

Foreign Nation Visibility in U.S. Public Discourse

A Longitudinal Analysis, 1945-2008

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**Abstract**

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In this dissertation I introduce and develop the concepts of foreign nation visibility and foreign prioritization, and I analyze them in U.S. public discourse about foreign affairs, examining whether and how they have changed since World War II. Specifically, I examine two important political agendas in the United States: the U.S. presidential agenda and the U.S. news agenda. The primary aim of this research is to understand which countries and issues, as opposed to others, get on these agendas, why this occurs, and whether there are discernable changes in recent decades. To address these questions, I conduct three analyses. First, I undertake a longitudinal content analysis of foreign nation visibility on the presidential agenda, tracking mentions of foreign nations in major presidential addresses to the nation from the end of World War II in 1945 through 2008, the last full year of George W. Bush's presidency. Second, I conduct a longitudinal content analysis of foreign nation visibility in news content, tracking

coverage of foreign nations by a major U.S. television network and a leading U.S. newspaper during the same 64-year time period. In both cases, I connect these agendas to a host of factors that scholarship suggests might be expected to influence foreign nation visibility in U.S. public discourse. Finally, I focus on the relationship between the president and the press by examining their direct interaction in presidential press conferences. In this last analysis, I connect emphases on presidential policy and journalistic initiative with foreign nation visibility to expand the circle of implications in this research. Together, these analyses provide rich insight into presidential communications, news content, and foreign nation prioritization in U.S. public discourse.

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## **DEDICATION**

To Reyhan:

Your birth propelled me across the finish line.

Te quiero mijo!

## Chapter One

### Introduction

In the prologue to Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, the narrator, who is African American, declares, "I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me." I believe that something similar can be said about nations: they are invisible when those in other nations refuse to see them—and such invisibility has real and lasting consequences. Consider Rwanda in 1994: 800,000 Tutsi were slaughtered in the span of a hundred days by Hutu extremists in the most efficient mass killing since the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (Gourevitch, 1998). The genocide of the Tutsi by the Hutu stands out historically, not only because of the sheer number of people who were murdered in such a short period of time, but also because so many other nations did not publicly acknowledge the atrocities as they occurred. Even though Rwandans were being killed at three to five times the rate that Jews and others were killed during the Holocaust, Rwanda remained largely invisible in public and political discourse throughout most of the rest of the world.

The unfortunate consequence of Rwanda's invisibility in the United States during this time period is that the U.S. government "stood by [and did nothing] as the death toll rose into the hundreds of thousands" (Power, 2001). President Bill Clinton has since named failing to act in Rwanda his greatest "regret" as president (Harris, 2005) and, in March 1998 he publicly apologized to the Rwandan people and promised that the United States would "make every effort to increase ... vigilance and strengthen" its "stand against those who would commit such atrocities in the future—here or elsewhere" (Clinton, 1998). In 2012 this promise rings hollow: the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Republic of Sudan have been seemingly as

invisible in U.S. foreign policy discourse in the 2000s as Rwanda was in the 1990s, even though millions have lost their lives in the Congo and hundreds of thousands have lost their lives in the Darfur region of Western Sudan (Herbert, 2009; Kristoff, 2009). The repeating of this pattern suggests that there may be structural dynamics in political and news discourses that render nations visible or invisible. I examine this possibility in this dissertation.

The political consequences of not being prioritized in U.S. public discourse are enormous for many nations. For example, scholarship has shown that a foreign nation's visibility in the news affects U.S. public opinion about that nation (Golan and Wanta, 2003; McNelly & Izcaray, 1986; Robinson, 2002; Wanta, Golan, & Lee, 2004; Wanta & Hu, 1993), which limits the U.S. public's ability to act independently in humanitarian terms or to pressure officials to do so on its behalf. Indeed, highly visible nations receive more foreign development assistance and more foreign disaster assistance from the U.S. government than those with low visibility (Van Belle, 2003; Van Belle, Rioux and Potter, 2004). Highly visible foreign nations also benefit from more cooperation in military and economic alliances with the United States than those with low visibility (Wang, Shoemaker, Han, & Storm, 2008). Simply put, there is a relationship between national visibility and U.S. government action. The most visible foreign nations are prioritized; the least visible are not.

Of course, high visibility in U.S. public discourse is not always a positive development for all foreign nations—the degree to which a foreign nation's visibility reflects favorably or unfavorably on that nation (i.e. the valence of visibility) is also important. For example, Iraq, Iran, and North Korea—what George W. Bush decried as an “axis of evil” in his January 2002 State of the Union address—were all high visibility foreign nations in U.S. foreign policy discourse during the Bush administration, but the valence of their visibility was negative. In

general, though, valence only becomes important when visibility is high—because the public does not know about and the government does not act upon foreign nations that fly under the radar.

The United States is the most powerful and active country in the international system, but Americans generally know very little about what goes in the rest of the world. According to journalist Mark Hertsgaard, “for many Americans, the rest of the world does not really exist” and study after study supports this assertion (quoted in Coe & Neumann, 2011b). The majority of Americans lack basic knowledge about the rest of the world. For example, a 2006 National Geographic poll found that a majority of U.S. adults 18 to 24 in age did not know that Africa’s largest country, Sudan, was in Africa, and roughly half could not identify India on a map of Asia. Such unawareness led the Strategic Task Force on Education Abroad (2003: iv) to conclude that “America’s ignorance of the world” had become “a national liability.” Further, research has shown that Americans are less knowledgeable about foreign affairs than citizens of other developed democracies (Iyengar, Hahn, Bonfadelli, & Marr, 2009; Curran, Iyengar, Lund, & Salovaara-Moring, 2009). Considering the United States’ position as a democracy and the world’s sole superpower, the ignorance of its citizenry is more than a little alarming and it raises questions about the wisdom and democratic legitimacy of U.S. foreign policy.

It may be unfair to blame the American people for their lack of foreign knowledge, considering that foreign matters are unobtrusive—in the sense that most people have little to no direct contact with other countries (Zucker, 1978). However, it is more difficult to exculpate the U.S. president and the U.S. news media, considering they are the two institutions primarily responsible for transforming the “world outside”—in this case literally the world outside U.S. borders—into “the pictures in our heads” (Lippman, 1922). Both the president and news media

create, reinforce, and promote specific ways of seeing the world. Through their communications, they produce a political geography that maps who, what, and where we are as a country in relation to other nations. In this respect, they are like cartographers who choose which nations get on the political map, creating in the words of Gasher (2007: 299) “categories of inclusion and exclusion, relevant and irrelevant, we and they.”

Given the power of the president and news media to shape our perceptions of the political and geographic world, it is surprising how little we know about foreign nation visibility and the factors that influence it in U.S. public discourse. Media agenda-setting scholars have identified scores of factors that are correlated with foreign nation visibility on the news agenda, but most of the scholarship in this area is cross-sectional, correlational, and atheoretical. Presidential agenda-setting scholars, for their part, have largely ignored the issue of foreign nation visibility altogether. As such, there is room for significant contributions to be made to both bodies of scholarship. And given the ways that the world is shrinking due to globalization and technology, it is imperative that research begin to do so. The focus of this dissertation, therefore, is foreign nation visibility in U.S. public discourse, specifically foreign nation visibility on U.S. presidential and news agendas. Through my research, I seek to better understand which foreign nations are most and least visible on each agenda, why some foreign nations become more visible than others, and how foreign nation visibility and the factors that influence it have changed over time.

To address these questions, I conduct three analyses. First, I undertake a longitudinal content analysis of foreign nation visibility on the presidential agenda, tracking mentions of foreign nations in major presidential addresses to the nation from the end of World War II in

1945 through 2008, the last full year of the presidency of George W. Bush.<sup>1</sup> Second, I conduct a longitudinal content analysis of foreign nation visibility in news content, tracking coverage of foreign nations by a major U.S. television network and a leading U.S. newspaper during the same 64-year time period. In both cases, I connect these agendas to a host of factors that scholarship suggests might be expected to influence foreign nation visibility in U.S. public discourse. Finally, I focus on the relationship between the president and the press by examining their direct interaction in presidential press conferences during a somewhat shorter period, 1953-2008. In this last analysis, I connect emphases on presidential policy and journalistic initiative with foreign nation visibility to expand the circle of implications in this research. Together, these analyses provide rich insight into presidential communications, news content, and foreign nation prioritization in U.S. public discourse.

### Conceptual Overview

In this section I present my conceptual framework, focusing on the concept of agenda-setting—specifically, the two variations of foreign policy agenda-setting that are most relevant to this dissertation: presidential agenda-setting and news agenda-setting. I expect foreign nation visibility on the presidential agenda to have a greater influence on foreign nation visibility on the news agenda than vice versa, so I will discuss my theoretical expectations for the presidential agenda first and then turn to the news agenda. Next, I will address how the two agendas relate to one another. Finally, I will close this chapter with an outline of the remainder of the dissertation.

Before introducing my conceptual framework, however, it is important to briefly clarify what I

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<sup>1</sup> Although I collected and coded George W. Bush's farewell address of January 15, 2009, I decided not to include it in my analysis. It was excluded for two reasons. First, some of the key variables that I correlate presidential mentions with later in this chapter were not available for 2009 at the time of this analysis. Second, I wanted to be able to make a direct comparison of my results in this chapter with my results in the next chapter, but the news content central to that chapter was not available from 2009 at the time that it was analyzed.

mean by foreign nation visibility. As I define it, *foreign nation visibility* is the amount of attention that a foreign nation receives in presidential and news discourses. I use the term visibility with intent because its opposite, invisibility, conveys the consequences of not getting on the political map more clearly and powerfully than other terms such as salience, which are more common in agenda-setting scholarship. When someone or something is invisible it is as if that person or thing does not exist. Likewise, when foreign nations do not make it on political or news agendas they are, essentially, invisible to most Americans—and for many it is as if they do not exist.

The concept of agenda-setting refers to the way in which information is prioritized and attention is allocated to some issues rather than to others. The agenda-setting process was first explored empirically 40 years ago by McCombs and Shaw (1972), and it has since become one of the most fertile research paradigms in the field of political communication (Bennett & Iyengar, 2008; Walgrave & Van Aelst, 2006; Jennings & Miron, 2004). Most agenda-setting studies have focused on expansive objects of attention such as “the environment” or “the economy,” but scholarship suggests that the agenda-setting metaphor can usefully be applied to more specific objects as well (McCombs, 2004; McCombs & Reynolds, 2002; McCombs & Ghanem, 2001). An object of particular interest in this dissertation and one that has been largely ignored by agenda-setting scholarship is foreign nations (Kioussis & Wu, 2009). The omission of foreign nations in agenda-setting research is ironic given that the words of Bernard Cohen (1963: 13) that the press “may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about” were written in the context of foreign affairs. Nonetheless the vast majority of agenda-setting studies have focused on domestic policy issues. In my dissertation I rekindle Cohen’s emphasis on foreign policy and build on a

small body of recent scholarship (Wanta et al., 2004; Golan, 2006; and Kiouisis & Wu, 2009) that focuses on foreign nations as the object of attention in the agenda-setting process.

In political communication, the three most commonly studied agendas are the government agenda, the news agenda, and the public agenda (Manheim, 1994; Soroka, 2002). Government agenda-setting focuses on the issues that are prioritized by the government, news agenda-setting focuses on the issues that are emphasized in news coverage, and public agenda-setting focuses on the issues that are ranked as most important by the general citizenry. Because, as noted, foreign affairs tend to be unobtrusive for most citizens government prioritization and news coverage usually drive foreign nation visibility in U.S. public discourse (Zucker, 1978; Weaver, Graber, McCombs, & Eyal, 1981). It is for this reason that I focus my attention on the government agenda and the media agenda in this study. More specifically, I focus on presidential discourse as a measure of the broader U.S. government agenda and on leading television and newspaper coverage as a measure of the broader U.S. news agenda. Notably, I chose to focus on the presidential agenda in this research—rather than, say, on the congressional agenda—because scholarship has demonstrated that presidents dominate foreign policy, particularly relative to Congress (Peake, 2001; Peterson, 1994). Future research may want to consider the relationship between foreign nation visibility on presidential and congressional agendas, but in this first study of foreign nation visibility I focus on the former.

### *Presidential discourse*

The logical point of opening emphasis for research on agenda-setting in U.S. public discourse is the presidency. No other political actor in the United States has the same capability as the president to set the points of focus for other political actors. In Kingdon's (1995: 23) words, the president "can single-handedly set the agendas, not only of people in the executive

branch, but also of people in Congress, and outside the government”—and a large body of research supports this assertion. For example, the presidential agenda has been found to have a significant influence on the congressional agenda (Edwards & Barrett, 2000; Neusdadt, 1960; Baumgartner & Jones, 1993), the news agenda (Weaver, McCombs, & Shaw, 2004; McCombs, Gilbert, & Eyal, 1982; Wanta & Foote, 1994) and the public agenda (Cohen, 1997; Cohen, 1995; Hill, 1998). As a “one-man distillation of the American people” (Rositter, 1960), the president has the power to influence how people in other countries view the United States (Holsti, 2008; Zarefsky, 2004), as well as how people in the United States view the rest of the world. In short, the president is the most powerful person, and the presidency is the most powerful institution, in the U.S. political system.

Given the president’s widespread influence, the presidential agenda is especially worthy of consideration in the realm of foreign policy. In his dual role as commander-in-chief and chief diplomat, the president has more power to affect U.S. foreign policy than any other political actor (Wood & Peake, 1998). Moreover, scholarship indicates that presidential power has increased dramatically over time. According to Schlesinger (1973), for example, the shift in the constitutional balance of power between the presidency and other branches of government swung so far in the direction of the president by the midpoint of the Nixon administration, in the early 1970s, that the U.S. presidency became an “imperial presidency.” In Schlesinger’s (1973: 3) words, the imperial presidency achieved its pinnacle in the realm of foreign policy—specifically, “the capture by the President of the most vital of national decisions, the decision to go to war.” Presidential power receded in subsequent years during the relatively weaker presidencies of Ford and Carter (Coe, 2008), but recent scholarship suggests it swung again toward the president in the 1980s (Cairo, 2006)—a trend that has only accelerated since September 11, 2001

(Rudalevige, 2005). Today, it is widely accepted that the president is the most powerful player in the U.S. political system and his power is most pronounced in foreign policy.<sup>2</sup>

Presidential rhetoric is central to presidential influence in the foreign policy arena. Communicating with the public has become one of the central functions, if not *the* central function, of the modern presidency (Coe, 2008). Modern presidents speak publicly much more frequently today than they did in the past, and they increasingly “go public” to gain support for their policies (see Kernell, 1986). As Tulis (1987) puts it, the modern presidency is to a large degree a “rhetorical presidency”—that is, what presidents say is nearly as important as what they do. In their public communications, presidents employ certain language to emphasize some issues and deemphasize others, which in turn likely influences the public, the news media and other political actors to think that some issues are more important and deserving of attention than others. In this sense, presidential rhetoric helps constitute political reality (Campbell & Jamieson, 1990; Edelman, 1988). And nowhere is this power to influence perception more pronounced than in the realm of foreign policy; citizens are more likely to be influenced by presidential discourse about foreign policy both because of its unobtrusive nature and the unique knowledge, legitimacy, and power the president is perceived to have in this area.

Research on presidential agenda-setting that has taken foreign affairs into account has tended to do so only in the aggregate, lumping all foreign nations together under an “international problems” or “international affairs” category (e.g., Horvit, Schiffer & Wright, 2008; Soroka, 2003; Andrade & Young, 1996; Wanta & Foote, 1994). Wood and Peake (1998) were among the first to consider presidential attention to specific foreign policy issues, examining presidential rhetoric related to the U.S.-Soviet conflict, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and

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<sup>2</sup> For the sake of consistency, and because the first 44 presidents of the United States have been men, I use the adjective his to refer to the president throughout this dissertation.

the Bosnian conflict. However, their study did not distinguish the specific foreign nations that comprised each foreign policy issue. Recognizing the limitation of focusing on such broad issue categories, Peake (2001) and Peake and Eshbaugh-Soha (2008) attempted a differentiation when they examined presidential discourse about two foreign regions—Central America and the Caribbean. To date, however, no presidential study has examined the visibility—or invisibility—of foreign regions outside the Americas, and only one study (Coe & Neumann, 2011b) has examined the visibility of *specific* foreign nations on the presidential agenda.

The Coe and Neumann (2011b) study merits some discussion. They analyzed how U.S. presidents from Franklin Roosevelt in 1934 to George W. Bush in 2008 talked about foreign entities—that is, cities, nations, regions/continents, leaders, citizens, or governing bodies—in their State of the Union addresses. Across the 70-plus years of focus in their analysis, they found that U.S. presidents mentioned a surprisingly small number of foreign entities in these public communications. Even though the international system consists of approximately 200 independent states, they found that the 20 most-mentioned foreign entities accounted for roughly 80 percent of all presidential mentions, and the five most-mentioned foreign entities accounted for nearly 50 percent of all presidential mentions. These results are compelling—and they inform my theoretical expectations below—but further research is needed to corroborate their findings, especially since State of the Union speeches are far from a complete measure of presidential attention.

Research is also needed to explain why presidents focus on some foreign nations at the expense of others in their foreign affairs discourse. Coe and Neumann (2011b) suggest that U.S. presidents favor more powerful nations in their public communications, but they do not test this proposition in any way. This perspective, though, is consistent with the scholarship on foreign

nation visibility on the *news* agenda—which I detail in the next section—as well as the scholarship on international relations in political science. For example, according to realist theory, the most dominant and enduring theory in international relations, the primary concern of all states in the international system is pursuit of power so as to ensure and enhance state security (Mearsheimer, 2001). As a result, states are in constant competition with one another, perpetually vying for more economic and military power than peers. As the chief diplomat of the U.S. government and the commander-in-chief of the U.S. military, the president is especially sensitive to the distribution of power in the international system. Recognizing this sensitivity, I expect a foreign nation’s economic and military power to be a good predictor of its visibility on the presidential agenda. Phrased in the form of a hypothesis, my first theoretical expectation for the presidential agenda is:

H1: Foreign nations that are powerful are more likely to be visible on the U.S. presidential agenda than foreign nations that are not powerful.

My second theoretical expectation regarding foreign nation visibility on the presidential agenda grows out of the pervasiveness of crisis rhetoric in presidential communications. According to Bostdorff (1994: 24), of all the issues that presidents address in their major speeches to the nation, “crisis reigns supreme.” Indeed, Hahn (1987) has gone so far as to suggest that all “non-ceremonial” speeches given by presidents are crisis speeches because, aside from ceremonies, presidents usually address the nation only when something is wrong. Whatever the reason, presidents regularly invoke crises in their discourse, particularly those that deal with international affairs. As Bostdorff (1994: 1) puts it: “because foreign locales are so distant and knowledge of them is far removed from most Americans’ daily lives,” presidents strategically “advance claims of crisis in order to prompt public support for their...policies.” A good example of presidential crisis invocation is Ronald Reagan’s claim in the 1980s that the Nicaraguan

Sandinistas represented a terrorist haven “two days driving time” from the U.S. border, and therefore financing was needed for the Contras (Clift, 1986). A more recent example is George W. Bush’s invocation of crisis in the form of a “a mushroom cloud” to justify the overthrow of Saddam Hussein in 2003 (John, Domke, Coe, & Graham, 2007). According to Terror Management Theory (Becker, 1973), crisis rhetoric is powerful and persuasive because it makes people aware of their own mortality (Westen, 2008). Perhaps this is why people tend to “rally ‘round the flag” during times of war (Mueller, 1970). Whatever the reason, U.S. presidents often employ crisis rhetoric in their public communications, especially when the topic is foreign affairs.

Given this bias toward crisis in presidential rhetoric, I expect nations in conflict with the United States to dominate presidential discourse. The logic of this expectation derives from the fact that the public looks to the commander-in-chief in times of conflict. That is, presidential decisions to publicly speak about specific foreign nations do not arise in a vacuum, but rather in the context of concrete geopolitical realities. Ultimately, I expect U.S. involvement in foreign conflicts to increase the amount of attention presidents pay to foreign affairs, but decrease the diversity of that attention. I expect this particularly to be the case in the United States, because of its status in the international system: in the post-World War II era, the United States is one of only two states—the other being the Soviet Union prior to its dissolution—that has had the capacity to become directly involved in any crisis in the world at any time (Baum, 2004). According to Meernik (2004), during the 40-year period between 1948 and 1988, American presidents ordered the use of military force over 200 times. Since 1988, U.S. presidents have ordered at least seven major military operations—in Panama in 1989, Iraq in 1991, Somalia in 1993-94, Haiti in 1994, Bosnia in 1995, Kosovo in 1999, Afghanistan in 2001, and Iraq in 2003.

At the same time, the United States has notably *not* intervened in many other crises worldwide—the Rwandan genocide among them. In essence, if the international crisis was one in which the president chose to involve the nation, I expect him to focus his communications on it; if the president chose not to involve the nation directly, I expect his public messages to follow suit accordingly. Phrased in the form of a hypothesis, my second theoretical expectation for the presidential agenda is thus:

H2: Foreign nations in conflict with the United States will dominate presidential discourse about foreign affairs.

### *News discourse*

In contrast to research on the presidency, numerous studies have explored foreign nation visibility on the news agenda. Scholarship in this vein has typically employed the terminology of *international news flow*, or simply *news flow*, to refer to what I characterize as *foreign nation visibility*—that is, the amount of attention that a foreign nation receives in news coverage. As noted, I intentionally use the term visibility because its opposite, invisibility, conveys the consequences of not getting on the news agenda more powerfully than other terms such as salience or news flow. When something is invisible it is as if it does not exist—at least in the minds of the people who do not see it. Likewise, when a foreign nation is invisible in U.S. news discourse, for many Americans it is as if that country does not exist. After all, news is the primary way that most Americans keep abreast of what is going on in the rest of the world.

News flow generally focuses on one of two types of reasons that foreign matters become present in U.S. mainstream news: event-driven factors or structural factors (Chang & Lee, 1992). Event-driven factors are idiosyncratic. They are intrinsic to foreign occurrences and they pertain directly to what happens, when, and how—for example, the number of casualties in a conflict or the number of dollars worth of damage in a disaster. Generally speaking, scholarship suggests

that the more deviant or extreme a foreign event, the more likely it is to receive news coverage (Shoemaker, Danielian, & Brendlinger, 1991; Shoemaker, Chang, & Brendlinger, 1986).

Structural factors are the ongoing material realities within which a country exists in a globalized world. These factors speak to relational dynamics such as trade and conflict between countries as well as power dynamics such as the size of a country's territory, population, economy or military. Event-driven and structural factors are not mutually exclusive, but theoretical expectations, data collection, and analysis do tend to vary depending on which factors are being analyzed. Most news flow studies focus on one of these types of factors.

In this dissertation, I focus on the potential influence of structural factors on news coverage of foreign nations. Event-driven factors such as the magnitude of a foreign disaster have been shown to be important determinants of foreign nation visibility in the United States (Chang, Shoemaker, & Brendlinger, 1987) and elsewhere (Shoemaker & Cohen, 2006), but events do not occur in a vacuum. Structural factors like the relational dynamics between two countries affect news coverage of foreign events in meaningful ways. For example, a disaster in Canada is more likely to receive news coverage in the United States than a comparable disaster in Cameroon because events in Canada are considered more relevant and thus more newsworthy to Americans. For this reason, my focus in this dissertation are the structural factors that contribute to some countries getting more or less attention than others, regardless of specific events that may happen there.

News flow scholarship has identified dozens of structural factors associated with foreign nation visibility in U.S. news coverage. For example, a foreign nation's gross domestic product (Robinson & Sparkes, 1976), its military expenditure (Golan & Wanta, 2003), its population size (Dupree, 1971), its geographic proximity to the United States (Wu, 1998), and its level of trade

with the United States (Golan, 2006) all have been found to be correlated with foreign nation visibility in U.S. news coverage. Notably, however, among these studies there has been relatively little longitudinal—i.e. over-time—research on news coverage of foreign countries. This longitudinal gap in scholarship is ironic given that the term “news flow” connotes a dynamic process, and yet most studies have examined coverage at one point in time. The lack of over-time research is also problematic because it can spur incorrect inferences concerning the level and nature of foreign nation visibility, and it makes it difficult to compare the results of studies conducted at different points in time.

For example, scholarship posits that the geographic distance between countries affects news flow between them (Chang et al., 1987; Galtung & Ruge, 1965). Given the emergence of new media technologies like smart phones and the Internet, however, there is reason to believe that geographic proximity has become less of a predictor of foreign nation visibility on the news agenda in recent decades. Still, scholarship remains divided on this point—primarily because studies conducted during different time periods have come to different conclusions (e.g., Livingston & Van Belle, 2005; Koopmans & Vliegthart, 2010). The best way to reconcile these and other diverging findings in news flow scholarship is to conduct a longitudinal analysis that encompasses a sufficiently large time period to account for potential changes over time. In this dissertation, I attempt to do just that by examining visibility and the structural factors that influence it in U.S. news coverage.

Specifically, my analysis of the U.S. news agenda is driven by three primary theoretical expectations relating to power, significance, and geographic proximity. The first structural factor that I expect to impact foreign nation visibility in U.S. news discourse is the *power* of foreign nations to affect change in the international system. Unlike significance and geographic

proximity, which are defined in terms of the relationship between the United States and another country, power is the position of a country within the hierarchy of nations. Scholarship has shown that just as there is a tendency for news stories about domestic affairs to focus on individuals who have the ability to affect change in the domestic system—for example, influential politicians and wealthy business leaders (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009)—there is also a tendency for news stories about foreign affairs to focus on actors who have the power to affect change in the international system (Golan, 2006; Chang, 1998; Kim & Barnett, 1996). People are considered sovereign in the U.S. political system, but states—i.e. nations—are sovereign in the international political system. By definition, powerful nations have the ability to influence international affairs, and this influence can affect the lives of individuals in the United States, including news audiences. It stands to reason, therefore, that the more power a foreign nation possesses, the more emphasis it is likely to receive in U.S. news. My theoretical expectation is thus:

H3: Powerful foreign nations are more likely to be visible on the U.S. news agenda than foreign nations that are not powerful.

The second structural factor that I expect to impact foreign nation visibility on the U.S. news agenda is the *significance* of foreign nations to U.S. foreign policy. There are many dimensions upon which nations may be significant to other nations, but scholarship has found economic and political significance to be the most predictive of foreign nation visibility in the United States (Shoemaker & Cohen, 2006). For example, in an analysis of U.S. news coverage of foreign events, Shoemaker and colleagues (1991) showed that a foreign nation's economic and political significance to the United States was predictive of whether events that took place in that country were covered in the U.S. news media. Corroborating this finding, Kim (2002: 431) found that most international news stories in the United States originate from areas “where American

political or economic interests are at stake.” Taken together, these studies—and others like them (e.g., Ahern, 1984; Chang & Lee, 1992; Wu, 1998; Golan, 2008)—suggest that U.S. news stories about foreign affairs tend to be about America: what is happening, or what could happen, to the nation economically or politically. My theoretical expectation is thus:

H4: The more economically and politically significant a foreign nation is to the United States, the more emphasis it is likely to receive in U.S. news.

The third structural factor that I expect to impact foreign nation visibility on the U.S. news agenda is the geographic *proximity* of foreign nations to the United States. Scholars have found geographic proximity to be related to news coverage in both domestic (Martin, 1988; Morton & Warren, 1992) and international news stories (Chang et al., 1987; Galtung & Ruge, 1965). Indeed, Stevenson and Cole (1984) went so far as to suggest that proximity is a universal news value. This contention makes intuitive sense: journalists are more likely to cover and publics are more likely to follow events that are closer to home, both because they are easier for journalists to cover and because they are more relevant for news audiences. It stands to reason then that the closer a foreign nation is to the United States, the more likely it is to receive attention on the U.S. news agenda. My theoretical expectation is thus:

H5: The closer a foreign nation is to the United States geographically, the more emphasis it is likely to receive in U.S. news coverage.

Notably, I expect each of these structural factors to influence foreign nation visibility in U.S. news coverage, but because of the lack of longitudinal research in this area empirical analysis is required to determine whether these factors have become *differentially important* over time as predictors of foreign nation visibility on the news agenda. Thus, underlying each of my theoretical expectations is a research question. First, has power as a predictor of foreign nation visibility in U.S. news coverage increased, stayed the same, or decreased in importance over time

(RQ1)? Second, has political and economic significance as a predictor of foreign nation visibility in U.S. news coverage increased, stayed the same, or decreased in importance over time (RQ2)? Finally, has geographic proximity as a predictor of foreign nation visibility in U.S. news coverage increased, stayed the same, or decreased in importance over time (RQ3)? Because of the changing nature of international affairs, it seems likely that news coverage has changed in meaningful ways over time; however, it is simultaneously plausible that the deeply rooted nature of news practices has constrained these types of shifts in all but the most dramatic instances.

#### *Foreign prioritization on presidential and news agendas*

In my final area of focus in this dissertation, I place the concept of nation visibility in a broader state-and-press context that I call *foreign prioritization*. Foreign prioritization is a collective sensibility that includes the relative importance assigned to foreign over domestic matters, the visibility of foreign nations and regions in discourse, and the initiative of different actors to put issues on the agenda. Both the president and the news media have the power to shape public perceptions about the rest of the world and influence the nation's foreign priorities. The view here is that the relationship between the presidency and the news media is fundamental to understanding the place of nation visibility and foreign prioritization in U.S. public discourse.

Much scholarship has examined presidential or news agendas in isolation, but their relationship remains unclear and under-theorized (Walgrave & Van Aelst, 2006). Presidential agenda-setting developed in political science; media agenda-setting developed in communication, and today the proponents of each do not much speak to each other (Soroka, 2002). Not surprisingly, given their different foci, political science scholars tend to herald the agenda-setting power of the president and other political actors such as Congress (e.g., Bennett, 1990; Hallin, 1989), while communication scholars are more likely to emphasize the agenda-

setting power of the news media (McCombs, Shaw, & Weaver, 1997). It remains unclear, though, the extent to which the policy foci and priorities of the president are related to the policy foci and priorities of the press. One of my primary goals in this dissertation is to shed light on the relationship between the president and the press in regards to foreign prioritization.

So far the results of such scholarship have been mixed. McCombs, Gilbert and Eyal (1982) found that the agenda of 15 issues in President Nixon's 1970 State of the Union address successfully predicted the subsequent month's news coverage. More recently, Wanta and Kalyango (2007) found that the more President George W. Bush mentioned an African nation in his public statements the more the *New York Times* mentioned that nation in its coverage of foreign affairs. Other studies, however, have found the opposite to be true. For example, Gilbert, Eyal, McCombs, and Nicholas (1980), in an analysis of news coverage before President Jimmy Carter's 1978 State of the Union address, found that such news coverage predicted what the president talked about. More recently, Wood and Peake (1998) found that network news coverage of three enduring foreign policy issues in the 1980s and 1990s—U.S.-Soviet relations, the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Bosnian conflict—seemed to impact how often presidents addressed those issues in their public communications, but not vice versa. Such findings have led some to conclude that presidents are more responsive to the press than the press is to the president (Peake & Eshbaugh-Soha, 2008; Eshbaugh-Soha & Peake, 2005; Edwards & Wood, 1999). However, this conclusion flies in the face of the prevailing wisdom about the president-news media relationship—that is, that the president prevails. Ultimately, the results of scholarship are mixed and further research is needed to shed light on the relationship between presidential and news discourses in the realm of foreign affairs.

One important place to look is presidential press conferences, where the president and the press come together for formal, public, face-to-face interactions. In general, I expect the president's foreign priorities to be more likely to drive journalist foreign priorities in these settings, for three reasons: (1) the president is the most powerful actor in the U.S. political system (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993), (2) the president's policy-making power is most pronounced in foreign policy (Wood & Peake, 1998), and (3) the president is the single most influential newsmaker in the United States (Weaver et al., 2004). Presidents are the news media's go-to source on politics (Ansolabehere, Behr, & Iyengar, 1993), and the public appetite for presidential news is higher than it is for news from other political actors (Gans, 1980; Graber, 2006)—as a result, virtually everything a president says or does is considered newsworthy. Nothing is un-noticed or ignored.

At the same time, presidents invest substantial time and energy into attempting to shape news coverage (Edwards & Wayne, 1999), and they have a number of news management tools at their disposal (Maltese, 1994). These tools include indirect efforts—such as coordinating news within the executive branch, putting out the line of the day, and providing interview opportunities for the press (Bennett, 2003)—as well as direct efforts, such as making major presidential addresses to the nation, traveling domestically and internationally, and holding news conferences (Peake & Eshbaugh-Soha, 2008). All of these further tilt the balance of power toward the presidency rather than news media, and I expect the power differential to be pronounced in the formal interactions of presidential press conferences. My theoretical expectation is thus:

**H6: Presidential initiative and policy priorities will drive subsequent journalist questioning in presidential press conferences.**

## Chapter Outline

In this dissertation I introduce and develop the concepts of foreign nation visibility and foreign prioritization, and I analyze them in U.S. public discourse about foreign affairs, examining whether and how they have changed since World War II. Specifically, I am interested in two distinct agendas in the United States: the U.S. presidential agenda and the U.S. news agenda. The primary aim of this research is to understand which countries and issues, at the expense of others, get on these agendas, why this occurs, and whether there are discernible changes in recent decades. Such research will contribute to scholarship on presidential agenda-setting, news agenda-setting, and foreign policy discourse. The purpose of this first chapter was to present an overview of the scholarship that is the foundation for this research, to articulate the importance of this work, and to offer my specific expectations.

In Chapter Two I explain my analytic approach and discuss the major methodological decisions in the dissertation. In this discussion I describe how I defined and measured foreign nation visibility on presidential and news agendas, why I correlated foreign nation visibility with some factors and not others, and why I chose to bound my analyses in the specific ways that I did. This chapter includes separate descriptions of each of the three content analyses that were conducted in this dissertation.

In Chapter Three I present the results of a longitudinal content analysis of foreign nation visibility on the presidential agenda. This analysis tracks foreign nation mentions in major presidential speeches to the nation over 64 years: from May 1945 through September 2008. The purpose of this analysis is to determine which foreign nations are most and least visible on the U.S. presidential agenda, why some nations are more visible than others, and whether foreign nation visibility and the factors that influence it have changed over time. The findings contribute

to the scholarship on presidential agenda-setting and foreign policy discourse. They also form a basis for comparison with the results of the next chapter.

In Chapter Four I present the results of a longitudinal content analysis of foreign nation visibility on the news agenda. This analysis tracks coverage of foreign nations by a major U.S. television network and a leading newspaper during the same 64-year time period as the analysis in Chapter Three. The purpose of this analysis is to determine which foreign nations are most and least visible on the U.S. news agenda, why some nations are more visible than others, and whether foreign nation visibility and the factors that influence it have changed over time. The findings in this chapter contribute to the scholarship on international news flow, and they are directly compared to the results of the previous chapter.

In Chapter Five I present the results of a longitudinal content analysis that examines foreign prioritization in presidential press conferences. This analysis tracks the relative emphasis in these settings placed on foreign affairs by the president and the press, the visibility of foreign nations in press conference discourse, the initiative taken by the president and press to get issues on the agenda, and the impact of a new press conference format on each of these areas. This analysis spans a 56-year period of 1953 through 2008, and it contributes to scholarship on foreign policy agenda-setting and press-government interactions.

In Chapter Six I summarize and interpret my major findings, focusing on the similarities and differences in foreign nation visibility on the U.S. presidential agenda and the U.S. news agenda, and the interaction between the president and the press in presidential press conferences. I also address how my findings relate to previous scholarship and discuss more generally what they reveal about foreign nation visibility and foreign prioritization in U.S. political discourse.

This chapter concludes by addressing some of the limitations of this dissertation and suggesting directions for future research.

## Chapter Two

### Research Design

This dissertation focuses on foreign nation visibility in U.S. presidential and news discourses and the broader concept of foreign prioritization in presidential press conferences. Through this research, I seek to shed light on four aspects of foreign nation visibility in the United States: (a) which foreign nations are most and least visible in presidential and news discourses, (b) why some foreign nations become more visible than others, (c) how foreign nation visibility and the factors that influence it change over time, and (d) the relationship between foreign nation visibility on these two important agendas. In addition, I seek to gain traction on the extent to and the manner in which foreign nations and issues are prioritized in presidential press conferences.

To address these questions, I first conducted a content analysis of foreign nation visibility on the presidential agenda spanning 64 years; the results of this analysis are presented in Chapter Three. I then conducted a content analysis for the same time frame of foreign nation visibility in news content; the results of this analysis are presented in Chapter Four. In both instances I examined the entire post-World War II era, beginning in 1945 with the presidency of Harry Truman and ending in 2008, the last full year of the presidency of George W. Bush. In each case, I also connected each agenda to a host of factors that scholarship suggests might be expected to influence foreign nation visibility in U.S. public discourse. In Chapter 5 I focused on presidential press conferences, expanding my analysis to the broader concept of foreign prioritization. This analysis complements and adds to analyses in Chapters Three and Four by addressing the interaction between the president and the press in the foreign policy arena. For theoretical reasons that are discussed below, my analysis in Chapter Five encompassed a slightly different

time period (1953-2008) than my analyses in Chapters Three and Four (1945-2008). In the pages that follow, I explain my analytic approach and elaborate on its suitability for this project.

### The Presidential Agenda

My analysis of foreign nation visibility on the presidential agenda focuses on the post-World War II era, beginning with Harry Truman's presidency in 1945 and ending in 2008 with the last address of George W. Bush's last full year in office. I chose to focus on this time frame because the relationship of the United States with the rest of the world changed significantly with World War II (Hook & Spanier, 2003). Most notably, U.S. foreign policy became less isolationist (Cole, 1983; Jonas, 1966) and more internationalist (White, 1989). In addition, the United States was the only major power that actually became wealthier as a result of the war: U.S. Gross National Product (GNP) grew by more than 50% between 1939 and 1945, while Europe's as a whole fell by 25% (Kennedy, 1989). The relative wealth of the United States following the war contributed to its increased engagement in international relations, as did the country's military might. For example, President Truman's decision to drop atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki showcased what Wills (2010) has called America's "bomb power," and so doing permanently transformed the focus and impact of American foreign policy. Given these changes, it made sense to start my analysis of foreign nation visibility on the U.S. presidential agenda with Truman in 1945. At the same time, this approach allowed for multiple presidents to be included in my analysis—while holding roughly constant the internationalist role U.S. presidents have played in foreign affairs since World War II.

The first step in my analysis was to determine how to measure foreign nation visibility on the president's public agenda. Building on studies of the president's public foreign policy agenda

(Andrade & Young, 1996; Coe & Neumann, 2011b; Edwards & Wood, 1999; Horvit et al., 2008; Wood & Peake, 1998; Peake, 2001; Peake & Eshbaugh-Soha, 2008), I focus on *presidential rhetoric*—i.e. the president’s words. This focus stems directly from a commonly accepted definition of the presidential agenda: “The President’s agenda is perhaps best understood as a *signal*. It indicates what the President believes to be the most important issues facing his administration” (Light, 1991, 2-3, emphasis in original). Signal is the keyword here: when the president wants to call attention to a foreign nation he can do so by speaking about it in public or instructing other members of his administration to speak about it in public. For example, George W. Bush signaled that Iran, Iraq, and North Korea were important to his foreign policy agenda when he publicly addressed them as the “axis of evil” in his January 29, 2002, State of the Union address.

To measure foreign nation visibility on the *president’s rhetorical agenda*, I identified presidential invocations of foreign nations in major presidential addresses to the nation. Major presidential addresses to the nation are the best rhetorical signal of the president’s foreign policy agenda; after all, other political actors—including Congress, the news media, and the public—are more likely to respond to major presidential addresses than other presidential communications (Edwards & Wood, 1999). This is primarily because these communications are more accessible to them and, therefore, more likely to affect their own agendas. In the words of Peake and Eshbaugh-Soha (2008), given the spectacle that accompanies them, major national addresses are the president’s “greatest resource.” They are the only means that the president has to speak directly to the nation as a whole, and they are central to the president’s ability to “go public” and provoke the public to apply pressure to Congress (Edwards, 2003; Kernell, 1986; Young & Perkins, 2005). In short, modern presidents have no greater rhetorical vehicle for

making foreign nations visible in American political discourse than their major presidential addresses to the nation.

The most consistent instance of a major presidential address to the nation is the annual State of the Union speech, which is required by the U.S. Constitution. In the past, scholars have utilized State of the Union addresses as a proxy measure of the president's public agenda (Coe & Neumann, 2011b; Cohen, 1995; Weaver et al., 2004). Because they only happen once a year, however, relying exclusively on State of the Union addresses may provide an incomplete image of presidential attention, which can change due to circumstances that can occur anytime. Taking this into consideration, I adopted Domke and Coe's (2008) definition of a major presidential address. They suggested that major presidential addresses are those that meet three criteria: (a) the president is addressing his remarks to the entire nation, (b) the speech is broadcast live, and (c) the address deals with serious political issues. Based on this conceptualization, which is consistent with Hinckley (1990), Ragsdale (1998) and Wooley and Peters (2012), there were 306 major presidential addresses during the 64-year period analyzed—May 8, 1945 through September 24, 2008—or approximately five per year. The full texts of these speeches were collected from the *American Presidency Project*, which is regarded as the definitive record of presidential communications.

Once the speeches were compiled, I tracked presidential invocations of foreign nations via content analysis. Numerous studies have demonstrated the value of using content analysis to increase our understanding of political discourse (Domke & Coe, 2008; Hinckley, 1990; Kim, 2002; Teten, 2003). Multiple, nuanced definitions of content analysis exist, but for the purposes of this dissertation I adopted Krippendorff's (2004: 18) broad-based definition: "a research technique for making reliable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the

contexts of their use.” In this definition, the notion of inference is especially important—briefly, inference involves using direct observation to develop potential insight about unobserved phenomena (King, Keohane & Verba, 1994). In theory, it is possible to draw an infinite array of inferences from any text, which is why it is important to distinguish between scientific inferences and unscientific inferences—the former are concerned with reliability and validity, the latter are not. Inferences are reliable if they are based on empirical measures that yield the same results on repeated trials, and they are reflected in the question: “If someone else were to analyze the same data would they end up with the same results?” Inferences are valid if they adequately measure what the analytical concepts examined in a study are supposed to represent, and they are reflected in the question: “Am I actually measuring what I think I am measuring?” In this study, I took great care to ensure both the reliability and validity of my content analyses.

Because the corpus of major presidential speeches was large I used computer-aided content analysis to measure foreign nation visibility on the presidential agenda.<sup>3</sup> Computer-aided content analysis has been defined by Neuendorf (2002: 52) as “the automated tabulation of variables for target content that has been prepared for the computer.” This method of content analysis has a long history in social scientific research, it has become more common and sophisticated in recent years (Neuendorf, 2002), and it is now used regularly by various disciplines, including communication (Van Atteveldt, 2008) and political science (West, 2001). The two primary benefits of computer-aided content analysis are that (a) computers can process large amounts of “manifest” content—i.e. elements that are physically present and countable in a text—much faster and more cheaply than humans (Bara, 2006), and (b) reliability is a not a concern because, unlike traditional human content analysis, computers are programmed to

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<sup>3</sup> Many computer-aided content analysis programs are available; I used WordStat 5.1, which is an add-in module that requires QDA Miner. More information about Wordstat 5.1 can be found at <http://kovcomp.com/wordstat/index.html>.

process all texts in exactly the same way—the computer simply replicates coding decisions originally made by humans. The primary disadvantage of computer-aided content analysis is that it is much more difficult to capture latent content—that is, unobserved concepts that can only be measured indirectly. As a general rule, analytic concepts that can be validly measured via keywords are best suited for computer-aided content analysis, while more complex concepts that cannot be validly measured via a fixed set of keywords are better suited for analysis by human coders. Ultimately, the question of whether computer-based content analysis is appropriate depends on the complexity of the concepts being identified.

In this case, my content analysis of foreign nation visibility in presidential discourse consisted of a single coding item—a count in each presidential address of each mention of every country in the international system. With this approach, computer-aided content analysis was deemed appropriate for this portion of my study. My unit of data collection was the presidential address, while my unit of data analysis was each individual reference to a country. Notably, keyword searches such as this one are a common method of measuring attention in communication (e.g., Norris, 1995) and political science (e.g., Peake & Eshbaugh-Soha, 2008). According to Baumgartner and Jones (1993), for example, the best way to determine whether a particular social issue is on an agenda is to count the number of times the issue appears in some kind of communication content. In line with this reasoning, I employed computer-aided content analysis to count the total number of times each country in the international system appeared in each presidential address—an approach that is more straightforward even than counting references to issues.

To determine which countries were part of the international system, I used Gleditsch and Ward's (1999) system membership definition, which is derived from the Correlates of War

Project. According to this definition, a state is an independent polity if it meets two criteria: (a) it has “a relatively autonomous administration over some territory,” and (b) it is “considered a distinct entity by local actors” (Gleditsch & Ward, 1999, p. 398). According to these criteria, 198 independent polities existed during the 64-year period analyzed, 1945-2008. Notably, I deviated from Gleditsch and Ward’s categorizations in two ways. First, I treated North and South Vietnam as Vietnam, East and West Germany as Germany, North and South Yemen as Yemen, North and South Korea as Korea. The reason for aggregating each pair was that they were generally referred to as the same entity in discourse, and in actual fact the first three have since become part of a single entity and the fourth used to be a single entity. Second, I grouped together countries that no longer exist—e.g., Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union—with those that emerged out of their dissolution—e.g., the Czech Republic and Russia.

The specific keywords for which I searched were the names of each foreign country that existed in the international system during the dates analyzed. Some states, such as the Philippines, are known by only one name in English—i.e., the “Philippines.” Others such as Romania are known by two names—i.e., “Romania” and “Rumania.” Still others are known by three or more names—for example, the United Kingdom is referred to as the “United Kingdom,” the “U.K.,” and “Britain.” In addition, “Northern Ireland,” “Wales,” “Scotland,” and “England” are also considered a part of the United Kingdom. I took these distinctions into account when capturing mentions of each country. See Appendix A for the full list of states, their dates of existence, and the keyword search terms that were used for each country.

The totals of each keyword search were aggregated in two ways—by year and by geopolitical era. Specifically, I divided my analysis into four geopolitical eras: the early Cold War years (1945-1973), the late Cold War years (1974-1991), the post-Cold War years (1992-

2001), and the post-9/11 years (2002-2008). I chose to structure my analysis around these time periods because scholarship suggests that U.S. foreign affairs discourse changed after World War II ended in 1945 (Hook & Spanier, 2007; Delaet, Rowling, & Scott, 2005), when major combat operations ended in Vietnam in 1973 (Mermin, 1999; Norris, 1995), when the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991 (Entman, 2004; Norris, 1995), and when the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks occurred (Hutcheson, Domke, Billeaudeaux, & Garland, 2004; Burney, 2002). The aggregated totals of each keyword search represent the total volume of foreign nation visibility on the presidential rhetorical agenda. Using these numbers I calculated two distinct forms of findings.

First, the number of foreign nations mentioned in any given year or any given era, in a major national address, represents what I call the *scope* of foreign nation visibility on the presidential rhetorical agenda. Second, the extent to which presidential attention was focused on a large or small number of foreign nations in any year relative to other years and other presidents represents what I call the *concentration* of foreign nation visibility on the presidential agenda. Notably, the Herfindahl score—also referred to as the H-statistic—was used to calculate the concentration variable (Herfindahl, 1959; Hirschman, 1964). The H-statistic is widely utilized in political science—to measure the issue diversity of the congressional agenda, for example (Baumgartner, Jones, & McLeod, 2000; Hardin, 1998; Hardin, 2002)—and it is equal to the sum of squared proportions of attention paid to an issue. Herfindahl scores range from 0 to 1, where 0 represents perfect agenda diversity—i.e. each country receives the same amount of attention—and where 1 equals an agenda monopoly—i.e. one country receives all the attention. In short, the higher the H-statistic, the more attention is focused on a few countries; the lower the H-statistic, the more attention is spread across many different countries.

Finally, I collected a range of additional data to assess the potential explanatory power of the three structural factors of theoretical interest: power, significance, and proximity. Specifically, for *power*, I included three indicators in my analysis—two related to a nation’s capabilities and one related to its reputation in the international system. I treated a nation’s population size as an indicator of its demographic power and I treated a nation’s GDP as an indicator of its economic power—these data were gathered from the Expanded Trade and GDP database.<sup>4</sup> Lastly, I included a dichotomous measure of reputational power derived from the Correlations of War project,<sup>5</sup> which is based on a survey of International Relations experts who were asked to identify which nations were considered major powers by other nations in the same era. My classification of a foreign nation’s *significance* to U.S. foreign policy was based on one measure of economic significance and two measures of military significance to the United States. Economic significance was operationalized in standard fashion as the level of trade flow (exports plus imports) between the United States and another nation. These data come from the Direction of Trade Statistics database,<sup>6</sup> which is maintained by the International Monetary Fund, and they are measured in U.S. dollars. Military significance was operationalized first as the number of U.S. troops stationed in a nation; these data come from the Global U.S. Troop Deployment database maintained by the Center for Data Analysis.<sup>7</sup> The second measure of military significance was dichotomous—the existence of a military conflict between the United States and a foreign nation—and these data were derived from the International Crisis Behavior Project.<sup>8</sup> Finally, as a measure of geographic *proximity* to the United States, I gathered data on the geographic distance in kilometers between Washington D.C. and the capital city of each

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<sup>4</sup> <http://privatewww.essex.ac.uk/~ksg/exptradegdp.html>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.correlatesofwar.org>

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.esds.ac.uk/international/support/user\\_guides/imf/dots.asp](http://www.esds.ac.uk/international/support/user_guides/imf/dots.asp)

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2006/05/global-us-troop-deployment-1950-2005>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/icb/>

country, and these data come from the Centre d'Etudes Prospectives et d'Informations Internationales database.<sup>9</sup>

### The News Agenda

My examination of foreign nation visibility on the news agenda focused on coverage of foreign nations by major U.S. news outlets during the same 64-year period analyzed for the presidential agenda, 1945-2008. Most news flow studies have relied on one news medium to represent the entire news agenda (e.g., Livingston & Van Belle, 2005), but I took a more expansive approach in this study and analyzed two news outlets, representing two different news mediums: print and television. Specifically, I analyzed newspapers and network television news.

I analyzed newspapers for three reasons: (a) because they have long been considered the most substantive source of political information in the United States (Chaffee & Frank, 1996), (b) because they have been shown to have a stronger inter-media agenda-setting effect than other news media (Danielian & Reese, 1989, Golan, 2006; Van Belle, 2003), and (c) because unlike other news media—for example, the Internet and cable television news—data are available for the entire post-World War II period. The primary reason that I chose to analyze network television news is because network television news audiences, although declining, still dwarf those of other news media. Indeed, the average nightly news audience for the three network news programs was approximately 23 million in 2009, several times the number that typically tune into CNN, FOX, and MSNBC, the top three cable news channels (Pew, 2009) or subscribe to any single newspaper. As a point of comparison, the nation's highest-circulation newspaper, *USA Today*, had a daily circulation of about 2 million readers in 2009 (Arango, 2009). Because of the longitudinal nature of this study, it did not make sense to include cable television or the Internet

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.cepii.fr/anglaisgraph/bdd/bdd.htm>

in my analyses as neither was in existence during most of the 64-year time period analyzed.

The newspaper sample consisted of the entire “A” section—which is the main news section—of *The New York Times*. The *Times* was chosen because it is generally regarded as the “newspaper of record” in the United States (Golan, 2006; Chang et al., 1987). Further, scholarship has demonstrated that it is an important inter-media agenda-setter in the United States (Golan, 2006). My analysis of the *Times* covers the same dates as my analysis of major presidential addresses in Chapter Three, 1945 to 2008. Recognizing the elite and potentially unique character of this news outlet, I supplemented my analysis of the *Times* with an examination of CBS Evening News, which was the most watched television news network during the period analyzed (Pew, 2009). CBS Evening News became network television’s first half-hour weeknight news broadcast in 1963, but its broadcasts were not regularly recorded and preserved until 1968. Because 1968 falls in the middle of the first of the four geo-political eras around which I organized my analyses, I began collecting CBS News data from 1974 onward—the first year of the late Cold War era.

I gathered *Times* content from abstracts categorized by the Historical *New York Times* Index and CBS content from abstracts catalogued by the Vanderbilt Television News Index.<sup>10</sup> The former is the most commonly relied upon index of print media attention in the United States (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993; Bennett, 1990), and the latter is the most extensive and complete archive of television news in the United States (Edy, Althaus, & Phalen, 2005). Both indexes include an abstract of every news story in each database; these abstracts identify the issues and topics covered in the full news stories that are catalogued in each index. There is a long tradition of relying on news abstracts in general—and these two indexes of news abstracts in particular—

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<sup>10</sup> The Historical New York Times Index: <http://www.nytimes.com/ref/membercenter/nytarchive.html>. The Vanderbilt Television News Index: <http://tvnews.vanderbilt.edu/>.

as proxies to measure news content. For example, Baumgartner and Jones (1993) used the *New York Times* Index to assess trends in the major topics covered by U.S. news media in the decades after World War II, and Norris (1995) used the Vanderbilt Television News Index to track changes in foreign affairs news coverage in the United States after the Cold War. Notably, in a test of the congruence between the topics mentioned in news abstracts and the topics mentioned in full news stories, Edy et al. (2005) found that the proportion of time devoted to a topic in an abstract was approximately the same as the proportion of time devoted to the same topic in the full news story. For these reasons, I felt comfortable treating abstracts in the *New York Times* Index and the Vanderbilt Television News Index as reliable representations of the full news stories they summarize.

The news abstract was both the unit of data collection and the unit of data analysis. Notably, the unit of data analysis differed from my approach to the presidential agenda because I was interested in the number of news stories about each foreign nation, rather than the total number of mentions for a foreign nation in each news story. In contrast, the number of times that the president mentioned each foreign nation in each address *is* a meaningful signal, whereas the individual news article accomplishes the same function. Keyword searches were conducted for every country in the international system, using Gleditsch and Ward's (1999) system membership definition, and data was collected at the individual news story level.

Finally, as with the analysis of presidential communications, the totals of each keyword search of news content were aggregated in two ways—by year and by geo-political era. These aggregated totals represent the volume of foreign nation visibility in news content. Using these numbers, I also calculated the range and concentration of foreign nation visibility on the news agenda. As before, the Herfindahl score was used to calculate this latter variable. The results of

these analyses are presented in Chapter Four.

### Interactions of President and Press

The relationship between the presidency and the news media is fundamental to understanding a broad sense of foreign prioritization in U.S. political discourse. Both institutions have the power to shape public perceptions about the rest of the world as well as the nation's foreign priorities. Much scholarship has examined foreign policy broadly on one or the other agendas in isolation, but this study explicitly addresses the interaction between the president and the press when it comes to foreign nation visibility and foreign prioritization. There are many points of direct interaction between the president and the press—from on-record public interviews to off-record private conversations. Scholars agree, however, that a particularly important site of interaction between the president and journalists and the institutions they represent is the presidential press conference (Kerbel, Bonafede, Kumar, & Moore, 2007; Banning & Billingsly, 2007; Clayman, Elliott, Heritage, & McDonald, 2006; Kumar, 2003). For example, in the words of Kumar (1994: 1230), “the history of presidential press relations” in the modern era “is largely a history of the press conference.” In short, because presidential press conferences are the longest-standing forum in which presidents routinely answer questions submitted by the press, they are an ideal site of analysis for this study.

There is a long tradition of scholarship on presidential news conferences, including broad historical overviews—e.g., Kerbel et al. (2008) and Kumar (1994)—as well as studies of more narrowly defined topics such as trends in how reporters and presidents interact in news conferences. For example, Banning and Billingsley (2007) examined journalist aggressivity in presidential press conferences, while Clayman et al. (2006) examined journalistic initiative,

directness, assertiveness and adversarialness in press conferences. This scholarship, however, does not tend to provide much insight on the actual content in presidential news conferences. To date, no scholarly effort has systematically analyzed the issues or countries that get on the agenda in presidential news conferences. As a result, the scholarship on presidential and news agenda-setting reveals very little about what countries and issues are most and least visible in presidential news conferences, who takes the initiative to make them visible—the president or the press—and whether, or more likely how, this has changed over time.

To gain traction on these questions, I analyzed more than 50 years of presidential press conferences, beginning with Dwight Eisenhower’s first on February 17, 1953, and ending on September 24, 2008 with the last address of George W. Bush’s last full year in office. I began with Eisenhower because he was the first president whose press conference statements were fully “on the record.” Notably, Eisenhower was also the first president to allow his press conferences to be televised. Paralleling my analyses in Chapters Three and Four, I ended my analysis with Bush, the most recent president to serve out his full term. During this period, which spanned 10 presidencies, I analyzed the entire universe of presidential press conferences ( $N=1,096$ ). The transcripts were downloaded from the American Presidency Project, which defines a presidential news conference as any formal exchange between a president and the press for which a transcript of questions and answers was kept (Ragsdale, 1998), and each news conference was examined in its entirety.

Once the texts were compiled, I began by tracking the *policy focus* of the president’s opening remarks in each news conference. I started here because a focus on foreign policy/foreign affairs is the entry point for foreign prioritization. Specifically, I was interested in (a) the relative emphasis that presidents and the press put on foreign policy as compared to

domestic policy and (b) the extent to which this may have changed over time. Next, I coded foreign *nation visibility* in press conferences, by tracking all invocations of foreign nations, people, and regions. Notably, this approach was more expansive than the visibility coding employed in Chapters Three and Four. Specifically, in addition to tracking explicit country mentions (e.g. “Russia”) I tracked references to foreign leaders (e.g. “Joseph Stalin”), foreign locations (e.g. “Moscow”) and foreign institutions (e.g. the “Kremlin”). I then identified which political actor took the *initiative* to introduce the nation into the discourse and when. Finally, I noted the *format* of each press conference (i.e. solo or joint in nature), the date and location, the party of the president, the number of words of each news conference, and the number of words of the president’s opening statement. Ultimately, this analysis buttresses and broadens the dissertation focus by placing nation visibility in a broader context of foreign prioritization in the face-to-face, direct interactions of the press and president in presidential press conference.

## Chapter Three

### Foreign Nation Visibility in Presidential Speeches, 1945-2008

In 1994, over 800,000 Rwandans were slaughtered in the span of a hundred days in the most efficient mass killing since World War II. The Rwandan genocide stands out historically, not only because of the sheer number of people who were murdered in such a short period of time, but also because so many nations—including the United States—did not publicly acknowledge the atrocities as they were occurring. U.S. President William J. Clinton, for example, did not mention Rwanda once in the five major presidential addresses that he delivered to the American people in 1994—in spite of the fact that three of those addresses focused almost entirely on foreign policy and all of them were delivered after the Rwandan genocide. The unfortunate consequence of Rwanda's invisibility on the presidential agenda during this time period is that the Clinton administration stood by and did nothing as the death toll rose into the hundreds of thousands (Power, 2001). President Clinton has since named failing to act in Rwanda his greatest “regret” as president (Harris, 2005) and, in March 1998, he publicly apologized to the Rwandan people, promising that the United States would “make every effort to increase...vigilance and strengthen” its “stand against those who would commit such atrocities in the future—here or elsewhere” (Clinton, 1998). Little more than a decade later this promise rings hollow. Subsequent conflicts in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the Darfur region of Western Sudan claimed the lives of millions, yet these countries were as invisible in presidential discourse as Rwanda was in the 1990s (Prunier, 2009; Herbert, 2009; Kristof, 2009).

The invisibility on the U.S. presidential agenda of attention-worthy countries like Rwanda, the DRC, and Sudan suggests that there may be structural dynamics in presidential

discourse that render some foreign nations invisible and others visible on the president's foreign policy agenda. In this chapter I explore this possibility. Specifically, the overarching goal of this analysis is to highlight which foreign nations are most and least visible in major presidential addresses to the nation, why some foreign nations are more visible than others, and whether foreign nation visibility and the factors that influence it have changed over time. I begin by briefly reviewing my theoretical expectations regarding foreign nation visibility and my method for testing these expectations. I then provide a descriptive overview of the contours of foreign nation visibility in presidential speeches followed by a direct test of my theoretical expectations. Finally, I discuss what these results mean for my theoretical expectations and explain why foreign nation visibility—and invisibility—is crucial to foreign prioritization in the United States.

### Conceptual Framework

The research in this chapter was driven by two primary theoretical expectations. First, I expected U.S. presidents to focus their rhetorical attention on the most powerful foreign nations in the international system (H1). This expectation is derived from political realism—the most dominant and enduring theory in international relations. According to the realist perspective, the primary motivation of all states in the international system is the maximization of power as a means for ensuring greater national security (Waltz, 1979; Mearsheimer, 2001). As commander-in-chief of the U.S. military and chief diplomat of the U.S. government, political realism suggests that U.S. presidents are especially sensitive to the relative power of rival states and, therefore, devote much of their attention to the behavior and potential threat posed by these

states. It stands to reason then that the more power that a foreign nation possesses, the more attention it is likely to receive in presidential discourse.

Second, I expected foreign nations with which the United States was in conflict to dominate the president's rhetorical agenda (H2). This expectation is also derived from the president's institutional role as commander-in-chief as well as the fact that the U.S. has been increasingly involved in foreign conflicts throughout the post-World War II era. The rise in U.S. military involvement around the world—due in large part to the U.S.'s position as a superpower in the international system and the expansion of the military establishment within the United States—has meant that international affairs, particularly international conflicts, have commanded increased importance on the president's agenda (Bacevich, 2007). Furthermore, the press, the public, and other political actors tend to look to the president for guidance in times of conflict (Zaller & Chiu, 1996). Together, such pressures make it both necessary and essential for presidents to devote considerable rhetorical attention to international conflicts, especially those in which the United States is involved.

In addition to my primary theoretical foci on power and conflict, I examined five other hypotheses derived from scholarship on international news flow. The inclusion of these hypotheses allowed me to test how well variables that have been found to be significant predictors of foreign nation visibility on the *U.S. news agenda* predict foreign nation visibility on the *U.S. presidential agenda*. The first was that the wealthier a foreign nation, the more likely it will be visible on the U.S. presidential agenda (H3). This hypothesis derived from the fact that Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has been found to be among the most consistent predictors of foreign nation visibility on the news agenda (Ahern, 1984; Gunaratne, 2001; Golan, 2006). The second was that the larger a foreign nation's population, the more likely it will be visible on the

U.S. presidential agenda (H4). This hypothesis was also derived from scholarship (e.g., Kim & Barnett, 1996; Nnaemeka & Richstad, 1981), although the results of previous studies have been mixed. The third was that the more economic interaction a foreign nation has with the United States, the more likely it will be visible on the U.S. presidential agenda (H5). This hypothesis was derived from the work of Kim (2002) who found that most international news in the United States comes from areas where “American...economic interests are at stake” (see also Shoemaker & Cohen, 2006; Wu, 1998). The fourth hypothesis was that the geographically closer a foreign nation is to the United States the more likely it is to be visible on the U.S. presidential agenda (H6), and it derived from scholarship that has found that geographic proximity affects news coverage in both domestic (Martin, 1988; Morton & Warren, 1992) and international news stories (Chang et al., 1987; Galtung & Ruge, 1965). Finally, the fifth was that the more U.S. troops are stationed in a foreign country, the more likely it is to be visible on the U.S. presidential agenda (H7). This hypothesis derived from Chang and Lee’s (1992) work, which found that the presence of the U.S. military in foreign nations increased the likelihood that they would be covered in the news.

To test these hypotheses I conducted a longitudinal content analysis of foreign nation visibility on the presidential rhetorical agenda. Focusing on major presidential addresses to the nation, I identified on a yearly basis which countries U.S. presidents mentioned and how often they mentioned them. Specifically, I examined 64 years of data, encompassing the entire post-World War II era, beginning on May 8, 1945 with Harry Truman’s inaugural presidential address and ending on September 24, 2008 with George W. Bush’s last address of his last full year in office. In total, 306 presidential speeches across 11 presidencies were analyzed—approximately five speeches per year. Ultimately, this analysis provides valuable insight into which foreign

countries over the past several decades have been most and least visible on the president's rhetorical agenda, why some countries have been more visible than others at particular points in time, and how foreign nation visibility and the factors that influence it have changed over time. Together, these results have important implications for the scholarly debate over the motivations and factors that drive American foreign policy and priorities.

### Descriptive Contours

In this section, I detail my findings regarding foreign nation visibility on the presidential agenda in the post-World War II era. I begin by mapping the volume of foreign nation mentions in presidential speeches over time. I then describe the contours of the president's foreign-focused rhetorical agenda, focusing on two important patterns in the data: (a) the *concentrated* nature of presidential attention to foreign nations and (b) the *episodic* nature of presidential attention to foreign nations. Present in these two patterns is a third feature of the data—the invisibility or near invisibility of most countries in the international system—which I discuss alongside these two patterns. Next, I test my hypotheses regarding the key factors that drive foreign nation visibility on the presidential agenda. The overarching goal of this section is to offer insight and provide generalizable conclusions about the nature of foreign nation visibility in presidential discourse.

The logical point of opening emphasis is with a descriptive overview of major presidential addresses. Between 1945 and 2008, 12 U.S. presidents gave 306 major speeches to the nation, or approximately five per year. During this 64-year period, 4,568 unique references were made to foreign nations in major presidential addresses, or approximately 71 per year. The over time volume of foreign nation mentions is visible in Figure 3.1, which shows the total

number of foreign invocations in presidential speeches on a yearly basis, 1945-2008. Notably, the yearly number of foreign mentions in presidential speeches varied widely during the period analyzed, from a low of two in 1949 to a high of 272 in 1986. More importantly, no clear over time pattern is evident in terms of the volume of foreign references in presidential speeches.

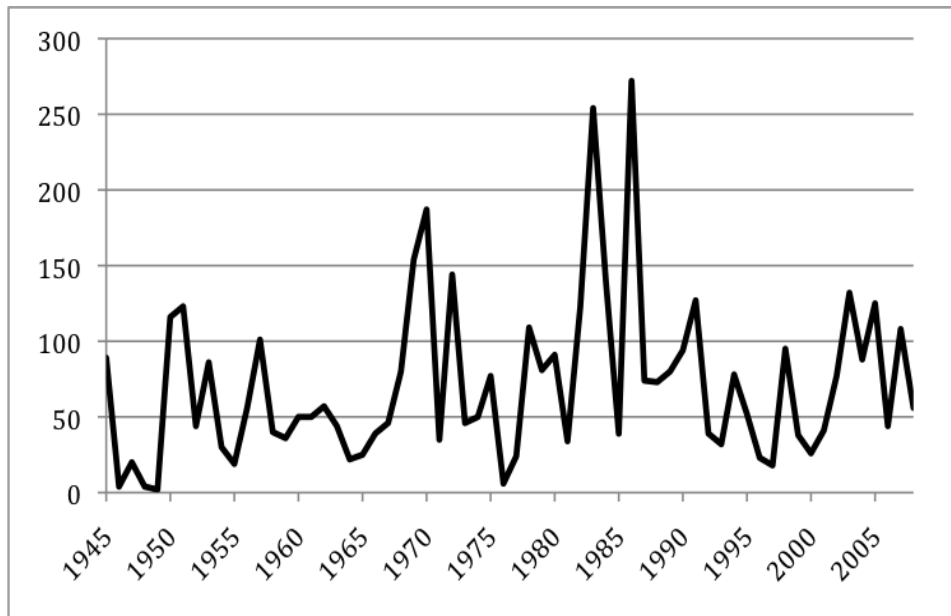


Figure 3.1 *Volume of foreign nation references in presidential speeches, by year, 1945-2008*

### *Concentration*

A defining feature of the president’s rhetorical agenda is its concentrated nature—a small number of foreign nations tend to dominate presidential attention to foreign affairs. The concentration of the president’s rhetorical attention to foreign nations is visible in Table 3.1, which presents the 20 most-mentioned foreign countries in major presidential addresses to the nation, from April 12, 1945 through September 24, 2008. The two most-mentioned foreign nations during this time—Vietnam and Iraq— together accounted for almost one-quarter (24.6%) of all foreign nation mentions. Broadening this analysis further, the 10 most-mentioned foreign nations comprised well over half (59.5%) of all mentions, and the 20 most-mentioned foreign

nations made up more than three-quarters (77.2%) of all mentions. To put these numbers into perspective, consider that there were 192 countries in the international system during the 65-year period analyzed and two of them, Vietnam and Iraq, together received more attention on the president's rhetorical agenda than the least-mentioned 172 countries *combined*. The president's rhetorical agenda in the post-World War II era has been downright oligopolistic—a handful of foreign countries have garnered the vast majority of presidential attention, while the rest of the countries in the international system have been given short shrift.

Table 3.1 *Twenty most-mentioned foreign nations in major presidential addresses, 1945-2008*

Country	Total Mentions	%	Cumulative %
1. Vietnam (North and South)	615	12.8%	12.8%
2. Iraq	517	11.3%	24.6%
3. Russia/Soviet Union	505	11.1%	35.6%
4. Korea (North and South)	212	6.0%	41.5%
5. Nicaragua	178	3.9%	45.4%
6. Israel	161	3.5%	48.9%
7. Afghanistan	140	3.1%	51.9%
8. Cuba	117	2.6%	54.5%
9. China	116	2.5%	57.0%
10. Iran	114	2.5%	59.5%
11. Germany (East and West)	97	2.1%	61.6%
12. Panama	96	2.1%	63.7%
13. Lebanon	91	2.1%	65.8%
14. Japan	83	2.0%	67.8%
15. El Salvador	80	1.8%	69.6%
16. Cambodia	72	1.8%	71.3%
17. Kuwait	69	1.6%	72.9%
18. United Kingdom	62	1.5%	74.4%
19. Poland	61	1.5%	75.9%
20. Egypt	55	1.4%	77.2%
<i>Total</i>	4,598	100%	100%

To further illustrate the concentrated nature of foreign nation visibility on the presidential agenda, I created a “word cloud” to portray the relative visibility and invisibility of every country mentioned by a U.S. president in a major national address in the post-World War II era. Word clouds are weighted lists of words in which font sizes vary according to the frequency with which each word appears in a given text (Sinclair & Cardew-Hall, 2008).<sup>11</sup> In the word cloud depicted in Figure 3.1, the font size of each country’s name varies according to the total number of times that country was mentioned by a U.S. president in a major presidential address between May 8, 1945 and September 24, 2008. The bigger the font size the more a country was mentioned—and the more visible the country was on the president’s rhetorical agenda. Likewise, the smaller the font size the less a country was mentioned—and the less visible the country was on the president’s rhetorical agenda.

As indicated in the word cloud, Vietnam, Iraq, and Russia were far more visible in presidential discourse in the post-World War II era than the other 189 countries in the international system. To a lesser extent, two-dozen other countries are also visible in the word cloud. However, the vast majority of countries are either barely visible or invisible. Specifically, in the 64-year period analyzed, 38% of countries ( $n=72$ ) were never mentioned in a major presidential address—and these countries are not present in the word cloud. Moreover, of those countries that were mentioned, 10% ( $n=19$ ) were only mentioned once—and these countries are

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<sup>11</sup> Word clouds are not common in communication research, but they have a long history in social science scholarship. The first word cloud was created by the noted social psychologist Stanley Milgram in an experiment in which he asked subjects to name landmarks in Paris, and then used their responses to create what he referred to as a collective “mental map” of the city. In Milgram’s mental map—or “word cloud” as it is now more commonly referred to in the literature—the font size of each landmark’s name was proportional to the number of times that it was mentioned by the subjects in the experiment (Milgram & Jodelet, 1976). As technology has made the creation of word clouds easier, scholars are increasingly using them as a way to visualize large spatio-temporal datasets such as mine (McNaught & Lamb, 2010). For example, Cooper, Collins, and Knotts (2009) created a word cloud to help visualize the most common words that appeared in the titles of the 25 leading political science journals between 2000 and 2007.



Vietnam, Iraq, Russia, Korea, Nicaragua, Israel, and Afghanistan—each *individually* received more rhetorical attention from U.S. presidents in the post-World War II era than the 51 countries in Africa *combined*. Indeed, Nicaragua ( $n=178$ ) and Israel ( $n=161$ ), with populations of six million and seven million respectively, were each, on their own, more visible on the president’s rhetorical agenda than the entire continent of Africa ( $n=121$ ), with a combined population of over one billion people.

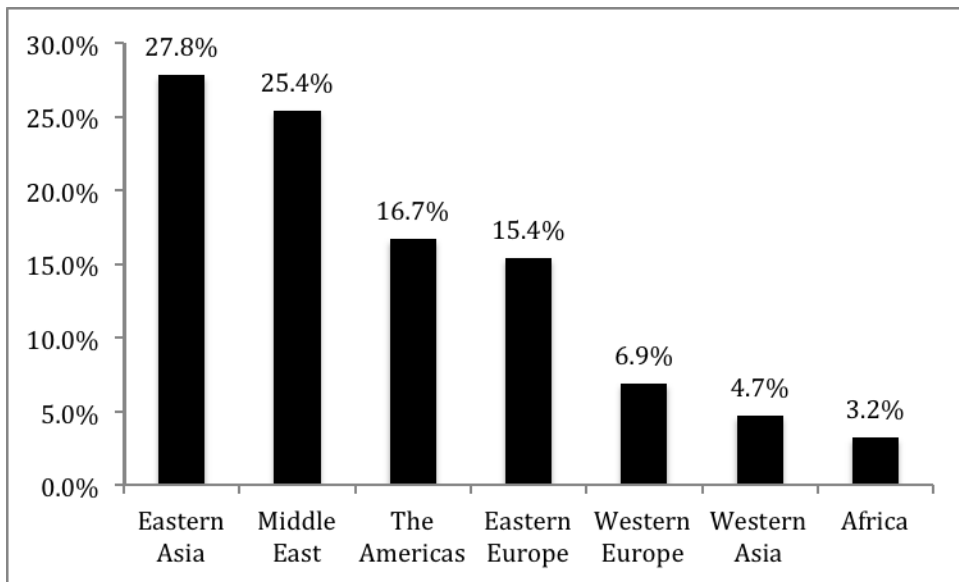


Figure 3.3 *Relative visibility of foreign regions in presidential speeches, 1945-2008*

Remarkably, 60% of African nations ( $n=32$ ) were invisible on the U.S. presidential agenda in the post-World War II era—that is, they were never mentioned. Another 14% ( $n=7$ ) were nearly invisible—that is, they were mentioned only once in the 64-year period analyzed. The most-mentioned African nation Somalia ( $n=48$ ), received the bulk of U.S. presidential attention when U.S. soldiers were engaged in a conflict there in the 1990s. At the same time, numerous other African nations plagued by much bloodier conflicts in which the United States has conspicuously not involved itself—for example, Sudan ( $n=5$ ), Rwanda ( $n=2$ ), the Democratic Republic of Congo ( $n=1$ ), and Uganda ( $n=0$ )—have been nearly invisible or

completely so on the president's rhetorical agenda. The on-going civil war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is particularly noteworthy in this respect—since 1998 an estimated 5.4 million people have died in this conflict, making it the deadliest since World War II (CBS, 2008). Just like a predator drone, however, this “stealth conflict” remains virtually undetected on the president's rhetorical radar as it extracts its deadly toll.

### *Episodicity*

A second important feature of foreign nation visibility on the president's rhetorical agenda is its episodic nature. This pattern is evident in Figure 3.3, which portrays the Herfindahl Index—or H-statistic as it is often labeled—for each year in the post-World War II era, 1945-2008. The H-statistic ranges in value from 0 to 1, where 0 indicates perfect agenda diversity—that is, each country in the international system receives the same amount of the president's rhetorical attention—and 1 indicates perfect agenda concentration—that is, one country in the international system receives all of the president's rhetorical attention. The higher the H-statistic, the more concentrated presidential attention; the lower the H-statistic, the more diffuse presidential attention. According to commonly accepted scholarly standards, a statistic below .10 represents a diverse agenda while a statistic above .18 indicates a highly focused agenda (Choi, 2009). The overall H-statistic for the 64 years analyzed is  $H = .29$ , which indicates that, in the aggregate, the president's foreign affairs discourse has been highly concentrated. However, the degree to which the president's attention has been concentrated on any given country or region has varied over time. The president's rhetorical agenda has, in general, been highly concentrated, but it spiked briefly prior to the Korean War in 1949, for a sustained period of time during the Vietnam War 1965-1973, briefly during the Somali Crisis in 1993 and again for a sustained period during the Iraq War 2003-2008. The presentation of these data suggests that foreign

nation visibility on the U.S. presidential agenda is not only highly concentrated, it is also highly episodic.

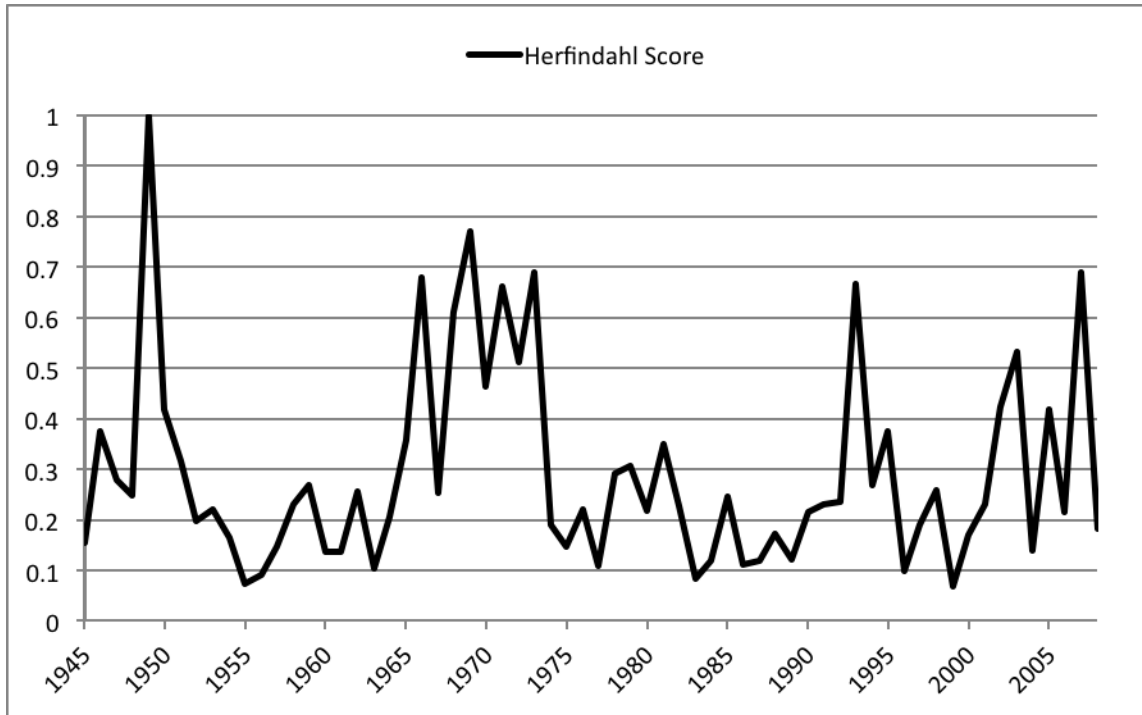


Figure 3.4 *Levels of concentration of foreign nation visibility presidential speeches, 1945-2008*

The episodic nature of presidential attention to foreign countries comes into sharper focus when we go beyond the aggregate distribution of foreign country mentions and consider the distribution in different geo-political eras. Table 3.2 lists the five most-mentioned foreign nations during the four geo-political eras analyzed: the early Cold War years (1945-1973), the late Cold War years (1974-1991), the post-Cold War years (1992-2001), and the post-September 11 years (2002-2008). An important trend evident in this table is the rise and fall of different countries on the president’s rhetorical agenda during each time period. Only three countries—Russia, Iraq, and Lebanon—were among the top five most-mentioned foreign nations in more than one time period. Russia made the top five in the early Cold War, the late Cold War, and the post-Cold

War eras; Iraq was the most-mentioned foreign nation in the post-Cold War and post-September 11 eras; and Lebanon made the top five in the late Cold War and post-September 11 eras. The other 16 countries in Table 3.2 made the top five in only one of the four geo-political eras analyzed. Again, these data are illustrative of the episodic nature of presidential attention to foreign nations.

Table 3.2 *Five most-mentioned foreign nations in major presidential addresses by yearly mean number of mentions and percentage of total mentions, 1945-2008*

	Era 1 Early Cold War (1945-1973)	Era 2 Late Cold War (1974-1991)	Era 3 Post-Cold War (1992-2001)	Era 4 Post-Sept 11 (2002-2008)
1	Vietnam 28.3 (31.6%)	Russia 15.8 (16.5%)	Iraq 6.5 (13.4%)	Iraq 54.3 (59.7%)
2	Korea 9.2 (11.2%)	Nicaragua 9.9 (10.2%)	Bosnia 4.9 (10.4%)	Afghanistan 9.1 (10.4%)
3	Russia 6.7 (10.9%)	Israel 5.4 (5.6%)	Haiti 4.7 (9.7%)	Iran 3.7 (4.6%)
4	Germany 3.0 (4.3%)	Panama 5.3 (5.4%)	Somalia 4.6 (9.5%)	Saudi Arabia 1.3 (1.4%)
5	China 2.2 (3.6%)	Lebanon 4.8 (4.9%)	Russia 2.3 (5.0%)	Lebanon 1.3 (1.4%)
Top 5	49.4 (61.6%)	42.2 (42.5%)	23.0 (48%)	79.7 (77.5%)

Another important trend evident in Table 3.2 relates to conflict: the heightened visibility of the foreign nations in the table is suggestive that conflict in general—and U.S. conflict in particular—may be an important factor in determining foreign nation visibility in U.S. presidential discourse. Russia, for example, received considerable attention in major presidential addresses during the Early and late Cold War eras, when it was a global superpower and it represented a very real military threat to the United States. After the dissolution of the Soviet

Union in 1991, however, Russia receded from the presidential agenda in subsequent eras. Indeed, nearly every country in Table 3.2 appears during a geo-political era when the United States—or a major U.S. ally—was in conflict with that country. The United States, for example, was directly involved in the Korean War (1950-1953), the Vietnam War (1965-1973) and the Berlin Blockade (1948) in the early Cold War years; the Panama Invasion (1989), the Gulf War (1990-1991) and the Lebanon Crisis (1982-1984) in the late Cold War years; the Bosnian War (1992-1995), the Haiti Invasion (1994) and the Somali Civil War (1992-1994) in the post-Cold War years; and the Iraq War (2003-2011) and the Afghanistan War (2001-present) in the post-September 11 years. The U.S. government was also indirectly involved in the Nicaraguan Contra War (1979-1991), and, since September 11, 2001, it has perceived Iran as a threat to U.S. national security and a potential enemy in a future military conflict.

The word cloud presented in Figure 3.4 further illustrates the episodic nature of foreign nation visibility on the presidential agenda. During the early Cold War era, three countries—Vietnam, Korea, and Russia—commanded most of the president’s attention. During the late Cold War era and, in particular, during the post-Cold War Era there was much more diversity on the president’s rhetorical agenda. During the post-September 11 era, however, Iraq and, to a lesser extent, Afghanistan, *overwhelmingly* dominated presidential discourse. To borrow a phrase from Walter Lippman, these results suggest that presidential attention to foreign countries is “like the beam of a searchlight that moves restlessly about, bringing one episode and then another out of darkness into vision” (Lippman, 1922, 229). Simply put, at any given time, a small number of foreign countries are highly visible on the president’s rhetorical agenda, but this visibility does not usually last and it is highly variable. Moreover, the foreign countries that U.S. presidents

tend to focus their attention on are, more often than not, countries that are in conflict—usually with the United States.



Figure 3.5 Foreign nation visibility in presidential speeches, by era, 1945-2008

Not only have there been major fluctuations in presidential attention to specific foreign countries in the post-World War II era—for example, Vietnam during the early Cold War years and Iraq during the post-September 11 years—there have also been major fluctuations in presidential attention to different geographic *regions*. Table 3.3 illustrates this pattern, showing the regional distribution of foreign country mentions in major presidential addresses during the four geo-political eras analyzed. Eastern Asia—largely due to the Vietnam War—dominated the president’s rhetorical agenda in the early Cold War years; the Americas—largely due to the perceived Communist threat in Central America—commanded much of the agenda in the late Cold War years; and the Middle East—largely due to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan—dominated the agenda 2001 to 2008. The spikes in presidential attention paid to Eastern Asia and the Middle East are particularly striking. Eastern Asia went from representing 59% of the president’s rhetorical agenda in the early Cold War era to only 5% in the post-September 11 era. Meanwhile, the Middle East went from representing 6% of the agenda in the early Cold War era to a stunning 72% in the post-September 11 era. Interestingly, Africa—nearly invisible in the early Cold War and late Cold War eras—became moderately visible in the post-Cold War era, largely due to America’s involvement in the conflict in Somalia in 1994. However, the continent receded from the agenda once again in the post-September 11 era as presidential attention turned to the Middle East.

Table 3.3 *Foreign region visibility in presidential speeches, by era, 1945-2008*

	<b>Era 1</b> <b>Early CW</b> <b>(1945-1973)</b>	<b>Era 2</b> <b>Late CW</b> <b>(1974-1991)</b>	<b>Era 3</b> <b>Post-CW</b> <b>(1992-2001)</b>	<b>Era 4</b> <b>post-9/11</b> <b>(2002-2008)</b>
	% (mean)	% (mean)	% (mean)	% (mean)
The Americas	5.7 (.15)	32.9 (1.00)	16.7 (.22)	2.1 (.05)
Western Europe	11.4 (.39)	4.2 (.23)	4.8 (.10)	3.3% (.14)
Eastern Europe	15.0 (1.08)	19.3 (2.01)	19.5 (.44)	2.9 (.12)
Middle East	6.2 (.35)	27.9 (1.80)	24.2 (.71)	72.2 (4.33)
Western Asia	1.4 (.15)	4.5 (.46)	8.1 (.21)	11.7 (.62)
Eastern Asia	59.3 (2.66)	8.5 (.40)	11.3 (.20)	5.4 (.16)
Africa	.9 (.03)	2.7 (.05)	15.4 (.13)	2.4 (.04)

Of all the regions depicted in Table 3.3, Central America is particularly illustrative of the episodic nature of foreign region visibility on the U.S. presidential agenda. In three of the four eras analyzed—the early Cold War years, the post-Cold War years, and the post-September 11 years—the seven countries that constitute this region (Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama) made up less than one percent of all foreign country mentions in major presidential addresses. In total, across these three eras, these seven countries were mentioned 16 times in 47 years, or approximately once every three years. During the late Cold War years, however, the same seven countries were mentioned 402 times in 18

years—approximately 22 times a year. Indeed, a Central American country was 64 times more likely to be mentioned by the president in a major national address during the late Cold War years than in the other three time periods combined. In fact, 96% of all references to Central America in major presidential national addresses to the nation in the post-World War II era occurred during the late Cold War years—when the region accounted for nearly one-quarter (23.3%) of the president’s rhetorical agenda. Central America is a relatively small region in a big world, but presidential attention to it is indicative of both the concentrated and episodic nature of presidential attention to foreign affairs. In the 1980s, when the region was considered a front in the war against communism, it garnered considerable attention on the president’s rhetorical agenda, but in the years before and since it has been almost invisible.

### Structural Dynamics

The heightened visibility of certain countries and regions in major presidential addresses to the nation and the complete or near invisibility of other countries and regions suggests that structural dynamics are likely driving foreign nation visibility on the presidential agenda. Specifically, I theorized that foreign nation visibility on the U.S. presidential agenda in the post-World War II era would be driven by seven variables that can be usefully categorized into three distinct conceptual areas: a foreign nation’s *power*, its political and economic *significance* to the United States, and its geographic *proximity* to the United States. For *power*, I included three indicators in my analysis—two related to a nation’s capabilities and one related to its reputation in the international system. I treated a nation’s population size as an indicator of its demographic power and I treated a nation’s GDP as an indicator of its economic power—these data were gathered from the Expanded Trade and GDP database. Notably, scholarship has found both variables to be good predictors of foreign nation visibility in news coverage (Ahern 1984; Chang

& Lee, 1992; Gunarante, 2001; Dupree, 1971; Nnaemeka & Richstad, 1981; Kim & Barnett, 1996). Lastly, I included a dichotomous measure of reputational power derived from the Correlations of War (COW) project, which is based on a survey of International Relations experts who were asked to identify which nations were considered major powers by other nations in the same era. This measure of power is common in scholarship examining factors that contribute to war and peace, but is new to the study of foreign nation visibility. Notably, six countries, not counting the United States, were regarded as major powers during the timeframe analyzed: the United Kingdom (1945-2008), China (1950-2008), France (1945-2008), Germany (1945, 1991-2008), Japan (1945, 1991-2008), and Russia (1945-2008).

My classification of a foreign nation's *significance* to U.S. foreign policy was based on one measure of economic significance and two measures of military significance to the United States. Economic significance was operationalized in standard fashion as the level of trade flow (exports plus imports) between the United States and another nation. These data come from the Direction of Trade Statistics (DOTS) database, which is maintained by the International Monetary Fund, and they are measured in U.S. dollars. Military significance was operationalized first as the number of U.S. troops stationed in a nation; these data come from the Global U.S. Troop Deployment database maintained by the Center for Data Analysis. The second measure of military significance was dichotomous—the existence of a military conflict between the United States and a foreign nation—and these data were derived from the International Crisis Behavior Project and the Uppsala Conflict Data Program. Finally, as a measure of geographic *proximity* to the United States, I gathered data on the geographic distance in kilometers between Washington, D.C. and the capital city of each country. These data come from the Centre D'Etudes Prospectives et D'Informations Internationales (CEPII) database.

As a first test of my theoretical expectations regarding these structural dynamics, I ran bivariate Pearson's correlations between my seven predictor variables—population size (H1), economic size (H2), reputation (H3), trade flow with the United States (H4), total U.S. troops in country (H5), conflict with the United States (H6), and geographic distance from the United States (H7)—and my outcome variable, mentions of foreign nations in major presidential national addresses.<sup>12</sup> A positive correlation coefficient indicated that as one variable deviated from its mean, the other variable deviated from its mean in the same direction. A negative correlation coefficient indicated that as one variable deviated from its mean (e.g., increased), the other variable deviated from its mean in the opposite direction (e.g., decreased). Standardized bivariate coefficients range in value from -1 to +1, where a value of +1 indicates that two variables are perfectly positively correlated—i.e. they move together in the same direction—and a value of -1 means that they are perfectly negatively correlated—i.e. they move together in opposite directions. Generally speaking, values of  $\pm .1$  represent a small effect,  $\pm .3$  represents a medium effect, and  $\pm .5$  represents a large effect (Field, 2009).

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<sup>12</sup> Notably, I also examined the extent to which each predictor variable was correlated with the other predictor variables included in my analysis. The most highly correlated predictor variables were population and reputation ( $p=.463$ ), trade flow and economic size ( $r=.255$ ), trade flow and reputation ( $r=.250$ ), troops and U.S. conflict ( $r=.201$ ), trade flow and population ( $r=.190$ ), troops and GDP ( $r=.139$ ), population and distance ( $r=.119$ ), reputation and GDP ( $r=.112$ ), reputation and troops ( $r=.102$ ), and troops and trade flow ( $r=.100$ ). The rest of the predictor variable combinations were correlated at  $r<.100$ .

Table 3.4 *Correlations between presidential mentions and variables of predicted importance, by era, 1945-2008*

		<b>TOTALS Post-WWII (1945-2008)</b>	<b>Era 1 Early CW (1945-1973)</b>	<b>Era 2 Late CW (1974-1991)</b>	<b>Era 3 Post-CW (1992-2001)</b>	<b>Era 4 Post-9/11 (2002-2008)</b>
<b>POWER</b>	<b>Population Size</b>	.063***	.079***	.074***	.078***	.013
	<b>Economic Size</b>	-.023	-.030	.008	-.036	-.490
	<b>Reputation</b>	.104***	.110***	.178***	.088***	.007
<b>SIGNIFICANCE</b>	<b>Trade Flow</b>	.006	-.004	.009	.045	.011
	<b>U.S. Troops</b>	.314***	.446***	.011	.055	.706**
	<b>U.S. Conflict</b>	.494***	.497***	.359***	.508***	.700**
<b>PROXIMITY</b>	<b>Distance</b>	.012	.073***	-.071***	-.004	.029

\*\*\*correlations are significant at  $p < .001$ ; \*\* $p < .01$

The results in Table 3.4 provide partial support for four of my hypotheses. Specifically, the first column in the table shows a significant and large correlation between foreign country conflict with the United States and presidential mentions (.494,  $p < .001$ ), a significant and medium correlation between in-country presence of U.S. troops and presidential mentions (.314,  $p < .001$ ), a significant but very small correlation between a nation's reputation and presidential mentions (.104,  $p < .001$ ), and a significant but negligible correlation between a nation's population and presidential mentions (.063,  $p < .001$ ). The other three predictor variables—a foreign nation's economic size, the distance from its capital city to Washington, D.C., and its

trade with the United States—were not significant, and, thus, not supported. These non-findings are noteworthy considering that previous scholarship has found economic size and trade with the United States to be significant predictors of foreign nation visibility in news content (Pietiläinen, 2006; Jones, Van Aelst, & Vliegenthart, in press). Overall, this analysis is suggestive that U.S. military involvement and U.S. national security interests are the primary driver of foreign nation visibility on the rhetorical agenda of major presidential speeches.

Going beyond the aggregate correlations for the entire 64 years to closer analysis of the correlations during the different time periods analyzed offers insight into how factors that influence foreign nation visibility have changed over time. In particular, two trends stand out. The first is that a foreign nation's reputation as a predictor of its visibility on the president's rhetorical agenda has decreased in importance over time. This is evidenced by the fact that the correlation coefficients for this variable went from .178 during the late Cold War years to .088 during the post-Cold War years to .007 during the post-September 11 years. Moreover, this variable was statistically significant—at  $p < .001$ —in the first three geo-political eras but not so in the post-September 11 era. The second notable trend is that U.S. national security interests have increased in predictive importance for foreign nation visibility on the president's rhetorical agenda over time. This is evidenced by the correlation coefficients for the conflict variable—all significant at the  $p < .001$  level—which went from a low of .359 during the late Cold War years to .508 during the post-Cold War years to a high of .700 during the post-September 11 years. Similarly, the correlation coefficients for the U.S. troops variable shifted from statistical insignificance during the late Cold War and post-Cold War years to being statistically significant and extremely high in the post-9/11 era (.706,  $p < .001$ ). Interestingly, trade with the United States and economic size GDP—two variables that scholarship suggests are good predictors of foreign

nation visibility on the *news* agenda—were not statistically significant at any point during the post-World War II era on the presidential agenda. These results are suggestive that presidents primarily highlight other countries in their major speeches when they pose a threat to U.S. national security or interests.

As a further test of my hypotheses, I ran a regression model to examine the relative influence of my predictor variables on presidential mentions. I could not run a standard ordinary least squares (OLS) regression because my outcome variable, presidential mentions, was abnormally distributed—more specifically, it was: (a) positively skewed and (b) zero-inflated. A positively skewed distribution means that the tail on the right side is longer than the tail on the left side and the bulk of the values (including the median) fall to the left of the mean. A zero-inflated distribution means that the proportion of zero counts is greater than expected on the basis of the mean of the non-zero counts. To account for these complications in my data, I ran a zero-inflated negative binomial (ZINB) regression model. Like the correlational analysis, this model included three predictor variables that relate to the foreign country’s power—population size, economic size, and reputation—three predictors that concern a foreign nation’s significance to U.S. foreign policy—trade flow, U.S. troops, and U.S. conflict—and a measure of the geographic distance from the United States. The results of the overall model are displayed in the first column of Table 3.5.

Table 3.5 *Zero-inflated negative binomial regression model with presidential mentions as criterion variable*

		<b>TOTALS</b> <b>Post-WWII</b> <b>(1945-2008)</b>	<b>Era 1</b> <b>Early CW</b> <b>(1945-1973)</b>	<b>Era 2</b> <b>Late CW</b> <b>(1974-1991)</b>	<b>Era 3</b> <b>Post-CW</b> <b>(1992-2001)</b>	<b>Era 4</b> <b>Post-9/11</b> <b>(2002-2008)</b>
<b>POWER</b>	<b>Population Size</b>	.999 <sup>o</sup> (.000)•	.999 (.000)	.999* (.000)	.999 (.000)	.999 (.000)
	<b>Economic Size</b>	.999*** (.000)	.999 (.000)	.999 (.000)	.999 (.000)	1.000 (.000)
	<b>Reputation</b>	3.885*** (.686)	4.703*** (1.204)	5.665*** (1.935)	3.239*** (.831)	1.721 (.822)
<b>SIGNIFICANCE</b>	<b>Trade Flow</b>	.999*** (.000)	.999 (.000)	.999 (.000)	1.000 (.000)	.999 (.000)
	<b>U.S. Troops</b>	.999*** (.270)	.999*** (.270)	1.000 (.270)	.999 (.270)	1.000 (.000)
	<b>U.S. Conflict</b>	25.704*** (5.88)	28.841*** (8.403)	14.192*** (5.624)	46.377*** (22.454)	41.683*** (36.027)
<b>PROXIMITY</b>	<b>Distance</b>	.999*** (.000)	.999 (.000)	.999*** (.000)	1.000 (.000)	1.000** (.000)

\*\*\* significant at  $p < .001$ ; \* significant  $p < .05$ ; <sup>o</sup> = incidence response ratio (IRR); • = standard error.

The overall model was statistically significant ( $\chi^2=363.88$ ,  $df=7$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $N=7,053$ ), as were six of the seven predictor variables. The only predictor variable that was not statistically significant was population size. Notably, the two strongest predictors of presidential mentions were U.S. conflict and international reputation. Specifically, the model estimated that a country in conflict with the United States—holding all other variables constant in the model—received 25.7 more presidential mentions per year than a country that was not in conflict with the United

States. Likewise, the model estimated that a country that has a reputation as a powerful foreign nation—again, holding all other variables constant in the model—received 3.9 more presidential mentions per year than a country that was not a major power. These results corroborate the correlational analysis discussed above—reputational power is a good predictor of foreign nation visibility on the president’s rhetorical agenda, but conflict is a much stronger predictor.

Finally, I ran four additional models for each geo-political era. The results of each analysis are displayed in columns two through five of Table 3.5. Notably, all four models were statistically significant: the early Cold War era ( $\chi^2=168.15$ ,  $df=7$ ,  $p<.001$ ,  $N=2434$ ), the late Cold War era ( $\chi^2=144.68$ ,  $df=7$ ,  $p<.001$ ,  $N=2506$ ), the post-Cold War era ( $\chi^2=114.24$ ,  $df=7$ ,  $p<.001$ ,  $N=1618$ ), and post-September 11 era ( $\chi^2=37.96$ ,  $df=7$ ,  $p<.001$ ,  $N=495$ ). Examination of the models during different time periods mostly corroborated the correlational analysis, as the same two trends stand out. Specifically, the regression model confirmed that reputation as a predictor of a foreign nation’s visibility on the president’s rhetorical agenda has decreased in importance over time. This is evidenced by the fact that the incidence rate ratios (IRRs) for this variable declined from 5.7 during the late Cold War years to 3.3 during the post-Cold War years to 1.7 during the post–September 11 years. Moreover, this variable was statistically significant ( $p<.001$ ) in the first three geo-political eras but not so in the post-September 11 era. The second notable trend involved the number of U.S. troops in a country and the presence of conflict with the United States. Whereas the correlational analysis suggested that the troops variable had become more significant over time, this regression analysis, after controlling for other variables in the model, suggested the troops variable has actually become less statistically significant over time. Corroborating the statistical analysis, the regression model also found that conflict has increased in importance over time. We know this because the IRRs for this variable increased

from a value of 14.2 in the late Cold War era to a value of 41.7 in the post-September 11 era. In short, these results largely corroborate the correlational analysis discussed above—reputation was a moderate predictor of foreign nation visibility for most of the post-WWII era, but conflict with the United States was far and away the best predictor, and it has become more predictive over time. Further, after controlling for other variables, the other hypotheses derived from international news flow scholarship were not supported.

### Discussion

This chapter sought to illuminate which foreign nations have been most and least visible on the presidential rhetorical agenda, why some foreign nations are more visible than others, and how foreign nation visibility and the factors that influence it have changed over time. Recall that I began this research with two primary theoretical expectations. First, I expected U.S. presidents to focus their rhetorical attention on the most powerful foreign nations in the international system (H1). Second, I expected foreign nations in conflict with the United States to dominate the president's rhetorical agenda (H2). Notably, I also began the research in this chapter with several additional hypotheses derived from the literature on international news flow relating to: population size (H3), economic size (H4), trade flow (H5), U.S. troops (H6), and geographic distance (H7). To test these theoretical expectations, I conducted a longitudinal content analysis of foreign nation visibility in presidential discourse. Focusing on major presidential addresses to the nation, I identified on a yearly basis which countries U.S. presidents mentioned and how often they mentioned them. In total, I examined 306 presidential speeches across 11 presidencies, beginning on May 8, 1945 with Harry Truman's inaugural address and ending on September 24, 2008 with the last address of George W. Bush's last full year in office. Notably, my results

moderately supported my first theoretical expectation—related to power—and they strongly supported my second theoretical expectation—related to conflict.

In Chapter Six I will address the implications of my findings more broadly, but three preliminary observations can be made here. First, foreign nation visibility on the president’s rhetorical agenda in the post-World War II era has been both highly *concentrated*—in the sense that presidential attention to foreign affairs has been disproportionately focused on a handful of countries and regions—and highly *episodic*—in the sense that the spotlight of presidential attention has jumped around quite a bit. Second, the flip-side of the president’s highly concentrated and episodic foreign affairs agenda is that the affairs of most of the countries in the international system were rarely talked about by U.S. presidents in their major addresses to the nation, unless they happened to relate to the primary focus of presidential attention. Third, presidential discourse about foreign affairs did not—and does not—occur in a vacuum, but rather in the context of concrete geopolitical realities. My results clearly show that when U.S. presidents have referred to foreign nations in their major national addresses, more often than not, they have done so in the context of a major international crisis or conflict—usually one in which the United States has been directly involved.

The implications of these research findings are important. After all, the president is the most powerful person and the presidency is the most powerful institution in the U.S. political system. No other political actor in the United States has the same capability to set the points of focus for other political actors, and nowhere is this power to influence perception more pronounced than in the realm of foreign policy. Through presidential communications, the president has the power, quite literally, to transform the “world outside” into the “pictures in our heads” (Lippman, 1922). Given this incredible power, it is significant that U.S. presidents have

concentrated so much of their rhetorical attention on so few countries, that the focus of most of this attention has been on countries with which the United States has been in conflict, and that so many other attention-worthy countries and conflicts have remained invisible in presidential discourse.

Of course, the results presented in this chapter only paint a partial picture of foreign nation visibility in U.S. political discourse. Further analyses are needed to fill in the rest of the picture. In the next chapter I take a step in this direction by examining foreign nation visibility on the U.S. news agenda. This examination is followed by a broader analysis of foreign prioritization in presidential press conferences in Chapter Five.

## Chapter Four

### Foreign Nation Visibility in News Coverage, 1945-2008

In his famous treatise *Democracy in America*, Alexis de Tocqueville (1900: 235-239) observed that “in the conduct of foreign affairs” democracies too often “obey impulse rather than prudence” because citizens are easily “led astray by ignorance.” Concerns regarding knowledge about foreign matters remain relevant today as study after study shows that Americans lack basic information about the rest of the world. For example, a 2006 National Geographic poll found that a majority of U.S. adults 18 to 24 in age did not know that Africa’s largest country, Sudan, was in Africa, and roughly half could not identify India on a map of Asia. Such unawareness led the Strategic Task Force on Education Abroad (2003: iv) to conclude that “America’s ignorance of the world” had become “a national liability.” Further, research has shown that Americans are less knowledgeable about foreign affairs than citizens of other developed democracies (Iyengar et al., 2009; Curran et al., 2009). Considering the United States’ position as a democracy and the world’s sole superpower, the ignorance of its citizenry is more than a little alarming and it raises questions about the wisdom and democratic legitimacy of U.S. foreign policy.

It may be unfair to blame the American people for their lack of foreign affairs knowledge, considering that foreign matters are unobtrusive—in the sense that most people have little to no direct contact with other countries (Zucker, 1978). It is more difficult to exculpate the U.S. news media, however, because they are the institution primarily responsible for transforming the “world outside”—in this case the world outside U.S. borders—into “the pictures in our heads” (Lippman, 1922). The fact is the news media are central in the creation, reinforcement, and promotion of specific ways of seeing the world. Their communications

produce a political geography that maps who, what, and where America is relative to other nations. In this respect, news professionals are like cartographers who choose which nations to highlight on the political map, creating, in Gasher's (2007: 299) words, "categories of inclusion and exclusion, relevant and irrelevant, we and they." With an interest in foreign nation visibility in U.S. public discourse and the agendas of both presidents and news media, I believe it is crucially important to understand which countries are most and least visible in U.S. news discourse, and why this may be so.

With this in mind, this chapter contributes a longitudinal perspective to the study of foreign nation visibility on the U.S. news agenda. Paralleling Chapter Three, which focused on foreign nation visibility on the U.S. presidential agenda, my goal in this chapter is to highlight which foreign nations are most and least visible in news discourse, why some foreign nations are more visible than others, and whether foreign nation visibility and the factors that influence it have changed over time. To begin, I briefly review my theoretical expectations regarding foreign nation visibility in news coverage and my method for testing these expectations. I then provide a descriptive overview of the contours of foreign nation visibility in the news, by comparing the print news agenda, the television news agenda, and the presidential agenda—focusing on the concentration and variability of each. These comparisons are followed by direct tests of my theoretical expectations. Finally, I discuss implications of my results for my expectations and the major similarities and differences between foreign nation visibility in U.S. news and presidential discourses.

### Conceptual Framework

Communication scholars have long been interested in identifying the key determinants of what makes foreign countries newsworthy and why some countries are considered more

newsworthy than others. Scholarship in this vein has typically employed the terminology of *international news flow*, or simply *news flow*, to refer to what I characterize as *foreign nation visibility*—that is, the amount of attention that a foreign nation receives in news coverage. News flow generally focuses on one of two types of reasons that foreign matters become present in U.S. mainstream news: event-driven factors or structural factors (Chang & Lee, 1992). Event-driven factors are idiosyncratic. They are intrinsic to foreign events and they pertain directly to what happens, when, and how—for example, the number of casualties in a conflict or the number of dollars worth of damage in a disaster. Generally speaking, the more deviant or extreme a foreign event, the more likely it is to receive news coverage (Shoemaker et al., 1991; Shoemaker et al., 1986). Structural factors are the ongoing material realities within which a country exists in a globalized world. These factors speak to relational dynamics such as trade and conflict between countries as well as power dynamics such as the size of a country’s territory, population, economy or military. Event-driven and structural factors are not mutually exclusive, but theoretical expectations, data collection, and analysis do tend to vary depending on which factors are being analyzed. Because of the ambitious longitudinal design of this study, I focus exclusively on the potential influence of structural factors on U.S. news coverage of foreign nations.

News flow scholarship has identified dozens of structural factors associated with foreign nation visibility in U.S. news coverage. For example, a foreign nation’s Gross Domestic Product (e.g., Robinson & Sparkes, 1976), its military expenditure (e.g., Golan & Wanta, 2003), its population size (e.g., Dupree, 1971), its geographic proximity to the United States (e.g., Wu, 1998), and its level of trade with the United States (e.g., Golan, 2006) all have been found to be correlated with foreign nation visibility in U.S. news coverage. Notably, however, among these

studies there has been relatively little longitudinal—i.e. over-time—research on news coverage of foreign countries. This longitudinal gap in scholarship is ironic given that the term “news flow” connotes a dynamic process, and yet most studies have examined coverage at one point in time. The lack of over-time research is also problematic because it can spur incorrect inferences concerning the level and nature of foreign nation visibility, and it makes it difficult to compare the results of studies conducted at different points in time.

My analysis of the U.S. news agenda is driven by three primary theoretical expectations relating to *power*, *significance*, and *proximity*. First, I expected U.S. news outlets to focus significant attention on the most powerful foreign nations in the international system (H1). Second, I expected U.S. news media to focus considerable attention on foreign nations perceived to be significant—especially economically and politically—to U.S. foreign policy (H2). Third, I expected U.S. news media to focus more attention on foreign nations that were geographically closer to the United States (H3). I expected each of these structural factors to influence foreign nation visibility in U.S. news coverage, but because of the lack of longitudinal research in this area empirical analysis was required to determine whether these factors have become *differentially important* over time as predictors of foreign nation visibility on the news agenda. Thus, underlying each of my theoretical expectations is a research question. First, has power as a predictor of foreign nation visibility in U.S. news coverage increased, stayed the same, or decreased in importance over time? Second, has significance as a predictor of foreign nation visibility in U.S. news coverage increased, stayed the same, or decreased in importance over time? Finally, has geographic proximity as a predictor of foreign nation visibility in U.S. news coverage increased, stayed the same, or decreased in importance over time? Because of the changing nature of international affairs, it seems likely that news coverage has changed in

meaningful ways over time; however, it is simultaneously plausible that the deeply rooted nature of news practices has constrained these types of shifts in all but the most dramatic instances.

To explore my hypotheses and research questions, I conducted a longitudinal content analysis of two major U.S. news sources: *The New York Times* and CBS Evening News. My analysis of the *Times* covers the same dates as my analysis of major presidential addresses in Chapter Three, 1945 to 2008. Because the Historical *New York Times* Index has a time lag of several years, I was only able to capture content through 2008 at the time that I conducted this content analysis. Recognizing the elite and potentially unique character of this news outlet, I supplemented my analysis of the *Times* with an examination of CBS Evening News, which was the most watched television news network during the period analyzed (Pew, 2009). CBS Evening News became network television's first half-hour weeknight news broadcast in 1963, but its broadcasts were not regularly recorded and preserved until 1968. For a conceptual reason that I will explain shortly, my analysis of CBS begins in 1974 and runs through 2008. I gathered *Times* content from abstracts categorized by the Historical *New York Times* Index and CBS content from abstracts catalogued by the Vanderbilt Television News Archives.

The content analysis consisted of a single coding item—a yearly count of the total number of abstracts for each news outlet in which a foreign country was mentioned. I chose to focus on news abstracts rather than news stories because I wanted to limit my analysis to news coverage in which the foreign country covered was a significant focus of the story. My unit of analysis was the news abstract, and the specific keywords that I identified were the names—and variations on those names—of each foreign country that existed in the international system during the period analyzed, 1945-2008. Ultimately, this analysis provides insight about which foreign countries over the past several decades have been most and least visible in U.S. news

discourse, why some countries have been more visible than others, and how the factors that influence foreign nation visibility have changed over time.

### Descriptive Contours

In this section, I detail broad patterns in foreign nation visibility in U.S. news in the post-World War II era. I begin by addressing the decline of the *Times* and CBS foreign news holes. Next, building on my analysis of foreign nation visibility on the presidential agenda in Chapter Three, I present a direct comparison of the contours of foreign nation visibility in *Times* coverage and major presidential addresses between 1945 and 2008. This is followed by more finely grained comparisons of foreign nation visibility in *Times* and CBS coverage (beginning in 1974) and presidential discourse during four distinct geo-political eras: (a) early Cold War (1945-1973), (b) late Cold War (1974-1991), (c) post-Cold War (1992-2001), and post-September 11 (2002-2008). Throughout my analysis, I focus on the relative *concentration* of foreign nation visibility in discourse, by which I mean the extent to which news and presidential attention to foreign affairs disproportionately focused on a relatively small number of countries and regions. After detailing these contours, I test my specific hypotheses regarding the factors that drive foreign nation visibility on the news agenda, focusing on the three key factors of power, significance, and proximity.

#### *Declining foreign news holes*

Between 1945 and 2008, the number of countries in the international system more than tripled, from 63 to 192. At the same time, the *Times* and CBS foreign news holes actually *decreased* during this period. This reality is evident in Figures 4.1 and 4.2, which depict the total number of news abstracts in which every foreign country in the international system was

mentioned in each news outlet. During the early Cold War years, the average yearly number of *Times* abstracts in which a foreign nation was mentioned was 17,522. This number dropped significantly during the late Cold War years to 13,336; it dropped further during the post-Cold War years to 11,123; and it fell to its lowest point during the post-9/11 years to 8,960. A similar pattern is evident for CBS. During late Cold War years, the average yearly number of CBS News abstracts in which a foreign nation was mentioned was 2,532. This number dropped by almost 50% during the post-Cold War years to 1,336, and it stayed at this much lower level ( $n=1,338$ ) during the post-9/11. This is a disturbing development that has potentially contributed to the troubling lack of citizen knowledge about foreign affairs in the United States.

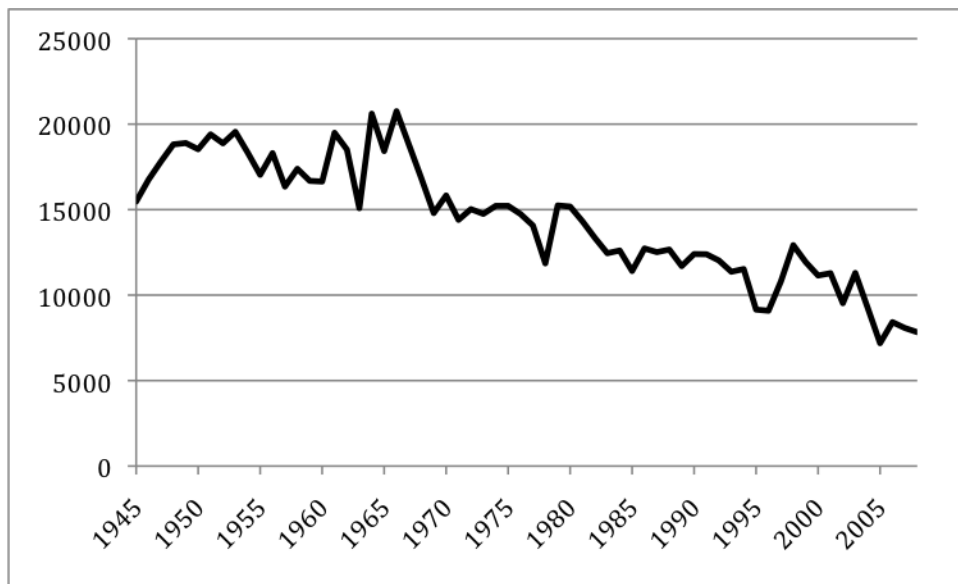


Figure 4.1 *Yearly number of foreign-focused Times abstracts, 1945-2008*

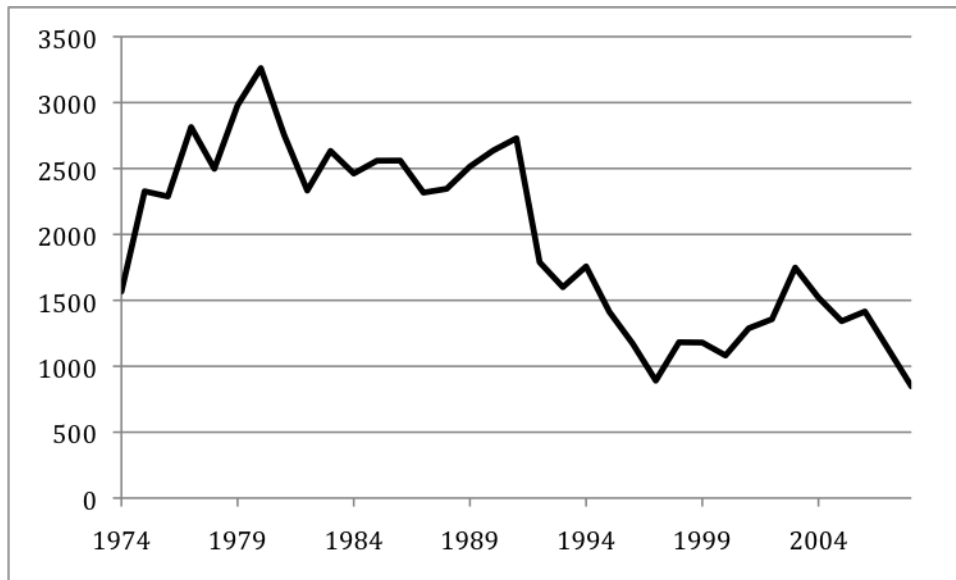


Figure 4.2 Yearly number of foreign-focused CBS News abstracts, 1945-2008

#### *Comparing news and presidential agendas*

Overall visibility in *Times* coverage and presidential discourse was both different and similar in important ways. An important difference relates to agenda concentration. The U.S. presidential agenda was highly concentrated in the post-World War II era: a small number of foreign nations dominated presidential attention to foreign affairs during this period. I offered evidence for this phenomenon in Chapter Three, which is repeated in the right-hand column of Table 4.1: we see the 20 most-mentioned foreign countries in major presidential addresses to the nation, 1945 to 2008. Three countries—Vietnam, Iraq, and Russia—accounted for more than a third (35.6%) of the president’s foreign affairs agenda during this period, and seven countries accounted for more than half (51.9%).

Table 4.1 *Twenty most-visible foreign nations in New York Times abstracts and major presidential addresses, 1945-2008*

<b><i>New York Times Abstracts</i></b>			<b>Major Presidential Addresses</b>		
Country	%	Cumulative %	Country	%	Cumulative %
1. Russia	5.7%	5.7%	1. Vietnam	12.8%	12.8%
2. France	5.0%	10.7%	2. Iraq	11.3%	24.6%
3. Britain	5.0%	15.7%	3. Russia	11.1%	35.6%
4. Germany	4.5%	20.1%	4. Korea	6.0%	41.5%
5. China	4.3%	24.4%	5. Nicaragua	3.9%	45.4%
6. Japan	3.9%	28.3%	6. Israel	3.5%	48.9%
7. Israel	3.9%	32.2%	7. Afghanistan	3.1%	51.9%
8. Vietnam	3.4%	35.7%	8. Cuba	2.6%	54.5%
9. Canada	3.1%	38.7%	9. China	2.5%	57.0%
10. Italy	2.7%	41.4%	10. Iran	2.5%	59.5%
11. India	2.5%	44.0%	11. Germany	2.1%	61.6%
12. Mexico	2.5%	46.4%	12. Panama	2.1%	63.7%
13. Korea	2.4%	48.8%	13. Lebanon	2.1%	65.8%
14. Iraq	1.8%	50.7%	14. Japan	2.0%	67.8%
15. Iran	1.7%	52.3%	15. El Salvador	1.8%	69.6%
16. Australia	1.7%	53.7%	16. Cambodia	1.8%	71.3%
17. Netherlands	1.5%	55.5%	17. Kuwait	1.6%	72.9%
18. Spain	1.5%	57.0%	18. Britain	1.5%	74.4%
19. South Africa	1.5%	58.4%	19. Poland	1.5%	75.9%
20. Brazil	1.5%	59.9%	20. Egypt	1.4%	77.2%
<i>Total</i>	100%	100%	<i>Total</i>	100%	100%
<i>(192 countries)</i>			<i>(192 countries)</i>		

\*Countries shaded in grey made the top twenty on both agendas.

The concentration of foreign nation visibility on the *Times* news agenda appears in the left-hand column of Table 4.1, which presents the 20 foreign nations that received the most coverage in the *Times* during the same 64-year period. The columns of the table show that foreign nation visibility on the *Times* news agenda was significantly less concentrated in the post-World War II era than it was on the presidential agenda. Indeed, at the top end of the distribution, foreign nation visibility in the *Times* was about half as concentrated as it was for

presidents. Specifically, the top four countries appeared in 20% of all *Times* news abstracts that mentioned a foreign nation, while the top four countries appeared in 41% of all foreign nations mentioned in major presidential addresses. The relatively more diffuse nature of foreign nation visibility in *Times* coverage is not surprising given that there are more sources of information in news content—particularly newspaper content—and there are many more *Times* stories than presidential speeches each year, both of which provide more opportunities for diversity on the news agenda. Nonetheless, it is interesting that after the first four countries on the presidential agenda the relative visibility percentages of the other foreign nations on both agendas are comparable. In other words, the heightened concentration of foreign nation visibility on the presidential agenda was primarily due to disproportionate focus on four countries: Vietnam, Iraq, Russia, and Korea. Notably, each of these four countries experienced direct and significant military conflict with the United States at different points during the post-World War II era.

An important similarity between the two agendas, evident in the table, relates to the considerable overlap in foreign nation visibility. Specifically, 10 countries were among the 20 most visible overall on both agendas. These countries are shaded in grey in Table 4.1, and they can be divided roughly into three categories. The first category consisted of five countries with which the United States engaged in a significant and sustained conflict in the post-World War II era: Russia, Korea, Vietnam, Iran, and Iraq. Notably, all of these countries were more prominent on the presidential agenda than on the news agenda. The second category included five of the most economically and militarily powerful countries in the international system: Britain, China, Germany, Japan, and Russia. These countries, with the exception of Russia, were more prominent in news discourse than they were in presidential discourse. Finally, the third category

consisted of two of America's enduring allies, the United Kingdom and Israel—both of which were more visible on the news agenda than the presidential agenda.

At the same time, half of the 20 most visible foreign nations on each agenda did not appear in the top 20 on the other agenda. Specifically, France, Canada, Italy, India, Mexico, Australia, the Netherlands, Spain, South Africa, and Brazil were each highly visible on the news agenda, but not on the presidential agenda. On the other side, Nicaragua, Afghanistan, Cuba, Panama, Lebanon, El Salvador, Cambodia, Kuwait, Poland, and Egypt were each relatively highly visible on the presidential agenda but not on the news agenda. Notably, the countries that were more visible on the *Times* agenda were primarily countries that are either major economic powers or major U.S. trading partners, while countries that were more visible on the presidential agenda were primarily ones with which the United States has been in conflict. These differences in the types of countries that get emphasized on each agenda and the degree to which they get emphasized are suggestive that different structural factors may be driving foreign nation visibility in *Times* and presidential discourses—a possibility that I take up in the next section.

To further illustrate some of the similarities and differences between foreign nation visibility in U.S. news and presidential discourses, I created two complementary word clouds. These word clouds portray the relative visibility and invisibility of every country that appeared in a *Times* news abstract and a major presidential address during the post-World War II era. In the upper window of Figure 4.1, the font size of each country's name varies according to the total number of news abstracts in which each country was mentioned in the *Times*; in the lower window of Figure 4.1, the font size of each country's name varies according to the total number of times each country was mentioned in a major presidential address. The bigger the font size the more news stories or instances in speeches in which a country was mentioned and thus the more

visible the country was in news or presidential discourses; the smaller the font size the fewer news stories or instances in speeches in which a country was mentioned and thus the less visible the country was in news and presidential discourses.



*New York Times Abstracts (1945-2008)*



*Major Presidential Addresses (1945-2008)*

Figure 4.3 Foreign nation visibility in Times abstracts and presidential speeches, 1945-2008

These word clouds demonstrate (a) that the presidential agenda was much more concentrated than the *Times* news agenda—in the sense that a handful of countries dominated presidential attention—and (b) that the *Times* agenda was much more diverse than the presidential agenda—in the sense that more countries received attention in *Times* news abstracts. Three countries stand out in the presidential word cloud—Vietnam, Iraq, and Russia. Together, these three countries loomed much larger in presidential discourse in the years 1945 to 2008 than the other 189 countries in the international system. To a lesser extent, two-dozen other countries were also visible in the presidential word cloud, but the vast majority of countries were either barely visible or not at all in presidential discourse. Specifically, in the 64-year period analyzed, 38% of countries ( $n=72$ ) were *never* mentioned in a major presidential address—and these countries are not present in the word cloud. Moreover, 10% ( $n=19$ ) of countries were only mentioned once, and these countries are illegible in the word cloud. Overall, then, more than half the countries in the international system were either invisible—never mentioned—or nearly so in major presidential addresses. Of those countries that were mentioned in a major presidential address in the post-World War II era, the vast majority of mentions were concentrated on a handful of countries.

Many more countries are visible in the *Times* word cloud than in the presidential word cloud, which demonstrates that the *Times* news agenda was much more diverse in terms of foreign nation visibility. Only three countries were invisible—never mentioned—in a *Times* news story: Kiribati, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and Saint Vincent and Grenadines. Nonetheless, it is worth highlighting that 13% ( $n=25$ ) of the countries that existed in the international system during the period analyzed were mentioned in a *Times* article less than once per year, and these countries appear as dots in the word cloud. Another 31% ( $n=60$ ) of countries were mentioned

less than once per month—and these countries, though visible in the word cloud, are illegible. Overall, then, close to half of the countries (44%) in the international system were invisible or barely visible on both agendas—mentioned less than once per year in a major presidential address and mentioned less than once per month in a *Times* news abstract.

The similarities and differences between the news agenda and the presidential agenda as well as the different elements of the news agenda come into sharper focus when we go beyond the aggregate distribution on each agenda and consider distinct geo-political eras. Column two in Table 4.2 lists the foreign nation that received the most attention on three different agendas—the *Times* news agenda, the CBS news agenda, and the presidential agenda—during each of four geo-political eras analyzed: (a) 1945 to 1973,<sup>13</sup> (b) 1974 to 1991, (c) 1992 to 2001, and (d) 2002 to 2008. Notably, a different country occupied the top spot on each agenda in the early Cold War and post-Cold War eras. In contrast, the same two countries were number one on each agenda in the late Cold War and post-9/11 eras. Specifically, Russia was the most visible nation on all three agendas in the late Cold War era and Iraq was the most visible nation on all three agendas in the post-September 11 era. Notably, Iraq was more prominent in news coverage and presidential discourse in the post-9/11 era than any other country in any other era, including Vietnam at the height of the Vietnam War. When we consider that the Vietnam War lasted longer and took the lives of more soldiers than the Iraq War it is remarkable the extent to which Iraq dominated U.S. public discourse 2001 through 2008.

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<sup>13</sup> Because the Vanderbilt Television News Index only goes back as far as 1968, CBS is not included in the data presentation for this era.

Table 4.2 Concentration of news and presidential discourses, by geo-political era, 1945-2008

	Top Country %	Top 5 Countries %	Top 10 Countries %
<b>Early Cold War</b>			
<i>NY Times</i>	Britain 6.1%	64.5%	76.7%
President	Vietnam 32.3%	26.9%	44.2%
<b>Late Cold War</b>			
<i>NY Times</i>	Russia 5.4%	22.7%	38.2%
CBS News <sup>14</sup>	Russia 14.1%	35.0%	48.6%
President	Russia 16.3%	42.5%	63.5%
<b>Post-Cold War</b>			
<i>NY Times</i>	France 5.7%	25.2%	41.2%
CBS News	Russia 8.3%	31.8%	50.1%
President	Iraq 15.6%	52.9%	69.9%
<b>Post-9/11</b>			
<i>NY Times</i>	Iraq 14.7%	27.3%	50.0%
CBS News	Iraq 32.0%	52.8%	65.6%
President	Iraq 60.3%	77.5%	83.3%

The visibility patterns evident in Table 4.2 are consistent with scholarship suggesting that a broad foreign policy consensus existed within the United States in the late Cold War era (Entman, 2004; Wittkopf & McCormick, 1998; Norris, 1995). Government and the elite *New York Times* agreed that Russia—then known as the Soviet Union—deserved special attention during this period because it represented a very real threat to the security and prosperity of the American people. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, however, the Cold War consensus withered, which resulted in considerably less institutional agreement regarding the appropriate focus of U.S. foreign policy (Entman, 2004; Livingston & Eachus, 1996). This is

<sup>14</sup> I ran bivariate Pearson's correlations between foreign nation visibility in presidential speeches and *Times* and CBS news content. Foreign nation visibility in *Times* and CBS content was highly correlated ( $r=.805$ ), as was visibility in CBS and presidential content ( $r=.680$ ), while visibility in *Times* and presidential content was moderately correlated ( $r=.469$ ).

reflected in the variation in the foreign nations that occupied the top spot on each agenda during the post-Cold War era: Iraq was most prominent on the presidential agenda, France was most prominent on the *Times* news agenda, and Russia was the most prominent on the CBS news agenda. Notably, this incongruity in presidential, *Times* and CBS news discourse did not last as Iraq emerged as the most visible foreign nation on all three agendas in the post-September 11 era.

Table 4.2 also lists the percentage of the *Times* and CBS news agendas as well as the presidential agenda consumed in each era by the five and ten most visible foreign nations. Two patterns are evident here. First, foreign nation visibility on all three agendas was most concentrated in the post-9/11 era. Ten foreign nations—representing just 5% of the countries in the international system—consumed more than half of each agenda during this period: 50.0% of the *Times* news agenda, 65.6% of the CBS news agenda, and 83.3% of the presidential agenda. Second, the concentration of foreign nation visibility on each agenda relative to each other was similar in all four eras. Specifically, the *Times* news agenda—by every measure in every era—was always the least concentrated, the presidential agenda was consistently the most concentrated, and the CBS news agenda was always in the middle. This pattern is apparent in Figure 4.2, which depicts the percentage of each agenda consumed by the five most visible foreign nations for every year of analysis, 1945 to 2008. In every single year analyzed, the *Times* news agenda was the least concentrated, the presidential agenda was the most concentrated, and the CBS news agenda was somewhere in the middle—usually falling closer to the *Times*.

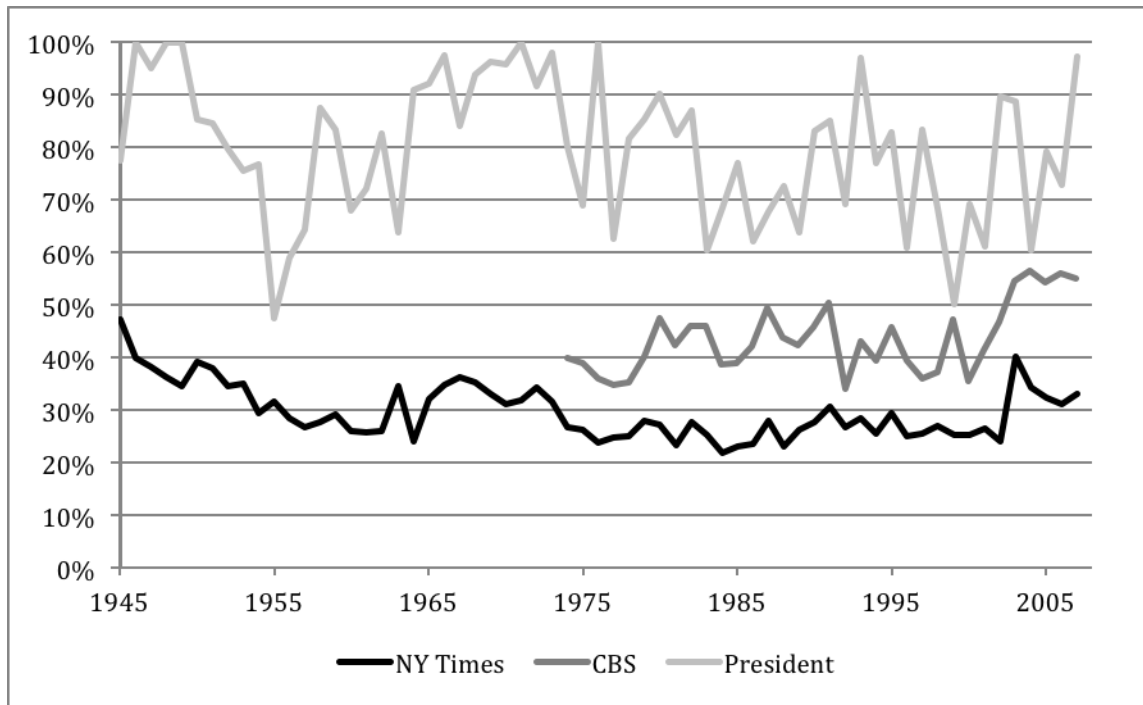


Figure 4.4 *Percentage of each agenda consumed on a yearly basis by five most visible countries, 1945-2008*

The relative step-downs in the levels of concentration—from the presidential agenda to the CBS agenda to the *Times* agenda—align well with the amount of “discursive space” available on each agenda. This remarkably consistent pattern makes sense as there are more sources of information in news content—particularly newspaper content—and many more *Times* and CBS news stories than presidential speeches each year, both of which provide more opportunities for diversity on the news agenda, particularly the *Times* news agenda. Notably, not only was the presidential agenda more concentrated than the *Times*, it was also more variable. The five most visible foreign nations in presidential discourse occupied between 50% and 100% of the president’s foreign affairs agenda during the post-World War II era, but there were dramatic fluctuations in attention from year to year. The *Times* and CBS news agendas were both less concentrated and less variable during this period: the five most visible foreign nations in the

*Times* consistently consumed between 20% and 40% of the *Times* agenda, while the five most visible foreign nations on CBS consistently consumed between 30% and 50% of the CBS agenda.

Notably, *Times* and presidential attention each became concentrated in unison at three points in the post-World War II era: (a) in the late 1940s and early 1950s as a result of the Korean War, (b) in the late 1960s and early 1970s as a result of the Vietnam War, and (c) in the 2000s as a result of the Afghanistan and Iraq wars. In each instance, the five most visible foreign nations on each agenda consumed more than 30% of the *Times* news agenda and more than 85% of the presidential agenda. Because my analysis of CBS begins in 1974 after major combat operations ended in Vietnam, we can assess whether CBS adhered to this pattern only for the final era. It did. The spike in concentration following the U.S. invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq—when the top five countries accounted for more than 50% of the CBS news agenda—followed the same pattern. In the post-World War II era when the United States was engaged in sustained military conflict, presidential and news attention to foreign affairs predictably converged on the country or countries that were most relevant to that conflict.

Further evidence of the variability of news and presidential attention to foreign affairs can be seen in Table 4.3. This table depicts the prominence of different foreign *regions* in news coverage and presidential discourse during four distinct geo-political eras. The boxes in the table indicate the most visible foreign region on each agenda in each era. An important pattern evident in this table and one that merits attention relates to the variability of each agenda. Foreign region visibility in the post-World War II era was extremely variable on the presidential agenda, somewhat less variable on the CBS news agenda, and significantly less variable on the *Times* news agenda. Specifically, presidential attention jumped from a focus on Eastern Asia (59.3%) in

the early Cold War era to the Americas (32.9%) in the late Cold War era to the Middle East in the post-Cold War (24.2%) and post-9/11 eras (72.2%). The geographic focus of the CBS news agenda also jumped around quite a bit: from the Middle East (29.6%) during the early Cold War era to Eastern Europe (23.4%) during the post-Cold War era and back to the Middle East (47.3%) during the post-9/11 era. Notably, the geographic focus of the *Times* news agenda was much less variable during this period: Western Europe and Eastern Asia were consistently among the most visible foreign regions in *Times* news coverage in all four eras analyzed—largely because of the prominence of major economic and military powers like Britain, China, France, Germany, and Japan (see Table 4.1). These differences in foreign region visibility suggest that foreign nations and regions that were relevant to a major U.S. conflict were more prominent in presidential and CBS news discourses, while foreign nations and regions that were more powerful and economically significant to the United States were more prominent in the *Times*.

Table 4.3 *Regional distribution of foreign nation visibility, by geo-political era, in Times, CBS, and presidential discourses, 1945-2008*

	<b>Era 1</b> <b>Early CW</b> <b>(1945-1973)</b> %	<b>Era 2</b> <b>Late CW</b> <b>(1974-1991)</b> %	<b>Era 3</b> <b>Post-CW</b> <b>(1992-2001)</b> %	<b>Era 4</b> <b>Post-9/11</b> <b>(2002-2008)</b> %
<b>The Americas</b>				
<i>NY Times</i>	16.3%	16.7%	15.3%	13.4%
CBS		12.9%	12.6%	8.2%
President	5.7%	32.9%	16.7%	2.1%
<b>Western Europe</b>				
<i>NY Times</i>	29.4%	22.1%	25.0%	18.7%
CBS News		15.7%	16.8%	13.9%
President	11.4%	4.2%	4.8%	3.3%
<b>Eastern Europe</b>				
<i>NY Times</i>	10.9%	9.2%	12.8%	6.6%
CBS		18.3%	23.4%	3.9%
President	15.0%	19.3%	19.5%	2.9%
<b>The Middle East</b>				
<i>NY Times</i>	9.9%	19.6%	13.0%	27.2%
CBS		29.6%	18.6%	47.3%
President	6.2%	27.9%	24.2%	72.2%
<b>Western Asia</b>				
<i>NY Times</i>	5.2%	5.1%	5.3%	8.7%
CBS		3.5%	4.9%	11.9%
President	1.4%	4.5%	8.1%	11.7%
<b>Eastern Asia</b>				
<i>NY Times</i>	22.2%	17.6%	19.9%	18.3%
CBS		12.5%	14.8%	11.2%
President	59.3%	8.5%	11.3%	5.4%
<b>Africa</b>				
<i>NY Times</i>	6.1%	9.8%	8.6%	7.1%
CBS		7.6%	8.8%	3.5%
President	.9%	2.7%	15.4%	2.4%
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

\*The boxes indicate the most visible foreign region in each era for a particular agenda.

In the first three geo-political eras, a different foreign region was prominent on each agenda. However, in the post-9/11 era, largely because of the Iraq War, all three agendas became concentrated on the same foreign region. In spite of the “*global war on terror*” rhetoric, the Middle East, in general, and Iraq, in particular, dominated presidential and news discourses between 2002 and 2008. Specifically, the Middle East accounted for 28% of all foreign country

mentions in *Times* abstracts, 47% of all foreign country mentions in CBS news abstracts, and 72% of all foreign country mentions in major presidential addresses. Within this region, Table 4.2 had shown that Iraq accounted for 15% of the *Times* news agenda, 32% of the CBS news agenda, and 60% of the presidential agenda. These numbers suggest once again that conflict—particularly when the United States is involved—drives U.S. attention to the rest of the world and this is reinforced in U.S. public discourse, particularly U.S. presidential speeches. Further, it appears more applicable in the most recent era than ever before.

It is to be expected that some foreign nations—those that are perceived to be more relevant to U.S. interests—will receive more attention in U.S. news and politics—while others will receive less attention. However, the relative invisibility of an entire continent is more perplexing. During the post-World War II era, Africa was the second least visible foreign region in *Times* (6.5%) and CBS (7.5%) news coverage, and the least visible foreign region in major presidential addresses (2.7%). As noted in Chapter Three, six countries—Vietnam (12.8%), Iraq (11.3%), Russia (11.1%), Korea (6.0%), Nicaragua (3.9%), and Israel (3.5%)—each *individually* received more emphasis from U.S. presidents in their major addresses over the six-plus decades analyzed than the 51 countries in Africa *combined*. Africa was more visible in *Times* and CBS news coverage, but even here the top six countries on each agenda each *individually* were the primary focus of more than half as many *Times* and CBS news abstracts as the entire continent of Africa. In recent decades, Africa has been plagued by a number of bloody conflicts—for example, in the Sudan, Rwanda, Uganda, Sierra Leone, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Indeed, between 1998 and 2008 an estimated 5.4 million people died in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, making it the deadliest conflict since World War II (CBS, 2008). News flow scholarship that focuses on event-driven factors—such as the number of casualties in a

conflict—suggests that the more deviant or extreme a foreign event, the more likely it is to receive news coverage (Shoemaker et al., 1991; Shoemaker et al., 1986). The conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, however, was almost absent not only in presidential discourse, but also in *Times* and CBS news discourses. The relative invisibility of this conflict and others like it in U.S. news coverage suggests that structural factors may be driving foreign nation visibility on the U.S. news agenda—a possibility I take up in the next section.

### Structural Dynamics

In Chapter One I theorized that foreign nation visibility on the U.S. news agenda in the post-World War II era would be driven by a foreign nation's *power*, *significance*, and geographic *proximity* to the United States. Specifically, my hypotheses were that U.S. news outlets would focus more attention on foreign nations that were perceived to be powerful players in the international system (H1), foreign nations perceived to be economically and militarily significant to U.S. foreign policy (H2), and foreign nations that were geographically closer to the United States (H3). In this section I present tests of these hypotheses.

As a first test of my theoretical expectations, for each nation I ran bivariate Pearson's correlations between my three groupings of seven predictor variables—power (population size, economic size, reputation), significance (trade flow with the United States, total U.S. troops in country, conflict with the United States), and geographic proximity (kilometers from capital to capital)—and my outcome variables, the number of *New York Times* and CBS News abstracts in which the nation was mentioned. Results are presented in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4 *Pearson's correlations between variables of predicted importance and foreign nation visibility, by era, in Times abstracts, CBS News abstracts, and major presidential addresses*

		<b>TOTALS Post-WWII (1945-2008)</b>	<b>Era 1 Early CW (1945-73)</b>	<b>Era 2 Late CW (1974-91)</b>	<b>Era 3 Post-CW (1992-01)</b>	<b>Era 4 Post-9/11 (2002-08)</b>
<b>POWER</b>	<b>Population Size</b>					
	<i>NY Times</i>	.324***	.379***	.382***	.400***	.261***
	CBS News	.184***		.230***	.208***	.086*
	President	.063***	.079***	.074**	.078**	.013
	<b>Economic Size</b>					
	<i>NY Times</i>	.079***	.067***	.198***	.239***	.079***
	CBS News	.044***		.096***	.060**	-.004
	President	-.023*	-.030	.008	-.036	-.490
	<b>Reputation</b>					
<i>NY Times</i>	.527***	.574***	.533***	.706***	.401***	
CBS News	.338***		.459***	.435***	.157***	
President	.104***	.110**	.178**	.088**	.007	
<b>SIGNIFICANCE</b>	<b>Trade Flow</b>					
	<i>NY Times</i>	.185***	.245***	.388***	.537***	.320***
	CBS News	.093***		.131***	.254***	.111**
	President	.006	-.004	.009	.045	.011
	<b>U.S. Troops</b>					
	<i>NY Times</i>	.437***	.494***	.257***	.410***	.701***
	CBS News	.326***		.117***	.220***	.770***
	President	.314***	.446***	.011	.055	.706**
	<b>U.S. Conflict</b>					
<i>NY Times</i>	.385***	.424***	.275***	.243***	.576***	
CBS News	.514***		.384***	.571***	.717***	
President	.494***	.497***	.359**	.508**	.700**	
<b>PROXIMITY</b>	<b>Distance</b>					
	<i>NY Times</i>	-.038***	-.039*	-.051**	-.064**	-.009***
	CBS News	-.003		-.032	-.044	.015
	President	.012	.073***	-.071**	-.004**	.029

\*\*\* $p < .001$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \* $p < .05$

The second column in Table 4.4 is highlighted because it includes the aggregated results across all years analyzed, 1945 to 2008 for the *Times* and president, and 1974-2008 for CBS News. During the post-World War II era, each of the three *power* variables were significantly

correlated with foreign nation visibility in the expected direction in both *Times* and CBS News coverage, though the strength of the relationships varied across the items. In particular, three patterns related to power emerged. First, in the aggregate and in every era, reputational indicators of *power* were more strongly correlated with foreign nation visibility in U.S. news discourse than they were in U.S. presidential discourse. This suggests that in the post-World War II era a foreign nation's status as a major power was a better predictor of foreign nation visibility on the U.S. news agenda than it was on the presidential agenda. Second, all three indicators of power were more highly correlated with foreign nation visibility in *Times* news discourse than they were in CBS News discourse, which suggests that the same structural dynamics may differentially impact different news mediums. Finally, across all three agendas a foreign nation's reputation as a major power was more predictive of its visibility in U.S. political discourse than either the size of its population or the size of its economy. Specifically, the correlation coefficients for the *Times* were .527 for reputation, .324 for population, and .079 for GDP; they were .338, .184, and .044, respectively, for CBS News; and they were .104, .063, and -.023, respectively, for the president. These results suggest that a foreign nation's reputation may be more important to its visibility in news than its material capabilities—a significant finding considering that this variable has not been included in previous news flow studies.

Next, all three indicators tapping a nation's *significance* were also significantly correlated with foreign nation visibility in the expected direction in both *Times* and CBS News coverage, while two of the three were significantly correlated in presidential discourse. Specifically, there was a small correlation between trade flow with the United States and foreign nation visibility in *Times* coverage (.185), a negligible correlation between the same variables in CBS News content (.093), and an even smaller correlation in presidential discourse (.006). More notably, there were

sizeable correlations between U.S. troops in country and foreign nation visibility on the *Times* (.437), CBS News (.326), and presidential (.314) agendas, and between conflict with the United States and foreign nation visibility on the *Times* (.385), CBS News (.514), and presidential (.494) agendas. The first set of findings regarding trade flow runs counter to previous research suggesting that “economic interest...plays the central role in determining news from abroad” (Wu, 2003, 20; see also Pietalinen, 2006). The second set of findings regarding U.S. troops and U.S. conflict support Wu’s (2000) contention that international information flows still reflect the earlier imperial system in which information followed national flags and armies.

Finally, geographic *proximity* was not found to be meaningfully related to the news agendas for the *Times* or CBS News. For the *Times* the correlation coefficient with distance was -.038, and for CBS it was -.003. These data, then, indicate no over-time relationship between geographic proximity and foreign nation visibility on the U.S. news agenda in the post-World War II era. This finding supports Livingston and Van Belle’s (2005) claim that “remoteness is not what it used to be in a world shrunk by advanced media technology” (p 58). Nonetheless, further longitudinal research is necessary—ideally on news coverage of different types of foreign events—to gain insight into whether there are particular conditions under which distance does predict newsgathering from other countries. Taken together, these correlations are suggestive that U.S. military involvement and perceptions of foreign nation power across the full six decades of analysis were the primary drivers of foreign nation visibility not only in presidential discourse (see Chapter Three), but also U.S. news discourse.

Analysis of the correlations during different geo-political eras (columns 3-6 in Table 4.4) offers insight into how the factors that influence foreign nation visibility in news coverage may have changed over time. In particular, two trends stand out. The first is that a nation’s

reputational power decreased in importance over time as a predictor of its visibility on the U.S. news agenda. This is evidenced by the fact that the correlation coefficients for this variable declined in every era for CBS and in every era but one for the *Times*. The overall decline in the importance of this variable for CBS—and to a lesser extent for the *Times*—is likely a reflection of the gradual decline of the Soviet Union as a major threat to the United States, and the rise of a more diffuse threat in the form of terrorism. The second notable over-time trend is that the significance of nations to U.S. military policy increased in predictive importance over time—especially for CBS News. This is evidenced by the fact that the correlation coefficients for the U.S. troops and U.S. conflict variables increased in step fashion for CBS in all three eras for which data were available. Specifically, the coefficients for the troops variable rose from .117 in the late Cold War era to .220 in the post-Cold War era to a high of .770 in the post-9/11 era, while the coefficients for the conflict variable followed a similar pattern, going from .384 in Era 2 to .571 in Era 3 to a high of .717 in Era 4. The pattern was less precise for the *Times*, but the coefficients for these two variables were both higher in the *Times* in the post-9/11 era than in any previous era. Taken together, these results suggest that U.S. national security interests are more predictive of foreign nation visibility in U.S. news discourse than other variables and that they have become more predictive over time.

As a further test of my hypotheses, I ran a regression model to examine the relative influence of my predictor variables on foreign country mentions in *Times* and CBS news abstracts. I could not run a standard ordinary least squares (OLS) regression because my outcome variables were positively skewed. In lay terms, this means that most countries in my dataset did not receive much attention on either news agenda while a handful of countries received a lot of attention. To account for this data complication, I ran a negative binomial

regression model. The same independent variables related to power, significance, and geographic proximity were included in this analysis. Results of the overall model are displayed in the first column of Table 4.5.

Table 4.5 *Negative binomial regression model with news abstracts and presidential mentions as criterion variables*

		<b>TOTALS Post-WWII 1945-2008</b>	<b>Era 1 Early CW (1945-73)</b>	<b>Era 2 Late CW (1974-91)</b>	<b>Era 3 Post-CW (1992-01)</b>	<b>Era 4 Post-9/11 (2002-08)</b>
<b>POWER</b>	<b>Population Size</b>					
	<i>NY Times</i>	1.000***	1.000***	1.000***	1.000***	1.000
	CBS News	1.000***		.999***	1.000***	1.000
	President	.999°	.999	.999	.999	.999
	<b>Economic Size</b>					
	<i>NY Times</i>	1.000***	1.000	1.000***	1.000***	1.000*
	CBS News	1.000*		.999	1.000	1.000**
	President	.999***	.999	.999	.999	1.000
	<b>Reputation</b>					
	<i>NY Times</i>	3.856***	3.597***	3.371***	3.287***	2.456**
CBS News	5.981***		6.466***	5.466***	2.078	
President	3.885***	4.703***	5.665***	3.239***	1.721	
<b>SIGNIFICANCE</b>	<b>Trade Flow</b>					
	<i>NY Times</i>	1.000***	1.000***	1.000***	1.000***	1.000***
	CBS News	1.000***		.999***	1.000***	1.000***
	President	.999***	.999	.999	1.000	.999
	<b>U.S. Troops</b>					
	<i>NY Times</i>	1.000***	1.000***	1.000***	1.000	1.000**
	CBS News	1.000***		1.000***	1.000	1.000*
	President	.999***	.999***	1.000	.999	1.000
	<b>U.S. Conflict</b>					
	<i>NY Times</i>	6.972***	5.412***	7.881***	13.872***	23.036***
CBS News	22.483***		16.317***	37.401***	45.302***	
President	25.704***	28.841***	14.192***	46.377***	41.683***	
<b>PROXIMITY</b>	<b>Distance</b>					
	<i>NY Times</i>	.999***	1.000	.999	.999	1.000
	CBS News	.999		.999	1.000	1.000
	President	.999***	.999	.999***	1.000	1.000**

\*\*\* p<.001; \*\* p<.01; \* p<.05; °the values reported in the table are incidence rate ratios (IRR)

The values reported in Table 4.5 are incidence rate ratios (IRRs), and they indicate the rate of increase or decrease in yearly foreign country mentions, based on one unit change in the

predictor variable. IRR values greater than one indicate rate increases and IRR values less than one indicate rate decreases. Notably, the overall model was statistically significant for both the *Times* ( $\chi^2=1579.41$ ,  $df=7$ ,  $p<.001$ ,  $N=7053$ ) and CBS News ( $\chi^2=1063.69$ ,  $df=7$ ,  $p<.001$ ,  $N=5370$ ). The only predictor variable that was not statistically significant at the  $p<.001$  level was distance for CBS News. However, after controlling for all variables in the model, population size, economic size, trade, and troops were found not to be predictive of foreign nation visibility in news discourse. This is evidenced by the fact that the incidence rate ratios for these variables are all .999 or 1.000, which means that an increase in the size of a country's economy or population, for example, does not lead to meaningful change in that country's foreign nation visibility in news discourse.

After controlling for all variables in the model, the two best predictors of foreign nation visibility in *Times* and CBS News coverage as well as in presidential discourse were a nation's reputation as a major power and whether that country was in conflict with the United States. Focusing first on news, the model estimated that during the post-World War II era nations that had reputations as major powers—holding all other variables constant in the model—appeared in almost four times as many *Times* news abstracts and nearly six times as many CBS news abstracts as foreign nations that did not have reputations as major powers. Likewise, during the 64-year period analyzed a country in conflict with the United States—again holding all other variables constant in the model—appeared in nearly seven times as many *Times* news abstracts and more than 22 times as many CBS news abstracts as a country that was not in conflict with the United States. Thus, a country's reputation as a major power was a significant predictor of

foreign nation visibility in *Times* and CBS news discourse, but conflict with the United States was the better overall predictor of visibility in U.S. news discourse.<sup>15</sup>

Analysis of the incidence rate ratio for each variable during different geo-political eras offers important insights into how the factors that influence foreign nation visibility have changed over time. The results of these analyses are displayed in columns two through five of Table 4.5. Two patterns stand out in this analysis—both of which were introduced in the correlational analysis. First, a nation’s reputation as a predictor of its visibility on the U.S. news agenda decreased in importance over time. This is evidenced by the fact that the incidence rate ratios (IRRs) for this variable in *Times* discourse declined from 3.6 during the early Cold War era, to 3.4 during the late Cold War era, to 3.3 during the post-Cold War era, to 2.5 during the Post-9/11 era. Likewise, the IRR for this variable in CBS news coverage declined from 6.5 during the late Cold War years, to 5.5 during the post-Cold War years, to 2.1 during the Post-9/11 years. Moreover, this variable decreased in statistical significance for both news outlets in the post-9/11 era. Second, the separate regression models for different time periods also confirms that conflict with the United States as a predictor of foreign nation visibility in U.S. news increased in importance over time. We know this because the IRRs for this variable increased in *Times* news coverage from a value of 5.4 in the early Cold War era, to 7.9 in the late Cold War era, to 13.9 in the post-Cold War era, to 23.0 in the post-9/11 era. Likewise, the IRRs for this variable increased in CBS news coverage from a value of 16.3 in the late Cold War years, to 37.4 during the post-Cold War years, to 45.3 during the post-9/11 years. Notably, the regression analysis diverges from the correlation analysis when it comes to the troops variable. The correlation analysis suggested that the troops variable had also become more significant over

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<sup>15</sup> Notably, the same structural factors—a nation’s reputation as a major power and conflict with the United States—were predictive of foreign nation visibility in presidential discourse (see Chapter Three). For the sake of comparison, the results of my analysis of the presidential agenda are repeated in this table.

time, but the regression analysis, after controlling for other variables in the model, suggests otherwise. In conclusion, both the correlation and regression analyses confirm that power was a moderate predictor of foreign nation visibility on the U.S. news agenda for most of 1945 to 2008, but conflict with the United States was far and away the best predictor, and it became more predictive over time.

### Discussion

This chapter sought to shed light on three aspects of foreign nation visibility in U.S. news discourse: (a) which foreign nations are most visible, (b) why some foreign nations are more visible than others, and (c) whether foreign nation visibility and the factors that influence it have changed over time. It also sought to elucidate how the news agenda compares to the presidential agenda when it comes to foreign nation visibility. To address these questions, I conducted two longitudinal content analyses of foreign affairs on the U.S. news agenda. In the first content analysis I tracked every nation mentioned in the abstract of a *New York Times* article in the post-World War II era (1945-2008). In the second content analysis I tracked every nation mentioned in the abstract of a CBS Evening News story in the post-Vietnam War era (1974-2008). I then ran a series of correlations and regressions to test the predictive power of several structural factors that I expected to be associated with foreign nation visibility in U.S. news discourse. Differences exist between the two news outlets that I analyzed—for example, CBS's foreign news agenda was significantly more concentrated than that of the *Times*—but it is noteworthy that foreign nation visibility in both outlets was associated with the same factors that were correlated with foreign nation visibility on the presidential agenda. In Chapter Six I will address the implications of my findings more broadly, but some preliminary observations can be made here.

First, the relative concentration of the *Times*, CBS, and presidential agendas was remarkably consistent over time. Specifically, by every measure and in every year analyzed, the *Times* agenda was always the least concentrated—in terms of how much attention the top countries received relative to the bottom countries—the presidential agenda was always the most concentrated, and the CBS agenda was always in the middle, usually falling somewhat closer to the *Times*. This pattern is evident in Table 4.2, but it is particularly striking in Figure 4.2. Notably, the relative step-downs in the levels of concentration on each agenda—from the presidential agenda to the CBS agenda to the *Times* agenda—align well with the amount of “discursive space” available at each level. Specifically, there are more sources of information in news content and many more news stories than presidential speeches each year so there are many more opportunities for diversity on the news agenda, particularly the *Times* news agenda, than there is on the presidential agenda. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that so many countries, particularly African countries, were invisible or nearly so in public discourse about the rest of the world. All countries are not created equal when it comes to newsworthiness and the factors that seem to matter most relate to power and conflict.

Second, U.S. news coverage of foreign affairs, like presidential discourse about foreign affairs, does not occur in a vacuum. Rather, these discourses take place in the context of concrete geopolitical realities. Notably, while the range of countries that received significant attention in the post-World War II era was much greater in *Times* and CBS News abstracts than in major presidential addresses, the same structural factors were predictive of foreign nation visibility on all three agendas. It may seem that dramatic events such as the January 2010 Haitian earthquake are what drive foreign nation visibility on the U.S. news agenda—indeed, sometimes they do (e.g., Chang et al., 1987)—but this chapter has shown that two structural factors—a foreign

nation's reputational *power* and its military *significance* to the United States—account for a significant portion of the variance in U.S. news coverage of the rest of the world.

Notably, the structural factor that was most predictive of foreign nation visibility in both U.S. news and presidential discourses was the existence of a military conflict with the United States. This factor was a good predictor of foreign nation visibility on *Times*, CBS, and presidential agendas in every era analyzed, but in the context of the “global war on terror” it became even more important in the post-9/11 era. Recall that between 2002 and 2008 Iraq was mentioned in one in every seven news stories dealing with a foreign country in the *Times*, and one in every three news stories dealing with a foreign country on CBS Evening News. This heavy concentration of U.S. news attention on Iraq supports Wu's (2000) contention that international news transmissions reflect the “earlier imperial system” in which news agencies followed “national flags [and]...armies” (p. 111). Perhaps U.S. journalists in the post-9/11 era were trying to “localize the global”—to borrow a phrase from Clausen (2004)—by focusing on U.S. troops abroad. Whatever the reason, the old adage “war is God's way of teaching American's geography” is reinforced in U.S. news discourse, particularly CBS News broadcasts. Further, it appears to be more applicable in the current era than ever before.

Unlike U.S. conflict, trade flow with the United States was not predictive of foreign nation visibility in either the *New York Times* or CBS News in the post-World War II era. In light of the widespread scholarly contention that trade flow influences news flow (e.g., Ahern, 1984; Golan, 2008) I believe this is an important finding. Recent comparative studies by Wu (2000) and Pietiläinen (2006) have found that in most countries trade flow is a significant predictor of foreign nation visibility in the news. Indeed, Wu (2003) has gone so far as to suggest that “economic interest...plays the central role in determining news from abroad.” However, my

analysis in this chapter suggests that the United States may be different in this regard: trade flow is not predictive of foreign nation visibility in leading U.S. news media when other structural factors are included in the analysis. This is likely related to the fact the U.S. news media focus significant attention on countries with which the United States is in conflict, and countries in conflict rarely have significant trade relations with each other.

Another longitudinal finding that warrants emphasis relates to geographic *proximity*. According to my analysis, this factor was not meaningfully predictive of foreign nation visibility on the U.S. news agenda in the post-World War II era. This finding supports Livingston and Van Belle's (2005: 58) claim that geographic remoteness is not an impediment to foreign news coverage "in a world shrunk by advanced media technology." Technology has always been a powerful force that shapes information availability (see Bimber, 2003; Kielbowicz, 1989), but in the so-called "information era" it is now easier than ever before for journalists to travel to and report from faraway places. Today, a single person with a smart phone can report in real time on events happening on the other side of the globe. In many ways this is a positive development. For example, if a news consumer lives in Hawai'i and there is a major earthquake in Japan, it is beneficial to hear about it right away to maximize the time available to prepare for a possible tsunami. At the same time, scholarship has shown that the increasing availability of up-to-the-minute information from all around the globe can negatively impact news audiences, especially when the information being transmitted lacks context and relevance for the news consumer (Iyengar, 1991). These findings strongly suggest that remoteness is no longer a serious impediment to international news coverage.

The final longitudinal finding that warrants emphasis relates to the shrinking *Times* and CBS foreign news holes. Between 1945 and 2008, the number of countries in the international

system more than tripled, from 63 to 192. At the same time, the *Times* and CBS foreign news holes actually *decreased* during this period. This finding corroborates the work of Riffe, Aust, Jones, Shoemaker, and Sundar (1994) as well as Norris (1995), and it suggests that the U.S. news media's window on the world has shrunk even as the United States has become more connected politically and economically to the rest of the world. This is a disturbing development that has potentially contributed to the troubling lack of citizen knowledge about foreign affairs in the United States, especially relative to other developed democracies (Curran, Iyengar, Lund, & Salovaara-Moring, 2009; Iyengar, Hahn, Bonfadelli, & Marr, 2009). After all, the news media are the institution primarily responsible for transforming the “world outside”—literally the world outside our borders—into “the pictures in our heads” (Lippman, 1922). If American citizens are going to remain competitive and informed in an increasingly interconnected world, U.S. news outlets should be increasing their foreign news holes not shrinking them.

Notably, the results presented in this chapter only paint a partial picture of the interaction between the news agenda and the presidential agenda as regards foreign nation visibility in U.S. political discourse. Further analysis is needed to fill in the rest of the picture. There is overlap in the specific foreign nations that garner the most attention in news coverage and presidential discourse and this chapter has shown that the same two structural factors—a nation's reputation as a major power and the existence of conflict with the United States—are associated with foreign nation visibility on both agendas. However, it remains unclear the extent to which, and the conditions under which, foreign nation visibility on one agenda affects foreign nation visibility on the other agenda. In Chapter Five I address this issue head-on by examining the interaction between journalists and presidents when the topic of foreign affairs is being discussed in presidential news conferences.

## Chapter Five

### Foreign Prioritization in Presidential Press Conferences

In March 1913, just days after his inauguration, President Woodrow Wilson extended an open invitation to news reporters to come to the White House to ask him questions.<sup>16</sup> Previous presidents had met with hand-selected journalists,<sup>17</sup> but Wilson was the first to adopt an open-access policy of allowing reporters from all news organizations, not just politically friendly ones, to attend and ask questions. Such a large number of reporters showed up that Wilson postponed the gathering until the following week, when he could find a space sufficient in size to accommodate all of the journalists who wanted to participate (Kumar, 2005). And thus was born the presidential press conference—an institution that scholars place at the heart of American democracy and a free and vigilant press (Banning & Billingsly, 2007; Kerbel et al., 2007). Nearly a century later, it remains today.

The press, not surprisingly, considers this forum of structured interaction with the president to be important. Helen Thomas, long the dean of the White House press corps and granted the privilege to ask the first question at most presidential press conferences for decades, declared in 1996 that “you can’t have a democracy without ... press conferences. We’re the only forum in society where the president can be questioned on a regular basis. Otherwise he can rule by edict and live like a king” (quoted in Kumar, 2007, 256). Reporter Susan Page of *USA Today* put it this way in 2007: “We don’t have a parliamentary system where a president has to subject himself the way a prime minister does, to hectoring. Where a president has to subject himself to

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<sup>16</sup> Consistent with scholarship, I use the terms *press* and *news* conference interchangeably in this chapter.

<sup>17</sup> President Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft were the first U.S. presidents to meet with reporters and explain their thinking and policies, but their sessions were only open to a friendly few reporters with which they felt comfortable speaking (Kumar, 2005).

questions from the opposition party. The closest thing we have is a news conference where reporters are standing in for the public” (in Kumar 2007, 256). In the years since Wilson’s first news conference, the format has evolved—for example, news conferences are now live-streamed on the internet—and it has become institutionalized: today when President Barack Obama holds a press conference, like Wilson and the 15 presidents between them, he answers questions on a broad range of topics and reporters are welcomed on an equal-access basis.

Presidents have not always been enthusiastic about the open-access format of press conferences,<sup>18</sup> but they recognize the gravity of these settings. George W. Bush provided insight into a president’s perspective during his first term in the White House when in November 2002, before the annual pardoning of a turkey by the White House, he made a joke about the apparent anxiety of the turkey: “He looks a little nervous, doesn’t he,” he said to the audience of students, teachers, and parents, “He probably thinks he’s going to have a press conference” (Bumiller, 2002). Two years later, in a press conference with the new president of Afghanistan, Bush adopted a more serious tone when he said that he and Hamid Karzai would “answer some questions, in the tradition of democratic societies” (Bush, 2004). Calvin Coolidge expressed a similar sentiment in 1926 when he told reporters, “I regard it as rather necessary to the carrying on of our republican institution that people should have a fairly accurate report of what the president is trying to do, and it is for that purpose, of course, that those intimate conferences are held” (quoted in Kumar, 2011, 1). Press conferences are a difficult communication environment to negotiate (Banning & Billingsly, 2007; Clayman et al., 2006), but presidents continue to hold them because of the important role they play in the democratic process and because of the expectations of the office.

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<sup>18</sup> For example, President Wilson, after holding twice-weekly press conferences during his first term in office, held only three press conferences *in total* during his second term (Kumar 2005, 168).

We the people are the *demos* in democracy and we expect and deserve accountability from our representatives—not only electorally, but also rhetorically. Such democratic accountability is especially important in the realm of foreign affairs, where the president, in the dual role as commander-in-chief and chief diplomat, has more power to affect policy and public perceptions than any other political actor. To cite just one example, consider that the U.S. Constitution grants to Congress the exclusive power “to declare war.” However, since World War II this most vital of national decisions has been assumed by the president. The last time Congress officially declared war was in 1941. Since then U.S. presidents have ordered U.S. troops to participate in a number of military actions, including Korea, Vietnam, the Persian Gulf, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Because foreign affairs are an unobtrusive matter—in the sense that most people have little direct contact with what is going on in other countries (Zucker, 1978)—the American people rely on journalists to scrutinize, and challenge if necessary, the president’s policy agenda. In like manner, the public relies on reporters to push new foreign policy topics onto the public agenda, especially topics that presidents might not otherwise want to talk about—for example, President Nixon’s bombing of Cambodia and Laos during the Vietnam War, the extraordinary rendition program begun by President Clinton, or the predator drone program begun by President George W. Bush. In this sense, when journalists interrogate presidents and their policies in presidential press conferences, they introduce a measure of public accountability to the policymaking process—and in so doing they help shape the nation’s priorities.

The relationship between presidents and the press in presidential press conferences is important to understanding what I call *foreign prioritization* in U.S. political discourse. Foreign prioritization is a collective sensibility that includes the relative importance assigned to foreign policy over domestic matters, the visibility of foreign nations and regions in discourse, and the

initiative of different actors to put issues on the agenda. In this chapter, therefore, I expand my analysis to combine foreign nation visibility with foreign policy focus and actor initiative—two concepts that will be explained in the next section. Notably, I chose to look more broadly at foreign prioritization in presidential press conferences because they represent perhaps the best forum to analyze the direct interaction between presidents and the press. Building on Chapters Three and Four, my goal in this chapter is to highlight which foreign nations have been most and least prioritized in presidential press conferences and why this might be. In the next section, I review my theoretical expectations and method. I then provide a descriptive overview of the contours of foreign prioritization in presidential press conferences, followed by direct tests of my theoretical expectations. Finally, I discuss the implications for future studies.

### Conceptual Framework

This chapter was driven by theoretical expectations and research questions related to four areas: (a) policy focus, (b) nation visibility, (c) actor initiative, and (d) conference format. My research in each of these areas provided rich insight into foreign prioritization in presidential press conferences and carries implications for U.S. political discourse more generally. I began by examining the *policy focus* in presidential press conferences. I started here because a focus on foreign policy/foreign affairs is the entry point for foreign prioritization.<sup>19</sup> Specifically, I was interested in (a) the relative emphasis that presidents and the press put on foreign policy as compared to domestic policy and (b) the extent to which this may have changed over time. A number of broad historical overviews of presidential press conferences have been published (e.g., Kerbel et al., 2007; Kumar, 2007) as well as a number of studies of more narrowly defined topics such as trends in how reporters and presidents interact in news conferences (Banning and

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<sup>19</sup> I refer to foreign policy and foreign affairs interchangeably in this chapter.

Billingsley, 2007; Clayman et al., 2006), but the actual content of presidential press conferences has largely been ignored by scholarship.

On the one hand, there is reason to believe that presidents in their opening remarks and journalists in their questions might emphasize foreign over domestic policy in press conferences. The United States emerged from World War II as a global superpower, and the rise of U.S. involvement around the world meant that foreign affairs—particularly U.S. involvement in conflicts—has commanded increased importance on the president’s public agenda during the years since (Bacevich, 2007). Further, the press, public, and other political actors look to the commander-in-chief for guidance in times of conflict (Zaller & Chiu, 1996). On the other hand, polls suggest that the American public is generally less interested in foreign than domestic matters (Pew, 2011; Wlezien, 2005), and presidents and journalists are both representatives of the public so it stands to reason that they would “give the public what it wants,” so to speak. Moreover, it is only in recent decades that technology has made it possible for people—including the president and the press—to become aware of and respond to world events in real time (Livingston & Van Belle, 2005; Livingston & Bennett, 2003). In light of these diverging arguments, I began this chapter with the following research questions: to what extent have presidents, in their opening remarks, and journalists, in their questions, emphasized foreign over domestic policy (RQ1), and has this changed over time (RQ2)?

The second area of investigation in this chapter focused on foreign *nation visibility* in presidential press conferences. In Chapters Three and Four I found that powerful foreign nations—e.g. Britain, China, France, and Russia—and foreign nations with which the United States had been in conflict—e.g. Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq—dominated presidential and news discourse in the post-World War II era. I began this chapter with similar expectations.

According to political realism, the most dominant and enduring theory in international relations, the primary motivation of all states in the international system is national security (Waltz, 1979; Mearsheimer, 2001). As commander-in-chief of the U.S. military and chief diplomat of the U.S. government, U.S. presidents are expected to be especially sensitive to perceived threats to national security and, therefore, might devote much of their rhetorical attention to such threats. Similarly, scholarship suggests that news media, like the president, tend to focus their foreign affairs attention on powerful actors (Jones et al., in press; Golan, 2006; Kim & Barnett, 1996)—for example, the permanent five members of the United Nations Security Council—and deviant and socially significant events (Shoemaker et al., 1991; Chang et al., 1987; Shoemaker & Vos, 2009; Kim, 2002)—for example, U.S. military actions in foreign countries. This scholarship combined with my findings in Chapters Three and Four led me to expect that presidents, in their opening remarks, and journalists, in their questions, would focus most of their attention on powerful foreign nations (H1) and foreign nations in conflict with the United States (H2).

The third area of investigation focused on which political actor—the president or the press—more often *initiated* the introduction of foreign policy topics and nations in presidential press conferences. On the one hand, there are a number of compelling reasons why presidents might drive foreign policy discourse and nation visibility in these encounters. First, the president is the most powerful actor in the U.S. political system (Kingdon, 1995) and his power is most pronounced in the realm of foreign policy (Schlesinger, 1973). Second, the president controls the timing and context of presidential press conferences (Clayman, 2004). Third, the president has the opportunity to make preliminary and uninterrupted remarks at the beginning of each news conference, which in theory can influence the agenda of the rest of the conference, including the questions posed by reporters. Finally, the size of presidential news conferences would seem to

favor the president, as there are many journalists “bidding” for the president’s attention (Kumar, 2007), which in principle makes it easier for the president to avoid those journalists who are perceived to be less friendly to his agenda.

On the other hand, there are other reasons to think that the press might drive foreign prioritization in presidential news conferences. The first and most obvious reason is that presidential press conferences are open to all reporters who are eligible to cover the president,<sup>20</sup> and reporters formulate their own questions. In addition, although the president in his opening remarks can in principle influence the agenda of press questioning, scholarship indicates that the press does not follow along as frequently as might be assumed (Clayman, 2004; Clayman & Heritage, 2002). Finally, scholarship also suggests that journalists have become more aggressive in their questioning of presidents (Clayman et al., 2006). Because there were rationales on both sides of this matter, I offered this as a research question: which actor, the president or the press, has been more likely to initiate foreign policy discourse and foreign nation visibility in presidential press conferences (RQ3), and has this changed over time (RQ4)?

My final area of focus in this chapter focused on the *format* of presidential press conferences. In the century since Woodrow Wilson convened the first open-access presidential press conference, the set-up of these forums has shifted over time. During the Wilson, Warren Harding, Calvin Coolidge, Herbert Hoover, Franklin Roosevelt, and Harry Truman administrations, press conferences were private encounters governed by an informal agreement

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<sup>20</sup> To attend a White House press conference, a journalist needs to obtain a congressional press pass from the Standing Committee of Correspondents. According to the Congressional Directory (2011: 971), the major requirements include working for a publication “whose principal business is the daily dissemination of original news and opinion of interest to a broad segment of the public” and one which is “editorially independent of any institution, foundation or interest group that lobbies the federal government.” In addition, the White House requires a Secret Service background check. Notably, the White House Correspondents’ Association (WHCA), an association of professional journalists who cover the White House, is not involved in the credentialing process, and White House reporters are not required to be WHCA members. Also, passes can be renewed on a yearly basis without additional scrutiny. See Keating (2010) for a history of eccentric individuals who have been granted press passes and a few who have had them revoked.

that the president's remarks were "off the record" unless the president indicated otherwise—in other words, reporters could not quote the president without receiving explicit permission to do so (Clayman et al., 2006). Once press conferences went "on the record," there was no way to undo a damaging statement.<sup>21</sup> As a result of this development, administrations began seeking other ways to manage the flow of information in press conferences—for example, by managing their setting, timing, frequency, and format.

A relatively recent change in format that I expected to have a big impact on foreign policy discourse, nation visibility, and discursive initiative in presidential press conferences was the emergence of the *joint* press conference. Joint news conferences differ from solo news conferences in that the president shares the stage with at least one other person. The practice is not new—Roosevelt, Truman, and Johnson occasionally held such sessions—but beginning with the presidency of George H. W. Bush the format shifted from one in which presidents appeared once in a while with important domestic advisers to clarify domestic policy to one in which they appear commonly with one or more foreign heads of state to discuss foreign policy (Kumar, 2007). Scholarship has examined how this change in format has affected the tenor of press-president interactions (see Banning & Billingsly, 2007; Clayman et al., 2006), but no scholarly effort has systematically examined the potential differences in how foreign policy or nations are prioritized in joint versus solo press conferences. Because scholarship suggests that joint sessions increasingly include foreign dignitaries, I expected presidents in their opening remarks, and

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<sup>21</sup> A good example of how "off the record" press conferences affected the flow of information in press conferences prior to Eisenhower can be seen in an exchange Harry Truman had with a reporter in a news conference on March 30, 1950. During the conference Truman reportedly said, "I think the greatest asset that the Kremlin has is Senator Joseph McCarthy," which caused a member of the assembled press to exclaim: "Brother, will that hit page one tomorrow." Realizing the potential impact of his statement, Truman quickly revamped it to, "The greatest asset that the Kremlin has is the partisan attempt in the Senate to sabotage the bipartisan foreign policy of the United States" (Truman, 1950). By striking one quote from the record and issuing a new one, Truman was able to control the flow of information in a way that his successors could not.

journalists, in their questions, to focus more on foreign policy than domestic policy in these venues as compared to solo press conferences (H3).

Going further, it is the case that the presence of a foreign dignitary in a joint news conference is itself a form of foreign policy and nation emphasis, and scholars describe the new format as “an important diplomatic tool” (Kumar, 2011). However, scholarship has yet to systematically analyze *which* foreign leaders and countries have most often been granted the privilege of sharing the stage with the U.S. president. Informed by my findings in Chapter Three—that presidents in their public communications tend to favor powerful countries and countries in conflict with the United States—as well as Michael Corleone’s classic quote in *The Godfather Part II*—that leaders should “keep their friends close, and their enemies closer”<sup>22</sup>—I expected the countries most often invited to participate in joint press conferences with U.S. presidents would be the country’s closest allies—e.g. Britain and Israel—or its biggest rivals—e.g. China and Russia (H4).

To examine these hypotheses and research questions, I analyzed more than 50 years of presidential press conferences, beginning with Dwight Eisenhower’s first on February 17, 1953, and ending with George W. Bush’s last address of 2008 on September 24, 2008. I began with Eisenhower because he was the first president whose press conference statements were fully “on the record.” Notably, Eisenhower was also the first president to allow his press conferences to be televised. Paralleling Chapters Three and Four, I ended my analysis with Bush, the most recent president to serve out his full term. During this period, which spanned 10 presidencies, I analyzed the entire universe of presidential press conferences: 755 solo conferences and 341

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<sup>22</sup> The original Godfather quote is: “My father taught me many things here—he taught me in this room. He taught me—keep your friends close and your enemies closer.” Notably, this quote is often misattributed to Niccolò Machiavelli, author of the *The Prince*, or Sun Tzu, author of *The Art of War*.

joint conferences. The transcripts for all 1,096 news conferences were downloaded from the American Presidency Project.

Each news conference was examined in its entirety. For my analyses I subdivided each solo news conference into three distinct units: (a) introductory remarks by the president, (b) reporters' questions, and (c) presidential remarks in response to questions. I subdivided each joint news conference into three additional units: (d) the other speaker's opening remarks, (e) reporters' questions directed at the other speaker, and (f) the other speaker's remarks in response to questions. These distinctions allowed me to identify who introduced content and when.

I first tracked the *policy focus* of the president's opening remarks in each news conference. Opening remarks that did not address policy or politics were coded as "0," including those instances in which the president chose not to address the press. Opening remarks that were primarily focused on domestic affairs were coded as "1" (domestic policy focus); remarks focused on both domestic and foreign affairs were coded as "2" (mixed policy focus); and remarks focused primarily on foreign affairs were coded as "3" (foreign policy focus). I next adopted the same coding for reporters' questions, with a slight modification. Journalist questions that did not address foreign or domestic policy were coded as "0," questions that focused *exclusively* on domestic affairs were coded as "1," and questions that invoked foreign affairs in any way were coded as "2." I excluded the middle category for journalistic questions because questions were far shorter and far more targeted than presidential remarks or responses.

Next, I coded foreign *nation visibility* in press conferences, by tracking all invocations of foreign nations, people, and regions. Notably, this approach was more expansive and inclusive than the visibility coding employed in previous chapters. Specifically, in addition to tracking explicit country mentions (e.g. "Russia") I tracked references to foreign leaders (e.g. "Joseph

Stalin”), foreign locations (e.g. “Moscow”) and foreign institutions (e.g. the “Kremlin”). After identifying which specific foreign nations were present in each news conference, I tracked each nation’s prominence in the discourse by counting the number of independent speaking units in which each nation was mentioned in each news conference. For example, if Iraq was mentioned in the president’s opening remarks, in two journalist questions, and in three responses to journalist questions, it appeared in “6” independent speaking units. If it was only mentioned in one question and one presidential response it received a “2.”

I then identified which political actor took the *initiative* to introduce the nation into the discourse and when. Specifically, foreign nations that were introduced by the president in his opening remarks received a code of “1;” nations that were introduced by a journalist in a question directed at the president received a code of “2;” and nations that were introduced by the president in a response to a journalist’s question received a code of “3.”

Finally, I noted whether the press conference was a solo or joint affair, the date and location of each news conference, the party of the president, the number of words of each news conference, and the number of words of the president’s opening statement (see Appendix B).

Notably, the seven main variables analyzed in this chapter were subjected to inter-coder reliability tests. Specifically, 10% of the cases for each variable were randomly selected, independently coded, and directly compared. The inter-coder reliability coefficients (calculated via Krippendorff’s alpha) were as follows: *total questions* ( $\alpha=.979$ ), *foreign questions* ( $\alpha=.942$ ), *domestic questions* ( $\alpha=.914$ ), *nation visibility by press conference* ( $\alpha=.947$ ), *policy focus of opening remarks* ( $\alpha=.957$ ), *actor initiative* ( $\alpha=.926$ ), and *nation visibility by speaking units* ( $\alpha=.901$ ). Krippendorff (2004) recommends relying only on those variables that achieve an alpha of .80 or higher. Notably, all of the reliability coefficients reported in this chapter were above

.90, indicating strong beyond-chance agreement. Taken together, the analyses that follow buttress and broaden the dissertation focus by examining foreign prioritization in the face-to-face, direct interactions of the press and president in presidential press conference.

### Foreign Prioritization in Presidential Press Conferences

In this section, I detail my findings regarding foreign prioritization in presidential press conferences. I begin with a descriptive overview of presidential press conferences, focusing on the frequency of the forum. I then investigate the substantive policy *focus* of presidential press conferences in the aggregate and over time—examining the relative emphasis that presidents, in their opening remarks, and journalists, in their questions, put on foreign versus domestic affairs. Next, I detail my findings regarding foreign nation *visibility* in presidential press conferences, 1953-2008. I then examine which actor—the president or the press—more often took the *initiative* to introduce foreign nations into the discourse. Finally, I end with an analysis of the *format* of presidential press conferences and the impact of recent changes.

Since Dwight Eisenhower convened the first fully on the record press conference in 1953, the number of presidential press conferences held each year has varied widely, from a low of three in 1987 to a high of 45 in 1994. The over time frequency of these sessions is visible in Figure 5.1, which shows the total number of presidential press conferences per year, 1953-2008. The four geo-political eras on which I focused in previous chapters are distinguished by the vertical, dotted lines in the figure. During the early Cold War years (1953-1973), presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, and Ford held an average of 20 press conferences per year. This number dropped by 30% during the late Cold War years (1974-1991) to an average of 14 per year, but rose again—by 70%—during the post-Cold War years (1992-2001) to an

average of 24 sessions per year. Presidential press conferences stayed relatively more common during the final period analyzed, the post-9/11 years (2002-2008), when they took place on average 27 times per year.

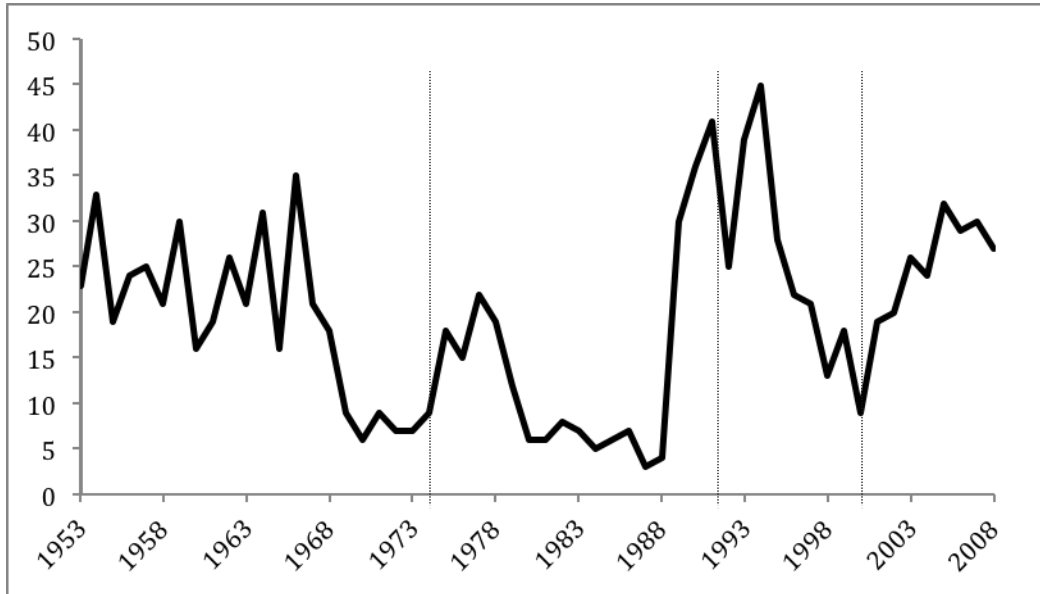


Figure 5.1 *Number of presidential press conferences per year, 1953-2008*

The lowest frequency of presidential press conferences was the 20-year period from 1969 to 1988, during the presidencies of Nixon, Ford, Carter, and Reagan. The sharp decline from 1968 to 1969 may be explained in part by the decisive change in public opinion against the Vietnam War during this period—notably, the Tet Offensive and the My Lai Massacre both took place in 1968. However, scholarship suggests that the frequency of presidential press conferences has more to do with individual presidential preferences than the political environment (Eshbaugh-Soha, 2003). For this reason, it is illustrative to see both the total and average number of press conferences held by each president over time. Table 5.1 shows that during the ten presidencies analyzed, George W. Bush held more press conferences ( $n=205$ ) than any other president, while his father, George H. W. Bush, held the most on average: 33.5 per

year. The great majority of presidents—eight out of 10—held on average at least one press conference per month. However, Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan were important outliers in this regard, convening only 7.1 and 5.8 sessions per year respectively. Notably, the number of press conferences per year surged from Reagan (5.8) to George H. W. Bush (33.5), and it remained high under Bill Clinton (24.4) and George W. Bush (25.9). The frequency with which individual presidents have held public, on the record press conferences has varied over time, but every president since Eisenhower has continued the tradition of convening them through their time in office. This makes them a good venue to analyze over time changes in the interaction between the president and the press in terms of foreign prioritization.

Table 5.1 *Frequency of presidential press conferences, by president, 1953-2008*

<b>President</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Per Year</b>
Eisenhower (1/20/53 to 1/20/61)	192	24.0
Kennedy (1/20/61 to 11/22/63)	62	21.9
Johnson (11/22/63 to 1/20/69)	124	24.0
Nixon (1/20/69 to 8/9/74)	39	7.1
Ford (8/9/74 to 1/20/77)	40	16.0
Carter (1/20/77 to 1/20/81)	59	14.8
Reagan (1/20/81 to 1/20/89)	46	5.8
H. W. Bush (1/20/89 to 1/20/93)	132	33.5
Clinton (1/20/93 to 1/20/01)	195	24.4
W. Bush (1/20/01 to 1/20/08)	207	25.9
Total	1096	19.9

*Policy Focus*

Moving beyond the descriptive, the first step in my analysis was to examine the policy focus of presidential press conferences in the aggregate and over time. I started here because a focus on foreign policy is an important indicator of foreign prioritization. Specifically, I began

by examining the president's opening remarks both because they set each press conference in motion and because they indicated what the president wanted to discuss. Specifically, I isolated presidential opening remarks that had a substantive policy focus—that is, policy or politics was discussed—and I analyzed the relative emphasis that was put on foreign versus domestic policy in those remarks. An example of an opening statement with a substantive policy focus occurred in Bill Clinton's second-to-last press conference, which began like this: "This has been a good week for the American people: first, the landmark breakthrough in human genomic research, which promises to eradicate once incurable diseases and revolutionize health care for a very long time to come; second, the release of the midseason review, which told us that the health of our economy continues its remarkable expansion" (Clinton, 2000). By contrast, an example of an opening statement lacking a substantive policy focus came from Richard Nixon's first press conference, which began like this: "Ladies and gentlemen, since this is my first press conference since the inauguration, I can imagine there are a number of questions. Consequently, I will make no opening statement and we will go directly to your questions" (Nixon, 1969). The former statement, which measured 1270 words in length, was likely composed with the intention of influencing the agenda of the rest of the news conference, while the latter statement left the agenda setting to the journalists.

Interested in the topical focus of presidential opening remarks over time, I compared the percentage of substantive opening statements primarily focused on: (a) domestic affairs, (b) both domestic and foreign affairs, and (c) foreign affairs. Notably, those with a substantive policy focus increased from a low of 49% during the Nixon administration to well over 90% during the Reagan, H. W. Bush, and Clinton administrations, and by W. Bush's presidency, 100% of all presidential press conferences began with a substantive policy statement. Table 5.2 shows the

relative policy focus of these remarks. Two patterns are evident. First, in the aggregate, presidents in their press conferences have focused more of their opening remarks on foreign affairs (60.7%) than domestic affairs (25.3%). Second, they have done so at an increasing rate since the presidency of Jimmy Carter. Each of the last three presidents—George H. W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush—have primarily focused well over half of their substantive opening remarks in press conferences—70.7%, 80.3%, and 84.5% respectively—on foreign policy rather than domestic policy. Indeed, George W. Bush focused ten times as many opening statements on foreign policy as he did on domestic policy.

Table 5.2 *Primary focus of substantive opening remarks in presidential press conferences, 1953-2008*

<b>President</b>	<b>Domestic %</b>	<b>Mixed %</b>	<b>Foreign %</b>
Eisenhower	37.7	18.9	43.4
Kennedy	23.6	30.9	45.5
Johnson	51.5	25.2	23.3
Nixon	26.3	15.8	57.9
Ford	41.7	29.2	29.2
Carter	52.1	20.8	27.1
Reagan	46.7	8.9	44.4
H. W. Bush	20.3	8.9	70.7
Clinton	11.9	7.8	80.3
W. Bush	8.2	7.2	84.5
Average	25.3	14.0	60.7

The increased presidential focus on foreign policy in press conferences is even more striking when we isolate domestic-focused opening remarks and consider mixed- and foreign-focused opening remarks together. Figure 5.2 shows the percentage of opening remarks significantly focused on foreign policy, by president, 1953-2008. Consistent with the data presented in the previous table, since Carter there has been a dramatic increase in presidential attention to foreign affairs in the opening remarks of press conferences. During the Carter and

Reagan administrations, about half of presidential opening remarks addressed foreign policy. By the presidency of George W. Bush, the percentage of presidential opening statements referencing foreign affairs had jumped to over 90% of all statements. It is clear that recent presidents have focused more on foreign affairs in their interactions with the press in these forums.

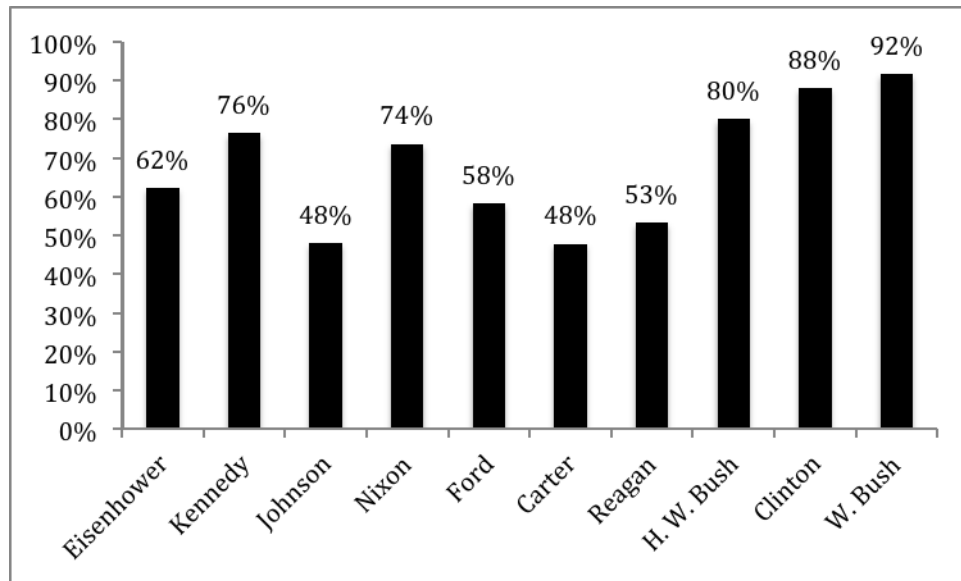


Figure 5.2 *Percentage of opening remarks in press conferences addressing foreign policy, by president, 1953-2008*

Further, recent presidents spoke for longer periods of time as well. This reality is apparent in Figure 5.3, which presents the median number of words of the opening remarks for the ten presidents analyzed. Overall, the median length of presidential opening remarks, 1953-2008, was 547 words. During the Kennedy and Johnson administrations the median number of words per opening statement grew considerably, but it dropped again during Nixon’s presidency. Since Nixon, there was a dramatic increase in the length of presidential opening remarks over time. Indeed, George W. Bush’s opening remarks (776 words), the last president in my analysis, were seven times longer than Richard Nixon’s (97 words) and five times longer than Gerald Ford’s (145 words). Scholarship has not systematically examined the impact that presidential

statements have on subsequent journalist questioning, but it stands to reason that longer remarks influence journalist questioning more than shorter remarks.

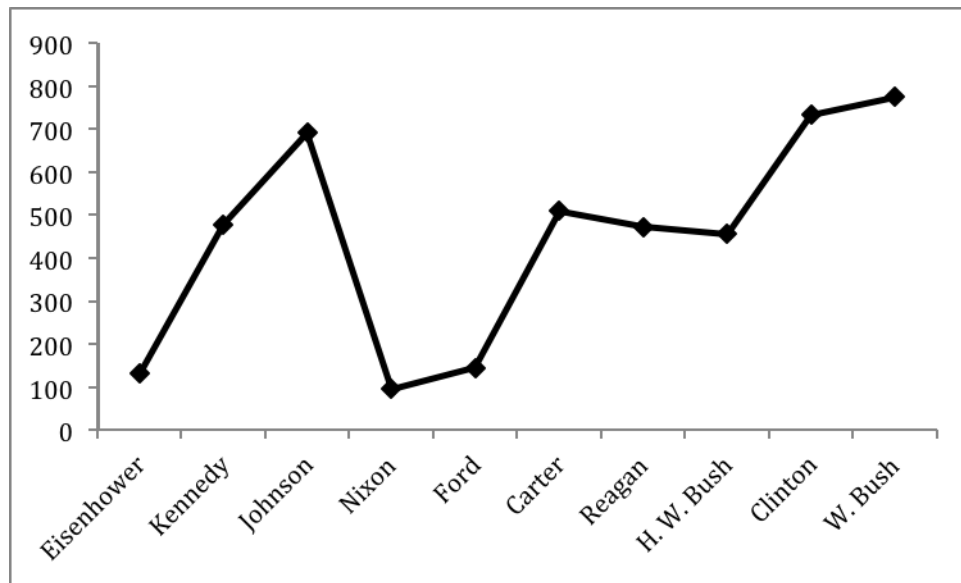


Figure 5.3 *Median number of words of presidential opening remarks, by president, 1953-2008*

The fact that recent presidents laid out their foreign policy priorities more frequently and for longer periods of time at the outset of press conferences raises the question of whether this practice has an agenda-setting effect on subsequent journalist questioning. To investigate this possibility, I began by examining the policy focus of journalist questions in the aggregate and over time. Presidents obviously try to influence the content of subsequent questioning, but journalists have significant freedom to ask presidents about a wide range of topics—regardless of whether they are related to their opening statements. For example, in a February 1999 press conference, Bill Clinton opened with several minutes of remarks about foreign affairs in Africa. But the first question focused on “recent allegations by an Arkansas woman, apparently of something she claimed happened many years ago” (Clinton, 1999). The question—and those that followed—did not follow Clinton’s planned agenda, illustrating the freedom journalists have to deviate from the president’s desired focus in a news conference.

The potential for topical deviations in these forums led me to examine the policy foci of journalist questions, by president over time, and to compare them to the policy foci of presidential opening remarks. Because journalist questions are shorter and more targeted, each question was coded as either primarily focused on foreign policy or primarily focused on domestic policy. Table 5.4 shows my analysis of 19,312 journalist questions in 1,096 press conferences, and the results closely align with presidential emphases. Specifically, journalists asked more questions about foreign policy in a majority of press conferences (58%), and there was a steady and dramatic increase in foreign policy focus in journalist questions from the presidency of Gerald Ford (10%) to George W. Bush (85%). This finding is particularly noteworthy considering that foreign affairs reporting at major news outlets has decreased in recent decades (Hamilton, 2004; Pew, 2011)—that is, fewer foreign-focused news stories are appearing in newspapers and on network television news, but when given the opportunity journalists are asking more questions about foreign affairs than domestic affairs in presidential press conferences.

Table 5.3 *Primary focus of journalist questions in presidential press conferences, 1953-2008*

<b>President</b>	<b>Domestic %</b>	<b>Foreign %</b>
Eisenhower	71.4	28.6
Kennedy	33.9	66.1
Johnson	66.9	33.1
Nixon	48.7	51.3
Ford	90.0	10.0
Carter	69.5	30.5
Reagan	30.4	69.6
H. W. Bush	27.3	72.7
Clinton	21.0	79.0
W. Bush	15.0	85.0
Average	41.9	58.1

To determine the extent to which the policy foci of the presidential and press agendas correlated, I ran a bivariate Spearman’s correlation between the policy focus of presidential opening remarks and the policy focus of journalist questions. The resultant correlation was .50 ( $N=1096$ ,  $p<.001$ ), which indicated that both variables deviated from their mean in the same direction. Notably, values of  $\pm .1$  represent a small effect,  $\pm .3$  represents a medium effect, and  $\pm .5$  represents a large effect (Field, 2009)—so the policy foci of presidential opening remarks and journalist questions were closely correlated in presidential press conferences, 1953-2008.

Analysis of the correlations during different presidencies offers further insight into whether the relationship between the presidential and press agendas has changed over time. Specifically, since the Carter administration, there has been a steady increase in the policy congruence of

presidential opening remarks and journalist questions: the correlation coefficient went from .17 during the Carter presidency to .29 for Reagan to .50 for H. W. Bush to .72 for Clinton and .61 for W. Bush. Moreover, this variable shifted from being statistically insignificant for Carter’s time to being statistically significant at the  $p < .001$  for the presidencies of Reagan, H. W. Bush, Clinton, and W. Bush. This trend may be a reflection of the increasingly globalized nature of the modern world, but it may also be a reflection of the changing format of presidential press conferences—an issue that I take up later in this chapter.

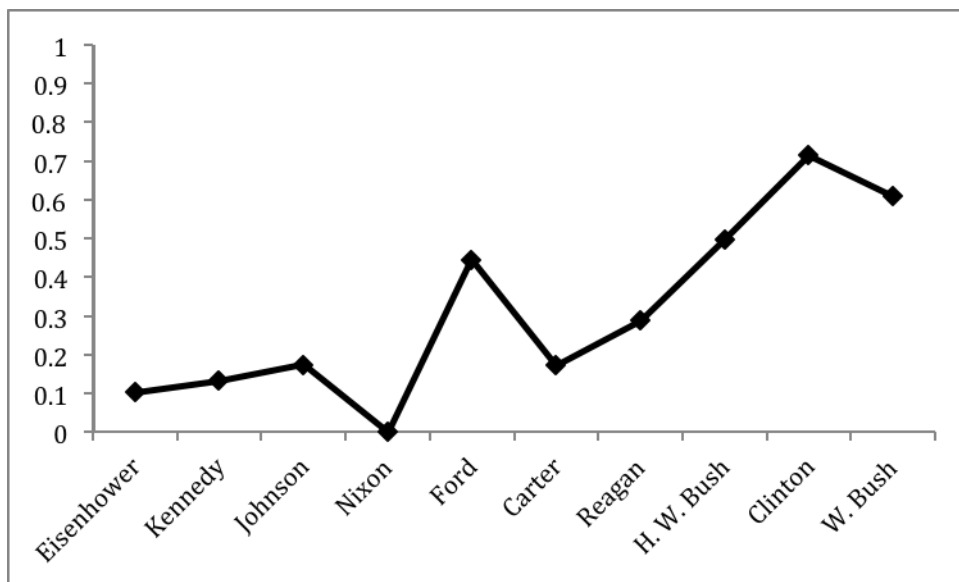


Figure 5.4 *Correlations between primary focus of presidential opening remarks and primary focus of journalist questions, by president, 1953-2008*

#### *Foreign nation visibility*

The second step in my analysis of foreign prioritization was to examine which foreign nations were most and least visible in the discourse. Based on the congruence of my visibility findings in Chapters Three and Four, I expected more of the same in presidential press conferences—a concentrated agenda focused on (a) powerful foreign nations and (b) foreign nations in conflict with the United States. I did not have specific expectations about the

percentage of press conferences in which a foreign nation would be mentioned or the number of foreign nations that would be mentioned in each news conference, but it is noteworthy that at least one foreign nation was mentioned in 95% of the 1,096 press conferences analyzed and there were an average of 8.1 foreign nation references in each news conference. Notably, the last presidential press conference that did not address at least one foreign nation took place nearly 20 years ago in December 1995. Presidential press conferences have had a wide range of foci in the post-World War II era, but regardless of their focus foreign nations have been regularly invoked in these forums.

To determine which specific foreign nations were visible, I began by examining the number and percentage of news conferences in which each country appeared.<sup>23</sup> The 20 most visible foreign nations from February 17, 1953 through December 15, 2008 are listed in Table 5.4. According to this analysis, Russia was the most visible foreign nation during this period—remarkably, it was mentioned in over two-thirds (67.8%) of the 1,096 press conferences that presidents convened during this period. In previous research I found that Russia was the most visible foreign country in news discourse (see Chapter Four) and the third most visible foreign country in presidential discourse (see Chapter Three) during the post-World War II era—nonetheless, it is astounding that any one country would appear so frequently, and for such a long period of time, in U.S. presidential press conferences. The next five most visible nations—the United Kingdom (38.4%), China (36.6%), France (33.1%), Germany (32.6%), and Israel (30.3%)—appeared on average in about half as many news conferences as Russia, but it is still notable that they were each mentioned in approximately one-third of press conferences during this period.

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<sup>23</sup> In Chapter Four I used a similar method when I examined the number of news stories in which each country appeared.

Table 5.4 *Twenty most-visible foreign nations in presidential press conferences by number and percentage of conferences addressing each country, 1953-2008*

<b>Country</b>	<b>Number of Conferences Addressing Each Country</b>	<b>Percentage of Conferences Addressing Each Country</b>
1. Russia	743	67.8
2. United Kingdom	421	38.4
3. China	401	36.6
4. France	363	33.1
5. Germany	357	32.6
6. Israel <sup>24</sup>	332	30.3
7. Korea (North/South)	314	28.6
8. Japan	260	23.7
9. Vietnam	259	23.6
10. Iraq	258	23.5
11. Iran	201	18.3
12. Cuba	199	18.2
13. Switzerland	193	17.6
14. Egypt	179	16.3
15. Mexico	175	16.0
16. Canada	170	15.5
17. Afghanistan	157	14.3
18. Syria	134	12.2
19. Lebanon	125	11.4
20. Serbia (Fmr. Yugoslavia)	120	10.9

The range of press conferences in which a country is present is an important indicator of its visibility in the discourse, but it is only part of the story. The other part is the quantity of attention that it receives once it is on the agenda. To gauge this aspect of visibility, I analyzed the number of substantive, independent speaking units—presidential opening remarks, plus

<sup>24</sup> Palestine was referenced in 223 press conferences (or 20.3% of the total)—usually in combination with Israel. However, I did not include Palestine in my analysis because it is not officially recognized as a sovereign state in the international system. Palestinians declared their statehood in 1988 and more than a hundred countries have formally recognized the State of Palestine since, but it still has not been granted the rights of full statehood by the United Nations.

journalist questions plus presidential responses—in which each nation appeared in each news conference.<sup>25</sup> The results of this investigation are shown in Table 5.5.

Table 5.5 *Twenty most-visible foreign nations in presidential press conferences by number and percentage of speaking units addressing each country, 1953-2008*

Country	Number of Speaking Units Addressing Each Country	Percentage of Speaking Units Addressing Each Country
1. Russia/Soviet Union	3,924	9.9
2. Iraq	1,620	4.1
3. Vietnam (North/South)	1,195	3.0
4. China	1,176	3.0
5. Israel <sup>26</sup>	1,157	2.9
6. United Kingdom	1,051	2.7
7. Germany	993	2.5
8. France	799	2.0
9. Korea (North/South)	779	2.0
10. Japan	664	1.7
11. Iran	626	1.6
12. Cuba	541	1.4
13. Canada	479	1.2
14. Egypt	449	1.1
15. Mexico	412	1.0
16. Afghanistan	377	1.0
17. Bosnia	366	0.9
18. Switzerland	361	0.9
19. Lebanon	340	0.9
20. Syria	312	0.8

Once again, Russia was the most visible foreign nation, mentioned in nearly one-tenth (9.9%) of the 39,562 substantive speaking units analyzed.<sup>27</sup> Considering the wide range of

<sup>25</sup> A *substantive* speaking unit is defined as one in which policy or politics is discussed. An *independent* speaking unit is defined as a standalone statement or question by a single speaker. For example, the president's opening statement—no matter the length—counts as one speaking unit. Likewise, each journalist question—no matter the length—counts as a single speaking unit. Finally, each presidential remark—usually in response to a journalist question—also counts as a one speaking unit.

<sup>26</sup> Palestine was referenced in 655 speaking units (1.6%) of the total—usually in combination with Israel—but as with my previous analysis I decided not to include it in this table.

issues—including domestic issues—that are discussed in press conferences, it is remarkable that one country was so often invoked in these forums. There is significant overlap in the countries that appear in Tables 5.4 and 5.5: Bosnia is absent from the former table and Serbia is absent from the latter table; otherwise the other 19 countries are the same. Nonetheless, it is notable that the two countries with which the United States has experienced the most sustained and resource intensive conflicts—Iraq and Vietnam—are ranked higher in Table 5.5 than in Table 5.4, while China, France, and the United Kingdom are ranked lower. This shows that countries in conflict with the United States are likely to receive high levels of attention—i.e. appear in many speaking units in the news conferences in which they appear—while the conflicts are ongoing, but much lower levels of attention during other periods. At the same time, major powers like China, France, and the United Kingdom are likely to receive more regular attention—i.e. be mentioned in a wider array of conferences—but receive less intensity of attention than countries in which the United States is in conflict.

The final step in my analysis of visibility focused on regional groupings of nations. Figure 5.5 shows that during the period of analysis, the most visible region in the discourse was the Middle East (23.5%) and the least visible was Africa (3.7%)—measured in terms of percentage of total speaking units. Notably, five Middle Eastern countries—Egypt, Iran, Israel, Lebanon, and Syria—were among the 20 most visible foreign nations, while not one African nation made the top 20. When we consider that more than a quarter of the countries that are officially recognized in the international system (25.4%) and one-seventh of the world’s total population (14.2%) are in Africa, it is noteworthy that the region received so little attention in U.S. presidential press conferences.

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<sup>27</sup> Notably, statements by foreign dignitaries in joint news conferences were not included in this analysis. There were 326 such statements, but I did not include them because I was only interested in foreign nation visibility in U.S. discourse.

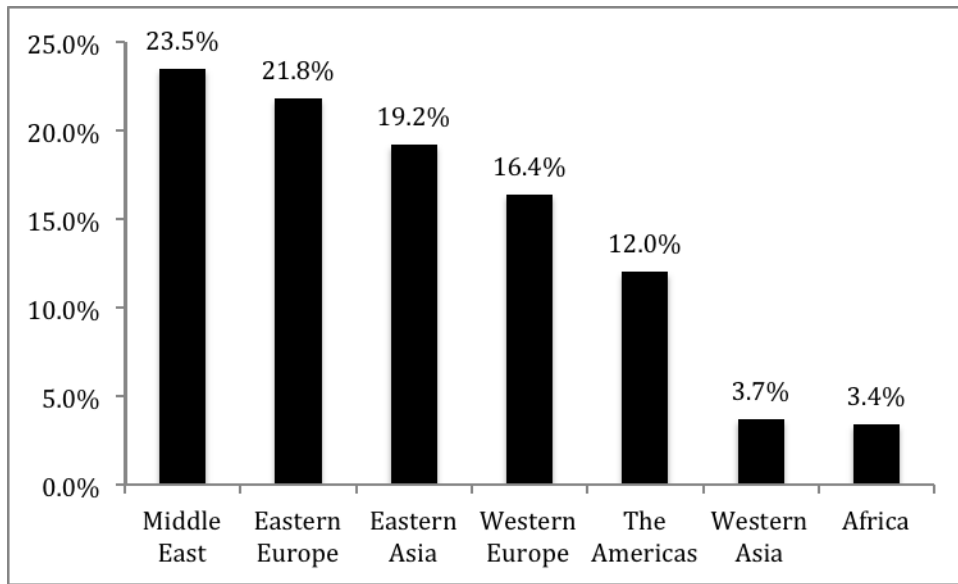


Figure 5.5 *Foreign region visibility in presidential press conferences, 1953-2008*

The relative visibility of different regions comes into sharper focus when we go beyond the aggregate distribution of foreign nation mentions and consider the distribution in different geo-political eras. Four noteworthy patterns are evident in Table 5.6, which shows these data. First, the Middle East has not always been the most visible region. In fact, during the early Cold War era (1953-1973) it was—along with Africa and Western Asia—among the least perceptible in the discourse. In recent decades, however, the Middle East has emerged as the most visible foreign region in presidential press conferences—by far. Indeed, the countries of the Middle East accounted for nine times as much of the discursive agenda in the post-9/11 era (44.1%) as they did during the early Cold War era (4.9%), and the Middle East garnered more presidential and press attention during this period than any other region in other era. Second, Europe has become less prominent in the discourse over time. Specifically, Western Europe, which accounted for a quarter of all foreign region mentions in the early Cold War era fell to 11% in the post-9/11 era, and Eastern Europe, which was consistently among the most visible foreign regions prior to

September 11, 2001, fell to less than 10% during the same era. Finally, Africa has consistently been among the least visible regions in presidential press conferences, regardless of time period.

Table 5.6 *Foreign region visibility in presidential press conferences, by era, 1953-2008*

	<b>Era 1</b> <b>Early CW</b> <b>(1953-1973)</b> %	<b>Era 2</b> <b>Late CW</b> <b>(1974-1991)</b> %	<b>Era 3</b> <b>Post-CW</b> <b>(1992-2001)</b> %	<b>Era 4</b> <b>Post-9/11</b> <b>(2002-2008)</b> %	<b>TOTALS</b> <b>OVERALL</b> <b>(1953-2008)</b>
The Americas	10.4	14.5	13.7	8.6	12.0
Western Europe	25.1	13.0	14.1	11.2	16.4
Eastern Europe	24.0	24.6	26.3	9.1	21.8
Middle East	4.9	31.8	20.0	44.1	23.5
Western Asia	2.2	1.0	3.6	9.6	3.7
Eastern Asia	32.0	10.5	18.4	13.3	19.2
Africa	1.4	4.6	4.0	4.1	3.4

\*The boxes indicate the most visible foreign region during each era.

The findings in this section are congruent with the results presented in Chapters Three and Four. In U.S. political discourse, when the topic is foreign affairs, regardless of the format—presidential speeches, news stories, or press conferences—the nations that are most often privileged in the discourse are either major economic and military powers like Britain, China, France, Germany, Japan and Russia, or they are countries in conflict with the United States like Afghanistan, Bosnia, Cuba, Korea, Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, and Vietnam. By contrast, countries such as Indonesia, Brazil, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Nigeria—the fourth through eighth most populous countries in the world—garner little attention in U.S. political discourse relative to their sizes. Likewise, countries like the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Haiti,

Rwanda, Sudan, and Uganda, which have all experienced catastrophic disasters in recent decades, are also largely ignored in presidential and press discourse about foreign affairs. The moral of the story is that foreign nation prioritization in U.S. political discourse has less to do with the bonds that unite us—like our shared humanity—and more to do with the bonds that divide us—like our proclivity for competition and conflict.

### *Actor initiative*

The third step in my analysis of foreign prioritization was to examine what I call *actor initiative*. Specifically, I was interested in which actor—the president or the press—more often introduced foreign nations into the discourse (RQ3) and whether this changed over time (RQ4). To address these research questions, I noted whether the president or the press introduced a foreign nation into the press conference. I further differentiated between presidential opening remarks—the president’s first statement before journalists began asking questions—and subsequent presidential remarks in response to journalist questions. Figure 5.6 presents the results of my analysis. Specifically, it shows that of the 8,130 foreign nation introductions into presidential press conferences 1953 through 2008, 60% were initiated by presidents and 40% were initiated by journalists. More specifically, 42% were initiated by presidents in their opening remarks and the other 18% were initiated in their remarks following journalist questions. Presidential statements are generally longer than journalist questions, in terms of the overall number of words, which gives presidents more opportunity to introduce foreign nations, but it is noteworthy that journalists introduced fewer foreign nations into the discourse than the presidents they were questioning—especially when we consider that the primary purpose of press conferences is for the press to query presidents.

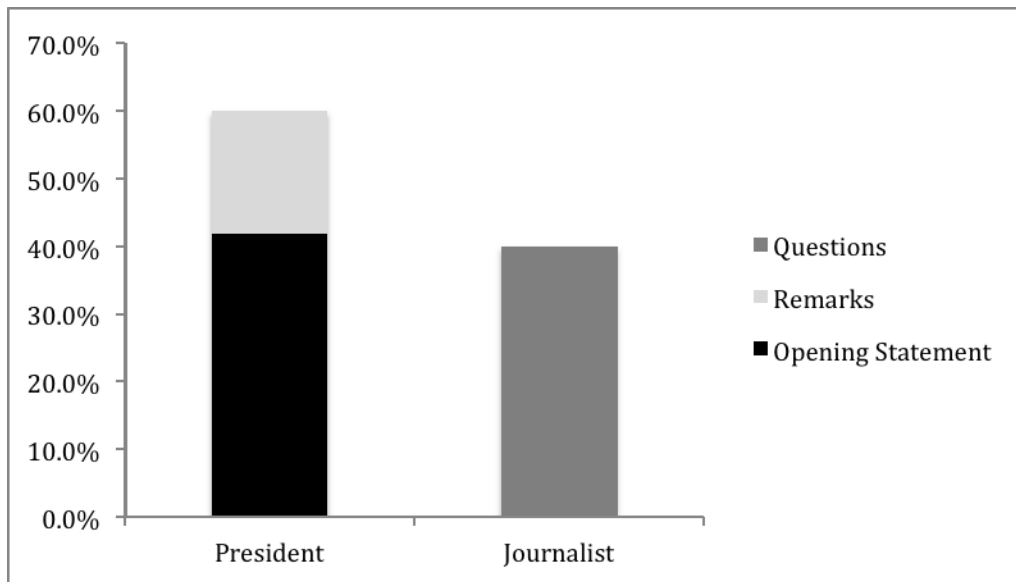


Figure 5.6 *Percentage of foreign nations introduced by each actor and type of speaking unit in presidential press conferences, 1953-2008*

To further investigate the relationship between initiative and visibility, I calculated the percentage of foreign nation invocations introduced by each actor during different geopolitical eras. This analysis in Figure 5.6 offers insight into how the relationship between initiative and visibility has changed over time. Specifically, it shows that the percentage of foreign nations introduced in presidential opening remarks nearly tripled from 22% in the early Cold War era (1953-1973) to 63% in the post-9/11 era (2002-2008). At the same time, the percentage of foreign nations introduced in journalist questions fell by more than half from 58% in the first era to 22% in the final era, and the percentage of nations introduced in subsequent presidential remarks fell modestly from 20% to 15% during the same period. In the aggregate, then, journalistic initiative decreased and presidential initiative increased with regard to foreign nation visibility in presidential press conferences in the post-World War II era.

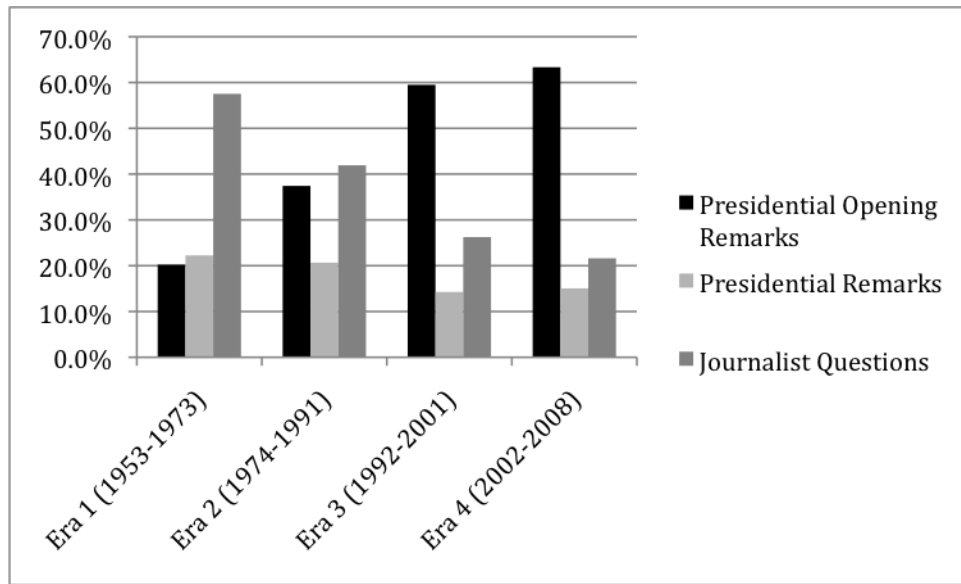


Figure 5.7 *Percentage of foreign nations introduced by each actor and type of speaking unit in presidential press conference, by era, 1953-2008*

Next, I rearranged the data on initiative and visibility to examine their relationship by region. Figure 5.7 shows the percentage of foreign nations introduced by presidents in their opening remarks, by region and by geopolitical era, 1953-2008. And Figure 5.8 shows the percentage of nations introduced by journalists in their questions, also by region and by geopolitical era, 1953-2008. The results of this analysis are clear: over time and across regions, presidents have increasingly introduced foreign nations into the discourse via their opening remarks (Figure 5.7), while journalists have increasingly exhibited less initiative in doing so via their questions (Figure 5.8).

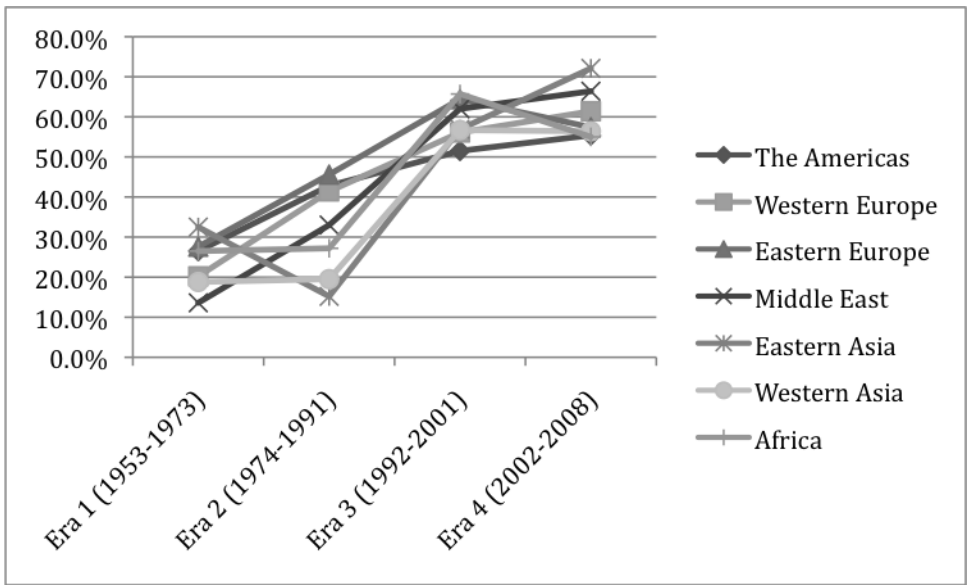


Figure 5.8 *Percentage of foreign nations introduced by presidents in their opening remarks, by region and era, 1953-2008*

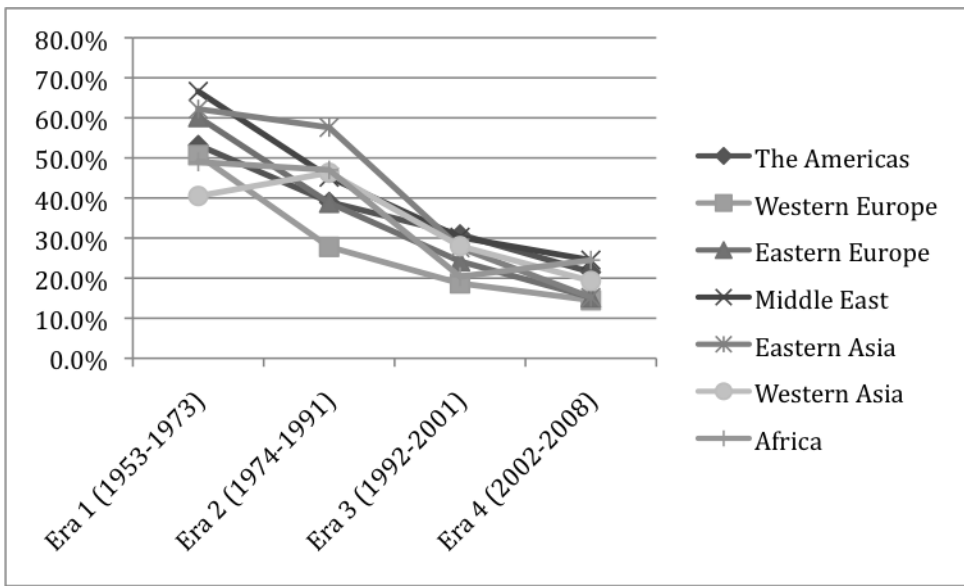


Figure 5.9 *Percentage of foreign nation invocations introduced by journalists in their questions, by region and era, 1953-2008*

To conclude this section, I interwove the three strands of this chapter thus far: policy focus, nation visibility, and actor initiative. Specifically, I correlated the policy focus of the president's opening remarks with the percentage of foreign nations introduced by the president in

each news conference.<sup>28</sup> Because the values of the policy focus variable were ordinal rather than interval, when calculating the correlation I employed the Spearman's *rho* statistic. The correlation was .472 ( $p < .001$ ) for the whole period under analysis, which suggests that these two variables are related to each other. To determine if the relationship between these variables changed over time, I conducted the same analysis for each of the four geo-political eras at the heart of this study. The results of these analyses are presented in Figure 5.8, and they show that the correlation between the policy focus of presidential opening remarks and the percentage of foreign nations introduced by the president decreased from the early Cold War era (.392,  $p < .001$ ) to the late Cold War era (.316,  $p < .001$ ) and again during the post-Cold War era (.292,  $p < .001$ ), but then it rose to its highest level during the most recent era (.506,  $p < .001$ ). These results are suggestive that the relationship between the policy focus of presidential opening remarks and foreign nation visibility in presidential press conferences is strengthening—albeit modestly.

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<sup>28</sup> To make this analysis possible, it was necessary to transform the initiative data that I collected at one unit of analysis, the level of the country mention, to another unit of analysis—the level of the news conference. This was a multi-step process. First, I calculated the sum of countries mentioned in each news conference—e.g. on February 17, 1953, six countries were mentioned overall. Then I calculated the sum of foreign nations introduced by the president in each news conference—e.g. in that press conference one nation was introduced in President Eisenhower's opening remarks, two were introduced in his subsequent remarks, and the other three were introduced by journalists in their questions. In this example the president introduced three countries. Third, I calculated the percentage of foreign nations mentioned in each news conference that were introduced by the president. At the end of this process, the unit of analysis for the new variable—percentage of foreign nation mentions initiated by the president—was the same as the unit of analysis for the other variable of interest—the policy focus of the president's opening remarks: the news conference.

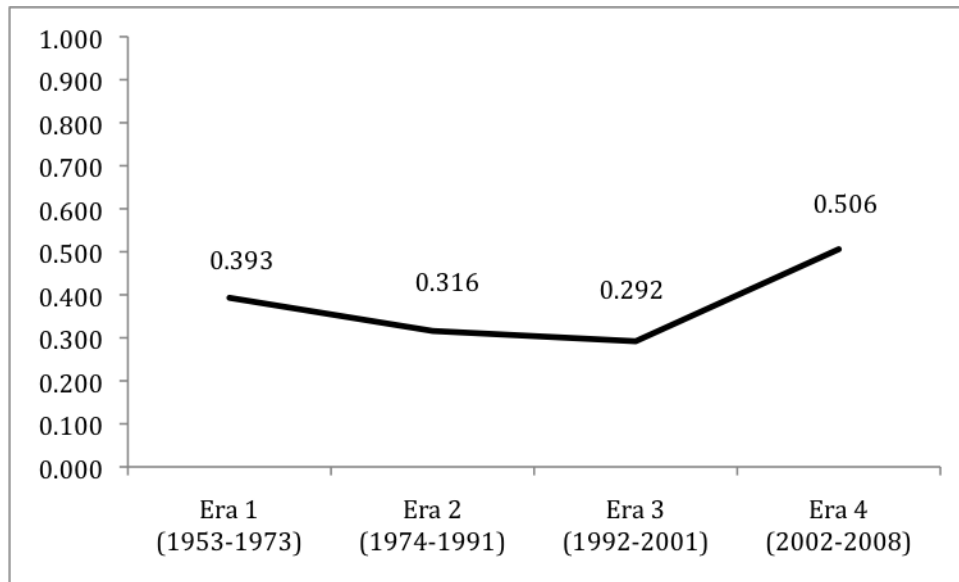


Figure 5.10 *Correlations between primary focus of presidential opening remarks and percentage of foreign nations introduced by the president in each news conference, 1953-2008*

#### *Format*

The final step in my analysis of foreign prioritization involved an examination of the *format* of presidential press conferences. For decades, all press conferences were what scholars now refer to as “solo” press conferences, in which the president appeared alone before journalists to take questions. “Joint” press conferences, as the name suggests, differ from solo press conferences in that someone else with a substantive role in the conference appears alongside the president. According to Kumar (2005), presidents have long encouraged members of their administration to make clarifying comments or answer specific questions about intricate issues like the budget, but these examples differ from the modern incarnation of joint press conferences in that the president’s staff were acting as a proxy for and speaking on behalf of the president. Nowadays, joint news conferences include one or more foreign dignitaries who speak for themselves as representatives of a foreign nation. A format that was once used sparingly as an instrument to amplify and elucidate domestic policy has become a tool of foreign policy and

international diplomacy. Indeed, the president’s choice of which foreign nations in which to participate in joint presidential press conferences is an important indicator of foreign prioritization by the president.

George H. W. Bush was the first president to regularly convene joint news conferences. Prior to Bush three U.S. presidents held a total of eight such sessions—Franklin Roosevelt convened six of them, Harry Truman convened one, and Gerald Ford convened the other. Figure 5.9 depicts the yearly distribution of news conferences, by format, 1953-2008. In total, H. W. Bush held 132 press conferences—42 joint (31.8%) and 90 solo (68.2%) sessions. Bill Clinton, the next president, was the first to hold more joint ( $N=130$ , 66.7%) than solo ( $N=65$ , 33.3%) press conferences, and George W. Bush, the most recent president in this analysis, convened a higher number ( $N=156$ ) and percentage (75.5%) of joint news conferences than any other president in history. The increased frequency in the 1990s and 2000s of this new format raises important questions about the impact that it perhaps has had on foreign policy discourse and nation visibility in these forums.

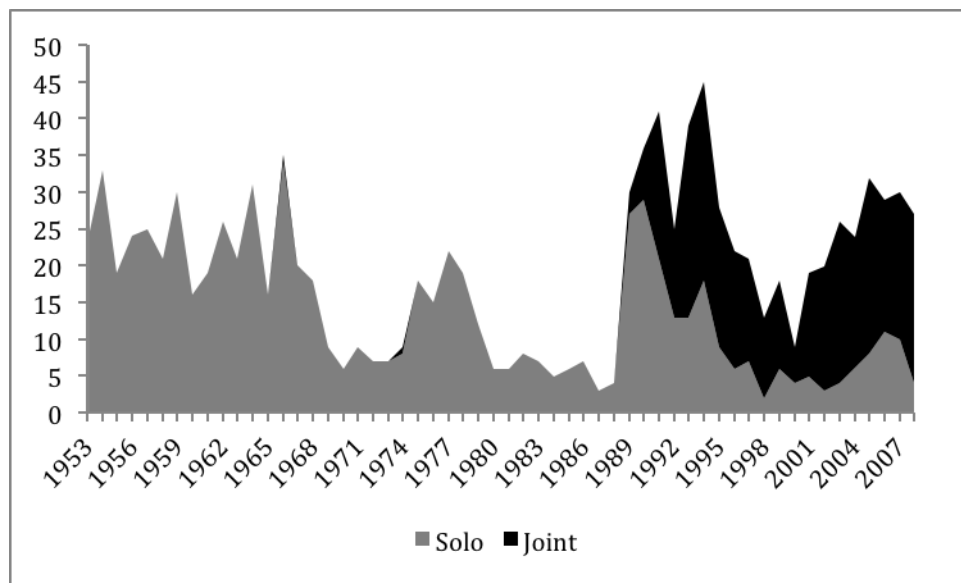


Figure 5.11 Yearly distribution of presidential press conferences, by format, 1953-2008

Entering this research, I expected that in joint press conferences presidents in their opening remarks, and journalists, in their questions, would focus more on foreign policy than domestic policy (H3). To test this hypothesis I calculated the mean policy foci of the last three president's opening remarks in joint news conferences and compared them to their mean policy foci in solo news conferences. Previous presidents were not included in this analysis because the change in format did not emerge until the entrance of George H. W. Bush into the White House. The results of this analysis are presented in Figure 5.10. A mean of "1" indicates that the primary focus of the president's opening statement was domestic policy, "2" indicates that the focus was mixed, and "3" indicates that the primary focus was foreign policy. As illustrated in the figure, the primary focus of presidential opening remarks in joint press conferences during the H. W. Bush, Clinton, and W. Bush administrations was nearly always foreign policy, while the primary focus of presidential opening remarks in solo press conferences was much more mixed. This finding is not overly surprising—presidents in joint press conferences are meeting with foreign dignitaries after all—but it is significant considering the significant increase in presidents holding more joint than solo news conferences.

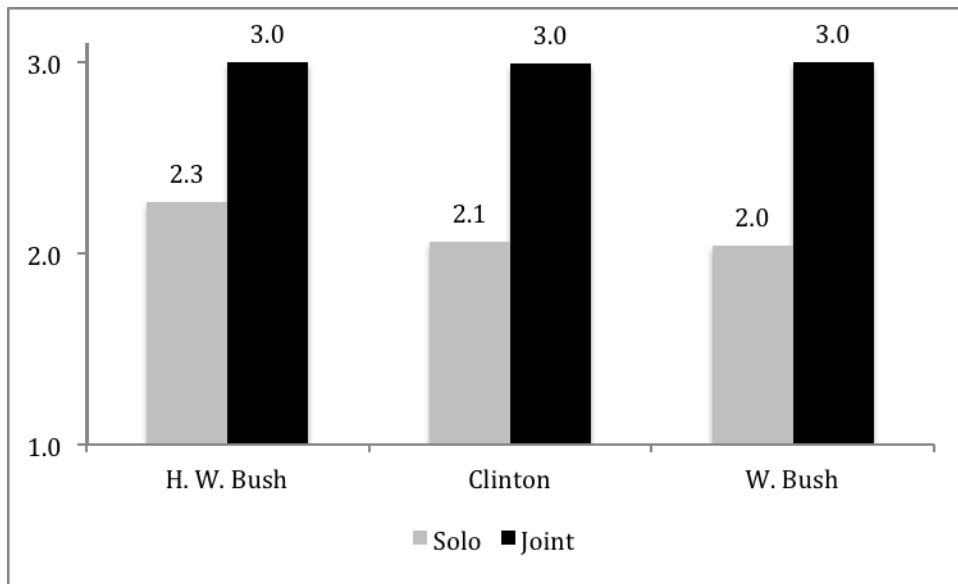


Figure 5.12 *Policy focus of president's opening remarks in presidential press conferences, by format, 1953-2008*

As a next step, I examined the policy focus of journalist questions in joint versus solo press conferences. It seemed likely that journalists would focus more attention on foreign policy than domestic policy in joint press conferences, but with fewer solo news conferences occurring in the last three presidencies it was also possible that journalists might feel compelled to use the opportunities they have in joint news conferences to ask the domestic policy questions they otherwise would have asked in solo news conferences. Consider a joint press conference that Bill Clinton held with President Jerry Rawlings of Ghana on February 24, 1999: all of the questions Clinton received from the U.S. press were focused on the Monica Lewinsky scandal. Frustrated by the domestic policy focus of the questions, a Ghanaian reporter complained that American reporters did not pose any questions about Africa. Clinton responded, "It's my fault because I don't let them ask me enough questions on other occasions, so I'm forcing them to use this opportunity to pepper me" (Clinton, 1999). This potential for topical deviations in joint versus solo press conferences led me to analyze the policy foci of journalist questions, by format, during

the H. W. Bush, Clinton, and W. Bush administrations. Specifically, I calculated the percentage of questions in each news conference that focused on foreign policy (see Figure 5.13). Like the presidential opening statements, journalist questions in joint press conferences have been much more focused on foreign policy than domestic policy, while journalist questions in solo news conferences have been much more mixed. Taken together, these analyses demonstrate that foreign policy is increasingly being prioritized over domestic policy in presidential press conferences, and this shift in focus is more pronounced in joint sessions.

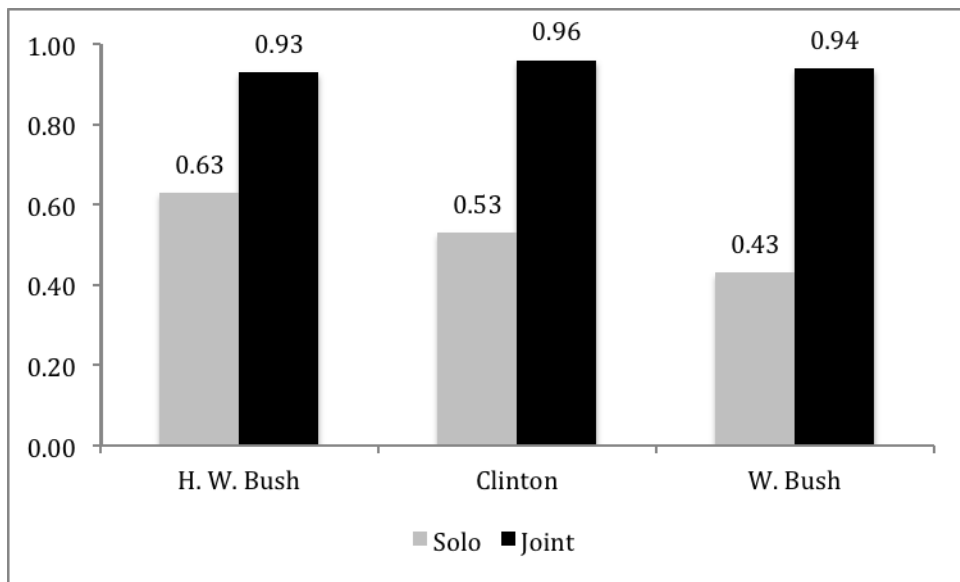


Figure 5.13 *Policy focus of journalist questions, by format, 1953-2008*

Next, I examined the number of journalist questions directed at the president in presidential press conferences. In the aggregate, the mean number of questions posed in all news conferences ( $N=1,096$ ) was 18. However, there was a significant difference between solo and joint press conferences in this regard: the average number of journalist questions posed in solo news conferences was 22 ( $N=755$ ), while the average number posed in joint news conferences

was 67 ( $N=330$ ).<sup>29</sup> Figure 5.14 portrays the mean number of questions posed by journalists in all presidential press conferences (triangle), only solo conferences (diamond), and only joint conferences (square), by era, 1953-2008. The most noteworthy pattern in the figure is that the average number of journalist questions posed in presidential press conferences has declined significantly in the last two eras. Specifically, in the late Cold War years (1974-1991), the average number of journalist questions posed in all news conferences was 24. During the post-Cold War years (1992-2001) the average number dropped to 12, and during the post-9/11 years it dropped even lower to an average of nine questions per conference. Notably, the precipitous drop in the number of questions posed in presidential press conferences corresponds to the rise in joint press conferences depicted in Figure 5.11. The average number of questions posed in joint news conferences in the late Cold War years was 19—comparable to the average number of questions posed in solo news conferences during the same era—but it dropped to eight in the post-Cold War years, and to five in the post-9/11 years. This pattern helps explain why joint press conferences have become the preferred format for presidential press conferences in recent decades: presidents get credit for having had a news conference, but they do not have to subject themselves to as many questions.

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<sup>29</sup> The difference in  $N$ 's relates to joint domestic news conferences ( $N=11$ ), which typically include guests who are administration officials elucidating or amplifying presidential policy. These sessions are categorically different from joint foreign press conferences, which include foreign dignitaries as guests who represent and speak for themselves and their countries.

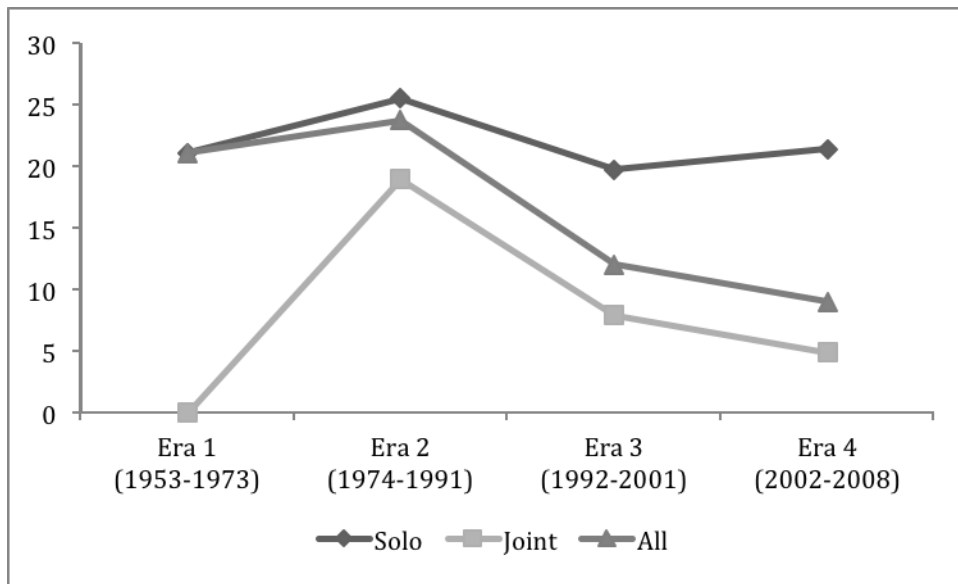


Figure 5.14 *Mean number of journalist questions, by format and era, in presidential press conferences, 1953-2008*

For my final analysis, I examined the specific foreign nations that have been prioritized in joint presidential press conferences. During the period analyzed, 330 joint presidential press conferences were convened with foreign dignitaries—163 were held in the United States (49.4%) and 167 were held abroad (51.6%). Notably, the majority of foreign-based joint presidential press conferences were convened either in Western Europe (31.9%) or the Americas (20.5%), and more sessions were held in Russia (8.4%) and Canada (7.2%) respectively than in Western Asia (3.0%) and Africa (3.0%) combined. Like the president’s foreign agenda in presidential speeches (see Chapter Three), the president’s foreign agenda in joint press conferences was highly concentrated on a relatively small number of countries. This reality is apparent in Table 5.7, which presents the 20 foreign nations most often invited to participate in joint press conferences with U.S. presidents, 1974-2008. Notably, Britain, Russia, and Canada, the top three countries in the table, together participated in nearly a quarter of all the joint press conferences convened by U.S. presidents during this period. There were 192 countries in the international

system during the period analyzed and these three countries participated in more joint press conferences with U.S. presidents than the bottom 172 countries *combined*.

Table 5.7 *Twenty countries most frequently invited to participate in joint presidential press conferences, 1974-2008*

Country	Total Joint Conferences	%	Cumulative %
1. Britain	31	9.4%	9.4%
2. Russia	29	8.8%	18.2%
3. Canada	20	6.1%	24.2%
4. Japan	19	5.8%	30.0%
5. Israel	18	5.5%	35.5%
8. France	18	5.5%	40.9%
7. Germany	17	5.2%	46.1%
8. Mexico	14	4.2%	50.3%
9. Italy	13	3.9%	54.2%
10. Egypt	11	3.3%	57.6%
11. Korea	10	3.0%	60.6%
12. Australia	9	2.7%	63.3%
13. Colombia	7	2.1%	65.5%
14. Spain	7	2.1%	67.6%
15. China	6	1.8%	69.4%
16. Ukraine	6	1.8%	71.2%
17. Greece	6	1.8%	73.0%
18. Afghanistan	5	1.5%	74.5%
19. Estonia	5	1.5%	76.1%
20. Iraq	5	1.5%	77.6%
<i>Total</i>	330	100%	100%

In line with my expectations, the countries most frequently invited to participate in joint sessions with the president were the world's major economic powers. Indeed, the members of the G-8—Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, and the United Kingdom—were among the nine countries most likely to participate in a joint press conference with a U.S. president. Given its international prominence I expected China to have participated in more joint sessions,

but it still made the top 15. Further, although I expected Israel to be a privileged participant in these forums, it is nonetheless noteworthy that Israel's foreign leaders were invited to participate in more joint presidential press conferences ( $n=18$ ) than the 51 countries in Africa combined ( $n=10$ ). It is also noteworthy that six of the 20 most prioritized countries in joint press conferences were from Western Europe, four were from Eastern Asia, three from Eastern Europe, three from the Middle East, three from the Americas, one from Western Asia, and none from Africa. Overall, 31% of all foreign nations invited to participate in a joint press conference with the president were from Europe, 19% were from the Americas, 17% were from Eastern Europe, 15% were from Eastern Asia, 13% were from the Middle East, 3% were from Western Asia, and 3% were from Africa.

## Discussion

This chapter explored the concept of foreign prioritization in presidential press conferences. Specifically, it examined the relative emphasis placed by the president and the press on foreign affairs, the visibility of foreign nations in press conference discourse, the initiative taken by the president and the press to get issues on the agenda, and the impact of a new press conference format. Notably, I focused on presidential press conferences because these forums are the most enduring and perhaps the most important point of direct interaction between the president and the press in the United States. Building on Chapters Three and Four, my goal was to examine which foreign nations have been most and least prioritized in presidential press conferences, some of the different ways they have been prioritized, and whether this has changed over time. The analysis in this chapter compliments and adds to the earlier analyses by expanding the conceptual focus of my research—from foreign nation visibility to foreign

prioritization—and by addressing the interaction between the president and the press in the foreign policy arena.

I began by examining the *policy focus* in presidential press conferences. I started here because a focus on foreign policy is the entry point for foreign prioritization. Specifically, I was interested in the relative emphasis that presidents and the press put on foreign policy as compared to domestic policy. Because of the lack of scholarship in this area, I offered two research questions: to what extent did presidents, in their opening remarks, and journalists, in their questions, emphasize foreign over domestic policy (RQ1), and did this change over time (RQ2)? To get leverage on these questions, I content analyzed every presidential opening remark and every journalist question in the universe of presidential press conferences during the 56-year period between 1953 and 2008. Results were clear: both presidents and journalists focused more of their attention on foreign affairs than domestic affairs in presidential press conferences, and both did so at an increasing rate over time. Considering the dual role of commander-in-chief and chief diplomat and the rising global role of America, it is understandable that U.S. presidents would focus more attention on foreign affairs over time than domestic affairs. However, it is somewhat surprising that journalists would follow the president's lead in this regard—especially considering that foreign affairs reporting at major news outlets has decreased in recent decades (Hamilton, 2004). These data suggest that presidents may be getting off easier these days in press conferences today than they have in the past.

The second step in my analysis focused on foreign nation visibility. In Chapters Three and Four, I found that powerful foreign nations and foreign nations in conflict with the United States were the focus of a disproportionate amount of attention in presidential speeches and news coverage. I began this analysis with similar expectations, and my findings bore them out. No

matter the format—presidential speeches, news stories, or presidential press conferences—the foreign nations most often prioritized in the post-World War II era have been major economic and military powers like the members of the United Nations Security Council or the members of the G-8. Further, my analysis confirmed again that Africa was largely invisible in presidential press conferences—both in terms of how often its nations were even brought up and in terms of how often leaders of African nations were invited to participate in the sessions. Notwithstanding its size and population, Africa is clearly not a foreign policy priority in the United States—presidents ignore the continent in their speeches (see Chapter Three), journalists largely ignore it in their news stories (see Chapter Four), and both actors ignore it in presidential press conferences. It remains unclear the extent to which Africa is invisible in U.S. presidential and news discourse because it is not a foreign policy priority or if it is not a foreign policy priority because it is invisible in discourse. If journalists queried presidents about Africa more often—as they did during the 1980s during the international campaign to eradicate apartheid—it well may become more of a U.S. foreign policy priority. But it is unusual to find journalist interest in the continent unless the United States is involved—usually in a conflict—or something truly horrific has happened, and even then it is questionable whether it will get much attention.

The third step in my analysis of foreign prioritization in presidential press conferences focused on which actor—the president or the press—more often *initiated* the introduction of foreign nations into the discourse. Because scholarship was split on this matter, I again posed research questions: which actor, the president or the press, was more likely to initiate foreign nation visibility in presidential press conferences (RQ3), and did this change over time (RQ4)? I analyzed more than 8,000 foreign country invocations in presidential press conferences, and found that presidents were more likely than journalists to initiate discussion about foreign

nations in press conferences, and this has become more the case over time. This finding is significant because it suggests that presidents are more successful—and increasingly so—at setting the foreign policy agenda in press conferences, even though the forum is in principle a *press* conference. The image is of participating journalists carrying on an important democratic tradition by holding presidents accountable for their actions (see the quotes by Helen Thomas and Susan Page at the beginning of this chapter), but the relative lack of journalist initiative in these venues raises important questions about the enduring value of the forum. That said, more understanding of the idea of initiative and the factors shaping it would be a valuable contribution of future research.

The final step in my analysis focused on the changing *format* of presidential press conferences. Over time joint press conferences have overtaken solo press conferences as the most common way for presidents to formally meet with the press. This change in format has had wide-ranging implications for the discourse in these forums. For one, they are much more focused on foreign affairs than domestic affairs, which means that journalists now have fewer opportunities to query the president about his domestic policies. It also means that journalists have fewer opportunities to query the president at all since the number of journalist questions in joint sessions is so much lower than in solo sessions. Presidents find it much easier to control the communication flow in joint press conferences because time is shared with another leader. Each leader generally begins the news conference with a statement lasting several minutes, and the president often specifies exactly how many journalist questions he and his guest will field. This allows the president to be able to focus on fewer queries secure in the knowledge that he will not be pressed repeatedly on one subject. It is obvious why presidents find the new format more appealing, but the press and, ultimately, the public lose when the president wins.

I believe these findings make an important contribution to our understanding of foreign affairs discourse in the United States. They demonstrate that foreign policy has overtaken domestic policy as the topic of primary attention in presidential press conferences. Combined with my findings in Chapters Three and Four, the findings in this chapter show beyond a shadow of a doubt that foreign nations are given short shrift in U.S. public discourse unless they are powerful or threatening to U.S. national interests. At the same time, the balance of power between the president and the press in presidential press conferences has shifted significantly in recent decades away from journalists and toward the president. Presidential opening remarks are longer and more substantive than ever before. At the same, presidents have changed the format of press conferences—by moving toward joint press conferences and away from solo conferences—in a way that diffuses journalist questioning. As a result, journalists are now asking fewer questions and are taking less initiative to introduce new topics of discussion in the questions they do ask. Presidential power has varied over time, but scholarship suggests that it has swung toward the president in recent decades, and the results in this chapter support that notion. The press has abdicated the initiative in presidential press conferences and presidents are driving the agenda more than ever before.

## Chapter Six

### Conclusion

On August 7, 1964 Wayne Morse, the Senior Senator from Oregon, was one of two U.S. Congressmen to vote against the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, which authorized then president Lyndon B. Johnson “to take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression” in Southeast Asia. The vote in the House of Representatives was 416-0 and the vote in the Senate was 88-2. The resolution passed three days after the Gulf of Tonkin Incident in which President Johnson claimed that a North Vietnamese torpedo boat had launched an “unprovoked attack” against the U.S. navy destroyer Maddox. The day after this incident the *New York Times* editorialized that the president “went to the American people last night with the somber facts” and the *Los Angeles Times* urged Americans “to face the fact that the Communists by their attack on American vessels in international waters, have themselves escalated the hostilities” (quoted in Cohen and Solomon, 1994).

A month later, Senator Morse appeared on CBC’s Face the Nation. Asked why he opposed the president’s foreign policy, Morse responded: “Since when do we have to back our president...when the president is proposing an unconstitutional act?” Morse went on, arguing that the interviewer, Peter Lisagor, was involved in “the promulgation of an old fallacy that foreign policy belongs to the president of the United States.” Morse declared, “All the president is, is the administrator of the people’s foreign policy. Those are his prerogatives and I am pleading that the American people be given the facts about foreign policy.” In response, Lisagor skeptically appealed to the Senator’s sensibility stating, “you know as well as I do that the American people cannot formulate and execute foreign policy.” In Morse’s last statement on the

matter, he accused Lisagor of having “little faith in democracy,” charged the American government of “not giving the American people the facts” and averred that he had “complete faith in the ability of the American people to follow the facts” if the news media “would give them” (Face the Nation, 1964).

Informed by Senator Morse’s normative conception of foreign policymaking in the United States, in this dissertation I examined the foreign affairs priorities of U.S. presidents and major news media outlets in the post-World War II era, as expressed through their public communications. Specifically, I focused on the concept of *foreign nation visibility*, which I define as the amount of attention that a foreign nation receives on the public agenda. Although I focused on U.S. presidential and news agendas in this study, the concept of foreign nation visibility can usefully be applied to other agendas as well. The term visibility was chosen purposefully because its opposite, invisibility, conveys the consequences of not getting on the political map more clearly and powerfully than other terms such as salience or prominence, which are more common in agenda-setting scholarship. When something is invisible it is as if it does not exist—at least in the minds of those who do not see it. In this study I have argued that the same can be said of foreign nations: when they are not prominent in discourse it is as if they do not exist. The political consequences of such invisibility can be enormous, which is why so many foreign governments contract U.S. public relations firms to increase their visibility in the United States (Manheim, 1994). Simply put, there is a relationship between national visibility and U.S. government action: the most visible foreign nations are prioritized; the least visible are not.

After developing the concept of foreign nation visibility, I then analyzed it in discourse, focusing on U.S. presidential and news agendas. Specifically, I conducted three longitudinal content analyses. First, in Chapter Three I examined the concept of foreign nation visibility in

presidential discourse, tracking mentions of foreign nations in presidential speeches from the end of World War II in 1945 through 2008, the last full year of George W. Bush's presidency. In Chapter Four I conducted a parallel analysis of news content, tracking coverage of foreign nations by a major television network and a leading U.S. newspaper during the same 64-year period. I then directly compared the results of these two analyses and connected them to a host of factors that scholarship suggested were related to foreign nation visibility. In Chapter Five, I focused on the relationship between these agendas by examining their direction interaction in presidential press conferences during a somewhat shorter time period, 1953-2008. In this last analysis, I connected emphases on presidential policy and journalistic initiative with foreign nation visibility to expand the circle of implications in this research.

The rest of this chapter proceeds as follows: First, I summarize my key findings and reflect on their implications. Then I briefly address some of the limitations of my research design. Finally, I discuss the major contributions of my research for scholarship and reflect on the normative considerations that drove my research.

### Major Findings

The research in this dissertation contributes to our collective understanding of foreign nation visibility and foreign prioritization in U.S. public discourse. In this section, I focus on six major findings that emerged out of this research. First, foreign nation visibility in U.S. public discourse is highly *concentrated* and has become more so over time, especially in presidential speeches. Second, foreign nation visibility in U.S. public discourse is extremely *episodic*—or variable—and, like concentration, this episodicity is most pronounced in presidential speeches. Third, many countries and some foreign regions are nearly *invisible* in U.S. presidential and

news discourses. Fourth, a foreign nation's *power* was a significant predictor of its visibility in presidential and news discourses. Fifth, *conflict* with the United States was the best predictor of visibility on the presidential and news agendas analyzed. Finally, although journalists ask the questions in presidential press conferences, presidents increasingly take the *initiative* and drive the discourse about foreign affairs in these settings.

### *Concentration*

The first defining feature of foreign nation visibility in U.S. public discourse is its *concentrated* nature—a handful of foreign nations have dominated presidential and news attention to foreign affairs in the post-World War II era. This concentration is most pronounced in presidential discourse where I demonstrated in Chapter Three that the two most-mentioned foreign nations overall—Vietnam and Iraq—together accounted for almost one-quarter (24.6%) of all foreign nation mentions in presidential speeches, 1945-2008. Considering that neither country is among the top fifteen countries globally in terms of economic size, population size, or territorial size, it is remarkable that presidents have focused so much rhetorical attention on these two countries in their speeches. Indeed, together they garnered more attention on the president's rhetorical agenda than the least visible 172 countries *combined*.

In Chapter Four I showed that the news agenda—as reflected in *Times* and CBS news abstracts—was significantly less concentrated than the presidential agenda during the period analyzed, 1945-2008. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that foreign nation visibility in both news outlets has become more concentrated over time, and the greatest degree of concentration occurred during the most recent era (see Tables 4.2 and 4.3). A similar pattern is evident in presidential press conferences, the most enduring forum of direct interaction between the president and the press in the United States. Amazingly, Russia was mentioned in 68% of the

1,096 press conferences that were convened during the 56-year period analyzed, 1953-2008 (see Table 5.4). Further, Russia was mentioned in 10% of the total number of speaking units (9.9%) during the same time period (see Table 5.5). That means that one in every ten times that the president or a journalist opened their mouths to talk substantively about policy in a press conference Russia was mentioned.

One consequence of a highly concentrated foreign affairs agenda is that it gives audiences the sense that some countries and issues—those that are prominent in the discourse—are more important than others. A related consequence is that it pushes other countries and issues off the agenda since all agendas have capacity limits and large expansions of attention in one area inevitably lead to large cuts in attention in other areas (Alexandrova, Carammia, & Timmermans, 2012). Notably, this finding corroborates past scholarship (e.g., Larson, 1984), but it also extends it by adding a much needed longitudinal dimension and including a much wider variety of sources than any previous study—including presidential speeches, presidential press conferences, and *New York Times* and CBS Evening News content. Given the dearth of scholarship on this subject in other countries it remains unclear if U.S. presidential and news agendas are more concentrated than comparable agendas in other countries, but my analyses clearly demonstrate that foreign nation visibility on these agendas is highly concentrated, and has become more so over time.

### *Episodicity*

Another defining feature of foreign nation visibility in U.S. public discourse, particularly presidential discourse is the variability in attention from one era to the next—what I call *episodicity*. This pattern is most obvious on the presidential agenda where 16 different countries were among the top five most-mentioned foreign nations in the four eras analyzed (see Table

3.2). However, as I showed in Chapters Three and Four it is also evident in news content and the interaction between the president and the press in news conferences. Specifically, in news content it is noteworthy that the Middle East went from appearing in 13% of all foreign-focused *Times* abstracts and 19% of all foreign-focused CBS Evening News abstracts in the post-Cold War years (1992-2001) to 27% and 47% respectively in the post-September 11 years (2001-2008). In other words, attention to the region more than doubled from one era to the next. At the same time, Eastern Europe went from appearing in 13% of *Times* and 23% of CBS news abstracts to 7% and 4% respectively. The same spikes and drops in attention are evident in presidential press conferences where the Middle East went from accounting for 20% of all foreign country references in the post-Cold War era to 44% in the post-9/11 era and Eastern Europe went from accounting for 26% of all foreign references in the former period to 9% in the latter period.

The episodicity of U.S. presidential and news agendas can seem almost schizophrenic at times. Consider the case of Central America. In Chapter Three I demonstrated that for most of the post-World War II era, Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama accounted for less than one percent of all foreign country mentions in major presidential addresses. Indeed, during the early Cold War (1945-1973), post-Cold War (1992-2001), and post-September 11 years (2002-2008), these seven countries were together mentioned 16 times in 47 years, or about once every three years. During the late Cold War era, the same countries were together mentioned 402 times in 18 years—or about 22 times a year. Indeed, 96% of all references to Central America in major presidential addresses to the nation in the post-World War II era occurred during the late Cold War years—when the region accounted for 23% of all foreign countries mentioned by a U.S. president in a major national address. Such extreme

fluctuations in attention to different countries and regions likely contribute to a foreign affairs agenda that appears to audiences as a series of disconnected episodess.

These patterns support Iyengar's (1991) observation that news, particularly television news, is more often framed episodically than thematically. To borrow a phrase from Walter Lippman (1922: 358), "the press is like the beam of a searchlight that moves restlessly about, bringing one episode and then another out of darkness into vision." The data in this dissertation suggest that this observation is as applicable today as it was 90 years ago—perhaps more so. Further it applies better to presidential attention than press attention. Simply put, at any given time, a small number of foreign countries are highly visible on the U.S. public agenda, particularly the U.S. presidential agenda, but the visibility does not usually last and it is highly variable.

### *Invisibility*

The flipside of presidential and news agendas that are highly concentrated is the relative invisibility of other countries and regions. Africa is a prime example. In Chapter Three I demonstrated that Africa was the least visible foreign region in presidential speeches (see Figure 3.2), in Chapter Four I showed that it was the second least visible region in news content (see Table 4.3), and in Chapter Five I showed that it was the least visible foreign region in presidential press conferences (see Table 5.6). Considering that Africa is the second largest continent in the world—both in terms of population and land mass—it is remarkable that it receives so little attention in U.S. public discourse.

The region is more visible in news discourse than presidential discourse but when given the opportunity to query the president about foreign affairs in presidential press conferences, journalists largely ignore Africa in their questioning—even when the leader of an African nation

is a participant in the news conference. This state of affairs was dramatically highlighted in a February 1999 joint press conference that included Bill Clinton and President Jerry Rawlings of Ghana. After American journalists asked a series of questions about Kosovo, Iraq, and the Monica Lewinsky scandal, a Ghanaian journalist stood up and said, “It’s obvious that Africa does not play a major role in terms of the minds of the people of the United States, as we can gather that no questions have been asked about Africa” (Clinton, 1999). Clinton awkwardly tried to brush the comment off by suggesting that the African journalist should not take it personally since the same thing “often happens with Asians and Latin Americans,” but the data presented in this dissertation suggest otherwise. Notwithstanding its size and population, Africa is not prioritized in U.S. public discourse about foreign affairs.

One of the major implications of Africa’s invisibility on U.S. presidential and news agendas is that it flies under the radar of policymakers and citizens alike. The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is a prime example. In 2008, the last year included in my analysis, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) reported that 5.4 million people had died as a result of the decade-long conflict in the DRC, the vast majority from starvation and preventable disease (CBS, 2008). The conflict began in 1998 and by 2000 the IRC was reporting that 1.7 million people had already died, making it the deadliest in the world (IRC, 2000). The fighting subsided in 2003, but aid groups such as the IRC warned that “failure to address the needs of the displaced and otherwise affected...meant that the death toll would continue to rise: far beyond the toll caused by the bullets and bombs” (Hawkins, 2008, 1). In spite of these dire warnings, the DRC was virtually invisible in U.S. public discourse and as a result it flew under the radar of U.S. policymakers and citizens, resulting in silence and inaction on the part of the U.S. government and most U.S. aid groups and charities.

Unfortunately, the DRC is not unique in this regard. According to Hawkins (2008), 12 of the world's 15 deadliest conflicts, and almost 90 percent of the world's conflict-related deaths since the end of the Cold War, have occurred in Africa. Nonetheless, U.S. aid to the region has been minimal. Far from dominating U.S. public discourse, Africa in general—and these conflicts in particular—has been virtually invisible on U.S. presidential and news agendas. It is for this reason that President Clinton's promise to the Rwandan people in 1998, four years after the genocide there, that the United States would "make every effort to increase ... vigilance and strengthen" its "stand against those who would commit such atrocities in the future—here or elsewhere" (Clinton, 1998) rings hollow. As demonstrated in Chapters Three, Four, and Five, Africa remains largely invisible in U.S. public discourse, and the consequences of this invisibility are enormous for those who would benefit from U.S. humanitarian assistance.

### *Power*

The fourth major finding in this study related to the factors that drive foreign nation visibility in U.S. public discourse. Notably, powerful nations were more visible on U.S. presidential and news agendas than nations that were not considered powerful. Consider first that a majority of the world's major economic and military powers—Canada, China, France, Germany, Japan, Italy, Russia, and the United Kingdom—were among the most visible countries on all four agendas analyzed in this study (see Tables 3.1, 4.1, 5.4, 5.5, and 5.6) Then consider the results of the regression models that I ran in Chapters Three and Four. Specifically, Table 4.5 demonstrates that after controlling for population size, economic size, trade flow with the United States, conflict with the United States, U.S. troops in country, and geographic distance from the United States, power was a significant albeit moderate predictor of foreign nation visibility in presidential speeches and *Times* and CBS news content.

Power also seems to be a major factor in the presidential decision to hold joint news conferences with some nations rather than others. As evidence of this, consider that the seven countries that are in the G-8 with the United States—Canada, France, Italy, Germany, Japan, Russia, and the United Kingdom—were among the nine countries most likely to participate in a joint press conference with a U.S. president. The G-8 is a forum for the world’s major economies, but its members also include the world’s largest, most technologically advanced, and powerful militaries. Together the seven members of the G-8—the other being the United States—were invited to participate in 45% of all joint presidential press conferences in the post-World War II era. These invitations are significant because they increase the visibility of the foreign nations involved, and they send a clear message to audiences at home and abroad indicating what the president’s foreign policy priorities are.

### *Conflict*

The fifth major finding in this study also related to the factors that drive foreign nation visibility in U.S. public discourse. Specifically, I found that countries in conflict with the United States were much more visible in presidential speeches and news stories than countries not in conflict with the United States. It makes sense that presidents and journalists would prioritize countries that threaten U.S. interests in their communications, but it is nonetheless remarkable the extent to which they did so during the time period analyzed. Indeed, during the post-September 11 era, Iraq appeared in 15% of all *Times* and 32% of all CBS Evening News abstracts that mentioned a foreign nation, and it accounted for 60% of all foreign country mentions in presidential speeches. Further evidence of the importance of U.S. conflict as a predictor of foreign nation visibility in U.S. news and presidential discourses can be found in Table 4.5. After controlling for population size, economic size, trade flow with the United States,

U.S. troops in country, reputational power and geographic distance from the United States, the results in this table demonstrate that conflict with the United States was the best predictor of foreign nation visibility in presidential speeches and *Times* and CBS news stories during the period analyzed.

The heavy concentration of U.S. presidential and news attention on countries in conflict with the United States supports Wu's (2000: 111) contention that international news flows reflect the "earlier imperial system" in which news agencies followed "national flags [and]...armies." Past research, including Wu's (2000), has suggested that conflict is predictive of foreign nation visibility in U.S. news discourse (see Larson, 1984), but the studies presented in this dissertation are the first to test this proposition empirically. The results are undeniable: foreign nation visibility in U.S. public discourse is dominated by countries where the United States is, has been, or may soon be involved militarily. Attention to these countries is both highly concentrated—pushing other countries off the agenda—and highly episodic—jumping around from conflict to conflict. These results would support the notion that "war is God's way of teaching Americans geography" if American citizens could actually identify the places their country has been in conflict with on a map. Unfortunately this is not the case. According to a National Geographic-Roper Public Affairs poll conducted in 2006—the last year a national survey on this kind was conducted—nearly two-thirds of Americans 18-24 could not identify Iraq on a map and 88% could not identify Afghanistan. The fact that this poll was conducted three years after the U.S. invasion of Iraq and five years after the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan suggest either the news media are not doing a very good job contextualizing U.S. conflict abroad or news audiences are disinterested or confused by the episodic nature of U.S. foreign policy and U.S. foreign affairs discourse.

The disproportionate focus on countries in conflict with the United States in U.S. public discourse raises questions about the frequency with which the United States involves itself militarily in the rest of the world. Nearly a half-century has passed since Senator Wayne Morse of Oregon went on NBC's Meet the Press and criticized presidential overreach in foreign policy and the news media's abdication of its responsibility to inform and educate the American people about foreign affairs. However, his criticisms of the foreign policy establishment are as relevant today as they were 48 years ago—if not more so. The fact is presidential power has increased dramatically in the last several decades, and numerous scholars now suggest that an “imperial presidency” has emerged in American foreign policymaking (Cairo, 2006; Rudalevige, 2005; Bacevich, 2002; Johnson, 2004). According to Arthur Schlesinger (1973: 3), this is perhaps best exemplified by “the capture by the president of the most vital of national decisions, the decision to go to war.” Notably, since passage of the 1973 War Power Act, which was intended to limit presidential power to involve the United States in foreign conflicts, the country has been directly involved militarily in Panama (1989), Iraq (1990-1991 & 2003-2011), Lebanon (1982-1984), Somalia (1992-1994), Bosnia (1992-1995), Haiti (1994), Afghanistan (2001-present), and Libya (2012). Libya is especially noteworthy considering that President Obama did not even bother getting congressional approval within the statutory 90 days for U.S. involvement there, arguing that he did not need it because American involvement fell short of full-blown “hostilities.” These engagements, and other like them, raise important questions about the foreign policy priorities of U.S. presidents and the democratic legitimacy of American foreign policy more generally.

### *Initiative*

The final major finding in this research relates to the relationship between the president and the press in the foreign policy arena. In Chapter Five I examined the direct interaction

between presidents and journalists in presidential press conferences, and I found that although journalists ask the questions in these settings, presidents increasingly take the *initiative* and drive the discourse about foreign affairs. Specifically, I demonstrated four ways that presidents have taken the initiative to set the foreign policy agenda in press conferences. First, the percentage of press conferences that begin with the president giving a substantive policy statement has risen dramatically over time—from a low of 49% of all statements during the Nixon administration to 100% of all statements during George W. Bush’s presidency. Second, presidents have increasingly focused on foreign affairs in their opening remarks—indeed, by W. Bush’s presidency 92% of all presidential press conferences began with a substantive policy statement that addressed foreign affairs in a significant way (see Figure 5.2). Third, the length of presidential opening remarks has also risen dramatically over time—from a median of 97 words during Nixon’s presidency to a median of 776 words during Bush’s presidency (see Figure 5.3). Finally, the format of presidential press conferences has changed—what were once almost exclusively solo affairs where the president appeared on the stage by himself to answer journalist questions are now mostly joint affairs where the president appears alongside one or more foreign dignitaries (see Figure 5.11). The consequence of these patterns of increased presidential initiative with respect to foreign policy is that journalists are getting fewer opportunities to query the president (see Figure 5.14) and they are showing significantly less initiative when it comes to introducing new countries/issues into the discourse (see Figure 5.9).

The changing patterns of president-press interactions, especially as they pertain to foreign policy, have significant implications for the health of our democracy. The United States has a presidential system, which means that the executive branch exists and operates independently of the legislative branch. In a parliamentary system, the chief executive—i.e. the prime minister—is

answerable to parliament. For example, in the United Kingdom the prime minister is compelled to appear before the House of Commons—the equivalent of the U.S. House of Representatives—every Wednesday to answer questions from the opposition party. This tradition adds democratic accountability to the governing process in the United Kingdom. In the United States, there is no such requirement that presidents appear before Congress to answer questions from the opposition party. The closest thing we have in the United States is presidential press conferences where journalists stand in for Congress and the public and query the president about his policies. Press conferences are considered an important democratic tradition in the United States (Kumar, 2007), but the shifting balance of power from the press to the president in these forums raises important questions about their enduring value.

#### Methodological Matters

There are three methodological matters in this dissertation that merit discussion. First, my analysis of foreign nation visibility in U.S. public discourse focused exclusively on the first-level of agenda-setting and omitted the second-level of agenda-setting. Second, because of my exclusive focus on the United States in this study it is not clear how generalizable my findings are to other countries. Third, my analysis of the factors that influence foreign nation visibility only included seven independent variables, which raises questions about the importance of other potential factors.

Notably, my analysis focused exclusively on *what* countries and issues were discussed in discourse, but it did not delve into *how* they were discussed. In the agenda-setting vernacular, it focused on the first-level of agenda-setting (the agenda of objects), but omitted the second-level (the agenda of attributes). For example, I demonstrated that Iraq dominated presidential and

news agendas during the post-September 11 era, but my coding scheme did not account for how countries like Iraq were talked about once they got on the agenda. It would be interesting to know, for instance, whether countries in conflict with the United States are more often brought up in a rhetorical context of American national security, American national interests, American national principles—e.g., freedom and democracy—or some altogether different rhetorical context. Switzerland is noteworthy in this regard. It was the 13<sup>th</sup> most visible foreign nation in presidential press conferences—measured in terms of the percentage of total news conferences in which it was referenced—but I know from having done the coding that this rank is somewhat misleading because many of the references to Switzerland were references to summits that were convened there. In this study I considered such references indicators of Switzerland’s visibility in the discourse, but future studies may want to differentiate between different categories of country references.

The second-level of agenda-setting was intentionally omitted from my coding scheme for several reasons. First, the quantity of content precluded a more detailed analysis of the universe of content. All told, I analyzed 306 major presidential addresses, 1196 presidential press conferences, and 64 and 35 years of *New York Times* and CBS Evening News abstracts respectively. Second, although I could have sampled a smaller selection of content, I wanted to be completely sure that I was capturing each nation’s actual visibility in the discourse and not missing anything because of the bounds of my sample. This was an especially important consideration in my analysis of presidential speeches—and, to a lesser extent, presidential press conferences—because of the variability in the frequency of the format. Some countries—e.g., Cambodia and Somalia—were highly visible in a small number of speeches and press conferences, and their visibility may have been miscalculated depending on the size and bounds

of the sample. Third, the primary purpose of this first study was to examine foreign nation visibility in U.S. public discourse. Having established which foreign nations were most and least visible in the discourse, future scholarship might consider sampling a small number of countries to examine their attributes more closely, but this type of analysis was beyond the scope of this study.

Another methodological matter that merits attention relates to the generalizability of the findings in this study. My analysis of foreign nation visibility focused on one country, the United States, and that country is unique in many respects. For example, I found that conflict was more predictive of visibility than any other factor, but that finding is likely not generalizable to other countries given America's unique involvement in so many conflicts around the world. Likewise, the United States has unique political and media systems (Hallin & Mancini, 2004), which may contribute to different patterns of foreign prioritization and foreign nation visibility. Robinson and Sparkes (1976), for example, compared foreign nation visibility in 39 U.S. and Canadian newspapers and discovered that the results were not the same in these two countries. Though dated, this study suggests that different patterns of foreign nation visibility exist in different countries—even politically, economically and culturally similar countries like the United States and Canada.

A final methodological matter that merits attention was that my analysis of the factors that influence foreign nation visibility only included seven independent variables. I would have liked to have included more contextual variables in my analyses (e.g., the presence or absence of foreign bureaus and/or foreign correspondents in other countries), but the ambitious longitudinal design of this study made it difficult to do so. Indeed, several of the contextual factors that I had

hoped to include in my analyses were not available for much of the 64-year period analyzed. Others would have required a larger investment in time and energy than I could afford.

### Conclusions

The two major empirical contributions of this project derive from the breadth of content analyzed—presidential speeches, presidential press conferences, *Times* and CBS news stories—and its ambitious longitudinal design. Since Larson’s (1984) seminal examination of ten years of international affairs coverage on U.S. network television news, there have been very few over-time analyses of what I call foreign nation visibility. This is ironic considering that the term international news flow is often used to describe the research in this area. The term “flow” connotes a dynamic process of news flowing both between nations and over-time, but most news flow studies focus on the former at the expense of the latter. One problem with the lack of over-time research is that it can spur incorrect inferences concerning the level and nature of foreign nation visibility as well as the factors that contribute to it. For example, scholars have long suggested that trade flow is a significant predictor of news flow (e.g., Ahern, 1984; Golan, 2008; Wu, 2000; & Pietiläinen, 2006). Indeed, Wu (2003) went so far as to suggest that economic interest “plays the central role in determining news from abroad.” However, the findings I presented in Chapter Four suggest otherwise. Specifically, when you control for power and conflict trade flow is no longer predictive of news flow in the United States. It is possible that trade flow is more predictive of news flow in other countries, but further longitudinal analyses are needed—in those countries—to determine if this is in fact the case.

Because of its ambitious longitudinal design—I coded the entire universe of news and presidential content across a 64-year period—other researchers who engage with my work can be

confident that the visibility data presented in this dissertation are a comprehensive reflection of foreign nation visibility during the period analyzed (1945-2008) and in the discourses analyzed—presidential speeches, presidential press conferences, and *Times* and CBS news abstracts—rather than the transitory result of changing world events. Like Larson’s (1984) original study, the visibility data presented in this dissertation offer future researchers a baseline measure of foreign nation visibility in the discourses analyzed. At the same time, my analyses go far beyond Larson’s (1984) original work. For one, the 64-year period that I analyzed is much longer than Larson’s (1984) original 10-year analysis. Further, this dissertation is much more expansive in terms of the range of content analyzed. Larson (1984) focused exclusively on network television news content in his analysis of foreign nation visibility in the 1970s and 1980s, while my study includes this content as well as content from the *New York Times*, major presidential addresses, and presidential press conferences. Finally, this project is the first to test whether power and conflict are predictive of foreign nation visibility—the fact that both were found to be significant predictors of visibility is a major contribution to our collective understanding of this phenomenon.

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## Appendix A

### Countries and Search Terms

#	Country	Search Terms
1	Afghanistan	"afghanistan"
2	Albania	"albania"
3	Algeria	"algeria"
4	Andorra	"andorra"
5	Angola	"angola"
6	Antigua & Barbuda	"antigua and barbuda"
7	Argentina	"argentina" or "argentine republic"
8	Armenia	"armenia"
9	Australia	"australia"
10	Austria	"austria"
11	Azerbaijan	"azerbaijan"
12	Bahamas	"bahamas"
13	Bahrain	"bahrain"
14	Bangladesh	"bangladesh"
15	Barbados	"barbados"
16	Belarus	"belarus" or "byelorussia"
17	Belgium	"belgium"
18	Belize	"belize"
19	Benin	"benin"
20	Bhutan	"bhutan"
21	Bolivia	"bolivia"
22	Bosnia-Herzegovina	"bosnia"
23	Botswana	"botswana"
24	Brazil	"brazil"

25	Brunei	"brunei"
26	Bulgaria	"bulgaria"
27	Burkina Faso	"burkina faso" or "upper volta"
28	Burundi	"burundi"
29	Cambodia	"cambodia" or "khmer republic" or "kampuchea"
30	Cameroon	"cameroon"
31	Canada	"canada"
32	Cape Verde	"cape verde"
33	Central African Republic	"central african republic"
34	Chad	"republic of chad" or "chad" and "africa"
35	Chile	"chile"
36	China	"china"
37	Colombia	"colombia"
38	Comoros	"comoros"
39	Congo	"congo" or "zaire"
40	Republic of Congo	"republic of congo" or "brazzaville"
41	Costa Rica	"costa rica"
42	Cote D'Ivoire	"cote d'ivoire" or "ivory coast"
43	Croatia	"croatia"
44	Cuba	"cuba"
45	Cyprus	"cyprus"
46	Czech Republic	"czech republic" or "Czechoslovakia"
48	Denmark	"denmark"
49	Djibouti	"djibouti"
50	Dominica	"dominica"
51	Dominican Republic	"dominican republic"
52	East Timor	"east timor" or "timor-leste"

53	Ecuador	"ecuador"
54	Egypt	"egypt"
55	El Salvador	"el salvador"
56	Equatorial Guinea	"equatorial guinea"
57	Eritrea	"eritrea"
58	Estonia	"estonia"
59	Ethiopia	"ethiopia"
60	Federated States of Micronesia	"micronesia"
61	Fiji	"fiji"
62	Finland	"finland"
63	France	"france"
64	Gabon	"gabon" or "gabonese republic"
65	Gambia	"gambia"
66	Georgia	"georgia"
67	Germany (East and West)	"germany"
68	Ghana	"ghana"
69	Greece	"greece"
70	Grenada	"grenada"
71	Guatemala	"guatemala"
72	Guinea	"guinea" NOT "guinea-bissau"
73	Guinea-Bissau	"guinea-bissau"
74	Guyana	"guyana"
75	Haiti	"haiti"
76	Honduras	"honduras"
77	Hungary	"hungary"
78	Iceland	"iceland"
79	India	"india"
80	Indonesia	"indonesia"

81	Iran	"iran"
82	Iraq	"iraq"
83	Ireland	"ireland"
84	Israel	"israel"
85	Italy	"italy"
86	Jamaica	"jamaica"
87	Japan	"japan"
88	Jordan	"jordan"
89	Kazakhstan	"kazakhstan" or "kazakstan"
90	Kenya	"kenya"
91	Kiribati	"kiribati"
92	Korea	"korea"
93	Kuwait	"kuwait"
94	Kyrgyz Republic	"kyrgyz republic" or "kyrgyzstan"
95	Laos	"laos" or "lao people's democratic republic"
96	Latvia	"latvia"
97	Lebanon	"lebanon" or "lebanese republic"
98	Lesotho	"lesotho"
99	Liberia	"liberia"
100	Libya	"libya"
101	Liechtenstein	"liechtenstein"
102	Lithuania	"lithuania"
103	Luxembourg	"luxembourg"
104	Macedonia	"macedonia"
105	Madagascar	"madagascar"
106	Malawi	"malawi"
107	Malaysia	"malaysia"
108	Maldives	"maldives"

109	Mali	"mali"
110	Malta	"malta"
111	Marshall Islands	"marshall islands"
112	Mauritania	"mauritania"
113	Mauritius	"mauritius"
114	Mexico	"mexico"
115	Moldova	"moldova"
116	Monaco	"monaco"
117	Mongolia	"mongolia"
118	Montenegro	“montenegro”
119	Morocco	"morocco"
120	Mozambique	"mozambique"
121	Myanmar	"myanmar" or "burma"
122	Namibia	"namibia"
123	Nauru	"nauru"
124	Nepal	"nepal"
125	Netherlands	"netherlands" or "holland"
126	New Zealand	"new zealand"
127	Nicaragua	"nicaragua"
128	Niger	"niger"
129	Nigeria	"nigeria"
130	Norway	"norway"
131	Oman	"oman"
132	Pakistan	"pakistan"
133	Palau	"palau"
134	Panama	"panama"
135	Papua New Guinea	"papua new guinea"
136	Paraguay	"paraguay"

137	Peru	"peru"
138	Philippines	"philippines"
139	Poland	"poland"
140	Portugal	"portugal"
141	Qatar	"qatar"
142	Romania	"rumania" or "romania"
143	Russia (fmr. Soviet Union)	"russia" or "u.s.s.r." or "ussr" or "soviet union"
144	Rwanda	"rwanda"
145	Saint Kitts and Nevis	"saint kitts and nevis"
146	Saint Lucia	"saint lucia"
147	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	"saint vincent and grenadines"
148	Samoa	"samoa"
149	San Marino	"san marino"
150	Sao Tome and Principe	"sao tome and principe"
151	Saudi Arabia	"saudi arabia"
152	Senegal	"senegal"
153	Seychelles	"seychelles"
154	Sierra Leone	"sierra leone"
155	Singapore	"singapore"
156	Slovakia	"slovakia" or "slovak republic"
157	Slovenia	"slovenia"
158	Solomon Islands	"solomon islands"
159	Somalia	"somalia" or "somali republic"
160	South Africa	"south africa"
161	Spain	"spain"
162	Sri Lanka	"sri lanka" or "ceylon"
163	Sudan	"sudan"

164	Surinam	"suriname" or "surinam"
165	Swaziland	"swaziland"
166	Sweden	"sweden"
167	Switzerland	"switzerland"
168	Syria	"syria" or "syrian arab republic"
169	Taiwan	"taiwan"
170	Tajikistan	"tajikistan"
171	Tanzania	"tanzania" or "tanganyika" or "zanzibar"
172	Thailand	"thailand"
173	Tibet	"tibet"
174	Togo	"togo" or "togolese republic"
175	Tonga	"tonga"
176	Trinidad and Tobago	"trinidad and tobago"
177	Tunisia	"tunisia" or "tunisian republic"
178	Turkey	"turkey"
179	Turkmenistan	"turkmenistan" or "turkmenia"
180	Tuvalu	"tuvalu"
181	Uganda	"uganda"
182	Ukraine	"ukraine"
183	United Arab Emirates	"united arab emirates"
184	United Kingdom (Britain)	"united kingdom" or "u.k." or "britain" or "northern ireland" or "england" or "scotland" or "wales"
185	Uruguay	"uruguay"
186	Uzbekistan	"uzbekistan"
187	Vanuatu	"vanuatu"
188	Venezuela	"venezuela"
189	Vietnam (North and South)	"vietnam"

190	Yemen (North and South)	"yemen"
191	Serbia (former Yugoslavia)	"yugoslavia" or "serbia"
192	Zambia	"zambia"
192	Zimbabwe (Rhodesia)	"zimbabwe" or "rhodesia"

## Appendix B

### Press Conference Codebook

#### Part I: Unit of Analysis (Press Conference)

1. *Text number (text#)*

Each news conference has been assigned a number between 1 and 1096. This number should be recorded in the code sheet under the variable name *text#*.

2. *Date of news conference (date)*

The exact date that each news conference was held should input it in the code sheet under the variable name *date*. All dates should be input in the following format: YYYY-MM-DD.

3. *Election year (election)*

Whether or not the year the news conference took place was a presidential election year should be noted in the code sheet under the variable name *election*. This is a dichotomous variable—election years should be marked “1” and non-election years should be marked “0.” The following years were election years: 1956, 1960, 1964, 1968, 1972, 1976, 1980, 1984, 1988, 1992, 1996, 2000, 2004, and 2008.

4. *Title of news conference (title)*

The title of each news conference should be input in its entirety in the code sheet under the variable name *title*. To insure accuracy, the best way to do this is by copying and pasting directly into the code sheet.

5. *President (president)*

Please identify which U.S. president participated in the news conference. Each president has been assigned a number (see below), and this number should be input in the code sheet under the variable name *president*.

President	Code
Eisenhower	1
Kennedy	2
Johnson	3
Nixon	4
Ford	5
Carter	6
Reagan	7
H. W. Bush	8
Clinton	9
W. Bush	10

6. *President's party (party)*

The president's political party should be input in the code sheet under the variable name *party*. The president's political party should be coded as follows:

- 1 = Democrat
- 2 = Republican

7. *Length of news conference (words)*

The total number of words for each news conference should be input in the code sheet under the variable name *words*.

8. *Length of president's opening remarks (length)*

The total number of words of the president's opening remarks should be input in the code sheet under the variable name *length*.

9. *Policy focus of president's opening remarks (remarks)*

This is a nominal variable that categorizes the primary topical focus of the president's opening remarks. Each topical category has been assigned a number (see below), and this number should be input in the code sheet under the variable name *remarks*. (Note: substantive opening statements include some discussion of policy. In other words, they are more than "Good morning, I am ready for your questions.").

Topic	Code
No Substantive Opening Remarks	0
Primarily Domestic Affairs	1
Mixed Domestic/Foreign Affairs	2
Primarily Foreign Affairs	3

10. *Number of domestic policy questions (DPQs)*

The total number of domestic policy questions posed by journalists during the news conference should be input in the code sheet under the variable name *DPQs*. Domestic policy questions are focused on political issues internal to the United States. Examples of a focus on domestic policy include questions pertaining to health care, education, law enforcement, the budget, taxes, civil rights, civil liberties, unemployment, etc. Domestic policy differs from foreign policy described below. Important note: if a question addresses both domestic policy and foreign policy—code the question as primarily one or the other.

11. *Number of foreign policy questions (FPQs)*

The total number of foreign policy questions posed by journalists during the news conference should be input in the code sheet under the variable name *FPQs*. Foreign policy questions are focused on political issues external to the United States. Examples of a focus on foreign policy include questions pertaining to wars, treaties, trade, summits, foreign aid, foreign travel, the value of the dollar, etc. Foreign policy differs from domestic policy described above. Important note: if a question addresses both domestic policy and foreign policy—code the question as primarily one or the other.

12. *Location of news conference (location)*

The location of each news conference should be input in the code sheet under the variable name *location*. Location should be coded as follows:

- 1 = United States (Washington, D.C.)
- 2 = United States (Outside of Washington D.C.)

3 = Abroad

13. *Foreign location (foreign\_location)*

If 3 was marked for the previous variable (i.e. the news conference was held abroad), indicate the specific country location where the news conference was held. Refer to Appendix A for country numbers and input the number in the code sheet under the variable name *foreign\_location*.

14. *Conference format (format)*

The format of each news conference should be input in the code sheet under the variable name *format*. Please code format as follows:

- 1 = Solo
- 2 = Joint Domestic (with other Americans)
- 3 = Joint Foreign (with foreigners)

15. *Foreign invitee (invitee)*

If 3 was marked for the previous variable (i.e. the news conference was a joint news conference held with a foreign dignitary) then indicate the specific country or countries that were invited to participate in the news conference. Refer to Appendix A for country numbers and input the number in the code sheet under the variable name *invitee*.

16. *Number of presidential statements (presz\_statements)*

If 3 was marked for variable 14 (conference format), count the number of presidential statements (total of all speaking units) and input the number in the code sheet under the variable name *presz\_statements*.

17. *Number of foreign dignitary statements (dign\_statements)*

If 3 was marked for variable 14 (conference format), count the number of foreign dignitary statements (total of all speaking units) and input the number in the code sheet under the variable name *dign\_statements*.

18. *Additional questions (AQs)*

If 3 was marked for variable 14 (conference format), count the number of questions directed exclusively at the foreign dignitary and input the number in the code sheet under the variable name *AQs*.

Part II: Unit of Analysis (Foreign Country Mentioned)

19. *Foreign invocation (invocation)*

This is a nominal variable that specifies which foreign country or region is being referenced in the news conference. Important note: each foreign invocation should receive its own row in the code sheet. Foreign invocations include references to foreign people, foreign cities, foreign nations, and foreign regions. Each country has been assigned a number (see Appendix A), and this number should be input in the code sheet under the variable name *invocation*.

20. *Initiative (initiative)*

This is a nominal variable that indicates (a) which actor—the president, the press—took the initiative to introduce the foreign nation to the discourse and (b) in what rhetorical context they did so. Specifically, this variable differentiates between three types of rhetorical units: (1) the president's opening remarks, (2) a journalist's question, and (3) the president's response to a journalist's

question. Each type of rhetorical statement has been assigned a number (see below), and this number should be input in the code sheet under the variable name *initiative*.

Actor	Code
Opening remarks by president	1
Question by journalist	2
Subsequent remarks by president	3

21. *Number of speaking units (units)*

This is a continuous variable that indicates the number of speaking units in which the country was mentioned—presidential opening remarks + journalist questions + subsequent presidential remarks. The total number should be input in the code sheet under the variable name *units*.

Speaking Units	Code
The foreign nation was referenced in one speaking unit.	1
The foreign nation was referenced in two speaking units.	2
The foreign nation was referenced in three speaking units.	3
The foreign nation was referenced in four speaking units.	4
The foreign nation was referenced in five speaking units.	5
Etc.	Etc.

## VITA

Tim Jones was born and raised in the Pacific Northwest. He is the first member of his family to graduate from college. In 2000, he earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Pitzer College, double majoring in Political Studies and International and Intercultural Studies. At the University of Washington, Tim earned a Master of Arts degree in Political Science in 2006 and a Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science in 2012. Tim has published in several peer-reviewed journals at the intersection of politics and communication, including *Communication Research*, *Journal of Communication*, and *Political Communication*. He is currently the Chair of the Political Science and International Studies program at Bellevue College.