

Public Abstract

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Title: The Political and Economic Consequences of the Summit Diplomatic Activity of the U.S. President

American presidents have attended more than 2,000 summit meetings since the end of the Second World War. Yet, what we know about these meetings is limited to historical case studies. In this dissertation, I move beyond these descriptive accounts and give a systematic analysis of the consequences of presidential summit meetings with foreign heads of state and government. I focus on three areas of importance. First, I look at the domestic impact of summits arguing summit meetings can give a small, positive, but evanescent boost to presidential approval ratings. Second, I turn to the international political impact of summits and find that summit meetings have a small positive impact on the bilateral interstate relations of the U.S. This supports the possibility that these events help socialize heads of state and government into the international order. Third, I investigate the economic impact of bilateral summit meetings with developing states. Results uncover a positive relationship between summits and bilateral trade relations with and U.S. foreign aid to, but not foreign direct investment to these countries. This dissertation does not only uncover a general, albeit modest positive impact of summit diplomacy, but it also shows how the general impact of summits were stronger during the Cold War than it is today. Finally, my findings also demonstrate the worthiness of and need for studying summit diplomacy further.