Foreign Influence in US Politics*

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Abstract

We document that foreign lobbying shapes US government spending and public policy. We introduce a comprehensive dataset of 180,000 date-stamped, in-person meetings between foreign agents and individual US legislators, spanning 2000 to 2018 and covering 146 countries and 1,200 legislators. We find that meetings are positively related to legislator lawmaking effectiveness and membership to foreign affairs committee and foreign agents maintain connections with legislators even after they depart from important committees. Around these meetings, foreign countries benefit from increased financial aid and advantageous product tariffs. Finally, we study benefits and costs accruing to legislators and show monetary and electoral benefits, but no evidence that US legislators are 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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Washington lobbyists may not be a group with high ethical standards, and foreign lobbyists, with their track record of working for Nazis, drug-running despots, and death squad dictators, are widely thought to be the lowest type of Beltway pond scum.

Ken Silverstein, *Turkmeniscam*

1 Introduction

Billions of dollars have flowed from foreign governments to Washington lobbyists in recent years. Their goal? To shape 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 times, 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, we don't have broad-based evidence. This limits our understanding of how much sway foreign nations actually have over US foreign aid and tariff policies. It also leaves us in the dark about what benefits politicians might gain from supporting these nations.

This paper answers these questions by constructing a novel dataset that uses information on meetings between foreign agents (i.e. agents working in the US on behalf of foreign principals) and US legislators from the Department of Justice (DOJ). Using this dataset, we first characterize the nature and scope of connections between foreign agents and legislators from 2000 to 2018. We then study which country and legislator characteristics relate to meetings. On the extensive margin, countries that lobby trade more with the US, receive more diplomatic visits by the US presidents and at the same time experience more political violence and have more corruption relative to non-lobbying countries. Among legislator characteristics, lawmaking effectiveness and membership in the foreign affairs committee are important correlates of these connections.

Foreign countries benefit from these meetings through greater foreign aid and lower product tariffs. Legislators also reap rewards: more frequent meetings between foreign country representatives and US legislators relate to an increase in the share of registered voters sharing

an ethnic bond with that country and an increase in the number of privately-sponsored trips to these countries. Moreover, we document economically small costs to legislators, as proxied by changes in political contributions or in the probability of being re-elected. In sum, we show that foreign lobbying is effective in shaping public policy and resource allocation in the US, and find no evidence that legislators are punished by their constituents after meeting with foreign country representatives.

Our primary data come from filings under the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) enforced by the DOJ. FARA, originally enacted in 1938 to fight Nazi propaganda, imposes reporting requirements on all foreign principals lobbying in the US. We link each meeting with a US legislator to a single foreign client represented by a foreign agent (lobbyist) using detailed supplemental filings. In total, our dataset covers over 180,000 in-person meetings by 146 foreign countries lobbying approximately 1,200 US legislators across 10 Congresses.

The analysis proceeds in four parts. The first part of the analysis identifies foreign country and US legislator characteristics important for lobbying connections. Several characteristics influence a foreign country's propensity to lobbying in the US, including, trade partnerships with the US, the frequency of visits by US presidents, and whether the foreign country has been sanctioned by the US or has a history of political corruption. Regarding legislator characteristics, we find that foreign agents meet disproportionately with legislators who are most effective at advancing bills through the legislative process or members of power committees. More than 25% of meetings are with members of the Foreign Affairs Committee. On the intensive margin, only changes to lawmaking effectiveness and membership in the Foreign Affairs Committee positively correlate with changes in meeting intensity. Moreover, foreign agents continue to meet with legislators, including those of lower ranks, even after their departure from committees directly relevant to the foreign countries they represent.

The second part of the analysis studies the benefits to foreign countries around meetings. In panel regressions, we show that countries that meet more often receive more foreign aid on both intensive and extensive margins. We also show that meetings between foreign countries and legislators sitting in a given committee are related to a larger probability that a favourable bill passes that committee or an unfavourable bill does not advance that specific committee.

To better identify the causal link between meetings and benefits, we exploit legislator deaths as an exogenous shock to foreign country connections in the setting of foreign aid.

This allows us to establish that meetings with legislators identify political connections that benefit foreign countries. Our estimates imply a substantial per-meeting loss of $4.4 million in the form of aid to foreign countries from the death of a legislator they are connected to.

The third part of the analysis examines the benefits to legislators. To do this, we rely on a novel dataset on voter registration that allows us to link the ethnicity of the electoral base to that of the foreign country meeting with legislators. We document that more frequent meetings are associated with an increase in the share of registered voters with ethnic affiliations to the foreign country. Additionally, more meetings with legislators are associated with more foreign trips sponsored by private entities linked to the foreign country.

The last part of the analysis shows that, on average, costs to legislators are economically small. We examine aggregate political contributions made by individuals to legislators around meetings with foreign representatives. Additionally, we study whether these meetings influence the likelihood that an incumbent legislator wins an election in a specific election year. In both cases, we consistently find that the costs are negligible. 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, and the result above robustly links 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 expected to be too costly to their reputation. As our sample focuses only on realized meetings, one would expect that the benefit legislators receive exceed their costs (Grossman and Helpman, 1996). Second, although resources may be diverted to foreign governments, the resulting policies can still lead to economic growth that benefits a legislator's constituents.While it is likely 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.

Taken together, our study identifies the determinants of connections between foreign countries and legislators and examines the role that these connections play in shaping public policy and the allocation of government resources. By analyzing meetings, we provide insights that we hope 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

economics and public finance, and we believe it will be of interest to a wide community of scholars in these fields. Overall, our results shed light on how access to legislators is obtained and distributed, 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 (Grossman and Helpman, 1994, 2001; Persson and Tabellini, 2002). 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; 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; Grotteria, 2022).

Second, we contribute to the literature that relies on campaign contributions, donations, and past employment networks to proxy for connections. In contrast, our dataset sheds light on the complementary role of meetings with individual US legislators. 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 and complementary direct measure of connections, 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 associated with 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 Data

In this section, we offer a description of the datasets used in the paper.

2.1 Foreign Agents Registration Act

To study foreign lobbying and influence in the US, we construct a novel dataset listing all in-person meetings with exact dates between lobbyists working on behalf of foreign clients and members of the Congress.[1,2] We hand-collect data from supplemental statements filed under FARA, providing detailed information on meetings between representatives of individual foreign countries and US legislators. This comprehensive dataset allows us to examine the characteristics of US legislator or foreign countries that relate to meetings, and simultaneously

[1]For brevity, throughout the text, we may refer to the "meetings between the foreign agents working on behalf of foreign countries and US legislators" as "meetings between foreign countries and US legislators."

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

provide us with the unique opportunity to investigate the scope and nature of foreign influence in US politics.

We obtain our data from over 12,000 semi-annual lobbying disclosures made under the FARA from the US DOJ. The FARA requires agents operating in the US (*foreign agents*) to register with the DOJ and file disclosures if they work on *covered activities* — political/lobbying activity or public relations — on behalf of a *foreign principal*.[3] Of all foreign principals 87.8% are foreign governments and political parties, 7.3% are non-profit associations, whereas 6.4% are foreign corporations.[4] Importantly, FARA imposes disclosure requirements on the foreign agents who work on activities involving the public or political interests of a foreign government or political party, but exempt activities that are purely commercial or trade interests (i.e., purchase and sale of property, services, or commodities).

We digitize and manually transcribe these supplemental filings to create a dataset covering more than 180,000 in-person meetings to approximately 1,200 members of Congress by 500 unique lobbying firms.[5,6] We determine the country of origin for each foreign principal, allowing us to link each meeting with a unique foreign country.[7] This gives us 146 unique foreign countries as clients during the period 2000–2018.

We focus on question 12 and the corresponding attachments from all Supplemental Statements filed under FARA. Question 12, reproduced in Panel A of Figure 1, 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 which US legislator they met with, as seen in Panel B of Figure 1.

[3]To determine whether foreign principals are foreign governments, foreign firms, or foreign non-profit associates, we review each foreign principal in our data and assign them to a category. This process is detailed in Appendix **??**.

[4]Foreign principals can fit in multiple categories, e.g., state-owned enterprises. Hence, we assign foreign individuals to parties, corporations, or associations depending on their role at the time of the lobbying.

[5]Examples of popular legislators are included in Table D.1 in the online appendix.

[6]The results discussed in this manuscript remain unchanged once we include e-mails and phone calls reported through FARA. These estimations were reported in the previous version of the manuscript and for brevity, in the current version, we only consider in-person meetings.

[7]For each foreign principal, we determine the country of origin using data from the World Bank and 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.

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 1: *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.

The penalties for FARA non-compliance are severe. As of June 2023, violations are punishable by a fine of $250,000 and up to five years in prison. Since 2000, the Department of Justice has initiated 13 criminal FARA cases against 14 entities and individuals that have reached resolutions to date.[8] 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, under the LDA, lobbyists serving domestic agents are required to register with the clerk of the U.S. House of Representatives and the secretary of the U.S. Senate. As of June 2023, LDA violations can lead to a fine up to $200,000 per violation, or up to five years in prison. Despite this, from 1995 to 2017, only nine LDA cases were settled with civil penalties of $200,000 or less. This discrepancy might be because the House and Senate clerks lack the enforcement power of the DOJ, which oversees FARA (Thurber, Campbell, and Dulio,

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

2019).[9]

2.2 Country/legislator characteristics, outcomes variables, and other data

We merge our dataset of meetings, obtained from FARA supplemental filings, with data from various sources on foreign countries and US legislators. For more information about the data and how we created the variables, see the online appendix Section A.

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, Strezhnev, and Voeten (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

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

to 1 reflects a more conservative ideology whereas a score closer to -1 reflects a more liberal ideology.

Main outcomes of interest. In Section 4, we examine whether meetings between foreign agents and legislators are positively associated with benefits to foreign countries or US legislators. We extract data on trade policies relating to product tariffs from GovTrack. These 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. Additionally, we rely on data on foreign aid and financial assistance to foreign countries granted by US agencies.

We also 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 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 register 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.

Finally, 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.[10,11]

3 Describing the variation in meetings

We begin by presenting an overview of the patterns in the data. These will help us to motivate some features of our empirical specifications in the next section where we test whether

[10]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.

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

meetings are related to changes in public policy and political outcomes.

3.1 Descriptive analysis

Figure 2 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 an average of 11 legislators, while a foreign country at the 90^{th} percentile meets with almost 90 legislators.

3.1.1 Country characteristics

Table 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 U.S., for example, Exports are $ 560 million versus $ 258 million, and Imports are $ 578 millions versus $ 241 millions.

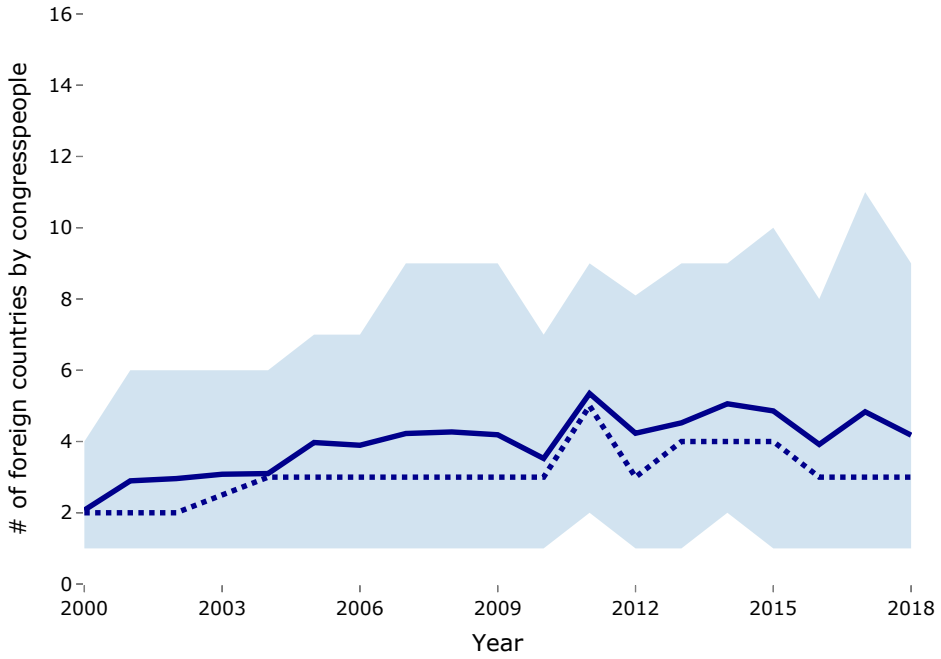
Regarding institutional characteristics, the median foreign country in our sample shows more politically polarized than the median country in the V-Dem database for the same period (0.075 vs -0.07) and has a slightly smaller political corruption index (0.53 vs 0.55). In terms of identities of foreign countries, Online Appendix Figure D.1 presents the heatmap of meeting frequency for specific years in the sample with varying color intensity 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.

3.1.2 Legislator characteristics

Personal. Table 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 vari-

able 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

A. Number of foreign countries meeting with each congressperson



B. Number of congresspeople meeting with each foreign country

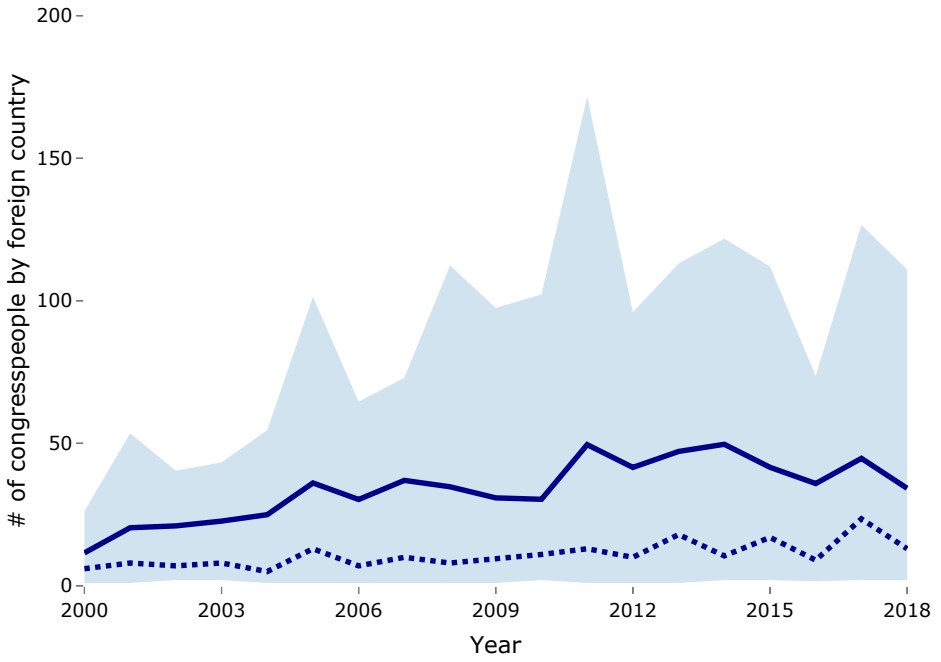


Figure 2: *Notes*: The figure presents an annual summary of the number of foreign principals whose representatives met with each congressperson (Panel A) and the number of congresspeople who have met with each foreign principal's representative (Panel B). The solid line represents the average, the dashed line the median, and the extremes of the shaded area are the 10^{th} and 90^{th} percentile in each year.

Table 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

old and holds 16% of their meetings with women legislators and 8% of their meetings with underrepresented minority legislators (Latin American or African American).

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 2 highlights foreign countries meet more often with legislators who, on average, have served for six terms in the Congress.

Table 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
		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

Ideological. We primarily utilize the first dimension of the DW-NOMINATE score, DW-NOMINATE 1, which reflects economic and governmental aspects of ideology. A secondary dimension, DW-NOMINATE 2, distinguishes nuances within major political parties on issues such as currency, nativism, civil rights, and lifestyle.

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. Motivated by prior work, we focus on the first dimension of the DW-NOMINATE

score, DW-NOMINATE 1, which 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. Near-zero averages for both measures imply balanced engagement with legislators of different ideologies.

Figure 3 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 shows that foreign countries consistently engage with legislators from various political ideologies and party affiliations over time.

Importance/influence. Table 2 shows that foreign countries meets 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 4 plots the evolution of meetings with effective lawmakers. The horizontal axis indicates the meeting year, since lawmaker 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, 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 2 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

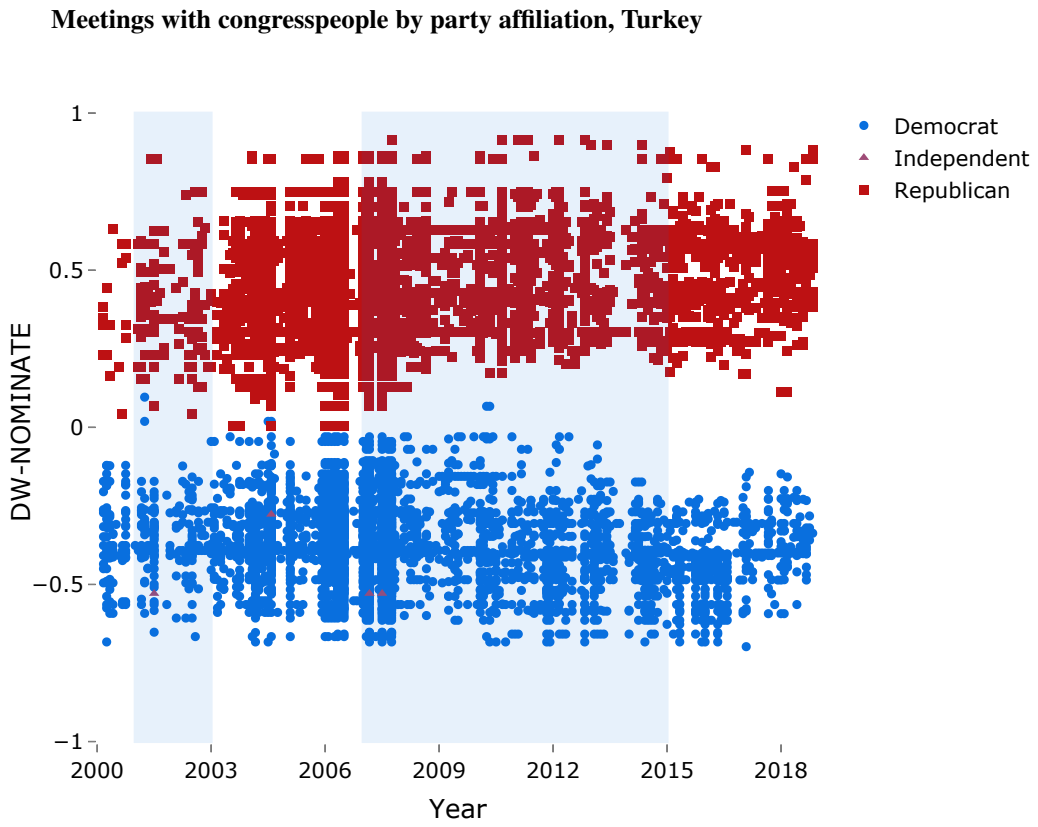


Figure 3: *Notes*: The figure shows the contact pattern over time for the government of Turkey. A contact is defined as a year-month with at least one meeting between a representative of a foreign country and a legislator. Each dot in the figure represents a contact. meetings with republican legislators 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).

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 energy and commerce committee are fewer at 13%.

The average values reported in Table 2 hide substantial time variation in the meetings with a given committee in a year. Panel A of Figure 5 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 & Intelligence committee members more than doubled accounting for 10% of all meetings in 2000 and 20% of all meetings in 2018. Meetings with members of Energy & Commerce saw only a modest increase.

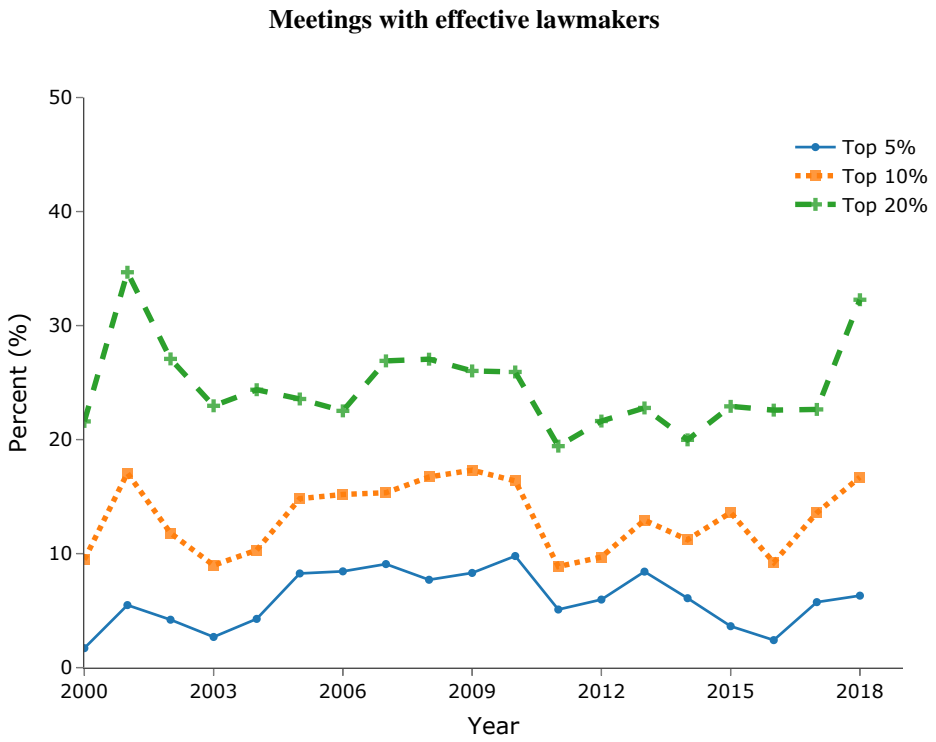
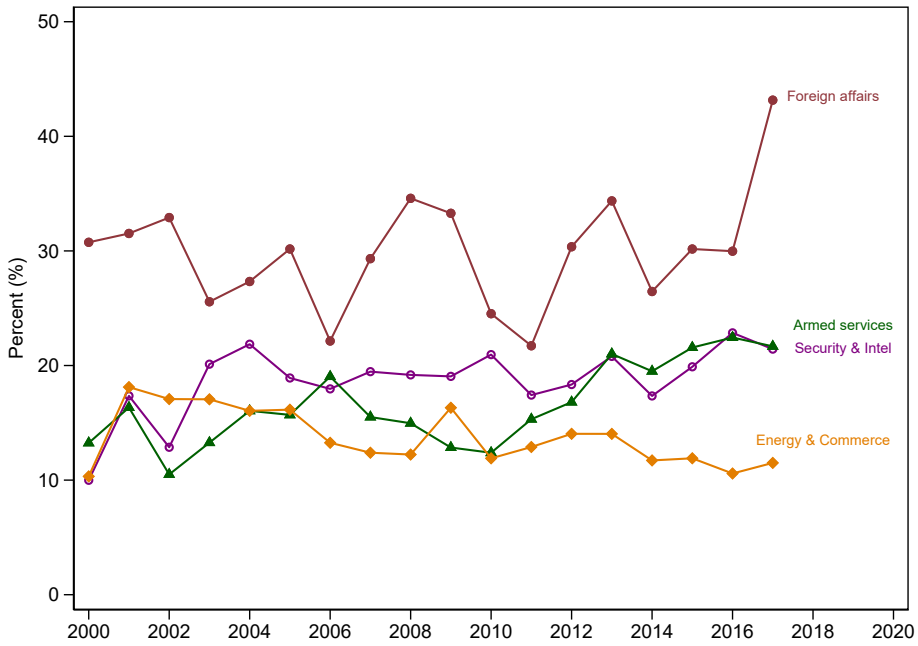


Figure 4: *Notes*: The figure shows the meetings with effective lawmakers over time for all foreign countries. We rank each legislator by their lawmaker effectiveness score (LES) from the Centre of Effective Lawmaking. We then compute the fraction of meetings with top 5% of legislators (blue circles), 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.

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 sizes and highlights the importance of meetings with the committee chair relative to meetings with an average committee member. In Panel B of Figure 5 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.

Overall, these descriptive statistics are informative of the variation in the country and legislator characteristics that we explore in detail below. Our findings provide novel insights into

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

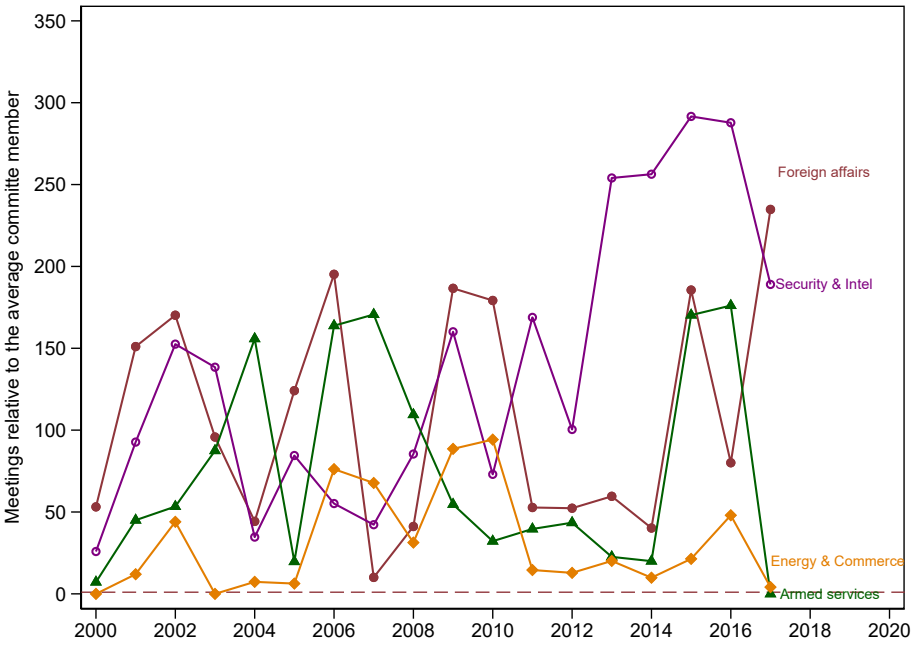


Figure 5: *Notes*: Panel A shows the percentage of meetings with a given committee relative to the total meetings each year. Panel B shows the meetings with chairs scaled by the average number of meetings with members in a given committee. The horizontal red dashed line is set at 1. Th is value represents 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.

the nature and scope of legislator links with foreign countries. We next proceed to relate meetings with country and legislator characteristics to understand which characteristics matter for connections with foreign countries.

3.2 Which countries use FARA to lobby US legislators?

Table 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:

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

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 associated with the decision to lobby US legislators. Lastly, in the online appendix Table D.3, 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

Table 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

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).

3.3 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:

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

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 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.

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

Table 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

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 associations 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.[12]

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

3.4 The role of committee assignments

Next, we explore whether committee assignments can explain meetings between foreign countries and US legislators. 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 above, 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).[13]

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." The quid-pro-quo channel posits that foreign countries primarily engage with legislators currently sitting in important committees, leveraging their immediate authority for potential short-term gains. Conversely, the information channel suggests that the relationships established between lobbyists and legislators serve as a valuable resource for exchanging useful information, even beyond the legislator's tenure in influential committees. As such, if the quid-pro-quo channel is the primary mechanism underlying these meetings, we should foreign countries to to meet less often with legislators after they depart important committees.

In Table 5, we examine changes in meeting intensity around the time of departure of legislators from important committees. The committee assignments for legislators are available

[12] In the online appendix Table D.2, we show that these results are robust to Poisson estimation.

[13] 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 5: Meetings around legislators switching important committees

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, *Log (1+meetings$_t$)*, the natural logarithm of one plus 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 Switcher* 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, House Committee on Homeland security, House Committee on Foreign Affairs, House committee on Intelligence, Senate Committee on Appropriations, Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, Senate Committee on the Budget, Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Senate Committee on Intelligence, 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:	Log (1+meetings)			
	All legislators		*High-ranked legislators*	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
After x Switcher	-0.001	-0.001	-0.003	-0.003
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Congress	No	Yes	No	Yes
Lobbying firm	No	Yes	No	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	0.07	0.06	0.07
Observations	584,860	584,860	381,912	381,912

at the monthly level. Given the granularity of our data we can 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 hold constant the relative importance 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 also consider changes in meeting intensity can be driven by the relevant importance of the issue to a lobbyist rather than a foreign country (Bertrand, Bombardini, and Trebbi, 2014).[14] To do so, in some specifications, we include lobbying firm fixed effects and account for lobbying firm switching issues in a predictable way when a legislator departs from a committee. We organize our analyses at the committee-lobbying firm-month level. Results in Table 5 suggest that foreign countries continue to meet with legislators

[14]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.

even following their departure from important committees.

These results are inconsistent with the prediction of the short-term quid-pro-quo channel. Our results are instead consistent with two alternative hypotheses: (1) an information channel, or (2) a quid-pro-quo channel that operates with 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. Overall, our results emphasize the importance for foreign countries to maintain connections with legislators beyond their current committee assignments.

4 Foreign country and legislator benefits

In this section, we examine both the benefits to foreign countries whose agents meet more often with legislators and the benefits to US legislators who meet more often with foreign agents. For foreign countries, we examine benefits including financial assistance or foreign aid and beneficial changes in US product tariffs. For legislators, we examine benefits in terms of the percentage of registered voters with ethnic ties to a foreign country that the legislator meets with, as well as privately sponsored trips outside of official office responsibilities.

Using panel regressions, we relate meetings between legislators and foreign countries to each of these benefits. We study two margins of adjustment, and estimate the following panel regressions:

$$\mathbb{1}\{\text{Benefit} > 0\}_{lsft} = \gamma_f + \delta_{st} + \beta \text{meetings}_{lsft} + \eta \text{Controls}_{ft} + \epsilon_{lsft} \tag{3}$$

$$\log(\text{Benefit}_{lsft}) = \gamma_f + \delta_{st} + \beta \text{meetings}_{lsft} + \eta \text{Controls}_{ft} + \epsilon_{lsft}, \tag{4}$$

where l represents the legislator met with, s represents the state associated with the legislator, f represents the foreign country whose agents meet with the legislator, and t represents the meeting year.

As we are interested in studying both the intensive and the extensive margins of adjustments, we work with a balanced panel, and account for years without a meeting by transforming the dependent and independent variables by adding one before taking the natural logarithm. Equation (3) quantifies the extensive margin, i.e., increase in the probability of the benefit of interest, and Equation (4) quantifies the intensive margin, i.e., increase in the value

of the benefit. The coefficient of interest is β, identified by variation in meetings between multiple foreign countries and legislators. Standard errors are corrected for heteroscedasticity and autocorrelation and clustered at the country-level.

The flexible empirical specification allows us to rule out concerns about location-specific and country-specific effects that may affect outcome variables for two reasons. First, state-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 the benefits to foreign countries or US legislators.

We also explore the robustness of our findings to other outcomes. In online appendix Section C, we show robustness documenting that meetings between representatives of a foreign country and a legislator are associated with more official trips by the same legislator to that foreign country and more Twitter mentions by the legislator about the foreign country.

Finally, while the panel regressions are informative of the association between meetings and benefits, it is unclear whether omitted factors and reverse causality drive the relationship. To circumvent such issues, we examine changes in benefits to foreign countries that unexpectedly lose a connection due to the death of a representative or a senator. Under the null hypothesis that connections to the legislators do not matter, the death of a legislator they are connected with should not be related to benefits. Note that we can perform such an analysis only when we can cleanly link individual legislator decisions to benefits. We reject this null hypothesis and provide evidence that larger benefits accrue to foreign countries whose representatives meet often with legislators.

It is unclear whether the null hypothesis should be that each party receives no benefits. Our sample by construction relies on realized meetings, where both parties have decided and agreed to meet, suggesting that in expectation, there are likely positive benefits to each party. Yet, our results provide novel evidence on the types of benefits to foreign countries and US legislators and, importantly, offer a first-order quantification informing economists, political scientists, and US voters.

Table 6: Meetings with Legislators and Foreign Aid 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 agency-foreign country-year. The dependent variable in columns 1 and 2, $\mathbb{1}_{Aid>0}$, an indicator for receiving foreign aid from the respective U.S. agency while in columns 3 and 4, the dependent variable is, *Log (1+Aid amount)*, natural logarithm of one plus the amount of foreign aid received by the foreign country from the respective U.S. agency. 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 legislators sitting on relevant committees. These include: House Foreign Affairs Committee, House Committee on the Budget, House Committee on Appropriations, Senate Committee on Appropriations, Senate Committee on Budget and Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. Specifications 1 and 3 include *Country* fixed effects to control for time-invariant country characteristics. Specifications 2 and 4 include *Country* $\times$ *year* fixed effects to control for time-varying country characteristics. 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:	$\mathbb{1}_{Aid>0}$		Log (1+Aid)	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Log (1+Meetings$_t$)	0.245***	0.201***	3.682***	2.962***
	(0.018)	(0.017)	(0.305)	(0.270)
Country fixed effects	Yes	No	Yes	No
Country $\times$ year fixed effects	No	Yes	No	Yes
R^2	0.51	0.70	0.52	0.71
Observations	24,199	24,199	24,199	24,199

4.1 Benefits to foreign countries

Foreign aid. We begin our analysis by examining the allocation of foreign aid to foreign countries. Foreign aid has been noted in the literature as highly important in winning support in major international affairs, maintaining political regimes, or strengthening international alliances (Alesina and Dollar, 2000). Further, prior work highlights the importance of political relations in determining foreign aid and assistance (Kuziemko and Werker, 2006; Sims, 1980). Hence, foreign aid offers a setting to examine the importance of meetings for resource allocation to foreign countries and an easy one where to quantify benefits.[15]

We focus on meetings with individuals sitting on committees important for the assignment of foreign aid: the House Foreign Affairs Committee, House Committee on the Budget, House Committee on Appropriations, Senate Committee on Appropriations, Senate Committee on Budget and Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. We do this for two main reasons. First, a disproportionate share of meetings that we observe are with members of committees important for the designation of foreign aid: more than 25% of all meetings are with members of the Foreign Affairs committee. Second, on average, countries that meet with legislators on these committees, receive $1.45 million more in foreign aid per month relative to those who do not meet (the t-statistics of the difference is 4.02).

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

Results are reported in Table 6. Column 1 reports the results with only country fixed effects, finding that an increase in meetings with a legislator is positively associated with receiving aid and assistance from the US. On the intensive margin, meetings are associated with larger aid and assistance. These results are robust to adding country $\times$ year fixed effects. Note that differences in timing between meetings and aid do not explain our results, as we are exploiting variation at the year-month level. Our results provide novel evidence that more and larger foreign aid are assigned to countries whose representatives meet more often with US legislators.

Trade policy. A large literature in economics 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, but more recent work points to a disproportionate influence of foreign lobbying for trade policies (Hillman and Ursprung, 1988; Gawande, Krishna, and Robbins, 2006; Antràs and i Miquel, 2011). Given this, we focus on tariff bills sponsored in Congress during our sample period. We manually classify bills as "favourable" ("unfavourable") to a particular foreign country depending on whether they propose lower (higher) product tariffs within specific trade agreements. 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.[16]

In our empirical specification, we examine two outcomes of interest. First, we study whether meetings relate to a legislator's propensity to sponsor a bill that is favourable 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 favourable bill passes that committee or an unfavourable 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.

[16]This procedure is outlined in greater detail in Appendix A.3.

Table 7: Meetings around 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, $\mathbb{1}_{Favourablebill}$, 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, $\mathbb{1}_{Favourableaction}$, defined as an indicator for whether a product tariff bills favourable to the foreign country passed a committee in which the legislator sat. The independent variable of interest is, *Log(1+Meetings$_t$)*, defined as the natural logarithm of one plus 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	$\mathbb{1}_{Favourablebill>0}$		$\mathbb{1}_{Favourableaction>0}$	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Log (1+Meetings$_t$)	0.001***	0.001**	0.001**	0.001*
	(0.000)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.000)
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	1,665,903	828,428

Table 7 reports the results. In column 1, we find that more meetings in a given year-month are associated with a larger probability of a favourable bill being sponsored. This increase translates to a change from a baseline probability of 0.039% to 0.040% when meetings double between foreign agents and legislators. 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. In column 3, we find that more meetings with a legislator in a given committee are associated with a higher probability of the favourable bill passing that committee or an unfavourable bill not advancing that committee. 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.

4.2 Deaths of legislators as shocks to connections

While the panel regressions suggest an association between meetings and foreign aid and trade policy, it is unclear whether omitted factors and reverse causality drive the relationship. For instance, in the case of aid, there is a possibility that a country with more aid at stake tends to meet more often with legislators. To mitigate general concerns that unobserved factors that affect both meeting intensity and resource allocation, we study countries that unexpectedly

lose a connection due to the death of a representative or senator.[17] The null hypothesis is that if meetings or connections to the legislators do not matter, then the loss of a connection through deaths should be unrelated to resource allocation. Thus, the identification strategy estimates the effect of losing a connection holding constant country-level and local economic conditions.

In particular, we compare foreign aid for countries exogenously losing a political connection (treated) relative to another country losing a political connection later (control). This analysis exploits the differences in the timing of losing political connection due to deaths. As before with panel regressions, we hold constant time-invariant unobservable country and time-varying location-specific characteristics by including country fixed effects and state-by-year fixed effects, respectively. Moreover, we restrict our analysis to outcomes within a one year window around the death of the legislator to mitigate issues related to overlapping election cycles.

We estimate the following difference-in-differences specification:

$$\mathbb{1}\{\text{Aid} > 0\}_{sft} = \gamma_f + \delta_{st} + \beta \text{Lost connection}_{sf} \times \text{After}_t + \epsilon_{sft} \tag{5}$$

$$\log(\text{Aid amount}_{sft}) = \gamma_f + \delta_{st} + \beta \text{Lost connection}_{sf} \times \text{After}_t + \epsilon_{sft}, \tag{6}$$

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) conditional on being politically active and the set of fixed effects. Standard errors are double clustered at the country-event level.

We examine foreign aid and assistance granted by federal agencies in the US around deaths of legislators. We report results from this exercise in online appendix Table 8. The estimates imply that countries that lose a connection with a legislator through death are 3.5 percentage points less likely to receive an aid and the aid amount they receive are 31 percent lower. Relative to the average aid value of $795 million, this loss represents a total drop in foreign aid of $247 million, translating to a per-meeting loss of $4.4 million. Thus, the loss of a

[17] Deaths have been used to identify importance and ascribe value in several contexts including political ties (Faccio and Parsley, 2009; Brogaard, Denes, 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).

Table 8: Foreign aid received by foreign countries from the US around legislator deaths

This table examines changes in foreign aid received by the foreign country in one year around legislator deaths in a difference-in-differences setting. The unit of analysis is state-foreign country-year. The dependent variable in column 1 is, $\mathbb{1}_{Aid>0}$, an indicator equal to one if the country received aid from the US while in column 2 the dependent variable is, *Log (1+Aid amount)*, natural logarithm of one plus the amount of aid received by the foreign country. *Lost connection* is an indicator variable taking the value of one if the foreign country connected to a US representative or a senator in a state, respectively, loses the connection due to the legislator's death. All regressions include *State* $\times$ *year* fixed effects to control for local economic confounds such as general state policies and *Country* fixed effects to control for time-invariant country characteristics. We use ordinary least squares (OLS) in estimations. Standard errors are double-clustered at the country-event and state levels and are robust to heteroscedasticity. ***, **, * denote significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% level, respectively.

Dependent variable:	$\mathbb{1}_{Aid>0}$	Log (1+ Aid amount)
	(1)	(2)
Lost connection $\times$ After	-0.035***	-0.309**
	(0.009)	(0.120)
Controls	No	No
State $\times$ year fixed effects	Yes	Yes
Country fixed effects	Yes	Yes
R^2	0.74	0.90
Observations	1,847	1,828

connection reduces the foreign aid that the connected foreign countries receive.

4.3 Benefits to US legislators

Having documented the benefits countries receive around the time 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.

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).[18] In particular, for each state and congressional district we count the numbers of voters who are registered with the democratic party and divide this value by the total number of voters of a given ethnicity in the same area. We show our results in a panel regression separating between senators and members of the House

[18]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.

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 to that foreign country.[19]

Table 9 presents the results for the share of Democrat voters of the ethnicity of a foreign country on meetings of that foreign countries interacted with a 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 representative of foreign countries to the share of registered voters in their state. We find a similar higher sensitivity when we focus on House members in column. These results imply that a doubling of meetings between a Democratic senator (representative) and a foreign country's representative leads to 2.0 (1.2) percentage point increase in the share of voters of that country's ethnicity registered to the Democratic party. Given that, on average, each legislator meets 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 rules 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 help in building legislative coalitions in domestic politics (McGee and Moniz, 2021). Moreover, unconditionally, legislators who meet with foreign countries are 3.5-times as likely to receive a sponsored trip from the countries they meet with.

Table 10 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-invariant country characteristics and state-by-year-month fixed effects for time-varying local

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

Table 9: 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 Log(1+Meetings$_t$), natural logarithm of one plus 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 national-level policies and *Country* fixed effects to control for time-invariant country characteristics. 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	Share of registered democrats$_{t+1}$	
	Senate	House member
	(1)	(2)
Log (Meetings$_t$)	-0.003	-0.000
	(0.006)	(0.005)
Democrat	0.122***	0.127***
	(0.010)	(0.007)
Log (Meetings$_t$) × Democrat	0.020*	0.012*
	(0.011)	(0.007)
Country fixed effects	Yes	Yes
Year fixed effects	Yes	Yes
R^2	0.38	0.28
Observations	970	2,506

Table 10: 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 *Log (1+# days)*, defined as the natural logarithm of one plus of 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 *Log(1+Meetings$_t$)*, natural logarithm of one plus 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* × *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) 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	$\mathbb{1}_{Trip>0}$		Log (1+# days)	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Log (1+Meetings$_t$)	0.002***	0.002***	0.004***	0.003***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State × 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	0.01	0.01
Observations	2,124,840	2,124,840	2,124,840	2,124,840

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 meet more often, and (b) to a longer stay in the country.

Table 11: 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 *Log(Political contribution by individuals)* defined as the natural logarithm of the total political contribution made by individuals to legislators in the election year during their political campaigns. The independent variable of interest is *Log(Meetings$_t$)*, natural logarithm of 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 electoral democracy index capturing the extent to which electoral democracy is achieved 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) 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	Log(Political contributions by individuals)		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Log (Meetings$_t$)	0.033	0.031	-0.036
	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.039)
Political corruption index		0.037	
		(0.031)	
Log (Meetings$_t$) $\times$ Political corruption index		-0.039	
		(0.025)	
Electoral democracy index			-0.189*
			(0.110)
Log (Meetings$_t$) $\times$ Electoral democracy index			0.151*
			(0.086)
Legislator fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
State $\times$ year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
R^2	0.87	0.87	0.87
Observations	17,792	17,792	17,792

5 Are there 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 influence 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.

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 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

Table 12: 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 natural logarithm of the number of meetings in a year with US legislators, *Log (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)
Log(Meetings$_t$)	-0.059	-0.109**	-0.060	-0.128***	-0.146***
	(0.041)	(0.042)	(0.041)	(0.048)	(0.048)
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

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 11 shows the results. In column 1, we find that the elasticity of political contributions to meetings is zero. We also exploit differences in foreign country characteristics to further probe the nature of the relationship between meetings and political contributions. In column 2, we find that the elasticity of political contributions by individuals to legislators' meetings with more corrupt foreign countries is lower than the elasticity of political contributions by individuals to legislators' meetings with less corrupt countries. Similarly, in column 3, we find that meetings between legislators and representatives of more democratic countries relate to a higher elasticity of political contributions from individual constituents to meetings. However, we note that the effect is economically small and significant only at the 10% level.

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 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 12 shows that incumbent legislators that meet more often are more likely to stay in the office longer.[20]

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, we show that countries that lobby are important trade partners to the US, receive more diplomatic visits by the US presidents and at the same time experience more political violence and have more corruption relative to non-lobbying countries. Among legislator characteristics, lawmaking effectiveness, and membership of foreign affairs committee are important correlates of these connections.

Using this new dataset, we quantify benefits and costs to foreign countries and legislators. Specifically, we document a significant increase in foreign aid and financial assistance and lower product tariffs. We also document 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 document that costs to US legislators 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

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

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 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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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 et al. (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 lawmaker 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 given to a country split by executive department. 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 U.S. 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.

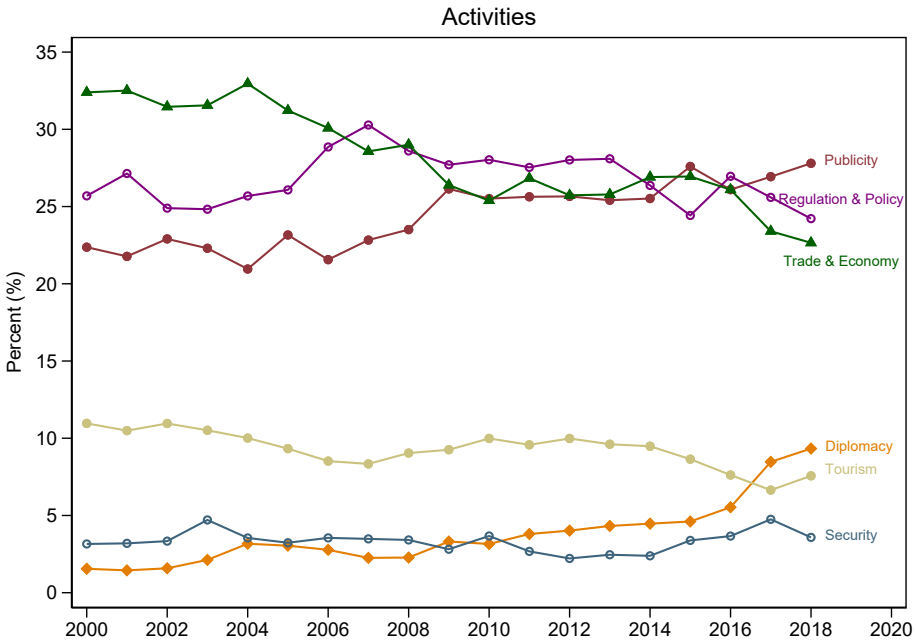
Table B.1 presents the estimates from a regression of the natural logarithm of the number of topics on time-varying characteristics discussed above. In particular, we estimate

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

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 association 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

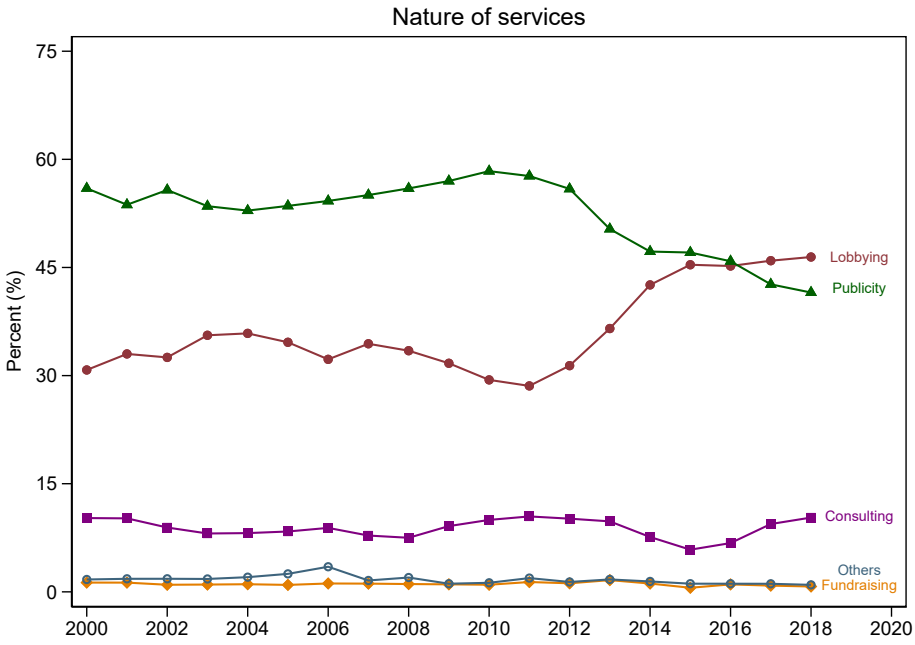


Figure B.1: *Notes*: The figure shows the fraction of activities belonging to each specific topic (Panel A) and each type of services (Panel B). The twelve lobbying topics are identified following the procedure outlined in Appendix B.

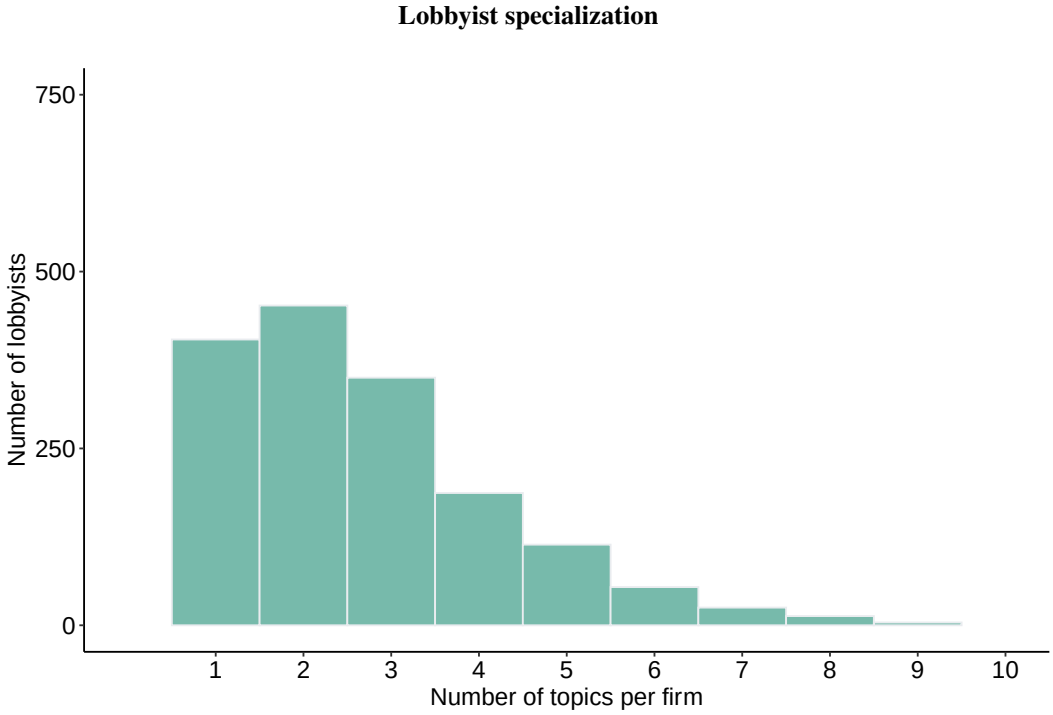


Figure B.2: *Notes*: The histogram shows the number of different topics each lobbying firm has worked on from 2000 to 2018 (horizontal axis), and the corresponding number of lobbying firms that have worked on a given number of topics (vertical axis). The twelve lobbying topics are identified following 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 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.[21] Results for both the official foreign trips and Twitter activity are in Table C.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 associated with (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.

[21] 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 C.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. The dependent variable in columns 3 and 4 is *Log (1+# days)*, defined as the natural logarithm of one plus of total number of days of official trips to the foreign country with whose representatives they met with. 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, *Log (1+# tweets)*, defined as the natural logarithm of one plus of total number of tweets mentioning a foreign country in the same year-month of the meetings. The independent variable of interest is *Log (1+meetings$_t$)*, the natural logarithm of one plus 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) 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.

	Panel A: Official foreign trips			
Dependent variable:	$\mathbb{1}_{Trip>0}$		Log (1+# days)	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Log (1+Meetings$_t$)	0.002***	0.002***	0.003***	0.002***
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(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:	$\mathbb{1}_{Tweet>0}$		Log(1+# tweets)	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Log (1+Meetings$_t$)	0.004**	0.004**	0.004**	0.003**
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(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

D Additional tables and figures

Table D.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 D.2: 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 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: 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:	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:	Log (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

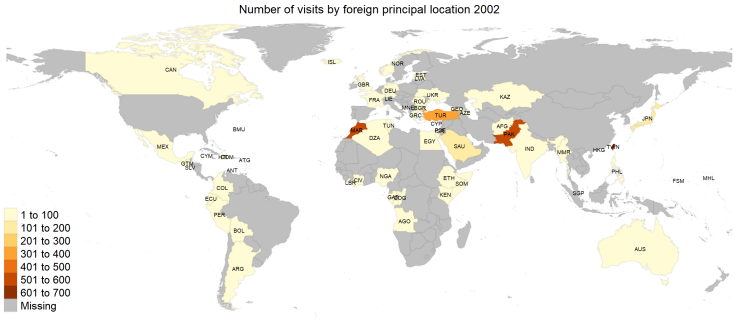
Table D.3: Importance of foreign country population in congressional district for meetings intensity

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.

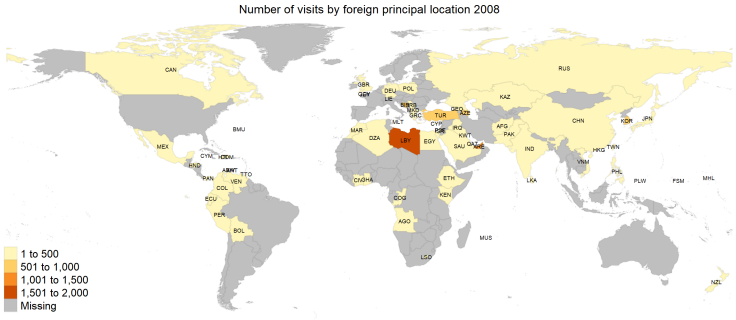
Dependent variable:	Log (meetings)		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Fraction of country's population		0.023***	0.022***
		(0.005)	(0.006)
Vote share (Log)	0.280***	0.279***	0.263***
	(0.073)	(0.073)	(0.070)
Majority	-0.096	-0.095	-0.110
	(0.068)	(0.069)	(0.188)
Seniority	-0.003	-0.003	-0.014
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.028)
Distance 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 $\times$ year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
R^2	0.31	0.31	0.43
Observations	8,558	8,558	8,465

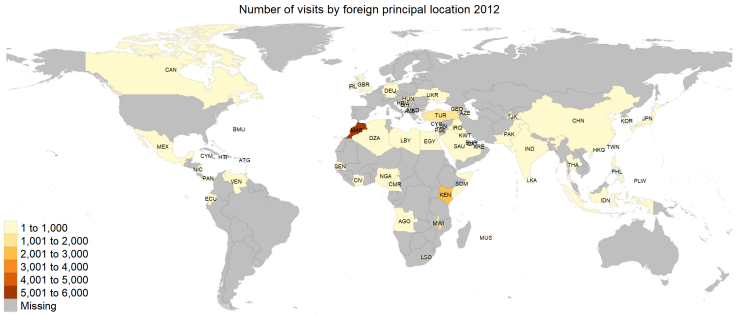
Figure D.1: Meeting intensity over time and foreign principal location



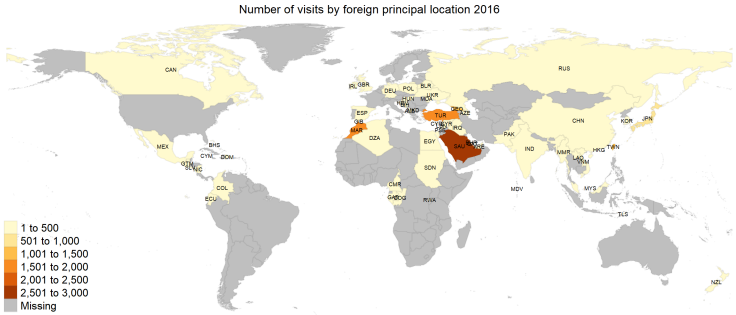
a 2002



b 2008



c 2012



d 2016