have been struggling to stay above water. Perhaps the most obvious is their lack of resources. While large health systems

can often leverage economies of scale and build deep financial reservoirs, rural hospitals are dependent on the revenue they collect from procedures and care delivered within their four walls. With elective surgeries only now beginning to resume, and patient confidence at an all-time low, that creates undue financial pressure. (Lagasse 2020).

While approximately 19% of the United States population lives in rural areas, only about 10% of physicians work in rural hospitals (Chaudhary et al. 2017). Machado, Jayawardana, and Mossialos (2021) show that the problem of physician shortage in rural areas worsened from 2010 to 2017, suggesting that this issue poses a serious challenge to rural health. In addition to the problem of physician shortage, healthcare services tend to be more expensive in rural areas than in urban places, and this lack of access to medical providers is correlated with a higher prevalence of diabetes, coronary heart disease, and obesity in rural America (Chaudhary et al. 2017; Cohen et al. 2016; O'Connor and Wellenius 2012). Additionally, 17.5% of the population in rural areas is 65 or older, while that number is only 13.8% in urban areas (Symens-Smith and Trevelyan 2019). The CEO of the National Rural Health Association, Alex Morgan, says that while smaller, critical access hospitals regularly perform drills and have plans in place for pandemics, the rural healthcare system was built to be efficient, not to handle a pandemic (Eastabrook 2020).

Rural hospitals are working to ensure that they will be able to provide for their communities. For some hospitals like Great Plains Health in North Platte, Nebraska, planning for the coronavirus pandemic began when the virus first reached the United States, long before it reached Nebraska. Physicians and administrators worked together to determine what steps needed to be taken to prepare their hospital, staff, and communities for the looming pandemic. As a rural hospital, they knew that they would have decreased access to extra medical supplies, like personal protective equipment (PPE) and ventilators, when the pandemic hit. They also knew that since they serve not just their city, but also many surrounding communities, they would need all the supplies they could get. Because of this, the hospital quickly began to conserve masks, gowns, and gloves, and they started to implement decontamination processes that were developed at academic hospitals.[1]

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[1] Personal communication between Nicole Kent and N. Matthews M. D. April 15, 2020.

The personal toll on healthcare providers is acute on the rural plains. Rural physicians know their patients – not just from office visits, but from seeing them at the grocery store and sitting by them at their child's t-ball game. In the general population, the prevalence of depression is around 8%, with burnout rates of 28% (Shanafelt et al. 2019). For physicians, both depression prevalence and burnout rates are 40% (Shanafelt et al. 2019). Matriculating medical students, however, have similar or slightly better mental health than control groups (Brazeau et al. 2014), indicating that the training and the job itself are causing these high rates of depression and burnout. The healthcare professionals are at risk as are the rural hospitals. COVID-19 reduces the income provided by elective surgeries. Many rural hospitals rely on elective surgeries and revenue through their "nonessential services" to operate in the black (Schulte et al. 2020). With 170 rural hospitals closing in the last fifteen years, it is not difficult to imagine that the financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic will likely cause additional financial strain for many rural healthcare facilities, and the federal funding provided to date might not be enough to revive rural hospitals (Tolan, Fantz, and Richards 2020).

The COVID 19 impact will likely affect rural populations on the health and economic fronts for years to come. As observed by University of Arkansas researchers:
"The economies of smaller cities and rural areas in Arkansas might take longer to bounce back from the crisis surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic than the state's larger metro areas, a University of Arkansas economist says. Mervin Jebaraj, director of the Center for Business and Economic Research at the Sam M. Walton College of Business, said some parts of the state will have a harder time of recovering economically from the pandemic and the slowdown - or near complete shutdown - for many businesses" (US Fed News 2020, April 22). Rural residents are resilient and the need for perseverance is obvious. Though their resiliency is enduring, rural residents could use a boost from nature and their respective policymakers.

While the perseverance of residents and healthcare providers in rural areas has been of great benefit during the COVID-19 pandemic, the federal structure of the United States has posed serious challenges to rural health. Scholars have widely documented how federalism has adversely affected the healthcare system of the United States. Research has shown that the federal structure of the United States has critically undermined the effectiveness of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) by allowing states to

implement the ACA at different paces (Collins and Lambrew 2019; Jennings and Hayes 2010). Similarly, federalism in the United States has resulted in negative outcomes in the US response to COVID-19. Studies have shown that federalism has exacerbated inequality among states, leaving states with poor resources unprepared for the pandemic (Gordon, Huberfeld, and Jones 2020; Huberfeld, Gordon, and Jones 2020). Also, Beland et al. (2021) contend that the crisis surrounding COVID-19 has seriously paralyzed the structure of healthcare financing due to divided authorities that federalism inevitably creates. The pandemic has revealed the structural weakness of the US healthcare system embedded in the federal structure.

Along with structural vulnerability of healthcare in the United States, policymakers have not fully addressed the COVID mitigation concerns. South Dakota policymakers welcomed hundreds of thousands to Sturgis for the annual motorcycle rally. The welcome mat was without health cautions. Specifically, "South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem, a Republican, has defied calls to cancel large gatherings and opposes requirements to wear masks. She welcomed the event, which in previous years brought in about $800 million in tourist spending, according to the state's Department of Tourism" (Groves 2022). The situation is similar in 2021 and Walker (2021) reported: "This year's rally, which began on Friday, is expected to draw an even larger crowd, just as the infectious Delta variant is producing more new virus cases nationwide than this time last year."

Local decisions greatly impact the conditions of rural health. Federalism allows such varied reactions and policies regarding rural health, which can consequently result in divergent outcomes. Governors in the US federal system are quite confident and comfortable at making bold assertions against the national government. For example, Governor Pete Ricketts, a Republican Governor, stated his disdain of national guidelines:

> Nebraskans exercise personal responsibility for their own health, and are encouraged to have a conversation with their doctor about the vaccine. These conversations will be important because the virus will be with us forever. Working together, we've successfully protected hospital capacity throughout the pandemic. It's time for the CDC and the government to get out of the way, and to stop trying to tell people how to live their lives. (Office of Governor Pete Ricketts 2021, July 27)

Arkansas provides another vivid example of the workings of federalism. Governor Asa Hutchison initially supported and signed legislation (Act 1002) that prevented OCID mask mitigation protocols. Governor Hutchinson in light of infection rates in Arkansas, regretted his initial support of Act 1002 and called for a special session to amend the legislation. As stated in his press release: "Governor Asa Hutchinson has called members of the 93rd General Assembly into Extraordinary Session to begin at 10 a.m. on August 4 to create an exception to Act 1002 that will give public school boards flexibility to protect those school children who are 11 and younger and not eligible for a vaccine" (Office of Governor Asa Hutchinson 2021, August 3). The appeal to local political culture is evident in the release as follows:

> "I understand that some legislators are reluctant to allow school boards this freedom, even in this limited way," Governor Hutchinson said. "But the exceptions for which I am asking are true to the conservative principle that puts control in the hands of local government…Some argue it should be up to the parents to decide for the children. For that reason, school boards will have many options after listening to the parents. The goal is to be safe and to keep schools open. Local flexibility will help get us there…" (Office of Governor Asa Hutchinson 2021, August 3)

The political nuances of federalism suggest that COVID policy will continue to unfold in a less than linear fashion. Federalism allows such a meandering path. Governor Ricketts and other governors, particularly Republicans, have resisted the national COVID guidance. Consequently, the federal structure of the United States has led to divergent policy outcomes, which has critically undermined the effectiveness of health policy against COVID-19 (Gordon, Huberfeld, and Jones 2020; Hubert et al. 2020).

As has been show above, the situation surrounding COVID-19 in rural communities is far from optimal. It is highly unlikely that the healthcare system of the United States can develop a concerted strategy against COVID-19 across states. While we have documented various challenges that rural health in the United States faces, there certainly can be alternatives in dealing with COVID-19. In the next section, we look into the case of Japan and analyze the differences between these two cases.

The Case of Japan

While rural America faces multifarious challenges surrounding COVID-19, the case of Japan offers an important contrast. As in the case of the United States, the issue of rural-urban difference in healthcare has been a critical issue in Japan. Scholars have widely explored the issue of rural-urban gap from various perspectives, generating a large number of studies on this subject (Abe et al. 2012; Fukuda, Nakamura, Tanaka 2005; Kuwata 2011; Sampaio et al. 2012). Although rural health in Japan faces various challenges, the environment seems to be more favorable in Japan than in the United States. One of the most critical factors that result in divergent outcomes is the role of the government in healthcare. The central government assures a level of health for all of the Japanese population while the United States does not have such governmental support or direction. The success or failure of COVID mitigation depends on the national government. Analyses focusing on the role of the government can uncover critical differences of healthcare in these two countries.

The most important element that supports healthcare in Japan is the universal healthcare system. Since Japan established the universal healthcare system in 1962, this system has covered all Japanese citizens (Ikegami et al. 2011). One of the essential elements of this system is the "uniform fee schedule," which makes it possible for the government to control the costs of medical care (Ikegami and Anderson 2012). This regulation has played an instrumental role in providing affordable healthcare to Japanese citizens (Ikegami and Anderson 2012; Shibuya et al. 2011). Although some studies suggest the need to implement reforms (Ikegami and Campbell 1999; Kobayashi 2009), there is no question that the universal healthcare system in Japan has functioned as the backbone of rural health in Japan, allowing all rural residents to have access to healthcare.

Experts have suggested that the universal healthcare system covering all Japanese citizens has played an instrumental role in tackling the problem of COVID-19, along with a variety of possible factors (McCurry 2020). This system allows Japanese citizens to seek medical care at low costs, thus securing equal access to healthcare among them (Ikegami and Anderson 2012; Shibuya et al. 2011). The universal healthcare system in Japan presents a contrasting picture to the US healthcare system in which those who are uninsured are reluctant to see doctors due to its high costs

(Taghipour and Saltman 2020; Scott 2020).[2] In tackling global pandemics, the universal healthcare system provides an important advantage. By dramatically lowering the costs of medical treatment, it becomes much easier to address health problems among citizens in a more effective manner.

In addition to the universal healthcare system, the issue of physician distribution is also illustrative to highlight the advantage of rural health in Japan. As in the case of the United States, physician shortage in rural areas is a serious problem in Japan (Matsumoto et al. 2018). Yet, the problem of physician shortage seems to be less serious in the case of Japan. Matsumoto et al. (2010a) suggest that physician distribution in Japan is not dependent on income distribution while this variable is an important determinant of physician distribution in the United States, which implies that the condition in Japan is more conducive to increasing the number of physicians in rural areas. Indeed, Matsumoto et al. (2010b) contend that there is a possibility that physicians who are concerned about competition may choose to practice in rural areas. In analyzing the distribution of family physicians in Japan, Yoshida et al. (2019) indicate that the distribution of family physicians tends to be skewed in favor of rural areas, which may potentially rectify the maldistribution of physicians.[3] Also, Ishikawa (2020) suggests that the geographical discrepancy in physician distribution tends to be improved over time. Finally, evidence shows that medical facilities in rural areas tend to be more effective than those in urban areas. Matsumoto et al. (2004a) maintain that possession rates of medical devices are higher at clinics and hospitals in rural areas than those in metropolitan areas. These findings indicate that rural residents in Japan enjoy some advantages in accessing healthcare.

One of the most crucial factors that contribute to rural health in Japan is the role of the Japanese government in healthcare. Recognizing the serious shortage of physicians in rural areas, governments at various levels have jointly addressed this problem. For instance, they have tried to increase the number of medical schools so that each prefecture has at least one medical school, consequently boosting the overall number of physicians in Japan (Matsumoto et al. 2010c). Another approach that has been successful is

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[2] Woolhandler and Himmelstein (2017) show that the lack of health insurance can lead to high mortality in the United States.
[3] However, it is important to note the percentage of family physicians in Japan is only 0.2% (Yoshida et al. 2019).

the "regional quota system" that was originally implemented by Jichi Medical University (JMU), which was established by the Japanese government in cooperation with regional governments in 1972 (Matsumoto et al. 2010c; Matsumoto, Inoue, and Takeuchi 2012). In exchange for scholarships provided by regional governments, students in JMU are required to practice medicine in rural areas for a certain period of time (Matsumoto, Inoue, Takeuchi 2012: 106). The regional quota system similar to the one employed by JMU has been widely adopted by different universities, and these programs have been instrumental in alleviating the problem of physician shortage in rural areas (Ishiakwa et al. 2017; Matsumoto and Kajii, 2009; Matsumoto, Inoue, Takeuchi 2012). While there are signs indicating some obstacles (Hara et al. 2017; Matsumoto, Okayama, and Kajii 2004b, 2018; Tanihara et al. 2011), it seems that political intervention by different levels of government has been fairly effective in addressing the problem of physician shortage in rural areas (Matsumoto 2011).[4]

The issue of physician distribution is also important in analyzing how rural areas in Japan can deal with the novel coronavirus. There have been some concerns about overwhelming clinics and hospitals in rural areas in Japan (Japan Times 2020, April 2; Tokyo Shinbun 2020, April 8). Indeed, it has been reported that some hospitals have been struggling to meet the challenges posed by COVID-19 (Japan Times 2020, April 29). However, the data shows that this problem has been confined to prefectures with large populations; rural areas still have ample rooms for new patients (NHK 2020, August 11). Among 47 prefectures in Japan, 8 prefectures show higher than 40% of the occupancy rates of hospitals, and 5 of these prefectures have are densely populated areas (NHK 2021, July 28). In the same way, Tokyo is one of few prefectures where the occupancy rate for those who suffer from severe symptoms exceeds 60% whereas the average for other prefectures remains 24% (NHK 2021, July 28).[5] Judging from these figures, it seems that rural areas tend to be spared from the problem of overpopulating hospitals.

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[4] Some medical schools in the United States have adopted similar approaches that attempt to increase the number of physicians in rural areas (Rabinowitz et al. 2008, 2012).

[5] Okinawa prefecture also records the occupancy rate of 63% for those with severe symptoms. Yet, Okinawa prefecture has only 70 beds available for those patients, and the situation surrounding healthcare is rather unique due to the fact that Okinawa is distant from main islands of Japan (NHK 2021, July 28).

Along with the occupancy rates, it is important to examine the vaccination rates among the Japanese population. One critical issue in this context is the recent push for vaccination against COVID-19. Amid the pressure to host the Olympics in Tokyo as scheduled, the Japanese government led by Yoshihide Suga, Prime Minister of Japan, set off an ambitious program of administering about 1 million doses of the vaccine per day (Dunbar 2021; Klapper 2021). Although the vaccination rates remain low compared to those of other Western democracies, the initiative promoted by the Japanese government has dramatically boosted vaccination rates among the Japanese population, especially for those who are over 65 years old (Yomiuri Shimbun 2021, July 31).

In understanding the rural-urban difference in healthcare, it is useful to investigate the vaccination rates among the population who are over 65 years old since this age group was the main target of the initial vaccination process. According to NHK (2021a, July 30), Gifu prefecture shows 91.42% of the vaccination rate among this age group, which is the highest figure among 47 prefectures, followed by Shiga (91.01%) and Yamagata (90.77%). However, prefectures with large populations tend to be ranked low: Osaka prefecture, which has the third largest population in Japan, shows the lowest vaccination rate of 81.41% and Tokyo is ranked 44th with 83.71% among 47 prefectures (NHK 2021a, July 30). These figures suggest that rural residents in Japan have access to vaccines against COVID-19. Although one still needs to examine the situation more carefully, it is possible that government initiatives at different levels have effectively prepared rural health in Japan for COVID-19.

Observers praised the Japanese government's response to the initial surge of COVID-19 in Japan. Among various factors, one of the most crucial elements is the message from the national government. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan at that time, declared a nationwide state of emergency in April 2020 to cope with rising cases of COVID-19. Declaring a state of emergency was instrumental in encouraging Japanese citizens to behave responsibly amid the pandemic (Sayeed and Hossian 2020; Tashiro and Shaw 2020). Inoue (2020) contends that political elites in Japan were highly effective in issuing a clear message to the public regarding the issue of

controlling the pandemic. Although the substantive effectiveness of the policy of declaring the state of emergency waned over time as the Japanese government relied on this means repeatedly, there is no denying that the government's initial response to the pandemic was fairly successful in limiting the surge of the coronavirus in Japan.

Finally, the central government of Japan has strategically planned to best mitigate the impact on rural Japan as well as manage the spread in urban areas. For instance, top officials in the Japanese government announced their plan to encourage migration to rural areas in order to contain COVID-19, calling this initiative "a good opportunity to promote regional revitalization" (Japan Times 2020, May 28). Although there are some challenges before this initiative is actually implemented, it is noteworthy that the Japanese government is taking steps to address the problem of urban concentration. In the years to come, one may see a series of policy initiatives to promote migration to rural areas as global pandemics remain as critical problems. This kind of policy reflects the government's effort to manage COVID-19 from a comprehensive framework, which can subsequently shape the way rural health functions in Japan.

These characteristics in healthcare in Japan have important implications in the battle against COVID-19. Compared to the United States, the impact of COVID-19 has been limited in Japan. While the number of infections is above 914,065, the death toll associated with the coronavirus is 15,184 as of July 30, 2021 (NHK 2021b, July 30). Unlike the United States that has been struggling to meet the challenges of COVID-19, the situation on rural health in Japan has been more stable, although factors that have truly contributed to the lower death toll in Japan have been still unknown (Sposato 2020). Although one cannot conclude that the healthcare system in Japan has contributed to the low death toll (Sposato 2020), the cursory look at the Japanese healthcare system reveals the important role of political intervention in healthcare (Matsumoto 2011). The central government of Japan strategically plans to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 while states in the United States are left to deal with a lack of resources and national direction.

The situation in Japan surrounding COVID-19 is not free from problems. Japan experienced four waves of infections and is currently going through the fifth wave with a record number of infections mainly in heavily populated areas in Japan (Kuhn 2021). Although the Japanese government led by Suga has tried to deal with these problems by declaring a state of

emergency targeting metropolitan areas, observers have been skeptical of the effectiveness of these measures (Sugiyama and Takahashi 2021). While rural areas tend to be stable with limited numbers of infections, it is possible that these areas may experience a surge of infections in the near future. As shown above, political intervention has been key in battling against COVID-19. Poor leadership by Suga may lead to disastrous consequences in Japan. In order to respond to COVID-19 in the most effective manner, it is essential to investigate how the Japanese government can implement a strategy that can navigate the healthcare system in an optimal manner. Findings obtained from the comparative analysis generate critical implications for the problem in healthcare in the United States.

Conclusion

The goal of the present research has been to gain insights into the issue of global pandemics in rural health. More specifically, this study has examined how rural health in the United States and Japan can cope with the outbreak of global pandemics such as COVID-19. Studies have suggested that rural residents in the United States face various challenges in accessing quality healthcare. For instance, the presence of the large number of the uninsured in rural areas poses a serious problem in tackling global pandemics (CDC 2020, July 14). In the same way, physician distribution in the United States tends to be dependent on income distribution rather than population distribution, thus making the shortage of physicians in rural areas a serious problem (Matsumoto et al. 2010a). Furthermore, studies have shown that the federal structure of the United States has undermined governments' approaches to COVID-19 at different levels (Beland et al. 2021; Gordon, Huberfeld, and Jones 2020; Huberfeld, Gordon, and Jones 2020). As these points illustrate, the United States seems to be highly vulnerable to the impacts of global pandemics.

The case of Japan draws a somewhat contrasting picture. Governments in Japan at different levels have jointly addressed the problems of rural health. Most importantly, the universal healthcare system in Japan provides equal access to healthcare among all Japanese citizens, making healthcare affordable by keeping the cost of healthcare low (Ikegami and Anderson 2012; Shibuya et al. 2011). In a similar manner, political intervention in Japan has been relatively effective in rectifying the problem of physician shortage in rural areas (Matsumoto 2011). Studies have widely

documented the presence of favorable factors in Japan encouraging physicians to practice in rural areas (Ishikawa et al. 2017; Matsumoto and Kajii 2009; Matsumoto, Inoue, and Takeuchi 2012). Finally, the national government in Japan played an essential role in controlling the initial surge of COVID-19, guiding Japanese citizens' behavior (Inoue 2020; Sayeed and Hossain 2020; Tashiro and Shaw 2020). Considering these advantages, one can predict that rural health in Japan is in a better position to deal with global pandemics.

However, one needs to be careful in interpreting these findings as the scope of the comparative analysis in this study is limited. Although the analysis focusing on the government role has indicated the favorable conditions in rural health in Japan, it is certainly possible that rural health in the United States enjoys more advantages in other issues. In order to evaluate performances of healthcare systems across countries, it is necessary to consider a wider range of issues. This is especially the case in analyzing how rural health in each country can cope with COVID-19 since global pandemics inevitably affect rural residents in various ways. In order to better understand rural health, it is necessary to conduct a systematic analysis across countries by adopting comprehensive data.

Although limited in scope, this study has generated important implications to combat global pandemics that may break out in the future. The analysis in Japan has suggested the effectiveness of the universal healthcare system in addressing global pandemics. The COVID-19 outbreak has revealed the vulnerability of the healthcare systems in the United States that leave out a large number of citizens. One of the major concerns that was raised in the problem of COVID-19 is patients' ability to bear the cost of medical treatment. In order to address this problem, it is imperative to install a system that allows patients with COVID-19 to have access to healthcare without financial burden (Goldstein 2020).

Furthermore, scholars emphasize the importance of political intervention in tackling the problem of physician shortage in rural areas (Matsumoto 2011). As noted above, governments at different levels in Japan have implemented the regional quota system, and it has been reported that this system has been successful in boosting the number of physicians who practice in rural areas (Matsumoto et al. 2016). In a similar manner, Matsumoto et al. (2015) emphasize the importance of increasing generalists

by relying on the regional quota system. While political intervention seems to be relatively successful in the case of Japan, evidence indicates that political intervention has not satisfactorily achieved its goal in the United States (Matsumoto 2011). Recognizing the divergent outcomes regarding physician shortage in rural areas, it is necessary to explore the reason why political intervention is successful in some cases while it is not in others. In order to make political intervention more effective, it is essential to examine factors that can promote desirable changes in rural communities.

Finally, one can emphasize the importance of coordination among governments at various levels. In tackling the initial surge of COVID-19 in Japan, the national government declared a state of emergency, which delivered a clear message to the Japanese public (Inoue 2020). The consistent message from political elites was instrumental in inducing behavioral change among the Japanese population during the initial surge of COVID-19 (Inoue 2020; Sayeed and Hossain 2020; Tashiro and Shaw 2020). This lesson can be applied in the context of the United States. It is imperative that political actors at different levels jointly tackle the pandemic adopting the consistent principles. To address the problem in the most effective manner, mitigation efforts toward the pandemic need to be synergetic. Although divided authorities that federalism inevitably creates in the United States may be an obstacle, it is important to establish a mechanism that allows relevant authorities to address the problem as a unified force.

As these points illustrate, the importance of political intervention in the issue of healthcare cannot be overstated. Leaving the issue of healthcare to the market dynamics can lead to disastrous outcomes in the face of global pandemics such as COVID-19. In order to boost the effectiveness of rural health, it is essential that policy makers take greater initiative in addressing the weaknesses of rural health. Even though the coronavirus pandemic is to be eventually controlled, it is always possible that another pandemic may break out. It is essential to be fully prepared for the possibility by taking necessary measures to establish effective healthcare systems in rural areas.

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Party Factions Matter:
Republican Intraparty Polarization Frustrates the Party Agenda in the House

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Party polarization is generally expected to yield more ideologically coherent and cohesive parties. Using a unique measure of factions in the Republican majority caucus, we directly test this expectation in the U.S. House of Representatives for the 112th Congress. Contrary to much of the literature on party polarization, we find a disjuncture between interparty polarization and intraparty cohesion, with the later standing as the key factor in determining party government. The distributional heterogeneity of Republican members along the party's internal ideological continuum reflects factional divergence from the party leadership and greater intraparty polarization. Ideologically extreme Republican factions are alienated from their party leadership, and they actively opposed the legislative agenda of the party on key votes.

Republican control of the U.S. House of Representatives since 2010 has been plagued by internecine struggles for control of the party agenda, marked by a toppled speakership, an aborted nomination for speaker, and gridlock on the party's legislative goals (Cannon 2015; Kopan et al. 2015). Unified Republican government after the 2016 election has continued the trend of paralysis and discohesion in producing and passing legislation. The most recent example of intraparty dysfunction of the Republican majority was the failed vote on the American Healthcare Act of 2017, a bill designed to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act (Pear, Kaplan, and Haberman 2017). The literature on party polarization and party politics suggests that, as a majority party becomes more ideologically coherent, pursuit of the party agenda should become easier. Thus, the failure of Republican majority

government is a puzzling data point that contradicts theoretical expectations. While American political parties are considered weak relative to those that dominate European parliaments, ideological conformity was expected to ameliorate, not exacerbate, party disunity on a legislative agenda (Patterson and Caldeira 1988; McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2001; Hetherington 2009; Theriault 2006).

We seek to resolve this empirical puzzle and, consequently, develop a more robust theory of party polarization in Congress. The literature on party polarization assumes that interparty divergence on the ideological spectrum necessarily induces intraparty ideological convergence. That is, the mechanism that yields ideological polarization between the two major parties in Congress necessarily produces more ideological conformity within the two parties respectively. We contend this assumption is faulty. In fact, the mechanism that yields interparty polarization may simultaneously induce intraparty polarization. A clear and simple test of this proposition is the extent to which factions in the majority party impact voting on the party's legislative agenda. If conventional wisdom holds, intraparty factions should be largely irrelevant in an era of partisan polarization. We develop a unique measure of factions within the Republican Party caucus to assess the extent to which the majority party in the House has unified on a legislative agenda versus a condition of intraparty disunity and factionalism. Through an analysis of key House votes in the 112th Congress, we show that factions in the Republican majority are a significant and substantively important obstacle to the agenda of party leadership, even though the two major parties are ideologically polarized. Ideological polarization can occur simultaneously between the major parties and within the majority party, as the internal ideological continuum of the Republicans expands in conjunction with the widening ideological gap between Republicans and Democrats.

Party Polarization in Congress: Causes and Consequences

Polarization in the U.S. Congress has reached unprecedented levels, with "partisan conflict reaching new highs in 2000 and 2004" (Lewis-Beck et al. 2008, 14). This trend has persisted well into the second decade of the 21st Century (Jones 2015; Jochim and Jones 2013). Much of the literature on party polarization in the legislature suggests that party

polarization increases the likelihood of gridlock with respect to the capacity of the opposition party to thwart the will of the minority, not with respect to internecine conflict over the party's agenda (Jones 2001; Ingberman and Villani 1993). Indeed, to the contrary, that party polarization will yield more ideologically coherent and cohesive parties is a consistent expectation in the party polarization literature (Jones 2001; Brewer, Mariani, and Stonechash 2002; Garand 2010; Ingberman and Villani 1993; Theriault 2006, 2008; Theriault and Rohde 2011). Over the past several decades, as a political party's cross-pressured ideological gadflies are purged through electoral competition, the parties became more ideologically distinct from one another, inducing greater party polarization between the two major parties. With fewer conservative Democrats and liberal Republicans, it was natural to expect that party polarization would yield more ideologically consistent and coherent party caucuses (Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart III 2001; Theriault 2006; Han and Brady 2007).

Consistent with this expectation, the party polarization literature has presumed that interparty divergence would increase intraparty cohesion and increasingly ideologically homogenous Republican and Democratic party caucuses (Sinclair 2006; Han and Brady 2007; Theriault 2008; McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2009; Frymer 2011). According to the literature, party polarization is therefore a key factor in structuring the prospects of party government in late 20th and early 21st century congressional politics (Jones 2001; Brewer, Mariani, and Stonechash 2002; Sinclair 2006; Theriault 2008; Garand 2010; Theriault and Rohde 2011). If party polarization increases intraparty cohesion, it brightens the prospects of strategic party government (Lebo, McGlynn, and Koger 2007). Accordingly, as much of the literature predicts, backbenchers in their respective parties should cede power and control to their leadership, to better achieve ideologically beneficial shifts in the status quo (Cooper and Brady 1981; Diermeier and Feddersen 1998; Aldrich and Rohde 2000; Theriault 2008; Diermeier and Vlaicu 2011).

Republican control of the House in the era of party polarization should have been characterized by increasing party unity on the leadership's agenda (Aldrich and Rohde 2000; Theriault 2008; Theriault and Rohde 2011). Yet, this is far from the case. While the two major parties are as polarized as they have ever been since the 1950s, the

majority party has suffered from intense disunity and discohesion on its agenda in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Party polarization is the simply the condition of interparty ideological heterogeneity (Rohde 1991; Aldrich 1995; Esteban and Ray 1994; Diermeier and Feddersen 1998; Brewer, Mariani, and Stonechash 2002; Duclos, Esteban, and Ray 2004; Garand 2010). It does not require anything other than ideological difference between party identifiers in the two respective major parties. Yet polarization scholars have sometimes conflated interparty heterogeneity with intraparty homogeneity, presumed that one necessarily entails the other, or even defined party polarization as encapsulating both characteristics (Brewer, Mariani, and Stonechash 2002; Theriault 2006; Han and Brady 2007; Theriault 2008; Theriault and Rohde 2011; Frymer 2011). Theriault argues that party polarization has enabled the majority party leadership to utilize procedural votes to centralize the legislative decision-making process, insulate party members from difficult votes, and control the outcome of the votes on important bills (Theriault 2008, 102). Theriault finds that increasing party polarization in the Congress through to the 21st century is a function of "ideologically charged" members. In the long-term, the party leadership is able to maintain discipline via the collectivization of interests and procedural votes favored by the leadership. As a result, Theriault contends that as polarization increases, necessarily so too will the power of the party leadership (Theriault 2008). Such outcomes depend on intraparty cohesion binding members and leadership together in common purpose in conjunction with strong incentives to thwart the ideologically divergent minority.

Party Coalitional Factions as a Function of Intraparty Heterogeneity

The linking of party polarization and intraparty cohesion is a seductive inference, as it certainly stands to reason that the growing scarcity of liberal Republicans and conservative Democrats would result, as Theriault suggests, in "fewer and fewer members…cross-pressured between what their constituencies want them to do and what their parties want them to do" (Theriault 2008, 221). There are two problems with the traditional view of party polarization in Congress. First, it tends to focus on only one type of cross-pressuring – the member of Congress faced with pressure from a more ideologically extreme party on the one

hand and the pressures of her more moderate district on the other. Yet even in an era of party polarization, it is possible for members to face the inverse cross-pressure condition – an ideologically extreme district and a more moderate party. Second, the traditional take on party polarization presumes the bounds of the ideological dimension in Congress are fixed. If such is indeed fixed, it would then be possible to have both increasing ideological heterogeneity between the parties and within one or both the parties; that is, we can have increasing ideological distinctiveness between the parties concurrent with an expansion of ideology within the parties.

If intraparty cohesion is characterized by the homogeneity of member preferences, then intraparty factions are, by definition, a departure from that ideal. American political parties have been historically plagued by factional infighting, particularly majority parties (Petrocik 1981). This is unsurprising, as the probability of intraparty heterogeneity increases as the number of members in the majority party increases. A majority party is more likely to have representatives from diverse districts and thus a greater potential for significant diversity among the policy priorities of members in the party. However, factions have received scant attention in the literature on legislative organization. This is likely due to the fact the two major theoretical approaches to legislative politics have little use for the concept of faction. For pivotal theories, factions, like parties, are epiphenomenal. As for partisan theories, factions are an implicit feature of parties, but little direct attention is given to the import of factions themselves either in theory-building or in empirical analysis. Rather, the focus of partisan theories is on the relationship between the rump party caucus, often represented by the party caucus median member, and its leadership. The literature on coalitions bears more fruit: party factions feature similar characteristics to those of coalitions. They both feature unifying sets of political preferences and form collectively to achieve legislative objectives.

Factions may temporarily form in response to a specific bill or political issue, or may persist as a stable sub-party organizational unit with a more robust and multifaceted ideological agenda. Much like parties, factions are defined substantively according to the common preference, agenda or political objective which causes them to emerge as either wholly sub-partisan or cross-party factions (Hammond and Fraser 1983; Lawrence, Maltzman, and Smith 2006). Much like the parties

themselves, identifying with a faction may serve electoral interests, as a signal to the member's district, or in service to legislative interests, such as competition over policy outcomes or as a means with which to compete with the party leadership, or other factions, for control of the party or legislative agenda (Hinckley 1972; Gopoian et al. 1987; Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart III 2001).

The most recent manifestation of highly competitive, factionalized politics, in the form of an emerging intra-party legislative coalition, is the Tea Party (Gervais and Morris 2012). The Tea Party in Congress has emerged as an ideological extreme faction distinct from status-quo congressional Republicans and the party leadership (Jacobson 2011; Skocpol and Williamson 2012; Gervais and Morris 2012; Parker and Barreto 2013). Ideologically extreme factions, like the Tea Party, have the potential to disrupt and frustrate party government. The extent to which ideologically extreme factions, such as the Tea Party, have expanded the ideological spectrum within the Republican Party in the House, and influenced the party agenda in opposition to the party leadership, is the empirical question at the heart of our analysis.

Empirical Expectations and Factional Strategies in Congress

Party polarization, as we define it, is synonymous with interparty heterogeneity. There is a great deal of empirical evidence demonstrating that party polarization in Congress, ergo interparty divergence, has substantially increased since the Eisenhower administration (Jones 2001; Brewer, Mariani, and Stonechash 2002; Theriault 2006, 2008; Butler 2009; McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2009; Garand 2010; McCarty 2011). However, there has been relatively little attention given to the relationship between interparty polarization and intraparty cohesion, even when these are recognized to be distinct characteristics of legislative parties. The balance of the literature suggests that interparty polarization and intraparty cohesion should be linked. Contrary to this expectation, and thus motivating the puzzle at the heart of our inquiry, is the possibility of interparty polarization and intraparty discohesion, i.e. that increasing fractionalization and friction from the ideological right within the Republican Party can coexist simultaneously with a party system that has aligned ideologically and polarized the two major parties. Intraparty polarization may incent intraparty factions to

organize on ideological terms in opposition to the more moderate members of the caucus and the party leadership, which is focused on producing a legislative agenda that has the support of the full majority caucus.

Why, then, do members of a political party identify with factions within that party? And thus what are the determinants of faction identification in the Republican majority party? We postulate two strategies for sitting members of Congress in choosing to affiliate with an intraparty faction. The electoral strategy is adopted by a member of Congress when they perceive that their district constituency has shifted such that identification with the faction is likely to return electoral benefits. This strategy is anticipated in the literature describing the plight of cross-pressured moderate partisans from moderate districts in an era of party polarization that has shifted the ideological poles of both parties (See Figure 1, Case 1).

But perhaps just as important is the inverse state, where a member with an ideologically extreme constituency is cross-pressured with respect to the more moderate agenda of her party (Figure 1, Case 2). Thus a member of Congress can adopt the electoral strategy irrespective of from which direction they are cross-pressured. For example, a member of Congress may adopt this strategy if, through party loyalty or their own policy preferences, their record has made them vulnerable in an ideologically polarizing district (Carson et al. 2010). Faction identification serves as a signal of ideological loyalty to their district. Thus the electoral strategy may be pursued by a vulnerable member to guard against a potential challenge from a candidate more ideologically proximate to the district constituency. The purposive strategy is adopted by a member of Congress because they identify with the ideological agenda of the faction, and wish to work together with like-thinking representatives in pushing policy in Congress.

Figure 1: Electoral & Purposive Strategies of Faction Identification

Electoral Strategy Case 1: Cross-Pressured Representative, Moderate District / Conservative Party

MODERATE — District — Faction — Representative — Party Median — CONSERVATIVE

Moderate representative signals greater moderation relative to the party through faction identification proximate to more moderate district

Electoral Strategy Case 2: Cross-Pressured Representative, Conservative District / Moderate Party

MODERATE — Party Median — Representative — Faction — District — CONSERVATIVE

Conservative representative signals ideological extremism relative to the party through faction identification proximate to more conservative district

Purposive Strategy Case 3: Conservative Representative / Moderate Party

MODERATE — Party Median — Faction — Representative — CONSERVATIVE

Ideologically extreme conservative representative identifies with ideologically extreme faction

Measuring Party Factions

While we do use the traditional identification measures, such as the membership roles for the Republican Study Committee and the Tea Party Caucus, we did not limit our measurements to them. We employ a unique and externally-determined measure of Tea Party identification we label "Tea Party Elected." This measure uses the ABC News comprehensive guidebook to Tea Party-backed candidates published in November of 2010 (TPE). As we noted earlier, caucus identification may or may not be motivated by ideological distinctiveness. By using two distinct and uniquely determined measures of Tea Party identification, we can assess the bona fides of Tea Party Caucus identification. This is an improvement on the Grevais and Morris paper, which used only the traditional measure of caucus identification (Gervais and Morris 2012). As we will show, TPE and TPC identification are substantially different party subgroups. There is very little overlap between the two independent measures of Tea Party identification—only one member of Congress falls within both the TPC and TPE categories. This suggests two different data-generating processes for the two types of Tea Party identification. Recall that many TPE identifiers saw the TPC as an attempt by the Republican Party to hijack the movement.

For the Liberty Caucus, we first identified them through official congressional Facebook page "likes" of Justin Amash's page. This was necessary as, initially, there was no public roster of the Liberty Caucus. It has since published a roster of their caucus. Given the strong correlation between our initial measure and the posted roster, we combined the two for this analysis. If a Republican does not affiliate with any of the Right-leaning caucus factions, or they are a part of the centrist "Tuesday Group," then they are coded as a member of the "rump" Republican Caucus (RRC).[1] Each is a dichotomous measure with a "1" indicating the member of Congress is an identifier with that particular party faction, and a "0" indicating the absence of identification with that same faction.

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[1] Membership in the Tuesday Group was determined by 2016 donations to the Tuesday Group political action committee as reported by Open Secrets: https://www.opensecrets.org/pacs/pacgot.php?cycle=2016&cmte=C00433060

Measuring the Ideological Distinctiveness of Party Factions and Determining Faction Behavior

We model faction identification and the roll call voting behavior of the factions using logistical regression to estimate the conditional distributions of the binary identification and vote response variables. We use the Poole-Rosenthal DW-NOMIATE scores as both an independent predictor of faction identification and as a measure of party cohesion and interparty polarization.[2] In order to assess quantitatively the influence of ideological factions we first examine the ideological median differential between the Democratic Party and the Republican Party from the 82nd Congress to the 113th Congress, and the ideological range within the Republican Conference. We then estimate a logistic regression of the probability of faction identification to assess the determinants of factional affiliation. The faction identification models provide insight into what strategies faction identifiers are adopting in deciding to enlist with a party faction as well as what factors predominate in determining that decision. Based on the faction identification models and the ideological location of mean faction identifiers, we develop an ordinal measure of faction identification (factions) that ranks the faction identifiers based on their extremity from the rump Republican caucus, composed of Republicans who do not identify with any of the ideological factions. Ranked from extreme on down, the caucuses are ordered as follows: Liberty Caucus, Tea Party Elected, Tea Party Caucus, Republican Study Committee, and finally, the Rump Republican Caucus. While members of Congress are free to affiliate with more than one caucus, we code them based on the most extreme caucus they identify with. Thus a member of Congress who is both a Liberty Caucus and Republican Study Committee member is coded as a Liberty Caucus identifier.[3]

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[2] Here we utilize DW-NOMINATE to assess party cohesion, and not alternative methods such as RICE Cohesion Scores due to the prospect that such scores potentially overinflate small group cohesion, and thus can be a biased measure of voting bloc unity. Such bias is problematic when dealing with, for example, party caucuses. See for discussion: (Desposato 2005).

[3] Alternatively, individual faction membership models were estimated for each of the selected votes for the 112th Congress. Logistic regression tables and predicted probability graphs for these models are reported in the supplemental addendum. Results obtained were consistent with our primary analysis.

Our final set of models estimate the probability of "yes" roll call votes on key party bills in the 112th Congress using faction identification and ideology as predictors along with two different classes of controls: individual member characteristics and district characteristics. Assessing voting behavior on a range of policies such as the debt ceiling, national defense, and religious freedom allows us to pointedly examine differences in voting behavior on key votes, as the vast majority of roll call votes in Congress are relatively unimportant (Howell et al. 2000). By focusing on votes that mattered, we get at the crux of faction influences within the majority party.

We estimate vote probability models for the Budget Control Act of 2011, one of the most important bills of the 112th Congress and a key test of party leadership loyalty for the Republicans, the 2011 National Defense Authorization Act, which was a major defense spending bill, and the 2011 International Religious Freedom Act, which reauthorized the 1998 bill of the same name and was designed to promote religious freedom internationally. The vote on the Budget Control Act of 2011, the August 2011 vote to raise the debt-ceiling, serves as a good case study in a number of respects. It was a fiscal policy vote, which is a subject squarely within the Tea Party policy wheelhouse. The controversy directly implicated increasing government spending levels, a key issue of the Tea Party movement. If factional identifiers in Congress are indistinguishable in their voting behavior from other Republicans, then the argument that the Tea Party and other factions influence congressional behavior would be significantly weakened. Furthermore, it would tend to lend weight to the traditional view that intraparty cohesion correlates with interparty polarization. If, however, ideological factions are distinct, it would suggest that ideological factions factor in intraparty discohesion. In sum, our analyses of these economic, social, and national defense-related votes will speak to Tea Party and the other ideological factions' distinctiveness from the rump Republican Party Conference and from the other caucuses within the party, its influence on the legislative environment, its capacity to influence outcomes, and its role in partisan polarization and intraparty discohesion.

Table 1: Mutually Exclusive Party Faction Means* and Comparison to Rump Republican Caucus

		Caucus								
		LIBERTY CAUCUS		FREEDOM CAUCUS		TEA PARTY ELECTED		TEA PARTY CAUCUS		REPUBLICAN STUDY COMMITTEE
		N = 7		N = 19		N = 40		N=34		N=61
		$\bar{X}$	LC - RRC	$\bar{X}$	FC - RRC	$\bar{X}$	TPE - RRC	$\bar{X}$	TPC - RRC	$\bar{X}$	RSC - RRC
DISTRICT	Income (in $1000s)	46.88	− 10.01	48.04	− 8.85	52.39	− 4.50	48.66	− 8.22	48.13	− 8.75
	Percent Black	11.94	+ 5.55	8.48	+ 2.08	12.00	+ 5.61	10.24	+ 3.85	10.14	+ 3.75
	Percent Rural	41.31	+ 19.67	33.82	+ 12.17	26.73	+ 5.09	28.23	+ 6.58	30.60	+ 8.95
	South	0.71	+ 0.54	0.37	+ 0.19	0.48	+ 0.30	0.71	+ 0.54	0.43	+ 0.26
	PVI	17	+ 10.97	11.74	+ 5.71	10.28	+ 4.25	12.40	+ 6.33	9.36	+ 3.33
MEMBER	Ideology	0.78	+ 0.18	0.84	+ 0.24	0.76	+ 0.16	0.66	+ 0.06	0.63	+ 0.03
	Incumbent	0.71	− 0.05	0.32	− 0.45	0.50	− 0.27	0.76	− 0.01	0.59	− 0.18
	Seniority	6.29	− 7.15	3.8	− 9.65	6.10	− 7.34	11.71	− 1.73	7.51	− 5.93
	Leadership	0	− 0.27	0	− 0.27	0.15	− 0.12	0.12	− 0.12	0.36	+ 0.09
	Male	1	+ 0.09	0.95	+ 0.09	0.88	− 0.04	0.91	0.00	0.92	+ 0.01
	Black	0	− 0.06	0.05	− 0.01	0.08	+ 0.01	0.03	− 0.03	0.02	− 0.05
		* Where data was missing, variable was set to global Republican mean									

The control variables we have included in the empirical analysis are of two different types. The first of these are member-level variables: *Seniority, Minority, Leadership,* and *Incumbent*; and the second type are district-level variables: *Percent Black, Percent Rural, Average Income, South* and *Partisan Voting Index* (PVI).[4] The member-level variables describe characteristics of the member of Congress which may influence their decision to join the Tea Party and/or other legislative behavior.

[4] Detailed variable coding is reported in the supplemental addendum.

Analysis of Determinants of Republican Party Faction Membership

Means and average differences from the rump Republican caucus (RRC) for district and member characteristics of Republican factions in the 112th Congress are reported in Table 1. The smallest faction is the Liberty Caucus. Though small relative to the other factions, it does constitute over 10% of the Republican caucus and over half of the margin between Republicans and Democrats in the 112th Congress. The TPE faction is just eight votes short of the total margin, meaning the TPE and LC, if they voted as a block, could defeat any bill put forward by the Republican Party leadership. All four factions have similar profiles relative to the RRC, differing from one another exclusively in terms of relative magnitude. All four factions have more partisan voters, lower average district incomes, have larger minority populations, are more rural districts, and a greater percentage of them are located in the South relative to the RRC. There is a similar trend in RRC differentials for the member characteristics across factions. All four factions are more conservative, have fewer incumbents, and have less seniority than the RRC. Every faction except the RSC has a lower percentage of members in the leadership, perhaps reflective of the rightward shift in the ideological center of the Republican Party.

In terms of differing factional identification strategies, it is instructive to examine the difference between the TPC and TPE factions. The TPC has double the percentage of southern members in comparison to the TPE, and they represent more conservative districts. Yet TPC identifiers are only slightly more conservative than the RRC (+0.06). This suggests TPC identifiers are mostly pursuing a Case 2 electoral strategy in identifying with the Tea Party. TPC membership is substantially more senior than the other factions. Combined with the greater propensity of TPC to be from the South, where the Tea Party movement was the strongest, and there is clearly a strong electoral motive for moderate southern Republicans to the ideological left of their districts to identify with the TPC in order to stave off primary challenges.

Figure 2 maps the mean placement of the three factions on the 1st and 2nd DW-NOMINATE dimensions in the same space as the RRC.[5]

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[5] Tea Party Caucus and Tea Party Elected is merged into a single "Tea Party" faction measure herein

The Liberty Caucus stands out as the most purely ideological faction, given that it loads almost entirely on the first dimension, and it is an ideological faction located at the extreme right of the Republican Party. It more than doubles the distance between the TPE faction and the RRC, the second most ideologically extreme right faction. Interestingly, the Liberty Caucus is nearly indistinguishable from the RRC on the 2nd dimension. The 2nd dimension of DW-NOMINATE is not always significant, but when it is, it generally captures orthogonal issue dimensions to the ideological spectrum (Poole 2005). In the post-Civil Rights era the 2nd dimension may correlate with social/cultural issues or with insider/outsider voting behavior.   Given the position of the RSC in the space, the more likely interpretation is that the second dimension is picking up on social and cultural preferences that are not shared by either poles of the Republican Party caucus. Thus it is fair to characterize the Liberty Caucus as the hard libertarian faction in the Republican Party. The location of the TPA faction relative to the TPA faction illustrates their mutual ideological distinctiveness. The TPA faction is the most extreme located faction on the 2nd dimension, though it is most proximate to the RSC on this dimension. So while it is extreme on an absolute scale, relative to the ideological center of the party the TPA, i.e. the RSC, it is actually the closest faction to that center on the 2nd dimension. Figure 2 demonstrates the ideological heterogeneity of the Republican Party factions and is strong evidence of intraparty heterogeneity that may be decisive in party voting.

Figure 2: Distribution of Republican Caucus Factions in DW-NOMINATE Space (112th)

Republican Caucus Faction Average Score on DW-NOMINATE 1st and 2nd Dimension

Republican Caucus Stratified by Group on DW-Nominate 1st and 2nd Dimensions
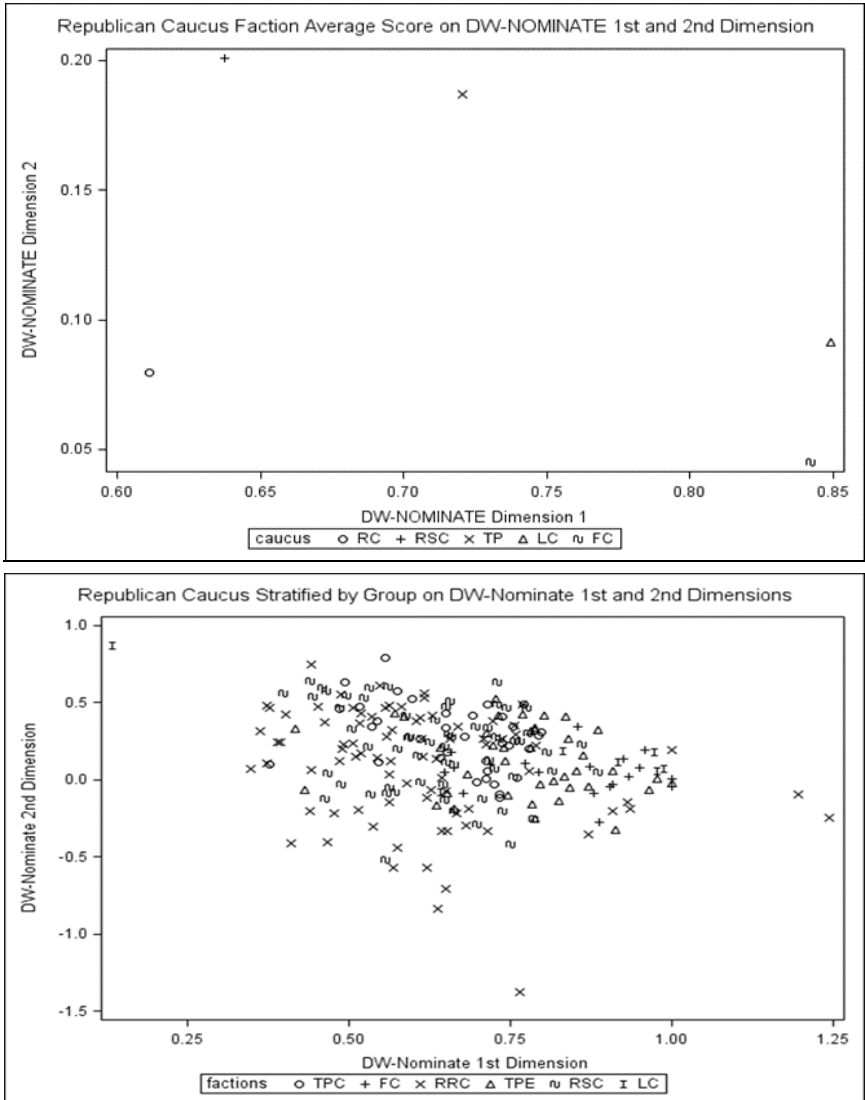
Table 2 depicts multivariate logistical regressions of Republican Party faction identification, with the RRC model serving as the null indicator (i.e. Republicans who do not identify with any of the party factions). The TPC model is an ordered logistic model. The faction identification models confirm the initial inferences suggested by the assessment of the mean faction differentials. The primary determinant of identification with the LC is ideology. Seniority is the only other factor that obtains statistical significance. Furthermore, this is the best fit of the faction identification models outside of the RRC model (Pseudo R^2 = .408). The LC model also has the lowest error classification rate, with 88.3% of cases correctly classified. This suggests Liberty Caucus identifying members do so primarily for purposive reasons. TPC identification is a different story from that of LC membership. While ideology is a significant factor in TPC identification, note that, unlike in the LC and TPE models, district effects are significant predictors. The PVI and ideology multiplicative term is significant with a negative sign, indicating an inverse interaction between ideology and the partisanship of the district in identifying with the Tea Party caucus, consistent with the Case 2 electoral strategy. This is apparent in the interaction plot of PVI and ideology.[6, 7]   The PVI curves are not parallel across the ideological levels. In fact, they intersect, thus corroborating the statistical significance of the interaction. Though leadership is negative for all of the ideologically extreme factions, it is statistically significant for the TPC model. This is suggestive, without being determinative, of the antagonistic disposition of ideological factions to the leadership of the party. We will assess that directly with respect to key votes in the next section.

Identification as a TPE exhibits a very distinct profile from that of TPC identifiers. There is only one statistically significant district term significant, and that is the percentage of African Americans in the district. There is no statistically significant interaction between PVI and ideology for the TPE model and there is a sign flip in the interaction term—it is positive for TPE identifiers. Ideology is the strongest

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[6] Figure A – As is reported in the supplemental addendum.

[7] The interaction plot is derived from a logistical regression of TPC identification using quartile-based categorical variables for PVI and ideology as predictors in place of the original variables.

predictor of TPE identification, and seniority is the only other significant member term in the model, as lower seniority makes TPE identification more probable. This is undoubtedly a function of the fact the Tea Party movement dates to 2008. That the seniority term for TPC, while negative, was statistically insignificant, even though the Tea Party had existed for only two congressional terms, is yet more confirmation of the distinct strategies at play between TPC and TPE identification. TPE identifiers ran as out-and-proud Tea Party candidates in the 2008 election, and their sincere ideological commitments are reflected in their identification profile. Figure 3 illustrates in stark terms the differences between TPE and TPC identification in the predicted probability effect plots. Again we use the quartile-based categorization of PVI to demonstrate the substantially different effects that the partisanship of the district has on the two types of Tea Party identification. There is little difference between the levels of PVI and TPE identification, with only the most Republican of districts showing much separation in the probability curves. The interaction between TPC identification and PVI is illustrated in the differing slope for the most partisan district category from that of the other categories.

TABLE 2: Logistic Regressions of Republican Caucus Faction Identification

VARIABLES	REPUBLICAN CAUCUS FACTIONS						
	LC	FC	TPC	TPE	TPA	RSC	RRC
	P.E. (S.E.)	P.E. (S.E.)	P.E. (S.E.)	P.E. (S.E.)	P.E. (S.E.)	P.E. (S.E.)	P.E. (S.E.)
Ideology	11.321 *	9.103 *	8.915 *	7.425 *	8.748 *	6.404 *	-8.508 *
	(4.174)	(3.531)	(2.812)	(2.354)	(2.261)	(2.078)	(2.142)
Seniority	-0.114 Φ	-0.119 Φ	-0.159 *	-0.022	-0.047 Φ	-0.150 *	0.110 *
	(0.063)	(0.064)	(0.044)	(0.025)	(0.026)	(0.030)	(0.027)
Minority	0.727	-0.119	0.787	0.968	0.395	-2.053 *	1.272
	(1.232)	(1.176)	(0.900)	(0.765)	(0.788)	(0.822)	(0.819)
Leadership	-0.224	-0.188	-0.113	-0.759 *	-0.558 Φ	0.649 ¥	-0.240
	(0.731)	(0.730)	(0.385)	(0.336)	(0.300)	(0.286)	(0.273)
Incumbent	-0.242	-0.338	0.112	0.948 ¥	-0.066	0.504	0.264
	(0.803)	(0.769)	(0.566)	(0.476)	(0.445)	(0.486)	(0.513)
Percent Black	0.023	-0.015	0.054 ¥	-0.002	0.002	-0.012	-0.002
	(0.032)	(0.032)	(0.024)	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.024)	(0.030)
Percent Rural	0.050	0.010	0.012	0.003	0.006	0.018	-0.009
	(0.021)	(0.018)	(0.013)	(0.012)	(0.019)	(0.011)	(0.012)
Average Income	0.005	-0.002	0.002	0.007	0.002	-0.002	0.002
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.018)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
South	-0.822	-0.256	-0.560	1.292 *	0.815 ¥	1.269 *	-1.394 *
	(0.806)	(0.712)	(0.537)	(0.432)	(0.417)	(0.483)	(0.542)
PVI	0.392	0.146	0.027	0.353 *	0.284 ¥	0.255 ¥	-0.333 *
	(0.209)	(0.199)	(0.165)	(0.123)	(0.121)	(0.112)	(0.118)
Ideology*PVI	-0.335	-0.142	0.043	-0.416 *	-0.311 Φ	-0.303 ¥	0.418 *
	(0.258)	(0.247)	(0.224)	(0.168)	(0.168)	(0.160)	(0.169)
Constant	-15.476 *	-7.555 *	-8.765 *	-8.170 *	-7.838 *	-3.361 Φ	3.748 *
	(3.939)	(3.172)	(2.457)	(2.026)	(1.928)	(1.749)	(1.771)
Pseudo R²	.660	.514	.351	.276	.231	.295	.421
Pr > ChiSq(Wald)	< .001	<.001	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001
% Correct Class	93.3%	91.6%	81.6%	73.6%	70.7%	76.6%	79.9%
N	239	239	239	239	239	239	239

Φ $P < .10$, ¥ $P < .05$, * $P < .01$

Figure 3: Predicted Probabilities of Tea Party Elected versus Tea Party Caucus Identifiers by PVI and Ideology

(a) Tea Party Elected Effects Plot

(b) Tea Party Caucus Effects Plot
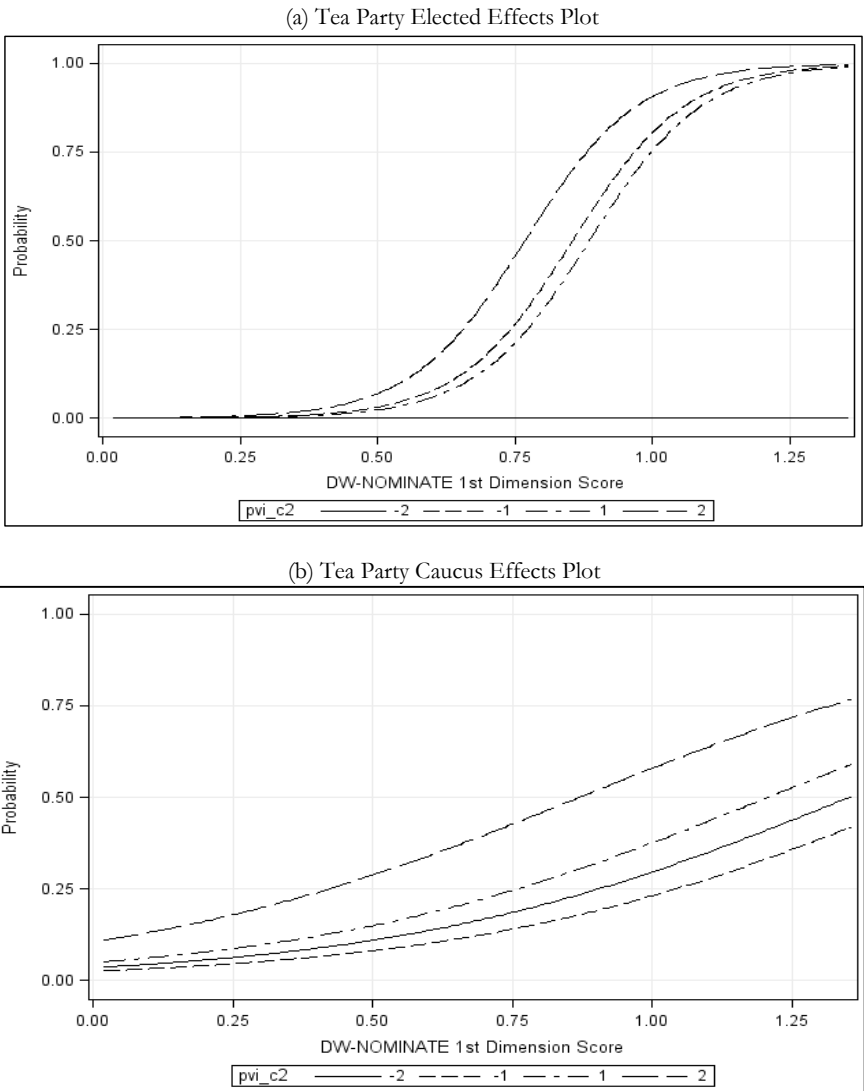
Furthermore, when comparing it to the probability plot for TPE, it is clear that for TPC identifiers, those in the low range of ideological ideal points have higher probabilities of identifying as TPC relative to

TPE, and this is especially so for the more moderate members which the highest partisanship levels in their districts (Figure 3a; 3b). TPE identifiers profile similarly to that of LC identifiers, demonstrating the similarity in their identification strategies (Case 3: purposive). On the other hand, the identification model for TPC suggests that those members are pursuing the electoral strategy (Case 2). That TPE and TPC identification is orthogonal is reflected in the significant drop in cases classified correctly for the TPA model which combines to two types of Tea Party identifications (68.8%) when compared to the average of cases correctly classified between the two individual models (77.5%).

The RSC identification has a similar determinant profile to that of the TPC with respect to statistically significant district effects. As with TPC identification, a member is a more probable identifier when their district is in the south and with higher partisanship levels in their districts. The most interesting difference is the coefficient for leadership, which is both positive and statistically significant. The odds ratio for leadership in the RSC model is 1.914, meaning leadership is almost two times more likely to identify with the Republican Study Committee than to not identify as such. This reflects the significant ideological shift in the Republican Party since the RSC was formed as a purposive faction to exert pressure on Republican leadership to move the status quo in a conservative policy direction. The RSC is now the home of the Republican Party leadership, as evidenced by the election of one of its members, Paul Ryan, to the Speakership in 2015 (Wong 2015).

The RRC model, or the non-faction identification model, profiles as an inverse of the more conservative factions. As we would expect given the interparty polarization of the past few decades in the House, seniority is a positive and statistically significant predictor of non-faction identification. And the ideology term is statistically significant but flipped—naturally more liberal Republicans are more likely to not identify with one of the ideological party factions. Likewise, the PVI and South predictors are statistically significant and their signs are inverted from that of the factions where district determinants are statistically significant, i.e. the TPC and RSC.

Roll Call Analysis: Intraparty Incohesion Trumps Interparty Polarization

We focus on the effect of party factions in the 112th Congress using a key vote on the federal budget and government spending and a key vote on national security spending. As a basis of comparison, we also model the vote on a non-controversial bill in support of international religious freedom. Table 3 reports the outcome of these votes broken down by faction. The small "no" vote differentials between the RSC and the RRC is confirmatory evidence that the locus of the party leadership resides within the RSC. Indeed, RRC non-faction identifiers had a slightly higher percentage of "no" votes on the 2011 BCA than did the RSC identifiers.

 Of particular interest is the "no" vote differential for the TPC. While the vote differential between the TPC and the RRC on all three bills is positive, it only exceeds two percentage points for the 2011 BCA, and even then the vote differential is in single digits (+7.60). This is consistent with strategic TPC identification. The TPE and LC identifiers, however, both have substantively large vote differentials for the 2011 BCA, and this is consistent with purposive identification expectations. Though the rank ordering in vote differential for the 2011 NDA is the same as it is for the BCA, the LC and TPE factions voted quite differently on that bill than they did on the BCA. The LC was even more opposed to the NDA, which is consistent with their libertarian orientation—opposed to all government spending and dovish on national security. More of the TPE faction voted against the NDA than did those in the RRC, but it was substantially reduced in comparison to their opposition to the BCA. Again this is consistent with the ideological profiles of the factions. There were very few "no" votes on the IRFA, although the ordinal pattern of no vote differential remains consistent with that of the other votes. Thus even on relatively minor bills, the heterogeneity of the Republican Party is apparent in member voting behavior.

Table 3: Comparison of Republican Party Faction Voting to the Rump Republican Caucus, 112th Congress

VOTE MEASURE	REPUBLICAN PARTY FACTION	N	NO VOTE	NO VOTE PERCENT	YES VOTE	YES VOTE PERCENT	RRC NO VOTE DIFFERENTIAL
Budget Control Act of 2011	Liberty & Freedom Caucuses	26	24	92.31%	2	7.69%	+ 79.65%
	Tea Party Elected	40	20	50.00%	20	50.00%	+ 37.34%
	Tea Party Caucus	34	7	20.59%	27	79.41%	+ 7.93%
	Republican Study Committee	63	5	8.20%	56	91.80%	- 4.46%
National Defense Authorization Act of 2011	Liberty & Freedom Caucuses	26	19	73.08%	7	26.92%	+ 63.75%
	Tea Party Elected	40	10	25.64%	29	74.36%	+ 16.31%
	Tea Party Caucus	32	3	9.38%	29	90.63%	+ 0.05%
	Republican Study Committee	62	4	6.67%	56	93.33%	+ 2.66%
International Religious Freedom Act of 2011	Liberty & Freedom Caucuses	26	7	26.92%	19	73.08%	+ 23.12%
	Tea Party Elected	38	5	13.51%	32	86.49%	+ 9.71%
	Tea Party Caucus	33	3	9.09%	30	90.91%	+ 5.29%
	Republican Study Committee	60	4	6.90%	54	93.10%	+ 3.10%

In order to assess the effect that intraparty factional politics had on the voting behavior of members of the Republican caucus, we test determinants of the vote on all significant legislation for the two sessions of the 112th Congress.[8] Table 4 reports OLS models of the composite

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[8] Significant votes were determined exogenously by the Washington Post, which differentiated key House votes from all votes in sessions one and two of the 112th Congress. The votes included in this analysis were culled from the Washington Post's U.S. Congress Votes Database.

Republican vote on the significant legislation of the 112th Congress.[9] There are two different sets of models reported in Table 4a: one set of models is estimated for the subset of the 112th Congress who cast a vote on all of the significant legislation, and the other set of models averages across the votes cast for each member of the Republican caucus, with a minimum of one vote cast on key legislation. For each of the sets of models, we estimated a model that excluded the factions measure, one that excluded the DW-NOMINATE based ideology measure, and one that included both. For all estimated models in which the factions measure was concluded, it was a statistically significant predictor of voting behavior on key legislation. The coefficients are uniformly in the negative direction, indicating that faction membership was a significant factor in determining opposition to the House leadership. This is reinforced by the observed effect of the measure for leadership in the House, which also was uniformly statistically significant and in the positive direction. Interestingly, while the no-faction models performed better than the no-ideology models, the difference in model fit between the two was relatively small for those who voted on all of the key legislation. While there is a substantial difference in model fit for the average vote models, the faction model performs fairly well on its own, accounting for 27% of the variation in votes on key legislation. In the full models for both sets, the faction measure is statistically significant, even with ideology included as a variable in the model. Furthermore, the model fit improves substantially for both sets of models, though much less so for the average vote models when compared to the all-vote models.

Relatedly, Table 5 reports logistical regression models of the votes on the three issue votes in the 112th Congress.[10] The BCA and NDAA models have similar patterns in the signs and statistical significance of the predictors, though the NDAA model is a better fit and correctly classifies more cases than does the BCA model. Both ideology

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[9] TOBIT models for the composite Republican vote were estimated and are reported in the supplemental addendum. The TOBIT models were consistent with the OLS models presented in the main text in terms of statistical significance of the parameter estimates, signs of the coefficients, and respective model fits.

[10] Two-way and three-way interaction models were estimated for each vote. Only significant interactions were retained on a hierarchical basis. For example, since the three-way interaction for the IRFA model was significant, all lower-order interactions and main effects were estimated irrespective of whether the terms were statistically significant.

and the ordinal faction term are statistically significant predictors of both votes. Thus even controlling for the ideology of the members as well as district and individual characteristics, faction was a significant predictor for both votes. Just as important, both the ideology and faction terms are negative across both models. Thus even controlling for the effect of more ideologically conservative members aligning against the two bills, faction identification had an independent and negative impact on the probability of voting for either bill. What's more, for both models leadership was an independent and positive predictor of a vote for either bill. This juxtaposition places the affect that intraparty heterogeneity has on party government in stark relief. The ideological factions of the Republican Party voted against a bill clearly favored by the party leadership.

TABLE 4: OLS Models of Composite Republican Vote on Significant Legislation for the 112th Congress

VARIABLES	Voted on All Significant Legislation			Average of Votes on Significant Legislation		
	No Factions P.E. (S.E.)	No Ideology P.E. (S.E.)	FULL P.E. (S.E.)	No Factions P.E. (S.E.)	No Ideology P.E. (S.E.)	FULL P.E. (S.E.)
Faction	– – –	-3.517 *** (0.608)	-2.439 *** (0.641)	– – –	-3.416 *** (0.550)	-1.733 *** (0.555)
Ideology	-27.473 *** (4.626)	– – –	-19.668 *** (4.901)	-35.674 *** (3.932)	– – –	-29.839 *** (4.284)
Seniority	0.083 (0.114)	-0.007 (0.116)	0.010 (0.110)	0.098 (0.089)	-0.030 (0.090)	0.028 (0.090)
Minority	-5.647 (3.558)	-6.483 * (3.570)	-5.805 * (3.424)	-5.364 * (3.017)	-5.359 * (3.260)	-5.450 * (2.959)
Leadership	3.771 *** (1.147)	3.647 *** (1.152)	3.679 *** (1.103)	3.451 *** (1.009)	3.197 *** (1.092)	3.285 *** (0.991)
Incumbent	-0.742 (2.012)	-0.976 (2.028)	-1.600 (1.949)	-2.328 (1.738)	-1.709 (1.878)	-2.767 * (1.711)
Percent Black	-0.094 (0.097)	-0.076 (0.096)	-0.099 (0.092)	-0.089 (0.081)	-0.070 (0.088)	-0.081 (0.080)
Percent Rural	-0.027 (0.050)	0.016 (0.049)	-0.011 (0.048)	-0.052 (0.042)	0.004 (0.045)	-0.038 (0.041)
Average Income	-0.005 (0.008)	-0.003 (0.008)	-0.002 (0.007)	0.002 (0.006)	-0.003 (0.007)	0.002 (0.006)
South	-0.293 (1.993)	1.517 (2.047)	1.272 (1.962)	-0.823 (1.683)	0.461 (1.826)	-0.263 (1.660)
PVI	-0.198 (0.125)	-0.186 (0.126)	-0.124 (0.121)	-0.148 (0.108)	-0.227 ** (0.117)	-0.083 (0.108)
Constant	111.174 *** (6.063)	98.066 *** (5.460)	108.743 *** (5.868)	116.282 *** (4.985)	98.964 *** (4.985)	114.543 *** (4.921)
R²	.291	.284	.347	.375	.270	.402
Pr > F	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001
N	179	179	179	233	233	233

* $P < .10$,   ** $P < .05$,   *** $P < .01$

The predicted probabilities are graphed in Figure 4, showing the impact the factions had on the probability of voting for the BCA or the NDAA. There was close to a 90% chance that RRC members would vote for the BCA, while the mean probability of a LC member voting for the bill was less than 50%. While the probability curve is not nearly as steep for the NDAA, a similar pattern is apparent. The split probabilities across ideology show the much lower probability curves of the LC and the TPE versus the rest of the Republican Party factions. The odds ratios for the predictors in each vote model are reported in Figure B.[11] Both faction and ideology are significant and negative with relatively tight Wald confidence limits around their odds ratio estimates. Holding all other predictors constant, the leadership odds ratio is relatively high, reflecting the importance of the bill to the party leadership, but the confidence limits are fairly large. Still, the leadership was three times more likely to vote for the bill than not, while the ideological factions were 1.55 times more likely to vote against it. Note, that includes factions such as the RSC and the TPC, which were more likely on the whole to vote for the bills than the LC and the TPE, as illustrated in the split probability plots. The evidence from the split probability and odds ratio plots for the BCA and NDAA models demonstrates the impact of intraparty polarization in frustrating party government, even in an era of interparty polarization. The existence of ideologically distinct parties does not necessarily imply, and thus does not necessarily produce, ideologically cohesive political parties. Since both are prerequisites to party government, one without the other isn't good enough.

It is interesting that the RSC was the most probable of the factions to vote for the BCA across all values of the ideological scale. It is yet more confirmation that the Republican Party leadership resides in the RSC and that it is the RSC that is in the driver's seat when it comes to the Republican Party agenda. However, this is clearly not a consensus

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[11] As is reported in the supplemental addendum.

TABLE 5: Logistic Models of Issue Votes for the 112th Congress – Caucus Factions (ordinal)

VARIABLES	BCA	NDAA	IRFA
	Parameter Estimate (Standard Error)	Parameter Estimate (Standard Error)	Parameter Estimate (Standard Error)
Factions	-0.759 * (0.161) * *	-0.446 *** (0.183)	0.250 (1.365)
Ideology	-3.401 * (1.305) * *	-5.943 *** (1.704)	-8.120 (8.060)
Seniority	0.006 (0.031)	-0.019 (0.034)	0.145 * (0.068) *
Minority	-0.163 (0.940)	0.947 (1.170)	0.582 (1.364)
Leadership	1.089 * (0.549) *	1.216 * (0.722)	-0.692 (0.457)
Incumbent	-0.248 (0.554)	0.467 (0.594)	-1.183 (0.875)
Percent Black	-0.041 * (0.024)	0.055 * (0.032)	-0.020 (0.036)
Percent Rural	-0.009 (0.013)	-0.013 (0.014)	0.004 (0.021)
Average Income	0.002 (0.002)	-0.002 (0.002)	0.002 (0.003)
South	0.631 (0.501)	-0.370 (0.576)	-1.122 (0.795)
PVI	-0.037 (0.034)	-0.007 (0.036)	-0.052 (0.315)
Ideology*PVI	– – –	– – –	-0.163 (0.481)
Ideology*Factions	– – –	– – –	-1.341 (1.889)
I*PVI*F	– – –	– – –	0.090 * (0.054)
Constant	5.060 * (1.569) * *	7.122 *** (1.805)	9.766 * (5.591)
Pseudo R²	.321	.430	.347
Pr > ChiSq	< .0001	< .0001	<.0001
% Correct Class	80.2%	86.9%	91.0%
N	232	222	223

∗ *P* < .10,   ∗∗ *P* < .05,   ∗∗∗ *P* < .01

agenda. They face substantial opposition from the more conservative factions along with the more conservative identifiers in the RSC. The most significant difference apparent in the split probabilities for the NDAA vote is that the TPE identifiers have a much closer profile to that of the other factions than the LC faction. Predicted probability plots for

the IRFA factions are not directly interpretable in the interaction model. While there were few "no" votes on the IRFA, the model does still show the importance of factional heterogeneity in determining the voting behavior of members. The significant three-way interaction term between ideology, PVI, and the faction variable suggests that all three factors in combination were essential for a "no" vote on that bill.

Polarization and the Puzzling Paucity of Republican Party Government

Based on the dispersion of DW-NOMINATE ideological estimates in the House, the 112th Congress was the sixth most polarized Congress in the past sixty years. Party polarization scholars have argued this environment is ripe for party government (Jones 2001; Lowry and Shipan 2002; Theriault 2006; Han and Brady 2007; Theriault 2008; Garand 2010; Frymer 2011; Theriault and Rohde 2011; Jochim and Jones 2013). They have argued that party polarization leads to unified party caucuses that cede procedural control to the party leadership and yield effective party management of legislative output. But as we have shown, this has not been reflected in the congressional politics of the House since the onset of the Tea Party movement. The expectation that party polarization will yield party government is rooted in the belief that interparty polarization and intraparty cohesion are linked phenomena. Thus while they are both conceptually distinct conditions of party government, they are interdependent conditions. That interparty polarization and intraparty cohesion would go hand-in-hand makes intuitive sense. Interparty polarization and intraparty discohesion can and do occur simultaneously, as has been the case since the 96th Congress, and in particular since the 109th Congress. There are multiple causal factors that determine party polarization in America, but one of the more important of these with respect to Congress is the polarization of congressional district constituencies (Bishop 2009). Incumbent members of Congress that find themselves ideologically distant from their core constituencies are cross- pressured with respect to their party leadership. Or as a cross-pressured Republican might say, echoing Ronald Reagan: they didn't leave their district, their district left them.
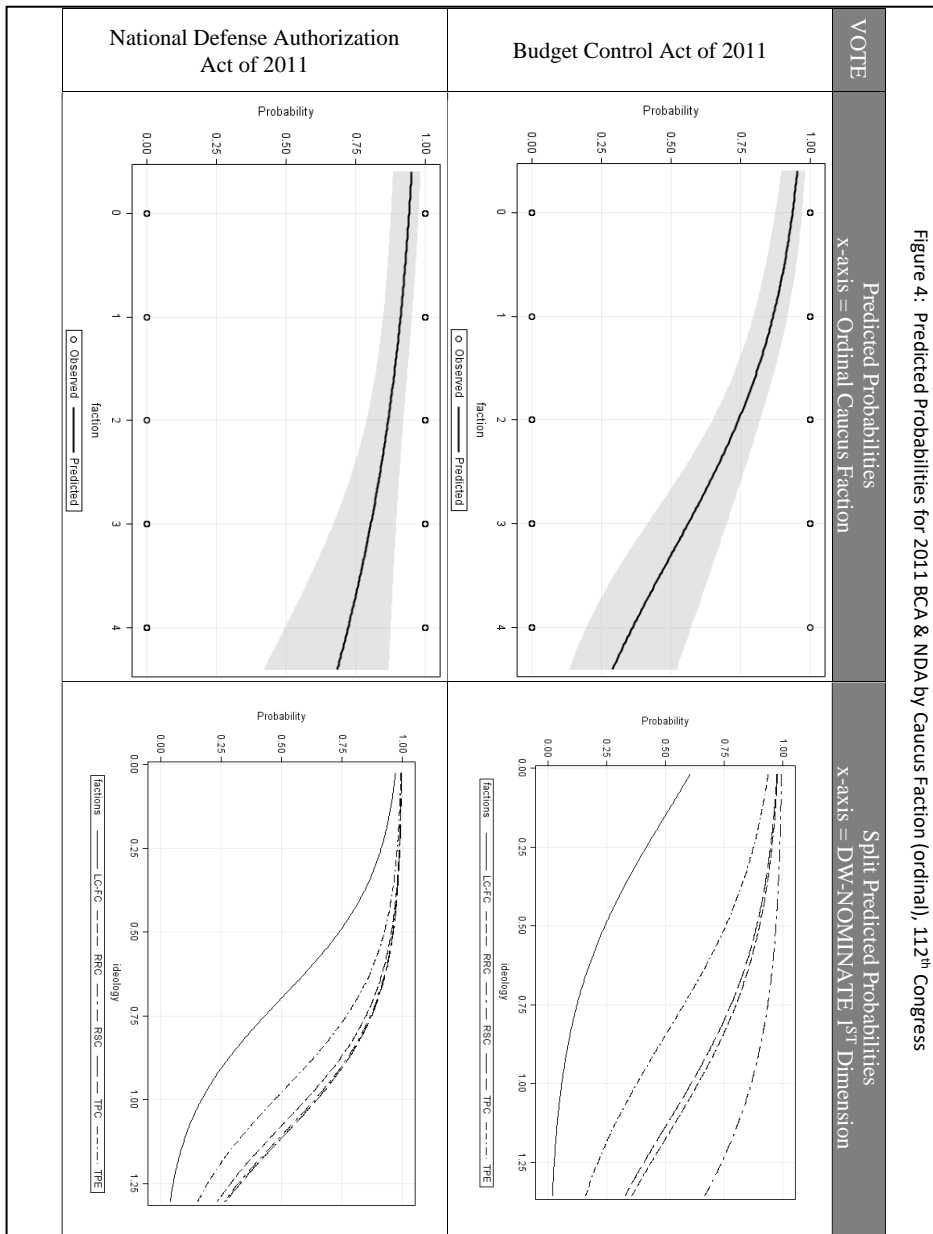
Figure 4: Predicted Probabilities for 2011 BCA & NDA by Caucus Faction (ordinal), 112th Congress

Factional identification is one strategy they can pursue as an electoral bulwark against challengers. On the other hand, challengers and candidates for open seats can pursue purposive strategies, and thus can use faction identification to their electoral advantage as well.

We have seen ideologically extreme factions coalesce within the Republican Party and, together, represent a substantial minority of Republican votes the Republican leadership cannot count on in organizing a legislative agenda. Increasingly the party leadership in the House has had to resort to Hastert Rule violations to pass party bills, as it did four times in the 113th Congress, the most since 2008 (Willis 2013). As we can see for both sets of significant legislation models, and the BCA and NDAA votes, the ideological factions are a thorn in the side of the Republican leadership and its attempts to exert agenda control and party discipline in the House. Factional opposition effectively reduces the majority party's membership and makes party government a much more tenuous proposition. The apparent paradox of frustrated party government in an era of party polarization is less puzzling in light of the intraparty discohesion and fractionalization of the majority party. The reality of sub-partisan caucuses or coalitions that polarize asymmetrically compared to the party status quo and the party leadership, and whose ideological goals cannot be accomplished by ceding power to the more moderate leadership, and thus bars the party-supporting actions expected in the party polarization literature. The avenues for further research of the relationship between interparty and intraparty polarization, the nature of factions in the Republican Party majority and party factions writ large, and the effect party factions have on party government are legion. A more sophisticated and complete examination of the conditions of party government longitudinally across Congresses would be an important next step in furthering our understanding of the conditions of party government. A formalization of party faction strategies would be an important contribution, as would an analysis explicitly linking mass public polarization and the factions in Congress.

Although further research and empirical scrutiny is indeed required, our research demonstrates that the current scholarship on polarization and party government could not have possibly accounted for the era of hyper-polarization and the corresponding state of

internally factionalized party political parties in American government. As such, although the work of Theriault and Rohde establishes the necessary foundation for our own research, it is nonetheless incomplete (Rohde 1991; Theriault 2008). Theriault's contentions regarding polarization, the interaction between party members and the party leadership, and his insistence upon the leadership using procedural and substantive strategies to prompt higher and higher levels of party cohesion as polarization increases has simply not been reflected in the political reality that is the post-Tea Party Congress. Additionally, Theriault and Rohde also assume a constant rate of polarization in Congress (Rohde 1991; Theriault 2008). According to this argument, Members of Congress polarize individually at a uniform rate, and newly elected members such as a large portion of Tea Party Caucus members – which may be exposed to external factors which polarize them more severely – are polarized on an equitable basis with the extant members of the institution. Theriault and Rohde's argument does not account for disparity in the process of polarization, and also assumes the party leadership always becomes more powerful as polarization increases (Rohde 1991; Theriault 2008). The body of theory thereby ignores the possibility of a sub-partisan caucus or coalition which polarizes asymmetrically compared to the party status quo, and whose ideological goals cannot be accomplished by ceding power to a far less polarized, and therefore ideologically incongruent, body of legislators forming the party leadership. In short, the body of research is simply not generalizable forward across time to the current period of congressional politics as the scholarship exists currently.

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The Gun Stops Here: Firearm Policy and Presidential Issue Framing.

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How do presidents frame gun control policy? Only months before the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, a major gun control bill was already making its way through Congress. Yet, it would take almost five years and the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King and Senator Robert F. Kennedy before a gun bill was signed into law. Even more puzzling, President Johnson remained virtually silent on gun control during much of this period of time. Recently, as firearm focusing events have risen, gun control has become a consistent part of Democratic Presidential agendas, while Republicans have shifted how they talk about gun control towards punitive and lenient measures. In this paper, we analyze presidential statements from Presidents Johnson to Obama and outline the evolution of presidential framing of gun policy. In particular, we show that presidents have used a combination of restrictive, punitive, and lenient frames to discuss gun control policy and to stand on opposing sides of the gun control issue, with a significant rise in division among party lines being notable in the post-Reagan Era. Whereas Democratic Presidents tend to respond quickly to firearm focusing events, advocating for restrictive measures, Republican Presidents have shifted over time to responding more slowly, and advocating for punitive and lenient measures relating to gun control.

Introduction

How do presidents frame gun control policy? How do presidents respond to focusing events, mass shootings that have been an increasingly unfortunate part of American society over time? How do Democratic and Republican Presidents differ in framing their gun control attention, and has this changed over time? Given that gun violence, especially in the form of mass shootings, have become an unfortunate and consistent part of the human experience in the United States, these are important questions to ask. Other work has explored the level of Congressional attention to firearm legislation (Fleming et al 2016), partisan alignments over the gun control issue (Lindaman and Haider-Markel 2002), public opinion regarding gun control and interest group power influence in the gun control debate (Goss 2008; Fleming 2012). However, less attention has been devoted to the president's attention to gun control policy. This omission, given the president's role as "Agenda Setter-in-Chief" (Rutledge and Larsen-Price 2014), represents an important gap in the literature on the gun control policy. This paper will focus on presidential attention to and framing of gun control policy. Specifically, we identify three frames consistent with Fleming's (2012) work which have dominated the gun control debate, and trace their prevalence among presidential policy statements from 1963-2017. We find that presidential attention to and framing of gun control can be tied to major legislation in the area of gun control policy following focusing events. Specifically, Democratic Presidents have tended to respond quickly advocating for restrictive policies consistent with enhanced gun control following focusing events, which has led to eventual policy changes like the Firearms Act of 1968, part of a broader Omnibus Crime Bill signed into law by President Johnson and the Brady Bill signed by President Clinton which banned assault weapons in 1994. Republican Presidents, however, have typically allowed a cooling off period following focusing events, responding much more slowly to firearm focusing events and advocating for policy solutions that deflect the focus away from the regulation of firearms.

Focusing Events and Presidential Issue Framing

Gun Violence and Focusing Events

Acts of gun violence such as mass murder, school shootings, and assassinations have become and unfortunate common place in American politics since the 1960s, and have become more common throughout that period. Focusing events are important to agenda setting because they cause a shock to the system, focusing attention of policymakers, the media, and the

public virtually simultaneously to a policy problem (Kingdon 1984). Thomas Birkland, in his groundbreaking work on focusing events and public policy, has defined a focusing event as:

> an event that is sudden, relatively rare, can be reasonably defined as harmful or revealing the possibility of potentially greater future harms, inflicts harms or suggests potential harms that are or could be concentrated on a definable geographical area or community of interest, and that is known to policy makers and the public virtually simultaneously (Birkland 1997:21).

Table 1. Firearm Focusing Events by Date

Firearm Focusing Event	Date
JFK Assassination	November 22, 1963
Texas Bell Tower Shooting	August 1, 1966
MLK Assassination	April 4, 1968
RFK Assassination	June 6, 1968
Wallace Shooting	May 15, 1972
Easter Sunday Massacre	March 29, 1975
Reagan Shooting	March 30, 1981
Stockton Massacre	January 17, 1989
Killeen Texas	October 16, 1991
Columbine	April 20, 1999
D.C. Sniper Shootings	October, 2–22, 2002
Virginia Tech	April 16, 2007
Fort Hood	November 5, 2009
Gabrielle Giffords Assassination Attempt	January 8, 2011
Aurora, CO Shooting	July 20, 2012
Sandy Hook Elementary	December 12, 2012
Charleston Church Shooting	June 17, 2015
San Bernadino, CA	December 2, 2015
Pulse Night Club (Orlando, FL)	June 12, 2016

Source: Dates collected from *New York Times* Historical Index

Working from this definition, we have identified a list of gun violence acts from 1963-2016 that qualify as focusing events. Each of the major focusing events listed in Table 1 clearly fit this definition, even accounting for the fact that technological advances have made it possible for more recent focusing events to be known to policymakers and the public faster than before. Notice also that this definition is general enough to encompass focusing events in many policy areas and about which presidents have made public pronouncements. For our purposes, however, it is strictly connected to firearm related events where a firearm has been used to harm or kill Americans, including prominent politicians, college students, school-aged children, or civilians who are just going about their daily lives.

Focusing events such as those identified in table 1 particular to gun violence are important to policy making for two reasons. First, they can serve to focus attention on a problem. Second, focusing events can affect problem definition in combination with other similar events, making previous issue frames being advanced by policy entrepreneurs more or less plausible as a result. The issue frames that result from a focusing event or series of similar events can result in major shifts in governmental attention, as well as sweeping policy change. As Baumgartner and Jones (1993) demonstrate, policy windows open due to shocks in the system, which can allow for significant changes in policy. Rapid, sweeping change is frequently the result of changing policy definitions, the attachment of new symbols, and positive feedback, all of which can be directly the result of focusing events such as mass shootings.

Haider-Markel and Joslyn (2001), focusing on public support for gun control frames, argue that focusing events are a major driving factor in issue framing involving guns. As their work makes clear, following mass shootings, policy entrepreneurs spring to action in advocacy of a preferred causal story in recognition of the opening of a policy window to shape public opinion. Issue framing, in this case, refers to the causal stories advanced by entrepreneurs to increase salience and promote a particular definition, interpretation, or policy solution, which in turn become the way in which those events are understood by both the public and political elites (Gamson, 1992; Entman, 1993; Haider-Markel and Joslyn, 2001). Political debate, and the likelihood of policy change, is determined by which of the issue frames successfully expands the scope of conflict, pulling in those who previously found themselves on the sidelines of the debate (Schattschneider, 1960).

In summary, focusing events occur suddenly, hitting everyone without warning, affect a large number of people, and are relatively rare. Focusing events are capable of getting agenda attention for an item, but this attention does not guarantee policy success. In the case of gun control policy, firearm focusing events lead to punctuated attention to gun control in Congress and the media, but policy change is extremely limited and rare (Fleming 2012; Fleming et al 2016).

Presidential Framing

Less work has been focused on presidential attention to gun control policy. The importance of presidents at the agenda setting stage has been well documented in the literature. The president has long been considered to have the most significant role in setting the agenda, with the ability of no other single actor being comparable to that of the president (Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Kingdon 1984). Further, Edwards and Barrett (2000) argue that presidential initiatives are much more likely to receive consideration in Congress compared to other bills. Others have noted that role the president has in setting the agenda may be his greatest source of influence (Bond and Fleischer 1990) and his most important strategic power (Edwards 1989; Fett 1992). In examining leadership and responsiveness at the agenda setting stage, Rutledge and Larsen-Price (2014) find evidence of presidential leadership of Congress to be consistent across six issue areas, and conclude that the president is the agenda setter-in-chief. If there is a clear leader at the agenda setting stage of the policy process, it is the president (Larsen-Price and Rutledge 2013).

The president's powerful role at the agenda setting stage means that the president has an unparalleled opportunity to frame policy debates. In a presidential system, the majority of political attention focuses on what the president does (Weatherford 2012). The ability to frame issues and define the way in which they will be presented to the public is one of the most important tools that political elites, including the president, has in advancing policy solutions (Edelman 1993; Rochefort and Cobb 1994; Jacoby 2000).

There are many examples of presidents using framing to advance their policy proposals. President Clinton, for example, persuaded the FDA to classify nicotine as a drug and cigarettes as drug delivery devices in order to change perceptions among the public about the dangers of smoking (Nelson 2004). President Clinton's proposed health care reforms during his first term failed in part due to his focus on the least popular frame of the

health care debate (Lau and Schlesinger 2005). Successful framing, or the alternative, can also have electoral consequences that trump objective conditions. Facing similar economic recessions, efforts to frame the hopeful trajectory by Ronald Reagan in 1982 proved a successful message of damage control in the midterm elections. On the contrary, Barack Obama was less successful in a battle to frame economic recovery than his Republican counterparts, which led to very large losses in the 2010 midterms for the Democrats (Weatherford 2012). Ronald Reagan used framing to gain support for his request to Congress in 1985 for funding for the construction of twenty-one new MX missiles when the issue was framed as having an impact on arms control negotiations with the Soviet Union (Edwards 2012). Experimental research has also demonstrated the potential for presidents to frame public policies to their favor. In a study of the hostage crisis in Iran in 1979-1980, respondents were more likely to approve proposed solutions if they were told that President Carter deemed the solutions as necessary (Sigelman 1980). Reagan's example and the results of the experimental study of Carter's ability to frame solutions of the Iran hostage situation are consistent with Zaller's (1994) assertion that the presidential ability to frame public policies is at its peak during times of crisis or threats to security. This would also be accurate in the case of gun control, where so much attention to the policy area is following a focusing event with mass casualties, where people look to the president for leadership to promote solutions and security (Birkland 1997).

Presidential framing of gun control policy is important because of the president's leadership role at the agenda setting stage, which provides presidents with an enhanced ability to determine how policy debates are framed. In the following analysis, we discuss how presidents from Johnson to Obama have framed the gun control debate in terms of the three frames governing gun control policy debates advanced by Fleming (2012). In addition, we also contextualize the use of frames in relationship to focusing events and presidents' agenda priorities. The findings suggest that major changes in gun control policy have coincided with increases in consistent presidential framing of the gun control placed in the context of the successful use of symbols provided by focusing events.

Presidential Issue Frames: Restrictive, Punitive, and Lenient
The restrictive issue frame is defined as presidential statements that advocate making it more difficult to obtain a firearm. Examples of these statements would be where the president publicly suggests restrictions on assault rifles, restrictions on handguns, restrictions on ammunition, taxes on

ammunition, waiting periods, and any other restriction that makes it harder to own or use a firearm. The principal argument here is that taking guns out of circulation, or preventing an increase in firearm availability, will lead to fewer gun crimes (Fleming 2012, Fleming et al 2016).

The punitive issue frame is defined as presidential statements focused on the individual rather than the gun, punishing those who use firearms in an illegal manner. The primary examples of this public statement type are limits on convicted felons from obtaining firearms and increased penalties for using a firearm in the commission of a crime. This issue framing is based upon providing a deterrent. Stronger penalties imposed on those who commit a crime with a gun will serve as a deterrent for individuals to commit a crime with a gun (Fleming 2012; Fleming et al 2016).

The lenient issue frame is defined as presidential statements that advocate making it easier to obtain or own a firearm. Examples of lenient frames call for making illegal firearms legal, eliminating taxes on firearms, allowing firearms to be carried in locations they are banned, and any other legislation that makes it easier to own or obtain a firearm. This frame is focused on making it easier to obtain a gun, based primarily on the notion that law-abiding citizens will be better able to protect themselves if they are armed (Fleming 2012, Fleming et al 2016).

In order to ensure intercoder reliability, the data set was coded by one of the authors as well as a student who had been trained by the author. Intercoder reliability was over 90% for the first round of coding. The author and the student then worked together to reconcile their coding differences and were able to then achieve close to 100% reliability. The most common example of discrepancies was when a president would use a mixed message.

Data for this paper was collected from the American Presidency Project's *Public Papers of the Presidents*, and were coded on a time-series and content basis. We analyze and code presidential public statements on a day-by-day basis from 1963-2016, and by issue frame on a sentence-by-sentence basis. Each sentence or individual phrase within a sentence counts as one statement, with one record only occurring within each sentence. Such an

Data Collection

<div align="center">

Table 2: Presidential Statements on Gun Control Policy

Statement Type
</div>

President	Restrictive	Restrictive-Punitive	Punitive	Punitive-Lenient	Lenient	Total
Johnson	255	31	25	8	5	324
Nixon	14	3	0	5	0	22
Ford	22	13	38	6	30	119
Carter	5	1	1	0	1	8
Reagan	1	3	66	13	37	123
Bush 41	49	18	106	12	35	220
Clinton	1,079	402	52	13	58	1,604
Bush 43	0	0	4	3	19	26
Obama	229	63	73	10	46	421
Total	1,654	534	375	73	231	2,867

approach to data collection is consistent with many other approaches, coding presidential content on a sentence by sentence basis (Policy Agendas Project, 2022 and coding content from the *Public Papers* (Edwards and Wood 1997; Eshbaugh-Soha and Peake 2005). The time frame of coverage begins when President Lyndon B. Johnson succeeded President Kennedy, and our data run through the end of the Obama Presidency. To select public statements for analysis, we used the key term "firearm". Initially, we also used the key term "gun", but interestingly we learned that the term "gun" tends to be employed almost exclusively to discuss weapons in a foreign policy context, and thus this key term was less of a fit for issue frames in domestic policy and as a result we narrowed the focus. Table 2 provides the number of statements made by each president for each issue frame from 1963-2017. As Table 2 indicates, our dataset has an N of 2,867 statements made by presidents over 54 years. Democratic presidents have devoted more than four times as much attention to gun policy as opposed to their Republican counterparts, and the restrictive frame has been by far the most commonly used frame in the discussion of gun control policy by presidents. We explore the extent of attention to gun policy by each president in the section that follows, noting patterns and key moments in the evolution of presidential framing and gun control policy. We summarize the key findings in presidential framing of gun control policy in the discussion section at the end of the paper.

Table 3 provides the framing of presidential policy statements following each focusing event, along with the average amount of time that passes in which presidents discuss focusing events within each frame. Taken together with Table 2, above, it is clear that there are several important patterns emerging within the discussion of gun control policy on the part of presidents. First, Democratic presidents talk a lot more about gun control policy than Republican presidents. Second, Democratic presidents tend to talk about focusing events longer than Republican presidents.

Finally, Democratic presidents lean overwhelmingly towards the restrictive frame when it comes to the discussion of gun control policy, whereas Republican presidents tend to be more mixed in discussing different frames. The limited attention to gun control policy among our time series devoted by Republican presidents is much less consistent in advocating a certain frame. We explore the framing of gun control policy by each specific president further in Figure 1.

Table 3: Presidential Attention to Gun Control Following Focusing Events

	Sent.	Days(	Sent.	Days(	Sent.	Days(
Johnson						
JFK Assassination						
1965			2	472.0	13	479.5
1966	1	838.0	2	838.0	7	838.0
MLK Assassination						
1968					17	40.9
RFK Assassination						
1968	2	18.0	9	51.1	173	31.9
1969					4	222.3
Texas Bell Tower						
1966					8	10.3
1967	1	189.0	18	363.6	39	314.0
1968	1	590.0	2	572.5	25	569.8
Nixon						
Wallace Shooting						
1972					8	60.1
1973			5	261.0	9	261.0
Ford						
Easter Sunday						
1975	7	100.9	33	140.6	19	110.8

1976	23	478.9	21	428.0	16	368.6
Carter						
Easter Sunday						
1979	1	1627.0	1	1465.0	6	1473.0
Reagan						
Regan Shooting						
1981	9	23.0	12	64.3		
1982			25	389.0		
1983	16	733.3	18	733.8		
1984			4	1150.5		
1986	1	1817.0	10	1817.0		
1988	11	2764.5	13	2710.5	4	2749.5
George H.W. Bush						
Stockton Massacre						
1989	17	84.0	53	138.2	55	102.3
1990	11	508.5	25	400.0	9	512.0
1991			24	862.0		
Killeen Texas						
1991			1	41.0		
1992	7	353.9	15	287.9	3	257.0
Clinton						
Columbine						
1999	6	54.5	5	108.8	300	82.0
2000	14	340.4	25	345.5	517	344.0
2001			1	638.0		
Killeen Texas						
1993	8	657.8	1	718.0	136	721.4
1994	8	921.9	2	899.5	98	904.7
1995	7	1316.7	3	1278.3	42	1294.3
1996	5	1763.2	2	1652.0	44	1760.0
1997	2	1967.0	8	2075.6	188	2076.6
1998	6	2538.3	16	2541.1	129	2512.3
1999	2	2670.0	2	2712.0	27	2679.0
Columbine						
1999	6	54.5	5	108.8	300	82.0
2000	14	340.4	25	345.5	517	344.0
2001			1	638.0		
George W. Bush						
Columbine						
2001			1	953.0		

DC Sniper Shootings						
2004	9	632.0	6	640.5		
2006	1	1185.0				
Virginia Tech						
2008	9	491.0				
Obama						
Virginia Tech						
2009			1	731.0	5	731.0
Fort Hood						
2010					3	343.0
Aurora, CO Shooting						
2012	4	46.5	7	40.6	16	36.1
Sandy Hook						
2012	3	5.0	3	5.0	16	5.0
2013	5	65.2	49	48.6	52	57.8
2014					1	481.0
2015	6	812.0			7	812.0
Charleston Church						
2015	6	88.7	6	132.0	32	87.3
San Bernadino, CA						
2016	22	62.0	17	34.5	159	52.2
Pulse Night Club						
2016					1	75.0

Figure 1: Presidential Frame Usage

Presidents' Rates of Sentence Types over Term(s)

	Rest.	Pun.	Len.
Johnson	88.27%		10.19%
Nixon	77.27%		22.73%
Ford	29.41%	45.38%	25.21%
Carter	75.00%	12.50%	12.50%
Reagan	65.60%	29.60%	
H.W. Bush	29.91%	52.68%	15.63%
Clinton	92.10%		
W. Bush	26.92%	73.08%	
Obama	69.36%	19.71%	10.93%

Types ■ Rest.   ■ Pun.   ▪ Len.
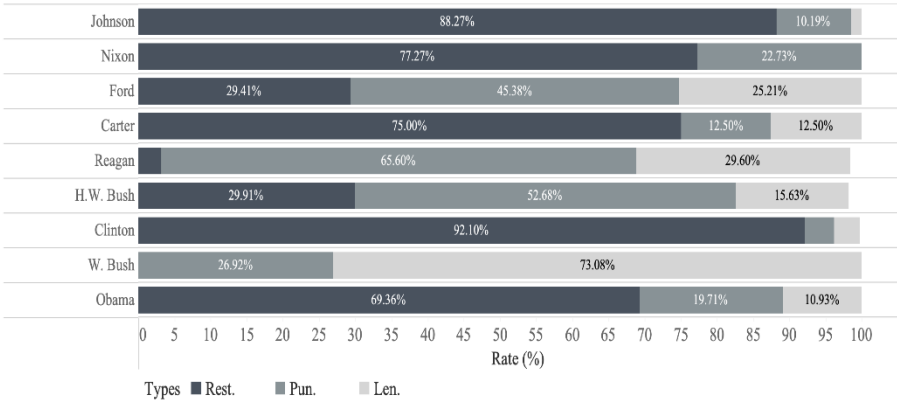
Partisan Attention and Framing of Gun Control

In this section, we will explore the partisan differences among presidents from 1963-2017 in their framing of gun control. First, focusing on the Democratic presidents, President Clinton stands out as the president who not only talked about gun control policy the most, but he also was the most consistent president in the data series when it comes to targeting his statements towards a specific policy frame. Referring back to Table 1, President Clinton made nearly four times as many statements as the next closest president regarding gun control policy. Further, an impressive 92% of Clinton's 1,604 statements regarding gun control were restrictive in nature. Clinton's attention to gun control policy were also clearly tied to focusing events. During the first two years of his presidency, Clinton advocated consistently for the Brady Bill, which would eventually pass Congress as a restrictive measure banning assault weapons. His use of the restrictive frame to advocate for the Brady Bill's banning of assault weapons is best captured by his statement on March 1, 1993, in which he says "I don't believe that everybody in America needs to be able to buy a semiautomatic or an automatic weapon, built only for the purpose of killing people, in order to protect the right of Americans to hunt and to practice marksmanship and to be secure in their own homes and own a weapon to be secure."[1]
Following the Contract with America victory in which the Republicans won

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[1] William J. Clinton, Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session at the Adult Learning Center in New Brunswick, New Jersey Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/220028

control of the House of Representatives, President Clinton talked much less about gun control until his second term, where he picked back up with restrictive frames that were focused on the protection of children. Following the Columbine shooting on April 20, 1999, Clinton's framing was coupled with an event that garnered widespread attention, and his focus on gun control increased dramatically for the remainder of his term. On April 24th, 1999, in the wake of the Columbine Massacre, Clinton stated "Next week I'll send to Congress two new bills to keep our children safe. First, we must do more to keep guns out of the hands of violent juveniles. My bill will crack down on gun shows and illegal gun trafficking, ban violent juveniles from ever being able to buy a gun, and close the loophole that lets juveniles own assault rifles."[2] Of the 1,604 statements made by President Clinton regarding gun control throughout his eight years in office, over half of them came in the 21 months following Columbine.

Barack Obama devoted the second highest amount of policy attention to gun control, although he only made 421 statements as compared to Clinton's 1,604. Interestingly, among Democratic presidents examined in this paper, Obama's statements regarding gun control are the most mixed, with 69% of his statements fitting the restrictive frame as evidenced in Figure 1. President Obama faced seven major focusing events during his Presidency, with three mass shootings occurring prior to his 2012 reelection and four occurring after. Interestingly, Obama's attention to gun control was quite unevenly distributed throughout his presidency, with only 36 of his 421 statements on gun control policy coming prior to his 2012 reelection. In response to the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, CT, Obama made reference to multiple mass shootings that had occurred during his first term. On December 14th, 2012, in his remarks on the shooting[3] and on December 15th in his weekly address[4], the President talked about the innocence of children and without specifically mentioning a solution called for "meaningful actions to prevent" such acts of violence. More than half of Obama's attention to gun control came in his last two years in office, similar to President Clinton above, but unlike Clinton the majority of Obama's attention in his final two years occurred without an accompanying focusing

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[2] William J. Clinton, The President's Radio Address Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/229378
[3] Barack Obama, Remarks on the Shootings in Newtown, Connecticut Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/303118
[4] Barack Obama, The President's Weekly Address Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/303116

event. The Pulse Night Club shooting occurred on June 12, 2016, and only one restrictive statement was made by President Obama following that event which came in the final year of his term. Rather, the lion's share of Obama's attention came in 2015 and earlier in 2016, surrounding focusing events occurring in those years while referring back to the massacre at Sandy Hook.

Lyndon Johnson is the president who devoted the next highest attention to gun control in our series. In a pattern similar to that of Presidents Clinton and Obama described above, President Johnson devoted the majority of his attention to gun control policy late in his presidency. Of Johnson's 324 total statements on gun control, only 33 were made in 1964-66, with 28 fitting the restrictive frame. Johnson's attention increased somewhat in 1967 following the Texas Bell Tower Shooting, which he continued to mention in his statements throughout the remainder of his presidency. Johnson also made 17 restrictive statements following the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., on April 4th, 1968. The vast majority of Johnson's gun control statements came following the June, 1968 assassination of Senator and Presidential Candidate Robert F. Kennedy, with 188 of 324 policy statements coming during his last seven months in office following the RFK Assassination. Responding to the assassination, President Johnson asked Congress to "pass laws to bring the insane traffic in guns to a halt, as I have appealed to them time and time again to do. That will not, in itself, end the violence, but reason and experience tell us that it will slow it down; that it will spare many innocent lives."[5] The tremendous spike in attention to gun control following the RFK Assassination also stands out because of the average days following the focusing event in which statements were made, provided in Table 3, which shows the immediacy in which Johnson responded to this event compared to other events throughout the series which had much longer responses. Finally, it is worth briefly mentioning that among Democratic presidents covered in our series, President Jimmy Carter stands out for several reasons. First, Carter is the only President covered in this paper that was blessed to not have a firearm focusing event occur during his presidency. Secondly, and likely as a result, President Carter discussed gun control policy the least among presidents, making only eight statements throughout his four years in office, with six of them advocating the restrictive frame.

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[5] Lyndon B. Johnson, Address to the Nation Following the Attack on Senator Kennedy Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/237145

Republican presidents devote much less policy attention to gun control compared to their Democratic counterparts discussed above. During the fifty-three year period 1963-2016 under examination, a total of 2,867 statements were made by presidents regarding gun control policy. Only 510, or just under 18%, were made by Republican presidents in spite of Republicans controlling the presidency for 28 of the 53 years and 9 of the 21 focusing events that are subject to this paper.

Among Republican presidents, Gerald Ford and George H.W. Bush stand out for both the volume and inconsistency of their discussion of gun control policy frames. Ford, in spite of only serving from August, 1974 through January of 1977, made 119 statements on gun control policy which is only slightly fewer than Ronald Reagan's 123 over eight years in office. Ford's pace of gun control policy statements is similar George H.W. Bush over his full four-year term, during which he made 220 statements regarding gun control policy. Ford and Bush also stand out in terms of their framing consistency. Ford's response to the Easter Sunday Massacre in 1975, for example, advocated for each of the three frames, including restrictions on Saturday Night Specials, opposed a nationwide gun owner's registry, and called for Congress to enact stricter punishment on individuals who use a gun in the commission of a crime all in the same address to Congress.[6] Ford's attention to gun control is unusual among Presidents of either party, in that Ford advocates for each the punitive (45%), restrictive (29%), and lenient (25%) frames as opposed to more framing consistency and purity we see from most presidents in the series. Ford's inconsistent framing of gun control, following his predecessor Richard Nixon whose limited attention to gun control policy was predominantly focused on the restrictive frame, indicates a notable shift among Republicans over time.

President George H.W. Bush was similar to Ford in advocacy for each of the three primary frames, with a greater percentage of his attention being devoted to the punitive frame (53%), followed by the restrictive frame (30%) and the lenient frame (16%). Similar to Gerald Ford, George H.W. Bush at times advanced multiple frames in the same speech. For example, in May, 1989, in response to the Stockton Massacre, Bush advanced the restrictive frame by calling for closing loopholes for felons to obtain guns, and banning assault weapons, along with the punitive frame in calling for

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[6] Gerald R. Ford, Special Message to the Congress on Crime. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/257109

minimum sentencing guidelines.[7] Later, in September, 1989, Bush stated that "banning assault weapons is not the ultimate answer."[8] Unlike Ford, however, George H.W. Bush's attention to gun control marked a tremendous deviation from his predecessor. Ronald Reagan devoted far less attention to gun control policy than either Ford or GHW Bush, and his attention to gun control framing was much more consistent. Of Reagan's 123 policy statements regarding gun control over two full terms, a much slower pace than that of his Republican predecessor or successor, 66% of Reagan's statements focused on the punitive frame and 30% focused on the lenient frame. Only four of Reagan's policy statements mentioned restrictions on guns as a frame, far fewer than either Ford or GHW Bush. Reagan's focusing event was personal, as he narrowly escaped a would-be assassin's bullet. In detailing his recovery from the March 30th attempt, on April 22nd, 1981, Reagan stated "if anything, I'm a little disturbed that focusing on gun control as an answer to the crime problem today could very well be diverting us from really paying attention to what needs to be done if we're to solve the crime problem."[9] Less than a month after himself being shot, Reagan offered this as a strong rebuke to the notion that gun control was the answer to solving the crime problem. Additionally, in 1986, Ronald Reagan became the first sitting president to address the National Rifle Association (NRA) Convention, further confirming a shift within the Republican Party towards a marriage with the NRA. Given this shift and new expectations, the NRA rebuked President George H.W. Bush (Kenny, McBurnett, and Bormuda 1994), and did not endorse him for a second term (Wilcox and Webster 2002).

Unlike his father before him, George W. Bush followed a pattern in his attention to gun control policy that was similar to President Reagan in several ways. First, he devoted very little attention to gun control policy, even following focusing events. Among presidents who faced firearm focusing events during their time in office, George W. Bush made the fewest (26) statements regarding gun control policy. Gun control was a campaign issue that the President used to his advantage during his reelection

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[7] George Bush, Remarks at the National Peace Officers' Memorial Day Ceremony Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/263542

[8] George Bush, Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session at a Luncheon for Regional Editors and Broadcasters Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/264094

[9] Ronald Reagan, Question-and-Answer Session With Reporters Helen Thomas and Jim Gerstenzang on the President's Recovery Period Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/246941

campaign, stating at a campaign stop in Beckley, West Virginia, on July 16, 2004, "The way to make our communities safer is to lock up more gun-toting criminals, not to restrict the constitutional liberties of law-abiding citizens."[10] The younger Bush departed from other Republican Presidents, however, in that 73% of his statements advanced the lenient frame, whereas 27% advanced the punitive frame. George W. Bush is the only president to focus the majority of his attention on the lenient frame, although his attention to gun control generally was quite limited. He did not issue a single statement as president calling for further restrictions on guns.

In summary, Republican presidents have evolved much more than their Democratic counterparts over time in terms of their framing of gun control policy. Richard Nixon made few statements regarding gun control, even following focusing events, but the overwhelming majority of his statements (77%) advanced the restrictive frame. Gerald Ford spoke much more about gun control than his predecessor, but his framing of gun control policy was much more favorable to the punitive frame. Ronald Reagan gave rise to the lenient frame at the expense of the restrictive frame, with the focus being predominantly on the punitive frame. Reagan also became the first sitting president to address the NRA Convention, which deepened the ties between the Republican Party and the NRA. George H.W. Bush departed from Reagan by devoting much more attention to gun control generally, and advocating more consistently for restrictions on guns. This led to a tarnished relationship with the group, which rebuked him, did not endorse him for a second term, and eventually would lead to the elder Bush revoking his lifetime membership after his time as president had ended. George W. Bush, perhaps choosing to follow Reagan or perhaps learning from his father's experience, devoted very little attention to gun control generally, even in the aftermath of focusing events. He is also the only president in our series to devote the majority of his attention to the much more NRA friendly lenient frame.

Democratic presidents have been much more responsive to focusing events and much more consistent in their framing. Despite holding the presidency for less than half of the years under examination in this paper, and only presiding over slightly more than half (57%) of the twenty-one focusing events covered in this data, Democratic Presidents issued an overwhelming 82% of the policy statements regarding gun control from

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[10] George W. Bush, Remarks in Beckley, West Virginia Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/215291

1963-2017. It is noteworthy that President Clinton was particularly chatty when it comes to gun control policy, issuing 57% of the total statements himself. However, in spite of that, Democratic presidents are still more responsive to focusing events and more focused on gun control policy generally than Republicans. Democratic presidents are also more consistent in their framing of gun control, both across frames and over time. Overall, 88% of the Democratic statements on gun control were restrictive in nature. Republican presidents focused the majority of their attention (51%) on the punitive frame throughout the series, with 25% restrictive statements and 24% lenient statements. Notably, the number of lenient statements has increased throughout the series at the expense of the restrictive frame among Republican presidents, with the punitive frame being a relatively consistent approach among Republican presidents to gun control.

Figure 2: Presidential Framing Duration Following Focusing Events

Frequency of Presidents' Sentence Types by Days Since Last Focusing Event
(0-100 Days Post Focusing Event)
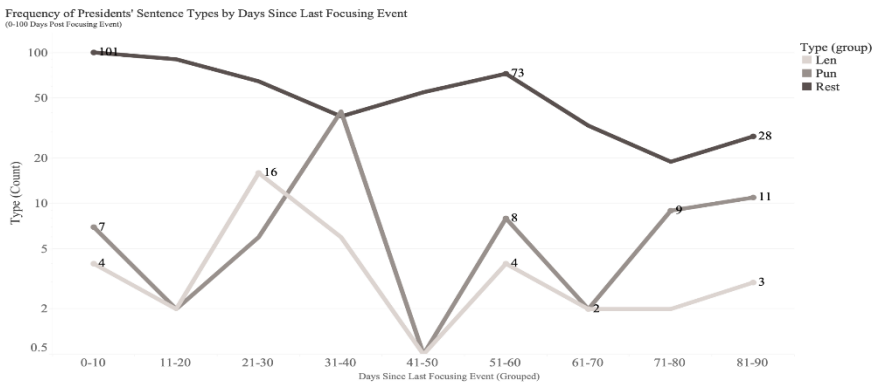
Finally, we examined the distribution of attention spikes within each frame following focusing events, as well as the duration of attention spikes each frame receives following focusing events. These data are provided in Figure 2 above. There are interesting patterns among each frame following focusing events. The restrictive frame, which is predominantly advanced by Democratic presidents, tends to spike immediately following focusing events, and decay steadily and slowly over the 100 days plus following a focusing event. The punitive and lenient frames, much more consistently advocated for by Republican presidents throughout our data series, tends to rise much more slowly following focusing events, with peaks coming between 21 and 40 days following a focusing event, and a much less consistent and rapid decay over the 100 days following a focusing event

compared to the restrictive frame. It appears, then, from data provided in Table 3 and Figure 2 combined, that Democratic presidents are much more likely to respond quickly to focusing events advocating for restrictions on guns, whereas Republican presidents tend to respond much more slowly advocating for the punitive and lenient frames.

Discussion

Presidents are provided in Article II, Section 3 of the Constitution with the opportunity to report to Congress periodically on the State of the Union. This has given the president broad authority to influence the agenda of Congress (Kingdon 1984; Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Rutledge and Larsen-Price 2014). Further, the President is the most recognized political figure in the country which provides him unrivaled access to the media and the public to promote his agenda. What presidents attend to, and how those issues are framed, matter tremendously in the shaping of public discourse.

In this paper, we have examined the scourge of gun violence which has become an increasingly unfortunate new normal in American society. Our dataset clearly indicates that, over time, mass shootings are on the rise. Mass shootings are focusing events, which have been shown to open policy windows for potential policy solutions (Birkland 1997; Fleming 2012). In spite of that, and increased policy attention normally following focusing events, changes to gun policy have been a rarity. Given the prominence of the president in both setting the agenda and framing public policy, this paper seeks to gain a first understanding of presidential attention to and framing of gun control policy and the implications on the prospects of policy change.

This paper has demonstrated that presidential attention to gun control has been inconsistent. The pattern that emerges is that attention to gun control on the part of the American presidents tends to depend not only on focusing events, but on the extent to which the president prioritizes gun control relative to other agenda items independently of events. Democratic presidents have tended to devote the most attention to gun control in response to focusing events, with the notable exceptions being Lyndon Johnson's muted reaction to the Kennedy Assassination and Jimmy Carter's lack of a gun control agenda. Carter had no major firearm focusing events during his four years in office. Following the passage of much of his domestic agenda, Lyndon Johnson was the third most active proponent of gun control policy in the time period under examination, with more than

two-thirds of his attention to gun control following the 1968 assassinations of Dr. Martin Luther King and Senator Robert F. Kennedy. Johnson was also very consistent in his framing of gun control policy, with greater than 88% of his statements on gun control being restrictive in nature. This consistency, combined with the focusing events of his presidency, led to the passage of Firearms Act of 1968 as part of a broader Omnibus Crime Bill. However, he chose to use the Kennedy Assassination as an opportunity to advance his Civil Rights and Anti-Poverty agenda rather than focusing on gun control. It was only the later term assassinations where there was room on his domestic agenda for gun control.

Ronald Reagan's presidency offered a critical turning point in the presidential framing of gun control policy, specifically for Republicans. Reagan only offered a few more statements on gun control overall than Gerald Ford, despite being in office more than twice as long. Also, like Ford, Reagan was himself the target of an assassin's bullet. Unlike Ford, however, Reagan was much more consistent in his framing of gun control policy. Nearly 97% of Reagan's statements on gun control fit either the punitive or lenient frame, with only 1 statement in 8 years promoting restrictions on guns and 3 presenting both the restrictive and punitive frames. Reagan's Presidency represented a substantial change in the approach of Republican presidents to gun control. Richard Nixon did not devote much attention to gun control. However, where he did, over three-fourths of his statements contained elements of the restrictive frame. Gerald Ford's gun control agenda was much more active than either Nixon or Reagan, and was actually during his time in office the most active agenda of any Republican president during our time frame. Ford's focus turned mostly towards punitive measures, but just under 30% of Ford's statements on gun control included elements of the restrictive frame. Reagan marked a significant departure from his Republican predecessors in framing gun control policy, with just over 3% of his statements containing elements of the restrictive frame, and only one statement being purely restrictive. Reagan also became the first sitting president to address the National Rifle Association at its annual convention on May 6, 1983. In his speech, Reagan effusively praised the NRA's lobbying efforts, espoused explicit support for the second amendment as the right to bear arms, and promoted the punitive frame in response to calls for increased regulation of firearms[11].

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[11] Ronald Reagan. May 6th, 1983. "Remarks at the Annual Members Banquet of the National Rifle Association in Phoenix, Arizona." The American Presidency Project, eds. John Wooley and Gerhard Peters. Retrieved from https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-annual-members-banquet-the-national-rifle-association-phoenix-arizona

George H.W. Bush deviated from Reagan in terms of his lack of a consistent message on gun control. Following the Stockton Massacre, which took place three days before his inauguration as president, President Bush made a variety of statements regarding gun control policy. From February through May, 1989, President Bush clearly appeared to have a strong gun control agenda. In just a three month period, Bush made a total of 108 statements on gun control policy. Among them, just under half (48%) had elements of the restrictive frame. His use of the restrictive frame as a successor to Reagan, who barely ever advocated the restrictive frame, coupled with the NRA's strong support in his campaign for president led to a strong rebuke from the association (Kenny, McBurnett, and Boruda 2004) and the group's refusal to endorse his reelection campaign (Wilcox and Webster 2002). Following pressure from the NRA in the early months of 1989, President Bush only made 130 statements from June, 1989 through the end of his term, a precipitous decline in his pace from his first three months. Notably, only 17% of his remaining statements advocated for any form of restrictions on guns, with the majority of his attention turning to punitive measures. It appears that the NRA's pressure on the first Bush Administration led to a notable deflection in attention, and a shift away from gun restrictions. George W. Bush seemed to have followed Reagan more than his father when it comes to gun control policy. George W. Bush barely mentioned gun control policy throughout his eight years as president. It was clearly not an issue on his agenda, and even when focusing events occurred, Bush avoided focusing on gun control to the extent possible. When he did address guns, following Reagan, his focus was almost exclusively on the lenient frame. Taken together, these findings portray George W. Bush as the dream president for the NRA. Following focusing events, Bush followed the NRA example of saying very little. When he did, 73% of his framing of gun control policy followed the lenient frame, with the remainder being punitive. Bush did not make a single statement advocating for restrictions on guns.

Finally, the peak time in the development of presidential framing of gun control policy came during the presidency of Bill Clinton. Among all of the presidents covered in our data set, Clinton was the president who most clearly had gun control as a prominent agenda item. In the first two years of his term, President Clinton issued 256 statements on gun control policy, with 91% of those statements advocating for restrictive measures. After losing the House of Representatives to the Republicans in the 1994 midterm elections, Clinton credited the GOP victory to the NRA (Fleming 2012). This, coupled with Bush's shift on guns and Reagan's speech at the NRA convention, elevated the NRA's perceived strength as well as their marriage to the

Republican Party. Interestingly, from the swearing in of the 104th Congress until his reelection to a second term in 1996, Clinton shifted away from gun control as an agenda item. He only made 99 statements pertaining to guns during the 104th Congress, and more than doubled the percentage of attention he focused on frames other than the restrictive frame. After securing reelection, Clinton dramatically increased his attention to guns, issuing an astonishing 1,252 statements on gun control, while increasing his use of restrictive frames to 93%, and many of these statements following the Columbine shooting in 1999.

President Obama was very similar to Bill Clinton in that the vast majority of Obama's attention to gun control came in his second term, including all of his executive actions, tied to an increase in firearm focusing events. Attention to gun control tends to be most affected by focusing events, which have become increasingly common in the last two decades. However, the data also show that attention to gun control following focusing events tends to be highest among Democratic presidents who choose to prioritize gun control. Johnson's barely mentioning guns following the Kennedy Assassination shows that his focus was elsewhere, while the remaining Democratic presidents either had no focusing events (Carter) or devoted substantial attention to gun control following focusing events. Gun control policy changes have been rare, and restrictions have primarily required unified Democratic government, focusing events as symbols to drive change, and presidents who placed gun control as a major component of their agenda during the Congressional session in which those items have passed. Absent the intersection of these circumstances, gun control has been an inconsistent part of presidential attention and a relatively stable policy area. Following the major policies passed in the first two years of the Clinton administration, presidential framing has polarized based on party lines following American politics generally, with Democratic presidents responding relatively quickly to focusing events by advocating for restrictive measures, and Republican Presidents following a "cooling off period" of about a month in length advocating for punitive and increasingly lenient measures over time, a pattern similarly followed by the NRA (Novak 2018).

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Managing the Money:
The President, Congress, and US Democracy Aid, FY2013-FY2019

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After 1989, US democracy promotion emerged as a significant foreign policy priority supported by both Republican and Democratic leaders in the executive and legislative branches. With its control of the purse strings, how did the US Congress affect US democracy aid? This paper examines US democracy aid from FY2013-FY2019, focusing on administration requests and congressional authorizations. Focusing on congressional engagement, we establish an analytical/conceptual framework that calls attention to patterns of congressional engagement and particular dynamics of congressional activity and assertiveness from compliance to independence. We apply this framework to US democracy assistance decisions, first laying out comparative data from the administration's budget requests and congressional appropriations during the period of our study, which, we argue, reflects the degree of congressional compliance-assertiveness for each fiscal year. We then provide brief comparative case studies of the activities and engagement of members of Congress in FY 2016 and FY2019 to shed further light on how and why members engaged, complied, and/or competed with the administration to shape US democracy assistance. We conclude with discussion of the implications for understanding US foreign policy dynamics and the role of Congress.

Like other members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, since the end of the Cold War, the US has been a major donor in efforts to facilitate the advance of democracy abroad. Along with other OECD donors, the US has made significant allocations of aid to advance democracy in other states, particularly where a democratization process has

already begun, an effort even more relevant with the recent rise in more populist and authoritarian regimes (Scott and Carter 2019; Ikenberry 2020). However, decisions on democracy aid are made on <u>both</u> ends of Pennsylvania Avenue. The "power of the purse" ensures the participation of the US Congress.

In the second decade of the 21st century, the ability of the US to continue such assistance faced political obstacles in Washington, DC. Increasing partisan and ideological polarization in the US made presidential efforts at getting any appropriations measure through Congress more difficult (Stonecash, Brewer, and Mariani 2018). Persistent divided government strengthens such polarization (Bianco and Smyth 2020). During the second term of the Obama administration, a Democratic president faced a Republican-controlled House of Representatives for four years and a Republican-controlled Senate for two years. The subsequent Trump administration benefitted from Republican control of the Senate but for two years faced a House controlled by Democrats. Complicating things further, the Trump administration featured a nativist, authoritarian president pushing an "America First" agenda. All these political factors made the US commitment to democracy aid a potentially contested issue and ensured that presidential requests to spend budget dollars for democracy assistance faced congressional scrutiny. How did the US Congress respond to presidential spending requests and shape US democracy aid?

Our analysis presents an interpretive case study (Lijphart 1971)[1] of executive-legislative engagement and activity on US democracy assistance from FY2013-FY2019, a period covering the last five years of the Obama administration and the first two years of the Trump administration. In this complex political environment marked by partisanship and polarization, we examine congressional reactions to presidential proposals for democracy assistance to consider how and under what conditions Congress is more or less compliant vis-à-vis administration proposals on this issue. Our interpretive case study approach applies an established, "conceptual framework that focuses attention on some theoretically specified aspects of reality" to a case – a set of events bounded by space and time – to provide better understanding of the events and explanations of their nature (Levy 2008, 405). This approach thus provides explanation of the nature and

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[1] This approach is also labelled case-explaining or theory-guided. See Levy (2008) and Van Evera (1997).

outcomes of a specific case, but also sheds light on the case as a member of a broader class of phenomena (George and Bennett 2005, 5) and offers insights on the utility and/or limits of the theoretical/analytical framework. Viewed through our conceptual/theoretical lens, we then consider what congressional activity and engagement on democracy assistance in this period indicates about presidents, Congress, and legislative-executive relations on foreign policymaking.

We argue that approaching this case through the lens of congressional engagement in foreign policy sheds light on both the processes and outcomes of foreign policymaking. Focusing on the central question about congressional engagement, we first draw from existing studies to establish an analytical/conceptual framework for understanding/explaining US democracy aid. Our framework calls attention to varying patterns of presidential-congressional engagement most broadly, and dynamics of congressional activity and assertiveness vis-à-vis the president – from compliance to independence – in particular. Our analysis focuses on the comparison between the president's budget requests and the subsequent congressional appropriations. The difference between these reflects the degree of congressional compliance-assertiveness with presidential requests for each fiscal year. We then apply that framework to interpret US democracy aid decisions from FY2013-FY2019, first examining data for administration budget requests and congressional budget allocations in detail, and then conducting case studies of 2015 (FY2016) and 2018 (FY2019) to highlight the interests, engagement, and actions of members of Congress. We conclude with discussion of the implications of the dynamics revealed in the analysis.

Presidents, Congress, and US Democracy Assistance

Many scholars have noted a general congressional desire to let presidents lead on foreign policy matters (e.g., Crabb and Holt 1992; Rockman 1994; Weissman 1995; Rudalevige 2005). Nonetheless, Congress can and does choose to push back to assert its institutional prerogatives and policy preferences in foreign policymaking (Lindsay 1994; Hersman 2000; Kriner 2010). One of the most privileged congressional powers is the power to appropriate funds (Lindsay 1994). As one observer noted, "Congress is at the heart of the budget process" (Patashnik 2005, 382). Appropriating funds – such as for democracy aid – is a form of structural policymaking that typically offers Congress opportunities for executive-legislative interaction

and congressional influence on broader foreign policy strategy (Lindsay and Ripley 1994).

Democracy assistance emerged at the end of the Cold War as one of those annual budget decisions into which Congress is hard-wired. Enjoying substantial support from both political parties, US democracy assistance programs are a subset of foreign aid and have become a heavily emphasized component of democracy promotion (e.g., Cox, Ikenberry and Inoguchi 2000; Mitchell 2016). While the conventional wisdom is that the US public disapproves of foreign aid in general, often believing it is a larger share of the federal budget than it truly is (Williamson 2019), some foreign aid programs, such as those with low costs and high moral considerations, receive greater public support (Christiansen, Heinrich, and Peterson 2019). Democracy assistance falls into this morally motivated category and allocations are relatively modest, which increases their acceptability to the voting public and thus to members of Congress.

By the turn of the 21st century, democracy promotion programs accounted for between 10 to 15% of foreign aid budgets by the US, Canada, and other European donors (Tierney et al. 2011). For the US, the Agency for International Development (USAID) administers about 85% of US democracy aid through programs supporting the rule of law and human rights, good governance, political competition and electoral processes, and civil society and political participation. About a third of US democracy aid bypasses top-down aid channels to implement projects through NGOs.

Long regarded by policy analysis and scholarly studies as a decision made by the executive branch, democracy aid is, in fact, subject to significant influence by Congress and its members. When considering democracy aid requests, Congress has multiple means to shape these allocations. The annual authorization and appropriations process empowers the members of the relevant House and Senate committees dealing with democracy aid, and administrations may seek to anticipate the reactions of committee members and incorporate them into the initial administration requests (Carter and Scott 2009). Other individual members may join advocacy coalitions (Lantis 2019) to shape democracy aid requests in preferred ways. When appropriations measures get to each chamber floor, elected party leaders also have their opportunity to shape spending totals and recipients if they so desire.

The two administrations of our study provide stark contrasts. President Barack Obama was committed to development assistance and democracy aid (Gibler and Miller 2012), but Donald J. Trump wanted to slash foreign aid spending and downgrade USAID as an agency by incorporating it into the larger State Department (Harris, Gramer, and Tamkin 2017). While Obama faced significant resistance on the matter of government spending levels, Trump's attempts to cut foreign aid were out of step with US public opinion on foreign aid, as recent polls found clear majorities supported American engagement with the world and a morally-based foreign policy which emphasized human rights and humanitarian assistance (Kull 2017).

These differing presidential approaches to foreign aid and democracy assistance took place in an increasingly polarized political context. Scholars have been noting this increasing polarization for years (Theriault 2008; Jochim and Jones 2012; Sinclair 2014; Thomsen 2014; Binder 2016; McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2016; Smidt 2017; Stonecash, Brewer and Mariani 2018). Members of Congress have always had the impulse to follow their party and be guided by their personal ideology to some extent (Cox and McCubbins 1994; Aldrich 1995), but the partisan and ideological polarization that marks US domestic policy now deeply affects foreign policy as well (Travis 2010; Rathbun 2013; Jeong and Quirk 2019). How did US democracy assistance develop in the interbranch policymaking processes of this highly charged political environment?

Understanding Congressional Engagement on US Democracy Assistance

We approach our analysis through the lens of previous work emphasizing: (i) the broader context of patterns of engagement between the president and Congress, and; (ii) the range of congressional behavior – from compliance to independence – that reflects varying degrees of assertiveness. Many scholars employ simple dichotomies (engaged-disengaged, active-deferent, etc.) to characterize congressional engagement with the president in foreign policy. However, activity is different than assertiveness or influence (Martin 2000; Anderson, Box-Steffensmeier, and Sinclair-Chapman 2003). Congress can be active yet still supportive of (and even deferent to) the president's foreign policy preferences. Conversely, Congress can be less frequently active but more challenging of the president's policy preferences when active.

As others have argued, if we differentiate between activity and assertiveness and combine these two dimensions, our lens for understanding congressional foreign policy engagement shifts from a one-dimensional characterization into a two-dimensional one. This in turn establishes four models of congressional foreign policy behavior, as shown in Figure 1 (Scott and Carter 2002; Carter and Scott 2009):

- A "Competitive Congress" whose greater levels of both activity and assertiveness lead it to challenge the president for foreign policy influence;
- A "Disengaged Congress" whose relative inactivity and compliance with presidential preferences reflect the acquiescent Congress more likely to defer to the president;
- A "Supportive Congress" whose greater activity combined with less assertive behavior helps both branches achieve shared foreign policy goals;
- A "Strategic Congress" whose lessened activity but greater assertiveness shows an inclination to select its battles carefully but a demonstration of its willingness to challenge the president's policy preferences.

These models better represent the varying relationships between the executive and legislative branches over time. As other studies have concluded, since World War II levels of both congressional foreign policy activity and assertiveness have varied substantially, but assertiveness has generally increased over time, even while activity has generally declined (see, for example, Lindsay 2003; Carter and Scott 2009). Even a less active Congress may affect policy if members of Congress (MCs) are more assertive when they choose to act.

Figure 1: Patterns of Congressional Engagement on Foreign Policy
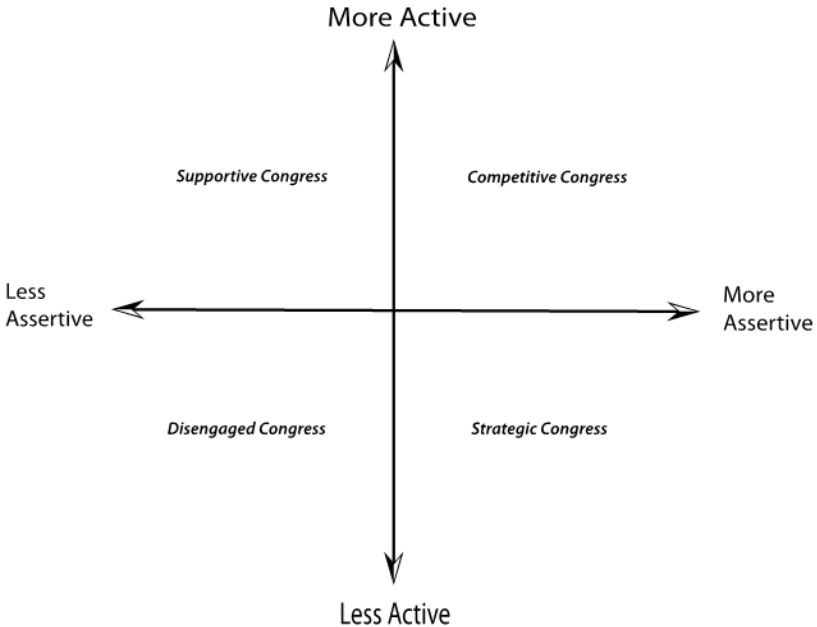
Within this broad structure of engagement patterns, in terms of congressional behavior, we conceptualize four types of congressional foreign policy activity, which range from least assertive to most assertive (see Figure 2). As Carter (1986) and Scott and Carter (2002) have explained, when members of Congress accede to the administration's request, their behavior is *compliant*. When members modify the administration's request, delivering a result either more or less than the administration desired, their behavior is *resistant*. When Congress flatly refuses to enact the administration's desires it engages in *rejection*. Finally, when members of Congress go beyond reacting to the administration's policy requests and proposals and choose to enact their own foreign policy agenda, their behavior is *independent.*

We argue that these distinctions are at the core of interbranch politics. In terms of Figure 1, we maintain that variation in congressional assertiveness along this continuum is the central factor in movement along the horizontal axis. More compliant activity results in a more supportive or disengaged Congress, and more assertive activity results in more competitive or strategic Congress.

Figure 2: Congressional Foreign Policy Activity

| Compliant | → | Resistant | → | Rejection | → | Independent |

← Less Assertive   More Assertive →
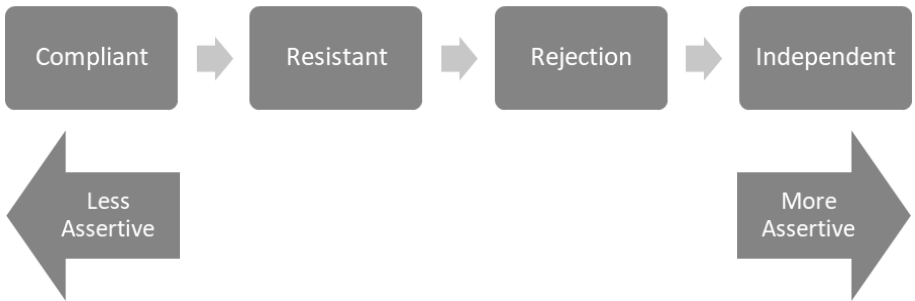
Of course, a variety of factors matter for movement along each of these axes. Understanding interbranch politics requires addressing the cues and conditions that motivate congressional foreign policy behavior and shape congressional activity and engagement patterns. Members of Congress are motivated by a wide variety of cues (factors members consider) and conditions (situational characteristics) of the policy context/structure. As several studies argue, among the most significant of these cues and conditions are public opinion, policy preferences, partisanship, the nature of the policy process, differences in policy type and issue, and policy instruments (Carter and Scott 2009; Scott and Carter 2014; Scott 2018). Configurations of these factors help to explain the patterns of interbranch politics: Congress may be compliant, competitive, or confrontational, and no single form or sequence prevails.

Important cues begin with public opinion and reelection concerns can motivate behavior (Kingdon 1989; Mayhew 1974). Partisanship also provides a very potent set of policy cues. At the very least, MCs from the president's party have a partisan reason to support the president or to work with or through the administration where possible. Conversely, opposition party members are quicker to challenge presidents and to promote their own alternative foreign policy initiatives, as presidents from Clinton to Biden have discovered (e.g., Carter and Scott 2009; Howell and Pevehouse 2007; Peake, Krutz, and Hughes 2012). MCs also have their own individual policy preferences as well (Carter and Scott 2009; DeLaet and Scott 2006), and these may be affected by their ideological predisposition and their personal interest in creating good public policy (e.g., McCormick and Mitchell 2007). Finally, institutional concerns may cue up foreign policy behavior (Mayhew

1974). Members of both the presidential and nonpresidential parties tend to guard the boundaries of their policymaking jurisdiction from executive encroachment (Scott and Carter 2014).

Beyond cues, certain policy conditions affect congressional foreign policy behavior (Scott and Carter 2014). For example, the cyclical nature of the policy process provides multiple opportunities for congressional influence. At minimum, the annual budget authorization and appropriation cycle establishes regular opportunities for policy evaluation and thus new cycles of policymaking in which MCs may play a significant role. Electoral timing matters as well. Presidents are typically in their strongest position shortly after their election or re-election, but their political capital tends to decline over time.

Policy context matters as well (Ripley and Lindsay 1993; Ripley and Franklin 1990). Crisis decisions favor the executive and push Congress as an institution to the background, at least for a time. However, the sense of "crisis" often recedes and, in combination with the policy cycle, invites later involvement by MCs who see the former "crisis" policy subject now more in the form of normal foreign policymaking. Non-crisis foreign policy, where Congress is often more involved, can be divided in two types: structural and strategic (Ripley and Lindsay 1993; Ripley and Franklin 1990). While Congress typically seems more comfortable in making structural foreign policy, over the years MCs have become increasingly likely to address strategic issues (Carter and Scott 2009; Howell and Pevehouse 2007). Indeed, many members seek out strategic foreign policy issues whenever they see a policy vacuum or a need for a policy correction (Carter and Scott 2009; Scott and Carter 2014).

Finally, the nature of the policy instruments thought to be most appropriate can aid either the president or Congress (Pastor 2001). Policies relying on the use of force, diplomacy, and intelligence activities are usually initiated by the executive branch, with Congress generally playing a more reactive role. Other policies, such as those relying on aid and tied more closely to the annual authorization/appropriation cycle, are more amenable to congressional initiative.

Research Design and Data

To answer our research question, we examine US democracy aid allocations
from FY2013-FY2019. Our democracy assistance data comes from the annual
US Department of State's *Congressional Budget Justifications* (CBJs) on foreign
assistance and their related supplemental tables from FY2013-FY2021.[2] These
documents present the president's annual budget request as well as the
actual budget allocation from two years prior. Note that fiscal year requests
and allocations are made in the year preceding the designated fiscal: thus,
FY2018 requests and allocations reflect budget decisions made in 2017 and so
on. In practice, this means our data reflects five years of the Obama
administration and two years of the Trump administration.

        For democracy aid, we extract the figures for presidential requests
and actual congressional allocations for the years of our study. We then
select FY2016 and FY2019 for the same figures for each country as
representative years for each administration. They also offer one year of
divided government and one year of unified party control. We construct a
country-year dataset with FY2016 and FY2019 observations. The CBJs
identify US democracy assistance in the summary tables presenting aid
objectives and program areas. Aggregating across the various aid
spigots/accounts, democracy assistance is reported in the "Governing Justly
and Democratically" objective, with subcategories of aid for rule of law and
human rights, good governance, political competition (chiefly election
support), and civil society. We include both administration requests and
congressional allocations for aggregate democracy aid and its individual
subcategories in the full FY2013-FY2019 dataset, and for each country
(FY2016 and FY2019) in the country-year dataset. This data thus allows us to
examine patterns in the requests, allocations, and their differences, the latter
of which is central to our examination of congressional role, activity, and
assertiveness.

        Finally, we include brief case studies of congressional activity and
engagement in each of these two years as well. Although we include general
information, we focus on congressional committee activity and examine a
series of hearings on foreign aid in general and democracy aid in the Senate

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[2] Among other places, these reports are available at the US Agency for International
Development's "Reports and Data" web page at https://www.usaid.gov/results-and-
data/budget-spending/congressional-budget-justification (accessed March 16, 2021).

and the House of Representatives in 2015 and 2018. These hearings include both the foreign affairs and appropriations committees of the two chambers. Along with some supplemental evidence, our examination of these hearing allows us to identify member interests/concerns and preferences underlying congressional activity and engagement on democracy aid and driving the budget actions revealed in the preceding data.

Engagement, Adjustment, and Assertiveness:
Congress and Democracy Aid under Obama and Trump

To begin with context, after 1975, US democracy aid grew from relatively low levels in the 1970s and 1980s to markedly higher allocations after 1989 and the end of the Cold War, and again after 1999 with new and costly commitments during the Global War on Terror. From negligible levels, US democracy assistance grew to $3-4 billion annually (about 14% of foreign aid), comparable to aid priorities such as health, emergency response, and agriculture in the 21st century. After FY2013 US democracy aid allocations ticked down in overall amounts, but generally held steady between $2-3 billion. However, the relative continuity masks important dynamics and variation generated by the engagement and assertiveness of Members of Congress.

Figure 3 presents US democracy aid allocations from FY2013-FY2019, differentiating between administration requests and actual allocations. As this figure indicates, democracy aid requests ranged from about $2.4 billion to about $2.9 billion during the Obama administration, but Congress *reduced* administration requests in all but the final budget year. Conversely, the Trump administration requested about $1.5 billion in each of its first two years, but Congress substantially *increased* allocations to more than $2.4 billion in both years, *more than it allocated in three of five Obama years*.

In this more polarized environment, it is notable that congressional allocations of democracy aid did not vary widely over this seven-year period. As noted earlier, democracy promotion benefits from certain cues. It is a moral value in US political culture, and US public opinion is supportive of democracy aid. It has been a bipartisan initiative embraced and expanded by both parties since the end of the Cold War. More broadly, in terms of the compliance-assertiveness framework of this analysis, Figure 3 suggests that, at most, Congress complied with presidential requests in only 1-2 years of this period.

Figure 3: Administration Democracy Aid Requests vs Congressional Allocations, FY2013-FY2019
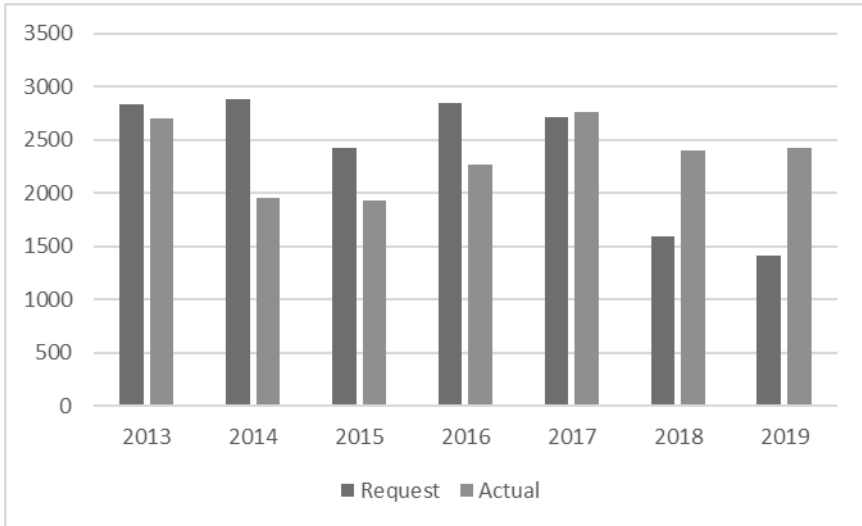
Yet the partisan-based cue is at times apparent. For each of the five years of the Democratic Obama administration in our study, divided government prevailed, with the president facing Republican control of the House for all years and control of both the House and Senate for the final two. Thus, it is not surprising that administrative requests for democracy aid were trimmed in four of those five years by the president's opponents in Congress. What is somewhat surprising is the fact that, despite divided government, in 2016 Congress increased the administration's request for FY2017. This atypical year deserves more analysis in the future.

The increases by Congress in 2017 (for FY2018) and in 2018 (for FY2019) can be attributed to several factors. First, the Trump administration sharply cut the requests for foreign aid in general and, for both foreign aid and for democracy aid, Congress pushed back by restoring it to levels more consistent with previous years, but sharply above the administration's request. Thus, despite unified Republican control of Congress and the White House, partisan considerations for members of the president's party were overridden by broad policy agreement, the public and political cultural cues noted above, and the protection of Congress's institutional role in the

appropriations process. As Tama (2018; 2021) has argued, this appears to be a case of "anti-presidential bipartisanship."

**Table 1: Congressional Change to Administration Democracy Aid Requests, FY 2016 and FY 2019**

Democracy Aid	Overall	FY2016	FY2019
Average Request	20,677,300	28,792,020	13,583,830
Average Change	-1,771,310	-9,511,020	5,009,500

Note: cell figures represent average amounts per country for the specified period

To further describe the divergent behavior of Congress between the Obama and Trump administrations, Table 1 shows the contours of our two country-year cases: FY2016 and FY2019. Overall, the average request per country recipient across both years was about $20.7 million, about $28.8 million in FY2016 and just under $13.6 million in FY2019. On average, Congress reduced presidential requests by about $1.8 million, but congressional changes to administration requests differed dramatically between the two highlighted years. Congress <u>reduced</u> President Obama's requests over $9.5 million per country in FY2016, but <u>increased</u> President Trump's requests by over $5 million per country in FY2019. Thus, the *average* changes per country by Congress in these two years indicates that the most common congressional action was rejection, resistance and/or independence, not compliance.

Figure 4 shows US democracy aid allocations from FY2013-FY2019 by subcategory, again differentiating between presidential requests and actual allocations. The four panels in Figure 4 again show that Congress generally reduced Obama administration requests, while consistently (every year) increasing those of the Trump administration. However, congressional action varied by program objective/subcategory. Congress: a) reduced every Obama administration request in the good governance subcategory, while modestly increasing those of the Trump administration in that subcategory; b) increased administration requests in rule of law/human rights subcategory five times (three during the Obama administration, two during the Trump administration); c) increased administration requests in the civil society subcategory four times (twice in each administration); and d) increased administration requests in the political competition (election) subcategory three times (the last year of the Obama administration and both years of the Trump administration).

Figure 4: Administration Democracy Aid Requests vs Congressional Allocations by Aid Subcategory, FY2013-FY2019
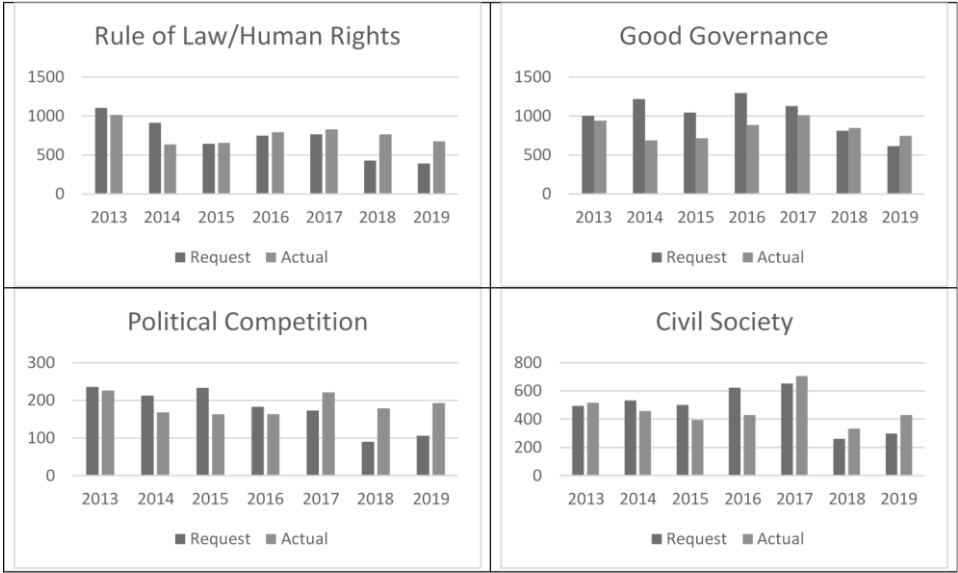
The varying congressional responses in these democracy aid subcategories is revealing. Congressional actions reflected neither compliance with administration priorities and proposals, nor simple, uniform reactions (i.e., cut requests by the Obama administration, increase those of the Trump administration). Instead, congressional actions targeted priorities and tactics in more nuanced ways, injecting its version of democracy promotion into the policy decisions.

Figure 5 shows administration requests and actual allocations from FY2013-FY2019 by region. As the figure shows, Latin America and South/Central Asia were the top priorities for the Obama administration, while the Trump administration prioritized South/Central Asia and the Middle East/North Africa. However, the regional breakdown reveals interesting variation from the general pattern of reductions from Obama requests and increases to Trump's requests. First, Congress decreased all requests by the Obama administration except for Europe, which it increased.

Figure 5: Administration Democracy Aid Requests vs Congressional Allocations by Region, FY2016 (Obama) and FY2019 (Trump)
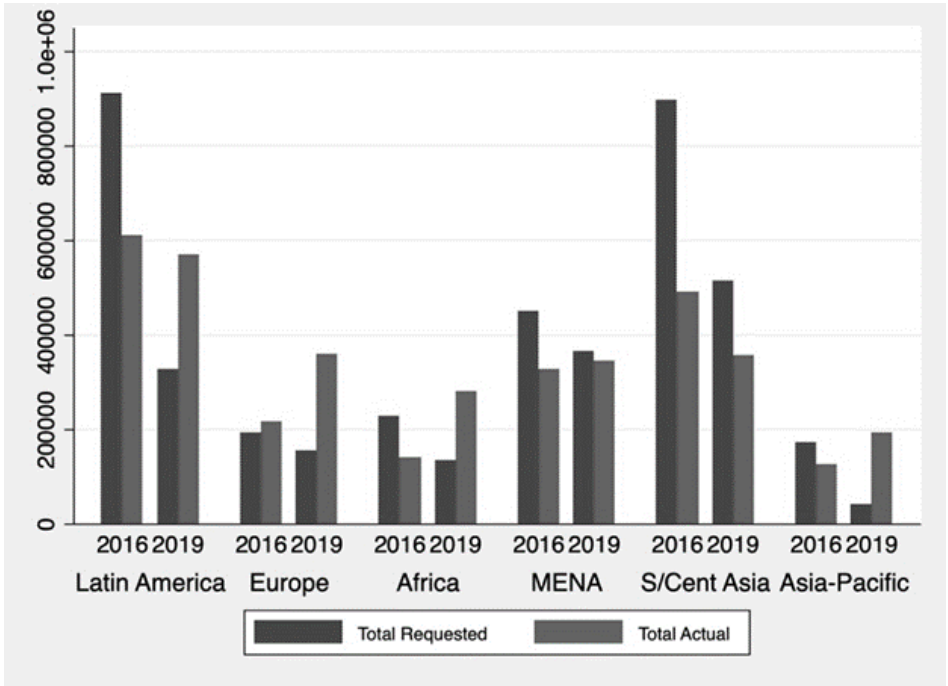
Congress also increased allocations to all regions *except* for the Trump administration's top priorities, which it decreased. Finally, not only did Congress allocate more funds in FY2019 than in FY2016 for all regions except for Latin America and South/Central Asia, it actually allocated more in FY2019 than the Obama administration even requested in FY2016 in three: Europe, Africa, and East Asia. In short, congressional assertiveness is evident across-the-board. MCs did not hesitate to reshape democracy aid allocations in their preferred directions, seemingly following partisan cues during the Obama years and – at least for Republicans – ignoring the pull of partisan cues during the Trump years. Notably, the shifts of democracy aid among regions by Congress reflects policy priorities and independent congressional policymaking.

Figure 6: Administrative Democracy Aid Requests versus Congressional Allocations by Region and Aide Subcategory FY 2016 and FY 2019
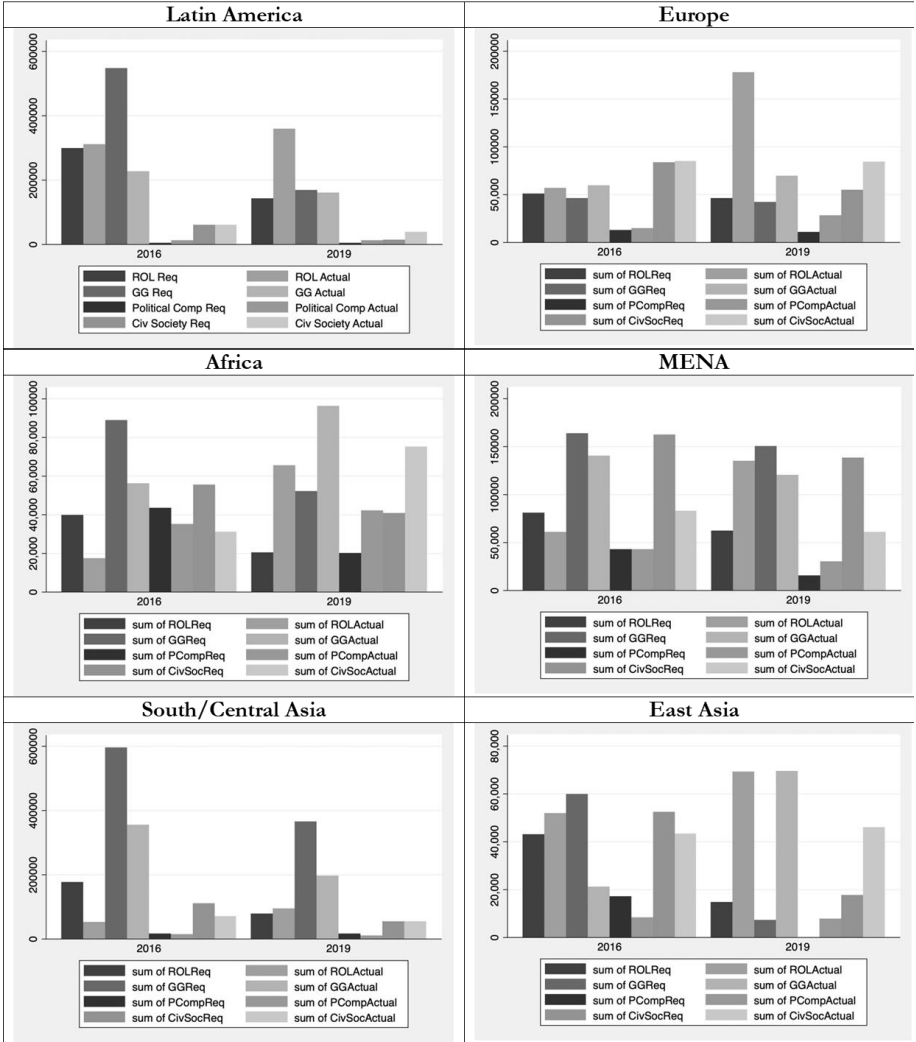

Figure 6 breaks democracy aid requests and allocations for FY2016 and FY2019 into aid objective/subcategory and region, which further reveals the nature and extent of congressional changes to administration requests.

As the preceding two figures indicate, far from simple increases or decreases, Congress reallocated funds from some objectives to others, varying its approach in different regions. In Latin America, for example, Congress chiefly reduced the Obama administration's democracy aid request in the good governance subcategory, and it increased the Trump administration's request in the rule of law/human rights subcategory. In Africa, Congress reduced all four categories from the Obama requests, and increased all four categories from the Trump administration requests. While reducing all categories except political competition in South/Central Asia during the Obama administration, Congress generally preserved all categories except good governance in the regions during the Trump administration. In East Asia, Congress increased democracy aid for the rule of law/human rights in both administrations, while reducing Obama administration requests and increasing Trump administration requests in the other three. In the MENA region, Congress decreased spending on civil society and good governance in both administrations, left the political competition request alone in the Obama administration while increasing it during the Trump administration, and took opposite action on the rule of law human rights subcategory, decreasing it in FY2016 and increasing it in FY2019. Finally in Europe, Congress mostly preserved the Obama administration requests in all four categories but increased the Trump administration requests across the board. Through the lens of our theoretical/conceptual framework, these complex shifts reflect policy-driven changes consistent with more assertive (i.e., independent, resistant) congressional foreign policy activity.

Table 2 presents data on the frequency with which Congress forced democracy assistance to places or in ways in which the administration did not plan or request. To place such changes in our levels of assertiveness categories, these instances represent part of our most assertive category – independence – and they display a dramatic shift across the two presidencies. For Obama's FY2016 budget, Congress forced democracy aid to one country for which none had been requested. By comparison, for Trump's FY2019 budget, Congress did so for 42 countries! A similar pattern is seen in the various aid subcategories: Rule of Law/Human Rights, Good Governance, Political Competition, and Civil Society. In these situations, Congress often responded to presidential requests for zero funding in a particular subcategory for a specific country by requiring that kind of democracy aid. To the FY2016 Obama request, Congress added such funds – when the administration had requested none – to 6-9 countries. Yet for the

FY2019 Trump request, Congress inserted such unrequested funds to several countries ranging from 27 to 39. During each administration, MCs were willing to fund democracy aid to countries where the administration was not, but the dissonance between the Trump administration's views on democracy aid and the views of MCs for FY2019 was dramatic. Again, we argue this reveals policy-driven independence in congressional foreign policy activity.

Table 2: Frequency of Countries Receiving Congressional Democracy Aid Funding After Administration Proposal of None, FY2016 and FY2019

Democracy Aid Category	Number of Countries	
	FY2016 (99 possible)	FY2019 (113 possible)
Overall Democracy Aid	1	42
Democracy Aid Subcategories		
Rule of Law/Human Rights	6	39
Good Governance	7	35
Political Competition	7	27
Civil Society	9	39

Note: cell figures represent number of countries for which Congress added funding

Our second most assertive category is Congress totally rejecting the administration's request. Table 3 presents the data on instances in which Congress zeroed out administration requests, either to provide democracy aid (the overall category) or for specific purposes/approaches in a given country (the subcategories). Table 2 shows that for FY2016, Congress refused to provide *any* democracy assistance to only two countries for which the Obama administration had requested funds. That number jumped to six for the FY2019 Trump budget, even though the overall effort of Congress for FY2019 was to restore and expand funding for democracy assistance in response to the Trump administration's draconian cuts. Yet when we examine specific categories of democracy aid, a slightly different picture is presented. Congress was more willing in FY2016 to reject specific categories of democracy aid for more countries (ranging from 9 to 12) than it was for Trump's FY2019 requests (ranging from 6 to 10). The fact that Congress was more willing to delete all democracy aid dedicated to promoting the Rule of Law/Human Rights, Good Governance, Political Competition, or Civil Society for, on average, 10 countries in Obama's budget while only, on average, 7-8 countries in Trump's budget seems a reflection of the strength of

the partisan differences of a Democratic White House and a largely Republican-controlled Congress. Moreover, these changes suggest that congressional attention to *how* democracy was assisted was somewhat greater during the Obama administration, given that concerns during the Trump administration were clearly more focused on *whether* and to what degree to aid democracy.

Table 3: Frequency of Countries with Congressional Rejection of Democracy Aid Funding After Administration Proposal to Provide Funds, FY2016 and FY2019

Democracy Aid Category	Number of Countries	
	FY2016 (99 possible)	FY2019 (113 possible)
Overall Democracy Aid	2	6
Democracy Aid Subcategories		
Rule of Law/Human Rights	9	7
Good Governance	9	6
Political Competition	12	7
Civil Society	11	10

Note: cell figures represent number of countries for which Congress deleted funding

Our mid-range category on the compliant-assertive scale is resistance behavior. By this we mean Congress makes changes in the administration's request short of rejection or independence behaviors. One way Congress could do so is to take the administration's request and transfer monies from one subcategory to another. Here Congress may not be changing the total democracy aid destined for a country but is changing the purposes for which it is spent – as noted above, this reflects concern with *how* to promote democracy. In Table 4 we note the frequencies of that happening. With the context of more sharply divided government for FY2016, far more instances of Congress tinkering with the details of the Obama request are found than in the case of the FY2019 Trump requests. Viewed another way, there were less funds to transfer between subcategories as Trump submitted a far smaller democracy aid budget request, and Congress was more focused on increasing administration requests to undo the harsh cuts to democracy aid.

Table 4: Frequency of Congressional Subcategory Transfers of Democracy Aid Funding to Adjust Administration Requests, FY2016 and FY2019

Year	Transfer Among Subcategories
FY2016 (99 possible)	62
FY2019 (113 possible)	22

Note: cell figures represent number of countries for which Congress redistributed funding among subcategories

To this point, we address the frequency of congressional changes in administration democracy aid requests. In Table 5, we examine the degree to which Congress changed either total democracy aid allocations for a country from the administration's request, or the final allocations for our four categories of democracy assistance for a country, for both FY2016 and FY2019. We begin by noting Fenno's (1966) finding that any congressional change in appropriation requests more than 5% has significant policy impacts.

Table 5: Congressional Change in Administration Democracy Aid Funding Request, FY2016 and FY2019

Change in Funding	OVERALL AID		ROL/HR		GG		PC		CS	
	2016	2019	2016	2019	2016	2019	2016	2019	2016	2019
Elimination	2	6	8	6	9	6	12	7	10	9
50-100% Reduction	19	7	13	3	13	9	4	1	15	8
25-50% Reduction	19	2	10	0	20	4	4	2	10	3
5-25% Reduction	19	2	10	2	8	2	5	2	11	2
Less than 5% Change	21	1	9	0	5	2	3	0	14	0
5-25% Increase	5	2	7	4	3	2	6	1	9	6
25-50% Increase	6	3	2	0	4	3	2	3	2	1
50-100% Increase	4	14	3	9	6	7	4	1	0	5
100% or more Increase	4	76	37	89	31	78	59	96	28	79
Total	99	113	99	113	99	113	99	113	99	113

We begin with the overall democracy aid total for each year, and there are notable differences. For FY2016 for 21% of the recipients (21 out of 99 countries), congressional changes were less than 5%. Thus, the policy effects were minimal for those 21 countries and congressional activity was compliant. Yet for FY2019, only 1 country out of 113 (or 0.9%) faced congressional changes of less than 5%. In short, Congress found the Obama administration's overall democracy aid requests more acceptable than those of the Trump administration for these two years. Congress changed a remarkable 99% of the Trump administration democracy aid requests for FY2019. Yet, note that congressional activity in both administrations was predominately assertive at some level, as indicated by the predominance of changes greater than 5% to the administration requests.

Further, the direction of these changes in democracy aid totals are not surprising. In 2015, President Obama faced a Republican-controlled Congress whose members wanted to cut budget deficits and were reluctant to give a Democratic president a policy victory. So, Congress cut more than 5% out of administration's FY2016 requests in almost 60% of the cases (59 of 99) and increased funding by more than 5% in only 19% of the cases (19 of 99). These results are reversed for the Trump administration's requests for FY2019. Congress reduced administration requests by more than 5% in only 15% of the cases (17 of 113 cases), but increased funds in excess of 5% in 84% of the cases (95 of 113). Some changed dramatically: Congress increased almost 80% of the Trump FY2019 requests (90 of 113) by 50% or more, and it increased 67% of those requests (76 of 113) by 100% or more. The prevalence of the most extreme changes to administration proposals in the Trump administration also clearly indicates congressional foreign policy activity of the most assertive levels.

In general terms, a similar pattern is found across all four of the democracy aid subcategories. Whether the matter involved Rule of Law/Human Rights, Good Governance, Political Competition, or Civil Society promotion, Republican-controlled Congresses more often cut funding requests from the Obama administration and sharply increased requests from the Trump administration for their respective fiscal years in Table 5.

Table 5 also sheds lights on how Republican-controlled Congresses prioritized different types of democracy assistance. Combining the two fiscal year examples, we find that MCs made changes to Political Competition

funding mostly in one direction. Although funding for Political Competition was the lowest in amounts (see Figure 5), Congress increased funding in this subcategory most frequently. While Political Competition allocations were least likely to be cut by more than 5%, in just 37 of 212 instances (or 17% of the time), they were increased by more than 5% in 172 of 212 instances (or over 80% of the time). Cuts were somewhat more likely to the Obama requests, and increases more likely on the Trump requests, but increases were far more common overall. Indeed, democracy funds for political competition – which center on election support – were doubled or more 60% of the time during the Obama year of our study, and a remarkable 85% of the time during the Trump year.

Members appeared to prioritize changes to the Rule of Law/Human Rights category next. Those allocations were cut more than 5% in 52 of 212 instances (or 25% of the time) but were increased more than 5% in 151 of 212 instances (or 71% of the time). Cuts were more likely during the Obama administration, while increases considerably more frequent in the Trump administration. Indeed, more than 78% of the time, Congress increased this subcategory by 100% or more for FY2019.

Good Governance and Civil Society allocations seem to be a rough tie in terms of third priority. Good Governance allocations were cut more than 5% in 71 of 212 instances (or 33% of the time), more often in FY2016 than in FY2019, while increased more than 5% in 134 of 212 instances (or 63% of the time). Notably, Good Governance funding was at least doubled a third of the time during the Obama administration, but more than two-thirds of the time under Trump.

Civil Society allocations had similar results. The second lowest subcategory for overall funding amounts (see Figure 5), Civil Society funds faced congressional cuts of more than 5% in 68 of 212 instances (or 32% of the time) and increases of more than 5% in 130 of 212 instances (or 61% of the time). Cuts of more than 5% occurred more than twice as often for FY2016 as for FY2019. Conversely increases occurred more than twice as often for FY2019, and Congress doubled (or more) the Trump administration requests nearly 70% of the time.

Case Studies: Members of Congress and Democracy Aid in 2015 and 2018

We now turn to two brief case studies of congressional activity and engagement on democracy. In these cases, we shed light on member interests/concerns and preferences underlying congressional activity and engagement on democracy aid and driving the budget actions revealed in the preceding data. Our brief cases provide some context/background and then focus on congressional reactions – as revealed through hearings – to administration budget requests on democracy aid (in part in the context of foreign aid).

Reducing Administration Requests in FY2016
The FY2016 democracy assistance request from the Obama administration faced sequestration, a procedure to automatically cut billions from the budget equally from both defense and nondefense spending (US House 2021). Despite this challenge, the FY2016 Obama administration request was larger than its FY2015 request, targeting the most funding for good governance and prioritizing such assistance to Latin America and South and Central Asia as shown in Figure 6.

In 2015, Republicans controlled both chambers of Congress and were bound by sequestration to cut funding wherever possible. While Republicans supported efforts to reduce the national debt, Republicans and Democrats alike on the authorization and appropriations committees were sympathetic to the need for democracy assistance funding, particularly Senators Lindsey Graham (R-SC) and Patrick Leahy (D-VT), the chair and ranking member, respectively, of the Appropriations subcommittee handling State Department funding (US Senate 2015b). Both denounced the application of sequestration to foreign aid and democracy assistance, saying the US should be spending more on these issues rather than less (US Senate 2015d). While Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chair Robert Corker (R-TN) seemed unmoved by the administration's overall foreign aid request, Ranking Member Ben Cardin (D-MD) emphasized the need to make human rights promotion an across-the-board priority for the State Department, not just a priority for USAID (US Senate 2015a).

When the House Foreign Affairs Committee took up the foreign aid budget, multiple members from both parties noted the foreign assistance programs shouldn't have been cut but should be increased. Members expressed concerns about democracy and governance issues in Africa,

Central America, Ukraine, Syria, Venezuela, for human rights protections for LGBT groups in Central America, and for the promotion of the rule of law in Afghanistan and Pakistan (US House 2015a). Members also expressed concerns over election security in Africa, given that more than 30 African countries were scheduled for national elections in 2015 and 2016 (US House 2015b).

When the Senate took up the matter, Foreign Relations Committee members like Senators Cory Gardner (R-CO), Chris Murphy (D-CT), and Edward Markey (D-MA) defended the need to spend more on democracy assistance, particularly in Africa (US Senate 2015a). In a Foreign Relations subcommittee hearing, Subcommittee Chair Marco Rubio (R-FL) pointed out the deterioration of human rights globally, particularly in the areas of freedom of the press and of religion. Ranking Member Barbara Boxer (D-CA) agreed, saying: "I support funding for programs that support human rights defenders and civil society organizations, promote religious freedom, and strengthen accountability and the rule of law." Tim Kaine (D-VA) expressed his concern about the governance and corruption issues in Central America, while Robert Menendez (D-NJ) said that the US should not change its democracy promotion practices in authoritarian states like Cuba just because the states don't like it (US Senate 2015c). Later, multiple members of the Appropriations Committee, including like Senators Graham, Leahy, Roy Blunt (R-MO), Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) and Chris Coons (D-DE) called for overall foreign assistance should be increased, rather than decreased (US Senate 2015d).

Given sequestration, ultimately Congress was forced to decrease the administration's democracy promotion request, which it did by almost $600 million as shown in Figure 4. However, the disappointment with this number was felt on a bipartisan basis by most members of the relevant committees. There was support for more funding for the promotion of rule of law and human rights as shown in Figure 5, with Congress appropriating more money for this category than requested. Interestingly as shown in Figure 6, the final appropriation reduced the administration's request for democracy promotion in Africa, despite the committees' concerns that African states needed more democracy support and increased the amount of democracy aid for European states.

Expanding Administration Allocations in FY2019

The Trump administration was less interested in democracy and human rights and drew sharp distinctions between such "values" and more central economic and security "interests" (Weber 2018, 35). Indeed, top-ranking officials often argued that pursuing such goals created "obstacles to our ability to advance our national security interests, our economic interests" (Tillerson 2017). Thus, the administration proposed deep cuts to the foreign aid budget each year (30% in FY2019), and even deeper cuts to the democracy aid portion (40% for FY 2019), as Figure 3 shows (see also US Department of State 2018).

Despite Republican control of both branches in 2018, members of Congress in both chambers and parties refused to go along. For example, in a 2018 Senate Appropriations foreign operations subcommittee hearing, Chair Lindsey Graham (R-SC) forcefully stated "The 2019 budget proposal from the administration will not make it. We're gonna kill it and replace it with something that makes more sense" (US Senate Appropriations, Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs 2018). Ranking member Chris Coons (D-DE) referenced the bipartisan actions in Congress the preceding year and noted that "it is deeply frustrating to me that, yet again, the Trump administration has ignored the will of Congress and submitted a budget request nearly identical to last year's request which was rejected robustly on a bipartisan and bicameral effort by Congress" (US Senate Appropriations, Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs 2018). Later that year, Graham and Patrick Leahy (D-VT) both noted the essential role of foreign and democracy aid as foreign policy tools, with Leahy emphasizing broad congressional opposition to the administration's approach (US Senate 2018b).

Members of Congress specifically supported democracy aid. Many members were motivated by concerns about antidemocratic reversals around the world, as indicated by their request for a report on global trends and challenges from the Congressional Research Service (Weber 2018). Over the year, members addressed their concerns in at least two ways. House and/or Senate foreign affairs committees held numerous hearings to highlight the need for US support for elections, civil society, and the rule of law in the face of challenges to democracy in particular countries and regions. These included Azerbaijan, Armenia, Cameroon, Cuba, Egypt, Ethiopia, Lebanon, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Russia, and Zimbabwe, and broad

regions such as Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and North Africa, Central Asia, and South Asia.[3]

In addition, both chambers relied on the annual budget process to address concerns about and support for democracy assistance. For example, In the Senate, Foreign Relations Committee members such as), Robert Corker (R-TN), Robert Menendez (D-NJ), and Chris Coons repeatedly voiced their strong opposition to the steep cuts in democracy assistance funding proposed by the administration (e.g. US Senate Foreign Relations Committee 2018a; 2018b). In the House, the Committee on Foreign Affairs convened a hearing specifically on democracy promotion in June. During that hearing members of both parties recounted many areas of democratic backsliding across all regions of the world. Committee Chair Ed Royce (R-CA) (US House Committee on Foreign Affairs 2018, 1) argued that

> There is no doubt democracy is on the ropes. Freedom House reports that democracy has declined worldwide over the last decade. The question for us is do we care? *We better care*. Democracy's expansion brought unprecedented Prosperity. America is more secure when fewer nations are authoritarian, which is the unfortunate alternative to democracy (emphasis added).

Ranking member Eliot Engel (D-NY) added (US House Committee on Foreign Affairs 2018, 3):

> [P]romoting democracy … should be at the center of our foreign policy….[I]t's the right thing to do because democracy helps people live fuller freer lives and it's also the smart thing to do because democracy is good for our security. That's why it's baffling that the administration has decided that democracy is no longer a foreign policy priority. The budgets the administration has sent us seek to slash investments in diplomacy and development by a third. So many of the efforts we make around the world to strengthen democracy would be hobbled if Congress went along with these draconian cuts.

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[3] This list is derived from a search of hearings https://www.govinfo.gov for 2018 with searches for foreign aid and democracy.

Driven by these concerns, the Republican-led Congress restored and defended US democracy aid. As was the case in the preceding year, steep cuts proposed by the administration were rejected, and Congress ultimately allocated nearly twice as much to democracy assistance than the administration requested. Congress increased aid in all categories (see Figure 4) and every region except the Middle East and South/Central Asia (Figure 5). Moreover (see Table 5), Congress increased democracy aid by 100% or more to 76 of 113 countries, 42 of whom received democracy aid allocations despite the administration requesting none (see Table 2).

Findings and Conclusions

The results of this first cut at congressional changes in democracy assistance requests during the last five years of the Obama administration and the first two years of the Trump administration can be viewed in more than one way. One could look at the overall democracy aid requests and allocations for each of these seven fiscal years and say: not much changed. Drawing the budget numbers from Figure 4, the average overall administration request for democracy aid each year was $2.39 billion. The average congressional allocation was $2.35 billion per year. So, over those seven years, Congress was more willing to cut than increase the allocations, but the average cuts only amounted to less than 2%. Given Republican control of at least one congressional chamber during those years, budget cutting should not be surprising.

Yet these averages mask considerable variation by year and within democracy aid subcategories. Based on our two in-depth comparison years, MCs were rarely compliant when considering presidential democracy aid requests. Combining the figures for FY2016 and FY2019, MCs changed the total aid allocations by more than 5% almost 90% of the time (in 190 of 212 instances). Further, 21% of those changes exceeded 50% (44 of 212), and 38% of the cases (80 of 212) topped 100%. Nearly all these largest increases came in the two Trump administration years. Congressional compliance (measured as changes of less than 5%) occurred in only about 10% of the instances, so it seems MCs felt right at home with this structural politics issue. On average, congressional total allocations may not change dramatically from presidential requests, but, in some years, they do and significant changes can be found within those overall democracy aid totals when considering the subcategories of democracy assistance.

Viewed through the lens of our conceptual/theoretical framework, congressional activity comes into even sharper relief. When it comes to democracy assistance, Members of Congress simply were not compliant. Our conceptual lens makes clear that compliance was the exception not the rule, even in times in which partisan calculations would appear to have called for such deference. In terms of aggregate funding on a country-by-country basis, Congress was rarely compliant. The norm in our data is for Congress to make consequential changes – at least resistance, often rejection, and frequently independent, policy-oriented changes in funding amounts, purpose, and targets. Moreover, while Congress was more likely to reduce Obama administration requests, it did so in a way that looks much more strategic than partisan. This is reinforced when congressional increases to the Trump administration's requests are added to the assessment. Clearly, Congress was *more* assertive in the Trump years than in the Obama years.

For this policy issue – democracy assistance – Congress does not appear to be supportive, disengaged, or strategic, however. It is difficult to conclude that anything other than "competitive" characterizes the pattern of engage revealed in our data. At the most general level, Congress made substantial changes to administration requests for democracy assistance. But this policy issue is especially characterized by Congress frequently substituting its conception of how much aid, of what types, should be allocated to which recipients, in ways that departed from administration proposals, often very dramatically (as evidenced for example by the relative frequency of the elimination of funding and the increase to funding by 100% or more). Indeed, while the average country change for our two in-depth study years was $1,771,310, the largest change was $96,580,000! As our brief case studies indicate, these changes were driven by both budgetary concerns (2015) and significant policy concerns (2019).

Of course, Congress was not equally competitive across all issue areas in either the Obama or Trump administrations, especially the latter, though substantial evidence (e.g., Carter and Scott, 2021; Tama, 2021) suggests greater assertiveness by Congress on the international affairs budget generally, Russia sanctions, NATO policy, and the war in Yemen, to name a few issues. This strongly suggests that the assertiveness on the democracy assistance issue fits best into an *overall* pattern of a strategic Congress. The fact that such instances of more assertive congressional foreign policy behavior, as in democracy aid in this analysis, and the additional examples just noted, continue even in the more partisan,

polarized context, and even when the president's co-partisans controlled Congress, suggests that a more accurate portrayal of the congressional foreign policy relationship with the presidency is to characterize it as *strategic*. Congress appears to choose its battles, pushing back when and where necessary and possible, and its members can simultaneously be relatively less active but more assertive.

Our conceptual lens also helps us to understand *why* Congress appears to be strategically more assertive in democracy aid. At least three factors from our framework help to explain this pattern. First, as we noted, polarization and partisan factors provide context and shape some of these choices. Yet, institutional concerns are also evident, as institutional perspectives and prerogatives appear significant. Members of both parties have political incentives that diverge from the White House, which leads to balancing efforts, or "anti-presidential bipartisanship." Such efforts appear particularly important when core congressional preferences differ from the White House, as is the case on democracy assistance, particularly in the Trump administration. Third, cues related to both policy type and policy instruments help to explain the patterns we have observed as well. In the more partisan and polarized context of the past decade, congressional engagement and activity have focused on structural policy like funding decisions involving aid, more often than strategic or crisis policy decisions. Indeed, "blunt instruments" of the budget are increasingly a core opportunity/access point, which further suggests that policy instruments are significant to the patterns of congressional engagement, activity, and influence. Congressional activity and influence are enhanced by policies that involve legislative-dominated instruments like foreign aid and diminished in those that involve presidential-dominated instruments (e.g., diplomacy, military operations, and the like).

Our analysis is limited, however, without additional years of study and further detailed investigation into congressional decision-making in committees, subcommittees, and on the floors of each chamber, both of which are essential for a full understanding of how and why members engaged as they did. Such investigation would also shed light on role and influence of key individuals. Nevertheless, this investigation of Congress and its engagement over democracy aid since 2012 through our conceptual lens sheds significant light on both the processes and outcomes of presidential-congressional foreign policymaking in this issue area.

Presidents should expect competition from Congress when choosing whether, how, and where to advance democracy abroad.

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