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Foreign Influence in US Politics*

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Abstract

This paper documents that foreign lobbying influences US government spending. We introduce a comprehensive dataset of over 230,000 date-stamped, in-person meetings between agents representing foreign governments and individual US legislators, state governors, and employees of US executive agencies from 2000 to 2018. The data suggest that foreign agents meet disproportionately with individuals important for foreign aid and corporate subsidies, like legislators sitting on powerful congressional committees. Foreign agents also maintain connections with legislators even after they depart powerful committees, providing evidence that meetings do not just reflect short-term *quid-pro-quo* arrangements. Around meetings, foreign countries receive greater amounts of financial aid. Foreign firms whose governments lobby more often also receive larger corporate subsidies from areas the legislators and governors that they meet with represent. Finally, legislators who meet more often with foreign agents receive both monetary and electoral benefits, while we do not find changes in the political contributions they receive or in their probability of re-election, suggesting that legislators are not punished by their constituents for meeting with representatives of foreign countries.

Keywords: Political economy, public finance, political connections, foreign lobbying
JEL codes: D72, H25, P16

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The real scandal in Washington is not what is done illegally, but what is done legally.

Pat Choate

1 Introduction

Billions of dollars have flowed from foreign governments to Washington lobbyists in recent years with the goal of shaping United States (US) policy (Opensecrets). There are many instances of this. In 2007, Ethiopia's lobbyists persuaded US lawmakers not to cut their foreign aid (Silverstein, 2007). In recent years, Saudi Arabia's lobbyists have found success, winning Congressional approval for arms sales to Riyadh (Opensecrets). Even as the Ukrainian conflict heated up in 2021, Russia spent millions on lobbying efforts in the US (Opensecrets). Despite an intense public debate around foreign lobbying and a few examples of its harmful effects on public policy, there is not solid evidence on the influence that foreign lobbying has in the US. Such an impediment limits our understanding of how much sway foreign nations actually have over US policies. It also leaves us in the dark about what benefits politicians might gain from supporting these nations.

To better understand these issues, this paper constructs a novel dataset that uses information from the Department of Justice (DOJ) on meetings between foreign agents— agents working in the US on behalf of foreign principals— and US legislators, state governors, and executive branch members. Using these data, we first characterize the nature and scope of connections between foreign agents and legislators from 2000 to 2018. Among the characteristics of legislators, membership in the foreign affairs committee or in power committees are key correlates of connections. Yet, our analysis reveals that foreign agents maintain connections with legislators even after they depart from these committees. Regarding US agencies, we observe that employees of the agencies primarily responsible for allocating and executing foreign aid, namely, USAID and the Department of State, tend to have more frequent meetings with representatives from foreign countries.

Indeed, we show that these meetings are related to substantial benefits. Foreign countries that meet more often with US legislators or US agency employees receive greater foreign aid. Similarly, the US subsidiaries of firms headquartered in foreign countries whose repre-

sentatives meet with US legislators receive larger corporate subsidies from the congressional district of the same legislators. We document our results using both panel regressions and a difference-in-differences estimation that exploits the death of legislators as a shock to connections for foreign countries. We then analyze the benefits and costs to US legislators. More frequent meetings between foreign country representatives and US legislators relate to an increase in the share of registered voters with ethnic affiliation with that country and an increase in the number of privately sponsored trips for the US legislators to these countries. At the same time, we find that the political costs to legislators are economically small, as proxied by changes either in political contributions by individuals or in the probability of being re-elected. In sum, we show that foreign lobbying is related to changes in government resource allocation within the US and find no evidence that legislators are punished by their constituents around meetings with foreign country representatives.

Our primary data come from filings under the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) enforced by the DOJ. FARA, which we carefully describe in Section 2, was originally enacted in 1938 to fight Nazi propaganda in the US. It imposes strict reporting requirements on all foreign principals lobbying in the US, and, more importantly for our purposes, it requires reporting every meeting that lobbyists have on behalf of a *foreign principal* with US legislators, state governors, or US government employees. We link each meeting to a single foreign client represented by a foreign agent (lobbyist) using detailed supplemental filings. Our dataset covers over 180,000 in-person meetings between the representatives of 146 foreign countries and approximately 1,200 US legislators, more than 45,000 in-person meetings between the representatives of 169 foreign countries and employees from 19 different government agencies, and almost 1,500 in-person meetings between the representatives of 49 foreign governments and 214 unique state governors from 2000 to 2018.[1]

The analysis proceeds in three parts. In Section 3 we describe some broad descriptive facts about meetings between foreign agents and US legislators or employees of the executive branch. Some of the findings are anticipated, while others are more surprising and contrast with findings in prior work. As expected, foreign agents meet disproportionately with legislators who are most effective at advancing bills through the legislative process or members

[1] Among countries that lobby US agencies but not legislators in our sample are the Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Zimbabwe, Burundi, South Sudan, Ghana, and Western Sahara.

of committees relevant for the allocation of resources. For example, more than 25% of meetings are with members of the Foreign Affairs Committee. Moreover, meetings occur around important events for the lobbying countries. One example if this is that foreign country representatives meet more frequently with individual US legislators in months when the legislator sponsors a tariff bill advantageous to that country.

More surprising is the finding that foreign agents continue to meet with legislators even after their departure from committees relevant to the foreign country they represent. This provides clarity to the existing literature, as studies on domestic lobbying have found contradictory results in this setting (Blanes i Vidal, Draca, and Fons-Rosen, 2012; Bertrand, Bombardini, and Trebbi, 2014). We also find that legislator ideology does not correlate with the frequency of meetings. This is interesting in light of the importance of ideology-induced preferences in foreign affairs and international relations, and declining electoral cohesion and increasing polarization. On the one hand, we would expect lobbyists to meet with legislators whose ideology closely aligns with the foreign government they represent and hence benefit from this pre-existing alignment. On the other hand, lobbyists could choose to meet with legislators of differing ideologies to persuade them to support crucial issues for their clients. Our findings suggest that, on average, these two channels may cancel out. These results speak to the importance of maintaining connections with legislators beyond their ideology and their current importance within the congressional committee structure.

In Section 4 we study the relationship between meetings with US legislators, state governors, or employees of US agencies and benefits to foreign countries or firms. In panel regressions, we show that countries that meet more often receive more foreign aid. We also show that meetings between foreign countries and members of the executive branch are related to a larger probability and amount of aid. Regarding foreign firms, we document that firms headquartered in foreign countries whose representatives meet more frequently with a legislator obtain more and larger subsidies in the state or congressional district represented by the legislator. We also show that more meetings between foreign country representatives and state governors are related to larger corporate subsidies to the firms headquartered in those foreign countries.

The localized nature of subsidies, combined with the large discretion that legislators have in allocating them, makes this process a nearly ideal setting to examine whether meetings

between foreign country representatives and legislators are related to more frequent and larger subsidies for foreign firms. To better identify the link between meetings and benefits, we exploit legislator deaths as an exogenous shock to foreign-country connections. This allows us to establish that meetings with legislators indeed identify political connections that benefit foreign firms. Specifically, our empirical analysis compares changes in corporate subsidies to foreign firms exogenously losing the political connection (treated) relative to another foreign firm that also receives subsidies from the local community of the legislator who died, but whose country representatives never met with the legislator. Our estimates imply a relative drop of 5 percentage points in the likelihood of obtaining corporate subsidies and a 70% drop in the amount of subsidies for US subsidiaries of firms headquartered in connected countries.

In Section 5, we examine the potential benefits and costs to legislators. Regarding benefits, we use a novel dataset on the near-universe of voter registration allowing us to link the ethnicity of the electoral base of US legislators to foreign countries. We document that more frequent meetings are related to an increase in the share of registered voters with ethnic affiliations to the foreign country representatives who meet with the legislator from the specific congressional district or state. To shed light on potential private monetary benefits to legislators, we further show that more meetings with legislators are related to an increase in foreign trips sponsored by private entities linked to the foreign country. Additionally, we investigate whether legislators incur costs based on the identity of their clients. Previous research has demonstrated that a legislator's client identity plays a significant role in their ability to secure political contributions and influence their chances of re-election (Werner, 2015; Kroszner and Stratmann, 2005; Ferraz and Finan, 2011). We find that, on average, costs to legislators are economically small. Political contributions by individuals over the election cycle do not seem to respond much to meetings with representatives of foreign countries. Additionally, meetings do not seem to influence the likelihood that an incumbent legislator wins an election in a specific election year.[2]

[2]One possibility could be misreporting important meetings that are detrimental to a legislator's reputation. However, this seems unlikely as the costs for violating FARA are large as discussed in Section 2. Moreover, the results above robustly link meetings to benefits for both foreign countries and legislators. Instead, there are two likely alternative explanations. First, meetings are set strategically. Therefore, legislators may forgo meetings that they expect to be too costly to their reputation (e.g., in our data, we do not observe any meetings between US legislators and lobbyists working on behalf of North Korea). As our sample focuses only on realized meetings, one would expect that the benefit legislators receive exceeds their costs (Grossman and Helpman, 1996). Second, the resulting policies can still lead to economic growth that benefits a legislator's constituents.While it is likely

Overall, our study provides the first large-scale evidence of foreign lobbying with a focus on the role played by connections between foreign country representatives and US legislators, state governors, and US agency employees in shaping the allocation of government resources. Our results can inform the design of more effective political institutions. Additionally, our dataset offers new empirical facts that can be used to test and refine theories of lobbying in political economy and public finance. We believe that this new dataset and findings are of interest to a wide community of scholars in these fields, providing novel insights on how access to legislators is distributed in the economy, a question of significant practical and theoretical importance.

Related literature. This paper contributes to the literature in three ways. First, we provide novel large-sample evidence of foreign influence in US politics by showing that meetings between foreign country representatives and US legislators favorably tilt resource allocation and public policy toward foreign governments. These findings contribute to the extant literature in political economics where theoretical models of lobbying stress the importance of special interest groups in determining trade policy, budget priorities, and public good expenditures and eventually economic growth (Grossman and Helpman, 1994, 2001; Persson and Tabellini, 2002; Rajan and Zingales, 2003). On the empirical side, papers linked the intensity of lobbying by domestic firms to changes in trade tariffs (Goldberg and Maggi, 1999; Nunn and Trefler, 2010; Bombardini and Trebbi, 2012; Kim, 2017), or to government contracts, support in times of distress, more favorable regulation, or protection against political risk (Fisman, 2001; Faccio, Masulis, and McConnell, 2006; Duchin and Sosyura, 2012; Goldman, Rocholl, and So, 2013; Tahoun, 2014; Adelino and Dinc, 2014; Zingales, 2017; Schoenherr, 2019; Acemoglu, Johnson, Kermani, Kwak, and Mitton, 2016; Hassan, Hollander, van Lent, and Tahoun, 2019; Ağca and Igan, 2020; Brogaard, Denes, and Duchin, 2021; Faccio and Zingales, 2021; Grotteria, 2022).

In using deaths to identify the value of connection for government resource allocation, we follow a growing body of research that has used them to identify importance and ascribe value in several contexts, including political ties (Faccio and Parsley, 2009; Brogaard, Denes,

that voters base their assessment of an incumbent's performance on recent economic conditions, it is difficult to accurately evaluate the efficiency of resource allocation or policies and use it to decide whether to punish legislators in elections.

and Duchin, 2021), independent directors (Nguyen and Nielsen, 2010), executives and CEOs (Johnson, Magee, Nagarajan, and Newman, 1985; Bennedsen, Pérez-González, and Wolfenzon, 2020; Fee, Hadlock, and Pierce, 2013) and we extend this line of research by studying changes in government resource allocation to foreign countries and firms.

Second, we contribute to the literature that relies on campaign contributions, donations, and past employment networks to proxy for connections. Complementary to this literature, our dataset sheds light on the direct role of meetings with individual US legislators. Importantly, it provides a first look into meetings with executive branch members. This links our paper to work relying on the Lobbying Disclosure Act (LDA), which regulates lobbying activities of domestic interest groups. The LDA requires lobbyists to disclose the identity of the chamber of Congress or the federal agency contacted, but *does not* require disclosure of the identity of contacted persons, which we instead observe. While useful, the LDA data have left many questions unanswered regarding the identities of legislators and how intensely they were contacted (Bombardini and Trebbi, 2020; De Figueiredo and Richter, 2014). We add to the literature on domestic lobbying by providing a new measure of connections both with legislators and members of the executive branches, allowing us to examine the scope, intensity of meetings, and their concomitant real effects on public policy for foreign governments.

Third, observing meetings with individual legislators allows us to quantify benefits and costs to them. Theoretically, models of interest group lobbying link legislative benefits to the quantity of political donations (Grossman and Helpman, 1994). They also note that legislators face costs from adopting policy positions that may be unpopular with their constituents (Grossman and Helpman, 1996). Research in political science has highlighted that legislators benefit from connections to lobbyists through more frequent fundraising events (McKay, 2018) and access to political information and legislative labor (Hall and Deardorff, 2006). Our paper complements this literature by showing that meetings with foreign countries are related to changes in the share of registered voters with ethnic affiliations to the foreign country and more frequent privately sponsored trips to that country. We also provide novel evidence that foreign lobbying imposes on average negligible costs to legislators, a result absent from the extant literature that tends to focus on political scandals (Hamel and Miller, 2019; Pereira and Waterbury, 2019).

2 Institutional details

This section begins by describing the institutional details of foreign lobbying in the United States. We then outline how our main outcomes of interest—foreign aid and corporate subsidies—are allocated in the US. We also provide a case study for each of the main outcomes that highlights the political processes and considerations at play.

2.1 Foreign Agents Registration Act

The Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) is the primary act regulating the various political activities that foreign entities can undertake. FARA mandates that *foreign agents* operating in the US register with the DOJ and file disclosures semi-annually on behalf of the *foreign principals* they represent if they work on *covered activities*. FARA defines the term *agent* as "any person who acts as an agent, representative, employee, servant, or any person who acts in any other capacity at the order, request, or under the direction or control" of a *foreign principal*. This definition of *agent* has been interpreted broadly by case law and does not require that the parties expressly enter into a contract establishing the relationship. The Act does not require that agents be compensated for their actions on behalf of foreign principals, meaning that the registration requirement applies to both paid and volunteer agents. However, consensus is that the *agency* depends upon whether a *specific* person has been asked to take a *specific* action on behalf of a *foreign principal*.[3]

The law, 22 US Code § 611, defines an agent of a foreign principal as subject to FARA's reporting and disclosure requirements if they engage in any of the following four actions within the US (*covered activities*): a) engages in political activities;[4] b) acts as public relations counsel, publicity agent, or political consultant;[5] c) solicits, collects, or disburses things of

[3] Attorney Gen. of United States v. Irish N. Aid Comm., 668 F.2d 159, 161 (2d Cir. 1982) at 161-62.

[4] The act defines political activities as "influence any agency or official of the Government of the United States or any section of the public within the United States with reference to formulating, adopting, or changing the domestic or foreign policies of the United States or with reference to the political or public interests, policies, or relations of a government of a foreign country or a foreign political party." 22 United States Code 611(o).

[5] A public relations counsel is "any person who engages directly or indirectly in informing, advising or in any way representing a principal in any public relations matter pertaining to political or public interests, policies, or relations of such principal" 22 U.S.C. § 611(g). A publicity agent is "any person who engages directly or indirectly in the publication or dissemination of oral, visual, graphic, written, or pictorial information or matter of any kind, including publication by means of advertising, books, periodicals, newspapers, lectures, broadcasts, motion pictures, or otherwise" 22 U.S.C. § 611(h). A political consultant is "any person who engages

value (i.e., contributions, loans, money); or d) represents the foreign principal's interest before federal agencies or officials. Finally, foreign principals can be governments, firms, political parties, individuals or non-profit associations.

The Congress has introduced several exemptions through amendments to the statute (22 US Code § 613). Among others, officials, diplomatic officers, and certain staff of foreign governments are exempt under FARA if those individuals are acting exclusively within their official capacities, as recognized by the US Department of State. To qualify for this exemption, the official or the members of diplomatic and consular offices cannot be acting as a public-relations counsel, publicity agent, or be a US citizen. Another notable exemption is for agents engaged in private and nonpolitical activities, including commerce, charitable solicitations, and religious, scholastic or scientific pursuit.[6] The exemption does not apply when the activities are directed or controlled by a foreign government or political party. Other two significant exemptions are a) practicing attorneys acting in the course of legal representation before a court of law or a federal agency, and b) agents that are otherwise registered under the Lobbying Disclosure Act (LDA). To qualify for this exemption, agents of foreign principals first must represent foreign principals other than foreign governments and foreign political parties. Second, those agents must have engaged in lobbying activities for purposes of the LDA and registered under that statute.[7]

The LDA that became law in December, 1995 marked the transition to place foreign commercial lobbying under the LDA rather than FARA. Without the LDA exemption, US subsidiaries of foreign companies would be forced to report their lobbying activity under FARA. However, recently the DOJ expressed support for eliminating the LDA registration exemption to the FARA. This is a striking and notable development that could have significant implications for US companies with foreign parents or foreign affiliates.[8] There are at least two reasons why foreign companies would prefer LDA over FARA to disclose their lobbying ac-

in informing or advising any other person with reference to the domestic or foreign policies of the United States or the political or public interest, policies, or relations of a foreign country or of a foreign political party" 22 U.S.C. § 611(p).

[6]Trade and commerce includes the purchase and sale of commodities, services, or property.

[7]Under the LDA, virtually any communication written or oral, with either "covered legislative branch officials" or "covered executive branch officials" regarding the "formulation, modification, or adoption" of policy or legislation constitutes a "lobbying contact." Also included are communications relating to the 1) administration or execution of a federal program or policy (including contracts, grants, loans or permits) and 2) the nomination or confirmation of a person subject to confirmation by the Senate.

[8]https://www.justice.gov/ola/page/file/1553341/download

tivities within the United States. First, registering under the LDA is far less burdensome than FARA (e.g., there is no requirement to report the date and the identity of the US legislator or official met by the lobbyist on behalf of the foreign client) and less subject to public stigma. Second, even though, as of June 2023, the penalties for FARA and LDA non-compliance are of similar severity, enforcement of FARA has been more strict. Violations to FARA are punishable by a fine of $250,000 and up to five years in prison, whereas violations to LDA are punishable by a fine of $200,000 and up to five years in prison.

The main difference is that FARA is overseen and enforced by the Department of Justice (DoJ) National Security Division's Counterintelligence and Export Control Section, whereas the LDA is overseen by the Clerk of the House and the Secretary of the Senate and enforced by the US Attorney for the District of Columbia. Since the 2000s, the DoJ has initiated 13 criminal FARA cases against 14 entities and individuals that have reached resolutions to date.[9] This has resulted in 13 parties being convicted and 1 party having the charges dropped. Most famously, Donald Trump's former campaign manager Paul Manafort was sentenced to five years in prison for not registering his 2017 lobbying activities. In comparison, only nine LDA cases were settled with civil penalties of $200,000 or less. This discrepancy might be attributed to the House and Senate clerks lack of enforcement power similar to the ones of the DOJ (Thurber, Campbell, and Dulio, 2019).[10]

2.2 Foreign Aid

Foreign aid is our main outcome of interest when examining the potential monetary benefits that accrue to foreign countries as a result of their lobbying activity. It is an ideal outcome for us to study for three main reasons. First, foreign aid is a key policy tool for the federal government, with prior work highlighting its importance in winning support in major international affairs, maintaining political regimes, and strengthening international alliances (Alesina and Dollar, 2000). Second, it is an outcome that could potentially be swayed by foreign lobbying, as prior work highlights that political relationships are important in determining foreign aid

[9] Examples of cases prosecuted under FARA can be found here.

[10] A notable exception occurred in 2020 when lobbyist Jack Abramoff pled guilty to not meeting LDA's registration requirements, which falls outside our sample.

and assistance (Kuziemko and Werker, 2006; Sims, 1980).[11] Third, foreign aid is allocated and then administered via a two-step process, where Congress first votes on the total amount of funds, goods, and services available to be given as assistance, then a host of executive agencies allocate this aid in accordance with their mandates from both Congress and the executive branch. Since our data speak to both meetings with members of Congress and executive agencies, we are ideally situated to comment on the role that each of these actors play.

How is foreign aid determined and where could foreign governments influence the process? A natural first place to look at is within Congress. This is because Congress has power over the type of aid that the government is authorized to give, the total amount of assistance allocated in the budget, and oversight over how foreign aid is allocated. In the last few decades, the latter two powers have taken on a larger role, as amendments to the the key foreign assistance authorization acts have become rarer, and when new authorization bills are passed, they generally target narrow regions or causes.

The implication of this is that when it comes to discussions about foreign aid and the potential for influence, it's essential to consider how aid is allocated through the budgetary process and the various points where oversight is involved. Typically, foreign aid appropriations are a crucial component of the State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs (SFOPS) spending bill. This bill carries substantial weight in shaping US foreign aid policy, as SFOPS subcommittees have significant authority over appropriations. Oversight authority, conversely, is split among various Congressional committees, each of whom play different roles in overseeing how foreign aid is distributed to recipient countries. While most aid programs fall under the House Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, other committees also supervise specific aid programs. For instance, the Agriculture Committees in both chambers oversee food aid, and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and House Financial Services Committee oversee contributions to multilateral development banks. Global health assistance falls under the purview of the House Energy and Commerce Committee and the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee.

All of this goes to the point that authority over foreign aid rests broadly across the members of Congress, potentially allowing influential Senators or House Representatives to sway

[11] Prior work has also highlighted the role of legislators in influencing federal agencies in the allocation of public resources (Brogaard, Denes, and Duchin, 2021).

Local News Coverage of how Mitchell McConnell shifts millions of dollars in foreign aid after being lobbied

$10 billion — Value of buyout of tobacco quotas McConnell arranged for farmers, for whom Hunter Bates lobbied

$45 million — Federal funds McConnell has recommended for four of Bates' lobbying clients

$2.4 million — Lobbying fees Bates has reported from clients helped by McConnell

$133,000 — Donations to McConnell from Bates, his wife and lobbying clients

THE MCCONNELL MACHINE

PART 4 OF 4

A LUCRATIVE CONNECTION

CHARLES BERTRAM | STAFF FILE PHOTO

Hunter Bates spoke to the Burley Tobacco Growers Cooperative Association board in October 2004. Bates lobbied the U.S. Senate on behalf of Kentucky burley farmers.

Lobbyist's close ties to senator pay off for them both — and clients

By John Cheves
HERALD-LEADER STAFF WRITER

WASHINGTON — Kentucky farmers needed help from Sen. Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., three years ago as Congress debated a buyout of their government tobacco quotas.

The farmers ended up with the perfect lobbyist to present their case: Gordon Hunter Bates, McConnell's recently departed chief of staff and campaign manager, just getting his start in the private sector.

They signed up as clients of the brand-new Bates Capitol Group, a small firm Bates opened after he was disqualified from the 2003 race for Kentucky lieutenant governor because he had been living in Virginia. Bates charged about $350,000 in fees, and with McConnell's help, the farmers got what they wanted, a $10 billion buyout over a decade.

As the deal was approved, McConnell gave a Senate floor speech and described Bates' role as "extremely important."

"Hunter is like a son to the senator, and having that kind of access is a big help," said Danny McKinney, chief executive of the Burley Tobacco Growers Cooperative Association in Lexington. "Most of the work he did for us was just the two of them in a room, in private, without the rest of us."

Bates soon hired other lobbyists tied to McConnell and is now perceived as a gatekeeper to one of the most powerful figures in the Senate. His business likely will boom if McConnell, now the majority whip, replaces the retiring Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, R-Tenn., in January, as planned.

From his seat on the Senate Appropriations Committee, McConnell has recommended about $45 million in federal funds for four of Bates' clients, interviews and public records show. The senator has filed or rewritten bills for three other clients, loosening pension contribution rules and making it harder to sue businesses.

See MCCONNELL, A14

SUMMARY OF THE MACHINE

Sen. Mitch McConnell's vast fund-raising machine fuels many Republican campaigns. In his powerful position, he earmarks federal dollars for many who support him.

After 22 years in the Senate, McConnell is an entrenched incumbent. Most money he takes goes to other senators, helping him rise in the ranks.

McConnell is the chairman of the Senate Appropriations subcommittee that controls more than $20 billion a year in U.S. aid for foreign countries.

- McConnell receives hundreds of thousands of dollars from ethnic lobbying groups interested in influencing foreign-aid spending.
- McConnell shifts hundreds of millions of dollars in foreign aid to countries his donors support: Armenia, Israel and Ukraine.

McConnell is married to Labor Secretary Elaine Chao, herself a major Republican Party fund-raiser. Chao seeded her agency with McConnell's former political aides.

- Chao's Labor Department has been receptive to McConnell's major business donors, particularly in the mining industry.
- McConnell pushes a pro-China trading policy that helps many of his donors, including the Chao family shipping business.

McConnell's former chief of staff, Gordon Hunter Bates, is a lobbyist and McConnell fund-raiser. His first clients got a $10 billion buyout package arranged by McConnell.

- McConnell recommends about $45 million in federal funds for four Bates clients and sponsors or rewrites bills for three others.
- Those clients give at least $120,000 in donations to McConnell. Bates has charged them about $2.4 million in lobbying fees.

ON KENTUCKY.COM

■ Read a statement from lobbyist Hunter Bates. | ■ Read parts 1-3 of The McConnell Machine. | ■ Comment on this story.

Figure 1: *Notes*: This figure is a screenshot of the Lexington Herald-Leader published on October 22, 2006.

the process. Moreover, these legislators need not be members of the committees mentioned above. There are many instances where legislators who are not be members of the Foreign Affairs committee receive campaign support from or meet with foreign agents interested in influencing aid spending. One example of this is shown in Figure 1 which highlights the case of Sen. Mitch McConnell in 2006, describing him as the conductor of a "fund-raising machine." The article suggests that he distributed his political campaign donations to various Republican candidates, helping direct substantial funds to countries like Armenia and Ukraine. This exemplifies that all members of Congress, regardless of their assigned committee, could be natural targets for efforts to influence the allocation of foreign aid.

Once aid is allocated, various executive committees implement foreign assistance, determining where it will go and what form it will take. Most aid funding is allocated to major executive departments like the Departments of State, Defense, Agriculture, and the Treasury.

Once allocated, several committees and agencies oversee aid implementation. For example, USAID and the Department of State implemented approximately 45% and 15% of all foreign aid in fiscal year 2019. The Department of Defense focuses on military assistance, implementing approximately 30% of all foreign aid in 2019. The remaining 10% are implemented by a combination of the Treasury and Health and Human Services Departments and others. From the perspective of foreign influence, we would therefore expect representatives of foreign countries hoping to influence aid policy to focus their meetings toward employees of the Department of State, USAID, and the Department of Defense. We present detailed evidence along these lines in Section 3.

2.3 Place-based corporate subsidies

To sharpen the link between foreign influence and monetary benefits, we next focus on place-based corporate subsidies. While foreign aid constitutes one of the key reasons foreign country representatives lobby in the US—evidenced by the many FARA reports related to foreign aid—the foreign aid allocation process involves several layers of committees and agencies. While data from FARA can help us speak to these different layers, they nonetheless blur the link between any single legislator or employee of the executive branch and foreign aid. Examining corporate subsidies, conversely, allows us to relate lobbying activities to individual legislators, governors, and employees of state agencies, since prior work has noted these actors have substantial sway over the award of corporate subsidies (Slattery, 2018; Jansa and Gray, 2014).

On top of this, corporate subsidies can be quite economically meaningful for their recipients. Slattery and Zidar (2020) note that in 2014, states spent between $5-$216 per capita on incentives for firms. The total state and local incentive spending amounted to at least $30 billion, totaling around 40% of state corporate tax revenues, with the average discretionary subsidy to the tune of $178 million. Moreover, firm-specific discretionary subsidies are roughly a quarter of total incentive spending within a state, highlighting the importance of legislator discretion in the subsidy allocation process. Although most of the power and credit goes to the state's Governor and their team, state senators, congresspeople, and legislators often play a key role, especially when the potential subsidies are large. Sometimes congress-

Local news coverage of the Yokohama deal

THE CLARION-LEDGER » CLARIONLEDGER.COM » SUNDAY, APRIL 28, 2013 » 3B

METRO/STATE

Pender

Continued from Page 1B

Raybans that got attention. Western wear seemed of interest. So he got four pairs of cowboy boots for Yokohama execs.

"Rather than a bowl or a vase or something — we gave them something they would remember," Bryant said. The boots were a hit.

Just before the first meeting — most were held at Mississippi State University — Bryant had his folks dash out for a quick tire change. They put Yokohama tires on the vehicles.

"When the chairman came out of the meeting, he stopped and looked, and called all the other executives over, and said, 'Look, Yokohama tires.'" Bryant said.

Japanese business culture is very formal and intricate, Bryant and Christensen said, and after years of dealing with Nissan and Toyota, Mississippi leaders have learned many lessons. Such as how to handle a business card.

"When you exchange business cards, it should be handed so your name is facing them," Bryant said. "And you never take their business card and just stick it in your pocket. At the meeting, the cards are arranged on the table, in order of people's authority, the individuals at the table."

Bryant said that during numerous meetings, MSU's computer whizzes and university president, local officials and other industry leaders were always at the ready to come answer questions or provide documents. If the Japanese execs had a question about power, for example, a TVA official was quickly summoned. Bryant said he and Mississippi's U.S. Sens. Thad Cochran and Roger Wicker — not just their staffers — were available for meetings as needed, something that "believe it or not, is apparently not always the case with some places."

Meanwhile, Christensen was back-and-forth to Japan, Chicago, Atlanta and elsewhere for meetings with the company, and to the Philippines to tour other plants. Christensen joked that he now has his passport number memorized and has seen every airline movie extant.

Bryant said Joe Max Higgins, a Golden Triangle economic development leader, also hit on an idea that made an early impression. In one of the first presentations of satellite images of the Clay County site to Japanese executives, a similar Yokohama plant in the Phillipines was overlayed, showing it fit perfectly. It was an "aha" moment, Bryant said, with the executives recognizing their plant immediately.

Bryant said MSU technology and data also helped put Yokohama execs' minds at ease over a big concern: workforce. Looking at a relatively rural, sparsely populated area, they were concerned about having enough qualified workers for the plant.

But an MSU computer data program that integrates population, education, social and other data helped convince the company the plant will draw qualified workers.

Bryant said Higgins also helped convince them that in Mississippi, workers will readily commute 40 miles or more to work.

But when it came down to the short rows of the short list of sites, Bryant said, company officials noted that the offerings of the finalists were so similar that the decision would be tough.

At one of the final meetings, Bryant said, he noticed the top exec was visibly suffering angst over what could be a career-defining decision. Bryant said he empathized and just made a dead-level offering.

"I said Mr. Chairman, let me make this decision easier for you," Bryant said. "We will make this work. I promise we will make this work."

Bryant said he was worried when a later meeting to hear the decision was cancelled because the Yokohama executive got delayed in Dallas. But then, at 11 p.m. on April 10, Bryant got a phone call from him. The conversation went on for nearly 15 minutes before he told Bryant the decision.

"He said, 'We've looked at many different sites. Your incentives package and the other two states are basically the same … We've chosen Mississippi. Your team worked harder than anyone else.'"

And, Bryant noted, "He mentioned the Yokohama tires on our vehicles. He did."

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Figure 2: *Notes*: This figure is a screenshot of the Clarion-Ledger published on April 28, 2013.

people are responsible for advocating and securing funding for various projects and programs in their respective states or districts. Other times congresspeople play a more direct role in the subsidy-giving deal. For instance, when Yokohama received a $325 million subsidy from the state of Mississippi, Senators Cochran and Wicker frequently met with foreign agents, playing an instrumental role in the process (Figure 2). Similarly, when Hyundai accepted the final subsidy offer from Alabama in 2002, the credit went to the teamwork among 30 groups, including the Governor, state senators, and congresspeople (Slattery, 2018).

There are several reasons why states or local authorities want to offer subsidies to existing firms or new entrants. The most commonly reported reason is "to stimulate economic activity and to create new jobs for the citizens of the State by encouraging and promoting the expansion of existing business and industry within the State and by recruiting and attracting new business and industry to the State" (North Carolina's Job Development Investment Grant program). Corporate subsidy programs aim to attract "high-benefit" firms, which ultimately deliver both

direct and indirect benefits in the form of higher employment, wages, and overall economic growth. The complexity faced by policymakers in forecasting and evaluating firms' benefits, and more importantly, the needed accuracy in the assessment on whether the firm would locate elsewhere, imply that the large discretion of governors and legislators gets combined with a lack of transparency in the process. This lack of transparency leaves incentives exposed to political capture. For instance, in 2016, the New York Times investigated and found that lobbying and corruption led to inflated subsidy deals by the Economic Development Agency in New Jersey for a total amount of $260 million (Corasaniti and Haag, 2019).

Subsidy to foreign firms while promoting economic growth can also be detrimental to US firms and national security. For instance, subsidies in the form of R&D tax credits to companies established in China or Russia are unquestionably associated with strategic implications for foreign policy and national security. Take, for instance, the CHIPS Act that prohibits funding recipients from expanding semiconductor manufacturing in China and countries defined by US law as posing a national security threat to the United States. Moreover, subsidies to foreign firms create a potential for significant distortion in the availability of resources, ultimately affecting the competitiveness of domestic firms in international markets. These concerns are heightened under the Biden administration, especially with regard to high-tech sectors like quantum computing, artificial intelligence, and advanced semiconductors. These compelling narratives offer a reason for why foreign governments may lobby state legislators and governors, who potentially lack knowledge and information, and can sway corporate subsidies in favor of US subsidiaries of foreign firms.

3 Lobbyist meetings on behalf of foreign clients

In this section, we describe our data on date-stamped meetings between lobbyists working on behalf of foreign clients and US legislators, state governors or members of the executive branch gathered from supplemental statements filed under FARA.[12,13] This comprehensive

[12]For brevity, throughout the text, we may refer to the meetings that a foreign agent undertakes on behalf of a foreign country as "meetings of the foreign country."

[13]Prior work on foreign lobbying focuses only on either a small subsample of meetings for specific countries over a few years or on semi-annual summary reports (Gawande, Krishna, and Robbins, 2006; Montes-Rojas, 2013; You, 2020; Lee, 2020). We also use the semi-annual reports to provide an overview of topics foreign countries lobby for in the US in the online appendix Section B. These reports lack information both on the

and novel dataset provides us with a unique opportunity to investigate the scope and nature of foreign influence in the US legislature, executive branch, and individual states. We then offer some broad descriptive facts about how meetings and connections have evolved over time, the legislator and executive agency characteristics associated with meetings, and some preliminary results that relate meetings to committee assignments and the legislative process. More information about foreign countries, US legislators' characteristics, and the variable construction process is provided in the online appendix Section A.

3.1 Foreign Agents Registration Act

We hand-collect data from supplemental statements filed under FARA, which provide detailed information on meetings between representatives of foreign countries and US legislators, state governors, and members of the executive branch. In the supplemental statements, data on meetings are provided in response to Question 12 and—especially for more prolific lobbyists—are reported in attachments and appendices at the end of the document. Question 12, reproduced in Panel A of Figure 3, asks about political activities undertaken on behalf of foreign principals during the previous six-month period. The activities include public relations, policies sought to be influenced, any sponsored or delivered speeches, and lectures or TV broadcasts, among others. Importantly, in the corresponding attachments, the lobbyist must report the date and subject of the meeting and the identity of the US government official they met with, as seen in Panel B of Figure 3.

Relying on over 12,000 semi-annual lobbying disclosures, we have compiled a comprehensive dataset of over 180,000 in-person meetings involving approximately 1,200 members of Congress, more than 45,000 in-person meetings with employees from 19 different government agencies, and 1,472 meetings with 214 state governors between 2000 and 2018.[14,15,16] Within our sample, we have identified 500 distinct registered lobbying firms engaging on be-

identities of individual US legislators with whom lobbyists meet and the date of the individual meetings between lobbyists and legislators.

[14]Examples of popular legislators are included in Table E.1 in the online appendix.

[15]The results discussed in this manuscript remain unchanged once we include e-mails and phone calls reported through FARA.

[16]The agencies in our sample are the Departments of State, Energy, Homeland Security, the Treasury, Commerce, Defence, Justice, Agriculture, Trade and Development, Health and Human Services, Labor, Transportation, and the Interior. We also collect meetings with the Office of the President, USAID, US Trade Representative, Peace Corps, Environmental Protection Agency, and the Federal Trade Commission.

A. Example of question 12

12. During this 6 month reporting period, have you on behalf of any foreign principal engaged in political activity[5] as defined below?
Yes ☑ No ☐

If yes, identify each such foreign principal and describe in full detail all such political activity, indicating, among other things, the relations, interests and policies sought to be influenced and the means employed to achieve this purpose. If the registrant arranged, sponsored or delivered speeches, lectures or radio and TV broadcasts, give details as to dates and places of delivery, names of speakers and subject matter.

See Attachment D

B. Corresponding attachment

Attachment D - Section III, # 12 **Reporting period – July 1 – December 31, 2007**

The Embassy of the People's Republic of China

Date	Office of	Met with	Issues Discussed
07-27-2007	The Speaker of the House	Jon Stivers	Chairman Wu visit
08-06-2007	The Speaker of the House	Jon Stivers	Chairman Wu visit
08-30-2007	The Speaker of the House	Jon Stivers	Chairman Wu visit
09-27-2007	The Speaker of the House	Nancy Pelosi	Chairman Wu visit
10-31-2007	House Ways & Means Committee	Jason Kearns	China-related legislation
11-29-2007	The Speaker of the House	Jon Stivers	China Bilateral relationship
12-07-2007	Senate Majority Leader	Michael Castellano	China-related legislation

Figure 3: *Notes*: Panel A reproduces the text of question 12 as it is in the official FARA supplemental statement. Panel B shows part of the attached document D, which details meetings with US legislators. These screenshots were taken from the following supplemental statement.

half of foreign principals with various members of the legislature and employees of the executive branch. We also review each foreign principal in our sample and determine whether they are a foreign government, foreign non-profit association, or foreign firm. The vast majority are foreign governments and political parties (87.8%), with remaining being either non-profit associations (7.3%) or foreign corporations (6.4%). Note that this sums to greater than 100% because foreign principals can fit in multiple categories, with state-owned enterprises serving as an example. The lack of foreign firms is not altogether unsurprising since, as noted in Section 2.1, US subsidiaries of foreign companies have been permitted to report under the LDA since the LDA was enacted.

To associate the country of origin for each foreign principal, we rely on the Department of Justice's records, enabling us to assign each meeting to a specific foreign country.[17] As a result, we have data on 146 unique foreign countries whose lobbyists held meetings with US

[17]For each foreign principal, we assign the associated geographical location using the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) three-letter country codes defined in ISO 3166-1. Throughout our analyses, we drop autonomous regions as they lack data on regional characteristics.

legislators, 169 countries whose lobbyists interacted with US agency personnel, and 49 unique countries whose lobbyists met with state governors.

Figure 4 presents an annual summary of the number of foreign countries met by each congressperson (Panel A) as well as of the number of congresspeople met by each foreign country (Panel B). Between 2000 and 2018, both the annual average and median number of meetings increased for both series. Furthermore, both distributions are highly skewed—for instance, the median foreign country meets with 11 legislators per year, while a foreign country at the 90^{th} percentile meets with almost 90 legislators.

Figure 5 presents the same annual summary for the number of foreign countries met by each agency (Panel A) as well as of the number of agencies met by each foreign country (Panel B). In contrast to meetings with legislators, between 2000 and 2018, the annual average and median number of connections are stable. The median agency, however, is meeting with fewer foreign countries than the median legislator. As with legislators, the distributions are skewed, with the median agency meeting with 8 foreign countries per year, while an agency at the 90^{th} percentile meets with 18 unique foreign countries.

3.2 Descriptive statistics about legislators and agencies

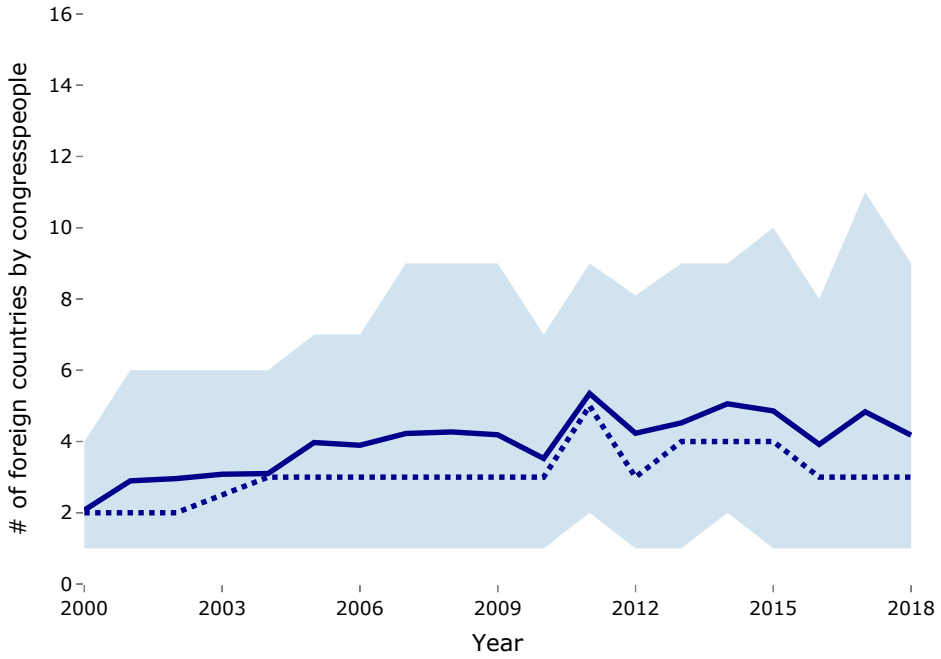
To motivate our analysis below on how foreign influence relates to greater amounts of foreign aid and corporate subsidies, this section presents a description of some of the legislator characteristics relating to meetings with the representatives of foreign principals. Our goal is to highlight that foreign lobbyists meet disproportionately with legislators relevant to the allocation of government resources.[18] We present similar evidence for executive agencies, highlighting that representatives of foreign countries meet most often with agencies most effective for their clients.

Ideology of legislators. Prior literature in political science and political economics has linked legislators' ideology with public spending priorities, the allocation of government resources (Gerber and Jackson, 1993; Green and Shapiro, 1994; Persson, Roland, and Tabellini, 2000) and legislative activity (Mian, Sufi, and Trebbi, 2010). To examine ideology, we

[18]Online Appendix C discusses summary statistics of other legislators' characteristics (e.g., personal and political) for interested readers.

use the dynamic weighted (DW) - nominate ideology scores for the members of Congress. These measures of legislator ideology are based on Congressional roll-call votes and were

A. Number of foreign countries meeting with each congressperson



B. Number of congresspeople meeting with each foreign country

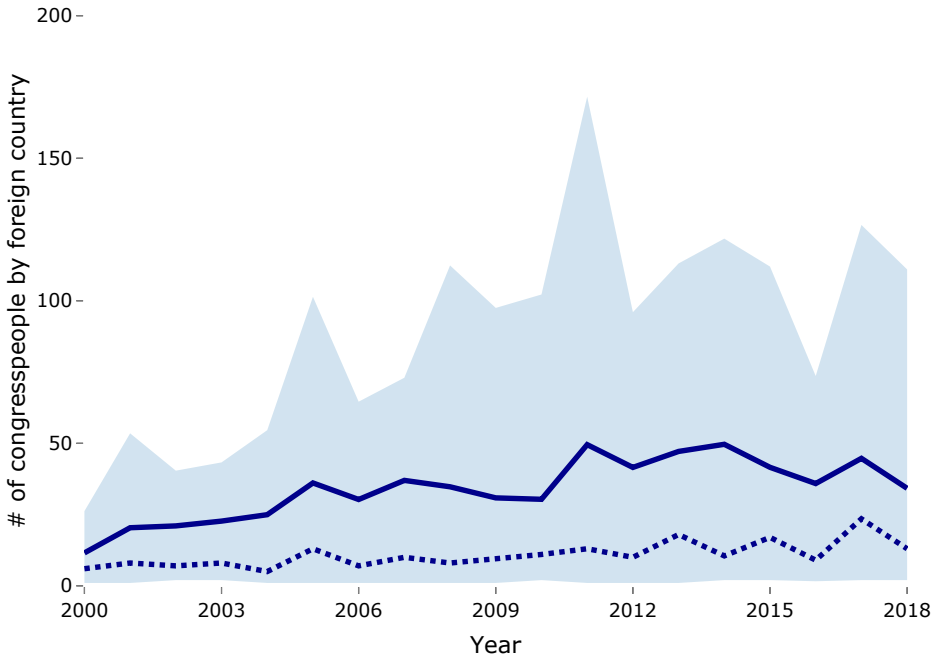
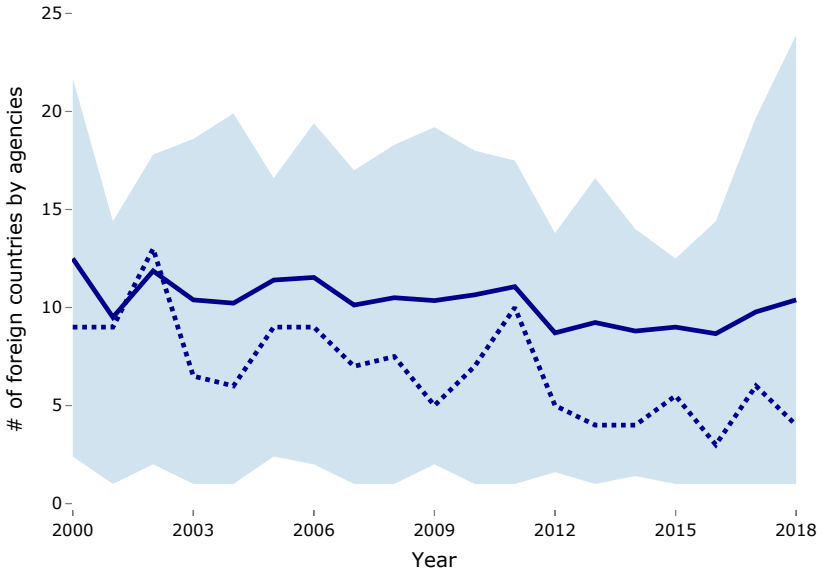


Figure 4: *Notes*: The figure presents an annual summary of the number of foreign principals whose representatives met with each congressperson (Panel A) and the number of congresspeople who have met with each foreign principal's representative (Panel B). The solid line represents the average, the dashed line the median, and the extremes of the shaded area are the 10^{th} and 90^{th} percentile in each year.

created by Poole and Rosenthal (1985) and later refined by Poole and Rosenthal (2011). DW-NOMINATE 1 captures the economic and governmental aspects of the ideological left-right spectrum. In contrast, DW-NOMINATE 2 captures differences within the major political parties on currency, nativism, civil rights, and lifestyle issues. For each score, a value close to 1 represents a more conservative congressperson, while a value close to -1 a more liberal

A. Number of foreign countries meeting with each agency



B. Number of agencies meeting with each foreign country

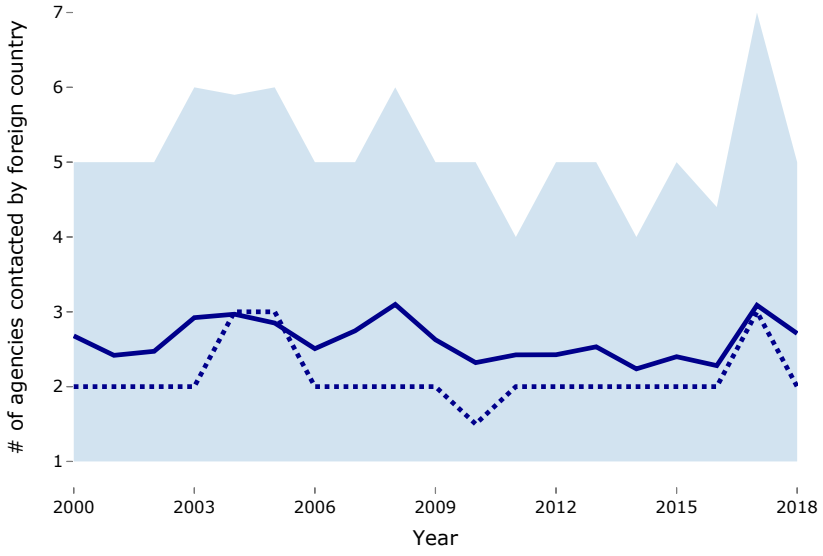


Figure 5: *Notes*: The figure presents an annual summary of the number of foreign principals whose representatives met with each executive agency (Panel A) and the number of executive agencies who have met with each foreign principal's representative (Panel B). The solid line represents the average, the dashed line the median, and the extremes of the shaded area are the 10^{th} and 90^{th} percentile in each year.

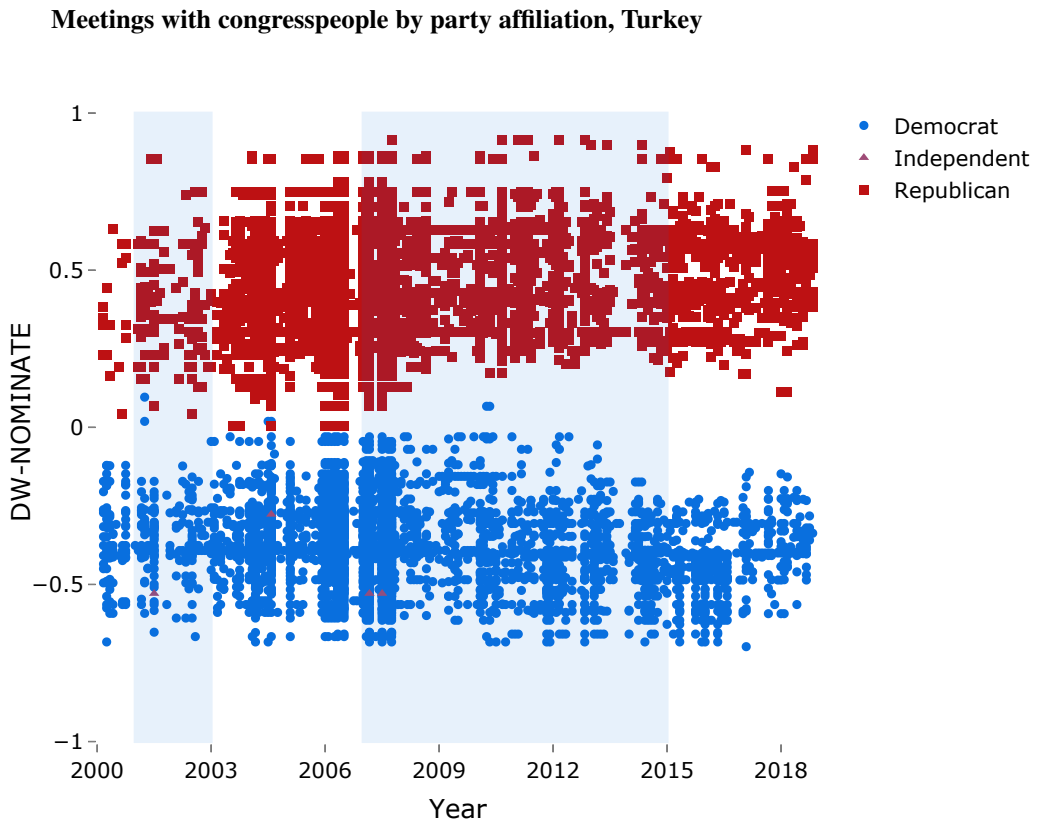


Figure 6: *Notes*: The figure shows the contact pattern over time for the government of Turkey. A contact is defined as a year-month with at least one meeting between a representative of a foreign country and a legislator. Each dot in the figure represents a contact. Meetings with republican legislators are shown as red squares, with Democrats as blue circles, and with independents as violet triangles. The shaded area in the background is blue if Democrats had the majority in the Senate. The vertical axis indicates the DW-NOMINATE 1 score from Poole and Rosenthal (2011).

congressperson.

Foreign countries meet equally with legislators across the ideological spectrum—both conservatives and liberals. This holds true regardless of the specific definition of political ideology used. Figure 6 illustrates this pattern with a specific example: contacts by the foreign representatives of the Turkish government. A contact represents a year-month in which at least one meeting between a foreign representative and a legislator took place. The graph's horizontal axis indicates the contact date, while the vertical axis reflects the legislator's DW-NOMINATE 1 score. Each dot signifies a contact. As shown, Turkey engages with legislators from both parties, across the ideological spectrum. This trend, however, is not limited to Turkey—it is the norm. Our data show that foreign countries consistently engage with legislators from various political ideologies and party affiliations over time.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics on legislator ideology and characteristics important for resource allocation

The table presents the descriptive statistics for the sample of individual meetings at the legislator-country-year level. We include the following ideological characteristics: *DW-NOMINATE 1* and *DW-NOMINATE 2*. Lastly, we also consider characteristics that are important for influence and resource allocation. *Majority* captures whether the legislator is a member of the party in control of the Senate, *Legislative Effectiveness Score* is the lawmaking effectiveness of the legislator, *Committee chair* and *Sub-committee chair* capture whether the legislator is the chair of either a senate or house committee or a sub-committee. We also capture whether the legislator is a member of, either a senate or house committee, the following committees: (i) the rules, ways and means, and appropriations, (ii) foreign affairs, (iii) Security & Intelligence, (iv) Armed Services, and (v) Energy & Commerce.

	N	Mean	Median	Std. dev
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
		Ideological		
DW-NOMINATE 1	36,555	0.045	0.091	0.430
DW-NOMINATE 2	36,555	-0.042	-0.053	0.292
		Importance/influence		
Majority	36,555	0.539	1.000	0.499
Legislative Effectiveness Score	36,555	1.064	0.646	1.351
Committee chair	36,555	0.092	0.000	0.289
Sub-committee chair	36,555	0.283	0.000	0.451
Power committee membership	36,555	0.400	0.000	0.490
Foreign affairs membership	36,555	0.255	0.000	0.436
Security & Intelligence membership	36,555	0.175	0.000	0.380
Armed services membership	36,555	0.170	0.000	0.375
Energy & Commerce membership	36,555	0.131	0.000	0.337

Importance of legislators and agencies for resource allocation. Next, we assess the relationship between meetings and various characteristics that proxy for a legislator's importance within the resource allocation process. To start, we use the Legislative Effectiveness Scores (LES) developed by Volden and Wiseman (2014, 2018), that capture the level of success that each Representative or Senator has in advancing items on their legislative agenda through the lawmaking process. More details are provided in Online Appendix A.

Table 1 shows that foreign countries meet with legislators with an average legislative effectiveness score of 1.06. This score is approximately the cutoff for effectiveness in the top tercile among all legislators, suggesting that countries meet with legislators who most effectively sponsor and advance bills through the legislative process. Figure 7 plots the evolution of meetings with effective lawmakers. The horizontal axis indicates the meeting year, since legislative effectiveness scores are available at the annual frequency. The vertical axis plots the fraction of meetings with the most effective lawmakers relative to all the legislators a foreign country meets in a year. We consider three definitions of "most effective lawmakers"—top 5%, top 10%, and top 20% of legislators by LES score. Though not entirely unexpected,

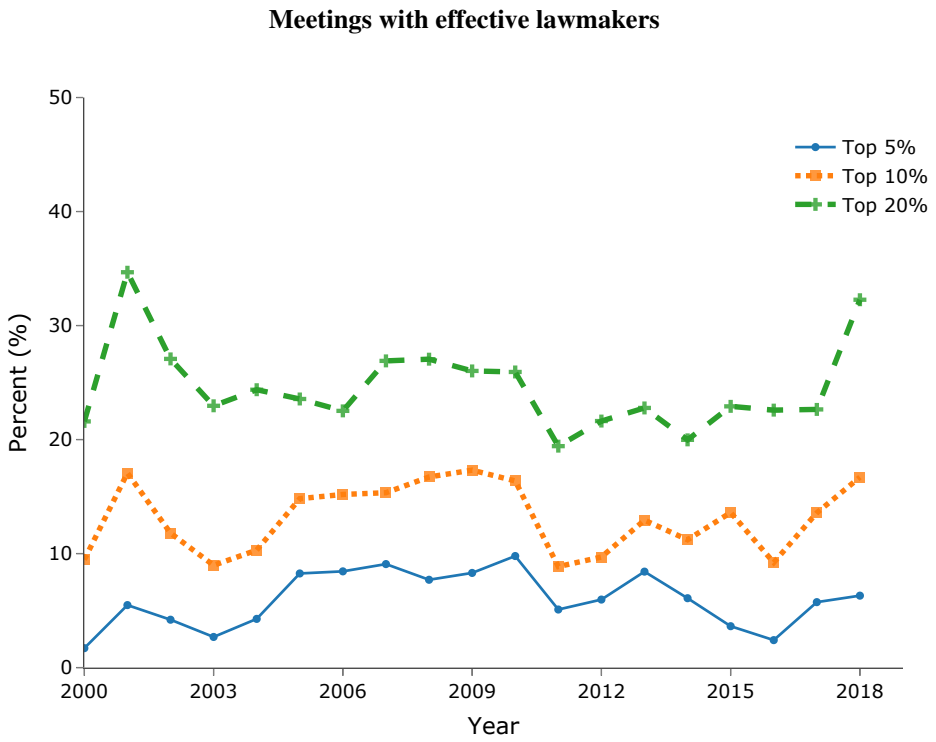


Figure 7: *Notes*: The figure shows the meetings with effective lawmakers over time for all foreign countries. We rank each legislator by their lawmaker effectiveness score (LES) from the Centre of Effective Lawmaking. We then compute the fraction of meetings with top 5% of legislators (blue circles), top 10% of legislators (orange squares), and top 20% of legislators (green crosses) relative to all the legislators a foreign country meets in a year.

foreign countries meet relatively more often with the most effective legislators. For example, the fraction of meetings attributable to the most effective 20% of legislators is almost always larger than 20%, with a minimum value of 19.42% in 2011. This result, that on average foreign countries meet more frequently with the most effective legislators, holds across definitions of effectiveness.

Relatedly, Table 1 shows a foreign country has, on average, nearly 30% of their meetings with sub-committee chairs and 40% of their meetings with members of "power" committees, which groups together the rules, ways and means, and appropriations committees (Volden and Wiseman, 2014). More importantly, 25% of the meetings are with members of the foreign affairs committee alone. Members of the armed forces (security and intelligence) committee account for 17% (17.5%) of meetings with foreign agents. Meetings with members of the energy and commerce committee are fewer at 13%.

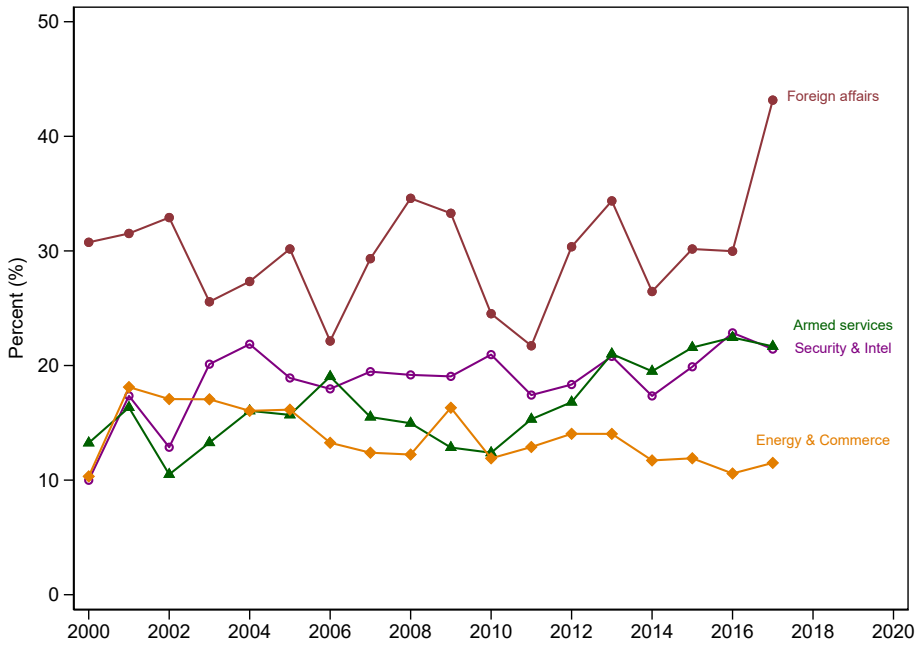
The average values reported in Table 1 mask substantial time variation in the meetings with a given committee in a year. Panel A of Figure 8 plots the percentage of meetings with

members of foreign affairs, armed forces, security and intelligence, and energy and commerce committees over time. Foreign countries meet more often with members of the foreign affairs committee, which increased by 10 percentage points over the sample period and passed from 30% to 40% of all meetings in a given year. During the same period, meetings with Armed Services and Security and Intelligence committee members more than doubled from 10% of all meetings in 2000 to 20% in 2018. Meetings with members of Energy & Commerce saw only a modest increase.

To understand the importance of committee chairs to foreign countries, for each committee-year we compute the number of meetings with chairs and the average number of meetings with members in the same committee. We then scale meetings with chair by the average number of meetings with members in the same committee in that year. This accounts for differences in committee size and highlights the importance of meetings with the committee chair relative to meetings with an average committee member. In Panel B of Figure 8, we plot this series over time for foreign affairs, armed forces, security and intelligence, and energy and commerce committees and we note considerable fluctuations for all committees. The figure suggests that foreign countries increase their meeting intensity with chairs in specific years, e.g., in 2015 they meet with the Security & Intelligence committee chairs 300 times more often than the average member of the same committee. We observe large fluctuations in the series of other committees as well.

Representatives of foreign countries also meet disproportionately with the executive agencies that are most responsible for foreign policy and the allocation of resources to foreign countries. Figure 9 presents an annual summary of the number of foreign countries met by members from the top three agencies in terms of funding foreign aid: the Department of State, USAID, and the Department of Defense. Panel A of Figure 9 presents the time-series of foreign aid and financial assistance funded by each of these agencies. At the beginning of our sample, around 40% of aid was allocated by the Department of State which increased to 45% by the end of the sample period. Similarly, aid provided by the Department of Defense rose by approximately four times over the same period. To shed light on the importance of meetings for aid allocation, in panel B of Figure 9 we present the time-series variation in the fraction of countries that meet with a specific US agency and receive aid from the same US agency in the same year. In general, we see that a large fraction of countries whose representatives meet

A. Percentage of meetings with members of a given committee



B. Meetings with chairs scaled by the average number of meetings with members in a given committee

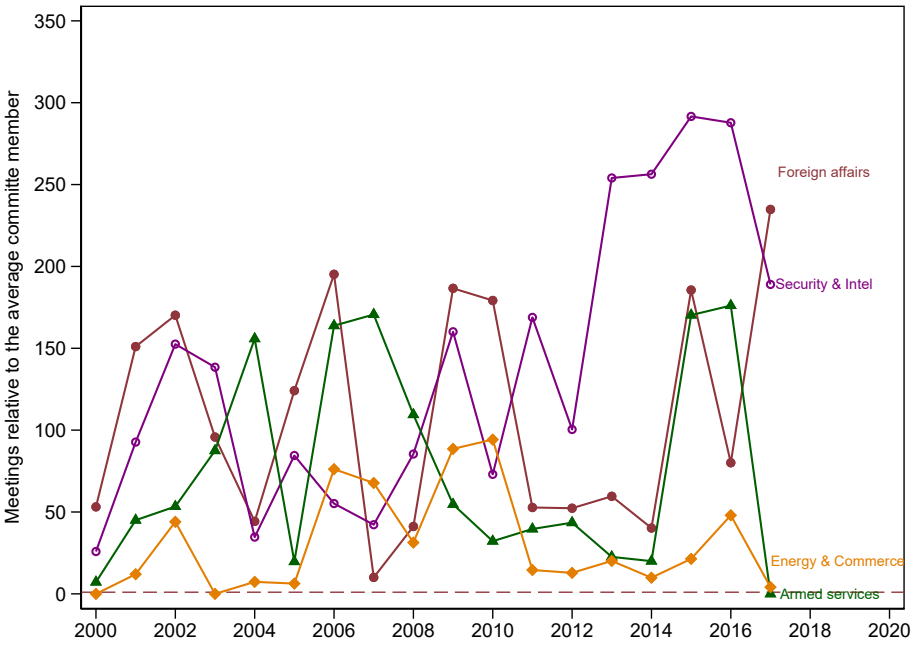
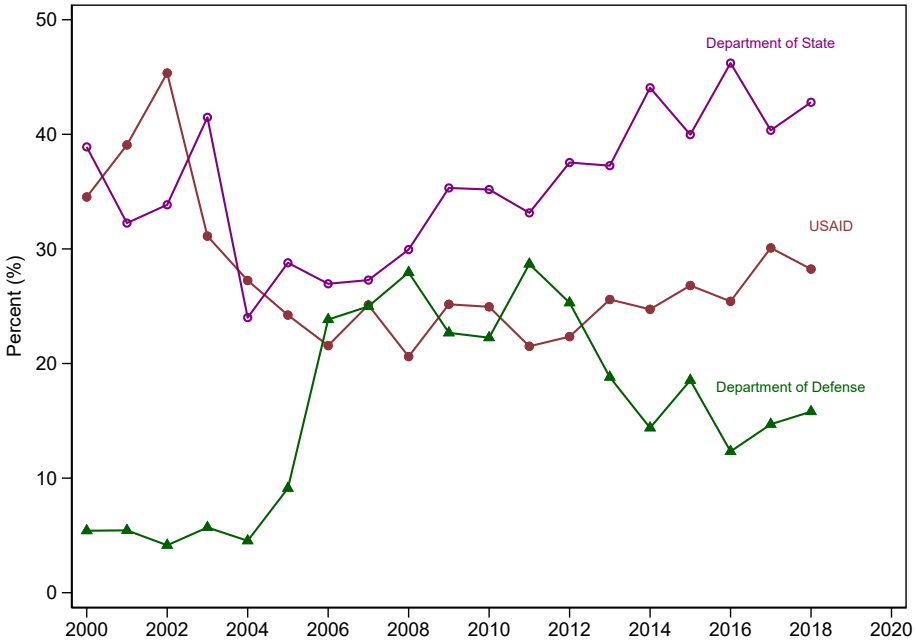


Figure 8: *Notes*: Panel A shows the percentage of meetings with a given committee relative to the total meetings each year. Panel B shows the meetings with chairs scaled by the average number of meetings with members in a given committee. The horizontal red dashed line is set at 1. A value of 1 represents the case in which the number of meetings of the committee chair is the same as the average number of meetings with members in the corresponding committee.

A. Foreign aid and financial assistance provided by US Agencies



B. Fraction of countries that meet with a specific US Agency and receive aid in the same year

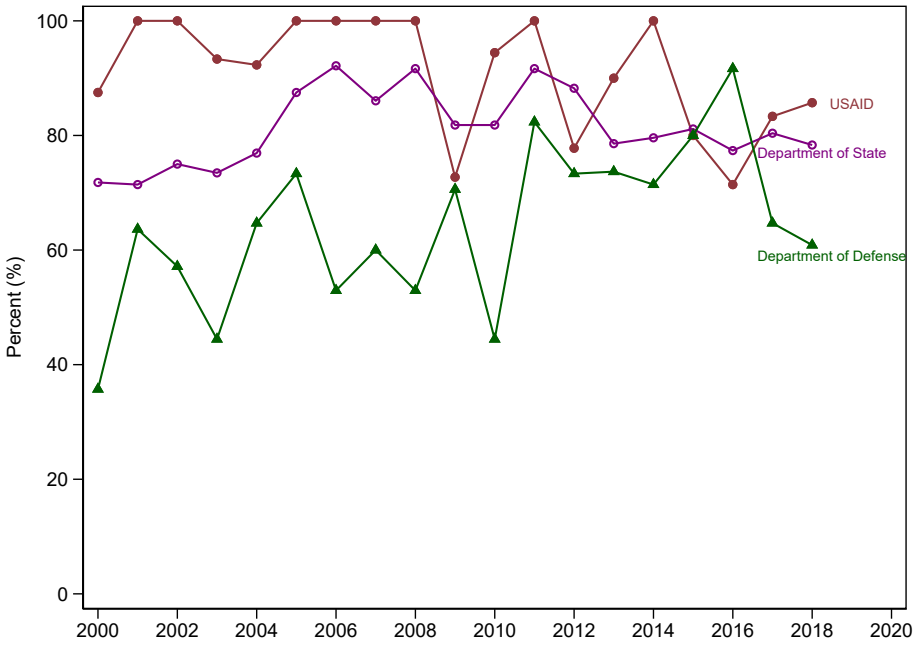


Figure 9: *Notes*: Panel A shows the percentage of foreign aid allocated by top three US agencies over the sample period. Panel B shows the fraction of countries that meet with a specific US agency and receive aid in the same year.

with USAID, the Department of State and the Department of Defense officials, receive aid from those government agencies in the same year. However, there is variation across agencies

Table 2: Summary statistics: Foreign aid and financial assistance by the US

The table presents the descriptive statistics for the foreign aid and financial by the US to foreign countries in our sample period at the country-year level.

	N	Mean	Median	Std. dev
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Foreign Aid			
Total Aid amount (US$ millions)	846	174.43	15.76	608.32
Aid as a fraction of country's GDP ($100 \times \frac{\text{Aid by US}}{\text{GDP}}$)	846	0.470	0.036	2.161
Aid amount by category				
Peace & Security	750	119.39	4.55	510.99
Health	378	42.06	6.95	95.58
Humanitarian Assistance	490	29.21	2.97	70.54
Economic Development	410	25.99	1.06	102.93
Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance	635	20.64	1.87	80.67
Education & Social Services	248	15.38	1.15	56.76
Program Support	328	5.12	2.10	11.98
Multi−sector	26	4.90	0.70	7.80
Environment	271	1.49	0.09	5.68

and over time in the number of countries that meet *and* receive aid. While these patterns are informative, they mask substantial heterogeneity in the identity of countries that consistently receive aid from the US and meet with members from the executive branches. They also mask potential intensive margin relationships, meaning that more connected countries could receive greater amounts of foreign aid. We explore this link formally in Section 4.

That said, the foreign countries that meet with members of executive branch do rely heavily on aid from the US. While they may not receive aid from a given agency in a particular year, they almost always receive some form of aid and financial assistance. For instance, the average country in our sample receives aid nine out of ten years with the median country receiving it for all ten years. In terms of economic magnitude, Table 2, suggests that the average aid is about US$ 175 million, which is about 0.47% of the country's GDP. We then assess whether foreign countries receive a higher proportion of aid compared to their interactions with funding agencies. If every country receiving foreign aid had established connections with the agencies responsible for allocating that aid, we would have expected to see a total of 18,610 such connections. However, we actually observe just 2,278 connections, which accounts for 12.2% of all potential associations. If aid was uniformly distributed, foreign countries in our meeting

sample should also account for 12.2% of the total foreign aid. Instead, over our sample period, the recipient countries in the meeting data receive 20% of total aid. This comparison indicates that countries engaging in meetings with US agencies through FARA receive, on average, a larger proportion of total aid.

There is also significant heterogeneity in the types of aid they receive from the US. The largest portion of US foreign aid is dedicated to global peace and security efforts, with an average allocation of approximately US$120 million and a considerable standard deviation of US$511 million. An example of this type of aid is seen in "Plan Colombia," a military assistance program aimed at countering Colombian drug cartels and insurgent groups. Additionally, the US provides aid for various other purposes, including humanitarian assistance in response to human-made or natural disasters like floods, food aid, or support during events such as the COVID-19 pandemic. This reflects the changing needs for US assistance over time. Overall, the economic and strategic importance of foreign aid suggests that meetings may provide an opportunity for foreign countries (and the US) to affect the aid allocation at different times, which we study in detail in Section 4.

The role of important Congressional committees. Next, we explore whether legislators' committee memberships and assignments are related to more meetings with lobbyists working on behalf of foreign countries. Table C.4 in the Online Appendix presents the estimates from a regression framework. In column 3, we focus on legislator characteristics that may influence resource allocation and public policy for foreign entities. We do not find a statistically significant relationship between meeting intensity and the legislator's status as committee chair. However, we observe a positive relationship with the following committee memberships: Power Committees, Foreign Affairs, and Security and Intelligence. Additionally, Column 4 presents the empirical specification, including all characteristics at once. When considering the characteristics jointly, we find that the relative importance of a legislator, captured by whether the legislator is a chairperson of a subcommittee, is positively related to more meetings with foreign agents. Membership of power committees remains a significant correlate of meeting intensity together with membership of foreign affairs and security and intelligence committees. In sum, these relationships highlight the relevance of committee membership for meetings with foreign agents.

Given the importance of committee memberships for foreign countries, we next explore the relationship between meetings with individual legislators, and committee actions by the same individual legislators in the context of trade bills. Our choice is motivated by the large literature in economics that proposes an important role for interest groups in the determination of trade policy (Grossman and Helpman, 1994). Much of this work has focused on domestic lobbying groups, with more recent work pointing to a disproportionate influence of foreign lobbying for trade policies (Hillman and Ursprung, 1988; Gawande, Krishna, and Robbins, 2006; Antràs and i Miquel, 2011). Hence, we focus our empirical analyses on tariff bills sponsored in Congress during the sample period.

We extract data on trade policies relating to product tariffs from GovTrack. We obtained 469 bills over the period 2000-2018. A detailed description of the process used to search for bills and, more importantly, to classify bills as "favorable" or "unfavorable" to a country is provided on page 54 in the Online Appendix A. The final data contain information on the identities of the sponsoring legislators and all actions on bills, including the dates and decisions taken by committees and sub-committees. We study actions on bills starting from the date at which the bill is sponsored by a legislator and follow the bills through their evolution within committees and Congress.[19]

We examine two outcomes of interest. First, we study whether meetings relate to a legislator's propensity to sponsor a bill that is favorable to a foreign country. Second, we examine whether meetings between foreign countries and legislators sitting in a committee that handles a tariff bill are related to a larger probability that a favorable bill passes that committee or an unfavorable bill does not advance that committee. We organize our analyses at the legislator-committee-foreign country-year-month level, allowing us to account for several confounding factors. The empirical specifications hold constant the relative importance of committees over time by including committee-by-year fixed effects. Additionally, we include legislator-fixed effects to control for time-invariant legislator characteristics. Finally, we add country-by-year fixed effects to control for time-varying determinants of trade relationships.

Table 3 reports the results. In column 1, we find that more meetings in a given year-month are related to a five basis point higher probability of a favorable bill being sponsored. This

[19]This procedure is outlined in greater detail in Appendix A.3. In the data, we observe that 19 committees are involved in any discussion on tariff bills, split between 3 senate committees and 16 house committees.

Table 3: Meetings around legislative action on tariff bills

This table presents panel regressions examining product tariff bills advantageous to foreign countries around meetings with US legislators. The unit of analysis is politician-foreign country-year-month. In columns 1 and 2, the dependent variable is, $\mathbb{1}_{Favourable\ Bill}$, defined as an indicator for whether the legislator was sponsoring or co-sponsoring a product tariff bill favourable to the foreign country with whose representatives he/she met. The dependent variable in columns 3 and 4 is, $\mathbb{1}_{Committee\ Action}$, defined as an indicator for whether any action on product tariff bills relevant for foreign country is voted on by a committee in which the legislator sat. The independent variable of interest is $Meetings_t$, i.e., the number of meetings between representatives of a foreign country and a legislator. All regressions include: *Legislator* fixed effects to control for time-invariant differences in legislator characteristics, *Committee* $\times$ *year* fixed effects to control for importance of committees over time, and *Country* $\times$ *year* fixed effects to control for time-varying determinants of trade relationships. We use ordinary least squares (OLS) in estimations. Standard errors are clustered at the country level and are robust to heteroscedasticity. ***, **, * denote significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% level, respectively.

Dependent variable:	$100 \times \mathbb{1}_{\text{Sponsoring Favourable bill}>0}$		$100 \times \mathbb{1}_{\text{Committee Action}>0}$	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Meetings_t	0.050**	0.047**	0.044*	0.031*
	(0.020)	(0.018)	(0.023)	(0.017)
Legislator fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country $\times$ year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Committee $\times$ year fixed effects	No	No	Yes	Yes
R^2	0.01	0.02	0.05	0.06
Observations	4,045,632	1,258,152	2,098,380	1,045,493

increase translates to a change from a baseline probability of 0.04% to 0.09% for a single meeting between foreign agents and legislators, a 125% increase.[20] In column 2, we focus on the sub-sample of effective legislators, defined as those that are above-median LES, and find that the estimates are similar for these legislators when compared to the average legislator. In column 3, we focus on legislators sitting on committees that ever evaluated at least one tariff bill and find that more meetings with a legislator in a given committee are related to a higher probability of a committee action on the tariff bill.[21] This change represents an approximate increase of 50% in the likelihood of a favorable action, relative to a baseline probability of a favorable action of 9.9 basis points. Lastly, in column 4, as before, we find that the sensitivity of actions to meetings is similar across more and less effective lawmakers. Overall, these estimates suggest that the sensitivity of bill actions to meetings is perhaps large, which can be potentially explained by a very small baseline probability of an action on a bill in any given year-month.

Next, we move beyond the specific case of tariff bills and broaden the analyses to examine

[20] These results are robust to estimating the relationship by aggregating meetings at the committee level. The estimates imply an increase in the probability of a favourable action by 0.7 percentage points relative to the average probability of 14% and is statistically significant at the 90% confidence level.

[21] In the data, we observe that 19 committees are involved in any discussion on tariff bills, split between 3 senate committees and 16 house committees. The House Committees include: Agriculture, Appropriations, Armed Services, Oversight and Reform, Budget, Education and Labor, Energy and Commerce, Foreign Affairs, Judiciary, Natural Resources, Transportation and Infrastructure, Rules, Science, Space, and Technology, Veterans Affairs, Ways and Means, and Homeland Security (select). The Senate Committees include: Finance, Foreign Relations, and Homeland and Governmental Affairs.

whether changes in committee assignments for individual legislators are related to changes in meetings with foreign agents. Committee assignments play a pivotal role in Congress in determining the scope of a legislator's influence and, as such, may significantly impact the strategies of foreign lobbying entities. Building on the observations described in Section 2 and 3.1, we focus on the foreign affairs, and the security and intelligence House and Senate committees as well as important committees that in prior work have been shown to influence resource allocation in the US (Cohen, Coval, and Malloy, 2011; Brogaard, Denes, and Duchin, 2021).[22] We test whether foreign agents meet *less often* with legislators after they depart from important committees, holding constant the relative importance of the committee to foreign countries. This allows us to shed light on two primary channels that may lead countries to lobby—the "quid-pro-quo channel" and the "information channel." A common way to interpret the quid-pro-quo channel is that foreign countries primarily engage with legislators currently sitting in important committees, leveraging their immediate authority for potential short-term gains. Conversely, a quid-pro-quo channel taking into account all potential long-term relationships or an information channel suggests that the relationships established between lobbyists and legislators are valuable beyond the legislator's tenure in influential committees. As such, if the quid-pro-quo channel based on immediate returns is the primary mechanism underlying these meetings, we should observe foreign countries meeting less often with legislators after they depart important committees.

In Table 4, we examine changes in meeting intensity around the time of departure of legislators from important committees. In these estimations, we compare meetings with legislators in the 24 months after they depart from a specific committee relative to 24 months before they depart. As the committee assignments for legislators are available at the monthly level, it allows us to account for several potential confounding factors. We control for local economic confounds through the inclusion of state-by-year-month fixed effects and for differences across Congresses that may influence meetings with legislators through the inclusion of Congress fixed effects. Our empirical specifications also hold constant the relative importance

[22]The committees influencing resource allocation include budgetary and oversight committees in the House of Representatives and the Senate: House Committee on Appropriations; House Committee on Oversight and Reform; House Committee on Armed Services; House Committee on the Budget; House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure; House Committee on Energy and Commerce; Senate Committee on Appropriations; Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs; Senate Committee on the Budget; Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation; and Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

Table 4: Meetings around legislators departing from committees important for resource allocation

This table presents regressions estimating the relationship between meetings with legislators around the time they switch out of important committees for resource allocation. Columns 1 and 2 focus on all legislators departing from important committees while columns 3 and 4 focus on top five legislators based on ranking within committees. The unit of analysis is legislator-state-foreign country-lobbyist-year month. The dependent variable is, *Meetings*, the number of meetings between representatives of a foreign country and US legislators sitting on important committees. The independent variable of interest is *After x Departure* which is an indicator variable taking the value of one if the US representative or senator switches out of an important committee. The important committees include: the House Committee on Appropriations, House Committee on Oversight and Reform, House Committee on Armed Services, House Committee on the Budget, House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, House Committee on Energy and Commerce, Senate Committee on Appropriations, Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, Senate Committee on the Budget, Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation; and Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. All regressions include: *Lobbying firm* fixed effects to control for time-invariant differences in lobbying firm characteristics, *Legislator* $\times$ *committee* fixed effects to control for influential legislators departing from the same committee at different points in their tenure, *Country* $\times$ *committee* fixed effects to control for relative importance of departing committee for foreign countries, and *State* $\times$ *year-month* fixed effects to control for local economic confounds. We use ordinary least squares (OLS) in estimations. Standard errors are clustered at the country level and are robust to heteroscedasticity. ***, **, * denote significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% level, respectively.

Dependent variable:	Meetings			
	All legislators		*High-ranked legislators*	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
After x Departure	0.004	0.004	-0.007	0.007
	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.006)
Congress	No	Yes	No	Yes
Lobbying firm	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Legislator $\times$ committee	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country $\times$ committee	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State $\times$ year-month	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
R^2	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06
Observations	431,834	431,834	274,727	274,727

of departing committees for foreign countries by including country-by-committee fixed effects. Additionally, we include legislator-by-committee fixed effects to control for influential legislators departing from the same committee at different points in their tenure. Finally, we include lobbying firm fixed effects and account for lobbying firm switching issues in a predictable way when a legislator departs from a committee(Bertrand, Bombardini, and Trebbi, 2014).[23] We organize our analyses at the committee-lobbying firm-month level. Results in Table 4 suggest that foreign countries continue to meet with legislators even after their departure from important committees.

These results are inconsistent with the prediction of a short-term quid-pro-quo channel. As mentioned, our results are instead consistent with two alternative hypotheses: (1) an information channel, or (2) a quid-pro-quo channel that operates via long-term relations, e.g., legislators even after leaving a committee may be able to influence their colleagues, or may ascend in the future to even higher positions. This latter hypothesis, i.e., that legislators even after leaving a committee may be able to influence their colleagues and the eventual allocation

[23]The granularity of our data allows us to account for this explanation. Specifically, our sample consists of 500 unique lobbying firms with the median firm working on two topics on behalf of three foreign countries.

of resources, accords well with anecdotal evidence. For instance, Ted Stevens chaired the Senate Appropriations Committee from 1997 to 2005. Even after leaving the chairmanship of the Appropriations Committee in January 2005, Stevens kept on securing large sums of federal money for the state of Alaska (for instance, he brought home $325 million in federal funding for Alaska in 2006, as suggested by Forbes). Overall, our results emphasize the importance for foreign countries to maintain connections with legislators beyond their current committee assignments.

4 Foreign influence

This section examines whether there is a relationship between lobbying by foreign countries and the monetary benefits these foreign countries or their firms receive. The past two decades have seen several examples of foreign governments or governmental associations lobbying for monetary benefits in the US. For instance, in 2003, lobbyists on behalf of the government of Guatemala lobbied US lawmakers not to cut their foreign aid (screenshot of the FARA report on page 76). In 2023, the Federation of German Industries lobbied for R&D tax credits to German firms in the US (a screenshot of the FARA report on page 76). In 2018, the Embassy of Japan lobbied the Maryland governor to improve Japan-Maryland relations (a screenshot of the FARA report on page 76).

We examine whether such stories are the exception or norm by studying how foreign aid and financial assistance to foreign countries and corporate subsidies to foreign firms relate to foreign lobbying. Using panel regressions, we relate meetings between legislators and foreign countries to each of these benefits. As we are interested in studying both the intensive and the extensive margins of adjustments, we work with a balanced panel. The advantage of panel regression estimates is that they capture the average relation in our sample between meetings and benefits allowing us to flexibly control for country-specific factors or general trends in the macroeconomy, that may simultaneously drive meetings or the benefits to foreign countries or foreign firms.

While panel regression estimates are informative of the relationship between meetings and benefits, it is unclear whether omitted factors or reverse causality drive this relationship. For instance, in the case of foreign aid, it's plausible that countries with more aid at stake

tend to engage in more frequent meetings with legislators. At the same time, lobbying is a choice made by interest groups, and those that engage in lobbying are likely different from those that do not in various (difficult-to-measure) dimensions. Also at the intensive margin, among the groups that engage in lobbying, those that lobby more are distinct from those that lobby less.[24] As a result, the average estimated effect derived from the panel regressions could be biased in either direction. For example, if only the most effective lobbyists choose to lobby, and the groups that lobby less (or not) are the least effective, our estimates would be upwardly biased. However, in our specific context, it's likely that competing foreign countries are simultaneously making choices, as in Grossman and Helpman (1994). This would imply a downward bias to our estimate of the "returns to lobbying."

To mitigate these concerns, when examining place-based corporate subsidies, we study countries that unexpectedly lose a connection due to the death of a representative or a senator following the seminal work by Roberts (1990).[25] Corporate subsidies provide a nice setting here, as they can by linked to the local area that the deceased legislator formerly represented in a way that foreign aid cannot. The null hypothesis is that if connections to the legislators do not matter, then the loss of a connection through deaths should be unrelated to changes in allocation of corporate subsidies to US subsidiaries of firms headquartered in those foreign countries. Our empirical analysis compares changes in corporate subsidies to foreign firms exogenously losing a political connection (treated) relative to another foreign firm that also receives subsidies from the local community of the legislator who died, but whose country representatives never met with the legislator. As before with panel regressions, we hold constant time-invariant unobservable country and time-varying macroeconomic characteristics by including fixed effects.

A caveat in interpreting our results is that our sample by construction relies on realized meetings or past connections, which are plausibly instances in which both parties have decided and agreed to meet. In expectation, there are likely positive benefits to each party, which suggests that the null hypothesis should not be one of zero benefits to foreign countries and firms. Even with this acknowledgment, our results provide a first-order quantification of the value of connections between foreign principals and legislators informing economists, politi-

[24] This difference could even vary depending on the policy area and other time-varying factors.

[25] The identified connection may be established in more than one way, including a meeting.

cal scientists, and, more importantly, citizens.

Indeed, our estimates are distinct from the values of domestic lobbying and connections in the extant literature. Political scientists suggest a stigma to foreign principals' lobbying, which is missing in prior work focusing on domestic firms. For instance, allocating resources and providing rents to US subsidiaries of foreign companies established in China or Russia is unquestionably associated with strategic implications for foreign policy and national security. All these considerations make our study unique with its novel dataset and focus on foreign principals.

4.1 Foreign aid

We estimate the following panel regression for foreign aid:

$$\mathbb{1}\{\text{Foreign aid} > 0\}_{ft} = \gamma_f + \delta_t + \beta \text{Meetings}_{ft} + \eta \text{Controls}_{ft} + \epsilon_{ft} \quad (1)$$

$$\text{Foreign aid}_{ft} = \gamma_f + \delta_t + \beta \text{Meetings}_{ft} + \eta \text{Controls}_{ft} + \epsilon_{ft}, \quad (2)$$

where f represents the foreign country whose agents meet with legislators in year t. To estimate both the intensive and the extensive margin, the variable Meetings_{ft} is defined as the log of one plus the sum of meetings that the foreign country f has with legislators in year t, implying the estimate β is not exactly the elasticity of benefits to meetings. Similarly, Foreign aid_{ft} is the log of one plus foreign aid received by country f in year t.

Equation (1) quantifies the extensive margin, i.e., an increase in the probability of receiving foreign aid, and Equation (2) quantifies the intensive margin, i.e., an increase in the value of foreign aid. The coefficient of interest is β, identified by variation in meetings across multiple foreign countries and over time. Standard errors are corrected for heteroskedasticity and autocorrelation and clustered at the country level. Country fixed effects (γ_f) are added to control for time-invariant country characteristics that may simultaneously drive meetings and foreign aid. Year fixed effects (δ_t) are added to control for time-variation simultaneously driving meetings and foreign aid.

Results from the panel regression are reported in Table 5. Columns 1 and 2 report the extensive margin results, assessing how much more likely to receive foreign aid are countries

Table 5: Meetings with legislators and foreign aid provided by the US

This table presents panel regressions estimating the relationship between meetings with legislators and foreign aid received by the country. The unit of analysis is foreign country-year. The dependent variable in columns 1 and 2, $\mathbb{1}_{Aid>0}$, an indicator for receiving foreign aid from the US while in columns 3 and 4 is *Log (Aid amount)*, natural logarithm of one plus the total aid amount in US dollars. The independent variable of interest is $Meetings_t$, the natural logarithm of one plus the number of meetings between representatives of a foreign country and legislators. All specifications include *Country* fixed effects to control for time-invariant country characteristics and *year* fixed effects to control for time-varying macroeconomic conditions. We use ordinary least squares (OLS). Standard errors are clustered at the country level and are robust to heteroscedasticity. ***, **, * denote significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% level, respectively.

Dependent variable:	$\mathbb{1}_{Aid>0}$		Log (Aid amount)	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
$Meetings_t$	0.005	0.002	0.124**	0.095*
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.057)	(0.056)
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes
Country fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
R^2	0.69	0.35	0.83	0.70
Observations	2,698	2,097	2,698	2,097

that meet with US legislators. Column 1 reports the results without adding country-level controls to the regression besides country-fixed effects, whereas in Column 2, we add time-varying country-level characteristics to control for factors that may jointly drive the decision to meet and receive foreign aid. We find that additional meetings with legislators are not associated with an increase in the probability of receiving aid and assistance from the US. Perhaps the primary reason why we don't observe a relationship between the probability of receiving foreign aid and meetings is that in 95% of country-year observations in our sample, foreign countries receive some form of aid from the US. At the intensive margin, in columns 3 and 4, instead, we observe that meetings are positively related to an increase in foreign aid. Our results provide novel evidence that more frequent and larger foreign aid is assigned to countries whose representatives meet more often with US legislators.

We then repeat the analysis using meetings with US agencies. We sum all meetings a given foreign country has with the employees of a specific US agency. Then, we relate the meetings at the country-agency-year level to the total amount of foreign aid that the agency allocates to the foreign country in the same year. Further, we account for time-varying differences in the propensities of agencies to award aid by including Agency $\times$ year fixed effects. As before, we control for time-invariant country characteristics by including country fixed effects. Results are reported in Table 6. The estimates of β are both larger in magnitude than the ones for legislators and statistically significant at the standard confidence levels.

Table 6: Meetings with the members of executive branch and foreign aid by the US

This table presents panel regressions estimating the relationship between meetings with members of executive branches and foreign aid received by the country. The unit of analysis is agency-foreign country-year. The dependent variable in columns 1 and 2, $\mathbb{1}_{Aid>0}$, an indicator for receiving foreign aid from a given US agency while in columns 3 and 4 is *Log (Aid amount)*, natural logarithm of one plus the total aid amount in US dollars received by the same agency. The independent variable of interest is $Meetings_t$, the natural logarithm of one plus the number of meetings between representatives of a foreign country and members of the agency. All regressions include *Agency* $\times$ *Year* fixed effects to control for demand for aid from specific agencies and include *Country* fixed effects to control for time-invariant country characteristics. All specifications include the following country characteristics as control variables: GDP per capita (*Gross Domestic Product*), total population (*Population*), total value of imports from the US (*Imports*), total value of exports to the US(*Exports*), total number of unrest events at source country (*Total unrest (source)*), total number of unrest events at target country (*Total unrest (target)*), and extent to which electoral democracy is achieved (*Electoral democracy index*). We use ordinary least squares (OLS). Standard errors are clustered at the country-level and are robust to heteroskedasticity. ***, **, * denote significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% level, respectively.

Dependent variable:	$\mathbb{1}_{Aid>0}$		Log (Aid amount)	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
$Meetings_t$	0.014***	0.011*	0.300***	0.236**
	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.099)	(0.106)
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes
Agency $\times$ year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
R^2	0.61	0.64	0.66	0.70
Observations	18,373	14,256	18,288	14,192

4.2 Benefits to foreign firms: Place-based corporate subsidies

Next, we proceed to understand how meetings with legislators affect the allocation of resources to US subsidiaries of foreign firms. The question is of significant importance with strategic implications for US foreign policy and national security. Take, for example, the CHIPS Act of 2022, passed under the Biden administration after the global microchip shortage in 2021. Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC) was concerned about the "subsidy criteria" proposed in the law. TSMC, along with the strong backing from the Taiwanese government, vigorously advocated against these criteria.[26] Specifically, TSMC sought to secure $15 billion in subsidies from a $52 billion research and manufacturing fund allocated under the CHIPS Act.

Beyond this anecdote, it is plausible that the legislators prioritize domestic firms over international ones to safeguard their political interests or instead prioritize national security interests over purely economic ones. On the other hand, it is conceivable that foreign governments use meetings with legislators to mitigate information asymmetries to potentially ameliorate the effects for US subsidiaries of foreign firms. In our sample from 2000 to 2018, almost 24% of total corporate subsidies went to subsidiaries of foreign firms. Of the total corpo-

[26] As Fox Business reports, the Taiwan Economy Minister Wang Mei-hua said that *TSMC is talking to the U.S. government about the requirements for subsidies. She said, "The Taiwan government and industry have a very close understanding [of what is going on] and hope that the details of the relevant subsidy legislation will not affect industrial cooperation between the two sides and costs for industry-related construction."*

rate subsidies assigned to foreign firms, 13% and 12% went to US subsidiaries of companies headquartered in Taiwan and Japan, respectively. Companies from Germany and the United Kingdom were also among the top recipients of corporate subsidies and megadeals: German companies, for instance, received 11.8% of the total subsidies to foreign firms. Moreover, even companies from South Korea and China received 4% each (8% in total) of the corporate subsidies assigned to foreign companies. Hence, a critical question arises: Do meetings of foreign country representatives with US legislators impact changes in resource allocation to US subsidiaries of firms headquartered in their respective countries?

To shed light on these substantive issues, we focus on state and local corporate subsidies. A key advantage is that these settings allow us to cleanly link meetings with individual legislators to changes in resource allocation in the legislator's congressional district or state. Each local subsidy can be directly linked to an individual firm and a local politician's particular district or state based on the proposed location of the subsidized facility. The place-based nature of subsidies, combined with the large discretion that legislators have in allocating subsidies, makes the subsidy allocation process an ideal setting to examine whether meetings or connections to legislators are related to more frequent and larger subsidies.

As before, we study two margins of adjustment and show results in a panel regression separating between Senators and members of the House of Representatives. Specifically, we estimate the following panel regressions:

$$\mathbb{1}\{\text{Subsidies}_{lft} > 0\} = \gamma_f + \delta_{lt} + \beta\text{Meetings}_{lft} + \eta\text{Controls}_{ft} + \epsilon_{lft} \tag{3}$$

$$\log(\text{Subsidies}_{lft}) = \gamma_f + \delta_{lt} + \beta\text{Meetings}_{lft} + \eta\text{Controls}_{ft} + \epsilon_{lft}, \tag{4}$$

where l represents the location of the legislator met with and so of the localized subsidy, f represents the foreign country whose agents meet with the legislator, and t represents the meeting year. We run the panel regression separately for House Representatives and Senators, where the locality l is a state for Senators and a congressional district for House Representatives.

As we are interested in studying both the intensive and the extensive margins of adjustments, we work with a balanced panel. Equation (3) quantifies the extensive margin, i.e., increase in the probability of receiving a subsidy, and Equation (4) quantifies the intensive margin, i.e., increase in the value of subsidy received. The coefficient of interest is β, iden-

Table 7: Meetings with legislators and local subsidies to US subsidiaries of foreign firms

This table presents panel regressions estimating the relationship between meetings and local subsidies granted to US subsidiaries of foreign firms. The dependent variable in columns 1 through 3, $\mathbb{1}_{Subsidy>0}$, an indicator for receiving subsidy by a foreign firm from the local region (state or congressional district) while in columns 4 through 6 the dependent variable is, *Log (1+Subsidy amount)*, the natural logarithm of one plus the amount of subsidy received by a foreign firm from a region (state or congressional district). The independent variable of interest is *Log (1+Meetings$_t$)*, natural logarithm of one plus the number of meetings between representatives of a foreign country and U.S. politicians from the respective area. All regressions include *Locality* $\times$ *Year* fixed effects to control for local economic confounds and include *Country* fixed effects to control for time-invariant country characteristics. All specifications include the following country characteristics as control variables: GDP per capita (*Gross Domestic Product*), total population (*Population*), total value of imports from the US (*Imports*), total value of exports to the US(*Exports*), total number of unrest events at source country (*Total unrest (source)*), total number of unrest events at target country (*Total unrest (target)*), and extent to which electoral democracy is achieved (*Electoral democracy index*). We use ordinary least squares (OLS). Standard errors are clustered at the country-level and are robust to heteroscedasticity. ***, **, * denote significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% level, respectively.

Dependent variable:	$\mathbb{1}_{Subsidy>0}$			Log (Subsidy amount)		
Legislators:	Senators	House members	Governors	Senators	House members	Governors
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Meetings$_t$	0.000	0.002*	0.031**	0.007	0.027*	0.468**
	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.013)	(0.032)	(0.016)	(0.215)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Locality $\times$ year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
R^2	0.27	0.08	0.54	0.27	0.07	0.55
Observations	58,403	213,542	4,535	58,403	213,542	4,535

tified by variation in meetings between multiple foreign countries and legislators within a year. Standard errors are corrected for heteroscedasticity and autocorrelation and clustered at the country level. The empirical specification allows us to rule out concerns about location-specific and country-specific effects that may affect outcome variables for two reasons. First, locality-by-year fixed effects are included to control for local economic confounds (e.g., state or regional macroeconomic trends) and general policies that potentially affect meetings or benefits. Second, country fixed effects are added to control for time-invariant country characteristics that may simultaneously drive meetings or benefits to foreign firms.

Table 7 reports the panel regression estimates. Columns 1 and 2 present the results for the extensive, whereas columns 4 and 5 show our estimates for the intensive margin. For Senators, we link benefits to US subsidiaries of foreign corporations at the state level to the total meeting with Senators from that state, collapsing meetings and benefits at the state-year-foreign-country level. For House Representatives, we use congressional districts as our unit of analysis for both benefits and meetings. We find a marginally statistically significant and positive relationship between meetings and benefits at the congressional district level but not at the state level.

We repeat the analysis using meetings with state governors. We sum all meetings a given foreign country has with state governors in a given year. Then, we relate the meetings at

the country-state-year level to the total amount of corporate subsidies that US subsidiaries of foreign firms receive in the same year. Further, we account for time-varying differences in the propensities of governors to award aid by including state $\times$ year fixed effects. As before, we control for time-invariant country characteristics by including country fixed effects. Results are reported in columns 3 and 6 of Table 7. The estimates of β are an order of magnitude larger than the ones for legislators, perhaps highlighting the importance of governors in the allocation of place-based corporate subsidies.

Next, we examine corporate subsidies granted in the local area around the time of the death of the US legislator elected in that area. We compare changes in subsidies to US subsidiaries of foreign firms whose countries exogenously lose a political connection relative to firms that also receive subsidies but whose countries never met with any of the legislators who died during the sample period. The localized nature of corporate subsidies allows us to identify variation coming from countries losing connections at different points in time based on the location of the subsidies awarded. We estimate the following difference-in-differences specification (in event-time):

$$\mathbb{1}\{\text{Subsidy} > 0\}_{lft} = \alpha_{fl} + \alpha_t + \sum_{k=-1}^{-5} \beta_k \times \mathbb{1}^{\text{Connected}} \times \mathbb{1}_k + \sum_{k=1}^{5} \gamma_k \times \mathbb{1}^{\text{Connected}} \times \mathbb{1}_k + \epsilon_{lft} \quad (5)$$

$$\log(\text{Subsidy amount}_{lft}) = \alpha_{fl} + \alpha_t + \sum_{k=-1}^{-5} \beta_k \times \mathbb{1}^{\text{Connected}} \times \mathbb{1}_k + \sum_{k=1}^{5} \gamma_k \times \mathbb{1}^{\text{Connected}} \times \mathbb{1}_k + \epsilon_{lft}, \quad (6)$$

where Equation (5) quantifies the extensive margin and Equation (6) the intensive margin. Here, the coefficient of interest is β which can be interpreted as the effect of losing a political connection (treatment effect). We control for locality-by-year fixed effects to control for local economic confounds that may affect both the decision to meet and the outcome. Moreover, the specification also includes country fixed effects to control for time-invariant country characteristics. Standard errors are clustered at the country level.

We report results from this exercise in Figure 10. Our estimates imply a significant drop in the extensive and in the intensive margin with a recovery period of 3 years. After the death of a legislator, as Figure 10. A shows, that the relative difference implies a drop of 5 percentage points in the likelihood of receiving corporate subsidies for *connected* firms and a 70% drop

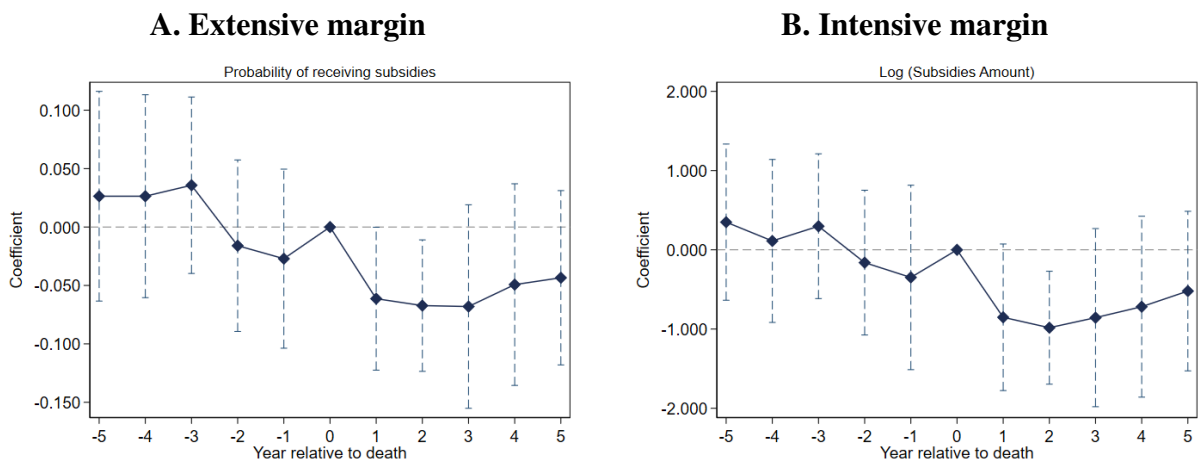


Figure 10: *Notes*: the figure shows the relative response in the extensive and the intensive margin for corporate subsides assigned to foreign firms headquartered in countries connected to a legislator who dies.

in the amount of the subsidy. Results are statistically significant at standard confidence levels and show a fast recovery 3 years after the legislator's death.[27]

5 Discussion of costs and benefits to US legislators

Having documented the benefits countries receive when their representatives meet with US legislators, we now analyze whether legislators also benefit from meetings with foreign country representatives. If legislators need to exert some effort (i.e., meetings are *costly*), or there are potential risks involved in meeting with foreign country representatives, then in equilibrium, we should also observe net benefits to legislators conditional on both parties agreeing to meet.

To compute costs and benefits, we use data from several sources. First, we employ data on the near-universe of registered voters from L2, a leading non-partisan data vendor used by political parties and the academic literature (e.g., Allcott, Braghieri, Eichmeyer, and Gentzkow, 2020, Brown and Enos, 2021, Bernstein, Billings, Gustafson, and Lewis, 2022, Spenkuch, Teso, and Xu, 2021). L2 has complete coverage of the US voter population starting from

[27]Figure E.6 reports the results for government contracts where we also exploit the localized nature of the place of performance of the contracts. Using the death of legislators as an exogenous shock to the connections, we document that firms headquartered in foreign countries whose representatives meet more frequently with a legislator obtain more and larger government contracts in the state or congressional district represented by the legislator.

2014. The database also contains an estimate of the ethnic description of registered voters. The sample of registered-voter population for which this description is not available is about 10% of the total registered voter sample. Using this dataset, we compute, for each congressional district/state each year, the share of registered voters by party affiliation and ethnic affiliation to the foreign country.

Second, we collect data on all official foreign travel by members and staff of both the US House of Representatives and the US Senate. This includes data on foreign travel gifts and related expenses provided by private individuals or entities to House members for activities beyond their official duties.[28,29]

Third, we compute political contributions for each legislator. Our dataset contains summary financial information for all candidates who raised or spent money as reported by the US Federal Election Commission (FEC) between January 1, 2000, and December 31, 2018. Our data include contributions to all entities raising more than $5,000 for federal elections, whether they are candidates, parties, or any other political action committees (PACs), as well as transfers from authorized committees to individual candidates. Fourth and finally, we use data on election results and party affiliations from the MIT Elections Lab.

5.1 Benefits to US legislators

Voter registration by ethnicity. We analyze changes in the share of voters registered for Democrats and Republicans at the state and congressional-district level, using a novel dataset that records voter registration for different ethnic groups for the near-universe of the US voting population. Unconditionally, 1.80% of voters switch from Republican to Democrat or vice versa (Engelberg, Guzman, Lu, and Mullins, 2022).[30] In particular, for each state and congressional district and for each given ethnicity, we count the number of voters registered with the democratic party and divide this value by the total number of voters of the same ethnicity in the same area. We show our results in a panel regression separating between senators

[28] Typical sponsors of these travel gifts include entities like the American Israel Education Foundation, associated with AIPAC (America's pro-Israel lobby), and The German Marshall Fund (GMF), a public policy think tank promoting cooperation and understanding between North America and the European Union.

[29] Data on foreign travel gifts, including destination details, are only available for Senators starting from 2018.

[30] It should be noted that the significance of switchers will vary depending on how competitive the election is. In particularly close elections, this number could potentially be a deciding factor for one of the candidates.

and members of the House of Representatives. Specifically, we relate the number of meetings between an individual legislator and a foreign country to changes in the share of voters registered for the legislator's political party and who share ethnic affiliation with that foreign country.[31]

Table 8 presents the results for the share of Democrat voters of the ethnicity of a foreign country on meetings of that foreign country interacted with an indicator variable denoting meetings with a Democratic legislator. The coefficient of interest is the coefficient on this interaction term. The analysis is symmetric if Republicans are used instead. Column 1 focuses on Senators and finds a higher sensitivity of meetings with representatives of foreign countries to the share of registered voters in their state. We find a similar higher sensitivity when focusing on House members. These results imply that, on average, each additional meeting between a Democratic senator (representative) and a foreign country's representative leads to a 44 (10) basis point increase in the share of voters of that country's ethnicity registered to the Democratic party. Given that, on average, each legislator meets, potentially, multiple times and with multiple foreign countries, these results are potentially sizable.

The empirical specification controls for time-varying national-level confounds that can explain these patterns. Moreover, country fixed effects exploit within-country changes in meeting propensity and hence rule out concerns regarding time-invariant country characteristics that simultaneously drive meetings and the share of registered democrats of a given ethnicity.

Privately-sponsored trips to foreign countries. Next, we examine legislators' trips sponsored by private organizations and interest groups to foreign countries around meetings with foreign country representatives. These trips have been shown to correlate positively with legislative effectiveness, providing legislators with more policy-relevant information and helping in building legislative coalitions in domestic politics (McGee and Moniz, 2021). Unconditionally, legislators who meet with a given foreign country are 3.5 times as likely to receive a sponsored trip to that country from private organizations.

Table 9 presents the results for both the extensive and the intensive margins of privately sponsored trips. In all specifications, we include country fixed effects to control for time-

[31]The data provides granular details on the political affiliation of individuals. Hence, when computing the share of registered voters, we consider all affiliations, including *independent*, *non-partisan*, and *unknown*.

Table 8: Share of registered voters with ethnic affiliations to the foreign country

This table presents panel regressions estimating the relationship between meetings and the share of registered voters with ethnic affiliation to the foreign country whose representatives the legislator is meeting. The unit of analysis is politician-region-foreign country-year. The dependent variable in is the share of registered democrat voters belonging to a given ethnic group within a state (column 1) or a congressional district (column 2). The independent variable of interest is Meetings_t, the number of meetings between representatives of a foreign country and US senators from the respective state (column 1) or a House member from the respective congressional district (column 2). Democrat is a dummy variable equal to 1 if the legislator is from the Democratic party and 0 otherwise. All regressions include *Year* fixed effects to control for local economic confounds and general state policies and *Country* fixed effects to control for time-invariant country characteristics. We use ordinary least squares (OLS). Standard errors are clustered at the country-level and are robust to heteroscedasticity. ***, **, * denote significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% level, respectively.

Dependent variable:	Share of registered democrats $_{t+1}$	
	Senate	House member
	(1)	(2)
Meetings_t	-0.055	-0.065
	(0.069)	(0.076)
Democrat	18.228***	22.664***
	(1.119)	(1.010)
$\text{Meetings}_t \times$ Democrat	0.443**	0.107*
	(0.169)	(0.061)
Country fixed effects	Yes	Yes
Year fixed effects	Yes	Yes
R^2	0.62	0.57
Observations	939	2,424

invariant country characteristics and state-by-year-month fixed effects for time-varying local economic confounds. We add legislator fixed effects to control for time-invariant legislator characteristics. We find that more meetings are significantly related to (a) a larger probability of trips to that foreign country whose representatives the legislator meets more often, and (b) a longer stay in the country.

5.2 Costs to US legislators

We find that, on average, costs to US legislators are economically small. We focus on incumbent legislators who were in Congress at least once between 2000 and 2018. We study aggregate political contributions made by individuals to these legislators in the election years during their political campaigns. Moreover, we test whether meetings between legislators and foreign country representatives are related to a change in the likelihood that an incumbent legislator wins an election in a specific election year. In both cases, our findings are consistent with costs being, on average, negligible for legislators.

Table 9: Privately-sponsored trips to foreign countries

This table presents panel regressions examining privately-sponsored trips of legislators around meetings. The unit of analysis is politician-foreign country-year-month. In columns 1 and 2, the dependent variable is $\mathbb{1}_{Trip>0}$, defined as an indicator for whether the legislator undertook a privately-sponsored trip to the foreign country with whose representatives they met with. The dependent variable in columns 3 and 4 is *# days)*, defined as the total number of days of the privately-sponsored trip to the foreign country with whose representatives they met with. The independent variable of interest is *Meetings*$_t$, the number of meetings between representatives of a foreign country and legislators. We include the following country characteristics as control variables: GDP per capita (*Gross Domestic Product*), total population (*Population*), total value of imports (*Imports*), total value of exports (*Exports*), share of labour compensation in GDP (*Labour share*), total number of unrest events at source country (*Total unrest (source)*), total number of unrest events at target country (*Total unrest (target)*), and extent to which electoral democracy is achieved (*Electoral democracy index*). All regressions include *State* $\times$ *year-month* fixed effects to control for local economic confounds and general state policies, *Country* fixed effects to control for time-invariant country characteristics and *Legislator* fixed effects to control for time-invariant legislator characteristics. We use ordinary least squares (OLS). Standard errors are clustered at the country level and are robust to heteroscedasticity. ***, **, * denote significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% level, respectively.

Dependent variable:	$100 \times \mathbb{1}_{Trip>0}$		# days	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Meetings$_t$	0.052***	0.046***	0.008*	0.007*
	(0.018)	(0.017)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State $\times$ year-month fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Legislator fixed effects	No	Yes	No	Yes
R^2	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.01
Observations	2,124,840	2,124,840	2,124,840	2,124,840

Table 10: Political contributions by individuals around meetings with foreign representatives

This table presents panel regressions estimating the relationship between meetings and political contributions by individuals to legislators. The unit of analysis is legislator-foreign country-year. The dependent variable is *Political contribution by individuals* defined as the total political contribution made by individuals to legislators in the election year during their political campaigns. The independent variable of interest is *Meetings*$_t$, the number of meetings between representatives of a foreign country and legislators. We also consider the following institutional characteristics of the foreign country: political corruption index which combines six distinct types of corruption and measures the level of corruption in a given year (column 2) and Corruption perception index which is a composite index of 13 NGOs and business executive surveys capturing the extent of corruption within the country (column 3). Additionally, the regression controls for the total political contributions received by legislator in the election year. All regressions include *Legislator* fixed effects to control for time-invariant legislator characteristics and *State* $\times$ *year* fixed effects to account for time-varying regional economic confounds. We use ordinary least squares (OLS). Standard errors are clustered at the country level and are robust to heteroscedasticity. ***, **, * denote significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% level, respectively.

Dependent variable:	Political contributions by individuals (in 000 USD)		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Meetings$_t$	-1.4	-1.4	-2.5
	(1.1)	(1.0)	(2.4)
Political corruption index		78.3*	
		(40.5)	
Meetings$_t$ $\times$ Political corruption index		-5.0	
		(8.7)	
Corruption perception index			-0.7
			(0.4)
Meetings$_t$ $\times$ Corruption perception index			0.1
			(0.1)
Legislator fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
State $\times$ year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
R^2	0.96	0.96	0.97
Observations	17,792	17,792	8,682

Political contributions. If politicians do not enact policies aligned with the interests of their constituents, then they might receive lower political contributions from them. To test whether

Table 11: Timing of re-election and meetings with foreign country representatives

A Cox proportional hazards model is fitted to understand determinants of time taken to vacate an office after an election. The unit of analysis is legislator-year. The main independent variable of interest is the number of meetings in a year with US legislators, *Meetings*$_t$. In column 2, we include the following legislator characteristics: whether the legislator is a member of the House of representatives (*House member*), natural logarithm of vote share in the elections (*Vote share*), an indicator capturing party affiliation (*Democrat*), member of the party that is in control of the senate (*Majority*), and the rank within the party (*Seniority*). In column 3, we include the following ideological characteristics: measures of legislator's political ideology, *DW-NOMINATE 1* and *DW-NOMINATE 2*. In column 4, we consider characteristics that are important for influence and resource allocation: lawmaking effectiveness of the legislator (*Legislative Effectiveness Score*), whether she is a senate or house committee and sub-committee chair (*Committee (Sub-committee) chair*), a member of rules, ways and means, and appropriations committee (*Power committee membership*). We also capture whether the legislator is a member, ranking member, or chair of, either a senate or house committee, the following committees: (i) the rules, ways and means, and appropriations , (ii) foreign affairs, (iii) Security & Intelligence, (iv) Armed Services, and (v) Energy & Commerce. All specifications include *State* fixed effects to control for time-invariant state characteristics. Standard errors are robust to heteroscedasticity. ***, **, * denote significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% level, respectively.

Characteristics	None	Legislator	Ideology	Importance	All
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Meetings$_t$	-0.006	-0.011	-0.008	-0.008	-0.011
	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)
Controls	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	2,658	2,627	2,658	2,658	2,627

it is indeed the case that politicians who meet more frequently with the representatives of foreign countries end up receiving fewer contributions from individual constituents, we relate both variables in a panel regression that includes legislator and state-by-year fixed effects to control for time-invariant legislator characteristics and time-varying location-specific characteristics. We also control for the total amount of money the candidate receives (i.e., contributions from individuals, party committees, and other political committees).

Table 10 shows the results. In column 1, we find that meetings with foreign countries do not relate to political contributions. We also exploit differences in foreign country characteristics to probe the nature of the relationship between meetings and political contributions. In column 2, we find that political contributions by individuals respond more negatively to legislators' meetings with more corrupt foreign countries. Similarly, in column 3, we find that meetings between legislators and representatives of more corrupt countries are unrelated to lower political contributions from individual constituents.

Re-election. Another potential cost to politicians is that a failure to enact policies aligned with constituency interests may result in them being voted out of the office during the subsequent election. We evaluate whether meetings between legislators and foreign country representatives influence the likelihood that an incumbent legislator stays longer in office. We focus on the sample of legislators who re-run for office. Accordingly, we employ a hazard model

and relate meetings and legislator characteristics to the time they exit their office (Cox, 1972). Table 11 shows that incumbent legislators who meet more often are slightly more likely to stay in office longer, though the results are not statistically significant.[32]

These findings suggest that meetings between foreign country representatives and legislators have, if anything, an economically small cost on average. One reason underlying these results on economically small costs could be that meetings are set strategically, with both parties deciding and agreeing to meet. Therefore, when a meeting is expected to be too costly for the legislator's reputation, they may decide not to meet with the foreign representatives. One implication is that our sample focuses on meetings that have happened, with the implicit assumption that the legislators expect larger benefits than costs from these meetings.

6 Concluding remarks

We introduce a new comprehensive dataset allowing us to study foreign lobbying and foreign influence in the US. Using 180,000 date-stamped in-person meetings between foreign country representatives and US legislators, over 45,000 in-person meetings between foreign country representatives and US Agency employees, and almost 1,500 meetings between foreign country representatives and state governors, we show that a) countries that lobby receive larger foreign aid and financial assistance from the US, and b) the US subsidiaries of corporations from those countries receive more corporate subsidies. We then document that more meetings between representatives of a given foreign country and US legislators are related to an increase in the share of registered voters with ethnic affiliations to the foreign country and an increase in foreign trips to these countries sponsored by private organizations. Finally, we show that costs to US legislators, if any, are economically small.

Overall, our study provides novel insights on the nature and scope of foreign lobbying in US politics. Understanding how access to legislators is gained and distributed in the economy is an important question of practical and theoretical relevance. From a positive perspective, our study highlights the determinants of connections between foreign countries and legislators and examines the sources of influence for public policy. From a normative perspective, our paper's

[32]The coefficients in the Cox (1972) regression relate to hazard, i.e., a negative coefficient implies more meetings are related to a longer stay in office.

findings can guide efforts to design more effective political institutions. Lastly, our dataset provides new observations that can be used to inform the selection of alternative theoretical models of lobbying and we expect it to be useful to a large community of scholars in political economics and public finance.

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ONLINE APPENDIX (NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

A Data sources and construction of variables

A.1 Country characteristics

We collect data on GDP and population from the World Bank. Bilateral trade flows data come from CEPII (Gaulier and Zignago, 2010; Bailey, Gupta, Hillenbrand, Kuchler, Richmond, and Stroebel, 2021). Data relating to conflicts include total number of unrest episodes gathered from the Cline Center Historical Phoenix Event Data. We separate the number of times a foreign country was a source or a target.

Data on the use of physical force to achieve political objectives by non-state actors and the number of coups d'état during a given year come from the Varieties of Democracy Database (V-Dem). Political corruption index, which combines six distinct types of corruption and measures the level of corruption in a given year, political polarization capturing the extent to which political differences affect social relationships beyond political discussions, as well as the electoral democracy index (EDI) of a country all come from V-Dem.

Democratization events come from the Episodes of Regime Transformation (ERT) data. These data use changes in EDI to determine the start and end years of democratizations. V-Dem produces these data from 1900–2018.Finally, we rely on a time-varying measure of each country's political preferences based on how they vote relative to the US on resolutions in the UNGA as estimated by Bailey, Strezhnev, and Voeten (2017) and the US presidential diplomatic visits as measured by Malis and Smith (2021).

A.2 Legislator characteristics

Personal characteristics. Legislators' personal characteristics come from the Center for Effective Lawmaking, which identifies the gender of the legislator, whether he/she comes from an underrepresented minority group, or whether he/she is african-american. The dataset also includes information on the age of the legislator, the vote margin, and the seniority within his/her own party.

Ideology and lawmaker effectiveness. A congressperson effectiveness and ideology scores come from the Center for Effective Lawmaking. The legislative effectiveness scores were developed by Volden and Wiseman (2014, 2018), and capture the level of success that each Representative or Senator has in advancing their legislative agenda items through the lawmaking process. The lawmaker effectiveness score is calculated by first grouping their sponsored bills into three different categories capturing whether they are commemorative, substantive, or substantive and significant, and, second, assessing how far the bill progressed through the process of becoming a law. Therefore, higher LES scores are given to members with large portfolios, those who tackle significant issues (not just commemorative measures), and those whose bills advance further in the lawmaking process. The LES is normalized to an average value of one in each Congress. These data are then matched to the legislators found the in FARA data representing one of the fifty U.S states using a fuzzy matching algorithm.

To examine ideology, we use the dynamic weighted NOMINATE (DW-NOMINATE) ideology scores for members of Congress, which are the seminal measures of legislator ideology based on Congressional roll-call votes created by Poole and Rosenthal (1985) and later refined by Poole and Rosenthal (2011). DW-NOMINATE 1 captures the economic and governmental aspects of the ideological left-right spectrum. A second dimension of the score, DW-NOMINATE 2, captures differences within the major political parties on currency, nativism, civil rights, and lifestyle issues. A value close to 1 represents a more conservative congressperson, while a value close to -1 a more liberal congressperson.

Elections. For election data we rely on information from the MIT election lab which compile biennial documents from the Clerk of the US House of Representatives. In particular, we use state-level returns for elections to the US Senate and the US House of Representative until 2018. The data includes the election year, state, electoral stage (distinguishing between a general election, a runoff election, or a primary election), whether it was a special election, name of the candidates, their parties, details on votes, and the winner. These data give us a comprehensive dataset of all legislators seeking election to legislative office from 2000–2018.

Congressional committee assignment. Data on Congressional committees come from Stewart (2017) who provide detailed information on committee membership for each legislator serving in Congress from 1993 to 2019 and calculate the first and last time they were on a committee. We make some corrections to the data. For example, six congresspeople in the House of Representatives and for seven Senators are assigned the wrong state, which we manually adjust. Moreover, we adjust the incorrect Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs committee identifiers for Sen. Jeffrey Chiesa. These data are then matched to the legislators found the in FARA data representing one of the fifty U.S states using a fuzzy matching algorithm. All matches that are not perfect are manually assigned the correct legislator.

A.3 Main outcomes of interest

Foreign aid. Data on foreign aid comes from ForeignAssistance.gov which is a website hosted by the US Department of State and the US Agency for International Development (USAID). It provides a comprehensive overview about US foreign assistance on multiple dimensions. Detailed information on the funding and implementing agencies are provided, as is the purpose of the appropriated aid. In particular, aid is differentiated by purpose into several categories: Agriculture, Commodity Assistance, Economics Growth, Education, Governance, Health and Population, Humanitarian, Infrastructure, and Other, whereas the latter differentiates Peace and Security, Democracy, Human Rights and Governance, Health, Education and Social Services, Economic Growth, Humanitarian Assistance, and Program Development and Oversight. For each entry the name agency to which funds were appropriated is provided. From the data we have dropped all observations where a transaction date was unavailable. Subsequently, we have collapsed the data on the country-executive department-year-month level, that is, for each country we obtain the amount of aid received from each US government agency for every month starting from October 2001. We also calculate the total aid for each year-month given to a country split

by executive department as the sum of all obligations. Note that some of the values we obtain from that process are negative. This is because aid is occasionally provided in the form of loans and for a given month or year a foreign country could be repaying more than it receives.

Tariffs bills. Data on tariff bills are taken from GovTrack.us by searching the bill text and bill subject line for the word "tariffs." We then searched each bill for mentions of specific trade agreements using the list of terms shown at the bottom of the paragraph. This list of terms was then matched to all countries affected by these trade agreements. This search yielded 469 bills over the period 2000–2018. We then went through the text of each bill to determine whether it increased or decreased tariffs or duties on products entering the United States. All bills that reduce tariffs or duties were categorized as "favorable"; all those that increase tariffs or duties were categorized as "unfavorable." Of the 469 bills, 244 were labeled favorable and 81 were labeled unfavorable, with the remainder being unclear on the direction they would alter tariffs. The 244 favorable bills yielded 2,969 unique country-bill observations, whereas the unfavorable bills yielded 298 unique country-bill observations, when matching countries to the trade agreements. Data were then collected on the sponsors and co-sponsors of these bills, the committees that oversaw them post-introduction, and the various actions that took place over the life-cycle of the bill. Data for sponsors and cosponsors were matched to the FARA meeting data by country, legislator and the year and month of bill introduction. Data for committees were matched to all senior legislators, where a senior legislator is defined as being in the top quartile of seniority within each party-committee pair. These data are then matched to the FARA meeting data by country, legislator and the year and month of all bill actions that took place in those committees. Committee bill actions are then categorized as "favorable" if the bill progresses through the legislative process or "unfavorable" if the bill does not pass that committee.

Trade agreement phrase list: free trade agreement implementation act; (cafta-dr); africa growth and opportunity act; (agoa); generalized system of preferences; (gsp); automotive products trade act; (apta); agreement on trade in civil aircraft; north american free trade agreement; nafta; caribbean basin initiative; (cbi); andean trade preference act; (atpa); andean trade promotion and drug eradication act; (atpdea); agreement on trade in pharmaceutical products; uruguay round concessions on intermediate chemicals for dyes; caribbean basin trade partnership act; (cbtpa); harmonized tariff schedule; caribbean basin economic recovery act; (cbera); united states-caribbean basin trade partnership act; united states-mexico-canada agreement implementation act; (usmca); trade agreement; trade act; trade partnership act.

A.4 Other data

Twitter. We obtain Twitter data of the official and personal accounts for all US legislators serving as of 07 April 2022 using version 2 of the Twitter API. We download all historical tweets, retweets, and quote tweets from the years 2010–2021. Given our meeting data goes from 2000–2018, not all House and Senate members can be matched to the meeting data. Of the 535 congresspeople, we can match 348 to our meeting data. Since many Senators were previous House of Representatives members or governors, they are often present in our sample

before being elected to the Senate. In total, we collect 6,671,713 tweets, and in the text, we search for mentions of all countries in our sample. In this search, we exclude the country Jordan as it is too often matched with the popular American first and last name. Similarly, we dropped tweets containing the word "Turkey" in November to exclude mentions of the popular American Thanksgiving cuisine. This selection yields 96,689 tweets which we match to country mentions, approximately 2% of the total sample.

Official foreign trips. We obtain data on all official foreign travel undertaken by members of the House of representatives. These data are available in accordance with the Mutual Security Act of 1954 (Title 22 U.S. Code, Chapter 24, Section 1754) and the International Security Assistance Act of 1978. The disclosures contain detailed information on the arrival and departure dates, foreign country visited, and the expenditures incurred during the trip.

Privately-sponsored trips. We obtain data on privately sponsored trips taken by members of the House of representatives from 2008 onwards. These data are available in compliance with the House ethics rules which mandates disclosure of all privately sponsored trips and their sponsors to the Clerk of the House (Rosenson, 2009; McGee and Moniz, 2021). The disclosures contain detailed information on the arrival and departure dates, foreign country visited, and the private agency sponsoring the travel.

Political contributions. Our dataset contains summary financial information for all candidates who raised or spent money as reported by the US Federal Election Commission (FEC) for the period between January 1, 2000 and December 31, 2018. Our data include contributions to all entities raising more than $5,000 for federal elections, whether they are candidates, parties or any other political action committees (PACs), as well as transfers from authorized committees to individual candidates.

B Summary of semi-annual reports

Our new comprehensive dataset of meetings between US legislators and lobbyists working on behalf of foreign countries separates us from the previous empirical literature on foreign lobbying. In fact, given that the DOJ, in addition to the detailed FARA filings, also publishes summary reports semi-annually, which are easily accessible, prior work trying to understand broad trends in foreign lobbying has mostly used those reports. Each report describes information on the lobbyist including their activities, nature of services, and money received for their political activities undertaken on behalf of foreign clients as reported in question 12. Importantly, these reports do not have information on the meetings lobbyists have with US legislators on behalf of their clients. Therefore, these summary reports are only suited to study broad trends in foreign lobbying in the US, and cannot be used to shed light on the scope and nature of foreign influence.

Following Lee (2020), we use the information from these reports to classify lobbying activities into 12 broad topics. To identify frequently lobbied topics, we selected key words relevant to each topic and coded the topic of lobbying incidents according to whether the key words were used to describe the incidents. The exact key words are below:

- **Trade:** trade; export; import; fta; nafta; cafta; drcafta; ftaa; naftas; kfta; caftas; korus-fta; tpp; transpacific partnership; gsp; mcool; tariff; custom; agoa; african growth and opportunity act, tpl; tariff preferential level; wto; gatt; mfn; antidump; dump; caribbean & basin; traders; exporters; imports; importers; sanction; commerc; food and drug administration; fda; food label
- **Economy:** financi; financ; fdi; tax; taxat; busi; econom; economi; debt; invest; investment; monetari; imf; bank; antitrust; scal; internat & monetari & fund; world & bank; exchang & rate; government & bond; securities & tax; securities & taxat; securities & exchang; securities &exchanges; securities & regulation; securities & regulations; securities & financial; secur & finance; oil; energy; appropriation
- **Security:** defence;defens; militari; nato; disarm; terror; counterterror; terrorist; antiterror; extremism; troop; peacemak; peacekeep; international & security; national & security; regional & security; security & relations; security & relationship; peace & process; peace & treaty; arms & sales
- **Diplomacy:** government relations; government relationship; government relationships; bilateral relations; bilateral relationship; bilateral relationships; diplomatic relations; diplomatic relationship; diplomatic relationships
- **Policy legal issues:** polici & consult; polici & counsel; polici & servic; polici & advic; polici & analysi; legal & consult; legal & counsel; legal & servic; legal & advic; legal & analysi; legal; law; political; act; legislation; s.[0-9]1,4; hr.[0-9]1,5; s-[0-9]1,4; hr-[0-9]1,5; public policy; foreign policy; US policy; us policy; resolution; settlement; regulat
- **Publicity:** media; news; newspaper; newspapers; newsletter; newsletters; enewslett; press; public & relations

- **Tourism:** tourism; tourist; tour; travel
- **Nuclear:** nuclear; atom; uranium
- **Visa:** visa; immigr; immigrat; immigrant
- **Foreign aid:** aid; usaid; economi & assistanc; militari & assistanc
- **Human rights:** human & rights; education; women; food assistance
- **Secession:** selfdetermin; self determin; self-determin

Panel A of Figure B.1 presents the evolution of the 6 most frequently listed topics over the sample period. We find that approximately one in four activities each year relate to publicity while one in ten activities relate to security. Over the sample period, lobbyists increased their engagement in diplomacy, while their engagement in economy and trade trended downwards. In addition to lobbying topics, we also classify the description of services into 5 broad topics which are presented in Panel B of Figure B.1. Lobbying services saw a significant uptick in 2010 and surpassed services related to promoting investment, trade, and tourism. By the end of 2018, more than half of the foreign agents report lobbying as their only service. Interestingly, there is a concomitant decrease in the promotion of investment, trade, and tourism around the same time as the uptick noted above. Further, we do not find any changes in consulting or fundraising activities over the sample period. These results reveal substantial heterogeneity in the role of lobbyists.

A next natural question is whether lobbyists specialize in providing issue-specific information to legislators, as indicated by prior work in the context of domestic lobbying (Bertrand, Bombardini, and Trebbi, 2014). To this end, Figure B.2 shows that the majority of lobbyists engage with legislators on fewer than three topics, suggesting that most lobbyists concentrate on a small number of topics in the foreign lobbying space.

Finally, we relate the number of topics engaged by the lobbyist on behalf of the foreign principal to the characteristics of the geographical region, where available. Specifically, we assess the relationship between foreign countries that lobby and several macroeconomic characteristics using data from the Word Bank. Specifically, we include data on Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita to capture economic growth, total value of exports and imports to capture reliance on trade, and labour share as a fraction of GDP to capture the trend toward automation that may affect incentives of policymakers (Ramey and Ramey, 1995; Jones and Olken, 2005; Jones and Romer, 2010). Additionally, we include the annual average country conflict score from the Cline Center Historical Phoenix Event Data, which provides detailed information on the level of conflict within each country every year (Althaus, Bajjalieh, Carter, Peyton, and Shalmon, 2020). Finally, we include data on institutions and the electoral democracy index from the Varieties of Democracy Database.

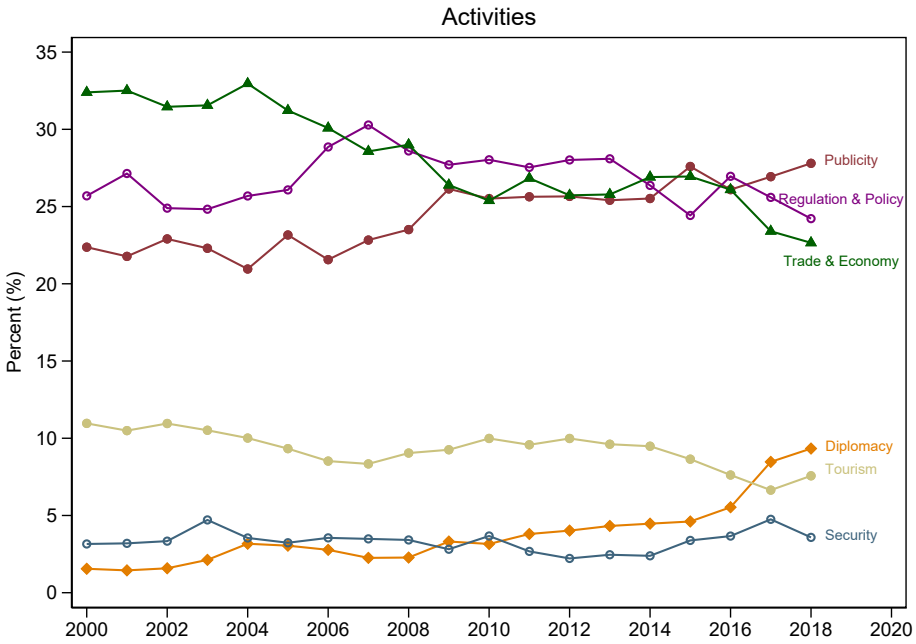
Table B.1 presents the estimates from a regression of the natural logarithm of the number of topics on time-varying characteristics discussed above. In particular, we estimate

$$\log(\text{Number of topics})_{frt} = \gamma_f + \delta_{rt} + \beta \text{ Country Characteristics}_{ft} + \epsilon_{frt}, \tag{B.1}$$

where f represents the country of the foreign principal, r represents the topic lobbied for, and t represents the year. The unit of observation is a foreign principal country-topic-year triad. The empirical specification includes country fixed effects to control for unobserved time-invariant regional characteristics in addition to topic-by-year fixed effects to allow for the importance of topics to vary over time. Our results suggest no statistically significant and economically meaningful relationship between foreign country characteristics and the number of topics except for the share of labor compensation as a fraction of the GDP. Note that the number of observations vary across specifications because of missing values of country characteristics.

In summary, the associations between topics and country characteristics from the semi-annual reports are informative of the broad trends in foreign lobbying activities. However, there are two major drawbacks. First, the summary reports do not contain information on the identities of individual US legislators, also a key issue in the broader literature on domestic lobbying using LDA data. Second, there is no information on the individual meetings between lobbyists and legislators. Both these drawbacks render summary reports unsuitable to study foreign influence in the US.

A. Activities provided by the lobbying firm



B. Nature of services provided by the lobbying firm

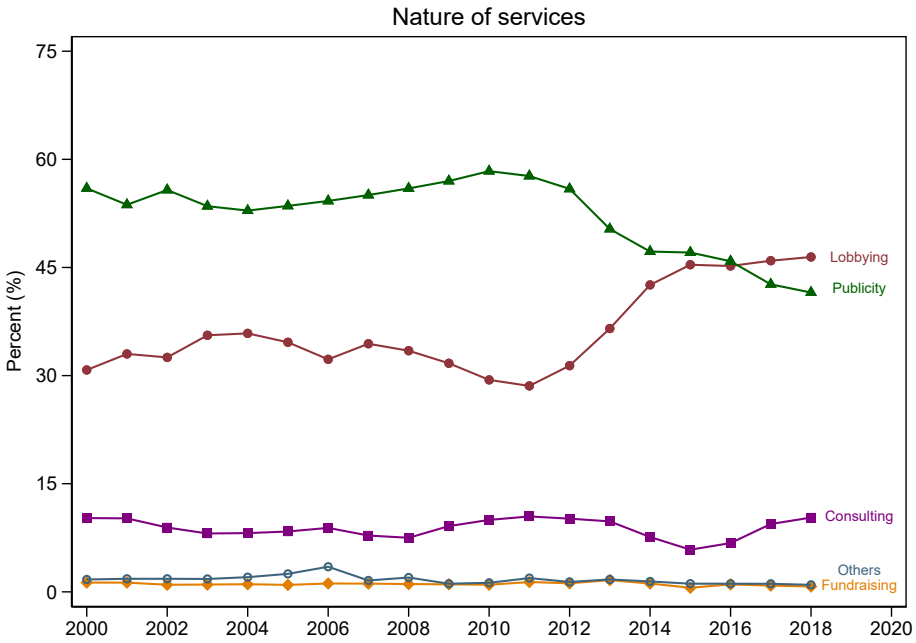


Figure B.1: *Notes*: The figure shows the fraction of activities belonging to each specific topic (Panel A) and each type of services (Panel B). The twelve lobbying topics are identified following the procedure outlined in Appendix B.

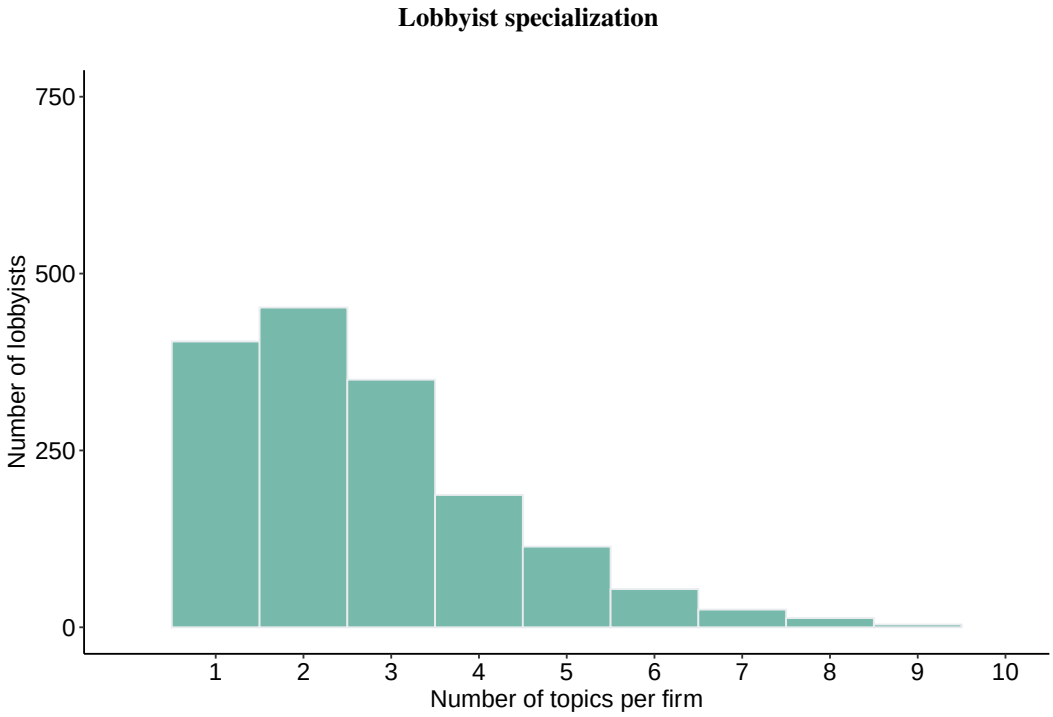


Figure B.2: *Notes*: The histogram shows the number of different topics each lobbying firm has worked on from 2000 to 2018 (horizontal axis), and the corresponding number of lobbying firms that have worked on a given number of topics (vertical axis). The twelve lobbying topics are identified following the procedure outlined in Appendix B.

Table B.1: Lobbying topics and foreign country characteristics: Report-level analysis

This table relates lobbying topics extracted from FARA semi-annual reports to foreign country characteristics. The unit of analysis is a country-topic-year triad. The dependent variable is *Log (Number of topics)*, i.e., the natural logarithm of the number of topics. We relate this to the following foreign country characteristics, namely: *Economic* (column 1), *Conflict* (column 2), and *Institutional* (column 3). Column 4 includes all the characteristics. *Economic* characteristics include: GDP per capita (*Gross Domestic Product*), total population (*Population*), total value of imports (*Imports*), total value of exports (*Exports*), share of labour compensation in GDP (*Labour share*); *Conflict* characteristics include: total number of unrest events in the source country (*Total unrest (source)*), total number of unrest events in the target country (*Total unrest (target)*). *Institutional* characteristics include the extent to which electoral democracy is achieved (*Electoral democracy index*). All regressions include *Topic* $\times$ *year* and *Country* fixed effects and are estimated using ordinary least squares (OLS). Standard errors are clustered at the country level and are robust to heteroscedasticity. ***, **, * denote significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% level, respectively.

Dependent variable	Log (Number of topics)			
Characteristics	Economic	Conflict	Institutional	All
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Gross Domestic Product (GDP)	-0.002			-0.011
	(0.026)			(0.027)
Population	0.103			-0.005
	(0.123)			(0.135)
Imports	0.041			0.017
	(0.096)			(0.100)
Exports	0.063			0.083
	(0.125)			(0.124)
Labour share	0.630*			0.792**
	(0.369)			(0.362)
Total unrest (source)		0.024		0.005
		(0.028)		(0.034)
Total unrest (target)		0.019		0.040
		(0.027)		(0.033)
Electoral democracy index			0.160	0.250
			(0.155)	(0.200)
Topic $\times$ year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
R^2	0.41	0.41	0.40	0.42
Observations	4,412	5,696	6,011	3,887

C The role of US legislators and country characteristics in explaining meetings

C.1 Country/legislator characteristics

Country characteristics. We collect several characteristics of foreign countries such as GDP, population, and civil violence from sources mentioned in the online appendix Section A. Additionally, country-level trade flows using bilateral goods trade data come from CEPII (Gaulier and Zignago, 2010; Bailey, Gupta, Hillenbrand, Kuchler, Richmond, and Stroebel, 2021). We include data on political institutions and the electoral democracy index from the Varieties of Democracy Database. We rely on a time-varying measure of each country's political preferences based on votings on resolutions in the UNGA as estimated by Bailey et al. (2017). This measure is a common proxy of bilateral distance between foreign countries' political attitude and the US. Finally, we rely on information on the total length of international sanctions imposed by the US (Felbermayr, Kirilakha, Syropoulos, Yalcin, and Yotov, 2020; Kirikakha, Felbermayr, Syropoulos, Yalcin, and Yotov, 2021) and the total number of US presidential diplomatic visits to foreign countries (Malis and Smith, 2021).

Legislator characteristics. We then merge data on US legislators' characteristics from a variety of sources. Data on election results and party affiliations come from the MIT Elections Lab, and data on House and Senate committee and sub-committee assignments from Stewart (2017). To measure lawmaking effectiveness, we use the Legislative Effectiveness Score (LES) developed by Volden and Wiseman (2014, 2018). This measure captures the ability of legislators to advance the bills they sponsor through the legislative process. Political ideology for each legislator is measured using the dynamic weighted NOMINATE (DW-NOMINATE) score, as developed by Poole and Rosenthal (1985, 2011). Under this measure, a score closer to 1 reflects a more conservative ideology whereas a score closer to -1 reflects a more liberal ideology.

C.1.1 Summary statistics of country characteristics

Table C.1 shows the summary statistics for countries in our sample that have complete data for all variables used in our analysis. The median country in our sample has a larger GDP, with a median of approximately $182 billion compared to the World Bank's median of $30 billion. It also has a larger median population of 9.26 million versus a median population of 5.98 million. Furthermore, these sample countries tend to trade more with the US, for example, Exports are $560 million versus $258 million, and Imports are $578 millions versus $241 millions.

Regarding institutional characteristics, the median foreign country in our sample shows more politically polarized than the median country in the V-Dem database for the same period (0.075 vs -0.07) and has a slightly smaller political corruption index (0.53 vs 0.55). In terms of identities of foreign countries, online appendix Figure E.4 presents the heatmap of meeting frequency for specific years in the sample with varying color intensity

Table C.1: Summary statistics: Country characteristics

The table presents the descriptive statistics for countries in the sample. We include the following country-level economic characteristics: total GDP in US$ millions (Log), total population (Log), exports from and imports from US in US$ millions (Log). Further, we include the following country-level characteristics relating to conflicts: total unrest from the Cline Center Historical Phoenix Event Data where we separate the number of times the country was a source or a target, the use of physical force to achieve political objectives by non-state actors (political violence) and the number of coups d'état during a given year. Lastly, we include the following country-level institutional characteristics: transition to democracy comes from the Episodes of Regime Transformation (ERT) data which uses changes in electoral democracy index from the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) project to determine the start and end years of democratizations, electoral democracy index capturing the extent to which electoral democracy is achieved within the country, political corruption index which combines six distinct types of corruption and measures the level of corruption in a given year, political polarization capturing the extent to which political differences affect social relationships beyond political discussions, total length of international sanctions imposed by the US (Felbermayr, Kirilakha, Syropoulos, Yalcin, and Yotov, 2020; Kirikakha, Felbermayr, Syropoulos, Yalcin, and Yotov, 2021), similarity in foreign policy preferences to the US based on voting on resolutions in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) measured using absolute distances between the ideal points of countries (Bailey, Strezhnev, and Voeten, 2017), and the total number of US presidential diplomatic visits to the country(Malis and Smith, 2021).

	N	Mean	Median	Std. dev
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
GDP (Log)	29,521	12.112	12.025	1.741
Population (Log)	29,521	3.446	3.538	1.517
US Exports (Log)	29,521	8.037	8.038	2.116
US Imports (Log)	29,521	8.081	8.127	2.448
Total unrest – source (Log)	29,521	4.277	4.511	1.414
Total unrest – target (Log)	29,521	4.223	4.431	1.363
Political violence	29,521	-0.502	-0.589	1.307
Coup	29,521	0.018	0.000	0.131
Transition to democracy	29,521	0.106	0.000	0.307
Electoral democracy index	29,521	0.471	0.461	0.259
Political corruption index	29,501	0.527	0.577	0.271
Political polarization	29,521	0.075	0.089	1.179
US-imposed sanction length (years)	29,521	9.656	0.000	15.985
Country political preference, UNGA Voting (Log)	29,521	0.983	1.110	0.324
US Presidential diplomatic visits (Log)	29,521	0.435	0.000	0.490

representing the number of meetings with US legislators in a given year. While the data covers nearly every region worldwide, the countries in our sample are slightly tilted towards large economies.

C.1.2 Summary statistics of legislators' characteristics

Personal. Table C.2 reports the summary statistics for individual legislators where we collapse individual meetings at the legislator-country-year level. A foreign country holds on average 3.4 meetings every year with a given legislator. The standard deviation in the meetings variable indicates a significant variation in meeting frequency. When examining individual characteristics, we find that a foreign country meets with a legislator who is on average 59-year old and holds 16% of their meetings with women legislators and 8% of their meetings with underrepresented minority legislators (Latin American or African American).

Table C.2: Summary statistics: legislator characteristics

The table presents the descriptive statistics for the sample of individual meetings at the legislator-country-year level. *Meetings* is the number of times a foreign agent and a legislator met in a given year. *Age* is the age of the legislator, *Woman* is whether the legislator is a woman, *Underrepresented minority* is whether the legislator is from an underrepresented minority group. *House member* is whether the legislator is a member of the House of Representatives, *Vote share* is the vote share in the elections, *Democrat* is an indicator capturing party affiliation, and *Seniority* is the number of terms a legislator has served in the Congress. We also include the following ideological characteristics: *DW-NOMINATE 1* and *DW-NOMINATE 2*. Lastly, we also consider characteristics that are important for influence and resource allocation. *Majority* captures whether the legislator is a member of the party in control of the Senate, *Legislative Effectiveness Score* is the lawmaking effectiveness of the legislator, *Committee chair* and *Sub-committee chair* capture whether the legislator is the chair of either a senate or house committee or a sub-committee. We also capture whether the legislator is a member of, either a senate or house committee, the following committees: (i) the rules, ways and means, and appropriations, (ii) foreign affairs, (iii) Security & Intelligence, (iv) Armed Services, and (v) Energy & Commerce.

	N	Mean	Median	Std. dev
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Meetings	36,555	3.454	2.000	5.051
		Personal		
Woman	36,555	0.157	0.000	0.364
Underrepresented minority	36,555	0.082	0.000	0.274
Age	36,555	58.99	59.00	10.54
		Political		
House member	36,555	0.720	1.000	0.449
Vote share	36,555	66.00	63.00	12.74
Democrat	36,555	0.496	0.000	0.500
Seniority	36,555	6.225	5.000	4.647

Political. House members represent 72% of all meetings and the average contacted legislator won their election with a vote share of 66%. Democrats account for 50.2% of the meetings with foreign countries. Table C.2 highlights foreign countries meet more often with legislators who, on average, have served for six terms in the Congress.

C.2 Which countries use FARA to lobby US legislators?

Table C.3 relates country characteristics to an indicator variable capturing whether a country lobbies US legislators in a given year. This analysis can inform about upfront costs of engaging in lobbying, which have been carefully studied in other contexts, such as domestic firm lobbying (Kerr, Lincoln, and Mishra, 2014). In particular, we estimate:

$$\mathbb{1}(Meetings > 0)_{ft} = \gamma_f + \delta_t + \beta \text{Country characteristics}_{ft-1} + \epsilon_{ft}, \tag{C.1}$$

where f represents the country for which the foreign agent is lobbying, and t represents the meeting year. The unit of observation is a foreign country-year dyad. The empirical specification includes country fixed effects to control for unobserved time-invariant regional characteristics in addition to year fixed effects to allow for macroeconomic fluctuations. We cluster standard errors at the country-level (Bertrand, Duflo, and Mullainathan,

2004).

In column 1, we find that, on average, more populated countries and those with larger trade exposures to the US are more likely to lobby, consistent with the idea that they have larger incentives. When we relate meetings to conflict (column 2), we find that countries that have been target of conflicts are more likely to lobby US legislators. Similarly, regarding institutional characteristics (column 3), countries with more diplomatic visits from US presidents and countries that have been target of more severe sanctions imposed by the US are more likely to lobby US legislators. In column 4, we combine all the characteristics together to account for cross-correlations and find similar results.

In column 5, exploiting within-country changes in characteristics, we find that strengthening diplomatic and trade relationships with the US is related to the decision to lobby US legislators. Lastly, in the online appendix Table E.2, we show that for house members there is a higher probability to meet with the representatives of a foreign country if a more substantial fraction of her electoral base was born in that foreign country. These results provide novel insights into the role of social ties and ancestry in explaining political connections between foreign countries and US legislators (Burchardi, Chaney, and Hassan, 2018; Bursztyn, Chaney, Hassan, and Rao, 2021; Burchardi and Hassan, 2013).

C.3 Which legislators meet foreign agents more often?

We now focus on understanding the role that legislator characteristics play in influencing the frequency of meetings with foreign countries. We include country-by-year fixed effects and use variation in the characteristics of legislators. In particular, we estimate:

$$\log(\text{meetings})_{lft} = \gamma_{ft} + \delta_l + \beta \text{Legislator characteristics}_{lt} + \epsilon_{lft}, \tag{C.2}$$

where l represents the legislator being lobbied for, f represents the country for which the foreign agent is lobbying, and t represents the meeting year. The unit of observation is a legislator-foreign country-year triad and, as before, we cluster standard errors at the country-level.

Table C.4 presents the estimates from the regression. Column 1 relates meeting intensity to the political characteristics of legislators without controlling for time-invariant legislator characteristics. We find that, on average, a foreign country meets more often with more senior legislators who win by larger margins. Interestingly, foreign countries meet less often with legislators if they represent the party that controls the Senate. Finally, consistent with the descriptive analyses, foreign countries meet with legislators irrespective of party affiliation.

Turning to ideological characteristics, in column 2 we find that meeting intensity is negatively correlated with the legislator's political ideology. In column 3, we focus on legislator characteristics that may influence resource allocation and public policy for foreign entities. We do not find a statistically significant relationship between meeting intensity and the legislator's status as committee chair. However, we observe a positive relationship with the following committee memberships: Power committees, Foreign affairs, and Security and Intelligence.

Table C.3: Which countries use FARA to lobby US legislators?

The unit of analysis is a country-year dyad. The dependent variable is an indicator for whether representatives of foreign government held at least one in-person meeting in a year with US legislators, $\mathbb{1}_{Meetings>0}$. In column 1, we include the following country-level economic characteristics lagged by one year: total GDP in US$, total population, exports from and imports from US in US$. In column 2, we include the following characteristics relating to conflicts: total unrest from the Cline Center Historical Phoenix Event Data where we separate the number of times the country was a source or a target, the use of physical force to achieve political objectives by non-state actors (*political violence*) and the number of coups d'état during a given year. In column 3, we include the following country-level institutional characteristics: transition to democracy, electoral democracy index capturing the extent to which electoral democracy is achieved within the country, political corruption index which combines six distinct types of corruption and measures the level of corruption in a given year, political polarization capturing the extent to which political differences affect social relationships beyond political discussions, the total length of international sanctions imposed by the US (Felbermayr, Kirilakha, Syropoulos, Yalcin, and Yotov, 2020; Kirikakha, Felbermayr, Syropoulos, Yalcin, and Yotov, 2021), similarity in foreign policy preferences to the US based on voting on resolutions in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) measured using absolute distances between the ideal points of countries (Bailey, Strezhnev, and Voeten, 2017), and the total number of US presidential diplomatic visits (Malis and Smith, 2021). All specifications include *Year* fixed effects and specification 5 includes *Country* fixed effects to control for time-invariant country characteristics. We use ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions to estimate the coefficients. Standard errors are clustered at the country level and are robust to heteroscedasticity. ***, **, * denote significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% level, respectively.

Dependent variable	$\mathbb{1}_{Meetings>0}$				
Characteristics	Economic	Conflict	Institutions	All	All
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
GDP (Log)	-0.026			-0.004	-0.027
	(0.026)			(0.031)	(0.046)
Population (Log)	0.046**			-0.038	0.091
	(0.021)			(0.023)	(0.165)
US Exports (Log)	0.043**			0.053***	0.013
	(0.019)			(0.018)	(0.022)
US Imports (Log)	0.019*			0.027**	0.024***
	(0.010)			(0.011)	(0.008)
Total unrest – source (Log)		0.030		0.010	-0.013
		(0.021)		(0.019)	(0.017)
Total unrest – target (Log)		0.053**		0.040**	0.024
		(0.021)		(0.019)	(0.016)
Political violence		0.010		0.007	0.018
		(0.024)		(0.023)	(0.039)
Coup		-0.014		0.017	0.028
		(0.129)		(0.115)	(0.062)
Transition to democracy			-0.026	0.006	-0.039
			(0.041)	(0.038)	(0.034)
Electoral democracy index			-0.159	-0.170	0.056
			(0.149)	(0.135)	(0.189)
Political corruption index			0.026	0.074**	0.021
			(0.035)	(0.033)	(0.054)
Political polarization			0.025	0.018	0.020
			(0.026)	(0.025)	(0.035)
US-imposed sanction length			0.055*	0.047*	-0.000
			(0.030)	(0.026)	(0.026)
Country political preference, UNGA Voting (Log)			-0.100	-0.027	0.156
			(0.081)	(0.093)	(0.219)
US Presidential diplomatic visits (Log)			0.268***	0.090**	0.074***
			(0.047)	(0.038)	(0.023)
Year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country fixed effects	No	No	No	No	Yes
R^2	0.12	0.09	0.09	0.21	0.49
Observations	2,660	2,660	2,660	2,660	2,660

Table C.4: Which legislators meet foreign agents more often?

This table relates meetings between foreign country representatives and US legislators to individual characteristics. The unit of analysis is a country-legislator-year triad. The dependent variable is the natural logarithm of the number of meetings in a year with U.S legislators, *Log (Number of meetings)*. In column 1, we include the following legislator characteristics: whether the legislator is a member of the House of representatives (*House member*), vote share in the elections (*Vote share*), an indicator capturing party affiliation (*Democrat*), member of the party that is in control of the senate (*Majority*) and rank within the party (*Seniority*). In column 2, we include the following ideological characteristics: measures of legislator ideology, *DW-NOMINATE 1* and *DW-NOMINATE 2*. In column 3, we include the characteristics that might affect influence: lawmaking effectiveness of the legislator (*Legislative Effectiveness Score*), whether she is a senate or house committee and sub-committee chair (*Committee (Sub-committee) chair*), a member of rules, ways and means, and appropriations committee (*Power committee membership*). We also capture whether the legislator is a member (ranking member or chair) of, either a senate or house committee, the following committees: (i) the rules, ways and means, and appropriations, (ii) foreign affairs, (iii) Security & Intelligence, (iv) Armed Services, and (v) Energy & Commerce. All specifications include *Country×Year* fixed effects and specification 5 includes legislator fixed effects to control for time-invariant legislator characteristics. We use ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions to estimate the coefficients. Standard errors are clustered at the country level and are robust to heteroscedasticity. ***, **, * denote significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% level, respectively.

Dependent variable:	Log (meetings)				
Characteristics	Legislator	Ideology	Importance	All	All
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
House member	-0.022			0.023	-0.165***
	(0.028)			(0.032)	(0.059)
Vote share (Log)	0.172***			0.149***	0.148***
	(0.025)			(0.027)	(0.035)
Democrat	0.016				
	(0.021)				
Majority	-0.038***			-0.063***	-0.023
	(0.012)			(0.017)	(0.035)
Seniority	0.005***			0.006***	0.012*
	(0.001)			(0.002)	(0.007)
Distance from median (ideology)		0.034		-0.048	-0.007
		(0.031)		(0.034)	(0.090)
DW-NOMINATE 1		-0.030***		-0.020*	0.854
		(0.010)		(0.011)	(0.527)
DW-NOMINATE 2		-0.009		0.002	0.450**
		(0.008)		(0.008)	(0.196)
Legislative Effectiveness Score			0.010**	0.010**	0.014***
			(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Committee chair			-0.021	-0.031*	-0.023
			(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.021)
Sub-committee chair			-0.018**	0.013	-0.002
			(0.009)	(0.010)	(0.012)
Power committee membership			0.055***	0.054***	0.010
			(0.019)	(0.016)	(0.015)
Foreign affairs			0.154***	0.173***	0.144***
			(0.028)	(0.032)	(0.032)
Foreign affairs (chair)			0.036	0.030	0.044
			(0.053)	(0.052)	(0.070)
Foreign affairs (Ranking member)			0.095**	0.008	-0.020
			(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.080)
Security & Intelligence			0.046***	0.054***	-0.007
			(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.018)
Security & Intelligence (chair)			0.046	0.063	0.022
			(0.045)	(0.045)	(0.058)
Security & Intelligence (Ranking member)			0.003	-0.022	-0.041
			(0.042)	(0.041)	(0.041)

Dependent variable:	Log (meetings)				
Characteristics	Legislator	Ideology	Importance	All	All
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Armed services			-0.005	0.019	0.017
			(0.017)	(0.018)	(0.028)
Armed services (chair)			-0.127***	-0.168***	-0.006
			(0.045)	(0.046)	(0.076)
Armed services (Ranking member)			0.142***	0.079	0.083
			(0.048)	(0.050)	(0.070)
Energy & Commerce			-0.036**	-0.020	-0.015
			(0.017)	(0.018)	(0.031)
Energy & Commerce (chair)			-0.126	-0.168**	-0.226**
			(0.081)	(0.083)	(0.095)
Energy & Commerce (Ranking member)			-0.152**	-0.219***	-0.245**
			(0.064)	(0.069)	(0.104)
Legislator fixed effects	No	No	No	No	Yes
Country × year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
R^2	0.31	0.31	0.32	0.32	0.40
Observations	36,555	36,555	36,555	36,555	36,525

Column 4 presents the empirical specification including all characteristics at once. We omit the "Democrat" indicator variable, as it is highly negatively correlated, -94%, with the DW-NOMINATE score. When considering the characteristics jointly, we find that the relative importance of a legislator, captured by the LES, and whether the legislator is a chairperson of a subcommittee is positively related to more meetings with foreign agents. Membership of power committees remains a significant correlate of meeting intensity together with membership of foreign affairs and security and intelligence committee. Finally, more liberal legislators (DW-NOMINATE 1) meet more often with foreign agents. In sum, these relationships highlight the relevance of political ideology and legislative effectiveness, as well as committee membership for meetings with foreign agents.

Moreover, we explore whether, conditional on deciding whom to meet with, changes in legislator characteristics relate to meetings intensity. This is informative of which characteristics matter for a connection to persist, a question previously unexplored in the literature. To do so, column 5 adds legislator fixed effects to our previous empirical specification and relates *within*-legislator changes in characteristics to changes in meeting intensity. The results suggest an increase in a legislator's effectiveness, an increase in their vote margins, and becoming a member of the foreign affairs committee are all positively related to an increase in meetings. Moreover, we find that foreign agents meet more often with legislators when they become senators, potentially due to an increase in the length of their term. Interestingly, changes in legislator ideology (DW-NOMINATE 2), capturing individuals who become more conservative on social issues such as immigration, are positively correlated to changes in meeting intensity.[33]

Overall, our findings provide new observations that meetings are related to the effectiveness of the legislators, their status as a member of specific important committees, in particular the foreign affairs committee.

[33] In the online appendix Table E.3, we show that these results are robust to Poisson estimation.

D Validation

We further probe the validity of the meeting intensity as a measure of connection/interest in the foreign country by examining how it correlates with foreign official trips of the legislator to that foreign country or the frequency with which the legislator publicly mentions the foreign country on Twitter.[34] Results for both the official foreign trips and Twitter activity are in Table D.1.

We study both the extensive and intensive margins of official foreign trips and Twitter activity. Regarding foreign trips, we find that more meetings are significantly related to (a) a larger probability of trips to that foreign country whose representatives the legislator meets more often, and (b) a longer stay in the country. Regarding Twitter, we find that more meetings are also positively related to (a) a higher probability of a mention of the foreign country in the legislator's tweets and (b) more mentions of the foreign country in the legislator's tweets.

[34]Recent work points to the important role of social media platforms in affecting political outcomes and even financial investors (Fujiwara, Müller, and Schwarz, 2021; Muller and Schwarz, 2021; Enikolopov, Makarin, and Petrova, 2020; Bursztyn, Egorov, Enikolopov, and Petrova, 2019; Acemoglu, Hassan, and Tahoun, 2018; Allcott and Gentzkow, 2017; Bianchi, Cram, and Kung, 2021).

Table D.1: Legislator foreign trips and Twitter mentions of foreign countries around meetings

This table presents panel regressions examining foreign trips and Twitter mentions of foreign countries by legislators around meetings. Panel A captures official trips by legislators to foreign countries around meetings. Official travels are trips undertaken by legislators to perform their official and representational responsibilities, and the trips are paid for by government sources. Panel B focuses on Twitter activity from their official and personal Twitter accounts. We consider all tweets, re-tweets, and quote tweets that mention a foreign country. In panel A of columns 1 and 2, the dependent variable is $\mathbb{1}_{Trip>0}$, defined as an indicator for whether the legislator undertook an official travel to the foreign country with whose representatives they met with (in percentage). The dependent variable in columns 3 and 4 is *# Days)*, defined as the total number of days of official trips to the foreign country with whose representatives they met with (in percentage). In panel B, the dependent variable in columns 1 and 2 is, $\mathbb{1}_{Tweet>0}$, defined as an indicator for whether the legislator wrote a tweet mentioning a given foreign country in the same year-month of the meeting. The dependent variable in columns 3 and 4 is, *# Tweets*, defined as the total number of tweets mentioning a foreign country in the same year-month of the meetings. The independent variable of interest is $Meetings_t$, the number of meetings between representatives of a foreign country and US legislators. All regressions include *Country* fixed effects to account for time-invariant country characteristics, and *State* $\times$ *year-month* fixed effects to control for regional trends. Additionally, specifications 2 and 4 in both panel include *Legislator* fixed effects to account for time-invariant legislator characteristics. We use ordinary least squares (OLS). Standard errors are clustered at the country level and are robust to heteroscedasticity. ***, **, * denote significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% level, respectively.

	Panel A: Official foreign trips			
Dependent variable:	$100 \times \mathbb{1}_{Trip>0}$		# Days	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
$Meetings_t$	0.075***	0.069***	0.002***	0.001***
	(0.013)	(0.012)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Legislator fixed effects	No	Yes	No	Yes
Country fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State $\times$ year-month fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
R^2	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.01
Observations	4,045,632	4,045,632	4,045,632	4,045,632

	Panel B: Twitter activity			
Dependent variable:	$100 \times \mathbb{1}_{Tweet>0}$		# Tweets	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
$Meetings_t$	0.147**	0.135**	0.002**	0.002**
	(0.061)	(0.060)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Legislator fixed effects	No	Yes	No	Yes
Country $\times$ year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
R^2	0.01	0.02	0.01	0.02
Observations	4,045,632	4,045,632	4,045,632	4,045,632

E Additional tables and figures

Table E.1: Top five politicians by number of meetings each year

The table reports the top five politicians by the total number of meetings each year.

Year	1	2	3	4	5
2000	Donald Payne	Trent Lott	Tom Lantos	Norman D Dicks	Bob Graham
2001	Davis Tom	Trent Lott	Dana Rohrabacher	Henry Hyde	John Mccain
2002	Chuck Hagel	Trent Lott	Tom Lantos	Doug Bereuter	Barbara Lee
2003	Mike Simpson	Chuck Hagel	Doug Bereuter	Lincoln Diazbalart	Robert Wexler
2004	Roy Blunt	Ed Whitfield	Robert Wexler	Tom Lantos	Jim Kolbe
2005	Charles E Schumer	Robert Wexler	Betty Mccollum	Tom Lantos	Chuck Hagel
2006	Ed Whitfield	Dan Burton	Robert Wexler	John Mccain	Roy Blunt
2007	Gus M Bilirakis	Robert Wexler	Tom Lantos	Mich Mcconnell	John S Tanner
2008	Howard L Berman	Robert Wexler	John S Tanner	Donald Payne	Bob Filner
2009	Melissa Bean	Michael E Mcmahon	John F Kerry	Robert Wexler	John S Tanner
2010	Howard L Berman	Melissa Bean	Alcee Hastings	Steve Cohen	Lincoln Diazbalart
2011	Daniel K Inouye	Mark Steven Kirk	Mich Mcconnell	Chris Murphy	Roy Blunt
2012	Tom Marino	Jeanne Shaheen	Steve Cohen	Christopher Coons	James M Inhofe
2013	Chris Murphy	Jim Risch	Jeanne Shaheen	Tim Kaine	Karen Bass
2014	Michael R Turner	Tim Kaine	Chris Murphy	Gerald E Connolly	Jim Risch
2015	Tim Kaine	Gregory W Meeks	Mich Mcconnell	Benjamin Cardin	John Boehner
2016	Michael R Turner	Darrell Issa	Gerald E Connolly	Steve Cohen	Christopher Coons
2017	Chris Murphy	Tim Kaine	Cory Booker	Bob Corker	Gerald E Connolly
2018	Michael T Mccaul	Joe Wilson	Jim Risch	Todd C Young	Benjamin Cardin

Table E.2: Importance of foreign country population in congressional district for meetings intensity

This table relates meetings with US legislators to individual legislator characteristics. The unit of analysis is a country-legislator-year triad. The dependent variable is the natural logarithm of the number of meetings in a year with US legislators, *Log (meetings)*. In column 1, we include the following legislator characteristics: natural logarithm of vote share in the elections (*Vote share*), member of the party that is in control of the senate (*Majority*), rank within the party (*Seniority*) and the number of lobbyists engaged by the foreign agent who previously worked with the legislators (*Employment connection*). We also include the following ideological characteristics: measures of legislator's political ideology, *DW-NOMINATE 1* and *DW-NOMINATE 2*, and distance from the median ideology in the congress. Lastly, we consider characteristics that are important for influence, i.e., lawmaking effectiveness of the legislator (*Legislative Effectiveness Score*), and whether she is a senate or house committee and sub-committee chair (*Committee (Sub-committee) chair*). We also capture whether the legislator is a member, ranking member, or chair of, either a senate or house committee, the following committees: (i) the rules, ways and means, and appropriations , (ii) foreign affairs, (iii) Security & Intelligence, (iv) Armed Services, and (v) Energy & Commerce. In columns 2 and 3, we consider *Fraction of country's population*, defined as the fraction of the electoral base that were born in the foreign country with whom the representative meets with. All specifications include *Country* $\times$ *Year* fixed effects while specifications 2 and 3 additionally include legislator fixed effects to control for time-invariant legislator characteristics. We use ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions to estimate the coefficients. Standard errors are clustered at the country level and are robust to heteroscedasticity. ***, **, * denote significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% level, respectively.

Dependent variable:	Log (meetings)		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Fraction of country's population		0.023***	0.022***
		(0.005)	(0.006)
Vote share (Log)	0.280***	0.279***	0.263***
	(0.073)	(0.073)	(0.070)
Majority	-0.096	-0.095	-0.110
	(0.068)	(0.069)	(0.188)
Seniority	-0.003	-0.003	-0.014
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.028)
Distance from median (ideology)	-0.148	-0.147	-0.214
	(0.103)	(0.103)	(0.435)
DW-NOMINATE 1	-0.050**	-0.047**	1.820
	(0.022)	(0.022)	(3.323)
DW-NOMINATE 2	-0.022*	-0.022**	0.000
	(0.011)	(0.011)	(.)
Legislative Effectiveness Score	0.012	0.013	0.020**
	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)
Committee chair	0.064	0.055	-0.006
	(0.062)	(0.057)	(0.062)
Sub-committee chair	0.065**	0.067**	0.041
	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.032)
Power committee membership	0.093***	0.093***	0.058
	(0.032)	(0.033)	(0.041)
Foreign affairs	0.140***	0.140***	0.120*
	(0.052)	(0.052)	(0.062)
Foreign affairs (chair)	-0.052	-0.049	-0.140
	(0.088)	(0.087)	(0.105)
Foreign affairs (Ranking member)	0.271***	0.271***	0.058
	(0.077)	(0.077)	(0.121)
Security & Intelligence	0.037	0.034	0.018
	(0.044)	(0.045)	(0.052)
Security & Intelligence (chair)	-0.210**	-0.218**	-0.065
	(0.097)	(0.100)	(0.087)
Security & Intelligence (Ranking member)	0.073	0.082	-0.093
	(0.106)	(0.107)	(0.118)

Dependent variable:	Log (meetings)		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Armed services	-0.001	-0.005	0.008
	(0.032)	(0.032)	(0.059)
Armed services (chair)	-0.052	-0.046	0.142
	(0.091)	(0.088)	(0.121)
Armed services (Ranking member)	0.448***	0.451***	0.466***
	(0.161)	(0.161)	(0.171)
Energy & Commerce	0.032	0.032	-0.017
	(0.050)	(0.049)	(0.063)
Energy & Commerce (chair)	-0.405***	-0.397***	-0.416***
	(0.123)	(0.121)	(0.148)
Energy & Commerce (Ranking member)	-0.447**	-0.458**	-0.708***
	(0.206)	(0.208)	(0.240)
Legislator fixed effects	No	No	Yes
Country × year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
R^2	0.31	0.31	0.43
Observations	8,558	8,558	8,465

Table E.3: Legislator characteristics and meetings intensity, Poisson estimation

This table relates meetings between foreign country representatives and US legislators to individual characteristics. The unit of analysis is a country-legislator-year triad. The dependent variable is the total number of meetings in a year with U.S legislators, *Number of meetings*. In column 1, we include the following legislator characteristics: whether the legislator is a member of the House of Representatives (*House member*), vote share in the elections (*Vote share*), an indicator capturing party affiliation (*Democrat*), member of the party that is in control of the senate (*Majority*) and rank within the party (*Seniority*). In column 2, we include the following ideological characteristics: Distance from median (ideology), and measures of legislator ideology, *DW-NOMINATE 1* and *DW-NOMINATE 2*. In column 3, we include the characteristics that might affect influence: lawmaking effectiveness of the legislator (*Legislative Effectiveness Score*), whether she is a senate or house committee and sub-committee chair (*Committee (Sub-committee) chair*), a member of rules, ways and means, and appropriations committee (*Power committee membership*). We also capture whether the legislator is a member (ranking member or chair) of, either a senate or house committee, the following committees: (i) the rules, ways and means, and appropriations, (ii) foreign affairs, (iii) Security & Intelligence, (iv) Armed Services, and (v) Energy & Commerce. All specifications include *Country*×*Year* fixed effects and specification 5 includes legislator fixed effects to control for time-invariant legislator characteristics. We use Poisson to estimate the coefficients. Standard errors are clustered at the country level and are robust to heteroscedasticity. ***, **, * denote significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% level, respectively.

Dependent variable:	Number of Meetings				
Characteristics	Legislator	Ideology	Importance	All	All
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
House member	-0.055			0.004	-0.240**
	(0.041)			(0.047)	(0.099)
Vote share (Log)	0.195***			0.198***	0.221***
	(0.041)			(0.048)	(0.082)
Democrat	0.009				
	(0.026)				
Majority	-0.046**			-0.141***	-0.034
	(0.019)			(0.037)	(0.067)
Seniority	0.005*			0.007**	0.015
	(0.003)			(0.003)	(0.009)
Distance from median (ideology)		-0.017		-0.232***	-0.057
		(0.045)		(0.076)	(0.187)
DW-NOMINATE 1		-0.033**		-0.018	0.563
		(0.014)		(0.014)	(0.655)
DW-NOMINATE 2		-0.004		0.006	0.481*
		(0.012)		(0.014)	(0.265)
Legislative Effectiveness Score			0.004	0.004	0.010*
			(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.005)
Committee chair			0.001	-0.012	-0.014
			(0.051)	(0.047)	(0.038)
Sub-committee chair			-0.027*	0.005	-0.029
			(0.015)	(0.024)	(0.026)
Power committee membership			0.083**	0.066**	0.017
			(0.036)	(0.033)	(0.029)
Foreign affairs			0.201***	0.221***	0.204***
			(0.036)	(0.043)	(0.052)
Foreign affairs (chair)			0.035	0.023	0.093
			(0.081)	(0.079)	(0.106)
Foreign affairs (Ranking member)			0.031	-0.090	-0.081
			(0.074)	(0.076)	(0.122)
Security & Intelligence			0.070***	0.074***	-0.006
			(0.027)	(0.025)	(0.031)
Security & Intelligence (chair)			0.083	0.104	0.061
			(0.103)	(0.101)	(0.112)
Security & Intelligence (Ranking member)			-0.046	-0.092	-0.090
			(0.065)	(0.063)	(0.075)

Dependent variable:	Number of Meetings				
Characteristics	Legislator	Ideology	Importance	All	All
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Armed services			-0.011	0.006	0.025
			(0.031)	(0.032)	(0.056)
Armed services (chair)			-0.158*	-0.198**	0.003
			(0.093)	(0.090)	(0.097)
Armed services (Ranking member)			0.222***	0.153**	0.063
			(0.065)	(0.075)	(0.091)
Energy & Commerce			-0.030	-0.019	0.001
			(0.034)	(0.034)	(0.067)
Energy & Commerce (chair)			-0.267*	-0.314**	-0.298**
			(0.142)	(0.148)	(0.139)
Energy & Commerce (Ranking member)			-0.303**	-0.378***	-0.358*
			(0.130)	(0.134)	(0.187)
Legislator fixed effects	No	No	No	No	Yes
Country × year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	36,555	36,555	36,555	36,555	36,525

Figure E.1: The government of Guatemala lobbying for foreign aid

Registration #5494
Item 12 for April 30, 2003 filing

11/04/04	Michael D. Smith discussion with appropriations staff regarding foreign appropriations; discussion with Senator Harkin and staff regarding foreign aid; review routed materials regarding efforts of other nations targeting Eritrea.

Figure E.2: Federation of German Industries lobbying for corporate subsidies

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Foreign Principal(s)	Date	Contact	Method	Purpose
Federation of German Industries (Bundesverband der Deutschen Industrie, BDI)	03/23/2023	Colin St. Maxens International Trade Policy Advisor Office of Senator Mike Crapo	Email	Outreach for introductory meeting
Federation of German Industries (Bundesverband der Deutschen Industrie, BDI)	03/27/2023	Dan Cheever, Legislative Assistant, Office of Senator Todd Young	Meeting	Discussed technology policy issues such as tax credits for R&D and provided information on upcoming TBI delegation visits.

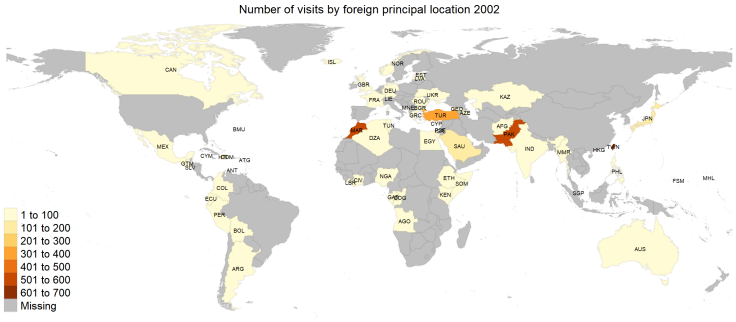
Figure E.3: Embassy of Japan talking about Japan-Maryland relations

EMBASSY OF JAPAN

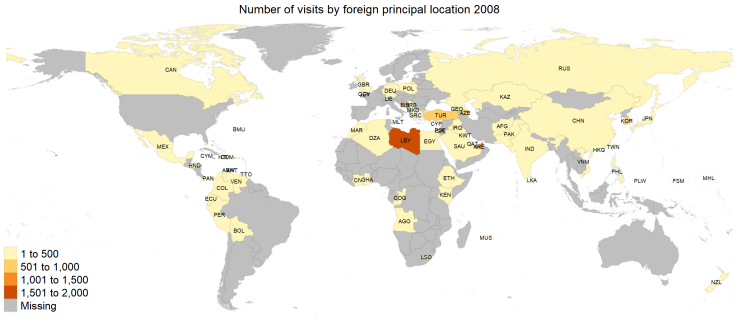
FARA TIMELINE

Date	Activity/Subject Matter	Government Official or Employee Contacted	Manner of Contact
5/24/2015	Japan-Maryland Relations	Maryland Governor Larry Hogan	Meeting
5/24/2015	Japan-Maryland Relations	Michael Gill, Maryland Secretary of Department of Commerce	Meeting
5/26/2015	Japan-Maryland	Laura Wetherald	Email

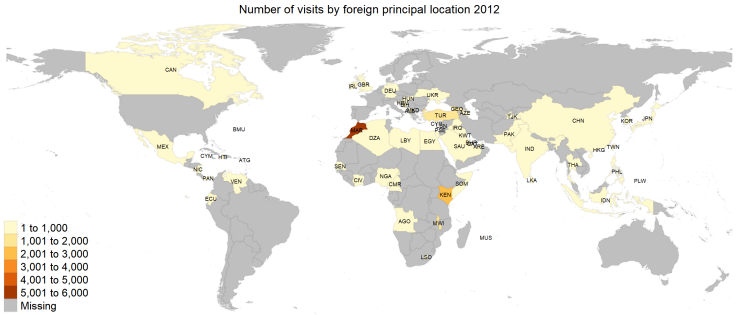
Figure E.4: Meeting intensity over time and foreign principal location



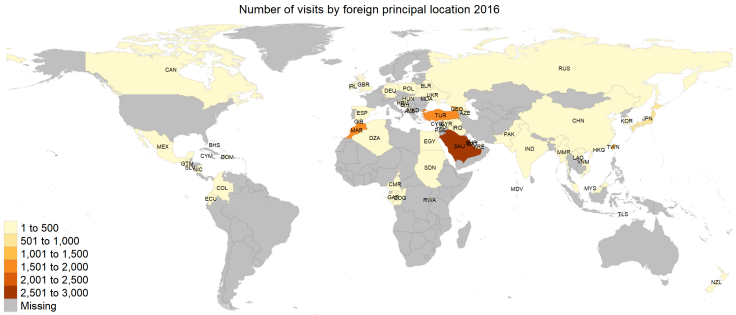
a 2002



b 2008



c 2012



d 2016

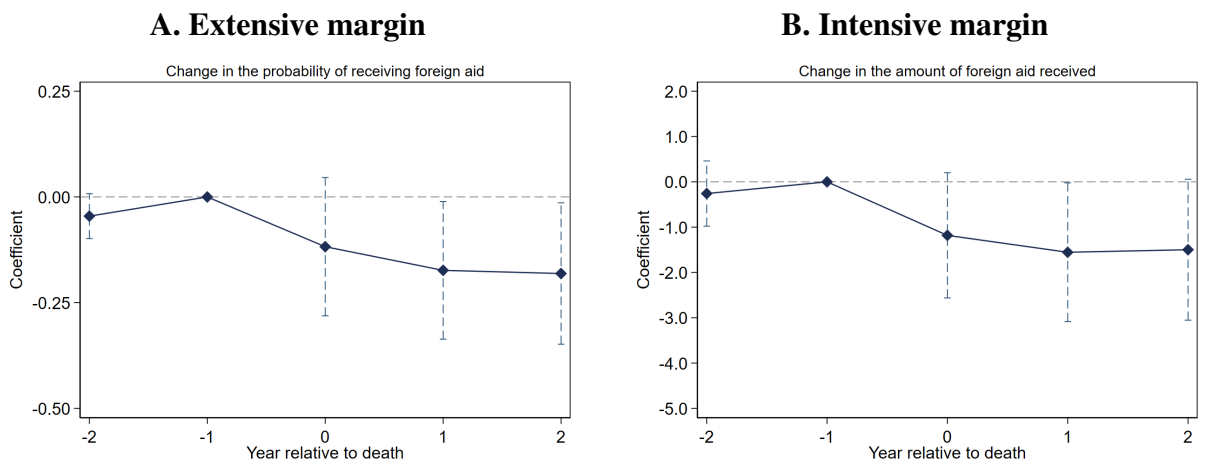


Figure E.5: *Notes*: The figure shows changes in foreign aid in the extensive and the intensive margin for countries that lose a connection due to the death of a legislator relative to countries that receive foreign aid but do not meet with any legislator who died in our sample.

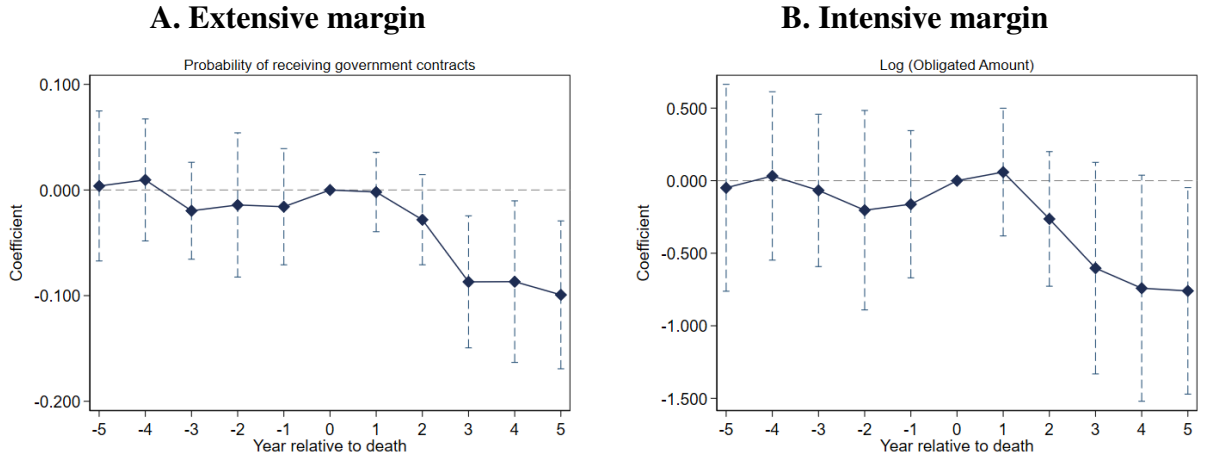


Figure E.6: *Notes*: the figure shows the relative response in the extensive and the intensive margin for government contracts assigned to foreign firms headquartered in countries connected to the dead legislator.