Appendix

Contents

A Formal Analysis

I formalize the familiarity-expertise tradeoff to produce comparative statics that indicate how the optimal familiarity and expertise of a diplomat varies with the characteristics of a post. The results inform the predictions offered in the main manuscript.

Set Up

The game consists of three players: a president P, an ambassador A, and a foreign government F. P's preferred policy can take the value of either ω_1 or ω_2. Common prior beliefs are that P's preference is ω_1 with probability 1/2 and ω_2 with probability 1/2. This preferences is known to P, but A only receives a signal about its value, s_1 or s_2. A then proposes a policy to F, p_1 or p_2. The probability that A's signal is s_i when P's preference is ω_i is $a \geq \frac{1}{2}$. The parameter a stands for familiarity, and can be thought of as the probability that A accurately learns P's policy preference.[24] Following A's policy proposal p_i, F makes a costly investment in the quality of a diplomatic agreement, q_F, focused on proposed policy. F does not know the state of the world, but may update its prior beliefs on the basis of A's policy proposal.

Ambassadors vary in their familiarity with the president (a) and their expertise ($q_A = 1 - da$), where $\frac{1}{a} > d > \frac{1}{2}$ is a measure of the difficulty of a posting.[25] This is the familiarity-expertise tradeoff. When P picks a friend or confidant with limited diplomatic expertise as ambassador, they bring high familiarity, a, but this comes at a cost in expertise or quality, q_A. Conversely, the president can delegate to an expert diplomat, receiving higher expertise, q_A, at the expense of familiarity, a. The parameter d scales the loss in quality that P incurs for favoring diplomats with less skill and more familiarity. When difficulty is high, the cost of foregoing expertise is felt more strongly.[26] No physical law prevents diplomats from having familiarity and high expertise. However, as discussed in the main manuscript, most ambassadorial candidate are high on one dimension or the other but not both. Generally, this assumption comports with stylized facts about the types of diplomatic appointments presidents can make. As other scholars have argued, looking outside the diplomatic service represents a loss in expertise (Haglund 2015; Scoville 2019), while even skeptics of non-career appointments would concede that a close relationship with the president is among the key

[24] Note that a captures communication in the model in reduced form. The main interpretation is that higher a means A is better at understanding or anticipating P's preferences, i.e., communication flows from P to F through A. But also consistent would be a case where A conveys some message from F to P and then get a response from the White House tailored to F's original message. In this way, the model can accommodate information flow in both direction. I leave to future work efforts to open this black box and explore more fully the utility of familiarity in facilitating information flow from foreign governments to the president.

[25] The constraint on d ensures an interior solution to P's maximization of a in selecting the optimal diplomat.

[26] To draw an analogy, the difference between a merely average physician and a world-class expert may not be apparent when it comes to treating the common cold. Both will perform well on easy tasks. However, when it comes to diagnosing and treating a rare disease, only the expert may be able to provide quality care.

advantages a politically appointed diplomat could have (see e.g., Moskin 2013; Kralev 2012). Ambassadors also vary in their ability to provide political favors to the president. I bracket the question of patronage initially, but return to it below. The sequence of the game is as follows:

1. P chooses the familiarity a of their ambassador.
2. P's policy preference, ω_1 or ω_2, is revealed to P.
3. A receives its signal of P's preferences, s_1 or s_2.
4. A proposes a policy, p_1 or p_2, to F.
5. F decides how much to invest in the quality, q_F, of the policy.
6. P chooses whether to accept or reject the policy *ex post*.

The players' payoffs depends on whether the policy is ultimately accepted or rejected by P. P's utility is,

$$u_P(p_i, k, d, q_A, q_F, a) = \begin{cases} 1(\omega_i = p_i)(k + q_A + q_F), & \text{if policy is accepted} \\ 0, & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

where k is a measure of the importance of the assignment, or how much P cares about getting the policy right. Here, quality only gives P utility when the policy matches P's policy preferences. It does not benefit P to have a well-crafted diplomatic agreement contrary to their preferences. Indeed, it may undermine the president's policy. If a president, for example, values strategic arms reductions but believes ballistic missile defense is in the national interest, it is not beneficial to the president to have a well-crafted agreement that bans missile defense but leaves strategic stockpiles untouched. A's utility is:

$$u_A(p_i, q_A, q_F) = \begin{cases} q_A + q_F, & \text{if policy is accepted} \\ 0, & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

A does not have an independent preference over the location of the policy, preferring just that the agreements they make are accepted by P. Last, F's utility is:

$$u_F(p_i, q_A, q_F) = \begin{cases} q_A + q_F - q_F^2, & \text{if policy is accepted} \\ -q_F^2, & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

where q_F is F's investment in a quality policy and $-q_F^2$ is the marginal cost of that investment.

Using backward induction, I solve for a separating Perfect Bayesian Equilibrium in which A proposes to F the policy p_i corresponding to its signal s_i. I assume that when P is indifferent between a policy and the status quo, they reject the policy in favor of the status quo.[27]

Analysis

Starting at the end of the game, P accepts the policy if its utility is greater than the status quo,

$$1(p_i = \omega_i)(k + q_A + q_F) > 0$$

This inequality holds if and only if $p_i = \omega_i$, that is, when A proposes the policy corresponding to the true state of the world.

Lemma 1. *The foreign government's optimal investment in diplomacy with an ambassador, $q_F^* = \frac{a}{2}$, is increasing in the ambassador's familiarity with the president.*

F's investment in policy p_i depends on its belief that the president will accept the policy. Since the prior belief is that the state of the world is ω_1 with probability $1/2$ and ω_2 with probability $1/2$, in a truth-telling separating equilibrium (i.e., A proposes the policy corresponding to their signal), the posterior belief that the proposed policy matches the state of the world is simply equal to a, the ambassador's familiarity, or the quality of their signal.[28]

P accepts if and only if $p_i = \omega_i$. Thus, F maximizes its expected utility with the following investment,

$$\begin{aligned} \max_{q_F}[a(q_A + q_F) + (1-a)(0) - q_F^2] & \\ 0 &= a - 2q_F \\ q_F^* &= \frac{a}{2} \end{aligned} \tag{1}$$

As the quality of A's signal increases, F's optimal investment increases. This is a key result of the model. Familiarity benefits P in two ways: first, ambassadors with high familiarity are

[27] Substantively, this choice reflects status quo bias (e.g., Samuelson and Zeckhauser 1988). Practically, this choice simplifies the model notation by allowing for fixed status quo payoffs of zero while ensuring the uniqueness of the separating equilibrium presented.

[28] This result is given by Bayes' Rule in the case where priors are $1/2$, i.e., $Pr(\omega = \omega_i | s = s_i) = \frac{Pr(s=s_i|\omega=\omega_i) \times Pr(\omega=\omega_i)}{Pr(s=s_i|\omega=\omega_i) \times Pr(\omega=\omega_i) + Pr(s=s_i|\omega=\omega_{-i}) \times Pr(\omega=\omega_{-i})} = \frac{a \times 1/2}{a \times 1/2 + (1-a) \times 1/2} = a$.

more likely to propose P's preferred policy. Second, ambassadors with high familiarity induce greater investment in bargaining by F than ambassadors with lower familiarity. Confidence that the ambassador speaks for the president reduces the likelihood that their investment in bargaining with be for naught, which in turn increases the overall incentive to prioritize reaching quality deals.

It is incentive compatible for A to propose policy p_i when receiving signal s_i, thereby revealing its signal, provided that the utility of truth-telling weakly exceeds that of misleading F:

$$u_A(p_i|s_i, q_F^*) \geq u_A(p_{-i}|s_i, q_F^*)$$
$$a(q_A + \frac{a}{2}) + (1-a)(0) \geq (1-a)(q_A + \frac{a}{2}) + a(0)$$

Since the signal is at least as likely to be accurate than not ($a \geq 1/2$), this weak inequality always holds and truth-telling is therefore always incentive compatible.

Lemma 2. *The president's optimal selection of an ambassador for a given diplomatic assignment, $a^* = \frac{1+k}{2d-1}$, is increasing in its importance k and decreasing in its difficulty, d.*

Last, consider the optimal selection of an ambassador by P. P's expected utility in the game for a given ambassador is:

$$u_P = Pr(\omega_i = p_i)(k + q_A + q_F^*) + (1 - Pr(\omega_i = p_i))(0)$$

Since A proposes the correct policy with a probability, this can be written as:

$$u_P = a(k + q_A + q_F^*) + (1-a)(0)$$

P selects the level of familiarity and, by implication, the level of expertise of an ambassador: $q_A = 1 - da$. P thus optimizes with:

$$\max_a [a(k + q_A + q_F^*) + (1-a)(0)]$$

Plugging in for q_A and q_F^*,

$$\max_a[a(k + (1 - da) + \frac{a}{2}) + (1 - a)(0)]$$

or,

$$\begin{aligned} \max_a[ak + a - da^2 + \frac{a^2}{2}] \\ 0 = k + 1 - 2da + a \\ a^* = \frac{1 + k}{2d - 1} \end{aligned} \tag{2}$$

Proposition 1, below, states the equilibrium strategies of the players.

Proposition 1. *The following collection of strategies forms the game's unique separating equilibrium:*

- *The president selects an ambassador of familiarity* $a^* = \frac{1+k}{2d-1}$.
- *The ambassador proposes the policy* p_i *corresponding to their signal about the* P*'s preference,* s_i.
- *The foreign government makes an investment in diplomacy with the selected ambassador,* $q_F^* = \frac{a}{2}$.
- *The president accepts a policy if it corresponds to their preference,* $p_i = \omega_i$*, and rejects it otherwise.*

The expression for a^* thus gives the optimal ambassador choice and exhibits the following properties.

Result 1. *As the difficulty of a diplomatic post increases, so should the expertise of a diplomat (*a^* *decreasing in* d*).*

Result 1 captures the expertise side of the familiarity-expertise tradeoff. As difficulty d increases, the optimally selected diplomat's familiarity a^* decreases (implying an increase in expertise). This is consistent with research showing that career diplomats are more prevalent in more difficult posts.

Result 2. *As the importance of a diplomatic post increases, so should the familiarity of a diplomat (*a^* *increasing in* k*).*

The key insight of the model and its most surprising result is that familiarity is increasing and expertise decreasing in the importance of a diplomatic assignment, k. The president values both matching the policy to their preferences ($p_i = \omega_i$) and quality diplomatic agreements (higher q_A+q_F). As the importance of the post, k, increases, so does the value to the president following their preferred policy relative to the quality of the deal. Thus, as the importance of a diplomatic assignment increases, presidents are increasingly willing to sacrifice expertise and experience in their diplomatic agent in order to ensure that the policy they prefer is pursued and communicated to foreign counterparts.

What explains this result? If a president cares little about a policy choice, it would be easy to simply delegate that choice to an expert who will execute it well. However, if a president cares a great deal about the policy choice itself (i.e., p_1 vs. p_2), there is a limit on the return to expertise. It does little good to have a diplomatic agent produce a well-crafted agreement contrary to the principal's preferences. The tradeoff becomes near lexicographic.

Taken together, Results 1 and 2 represent the familiarity-expertise tradeoff theorized informally in the main manuscript and inform Predictions 2 and 3.

Accounting for Patronage

Existing research and conventional wisdom suggests that an ambassador's ability to provide political favors to the president also influence ambassador selection. Reflecting this conventional wisdom, Prediction 1 was that, as the patronage value of a post increases, so should the likelihood of politically appointed ambassadors. Table 3 offers support for this prediction.

The base model above brackets the role of patronage to illustrate the familiarity expertise tradeoff. Extensions to the model can integrate the role of patronage while still capturing the familiarity-expertise tradeoff shown above. A very simple extension, consistent with Prediction 1, would be that P gets a patronage payoff of $\eta b - b^2$ irrespective of whether they accept the policy or the policy matches the state of the world. The patronage transaction is complete at the time of appointment. η is the patronage value of the post, b is the ability of the ambassador to provide political favors, and $-b^2$ could be thought of as the cost of depleting the pool of candidates who can offer favors or the political backlash that presidents face for investing too much in patronage. In this case, the game would proceed in a similar fashion as above but P would also select b at the outset. The expression for a^*, which gives the familiarity-expertise tradeoff, would remain unchanged. Optimal b^* would equal $\frac{\eta}{2}$, i.e., as the patronage value of the post increases, presidents are increasingly likely to appoint ambassadors who can offer political favors. As noted, this straightforward result is consistent with Prediction 1 from the main manuscript.

Going a bit further, it is often alleged that there is a patronage-expertise tradeoff (Hollibaugh Jr 2015). Ambassadors who can provide political favors tend to be less expert than career Foreign Service officers. The model can accommodate this by simply adding ηa to P's utility whether or not the policy matches the state of the world or is accepted:

$$u_P(p_i, k, d, \eta, q_A, q_F, a) = \begin{cases} 1(\omega_i = p_i)(k + q_A + q_F) + \eta a, & \text{if policy is accepted} \\ \eta a, & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

The game proceeds in similar fashion as the version that brackets patronage. However, we have an additional result.

Result 3. *As the patronage value of a diplomatic post increases, the expertise of the diplomat decreases (a^* increasing in η).*

P now optimizes over the expected utility $u_P = Pr(\omega_i = p_i)(k + q_A + q_F^*) + (1 - Pr(\omega_i = p_i))(0) + \eta a$, which, plugging in for q_A and q_F^* can be re-written as $a(k + 1 - da + \frac{a}{2}) + \eta a$. P's optimal ambassadorial selection is now represented with $a^* = \frac{1+k+\eta}{2d-1}$. The familiarity-expertise tradeoff remains, as a^* increases in k and decreases in d. However, there is also now a tradeoff between expertise and patronage. Since there is a negative correlation between a and q_A, that a^* increases in η implies that an increase in the patronage value of a post decreases the optimal expertise level of the ambassador. The main manuscript tested the patronage prediction using career/non-career appointments rather than specifically high/low expertise appointments. However, Appendix C.5 shows support for a more specific tradeoff between expertise and patronage.

B Supplemental Tables

In this section, I provide additional information on the quantitative empirics of the paper.

B.1 Coding Procedure

In this appendix, I describe how I coded key variables used in the empirical analysis.

- Type (Career vs. Non-Career/Political): I follow the codings used by the American Foreign Service Association, which publishes an online tracker of ambassadorial appointments (https://afsa.org/list-ambassadorial-appointments). Ambassadors listed as "career" are counted as career Foreign Service ambassadors. Otherwise, they are counted as non-career.

- Familiarity: As described in the main manuscript, ambassadors are considered high-familiarity if they had a meaningful personal connection to the president at the time of appointment (e.g., friend, business partner, White House staff or senior official in an executive branch agency). Career Foreign Service officers and non-career appointees who appear to have no meaningful connection to the president (e.g., just a donor) are considered low-familiarity. To code this variable, I used news articles and press releases regarding ambassadorial appointments and performance, often found using Nexis Uni, the New York Times, the Washington Post, or the UC Santa Barbara American Presidency Project's repository of nomination announcements.

- Expertise: As described in the main manuscript, ambassadors are considered high-expertise if they are career Foreign Service officers or, for non-career appointees, if they have substantial policy experience related to foreign affairs. Specifically, this includes former U.S. senators and representatives, governors, assistant secretaries or higher in a relevant federal agency or body (i.e., the Departments of Defense, Treasury, or Commerce), Senior Intelligence Service, NSC senior directors, and flag or general officers. To code this variable, I used news articles and press releases regarding ambassadorial appointments and performance, as well as other available biographies (e.g., on the website of a law firm where the ambassador works post-service).

- POTUS Visits: This data was collected using the State Department's Travels Abroad of the President tracker (https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/travels/president).

- Political Risk/Conflict Risk Scores: These scores come from PRS, which uses higher scores to indicate less risk. For clarity, I have reversed the scale so that higher scores indicate *more* risk.

B.2 Distribution of Ambassador Types

Table B.1 provides descriptive statistics on the distribution of ambassador types, as defined in the main manuscript. The majority, about 70 percent, are career Foreign Service officers. About 10 percent of the total, and 33 percent of non-career appointees, are coded as high familiarity. Just about 3 percent of all ambassadors are coded as high-familiarity, high-expertise and around 17 percent are low-familiarity, low-expertise. About 80 percent are high on one dimension and low on the other, justifying the assumption in the paper that, in most cases, presidents have to prioritize familiarity *or* expertise. The especially small number of high-familiarity, high-expertise types suggests presidents must allocate them judiciously. Descriptive statistics about the types of posts these ambassadors are sent to can be found in Appendix C.3.

Table B.1: Distribution of Ambassador Characteristics

Category	Percentage
Non-career	28.7
High Expertise	76.23
High Familiarity	9.22
High Familiarity, High Expertise	2.9
Low Familiarity, High Expertise	5.9
High Familiarity, Low Expertise	73.3
Low Familiarity, Low Expertise	17.8

B.3 Travels of the President

The core independent variable for measuring importance in the analysis of U.S. ambassadorial appointments is presidential visits to foreign countries in the previous eight years. In the dataset, 105 countries received at least one visit of the president, with a mean of 2.9 visits, a median of 1, and standard deviation 5.8. As the table below shows, the most visited countries have received the president dozens of times. Overall, the measure shows a good amount of variation. The fact that presidents don't visit every country, and don't visit many countries very frequently, comports with the idea that it is a costly indicator of importance.

Table B.2: Top Destinations for POTUS Travel, 1973-2020

	Country	Visits
1	Germany	38
2	France	34
3	United Kingdom	29
4	Japan	25
5	Italy	24
6	Canada	22
7	Mexico	22
8	Russia	19
9	South Korea	17
10	Belgium	15
11	Poland	13
12	Egypt	13
13	Saudi Arabia	12
14	China	12
15	Israel	11

B.4 Correlation between Presidential Visits and Other Measures of Importance

The table below shows that presidential visits are positively and statistically significantly correlated with alternative measures of a country's importance to the U.S. national interest: (1) population, (2) trade with the US, and (3) military capability (measured with CINC scores). This establishes the construct validity of presidential visits as a proxy for importance, which has important benefits that are explained in the main manuscript.

	Measure	Correlation	P-Value
1	US Trade	0.47	0.00
2	Population	0.36	0.00
3	CINC Score	0.29	0.00

B.5 Analysis of Assistant and Under Secretary Appointments

As an additional check on high-level U.S. diplomatic appointment patterns, I look outside my sample of ambassadorial appointments to consider the selection of U.S. assistant and under secretaries of State since 1973, a total of 347 appointments. This is useful for because these posts lack many of the patronage perks of ambassadorships in European capitals but are important and difficult roles, which helps to distinguish between the logics of familiarity and of patronage in diplomatic appointments. There are a high number of political appointees and, anecdotally, many tend to have connections to the president and other senior officials (e.g., foreign policy advisors to the president during the campaign). This offers further support to the idea that high-ranking political appointments reflect familiarity and not just patronage.

Table B.3: Non-Career Appointments to Assistant and Under Secretary-Level Posts, 1973 - 2020

Post	Total Obs.	Pct. Non-Career
A/S Administration	12	27.3
A/S African Affairs	13	46.2
A/S Arms Control	4	100
A/S Conflict & Stabilization Operations	3	66.7
A/S Consular Affairs	10	40.0
A/S Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor	13	92.3
A/S East Asian & Pacific Affairs	15	60.0
A/S Economic & Business Affairs	15	66.7
A/S Educational & Cultural Affairs	10	100
A/S Energy Resources	1	100
A/S European & Eurasian Affairs	17	29.4
A/S International Narcotics & Law Enforcement	14	58.3
A/S International Organization Affairs	16	76.9
A/S International Security & Nonproliferation	3	66.7
A/S Near Eastern Affairs	14	14.3
A/S Oceans & Int'l Environmental & Scientific Affairs	14	71.3
A/S Political-Military Affairs	19	73.7
A/S Population, Refugees & Migration	13	64.3
A/S Global Public Affairs	18	66.7
A/S South and Central Asian Affairs	7	57.1
A/S Western Hemisphere Affairs	18	50.0
U/S Arms Control & Int'l Security Affairs	15	86.7
U/S Economic Growth, Energy, & the Environment	14	92.9
U/S Civilian Security, Democracy, & Human Rights	5	100
U/S Management	13	84.6
U/S Political Affairs	17	23.5
U/S Public Diplomacy & Public Affairs	9	100

Source: American Foreign Service Association, accessed at https://afsa.org/assistant-secretaries-foreign-service-career-vs-other-appointments on March 3, 2021.

B.6 Appointments in OPEC Countries

The Saudi case discussed briefly in the main manuscript and in greater depth below raises the possibility of another patronage logic, different from the quality-of-life conception used in most studies of ambassadorial appointments: enrichment through business opportunities. Though plausible, the evidence for this is not strong. Though many ambassadors, both career and political, enter the private sector after leaving government and trade on their title and contacts, this does not appear to be driving appointments. As noted in the manuscript, only 3 of 9 politically appointed U.S. ambassadors to Saudi Arabia came from the private sector, and only one was an oil executive. Further, as Table B.4 below shows, political appointees are uncommon in other major oil producing countries. Saudi Arabia is alone among OPEC countries in receiving more political appointees than career ambassadors; no other OPEC member has received more than 2 political appointees over the last 40 years. What seems to differentiate Saudi Arabia with respect to politically appointed and high-familiarity ambassadors is its importance to U.S. foreign policy.

Table B.4: Political vs. Career Appointees in OPEC Countries, 1981-2020

Country	Career	Political
Algeria	14	0
Angola	9	0
Equatorial Guinea	10	1
Gabon	13	0
Iran	NA	NA
Iraq	11	1
Kuwait	11	0
Libya	6	0
Nigeria	13	1
Dem. Rep. of the Congo	13	0
Saudi Arabia	4	9
United Arab Emirates	11	1
Venezuela	9	1
Ecuador*	11	2
Indonesia*	12	1
Qatar*	9	2

Note: Starred countries are former members. Data comes from AFSA.

C Supplemental Model Specifications

C.1 Alternative Measures of Importance

The main measure of importance is presidential visits in the past eight years to a host country. Table C.1 presents analogous multinomial logit results using presidential visits over the past four years, reducing overlap between administrations. The results are similar.

Table C.1: Predictors of Ambassador Expertise and Familiarity, Visits Prior 4 Years

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Low Expertise, High Familiarity				
POTUS Visits Last 4 Years	2.34***	2.25***	2.24***	2.30***
	[1.73,3.16]	[1.68,3.01]	[1.61,3.12]	[1.67,3.17]
Political Risk	1.00	1.02	1.01	1.01
	[0.96,1.04]	[0.97,1.07]	[0.95,1.07]	[0.97,1.06]
Log GDP per Capita		1.15		
		[0.75,1.78]		
DoS Hardship (0-35)			1.00	
			[0.92,1.08]	
Tourism Share				0.88
				[0.75,1.03]
High Expertise, Low Familiarity				
POTUS Visits Last 4 Years	0.98	1.04	0.92	0.90
	[0.73,1.30]	[0.77,1.40]	[0.62,1.37]	[0.62,1.30]
Political Risk	1.12***	1.09***	1.11***	1.18***
	[1.10,1.15]	[1.06,1.11]	[1.07,1.15]	[1.14,1.22]
Log GDP per Capita		0.65**		
		[0.47,0.89]		
DoS Hardship (0-35)			1.10**	
			[1.04,1.17]	
Tourism Share				0.89+
				[0.78,1.02]
High Expertise, High Familiarity				
POTUS Visits Last 4 Years	2.87***	2.86***	2.86***	2.42***
	[2.21,3.73]	[2.16,3.80]	[1.86,4.40]	[1.66,3.52]
Political Risk	1.06***	1.04+	1.09**	1.12***
	[1.03,1.10]	[1.00,1.10]	[1.03,1.17]	[1.07,1.17]
Log GDP per Capita		0.80		
		[0.47,1.35]		
DoS Hardship (0-35)			1.05	
			[0.98,1.13]	
Tourism Share				0.85
				[0.70,1.05]
POTUS Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1356	1301	833	908

Exponentiated coefficients; 95% confidence intervals in brackets
+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

A simple alternative to presidential visits would just be population. Populous states are more likely to be politically influential, militarily significant, and economically powerful. Given the United States' global interests, states with large populations are likely to be important to U.S. foreign policy. Table C.2 re-estimates the multinomial logit models from the main manuscript, but substitutes population as a measure of importance. The results are similar.

Table C.2: Predictors of Ambassador Expertise and Familiarity, Population Importance Measure

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Low Expertise, High Familiarity				
Population	1.36*	1.52***	1.61***	1.62***
	[1.07,1.72]	[1.26,1.84]	[1.24,2.10]	[1.24,2.12]
Political Risk	0.98	1.02	0.99	0.98
	[0.94,1.02]	[0.97,1.07]	[0.93,1.05]	[0.93,1.03]
Log GDP per Capita		1.67*		
		[1.04,2.69]		
DoS Hardship (0-35)			0.98	
			[0.89,1.07]	
Tourism Share				0.94
				[0.77,1.14]
High Expertise, Low Familiarity				
Population	0.97	0.92	0.82	0.81
	[0.81,1.17]	[0.76,1.12]	[0.64,1.04]	[0.62,1.06]
Political Risk	1.12***	1.09***	1.14***	1.20***
	[1.10,1.15]	[1.06,1.12]	[1.09,1.19]	[1.15,1.25]
Log GDP per Capita		0.66*		
		[0.47,0.91]		
DoS Hardship (0-35)			1.09*	
			[1.02,1.16]	
Tourism Share				0.91
				[0.79,1.04]
High Expertise, High Familiarity				
Population	2.15***	2.34***	2.04***	1.94***
	[1.67,2.77]	[1.78,3.08]	[1.43,2.92]	[1.33,2.84]
Political Risk	1.03	1.06*	1.07	1.08*
	[0.99,1.07]	[1.00,1.12]	[0.98,1.18]	[1.02,1.14]
Log GDP per Capita		1.52		
		[0.91,2.52]		
DoS Hardship (0-35)			1.02	
			[0.93,1.12]	
Tourism Share				0.83
				[0.67,1.04]
POTUS Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1165	1114	670	743

Exponentiated coefficients; 95% confidence intervals in brackets
$^{+}$ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

C.2 Alternative Measures of Difficulty

In the main manuscript, I used PRS Political Risk scores to capture the difficulty of a post. A narrower measure of politco-military instability would be PRS' Conflict Risk score, which focuses just on internal and external political violence. Table C.3 presents estimates for models using Conflict Risk rather than Political Risk to measure difficulty. The results are similar.

Table C.3: Predictors of Ambassador Expertise and Familiarity, Conflict Risk Difficulty Measure

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Low Expertise, High Familiarity				
POTUS Visits Last 8 Years	1.67***	1.62***	1.65***	1.65***
	[1.41,1.98]	[1.38,1.92]	[1.31,2.07]	[1.37,1.99]
PRS Conflict Risk (0-24)	1.05	1.07	1.09	1.11
	[0.89,1.24]	[0.94,1.22]	[0.90,1.31]	[0.91,1.35]
Log GDP per Capita		1.08		
		[0.76,1.55]		
DoS Hardship (0-35)			1.00	
			[0.93,1.07]	
Tourism Share				0.86
				[0.71,1.04]
High Expertise, Low Familiarity				
POTUS Visits Last 8 Years	0.74**	0.93	0.81	0.66***
	[0.61,0.90]	[0.75,1.14]	[0.61,1.06]	[0.53,0.84]
PRS Conflict Risk (0-24)	1.40***	1.18***	1.38***	1.75***
	[1.26,1.56]	[1.08,1.29]	[1.19,1.61]	[1.48,2.07]
Log GDP per Capita		0.44***		
		[0.34,0.58]		
DoS Hardship (0-35)			1.17***	
			[1.11,1.23]	
Tourism Share				0.87*
				[0.77,0.98]
High Expertise, High Familiarity				
POTUS Visits Last 8 Years	1.69***	1.80***	1.55**	1.34*
	[1.38,2.06]	[1.44,2.26]	[1.13,2.14]	[1.06,1.70]
PRS Conflict Risk (0-24)	1.26***	1.13	1.52***	1.65***
	[1.10,1.43]	[0.97,1.30]	[1.24,1.86]	[1.33,2.05]
Log GDP per Capita		0.65*		
		[0.42,0.99]		
DoS Hardship (0-35)			1.10***	
			[1.04,1.16]	
Tourism Share				0.88
				[0.74,1.06]
POTUS Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1357	1302	833	908

Exponentiated coefficients; 95% confidence intervals in brackets
$^{+}$ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

As mentioned in the manuscript, diplomatic posts could be easier if the bilateral relationship is highly institutionalized and features strong preference alignment. Alliances capture these features. Table C.4 presents multinomial logistic regression estimates for models using U.S. alliances to measure difficulty. The results are similar.

Table C.4: Predictors of Ambassador Expertise and Familiarity, Alliance Difficulty Measure

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Low Expertise, High Familiarity				
POTUS Visits Last 8 Years	1.74***	1.71***	1.76***	1.67***
	[1.44,2.11]	[1.42,2.07]	[1.39,2.22]	[1.36,2.06]
Alliance	0.97	0.85	0.63	0.75
	[0.52,1.84]	[0.46,1.57]	[0.25,1.61]	[0.31,1.83]
Log GDP per Capita		1.09		
		[0.82,1.46]		
DoS Hardship (0-35)			1.00	
			[0.93,1.07]	
Tourism Share				0.92
				[0.77,1.09]
High Expertise, Low Familiarity				
POTUS Visits Last 8 Years	0.79*	1.02	0.93	0.76*
	[0.64,0.98]	[0.84,1.25]	[0.71,1.22]	[0.60,0.96]
Alliance	0.30***	0.48**	0.51+	0.23***
	[0.17,0.52]	[0.28,0.81]	[0.24,1.10]	[0.11,0.48]
Log GDP per Capita		0.43***		
		[0.34,0.54]		
DoS Hardship (0-35)			1.19***	
			[1.13,1.25]	
Tourism Share				0.83***
				[0.76,0.91]
High Expertise, High Familiarity				
POTUS Visits Last 8 Years	1.88***	2.01***	1.92***	1.65***
	[1.55,2.28]	[1.61,2.51]	[1.43,2.58]	[1.30,2.10]
Alliance	0.37**	0.39**	0.29**	0.16***
	[0.18,0.77]	[0.19,0.79]	[0.11,0.73]	[0.07,0.39]
Log GDP per Capita		0.74+		
		[0.54,1.01]		
DoS Hardship (0-35)			1.11***	
			[1.06,1.17]	
Tourism Share				0.86*
				[0.75,1.00]
POTUS Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1919	1783	1034	1062

Exponentiated coefficients; 95% confidence intervals in brackets
+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

C.3 Allocation of Ambassadors

Table C.5 indicates the ambassador ideal type that sees the greatest share of its appointees going to posts of a given level of difficulty and importance. Here, low importance means that a post has received zero presidential visits in the past eight years. High importance is one or more visits. Low difficulty corresponds to a low-risk score on the PRS Political Risk Index (cutoff according to PRS). High difficulty is a political risk score above that. The cells indicate the ideal type that is appointed at the highest rate. Percentages in parentheses are share of that ambassador ideal type that is allocated to posts of given importance and difficulty.

Table C.5: Highest Rate of Appointment of Ambassador Types, by Post Importance & Difficulty

	Low Importance	High Importance
Low Difficulty	Low Expertise, Low Familiarity (30%)	Low Expertise, High Familiarity (62%)
High Difficulty	High Expertise, Low Familiarity (59%)	High Expertise, High Familiarity (42%)

What is notable is that the results correspond to the matching solution implied by the model and theory. The theory suggests that expertise is most valuable in difficult posts and that familiarity is most valuable in important posts. In high-importance, low-difficulty posts, the ambassador type with the highest rate of appointment is high-familiarity, low-expertise types. In low-importance, high-difficulty posts, it is low-familiarity, high-expertise types. High-familiarity, high-expertise ambassadors are the least common type. However, they have the highest rate of appointment of the four ideal types in posts that are high-importance and high-difficulty. That is, presidents appear to disproportionately allocate the few ambassadors who are high on expertise and familiarity to posts where both of those attributes are especially valuable. By contrast, just 4% of high-expertise, high-familiarity ambassadors are sent to low importance, low difficulty posts.

C.4 Results for High Difficulty, High Importance Posts

The main manuscript indicates that high-expertise, high-familiarity ambassadors see the highest share of appointees go to posts that are high in difficulty and importance. As in Table C.5, suppose that we said posts were low-difficulty if they have a PRS Political Risk Score that puts them in the "low risk" category, according to PRS, and high difficulty otherwise. Suppose further that posts are high importance if there has been at least one presidential visit in the past eight years (mean = 0.5, median = 0). Table C.6 present multinomial logit models that regress ambassador type on a binary variable that equals one if a post is high difficulty *and* high importance.

Table C.6: Appointments in High Difficulty, High Importance Posts

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Low Expertise, High Familiarity				
High Difficulty, High Importance Post	0.76	1.01	0.85	0.80
	[0.31,1.83]	[0.41,2.50]	[0.33,2.17]	[0.29,2.19]
Log GDP per Capita		1.17		
		[0.83,1.66]		
DoS Hardship (0-35)			0.98	
			[0.91,1.06]	
Tourism Share				0.87**
				[0.78,0.96]
High Expertise, Low Familiarity				
High Difficulty, High Importance Post	2.34*	1.30	1.13	3.11**
	[1.20,4.53]	[0.63,2.69]	[0.47,2.71]	[1.37,7.06]
Log GDP per Capita		0.37***		
		[0.28,0.48]		
DoS Hardship (0-35)			1.20***	
			[1.14,1.26]	
Tourism Share				0.83**
				[0.74,0.93]
High Expertise, High Familiarity				
High Difficulty, High Importance Post	7.40***	6.28***	6.07**	9.59***
	[2.74,20.00]	[2.40,16.41]	[1.71,21.58]	[2.87,31.99]
Log GDP per Capita		0.84		
		[0.58,1.21]		
DoS Hardship (0-35)			1.09**	
			[1.02,1.17]	
Tourism Share				0.84+
				[0.70,1.00]
POTUS Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1337	1285	833	903

Exponentiated coefficients; 95% confidence intervals in brackets
+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

The results are stark. Going from a post that is low on one or both dimensions to a post that is high on both means that the odds that a president selects a high expertise, high familiarity ambassador is between 6 and 9 times higher relative to the base category.

C.5 Tradeoff between Expertise and Patronage

Some observers have argued that there is a tradeoff between patronage and expertise. Appendix A formalizes this tradeoff and shows that it can, theoretically, coexist alongside a familiarity-expertise tradeoff. Table C.7 presents OLS results predicting high-expertise ambassadors as a function of post characteristic. The results offer support for a patronage-expertise tradeoff. Political risk positively correlates with high-expertise appointments, while indicators of patronage value negatively correlate with high-expertise appointments (though the estimates are not statistically significant in the case of tourism). At the same time, we see evidence of the familiarity-expertise tradeoff. High-expertise appointees are more common in high political risk posts and less common in posts receiving presidential visits.

Table C.7: Selection of High-Expertise Ambassadors

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
PRS Political Risk (0-100)	0.010***	0.010***	0.012***	0.012***	0.019***	0.018***
	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Log GDP per Capita	−0.077***	−0.073***				
	(0.017)	(0.018)				
DoS Hardship (0-35)			0.013***	0.012***		
			(0.003)	(0.003)		
Tourism (% of GDP)					−0.010	−0.011
					(0.010)	(0.011)
POTUS Visits Last 8 Years		−0.016		−0.033*		−0.037**
		(0.019)		(0.018)		(0.017)
POTUS Fixed Effecs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Num. obs.	1301	1301	833	833	908	908

$^{***}p < 0.01$; $^{**}p < 0.05$; $^{*}p < 0.1$; OLS estimates with robust SEs clustered at the country level.

C.6 Results by Presidential Administration

Table C.8 presents the same regression specifications from Table 4 of the main manuscript, but broken down by presidential administration. Though the magnitude and significance of the coefficients varies from model to model, the results do not appear overwhelmingly driven by one adminstration.

Table C.8: Ambassador Selection by President

	(1) Reagan	(2) Bush 1	(3) Clinton	(4) Bush 2	(5) Obama	(6) Trump
Low Expertise, High Familiarity						
POTUS Visits Last 8 Years	1.63	1.22	2.66***	1.59**	1.52*	1.83**
	[0.58,4.55]	[0.55,2.69]	[1.61,4.38]	[1.17,2.17]	[1.07,2.15]	[1.17,2.88]
Political Risk	1.01	1.02	0.97	1.11**	1.02	0.90
	[0.95,1.07]	[0.96,1.10]	[0.86,1.09]	[1.04,1.19]	[0.93,1.12]	[0.72,1.12]
Log GDP per Capita	1.75*	1.14	0.42	2.59**	0.81	0.50
	[1.01,3.04]	[0.59,2.19]	[0.13,1.37]	[1.40,4.78]	[0.34,1.89]	[0.06,4.25]
High Expertise, Low Familiarity						
POTUS Visits Last 8 Years	1.12	1.01	1.36	0.88	0.82	0.71
	[0.41,3.02]	[0.55,1.84]	[0.88,2.09]	[0.57,1.36]	[0.59,1.15]	[0.32,1.54]
Political Risk	1.03	1.04+	1.12***	1.20***	1.15***	1.12**
	[0.99,1.07]	[0.99,1.09]	[1.06,1.18]	[1.11,1.29]	[1.06,1.23]	[1.03,1.22]
Log GDP per Capita	0.64	0.70	0.75	1.08	0.60	0.56+
	[0.38,1.09]	[0.40,1.23]	[0.49,1.13]	[0.61,1.93]	[0.30,1.17]	[0.29,1.10]
High Expertise, High Familiarity						
POTUS Visits Last 8 Years	2.32	2.42**	2.15***	1.92*	1.46	1.65
	[0.75,7.16]	[1.26,4.67]	[1.43,3.25]	[1.17,3.17]	[0.90,2.38]	[0.84,3.25]
Political Risk	0.97	1.00	1.06	1.18*	1.13*	1.02
	[0.92,1.03]	[0.88,1.13]	[0.96,1.17]	[1.03,1.35]	[1.02,1.25]	[0.74,1.42]
Log GDP per Capita	0.61+	0.59	1.20	1.01	0.78	1.36
	[0.36,1.04]	[0.17,2.07]	[0.46,3.14]	[0.35,2.89]	[0.22,2.71]	[0.22,8.57]
Observations	138	138	278	330	288	129

Exponentiated coefficients; 95% confidence intervals in brackets
+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Illustrative Case: Saudi Arabia

The quantitative results show that presidents often select high-familiarity political appointees for important posts. A key threat to the inferences I draw is that some important ambassadorial postings are also high in patronage value, creating the potential for observational equivalence in some cases between my theory and a simple patronage logic. In the statistical models presented above, I address this issue by controlling for a suite of quality-of-life measures that prior work has used to measure patronage value. As an additional check, I turn to the case of Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia has been for many years an important U.S. security and energy partner. The importance of Saudi Arabia to Washington's conception of the U.S. national interests is evident in presidential travel data: since 1973, sitting presidents have visited the Kingdom 12 times, ranked 13th among all countries and first in the Middle East region. In short, Riyadh is an important posting.

Saudi Arabia also lacks the patronage value of some other important diplomatic assignments. Take State Department hardship pay, which a former diplomat described as an incentive "to serve in embassies in countries that are dangerous, unhealthy, or generally unpleasant" (Jett 2014, 150). As of 2020, the State Department offers a 25% hardship differential for Saudi Arabia, well above above average and similar to what is offered for Nuuk, Greenland; Port-au-Prince, Haiti; and Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic. Unlike the UK or the Bahamas or even the neighboring United Arab Emirates, few would call Saudi Arabia a tourist destination for Westerners.[29] Beyond simple metrics, Saudi Arabia's conservative society and legal system limit opportunities for the sort of cocktail party hobnobbing that sinecure-seekers supposedly enjoy. One former politically appointed U.S. ambassador questioned whether he would "be able to tolerate" the human rights issues in the country, and noted his wife's reticence to join him in Riyadh given local gender norms (Jordan and Fiffer 2015, 10).

Saudi Arabia thus suggests divergent predictions for the logics of patronage and familiarity. If patronage is the only factor driving political appointments, we would expect to see mostly career ambassadors in the tough and low patronage value post at Embassy Riyadh. If familiarity matters as well, we would instead expect to see high-familiarity, non-career political appointments in Saudi Arabia, given the country's importance as a U.S. security and economic partner.

Despite the dubious patronage value of the ambassadorship, nine of 14 U.S. ambassadors to the Kingdom since 1981 have been non-career political appointees. This is wholly inconsistent with the perspective that non-career appointees are simply selected to serve in plum posts with a desirable quality of life. Instead, five were coded as high-familiarity, with pre-existing professional or personal ties to the president. Moreover, only three of those nine non-career appointees came from the private sector, and just one came from the oil industry, which runs counter to an alternative interpretation of patronage in the Saudi case: that it is about

[29] Across all years for which there is data, Saudi Arabia is below the mean for tourism as a share of GDP. Much of the tourism Saudi does receive relates to religious pilgrimages. The Kingdom only opened itself up to general international tourism in 2019.

self-enrichment for donors.[30] Instead, these appointment patterns are consistent with a familiarity-expertise tradeoff in which the ability to speak for the president is a diplomatic asset in important relationships. This logic is underscored by appointment patterns in other Gulf monarchies. Saudi Arabia is alone in receiving a high number of political appointees, reflecting its longstanding position as the central U.S. partner in the Arab world.

As the logic of familiarity suggests, the basic rationale for these appointments comes down to personal ties between the ambassador and the president and other political leaders in Washington. For example, both of President Clinton's ambassadors to the Kingdom, former Mississippi Governor Ray Mabus and former Georgia Senator Wyche Fowler, were, like the president himself, southern Democratic politicians. Albert Thibault Jr., a career Foreign Service officer and the deputy chief of mission in Riyadh to both Mabus and Fowler, remarked that "their value to the relationship... was that they had a personal tie with the president" Kennedy 2005, 94. As predicted by the model, the relationship between these ambassadors and political superiors back in Washington earned them special engagement from the Saudi government. Thibault continued:

> To have an ambassador who was a personal friend of the president, that counted far more than having some, let's face it, bureaucrat like myself or someone else who arrives, who may be deeply versed in the culture but who ranks in our system down on the totem pole from the assistant secretary, the under secretary, and the secretary of state.

Despite lacking the experience or expertise of the Foreign Service's Arabists, political appointees have found success. For example, Ambassador Robert Jordan benefited from ties to the White House. An attorney at James Baker's Texas law firm, Jordan had represented George W. Bush in a securities investigation predating the latter's run for Texas governor, becoming a personal friend in the process. By his own admission, Jordan had no diplomatic experience or familiarity with the Middle East. What qualified him, "above all" according to Baker, was that Jordan had "strong professional and personal ties with the president" (Jordan and Fiffer 2015, vii). Jordan played a key role in achieving an agreement for the U.S. to support Saudi Arabia's accession to the World Trade Organization. Though the Saudi leadership was interested in membership, they were skeptical of the United States' commitment. Leveraging his connections back in Washington, Jordan was able to confirm support for Saudi Arabia's WTO at the highest levels of the Bush administration, including at the White House and with the Secretaries of State and Commerce, and the U.S. Trade Representative (Jordan and Fiffer 2015, 43). As a result of Jordan's efforts, the Office of the Trade Represented launched a new round of talks, which resulted in Saudi economic

[30] If posts in oil-producing countries were attractive to political appointees as business development opportunities, then we would expect to see many political appointees not just in Saudi Arabia but in other petroleum-rich states. However, as Appendix B.6 shows, no other OPEC member frequently receives politically appointed U.S. ambassadors. Ambassador Robert Jordan, an attorney who served in Riyadh, noted that his ambassadorship was a mixed blessing from a financial and business perspective: while the experience did open doors in his post-diplomatic career, serving also required that he permanently give his clients to other partners at his firm and that he take a pay cut just as his kids were heading to college.

and legal reforms and WTO accession a few years later. By virtue of his ties to President Bush and other political leaders in Washington, Jordan was able to convince the Saudis to prioritize an agreement on WTO accession.