The Bureaucratic Politics of International Agreements

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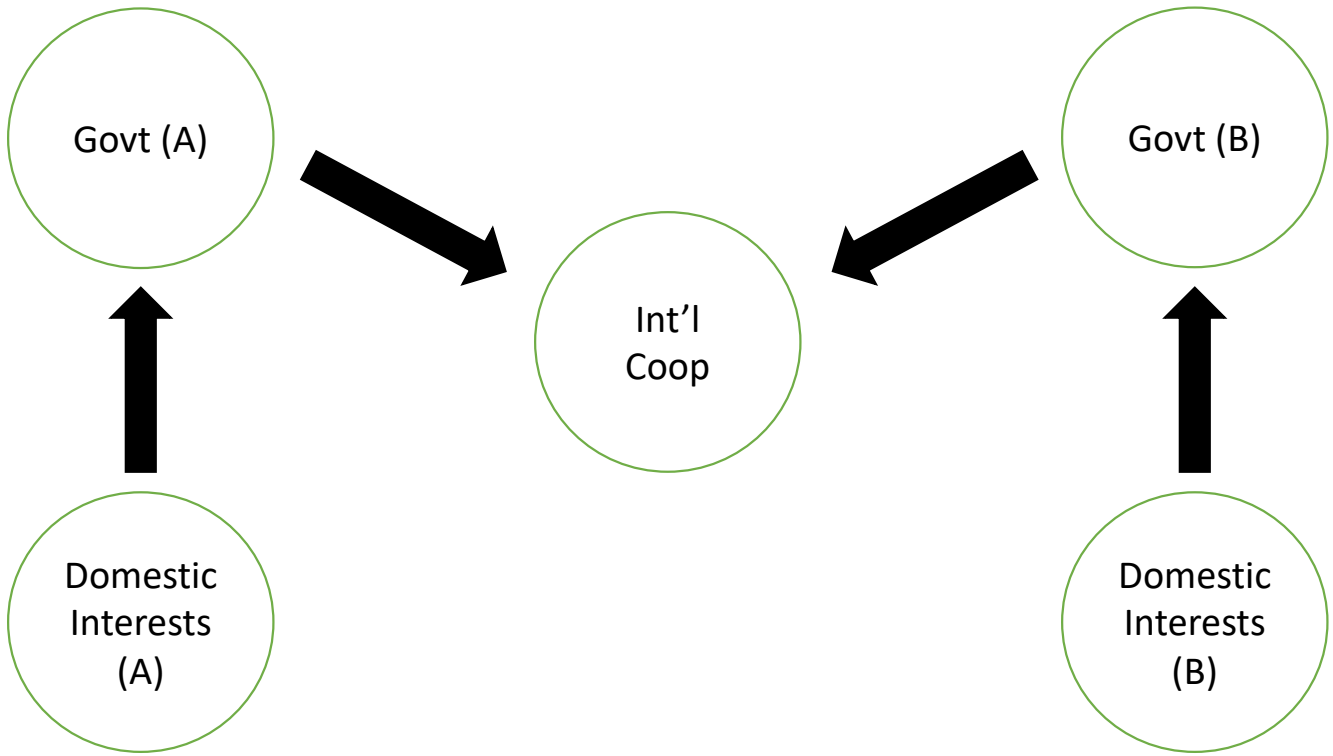
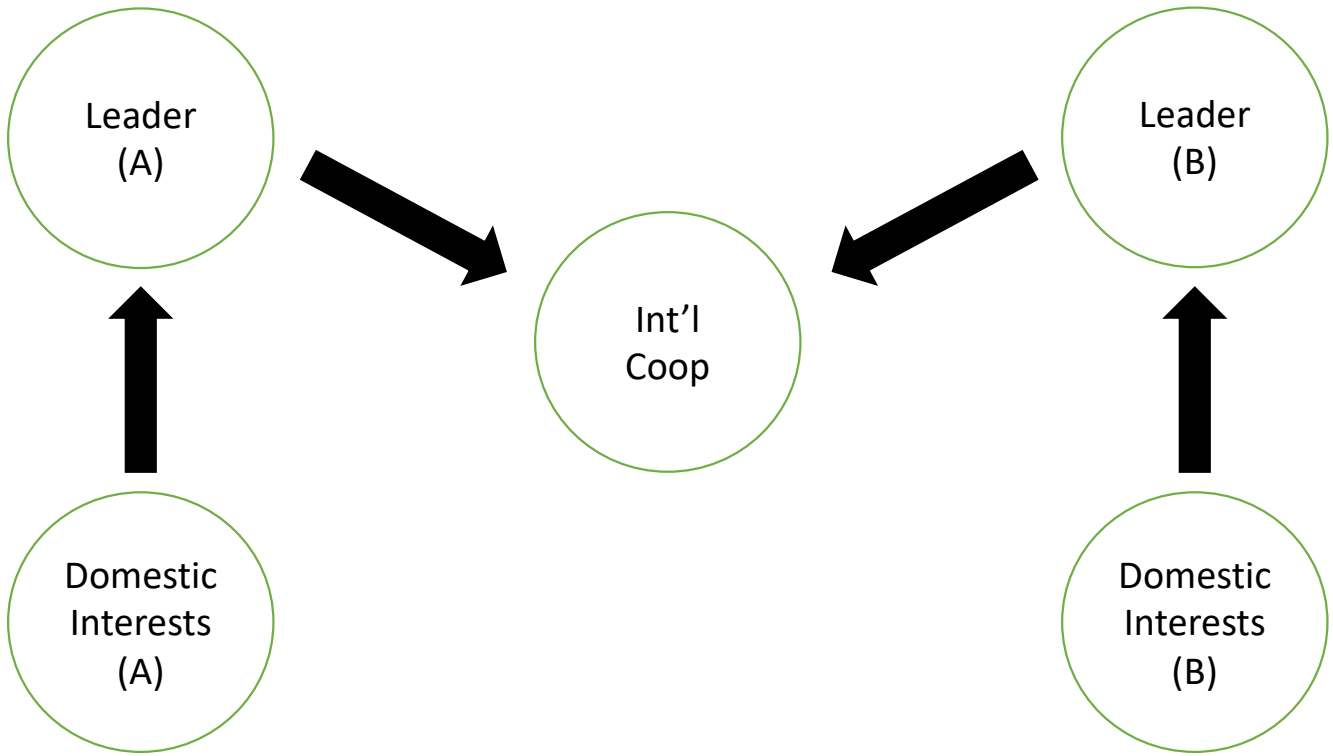
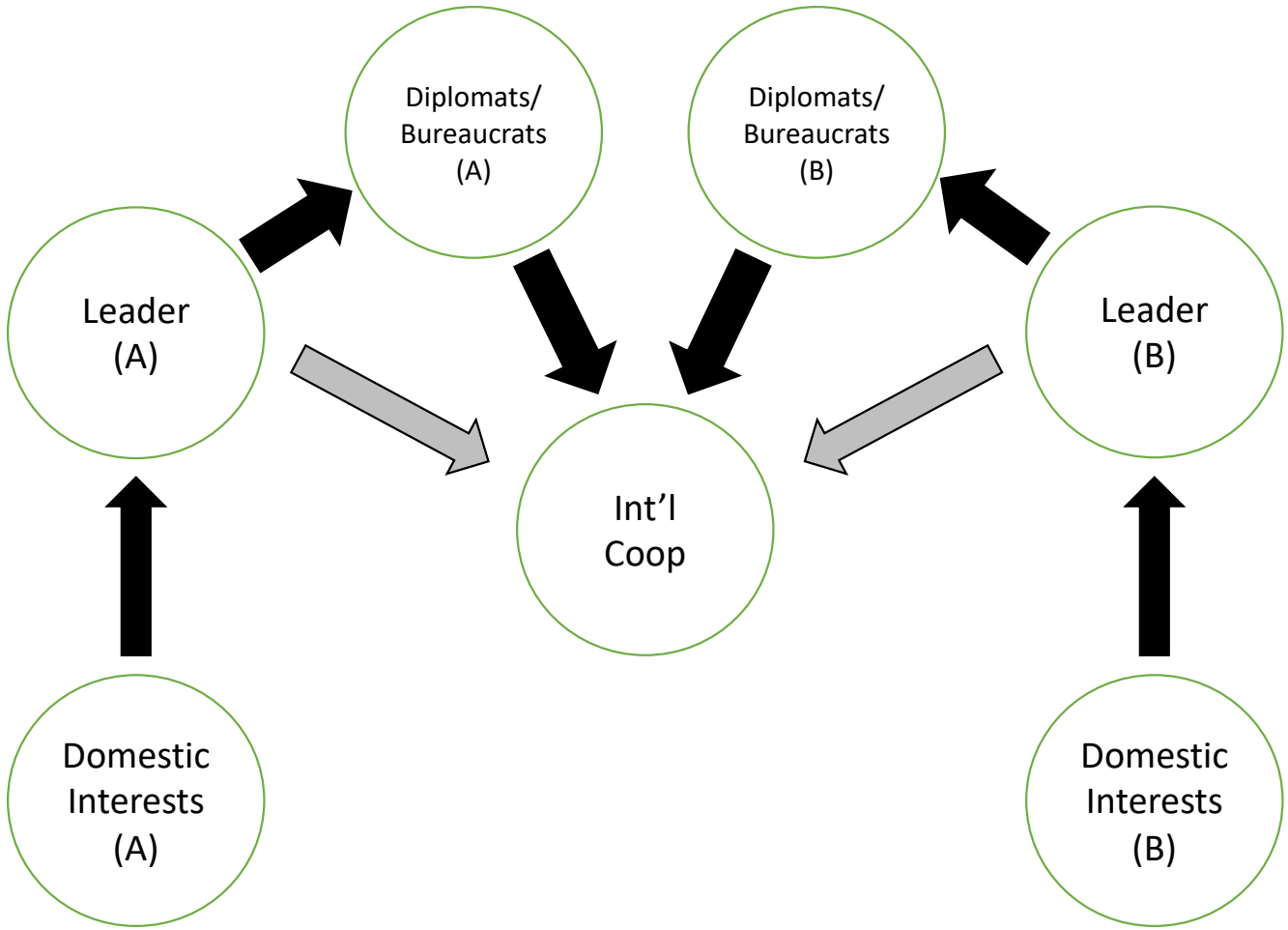
(Texas A&M)

Calvin Thrall
(Columbia)

IPES
27 October 2023


Govt (A)
Govt (B)
Int'l
Coop
Domestic
Interests
(A)
Domestic
Interests
(B)

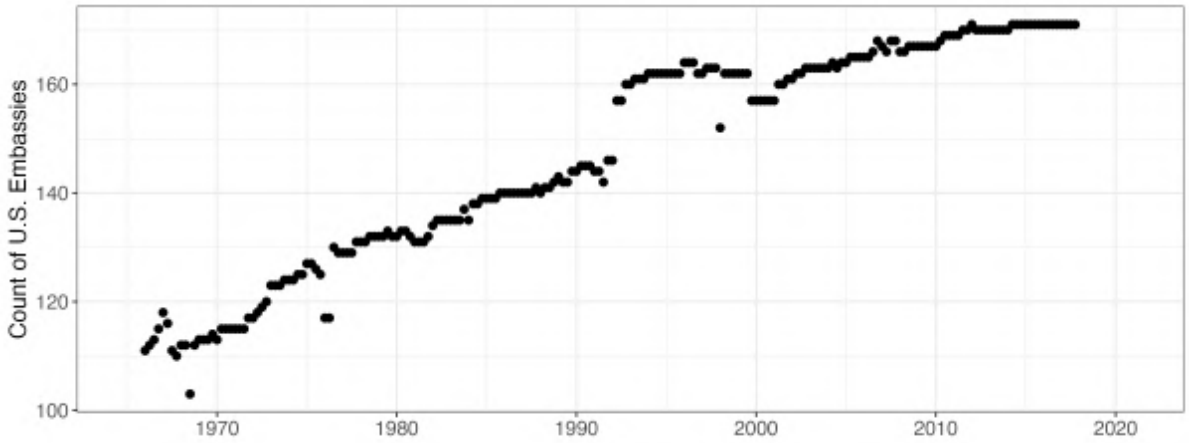

Leader
(A)
Leader
(B)
Int'l
Coop
Domestic
Interests
(A)
Domestic
Interests
(B)


Diplomats/
Bureaucrats
(A)
Diplomats/
Bureaucrats
(B)
Leader
(A)
Leader
(B)
Int'l
Coop
Domestic
Interests
(A)
Domestic
Interests
(B)

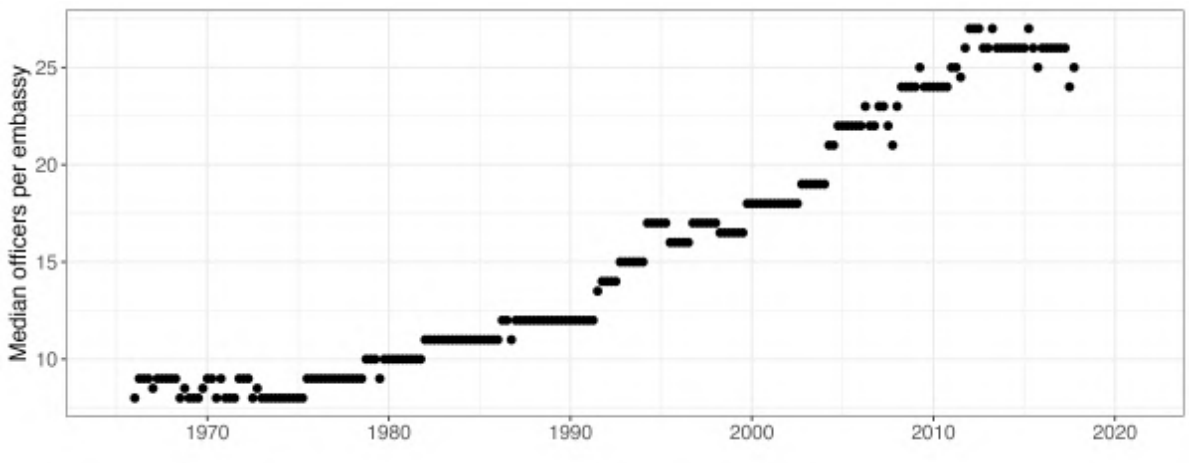
Ambassadors and international cooperation:

- Lindsey (2017, 2023); Gertz (2018); Malis (2021); Ahmed & Slasky (2022); Goldfien (2023); Arias (2023); Suong (2023); Kim & Fu (2023); Jost & Min (2023)

U.S. Embassies Over Time



Diplomatic Personnel per U.S. Embassy



This paper:

- Most comprehensive dataset on U.S. diplomatic personnel
- Use officer-level attributes to develop measures of embassy-level capacity
- Show that embassy capacity affects bilateral cooperation
  - esp. when pol. oversight $\downarrow$ & bureaucratic autonomy $\uparrow$

Theory

Diplomats in-country have stronger **preferences** for bilateral cooperation (vs. other participants in policy process), due to:

- *ideology*: selection and/or socialization (Lindsey (2017; 2023); Jost, Meshkin & Schub (2022); Wilson (1989); Gailmard & Patty (2007))
- *incentives*: producing measurable diplomatic outputs (Holmstrom & Milgrom (1991); Poulsen & Aisbett (2016))

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Diplomats more likely to enact their preferences when they have the **capacity** and the **autonomy** to do so

Data

Treaties as measure of bilateral cooperation

- 5,636 executive agreements, signed 1988–2017
  (Hathaway, Bradley, & Goldsmith 2020)

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  - (both are treaties under international law)

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Defense	1635
Finance, Trade, and Investment	623
Humanitarian	605
Science, Space, and Technology	549
Environment, Conservation, and Energy	495
Transportation and Aviation	393
Law Enforcement	313
Nonproliferation	273
Miscellaneous	196
Educational Exchanges and Cultural Cooperation	174
Taxation	138
Diplomacy and Consular Affairs	126
Maritime	115

Typical embassy "country team", from Kopp & Gillespie

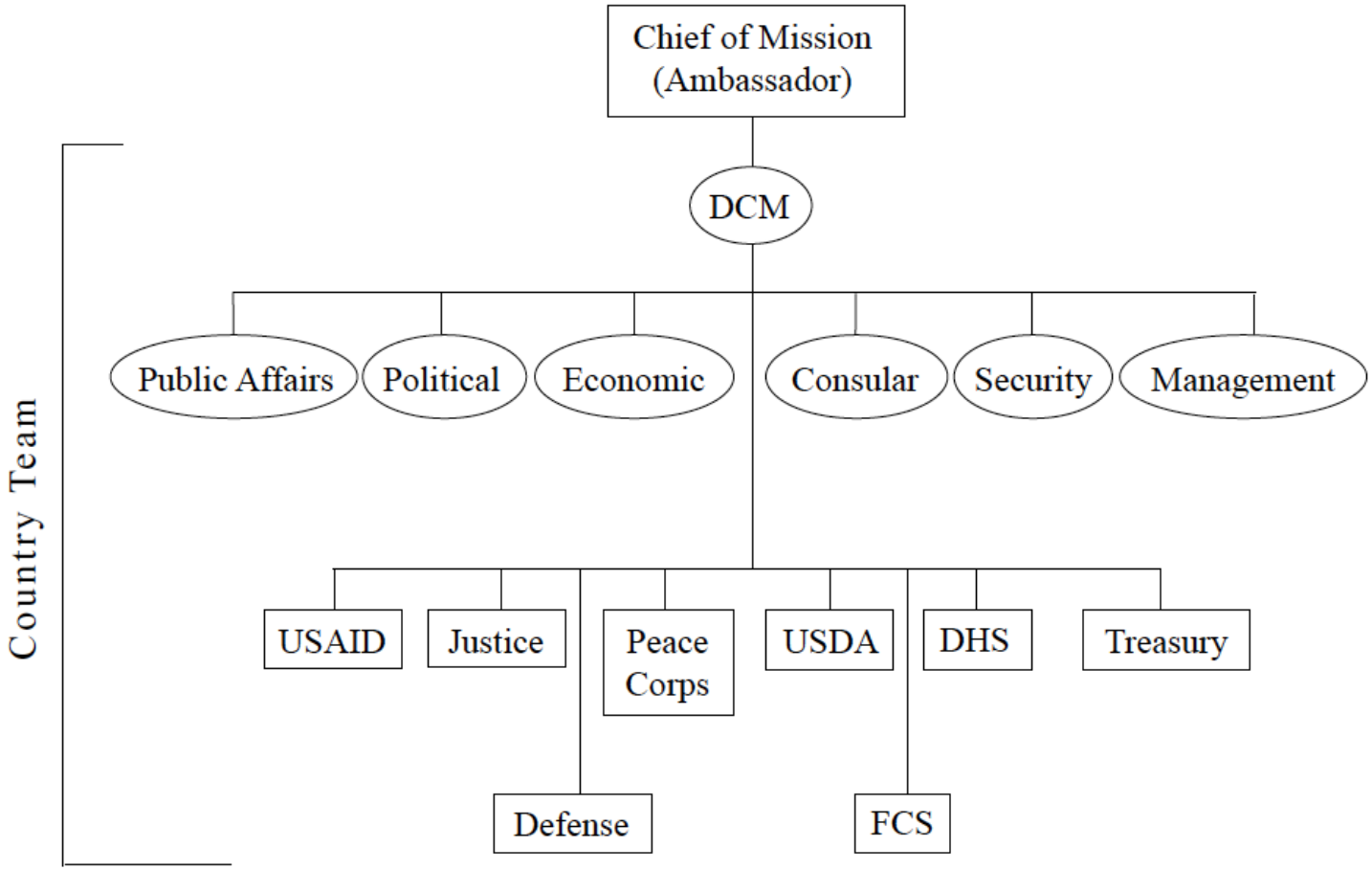

Figure 6.1
Organization of a Typical Mission

S 1.40/5:991/1 876-B
United States Department of State
[redacted]
rx
05
26
91
in.

Key Officers of Foreign Service Posts

UNIV. Of MICH.
MAY 17 1991

Guide for [redacted] Business Representatives

January 1991

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RABAT (E), 2 Ave. de Marrakech; P.O. Box 120; APO N Y 09284; Tel [212] (7) 622-65; Telex 31005

AMB:	E. Michael Ussery	RSO:	Peter Stella
DCM:	Richard L. Jackson	AGR:	Andrew A. Duymovic
POL:	Michael C. Lemmon	AID:	Dennis Chandler
ECO:	David S. Robins	PAO:	Edward T. Penney
CON:	George W. Brazier III	ODA:	Col James E. Murphy USMC
ADM:	Alphonse Lopez	MLO:	Col Thomas E. Burch USAF

CASABLANCA (CG), 8 Blvd. Moulay Youssef; APO NY 09284 (CAS); Tel [212] 26-45-50

CG:	Timberlake Foster	ECO:	Allen S. Greenberg
LAB:	William H. Owen	CON:	Suella Pipal
POL:	Peter McDevitt	ADM:	J. Patrick Truhn
COM:	Samuel D. Starrett	BPAO:	Elizabeth Thornhill

MARRAKECH (US Information Service), Ave Echchouada, L'Hivernage B.P. 240; Tel [212] (4) 472-83

BPAO: Franklin Huffman

Key Officers Data

(Collected in collaboration with David Lindsey (CUNY))

At the officer-quarter-year level:

- 472,299 officer-QY obs., 1966–2017
- 352,562 in embassies
- 274,030 in embassies, 1988–2017 (our sample)

At the embassy-quarter-year level (this analysis):

- 12,536 embassy-QYs, in 178 embassies, 84 QYs, 1988–2017

Research Design

Embassy-level analysis:

$$\text{Agreements}_{cqt} = \text{Capacity}_{cqt} + \text{Controls}_{cqt} + \text{FE}$$

- Agreements_{cqt}: # signed b/w U.S. and country c, in quarter q, year t

Research Design

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- Agreements_{cqt}: # signed b/w U.S. and country c, in quarter q, year t
- Capacity_{cqt}: four separate measures:
  1. Embassy Size: # officers listed in U.S. embassy in i, q, t
  2-4. Avg. Time in Post/Region/Service:
     - For each officer-QY, calculate: (i) time in current post; (ii) total time spent in current region; (iii) time since first appearance in the data
     - At the embassy-QY level: average (i), (ii), and (iii), across Ambassador, DCM, and FSO generalists (Political, Econ, Mgmt, Consular, Public Diplomacy)

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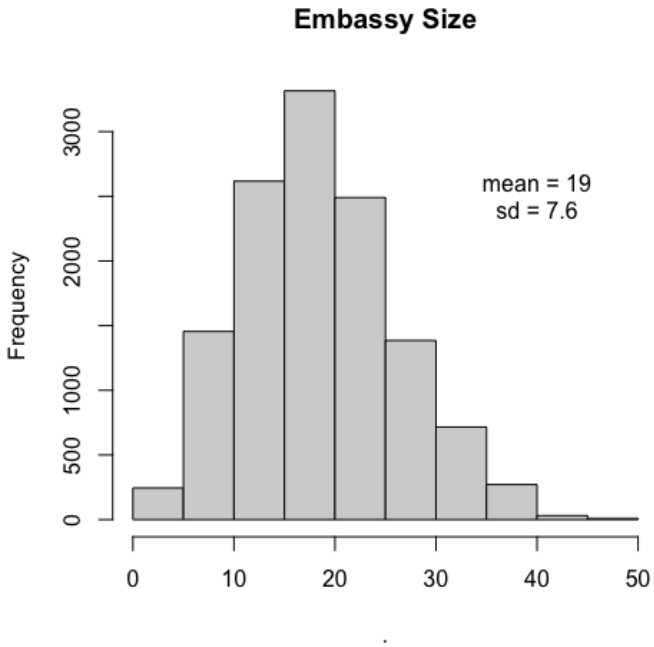
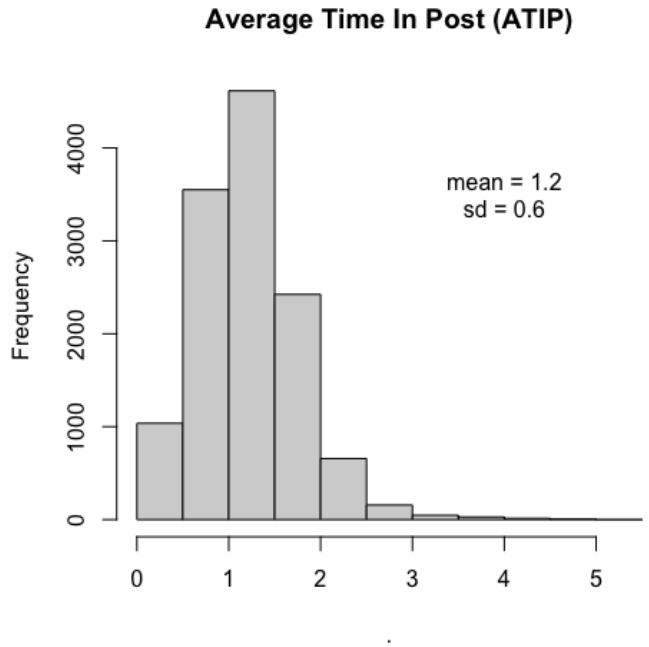
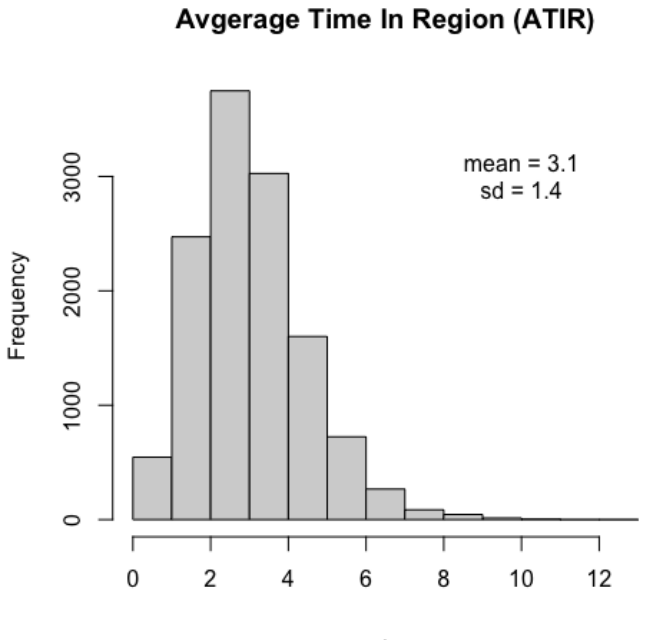
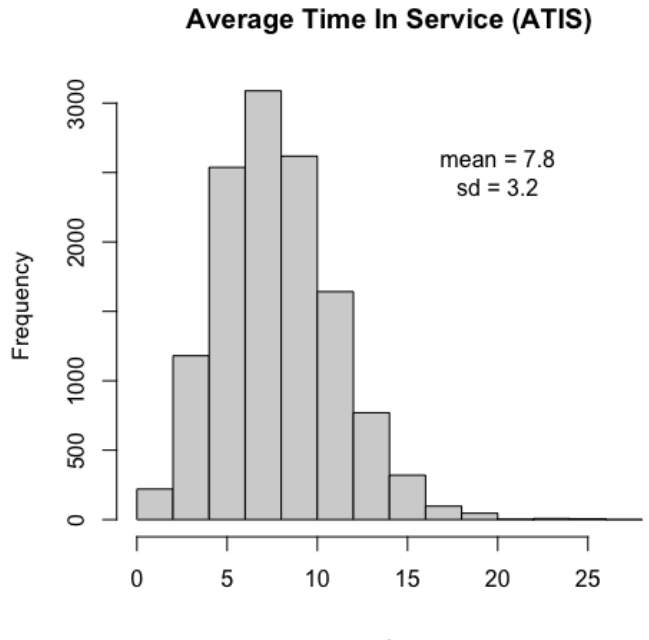
- Controls: GDP, pop., trade, aid, UNGA voting, capabilities, (emb. size)


Embassy Size
Frequency
0
500
1000
2000
3000
mean = 19
sd = 7.6
0
10
20
30
40
50


Average Time In Post (ATIP)
Frequency
0
1000
2000
3000
4000
mean = 1.2
sd = 0.6
0
1
2
3
4
5


Avgerage Time In Region (ATIR)
Frequency
0
1000
2000
3000
mean = 3.1
sd = 1.4
0
2
4
6
8
10
12


Average Time In Service (ATIS)
Frequency
0
500
1000
2000
3000
mean = 7.8
sd = 3.2
0
5
10
15
20
25

Research Design

Autonomy:

- Presidential election as a shock to top-level attention on foreign policy (Lindsey & Hobbs (2015); Durante & Zhuravskaya (2018); Bubeck et. al (2022))
- Less oversight $\implies$ more autonomy
- Higher capacity $\implies$ better able to exploit autonomy

Research Design

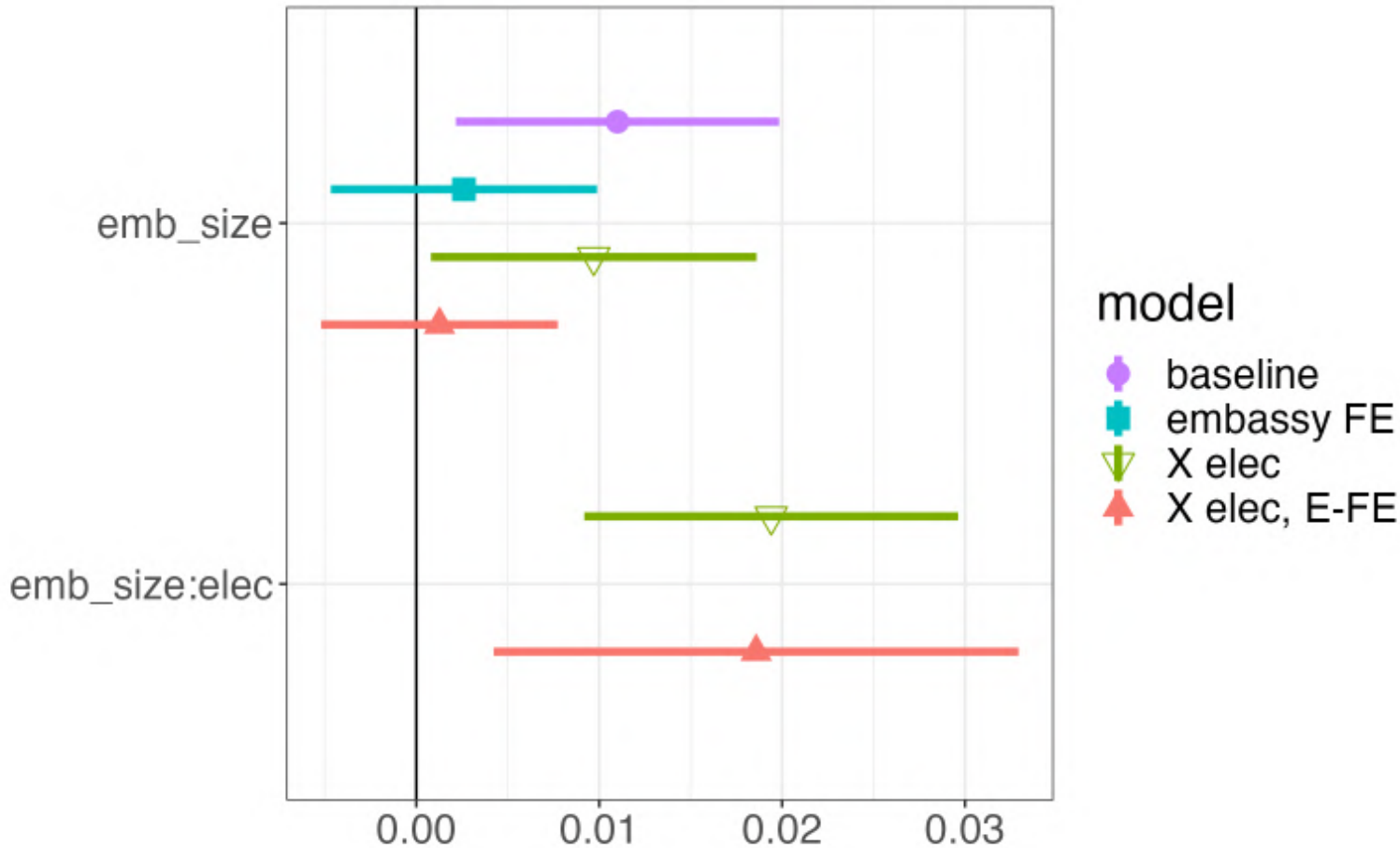
Autonomy:

- Presidential election as a shock to top-level attention on foreign policy (Lindsey & Hobbs (2015); Durante & Zhuravskaya (2018); Bubeck et. al (2022))
- Less oversight $\implies$ more autonomy
- Higher capacity $\implies$ better able to exploit autonomy

$$\text{Agreements}_{cqt} = \text{Capacity}_{cqt} \times \text{Elec}_{qt} + \text{Controls}_{cqt} \times \text{Elec}_{qt} + \text{FE}$$

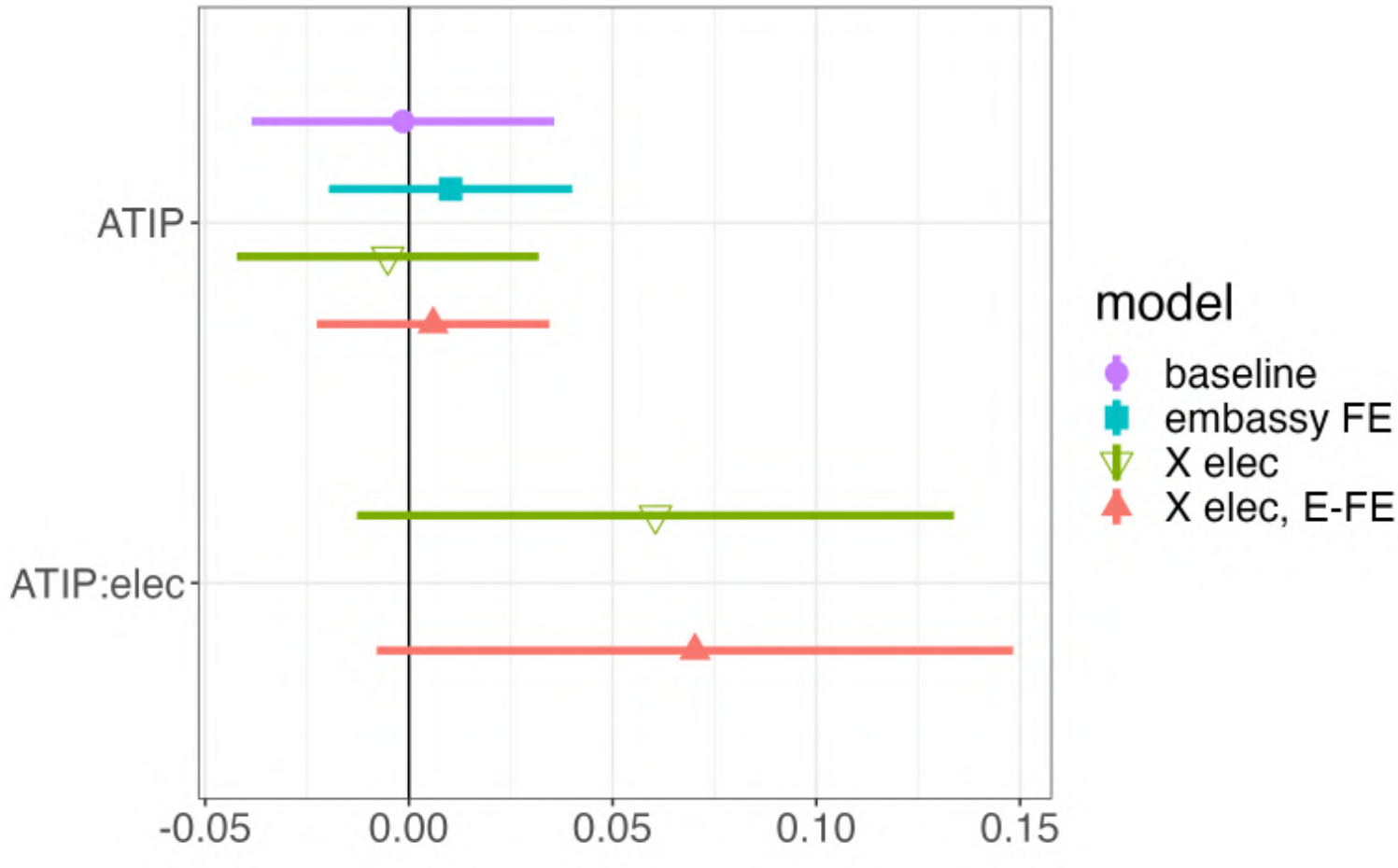
- $\text{Elec}_{qt} = 1$ for Q3 and Q4 in year when pres. is up for reelection, 0 otw

Embassy-Level: # Officers



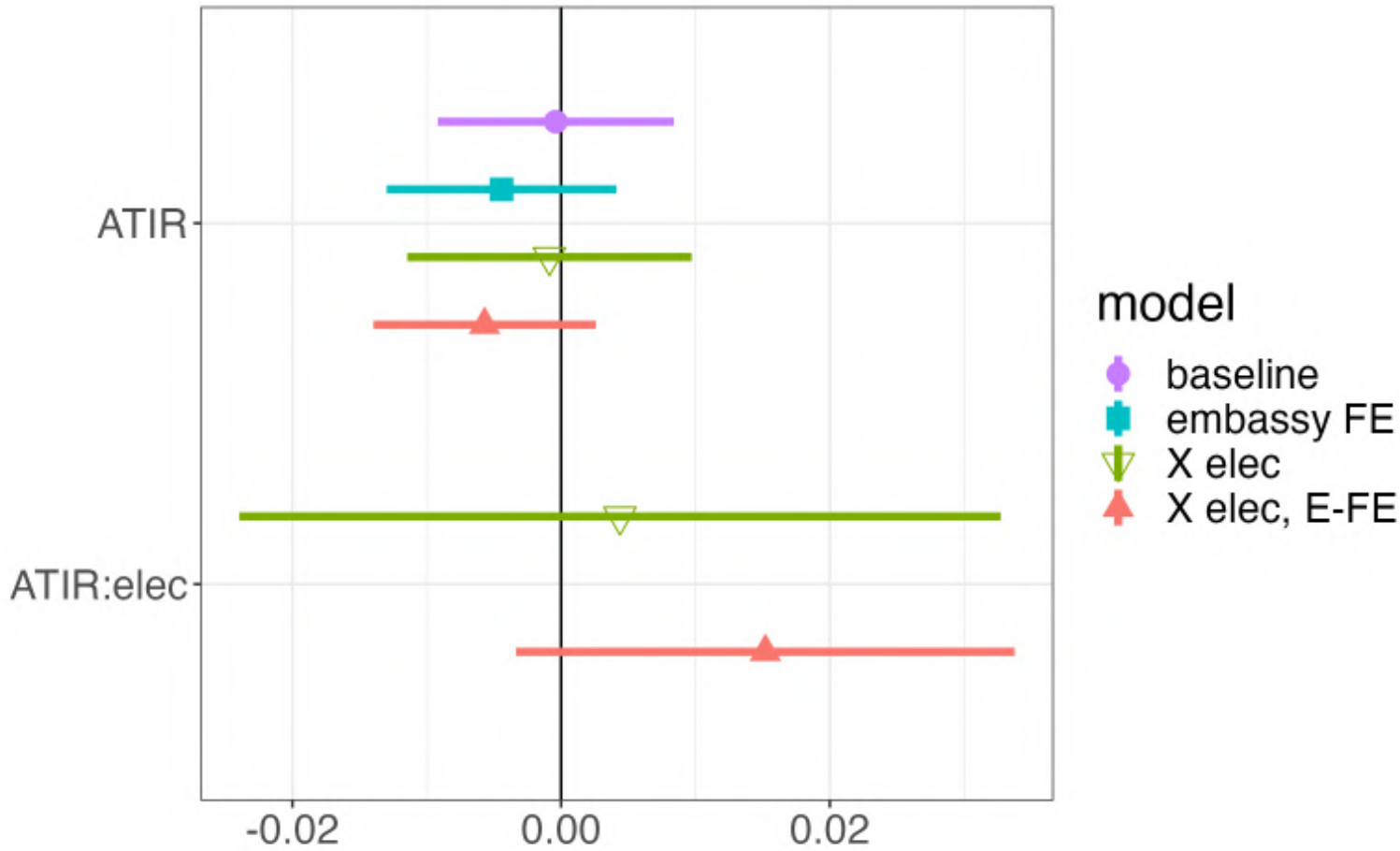
- DV (# treaties signed): mean = 0.3, sd = 0.7
- emb_size (# officers): mean = 19, sd = 7.6
- n = 12,536 embassy-QYs (178 embassies, 84 QYs, 1988–2017)
- all models: region FE, QY FE, controls, SE clustered by emb. & year

Embassy-Level: Avg. Time In Post (ATIP)



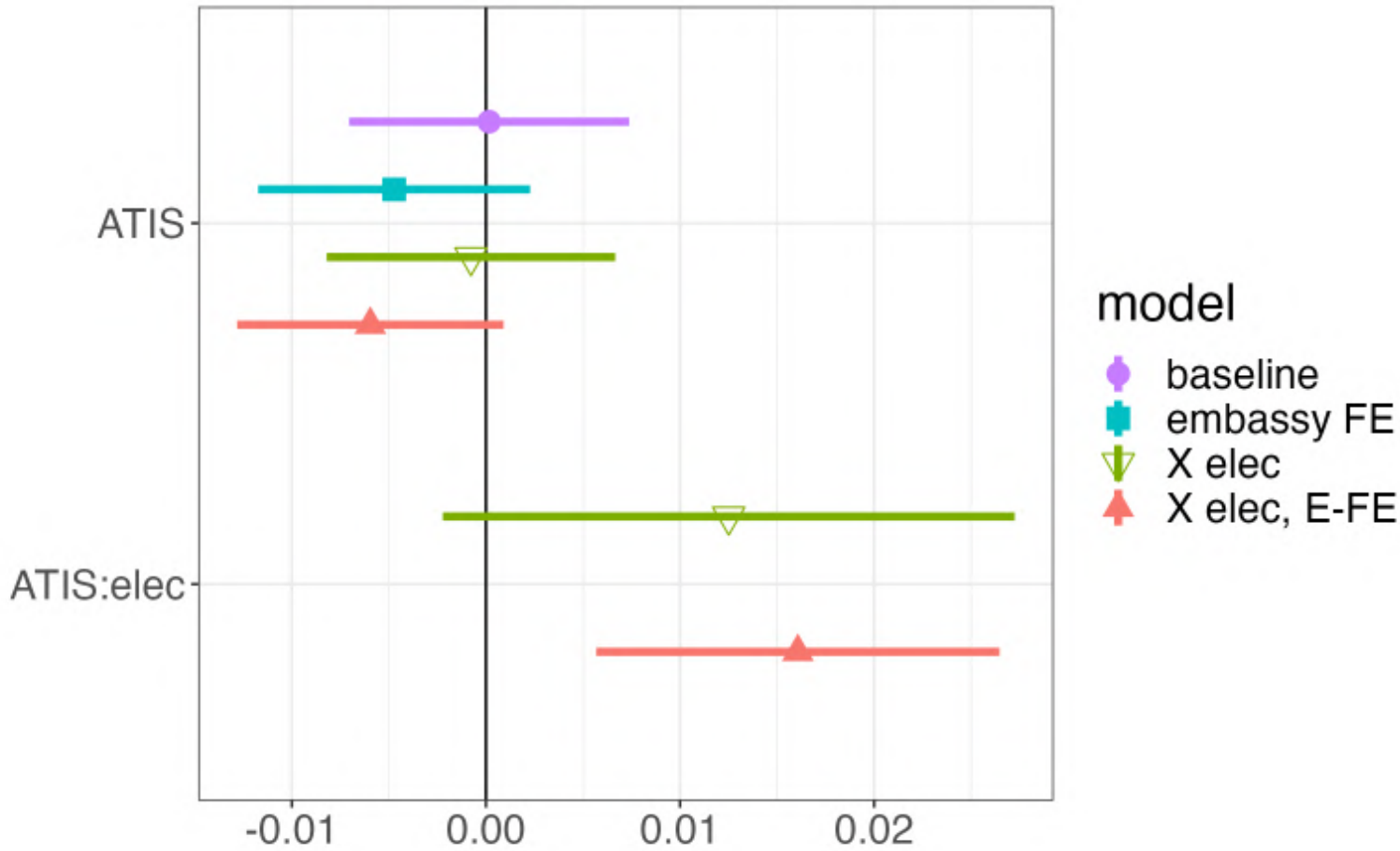
- DV (# treaties signed): mean = 0.3, sd = 0.7
- ATIP (years): mean = 1.2, sd = 0.6
- n = 12,536 embassy-QYs (178 embassies, 84 QYs, 1988–2017)
- all models: region FE, QY FE, controls, SE clustered by emb. & year

Embassy-Level: Avg. Time In Region (ATIR)



- DV (# treaties signed): mean = 0.3, sd = 0.7
- ATIR (years): mean = 3.1, sd = 1.4
- n = 12,536 embassy-QYs (178 embassies, 84 QYs, 1988–2017)
- all models: region FE, QY FE, controls, SE clustered by emb. & year

Embassy-Level: Avg. Time In Service (ATIS)



- DV (# treaties signed): mean = 0.3, sd = 0.7
- ATIS (years): mean = 7.8, sd = 3.2
- n = 12,536 embassy-QYs (178 embassies, 84 QYs, 1988–2017)
- all models: region FE, QY FE, controls, SE clustered by emb. & year

Disaggregating by Issue Area

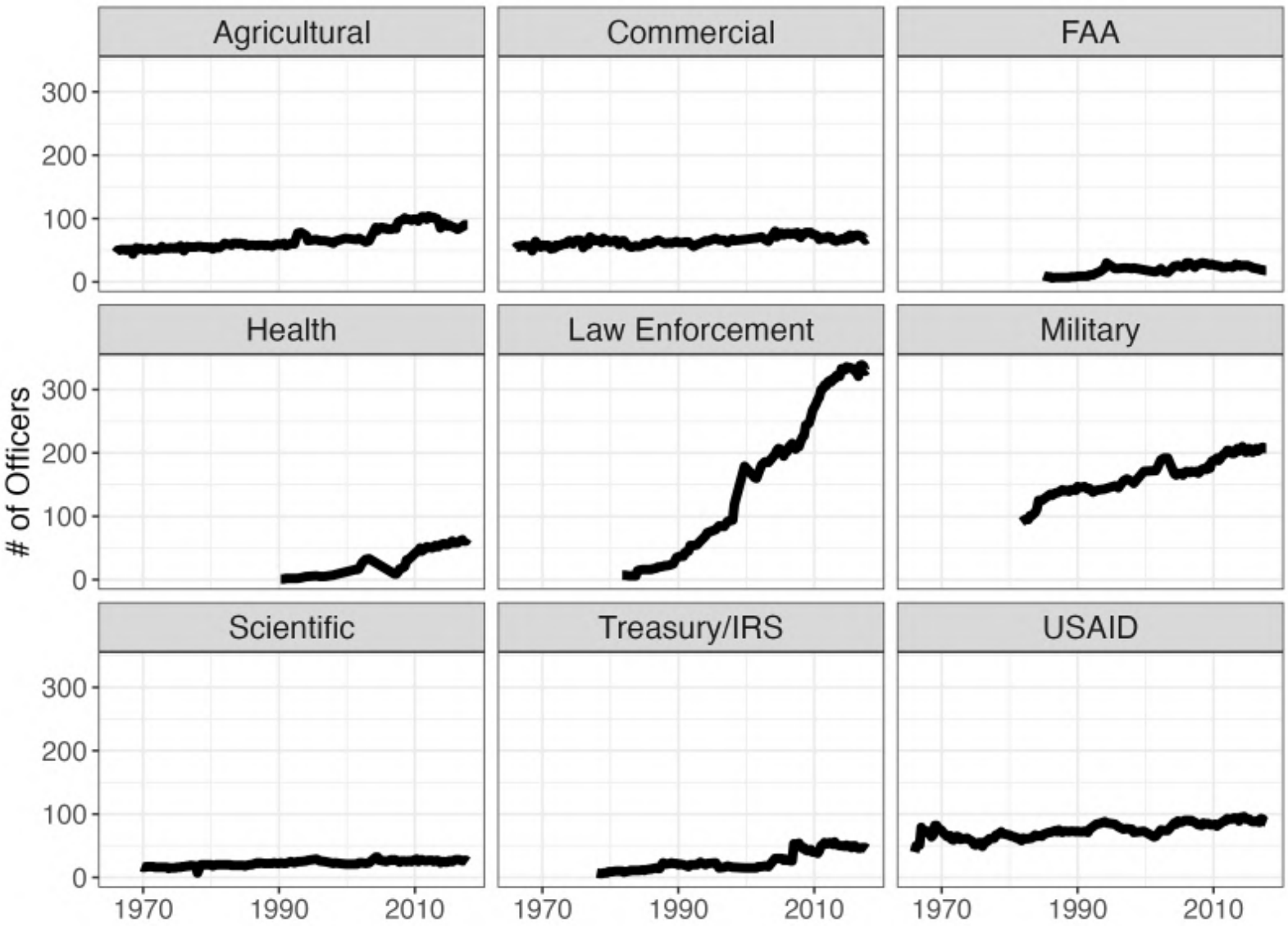
Different measure of capacity:

- presence of issue-specific attaché at embassy

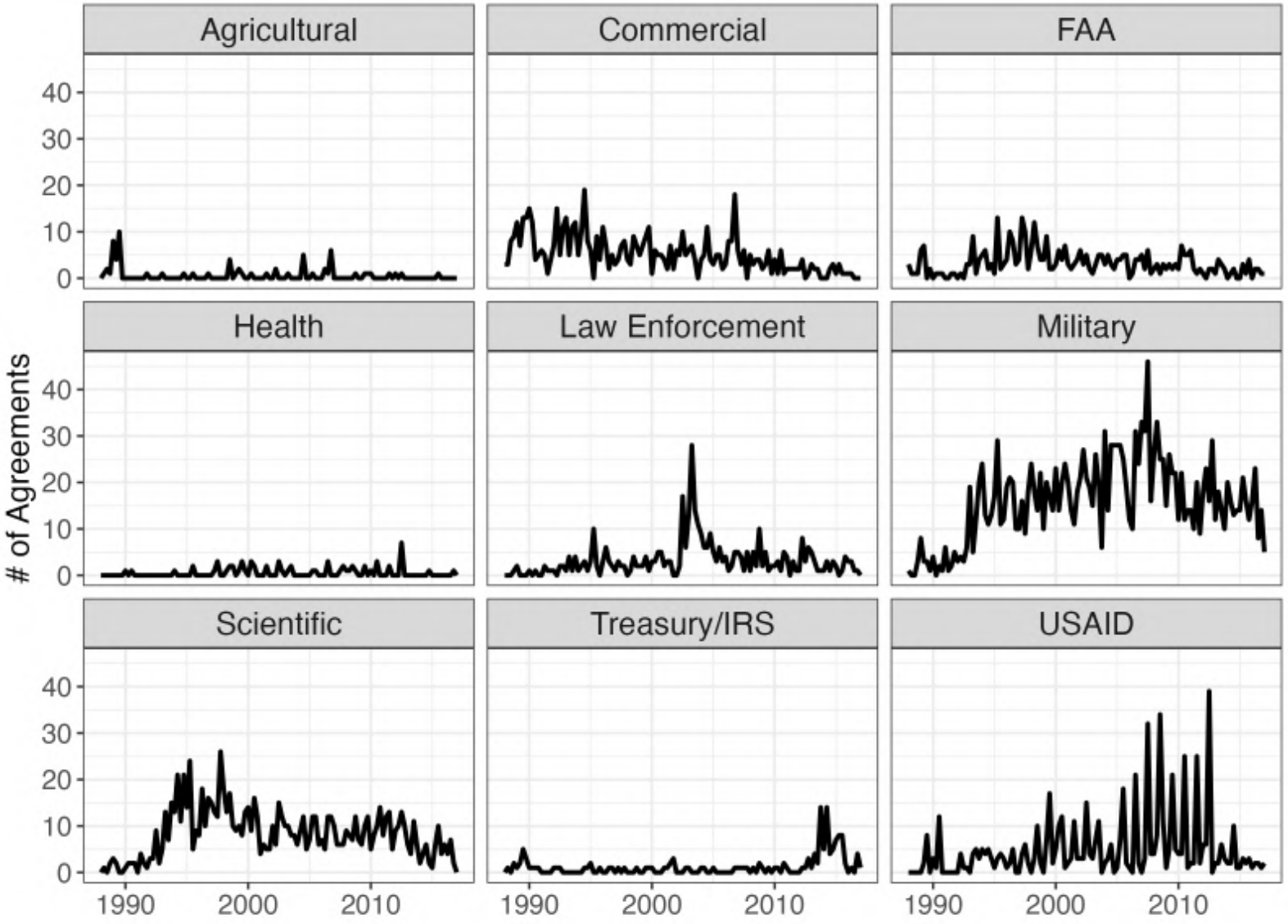
$$\text{Agreements}_{icqt} = \text{Attaché Present}_{icqt} \times \text{Elec}_{qt} + \text{Controls}_{iqt} \times \text{Elec}_{qt} + \text{FE}$$

- issue i, country c, quarter q, year t

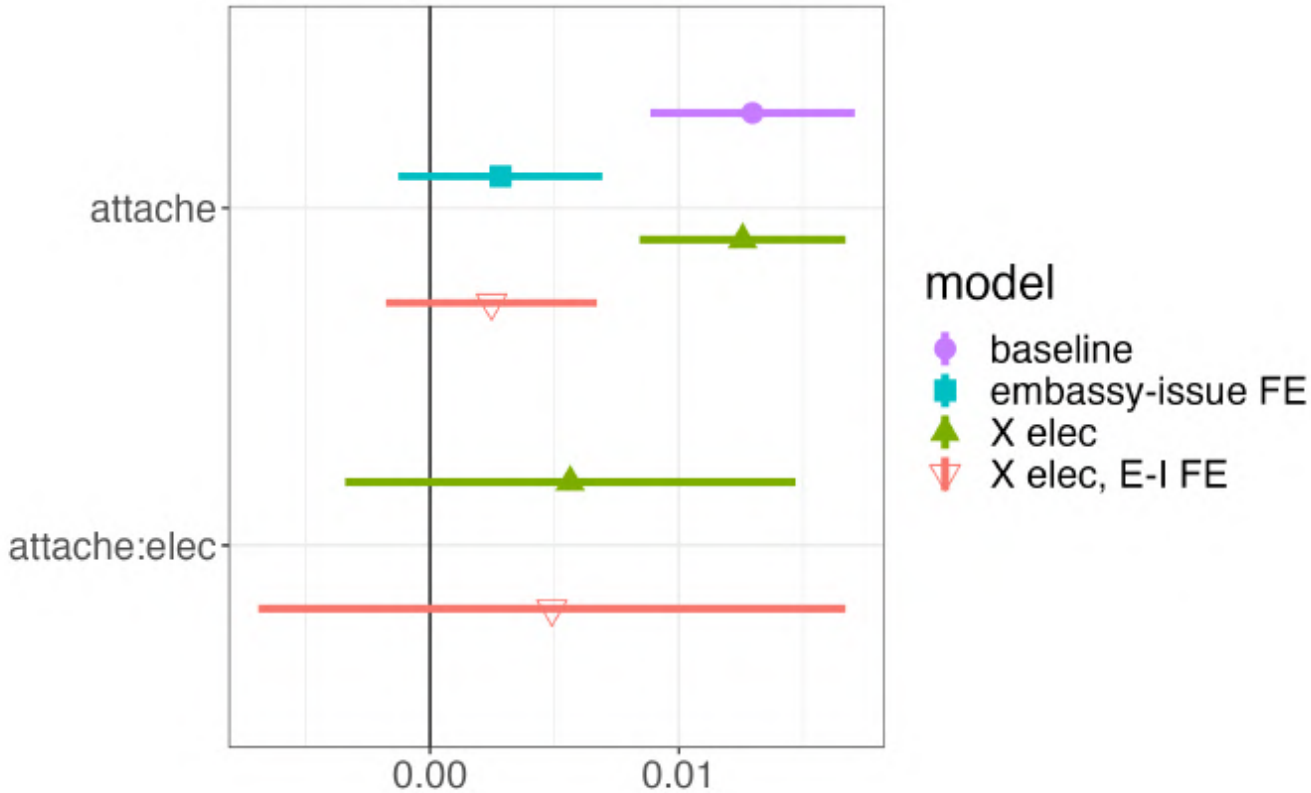
Total # External Attaches, by Issue Area



Agreements Signed, by Issue Area



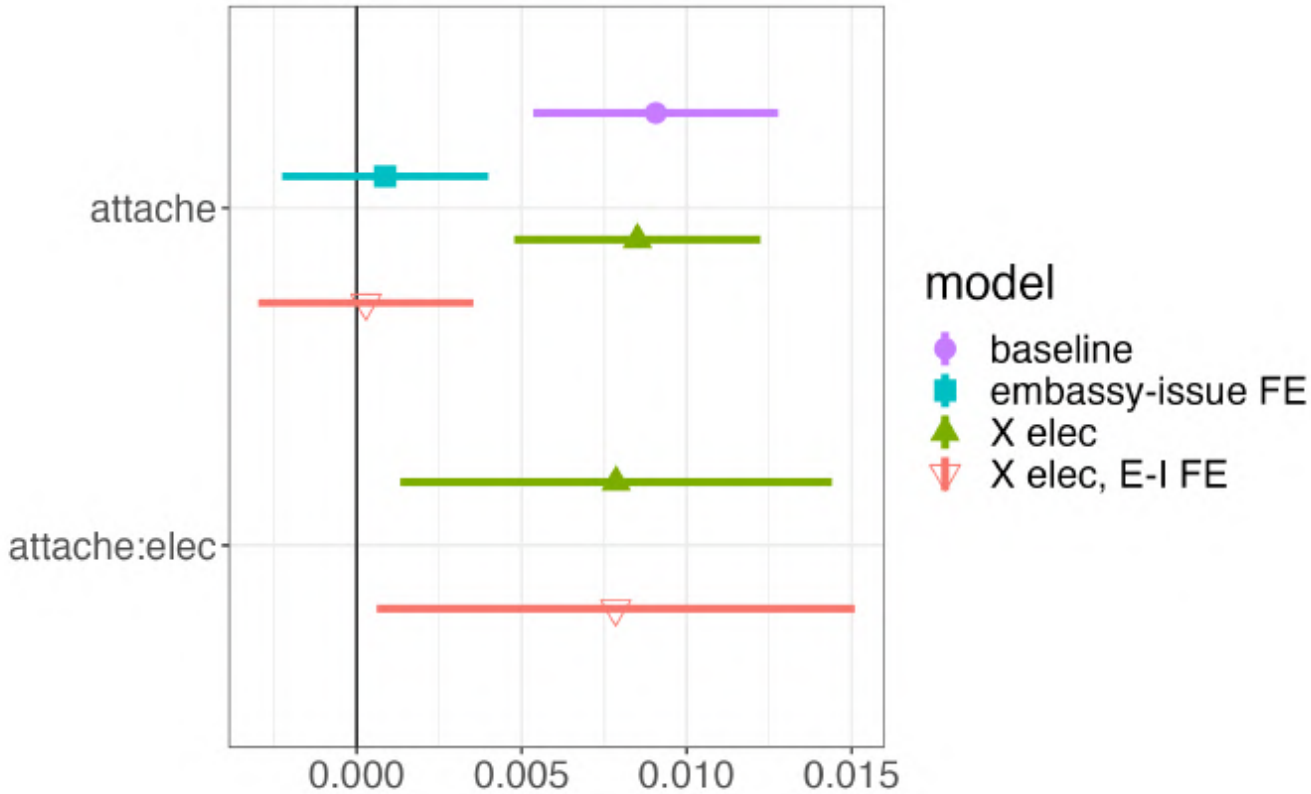
Embassy-Issue-Level: Attaché Presence



Note: *excluding* multiply-accredited attachés

- DV (treaty signed, 1/0): mean = 0.02, sd = 0.15
- attache presence (1/0): mean = 0.36, sd = 0.47
- n = 159,534 embassy-issue-QYs (9 issue areas)
- all models: region FE, QY FE, issue FE, controls, SE clustered by emb. & year

Embassy-Issue-Level: Attaché Presence



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Thank you!

- Matt Malis `mattmalis.github.io`
- Calvin Thrall `calvinthrall.com`
- Measuring American Diplomacy (MAD) Project: `measuringdiplomacy.github.io/`