

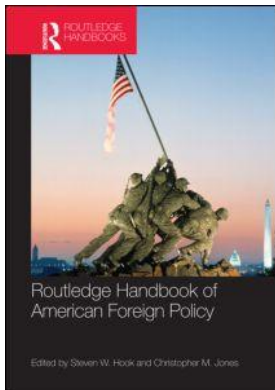
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Ralph G. Carter and James M. Scott

Conventional wisdom holds that “*the captain of the ship of state is the president*” (Crabb and Holt 1992: 297, emphasis in original). As a result, most studies of American foreign policy making focus on the president and/or other White House participants in the process (Rudalevige 2005). Bert Rockman (1994: 59) summarizes this viewpoint well when he says, “because of constitutional interpretations of presidential prerogatives in foreign policy and the president’s unique ability to act, leadership in foreign policy is normally thought to be the particular responsibility of the president.” Relatively few studies attribute any systematic or significant influence by Congress in foreign policy.¹ To many, Congress seems neither prepared nor willing to challenge presidential preferences in foreign policy making (Hinckley 1994). Instead, “Congressional acquiescence in foreign affairs ... is the product of a powerful set of internal norms and attitudes, customs and institutions, a veritable culture of deference” (Weissman 1995: 3).

This common perspective fails to account for consequential policy makers in Congress who play important roles and have significant impacts on American foreign policy. Inside the Washington beltway, a different perspective is found. Virtually every post-World War II president has castigated Congress for intruding into the “presidential” realm of foreign policy making, tired as President Ronald Reagan put it, of “a committee of 535 telling us what we can do” (Hoffman and Shapiro 1985: A22).

In foreign policy making, the president cannot be both preeminent and hamstrung; Congress cannot be both acquiescent and an important actor that must be taken seriously. The puzzle becomes: which view is correct—the preeminent presidency or the assertive Congress? This chapter reviews scholarship on the role, behavior and impact of Congress in American foreign policy, and identifies several patterns of behavior that advance the discussion and distinguish paths for future work. We begin by addressing the broad role and engagement of Congress and then discuss congressional actors, their behavior, and the nature and context of congressional impact. We conclude with a discussion of paths for future research.

Congressional Actors in Foreign Policy

The fact that Congress—as an aggregate institution—often fails to act collectively is at the heart of the debate over its role. However, “Congress” features multiple actors who

both shape policy and serve as access points where policy may be shaped. Hence, there is a need to attend to the range of actors that are actually embodied in “Congress.” There is, first, the institution as a whole, frequently studied through assessments of its legislative outputs. Each chamber can also exert influence, with the Senate having a number of constitutionally provided powers over foreign policy that the House of Representatives does not share. Further, each chamber’s floor becomes another access point, as members try to legislate via floor amendments. Within each chamber, there are the numerous standing committees and subcommittees where most policy is shaped, if not made (Loomis and Schiller 2005). Conference committees also represent a final access point at which policy can be shaped before going to the president. Policy also evolves in formal and informal policy caucuses that are formed around specific policy issues or issues that affect specific regions (Trubowitz 1998; Hammond 1989). Party organizations and leadership also play an increasingly important role both as an access point (Sinclair 2005) and in developing foreign policy positions (Smith 1994). “When the majority party leadership speaks for and acts on behalf of a united majority, it will continue to be a potentially formidable competitor to the president” (Sinclair 1993: 231). Congressional challenges become more pronounced when the majority party is also the opposition party to the president.

Moreover, “Congress is not truly an ‘it’ but a ‘they,’ and the hundreds of members who constitute that plural have their own political needs and substantive agendas” (Rudalevige 2005: 428). Long before matters come to a vote, individual members of Congress (MCs) can highlight issues, help set the governmental agenda, frame debate, introduce bills, and lobby their colleagues and administration officials for their support (Koger 2003; Mayhew 2005; Carter and Scott 2009). In short, “Congress does not check presidential power, individuals within it do” (Howell and Pevehouse 2007: 34). Thus in any given situation, “Congress” is really a shorthand term for those individual members who act in its name (Bax 1977).

Individual MCs represent the most fundamental actors and access points in Congress. The few individuals who choose to act on foreign policy issues become not only its public face (Mayhew 2005); they also become the cue-givers who direct the rest of their chambers; consequently they “act in the name of Congress” (Bax 1977: 884). A decentralized institution gives these motivated individuals considerable power (Hersman 2000). Even as newcomers to Congress, MCs control “million-dollar-per-year operations of staff, communications, travel, and research capacities” to direct at their agendas (Loomis 1998: 121). Their “individualized power has come to rival institutional or structural power when it comes to congressional influence over U.S. foreign policy” (Hersman 2000: 10), and they are especially notable in foreign policy (Hersman 2000: 29). From 1789–1988, nearly one-quarter of the policy actions of individual members dealt with foreign policy (Mayhew 2005).

Avenues of Congressional Influence

The Constitution forces a sharing of foreign policy responsibilities by assigning various powers to the Congress and to the executive, creating an “invitation to struggle” over which branch is to lead in foreign policy (Corwin 1957: 171). The Constitution assigns the president powerful but limited foreign policy roles (Lindsay 1994b). Article 2, Section 2 says the president is the “Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States ... He shall have Power, by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate, to make Treaties, provided two thirds of the Senators present concur; and he shall nominate, and by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate, shall appoint Ambassadors, other public Ministers and Consuls....” The use of these specific powers, court decisions (e.g., Silverstein 1994), and the growth of executive

institutions under the command of the president—especially after World War II—established important historical precedents for presidential leadership (Melanson 2005).

Nevertheless, the Constitution assigns Congress numerous and specific foreign policy powers. Article I, Section 1 gives Congress the general legislative power, and Section 7 adds the power to appropriate funds (“the power of the purse”). Section 8 includes a wide array of foreign policy powers:

- to collect duties,
- to provide for the common defense,
- to regulate foreign commerce,
- to set uniform rules for naturalization of citizens,
- to punish piracy and “other Offences against the Law of Nations,”
- to declare war,
- to raise and support armies and navies,
- to regulate land and naval forces,
- to organize, arm, discipline, and call forth the militia, and
- to make all necessary laws to carry out such powers.

Hence, the constitutional delegation of foreign policy powers to Congress is both wider in scope and more specific in nature than its delegation of powers to the presidency (Koh 1990).

Due to these formal powers and duties, scholarly attention to formal legislation and congressional procedures dominates studies of Congress and foreign policy. Yet there are many ways—formal and informal—for legislators to shape foreign policy (Hersman 2000). Two dichotomies simplify the possibilities. Actions can be legislative or nonlegislative (Burgin 1997) and direct or indirect (Lindsay 1993). Legislative actions pertain to the passage of *specific* pieces of legislation. Nonlegislative actions do not involve a specific item of legislation. Direct actions are specific to both the issue involved and the case at hand. Indirect actions refer to those that seek to influence the broader political context or setting. When these two dichotomies are joined, four broad of influence are identified: direct-legislative, indirect-legislative, direct-nonlegislative, and indirect-nonlegislative (Scott 1997). Examples of the activities that fall within each category are provided in Table 17.1.

Most scholars focus on direct-legislative approaches. These are, after all, most easily measured. Those concerned with how oversight activities shape later policy outcomes appreciate the legislative-indirect avenue of influence (e.g., Lindsay 1994b). Fewer observers appreciate the impact Congress has via nonlegislative avenues, whether direct or indirect. These avenues tend to be a major domain of selected individual MCs who seek to shape the U.S. foreign policy agenda and who often fly “under the radar” of most observers.

Table 17.1 Avenues of Congressional Foreign Policy Influence

	<i>Direct</i>	<i>Indirect</i>
Legislative	Legislation Appropriations Treaties (Senate)	Nonbinding Legislation Procedural Legislation Appointments (Senate)
Nonlegislative	Letters/Phone Calls Consultations/Advising Hearings Oversight Activities Litigation	Agenda Setting Framing Debate Foreign Contacts

Source: Adapted from Scott (1997).

Types of Congressional Engagement

Some of the contradictions in the literature may be attributed to differences in focus. Three types of foreign policy behavior can be identified, as depicted by Figure 17.1: activity, assertiveness, and entrepreneurship. Congressional foreign policy activism includes any effort by Congress and its members to affect policy, whether in support of, or in opposition to, an administration's position. Congressional foreign policy assertiveness, by contrast, involves those instances of activism in which Congress and its members challenge the administration's policy leadership (Scott and Carter 2002a). Assertiveness may involve both reactive efforts (opposition to proposals or policy from an administration) and proactive efforts (initiation of policy). The last type is congressional foreign policy entrepreneurship. This activity is a subset of assertiveness that includes only those foreign policy efforts by individual MCs that are both assertive and proactive. Because of the time investment involved, MCs only become proactive about issues they see as very important (Burden 2007). Entrepreneurship thereby involves congressional policy innovation or change driven by individuals sufficiently dissatisfied with the administration's existing policy (or the lack of a policy) to push for their own policy initiatives (Baumgartner and Jones 1993). By definition, such innovation means non-incremental policy change. Thus, entrepreneurship involves the initiation of new policy or the repudiation of existing policy.

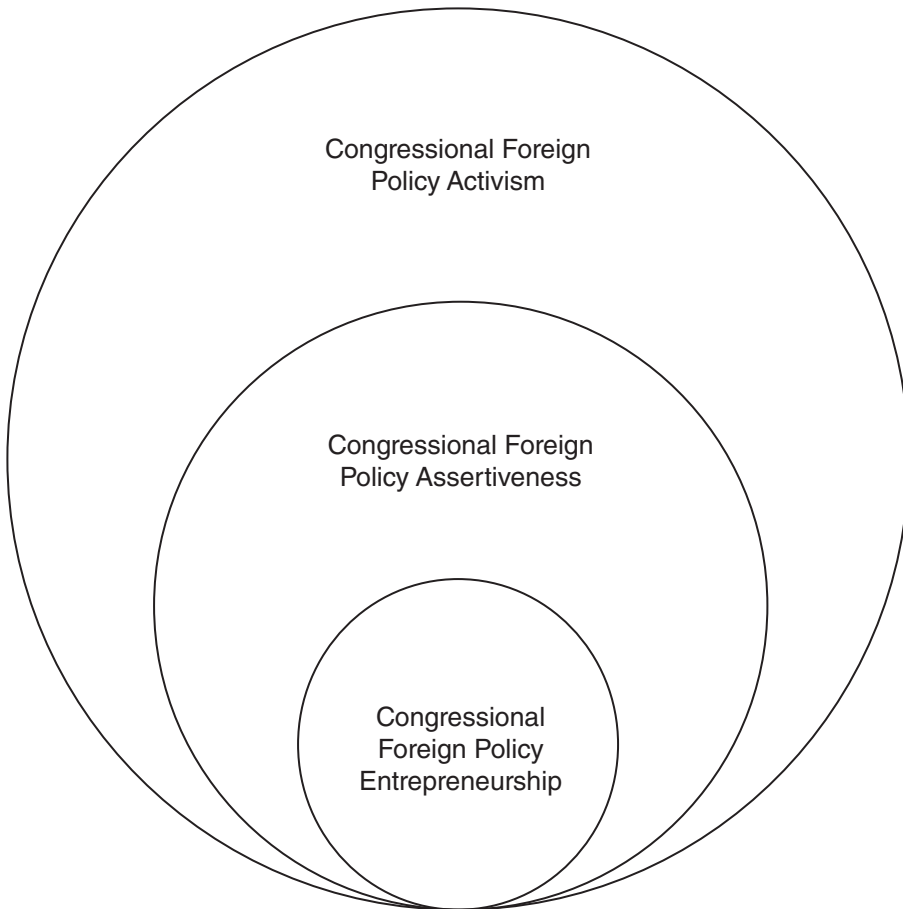


Figure 17.1 Types of Congressional Foreign Policy Activism

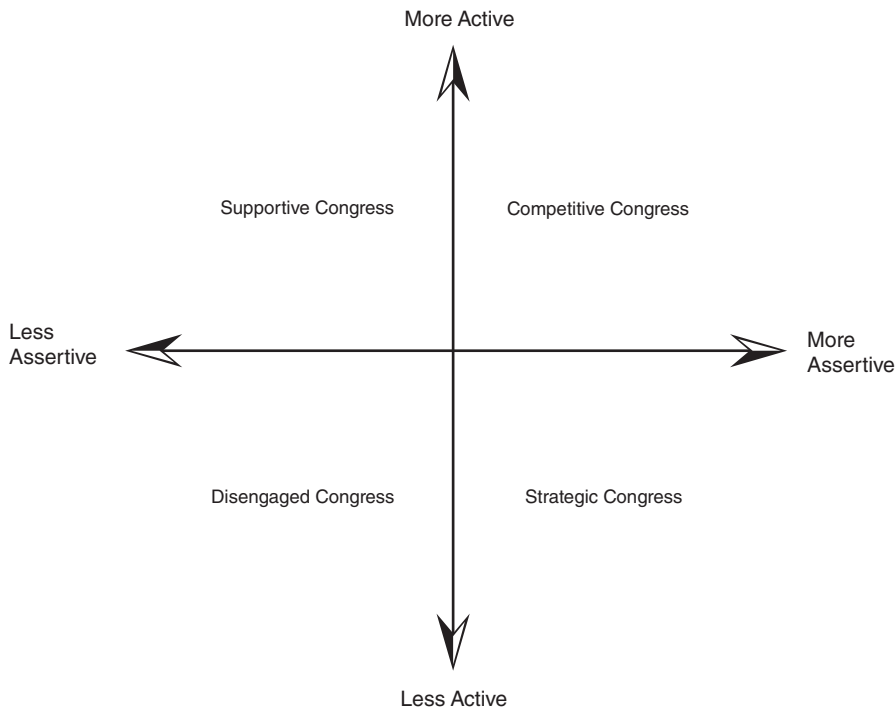


Figure 17.2 Congressional Foreign Policy Orientations

Distinguishing between activity and assertiveness sheds light on the overall patterns of congressional foreign policy engagement. As suggested at the opening, there is a fundamental disagreement in the literature over the broad congressional role, with some (e.g., Hinckley 1994) finding little congressional significance and others (e.g., Ripley and Lindsay 1993) finding much more. Scholars typically employ dichotomies (such as active-passive, etc.) to characterize congressional foreign policy engagement. Such simplistic distinctions fail to account for more subtle patterns and therefore miss significant congressional foreign policy activity. For example, Hinckley's (1994) analysis focuses on congressional foreign policy activity, which is not the same as assertiveness – or even success (Anderson, Box-Steffensmeier, and Sinclair-Chapman 2003). Congress can be less active, but when active, it may challenge the president's policy preferences.

Both dimensions of behavior—activity and assertiveness—are important. As shown in Figure 17.2, combining them (more or less active and more or less assertive) creates four models of congressional foreign policy engagement:

- a *Competitive Congress* whose greater levels of both activity and assertiveness lead it to challenge the president for foreign policy influence, a pattern of behavior reflective of the idea of a resurgent Congress;
- a *Disengaged Congress* whose relative inactivity and compliance with presidential preferences reflect the acquiescent Congress more involved in domestic than foreign policy and more likely to defer to and support the president;
- a *Supportive Congress* whose greater activity is combined with less assertive behavior, indicating a Congress cooperating with the president to achieve shared foreign policy goals;

- a *Strategic Congress* whose combination of less activity but greater assertiveness suggests a Congress that selects its battles carefully but is willing to challenge the policy preferences of the president.

These four models more accurately represent the varying relationship between the legislative and executive branches over the post-World War II years (Scott and Carter 2002a). Even a less active Congress may have important policy impact if MCs are more assertive when they do choose to act.

Such variation in congressional foreign policy behavior hints at the importance of the context. Since World War II, congressional foreign policy activity has generally declined over time, but congressional foreign policy assertiveness has increased over time (Scott and Carter 2002a). Thus separating activity from assertiveness explains part of the puzzle. Thus those who argue that Congress is acquiescent are looking at activity levels, rather than the increasing congressional penchant to challenge presidential initiatives.

Indeed, applying the four models of congressional activity to the post-World War II period reveals a more nuanced conception of the ebb and flow of congressional behavior. Until about 1958, Congress cooperated with the president in the development of Cold War policy (Carter 1986), making the appropriate characterization a Supportive Congress. Between about 1958 and 1967, congressional activity declined but assertiveness grew. This suggests a Strategic Congress, increasingly pressing the president on certain foreign matters, while remaining less active on foreign policy overall. This nicely captures the idea of an increasingly restive Congress uncomfortable with the logic of Cold War policy in the context of Vietnam overseas and domestic unrest at home. From 1968 through the mid-1980s, a relatively more active *and* assertive Congress emerged. This suggests a fifteen- to twenty-year period of a Competitive Congress anxious to correct a perceived imbalance of power between the two branches. This is consistent with analyses that stress a resurgent Congress, whose characteristics are often largely dependent on this period of time. Finally, since the mid-1980s, the figures suggest a less active but still assertive Congress, indicating a return to the Strategic Congress model. This pattern is consistent with the post-Cold War conception of a Congress generally less interested in foreign policy, but willing to challenge the president when it chooses to address key issues.

Congressional Incentives and Motivations

Scholars and analysts who see Congress as generally deferential to a dominant chief executive on foreign policy matters often focus on collective, institutional challenges through formal legislative activities on the use of force such as invoking the War Powers Act, exercising the power of the purse, or passing other direct legislation. However, others argue that foreign policy has been influenced by Congress less formally, but often significantly. For example, with respect to war powers—an area the White House is generally held to be advantaged vis-à-vis Congress (Lofgren 1972; Wolfensberger 2002; Fisher 2003; Kassop 2003; Lindsay 2003; Schonberg 2004; Mann and Ornstein 2006; Hendrickson 2002; Moss 2008)—presidents have been forced to adjust to the very existence of the 1973 War Powers Act, anticipate congressional reactions, and contend with assertive individuals (e.g., Gartzke 1996; Auerswald and Cowhey 1997; Howell and Pevehouse 2005, 2007).

And yet, *some* members of Congress attend to foreign policy matters substantively and persistently, and Congress as an institution does take action. What drives such behavior? According to the seminal work of David Mayhew (1974), MCs have often been characterized as “single-minded seekers of reelection.” From this perspective, MCs avoid foreign policy because there are few votes to be won on such issues (Lindsay 1994a). As one MC allegedly

noted, members cannot be bothered with foreign policy because “Afghanistan is not in my district.” The evidence on the electoral impulse is mixed. Some studies point out electoral incentives that exist for members of Congress to engage in foreign policy activism (Marshall and Prins 2002; Fleischer et al. 2000; Lindsay 1994a; Fiorina 1974; Kingdon 1977). Yet others maintain it is difficult to identify voting patterns of foreign policy behavior based upon electoral interests (Bernstein and Anthony 1974; Avery and Forsythe 1979; McCormick and Black 1983; Fleisher 1985; McCormick 1985; Carter 1989; Lindsay 1990; LeoGrande and Brenner 1993; in contrast, see Holian, Krebs, and Walsh 1997; Gartzke and Wrighton 1998). Thus, considerable debate exists within the recent literature on the impact of a member’s electoral interests and his/her foreign policy behavior, which merits additional analysis.

By contrast, Fenno (1973) argues that MCs not only want to get reelected, but they also want to enact “good public policy” and gain influence in the institution. Pursuing a foreign policy agenda helps some MCs achieve all three goals. Developing reputations for policy expertise, along with the perception that MCs care more about accomplishing something than about just garnering publicity, can go a long way in helping them establish a degree of personal clout within the chamber (Drew 1979; Wright, personal interview 2001; Hill and Hurley 2002). Such influence aids member effectiveness in the chamber, and the public perception of influence leads to greater electoral success in the future (Lindsay 1994a). Such expertise also helps members to move up to more prestigious positions in their committee or party ranks (Wawro 2000).

When members do address foreign policy, most studies emphasize one or more of three central concerns driving their behavior and motivations. First, much research points to the importance of heightened partisanship in Congress, even in foreign policy areas that have traditionally been viewed in a bipartisan manner (McCormick and Wittkopf 1990; Meernik 1993; Cooper and Young 1997; McCormick, Wittkopf, and Danna, 1997; Carter 1998; Caldeira and Wright 1998; Wittkopf and McCormick 1998; Martin 2000; Scott and Carter 2002a; Auerswald and Maltzman 2003; DeLaet and Scott 2006; Carter and Scott 2009).

Other research suggests that personal policy interests best explain why MCs engage in foreign policy activism (Fenno 1973; Lindsay 1990; Holmes 2005). For example, McCormick and Mitchell (2007) conclude that a member’s ideological predisposition and one’s interest in creating good public policy help explain membership in the Congressional Human Rights Caucus, but they also note that constituency demographics appear to influence membership as well. Their findings generally support both the “policy” and “reelection” schools of thought, which echo a previous larger-scale study of caucus membership (Hammond 1998). Others provide additional evidence that personal policy interests may be the key to motivating members to become active in foreign policy (Bernstein and Anthony 1974; Avery and Forsythe 1979; McCormick and Black 1983; Fleisher 1985; McCormick 1985; Carter 1989; Lindsay 1990; LeoGrande and Brenner 1993; Gartzke and Wrighton 1998; Carter, Scott, and Rowling 2004).

Motives and cues not only shape the positions that MCs take on any given foreign policy issue, but also their decisions to become involved and assertive on such issues. What shapes these decisions? Key factors include the individual’s core values, personal life experiences, and family experiences (Burden 2007). Such introspective representation (Mansbridge 1999) is particularly important on new issues or issues for which there is not clear party position—in other words, issues where there are opportunities for congressional impact.

Other factors are less idiosyncratic and tend to have broad impact. Previous studies emphasize five in particular:

- *Constituency.* Whether driven by the need for reelection, the desire for campaign contributions, or the propriety of representing the folks back home (Mayhew 1974; Arnold

1990; Parker 1992), the impact of strong and well-organized constituent groups should not be discounted. According to a foreign policy aide to one senior senator, *most* congressional foreign policy entrepreneurship is constituency driven, and the most influential constituency groups are often those that reflect very narrow interests and do not stray far from them. In addition to the pro-Israel lobby, good examples of such groups are ethnic lobbies like Armenian Americans, Greek Americans, and Cuban Americans. Business interests are another important example, as are (to a lesser degree) labor groups (Jacobs and Page 2005).

- *Partisanship*. Foreign policy making is a partisan process (Ripley 1998). Widespread bipartisan support of presidential foreign policy initiatives ended sometime in the late 1950s.² By the early 1960s MCs of the nonpresidential party began to challenge the president's foreign policy agenda (Carter 1998). Partisanship is a major factor in congressional foreign policy behavior in the post-Cold War period.
- *The President*, his policies, and his party identification. Presidential policies inspire different reactions (Kingdon 1989). Questions such as "Do I agree with the president's position?" and "Is the president from my party?" are central to congressional decision making (Asher and Weisberg 1978). Members of the president's party have a partisan reason to support the president or to work with or through the administration where possible. As Howell and Pevehouse (2007: 36) put it in their discussion of Congress and the use of force, members of the president's party are more likely to support presidential decisions because their worldviews match, they defer to the president's presumed information advantage, they have shared electoral fortunes, and they seek to curry presidential favor. Conversely, members of the opposition party act differently (Burden 2007; Howell and Pevehouse 2007). They are quicker to challenge presidents and to promote their own alternative foreign policy initiatives rather than await administrative action in line with their preferences (Ripley and Lindsay 1993; Sinclair 1993; Rohde 1994; Carter 1998; Ripley 1998; Carter and Scott 2009). The literature on divided government suggests this as well (e.g., Foreman 1988; Warburg 1989; Thurber 1991). Challenging the president is "good politics" for nonpresidential party MCs, and partisan or ideological differences generate substantive foreign policy disagreements with a president of the opposite party. By contrast, one would expect fewer electoral incentives or policy disagreements to prompt MCs from the presidential party to challenge the president's foreign policy agenda.
- *The News Media*. Media decisions about what foreign policy issues to highlight help create the preconditions for getting an issue on the government's agenda (Kingdon 1995). As suggested by the "CNN effect," dramatic media coverage creates pressures on the administration to intervene in places like Somalia, Haiti, and Yugoslavia (over Kosovo) and later to leave those locales (Entman 2004; Gilboa 2005). Such media-created pressures to act can be felt by MCs as well (Cobb and Elder 1983; Baumgartner and Jones 1993).³
- *Staff*. While staff expertise may have been limited prior to the reform era of the 1970s (Kingdon 1989), thereafter the policy expertise available to MCs increased dramatically (Mann and Ornstein 1993), and staff influence began to escalate (Fox and Hammond 1977). Staff members now often act as policy advocates and press their principals regarding a particular issue (DeGregorio 1997). This phenomenon may be more commonplace on the part of elected party leaders responsible for getting a legislative product through successful completion (DeGregorio 1997) or committee staffers who invest their time on a more limited number of issues than do personal staffers (Price 1971). The impact of staff may also be more noticeable in the Senate, as senators have more staff members than do House members and, as policy generalists, may be forced to rely on staff members more for information (Kingdon 1989).

In addition, a series of institutional factors motivate members in foreign policy as well.

- *Chamber.* As many have argued (e.g., Baker 2000), the Senate tends to be more concerned with foreign policy than the House, in part because of its constitutionally mandated foreign policy powers (e.g., ratification of treaties and confirmation of presidential appointments). Since senators represent an entire state rather than a district and stand for election every six years rather than every two, they may be freer than representatives to pick and choose the issues on which they focus. To the extent that foreign policy represents a more national interest than one driven by a local constituency, senators may be freer to pursue such policy interests than are representatives.
- *Relevant committee membership.* Committees are a source of policy expertise and the location of procedural access points from which to affect policy (Krehbiel 1991; Maltzmann 1997; Deering and Smith 1997; Norton 1999; Groseclose and King 2001). Those on foreign affairs and defense-related committees learn the substance of foreign and defense policy, typically becoming the chamber's experts for such issues and gaining opportunities for policy influence (Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Gilligan and Krehbiel 1997), whether at the time of initial policy consideration or later as members of a conference committee (Shepsle and Weingast 1987a, 1987b).
- *Party Status.* Majority party membership increases the opportunity for action. The majority party controls each chamber's leadership, committee and subcommittee leadership (e.g., Mayhew 2000), and floor agenda (e.g., Campbell, Cox, and McCubbins 2002), thereby making it easier for the majority party to process legislation than for the minority party to do so.
- *Party leadership position.* Since the 1970s, elected party leaders have gained policy influence at the expense of the standing committee structure (Loomis and Schiller 2005). Party leaders bring considerably more resources (Krutz 2002) and visibility to their policy actions (Wawro 2000).
- *Seniority.* Being more senior is not a necessity for activity or legislative influence (Ehrenhalt 1991; Mayhew 2000), and seniority's impact has diminished somewhat over time (Sinclair 2000). Nevertheless, seniority generally brings more visibility, greater access to the media, and more influence in subcommittees, standing committees and the chamber. As their seniority increases, the degree to which MCs are seen as an "expert" and are sought out by the media also increases—particularly in the Senate (Schiller 1995, 2000). Seniority is also often accompanied by a "safer" seat in Congress, thereby freeing time otherwise spent on reelection efforts to devote to policy entrepreneurship (Wawro 2000). Greater seniority makes it easier for MCs to act independently and to devote time and attention to the issues they choose (Stratmann 2000).

Challenges for Future Research

Our review and synthesis clearly indicates that much scholarly attention has been devoted to Congress and its role in foreign policy. Moreover, such attention is well warranted, as members have proven consequential in the foreign policy arena. What directions for future research are suggested by our review?

One key issue for future research concerns the targets of study. More is involved here than one set of observers perceiving the congressional glass as half empty and another set perceiving it half full. The congressional role in U.S. foreign policy making is misunderstood by many for a simpler reason: what scholars choose to examine determines what they think they

know. When attention is focused on the proper evidence, patterns of engagement, avenues of influence, historical/policy context, and policy activity, the importance of Congress and its individual members in shaping U.S. foreign policy becomes clearer.

A first step concerns the decisions and activities scholars choose to examine. For many, the most straightforward method to study Congress is through roll-call vote analysis (Burden 2007). This approach has an obvious appeal. Roll-call votes provide scorecards that can tell who won on the foreign policy issue and by what margin. Furthermore, such votes yield interval-level data capable of significant quantitative analysis. There is nothing wrong with relying on roll-call vote analysis to study Congress, so long as one recognizes there are “differences in the composition of the roll-call record across chambers and over time” (Roberts 2007: 355). Further, roll call votes are also a reactive form of behavior, and thus they say little about the proactive behavior of MCs (Van Doren 1990; Burden 2007).

Conclusions go seriously astray if scholars assume that roll-call votes are the *only* mechanism by which important foreign policy-making inputs are made by MCs. Attention must be paid “to the many ways that MCs and their staffs influence policy that cannot easily be measured or recorded” (Hersman 2000: 19). Howell and Pevehouse (2007) concur, and their examination of congressional influence on decisions to use force—typically regarded as the sole preserve of the president—indicates that Congress and its members matter more and in a broader variety of ways than conventional studies suggest. In his study of congressional foreign policy assertiveness during the Cold War, historian Robert Johnson (2006) makes a similar point—that missing what is not easily measured leads to the underestimation of congressional foreign policy influence. At the very least, roll call vote analyses ignore what happens before the vote as if such matters are inconsequential, but they are not (Burden 2007).

A similar shortcoming may be found in studies choosing to examine just the “major events” in U.S. foreign policy. These studies assume presidents make the important decisions and congressional involvement is only significant for the implementation of executive branch policies, less important structural issues, or only marginal political-diplomatic issues. Hersman (2000: 3) offers an excellent critique of this argument:

A focus on these high-profile events tends to produce a formal, institutionalized portrait of Congress that bears little resemblance to the practical, day-to-day reality of most policymakers ... Trying to evaluate the state of executive-legislative relations according to these headline-grabbing events is like trying to measure an ocean by counting waves. Dramatic clashes over high-profile issues—“waves”—are important, but they do not tell all, or even most, of the story. It is in the “ocean”—the day-to-day interactions over unexceptional issues—where most foreign policy is shaped, debated, and made.

This policy-making “ocean” matters for three reasons. First, just because many issues lack media or public attention does not mean they do not have considerable consequences for bilateral relationships or broader elements of U.S. foreign policy. Second, how such issues are handled on a day-to-day basis helps determine if they evolve into high-profile conflicts. Third, high-profile conflicts do not arise in a vacuum; they develop from a base of routine, informal interactions (Hersman 2000: 4). Thus, the congressional role is not necessarily less important than that of the president; it was long-ago recognized as simply being *less visible* (Moe and Teel 1970). Scholars need to open their eyes to a wider view of congressional foreign policy behavior to see the foreign policy-making system as it actually operates “inside the Beltway.”

A second avenue for future efforts should build on the important distinction between *activity* and *influence* to better comprehend the impact of legislatures on foreign policy (e.g., Martin 2000; Howell and Pevehouse 2007). Studies of legislatures and foreign policy frequently ignore their potential impact in the absence of formal or direct foreign policy legislation (Lindsay and Ripley 1993). Studies of congressional influence on decisions to use force are

good examples of this phenomenon. While those who study the formal output of Congress conclude that the institution rarely matters and fundamentally defers to the president (e.g., Hendrickson 2002; Moss 2008), others examining whether policy decisions are influenced by Congress have concluded the opposite (e.g., Auerswald and Cowhey 1997). Studies of other legislatures display a similar pattern (Nolan 1985; Martin 2000) and some broad cross-national studies have concluded that varying powers and types of legislatures impact the foreign policy behavior of states (e.g., Auerswald, 1999; Reiter and Tillman 2002). Not only can foreign policy behavior reflect legislative influence in terms of agenda-setting, broad parameters, and implementation, but executives make foreign policy choices in part by calculating legislative preferences and the costs and consequences of legislative dissatisfaction and opposition. Such “anticipated reactions” (Nagel 1975) are themselves a reflection of the influence of legislatures.

Finally, the role, activities, and impact of individual members deserve more attention. To Washington insiders, congressional foreign policy entrepreneurship is a well-known phenomenon, but few outside the foreign policy-making community recognize its significance. Whether they be elected party leaders, committee chairs, or just MCs who care about foreign affairs, congressional foreign policy entrepreneurs have been critical in many cases of U.S. foreign policy. These include creating a civilian space program and the Peace Corps, ending the Vietnam War, monitoring the intelligence community, imposing sanctions on South Africa, arming the Afghan mujahidin, securing nuclear materials in Russia after the Cold War, and saving the Mexican economy from its “peso crisis.”

Given their importance in shaping U.S. foreign policy in ways less often recognized by scholars, a number of questions arise. Who is engaging in congressional foreign policy entrepreneurship now, and what issues do they choose to address? What means do they use? At the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue, how do presidents anticipate and incorporate congressional viewpoints into their executive foreign policy agendas? Despite the progress made by past scholarship in answering these questions, much work remains to be done to understand the impact of Congress in U.S. foreign policy.

Notes

- 1 Some exceptions include Blechman 1990; Ripley and Lindsay 1993; Lindsay 1994a; Hersman 2000; Martin 2000; Howell and Pevehouse 2007; and Carter and Scott 2009.
- 2 In particular, see Table 2 in Carter (1986: 335).
- 3 However, as numerous studies suggest, the media’s coverage reflects government sources and may “index” the tone and direction of the policy debates and criticisms in the government. In particular, the media is substantially more likely, to offer critical views of the White House when policy actors in the government, and particularly the Congress, have already done so (e.g., Bennett 1990; Arnold 1990; Bermin 1999; Howell and Pevehouse 2007). This suggests that entrepreneurs may influence media attention and framing as much as they are influenced by it.

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