



THE WHITE HOUSE  
TRANSITION PROJECT  
1997—2017

RICE UNIVERSITY'S  
BAKER INSTITUTE  
FOR PUBLIC POLICY

*SMOOTHING THE PEACEFUL TRANSFER OF DEMOCRATIC POWER*

---

Report 2017—42

THE DYNAMICS OF  
INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC  
PRESIDENTIAL TRAVEL  
1977-2015

Brendan J. Doherty, *United States Naval Academy*  
*White House Transition Project*

Funded by the  
 MOODY  
FOUNDATION

## WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

**The White House Transition Project.** Established in 1999 to provide information to incoming White House staff members so that they can hit the ground running, The White House Transition Project includes a group of presidency scholars from across the country who participate in writing essays about past transitions and the inner workings of key White House offices. Since its creation, it has participated in the 2001, 2009 and now the 2017 presidential transitions with the primary goal of streamlining the process and enhancing the understanding of White House operations. WHTP maintains an important, international dimension by consulting with foreign governments and organizations interested in improving governmental transitions.

**Rice University's James A. Baker, III Institute for Public Policy.** Founded in 1993 on the campus of Rice University, the Baker Institute has 20 programs that focus on a broad range of issues including energy, health, conflict resolution, science and technology, tax and expenditure policy and Latin America and China studies. With an eye toward educating and engaging the next generation of leaders, the Baker Institute collaborates with experts from academia, government, the media, business, and nongovernmental and private organizations.

**The Moody Foundation.** Chartered in 1942 by William Lewis Moody, Jr., a successful businessman from Galveston, Texas, the Moody Foundation makes a difference for the people of Texas. The Foundation makes grants for projects focusing on the arts, humanities, religion, education, social services, community development, and health. In addition, the Moody Foundation has contributed to the building of many universities, hospitals, museums, and libraries across Texas.

© The White House Transition Project, 2001- 2017

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO .....	II
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....	1
RESEARCHING PRESIDENTIAL TRAVEL .....	2
GENERAL TRENDS OF INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC TRAVEL .....	4
Figure 1: Days of Presidential International and Domestic Travel, 1977-2015	4
Figure 2: Days of International Travel, 1977-2015	5
INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENTIAL TRAVEL .....	5
<i>When</i>	5
Table 1: Number and Length of International Presidential Trips, 1977-2015	7
Figure 3: Days of International Presidential Travel by Month, First Year in Office, 1977-2009	8
<i>Where</i>	10
Table 2: Numbers of Countries Presidents Visited and Total International Visits, 1977-2015	10
Table 3: Presidential Visits to Countries by Region, 1977-2015	11
Figure 4: Number of Presidential Visits by Country, 1977-2015	13
Table 4: Countries that Hosted at Least Five Presidential Visits, 1977-2015	14
<i>For What Purpose</i>	15
Table 5: Categories of International Presidential Travel, 1977-2015	15
DOMESTIC PRESIDENTIAL TRAVEL .....	17
<i>When</i>	17
Figure 5: Days Presidents Held Domestic Non-D.C. Area Events, 1977-2015	17
Figure 6: Days of Non-D.C. Area Domestic Presidential Travel by Month, First Year in Office, 1977-2009	18
<i>Where</i>	19
Figure 7: Days Presidents Held Domestic Non-D.C. Area Events in Each State, 1977-2015	20
Table 6: Non-D.C. Area Cities in which Presidents Held the Most Public Events, 1977-2015	21
Table 7: Time at Camp David, at Second Homes, and on Vacation, 1977-July 25, 2016	23
<i>For What Purpose</i>	24
CONCLUSION .....	26
REFERENCES.....	28

*Smoothing the Peaceful Transfer of Democratic Power*



THE WHITE HOUSE  
TRANSITION PROJECT  
1997–2017

RICE UNIVERSITY'S  
BAKER INSTITUTE  
FOR PUBLIC POLICY

*SMOOTHING THE PEACEFUL TRANSFER OF DEMOCRATIC POWER*

---

Report 2017–42

# THE DYNAMICS OF INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC PRESIDENTIAL TRAVEL, 1977-2015

Brendan J. Doherty *United States Naval Academy*  
*White House Transition Project*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As a president's time is arguably his or her scarcest resource, the strategic choices that determine its allocation are some of the most significant that a president and White House aides will make. When and where a president chooses to travel, and what he or she does while there, can reveal a great deal about presidential priorities. This essay analyzes patterns of both international and domestic travel over the past six presidential administrations in order to provide the incoming administration with information that will assist them as they decide when, where, and for what purpose the next president should travel.

Funded by the  
 MOODY  
FOUNDATION

*Smoothing the Peaceful Transfer of Democratic Power*



THE WHITE HOUSE  
TRANSITION PROJECT  
1997–2017

RICE UNIVERSITY'S  
BAKER INSTITUTE  
FOR PUBLIC POLICY

# THE DYNAMICS OF INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC PRESIDENTIAL TRAVEL, 1977-2015

Brendan J. Doherty *United States Naval Academy*  
*White House Transition Project*

The journeys of U.S. presidents across the country and around the world have provided the American people with indelible images of presidential leadership. One need look no further than Abraham Lincoln dedicating a cemetery to fallen Union soldiers in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, in November 1863; John F. Kennedy in Berlin almost a hundred years later declaring his solidarity with the people of that embattled city; or George W. Bush speaking to rescue workers through a megaphone in New York City following the attacks of September 11, 2001, to see clearly the importance of travel in shaping the public's perception of a president. Many presidents have been at their best when speaking directly to the people and drawing on the energy of the crowds they addressed in moments that would become emblematic of their leadership.

Decisions about presidential travel come down to the question of resource allocation. Former White House chief of staff and Vice President Dick Cheney declared that, "the president's time is the most valuable thing there is" (Bauder 2013). An aide to President Barack Obama sounded a similar theme, explaining, "the president's time ... is the most precious resource in the White House" (Donilon 2012). The strategic choices that determine when and where a president chooses to travel, as well as what he or she does while there, can reveal a great deal about presidential priorities.

A tremendous amount of effort goes into preparing for a presidential journey. An advance team lays the groundwork for each presidential trip, coordinating details that range from security to public relations. At least three helicopters—one bearing the president, and two providing security and serving as decoys—usually carry the president from the White House to Andrews Air Force Base, where he or she boards Air Force

Funded by the  MOODY  
FOUNDATION

One. A large entourage accompanies the president, including support planes carrying personnel and military and communications equipment, and cargo planes bearing armored vehicles, the president's limousine, and at times his or her helicopter, Marine One. On occasion, in the case of travel to dangerous overseas destinations, a decoy plane painted to look like Air Force One often makes the journey as well. In short, moving the president and what has been called the mobile White House around the country and the world requires a remarkable investment of time, money, and political effort (Allen 2002; Allen 2004; Babcock 1991; Babcock 1992; Milbank 2002; Nakashima 2000; Walsh 1977). This essay analyzes patterns of both international and domestic travel over the past six presidential administrations in order to provide the incoming president and his or her aides with information that will assist them as they decide when, where, and for what purpose the next president should travel.

## RESEARCHING PRESIDENTIAL TRAVEL

This study covers the 39-year period from January 20, 1977, through December 31, 2015, encompassing six presidencies—those of Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and the first seven years of Barack Obama. This period includes three Republican presidents—Reagan and both Presidents Bush—who collectively held the White House for 20 years, and three Democratic presidents—Carter, Clinton, and Obama, who served as president for 19 years of this study. The analysis is drawn from an original data set of international and domestic presidential trips that I compiled by first examining the *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States* at the American Presidency Project, and then the White House websites of Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama. The data set tracks the days each president spent abroad and the number of days on which he held domestic events in each state.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Not every entry in the *Public Papers* was treated as an individual event. The goal was to code presidential activity in a way that reflected the actual number of events that took place, not merely to record the number of entries in the *Public Papers*. For example, brief exchanges with reporters that immediately preceded or followed an event, such as an exchange on the front steps of a school just after a speech to students inside, were not coded as separate events, even though they often received their own entry in the *Public Papers*. Additionally, if a president attended an event for an entire morning and made several separate comments throughout the event, all in the same room to the same audience, that each garnered an individual entry in the *Public Papers*, those were not treated as separate events. For other exchanges with reporters, in which presidents engage frequently, anything over 150 words was coded as an event. This relatively inclusive threshold was set to get a full picture of what constitutes presidential activity in the states. Exchanges with reporters under 150 words were only recorded if they served as the only record of the president's visit to that city that day. For example, on April 4, 1994, President Clinton threw out the first pitch at an Indians game in Cleveland. He did not make a speech, and a brief exchange with reporters is the only record in the *Public Papers* of his trip to Cleveland, which surely was widely reported by the local news media. Such an event ought to be included in the data set of presidential travel.



A substantial proportion of presidential travel involves political fundraising, but many of these events are closed to the press and thus are routinely excluded from the *Public Papers*. In order to account for this, I conducted LexisNexis searches of Associated Press articles that contained each president's name within 25 words of the word *fundraiser* or one of its variants in each year of this study, and the resulting news stories were used to check the data set. Additionally, I reviewed the "Digests of Other White House Announcements" released by the White House press office, the recently available minute-by-minute daily White House schedules for Carter, Reagan, Clinton, and the first two years of George H.W. Bush, as well as Reagan's personal diary and Obama's public schedules on the White House website, and drew upon information from the discussion of the president's schedule by the White House press secretary in his or her gaggles and briefings with the press corps. All of these efforts revealed fundraisers not found in other sources, and the result is the most comprehensive data set available of presidential travel over the past four decades.

Because a large number of public presidential events occur in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area only a few miles from the White House as part of the president's regular activities and are not comparable to other types of presidential travel, events in Maryland and Virginia are not included in the following analysis. A presidential event held at Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland or at the Pentagon in Virginia is not a representative example of a president traveling to the states.

Days spent and events held at Camp David or a presidential home that served as a second White House are not part of this data set, and days spent on vacation without official events are also not included. However, this study does present information on the number of days that presidents spent at Camp David, at a second home, and on vacation, drawing on data shared by Mark Knoller of CBS News and the Jimmy Carter, George H.W. Bush, and William J. Clinton Presidential Libraries. I owe particular thanks to Knoller, who has systematically chronicled presidential activities dating to the latter portion of the Clinton administration, and has generously shared both his expert perspective on how best to code presidential travel as well as data on presidential vacations and time at second homes and Camp David that fell outside of the scope of my study.

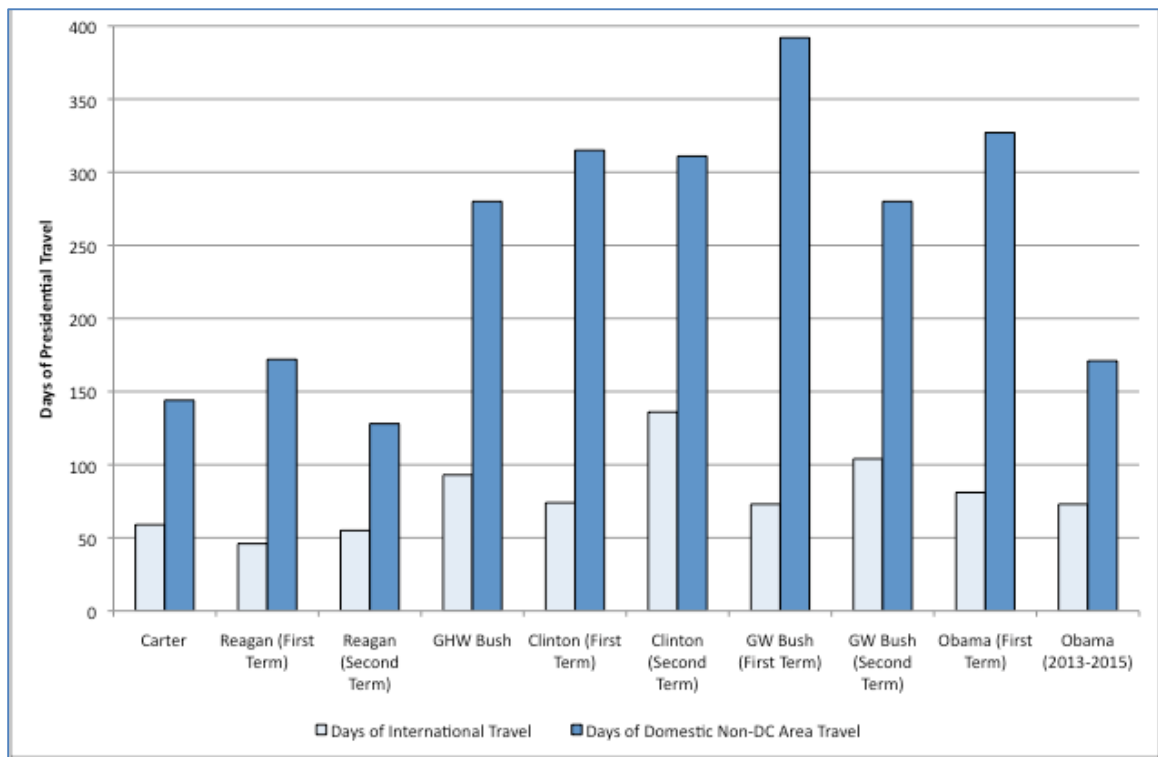
The data on international travel reflect the length of a presidential trip from the first to the last event abroad. As presidents do not always make remarks or hold a public event upon departing for or returning from an international trip, it is often impossible to determine from the *Public Papers* exactly when the president left and returned to the White House. As a result, the data presented here might slightly understate the total length of some of these international journeys. This is not always the case, however, as presidents flying to and from the Western Hemisphere and Europe often hold their first public event abroad on the same day that they depart from the White House, and frequently arrive home on the same day that they hold their last public event abroad. When presidents travel to Asia, however, their departure from the White House is often two calendar days before their first event abroad, due both to the length of the journey and the crossing of the International Date Line. Because of these dynamics, the data in

this study reflect time on the ground abroad, and not the total length of each trip from the departure from, to the return to, Washington, D.C.

## GENERAL TRENDS OF INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC TRAVEL

Figure 1 depicts the number of days that presidents held domestic non-D.C. area events (events outside of Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia) and days of international presidential travel by term from January 20, 1977, through 2015. Several trends are immediately evident. Days of domestic presidential travel rose substantially over much of the 39 years of this study, with the exceptions of the second terms of Reagan and George W. Bush. The first terms of Clinton, George W. Bush, and Obama all saw more than twice the number of days on the road domestically than Carter's single term in the late 1970s, illustrating the increase in presidential travel over the past four decades. George W. Bush's 392 first-term days holding domestic non-D.C. area events constitute more than a quarter of his first four years in office.

**Figure 1: Days of Presidential International and Domestic Travel, 1977-2015**

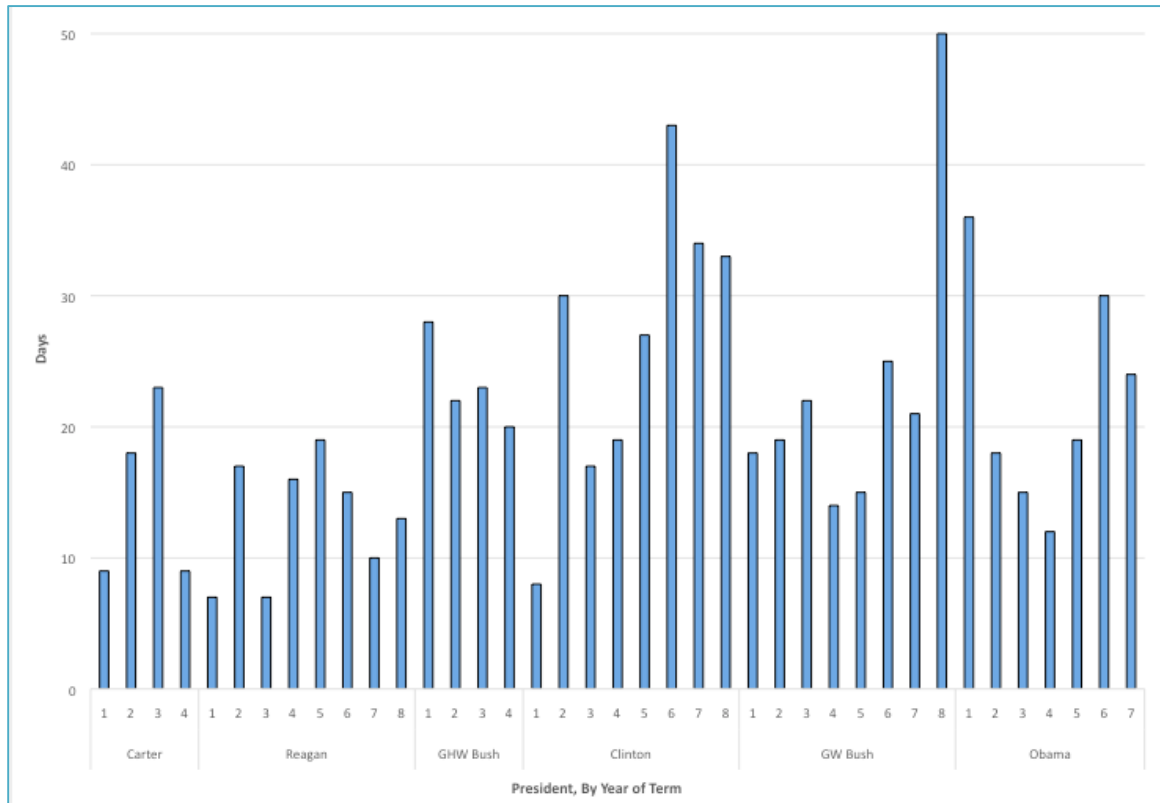


*Source:* Data compiled by the author from the *Public Papers of the Presidents*, the “Digests of Other White House Announcements,” White House schedules and press briefings, and Associated Press and other news articles.

International travel grew between 1977 and 2015 as well, though less dramatically than did domestic travel, as the four most recent presidents each spent more days holding events out of the country than did the first two presidents in this study. Clinton's 136

days of international travel during his second term are far more than any other president examined, and are more than double the amount of international travel by Carter or by Reagan during their respective terms. While Carter and Reagan averaged 53.3 days of international travel per term, the four most recent presidents' average per term has been 90.6 days. To better understand the dynamics of when, where, and for what purpose presidents travel, I first conducted a detailed examination of international travel before turning to an analysis of domestic travel.

**Figure 2: Days of International Travel, 1977-2015**



Source: Data compiled by the author from the *Public Papers of the Presidents*, the “Digests of Other White House Announcements,” White House schedules and press briefings, and Associated Press and other news articles.

## INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENTIAL TRAVEL

### *When*

While the volume of international travel has increased over the 39 years of this study, examination of when within their terms presidents travel reveals commonalities across these six administrations. Figure 2 illustrates that four of the six presidents spent the fewest days abroad in their first year in office. The first exception is George H.W. Bush, whose background as a former vice president and ambassador gave him both an international orientation and a wide range of personal contacts and friends among leaders around the world. The second exception is Obama, who campaigned in 2008

promising a multilateral approach to foreign policy and then spent substantially more days traveling abroad in his first year than any of his recent predecessors.

Several other general patterns emerge from examination of this figure. The four presidents whose lowest total days of international travel came in their reelection year—Carter, George H.W. Bush, George W. Bush, and Obama—faced the most challenging bids for a second term in the White House, while Reagan and Clinton's second-highest number of days of international travel in their first term came during the year of their reelection. Four of the six presidents spent the most first-term days abroad during either their second or third years in office. First term international travel peaked during the second year for Reagan and Clinton, during the third year for Carter and George W. Bush, and during the first year for George H.W. Bush and Obama. The general increase over time revealed in Figure 1 is evident within administrations in Figure 2 as well, as the latter four presidents traveled more in most years than did the first two presidents in the study.

The second terms of the four presidents who served two terms within the years covered by this study further highlight this escalation of international travel in recent decades. While Reagan's level of second-term international travel is roughly comparable to that of his first term, Clinton and Bush's second terms both saw a dramatic rise in the number of days spent abroad, and Obama is on pace to exceed his first-term total. In fact, Clinton's international travel during each of his last three years in office exceeds that of all but two other years in this 39-year period. George W. Bush spent at least twice as many days abroad in his final year in office—50—than he had in any of his first seven years as president. Through 2015, Obama's first year in office still stands as his high-water mark for international travel, though he could surpass that total in his eighth and final year in office.

Table 1 reveals that as the total number of days of international presidential travel has increased over time, the number of international trips has grown as well, while the average length of a presidential trip abroad has decreased. Both Bushes, Clinton, and Obama all went on approximately two to three times the number of trips to other countries per term that Carter and Reagan each did. With the rise in frequency came a decrease in duration, as Carter and Reagan averaged more than four days per trip, while the subsequent four presidents each averaged just over three days per trip, with the lone exception of George W. Bush's second term. Every president except Carter made at least one journey that consisted of events abroad on just one day, often to nearby destinations like Canada or Mexico. Each president embarked on an international tour with at least a week of events abroad. Carter went on three such journeys and George H.W. Bush five in their single terms in office. Reagan took six such trips, Clinton 10, and George W. Bush six during their eight years as president. Through seven years in office, Obama has gone on six international trips in which he spent at least a week abroad.

**Table 1: Number and Length of International Presidential Trips, 1977-2015**

President	Number of Trips	Average Length of Trip (Days)	Shortest Trip (Days)	Longest Trip (Days)
Carter	12	4.9	2	9
Reagan, 1 <sup>st</sup>	11	4.3	1	10
Reagan, 2 <sup>nd</sup>	13	4.4	1	11
GHW Bush	26	3.6	1	10
Clinton, 1 <sup>st</sup>	20	3.7	1	8
Clinton, 2 <sup>nd</sup>	35	3.9	1	11
GW Bush, 1 <sup>st</sup>	23	3.2	1	6
GW Bush, 2 <sup>nd</sup>	21	5.0	1	8
Obama, 1 <sup>st</sup>	25	3.2	1	9
Obama (2013-2015)	19	3.8	1	8

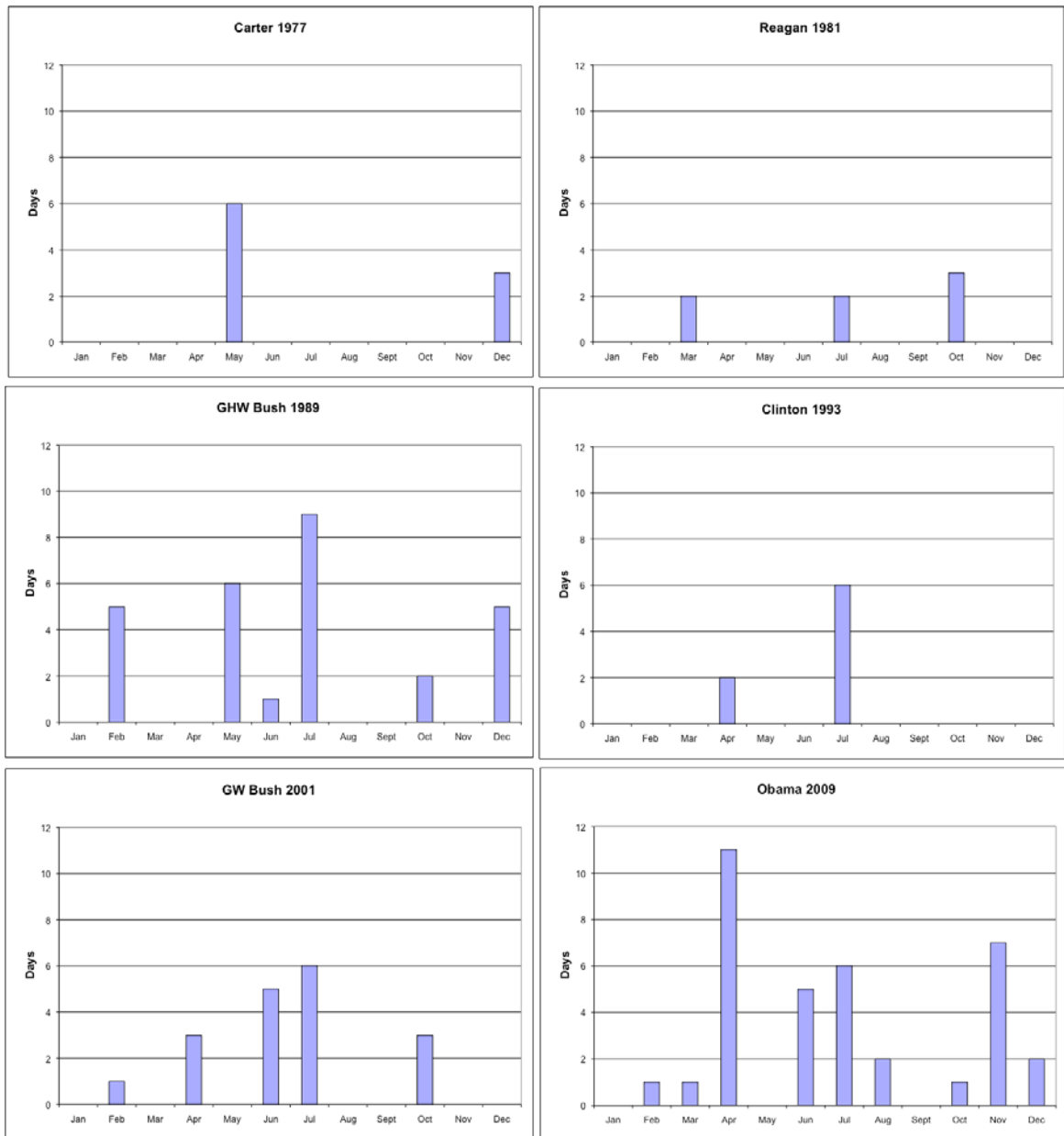
*Source:* Data compiled by the author from the *Public Papers of the Presidents*, the “Digests of Other White House Announcements,” White House schedules and press briefings, and Associated Press and other news articles.

Month-by-month patterns of international presidential travel in the first year in office are depicted in Figure 3. Carter began his international travel the latest, waiting until May. Both Bushes and Obama took their first trips abroad in February, while Reagan did so in March and Clinton in April. Carter and Clinton each took only two trips abroad during their first year in office, while Reagan embarked on three. George W. Bush took five trips abroad in his first year, while his father, George H.W. Bush, embarked on seven journeys overseas, including two separate trips in December. Obama took 11 trips abroad in his first year, an average of almost one per month, and spent 11 of 30 days out of the country in April.

For four of the six presidents in this study—Reagan, George H.W. Bush, Clinton, and Obama—Canada was their first international destination, an indication of that nation’s close relationship with the United States. Carter’s first trip abroad was to England, while George W. Bush, a former governor of Texas, signaled his intent to forge a closer relationship with our neighbor to the south when he chose Mexico for his first international destination as president.

A brief review of each president’s first year of international travel helps to illustrate the nature of the various journeys that presidents take abroad. While in England in May 1977, Carter attended a NATO meeting and a G-7 economic summit before moving on to Geneva, Switzerland, where he met on neutral ground with the president of Syria. He did not travel abroad again until December 29, 1977, when he began a nine-day journey in Poland, after which he visited Iran, India, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, France, and Belgium.

**Figure 3: Days of International Presidential Travel by Month, First Year in Office, 1977-2009**



Source: Data compiled by the author from the *Public Papers of the Presidents*, the “Digests of Other White House Announcements,” White House schedules and press briefings, and Associated Press and other news articles.

Reagan’s three journeys abroad in his first year in office took him to destinations that were closer to home. In March, he spent two days in the Canadian capital of Ottawa, meeting with that country’s leaders. After spending much of the next few months recovering from being shot by a would-be assassin at the end of March, Reagan returned to Ottawa for another two days in July for a G-7 economic summit. He completed his international travel during his first year in office when he spent three days

in October in Cancun, Mexico, attending the International Meeting on Cooperation and Development.

George H.W. Bush spent more days abroad in his first year than did his two immediate predecessors combined. In early February, he made a one-day visit to Ottawa before embarking at the end of the month on a trip consisting of four days of events in Japan, China, and South Korea. At the end of May and the beginning of June, he headed to Europe for seven days of events, including bilateral visits in Italy, Vatican City, Germany, and England, as well as a NATO meeting in Belgium. After just over a month back in the United States, he returned to Europe in July for a nine-day journey composed of bilateral visits in Poland, Hungary, and the Netherlands, as well as a G-7 economic summit in France. Three months later, Bush headed to Costa Rica for two days in late October for a bilateral visit, and in early December he met with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev on the island of Malta, before attending a NATO event in Brussels. To round out a busy first year of international travel, Bush met with French President François Mitterrand in the French West Indies in mid-December.

Clinton's first-year travel was far more limited than that of the man he succeeded in the White House. In April, he spent two days in Vancouver, Canada, where he met with Russian President Boris Yeltsin. In July of that year, he flew west to Asia for six days of events. He first attended a G-7 economic summit in Japan before continuing on to South Korea, where he met with that country's leaders and visited American troops stationed on the Korean peninsula.

George W. Bush made his first journey abroad in February 2001 to the ranch of Mexican President Vicente Fox for one day of meetings. In April, his second international trip took him to Quebec, Canada, for three days for the Summit of the Americas. Two months later, he flew to Europe for five days of events, including bilateral visits in Spain and Poland, a NATO meeting in Belgium, a European Union event in Sweden, and a summit in Slovenia with President Vladimir Putin of Russia. In July, Bush returned to Europe for a bilateral visit to England, a G-8 summit in Italy,<sup>2</sup> and a visit to U.S. troops stationed in Kosovo. Bush rounded out a full first year abroad with an October journey to China for an APEC summit.

Obama's 11 first-year international trips spanning 36 days far outpaced his predecessors. His first trip abroad in February was a one-day journey to Ottawa for a bilateral visit. At the end of March, he began an eight-day trip that included stops in London for a G-20 summit, in Strasbourg, France, and nearby Baden-Baden, Germany for a NATO summit, and in Prague, Czech Republic, for a European Union summit, followed by bilateral visits to Turkey and Iraq. Later in April, he made a four-day trip first to Mexico for a bilateral visit, then to Trinidad and Tobago for a Summit of the Americas. In June, Obama flew to Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Germany for bilateral visits before traveling to France for the 65th anniversary of the D-Day invasion during World

---

<sup>2</sup> The addition of Russia in 1997 transformed the G-7 into the G-8. Russia was removed from the group in 2014, so subsequent meetings again were referred to as gatherings of the G-7. For more information, see: <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/25/world/europe/obama-russia-crimea.html?ref=world&r=2>.

War II. A July trip took him to bilateral visits in Russia, Ghana, and Vatican City, as well as to a G-8 summit in Rome. In August, Obama returned to Mexico for a summit with the leaders of Mexico and Canada, then took a one-day trip to Denmark in October where he lobbied unsuccessfully for Chicago's bid to host the 2016 Olympics. In November, he spent a week in Asia that included bilateral visits to Japan, China, and South Korea, as well as an APEC summit in Singapore. Obama closed out a busy first year of international travel with two brief trips in December, first to Norway to accept the Nobel Peace Prize, and then a return visit to Denmark, this time for a United Nations summit focused on climate change.

### *Where*

Where do presidents travel abroad? Table 2 illustrates that the breadth and amount of international presidential travel have increased over the 39 years from Carter's inauguration through Obama's seventh year in office. The rise has been steady, from Carter's 25 countries in four years, to Reagan's 26 countries over eight years, to George H.W. Bush's 34 countries in four years, and Clinton and George W. Bush each visiting 73 countries over their eight respective years in the White House. Obama, with 51 countries visited through his seventh year in office, is on track for a similar final total. The number of total international visits each president made, including multiple visits to the same country, displays a pattern that is quite similar, with a steady rise over time as well from Carter's 28 visits to George W. Bush's 133. These two measures taken together indicate that Carter rarely visited the same country more than once, as he made 28 visits abroad to 25 different countries, while the other presidents made repeated visits to various countries much more frequently.

**Table 2: Numbers of Countries Presidents Visited and Total International Visits, 1977-2015**

	Carter	Reagan	Bush 41	Clinton	Bush 43	Obama
Countries Visited	25	26	34	73	73	51
Total Visits (Includes Multiple Visits to Countries)	28	44	57	127	133	93

*Source:* Data compiled by the author from the *Public Papers of the Presidents*, the "Digests of Other White House Announcements," White House schedules and press briefings, and Associated Press and other news articles.

To which regions of the world have presidents traveled most frequently? Table 3 indicates that, collectively, 219 of the 482 visits to other countries, or 45 percent, of the international visits these presidents made, were to countries in Europe. Individually, five of these six presidents made more than twice as many stops in European countries than they did in any other region, with Clinton leading the way with 64 visits. The lone exception is Obama, for whom Europe was still the most visited region, but it was trailed closely by Asia (33 visits versus 28 visits, through 2015), reflecting his administration's



much publicized “pivot to Asia.” These data reflect the total number of visits abroad, including multiple visits to the same country, so Reagan’s four journeys to Germany, for example, are counted four times in this table. Europe’s place atop this list is an indication of the close political, economic, and military ties between the United States and many of the countries on the continent. It is also partly a function of the great number of countries on that continent; while the United States also has close ties to its neighbors in North America, there are only two large countries, Canada and Mexico, in the immediate vicinity.<sup>3</sup>

**Table 3: Presidential Visits to Countries by Region, 1977-2015**

Region	Carter	Reagan	Bush 41	Clinton	Bush 43	Obama	Total
Europe	12	22	29	64	58	33	219
Asia	4	5	6	18	23	28	83
Middle East	3	0	2	11	18	7	41
North America	1	10	7	7	9	7	41
Africa	4	0	1	13	10	8	36
South America	2	2	7	5	10	3	29
Central America and Caribbean	2	5	4	7	3	5	26
Pacific	0	0	1	2	2	2	7
Total	28	44	57	127	133	93	482

*Source:* Data compiled by the author from the *Public Papers of the Presidents*, the “Digests of Other White House Announcements,” White House schedules and press briefings, and Associated Press and other news articles.

Asia ranks as the second-most visited region, even though this count excludes the countries in southwestern Asia that are grouped separately as being in the Middle East. Over time, the number of visits presidents have made to Asia has grown, with each president spending more time there than did his immediate predecessor. North America<sup>4</sup> is tied with the Middle East as the third-most visited region. While travel to other regions of the world has increased over time, visits to our North American neighbors have remained relatively constant over the last five presidencies. Recent presidents have traveled frequently to the Middle East, reflecting the United States’ recently increased military and political involvement in the region.

<sup>3</sup> Regional groupings were determined in large part according to categories established by the United Nations Statistics Division (<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/m49/m49regin.htm>). The countries of eastern Europe, including Russia, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, and more, were included as part of Europe, while the Republic of Georgia was categorized as being in Asia. While Russia spans both Europe and Asia, presidents uniformly visited cities in western Russia such as Moscow and St. Petersburg.

<sup>4</sup> In accordance with the United Nations categories, North America includes Canada, Mexico, and Bermuda, where George H.W. Bush met twice with British prime ministers. The countries of Central America and the Caribbean are included in a separate category.

In the aggregate, the six presidents made an approximately similar number of visits to Africa, South America, and Central America and the Caribbean. Clinton made the most country visits in each of these regions with the exception of South America, where George W. Bush led with 10 countries visited. The Pacific, which consists of Australia and New Zealand, was the least-visited region, with only seven total presidential stops. Some presidents never visited certain regions. Reagan did not journey to Africa and George H.W. Bush made only one stop there, a 1990 visit to Egypt. Carter did not travel to the countries of the Pacific, and Reagan never visited the Middle East.

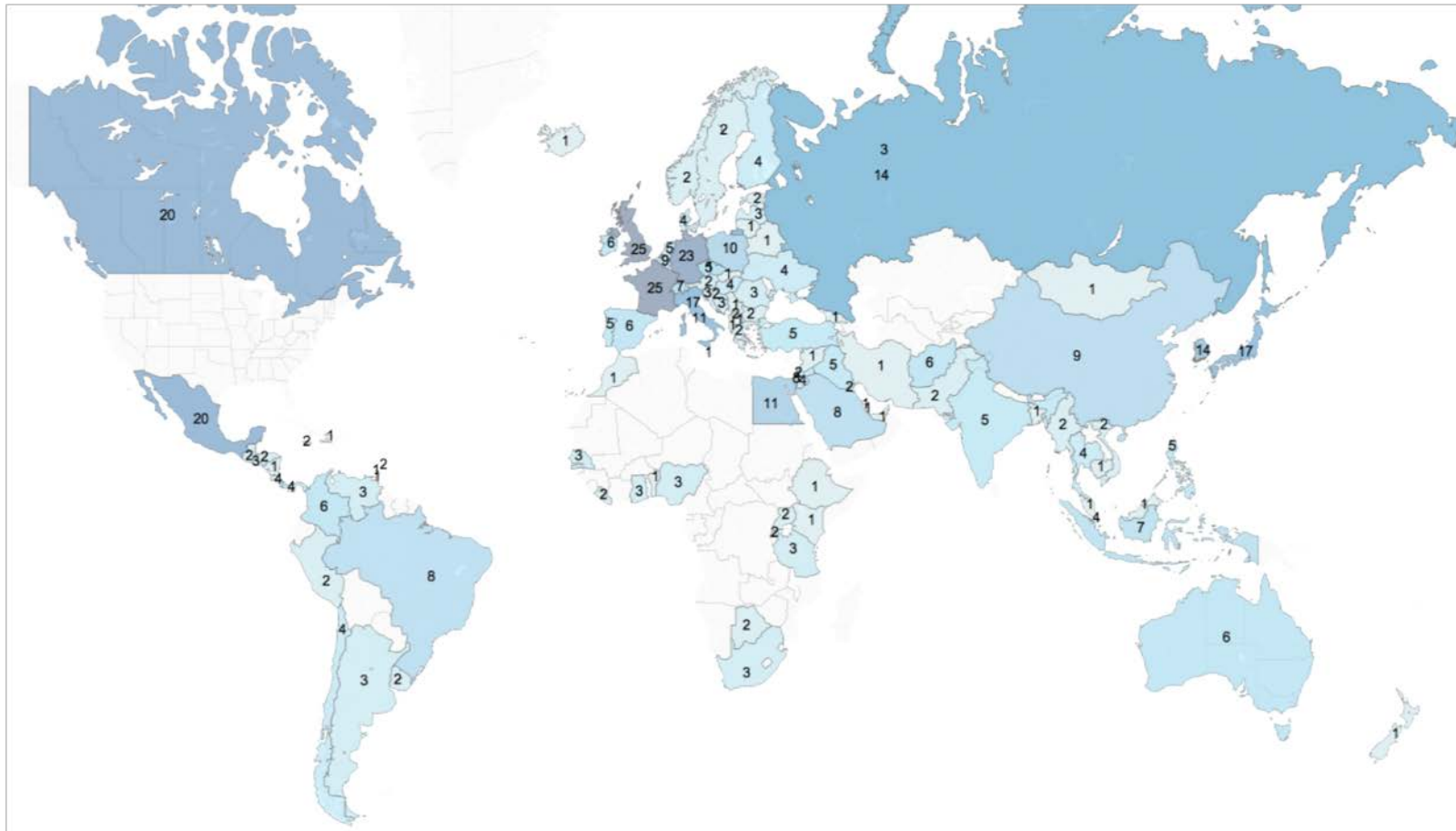
Analysis of presidential destinations by country reveals both continuity and variation in the objects of presidential attention. Figure 4 depicts the number of presidential visits each country received from 1977 through 2015, and Table 4 lists the countries that hosted five or more presidential visits and provides the data for each president. France and the United Kingdom were the most visited countries, each hosting U.S. presidents 25 times, followed closely by Germany (23), and Canada and Mexico (20 each). Only 10 countries were visited by all six presidents in this study, indicating their enduring importance to the United States: Belgium, Brazil, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Mexico, South Korea, the United Kingdom, and Vatican City. An additional nine countries were visited by five of these six presidents: Canada, China, Colombia, Egypt, Poland, Portugal, Russia/U.S.S.R., Saudi Arabia, and Spain. Of these 19 countries, 10 are in Europe, three in Asia, two in North America, two in South America, one in Africa, and one in the Middle East.

The frequency of multiple visits to the same country has increased dramatically over the past 39 years. Carter visited only three countries twice; he visited the other 22 countries he traveled to as president only once. Reagan visited two countries five times each—Canada and Mexico—in eight years, and George H.W. Bush visited France and the United Kingdom five times each in just four years.<sup>5</sup> Clinton made five or more visits to four countries during his eight years in office—the United Kingdom, Germany, Canada, and France—while George W. Bush did likewise to five countries—Russia, Mexico, Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom. Obama, through seven years in office, made five or more visits to two countries—France and Mexico. Figure 4 indicates that countries that have been infrequently visited tend to be in the developing world. Recent presidents have expanded both the volume and scope of presidential travel, visiting many more countries than their predecessors and going to many countries that had not previously hosted a U.S. president.

---

<sup>5</sup> Please note that these totals include two visits to Bermuda, which is part of the United Kingdom, and to the French West Indies, which is part of France.

Figure 4: Number of Presidential Visits by Country, 1977-2015



Source: Data compiled by the author from the *Public Papers of the Presidents*, the “Digests of Other White House Announcements,” White House schedules and press briefings, and Associated Press and other news articles. Maps made using Tableau software.

Table 4: Countries that Hosted at Least Five Presidential Visits, 1977-2015

Country	Carter	Reagan	Bush 41	Clinton	Bush 43	Obama	Total
France	2	3	5	5	4	6	25
United Kingdom	1	3	5	7	5	4	25
Germany	1	4	3	6	5	4	23
Canada	0	5	4	5	4	2	20
Mexico	1	5	1	2	6	5	20
Italy	1	2	2	5	5	2	17
Japan	2	2	2	5	3	3	17
Russia/U.S.S.R.	0	1	2	5	7	2	17
South Korea	1	1	2	3	3	4	14
Egypt	2	0	1	4	3	1	11
Vatican City	1	2	2	1	3	2	11
Poland	1	0	2	2	3	2	10
Belgium	1	1	2	1	2	2	9
China	0	1	1	1	4	2	9
Brazil	1	1	2	1	2	1	8
Israel	1	0	0	4	2	1	8
Saudi Arabia	1	0	1	1	2	3	8
Indonesia	0	1	0	1	2	3	7
Switzerland	1	1	1	4	0	0	7
Afghanistan	0	0	0	0	2	4	6
Australia	0	0	1	1	2	2	6
Colombia	0	1	1	1	2	1	6
Czech Republic / Czechoslovakia	0	0	1	1	2	2	6
Ireland	0	1	0	3	1	1	6
Spain	1	1	1	2	1	0	6
India	1	0	0	1	1	2	5
Iraq	0	0	0	0	4	1	5
Netherlands	0	0	2	1	1	1	5
Philippines	0	0	0	2	1	2	5
Portugal	1	1	0	1	1	1	5
Turkey	0	0	1	1	1	2	5

Source: Data compiled by the author from the *Public Papers of the Presidents*, the “Digests of Other White House Announcements,” White House schedules and press briefings, and Associated Press and other news articles.

*For What Purpose*

Presidents travel internationally primarily to attend a wide range of bilateral and multilateral summits with other heads of state. Table 5 reveals that the majority of presidential trips abroad have been bilateral visits, which almost always involve meetings with the host country's head of state and are often official state visits. Collectively, 64.9 percent of the visits that presidents made over this 39-year period were bilateral visits; individually, these ranged from 52.1 percent for Obama to 71.9 percent for George H.W. Bush.<sup>6</sup>

**Table 5: Categories of International Presidential Travel, 1977-2015**

Nature of Visit	Carter	Reagan	Bush 41	Clinton	Bush 43	Obama	Total	%
Bilateral Visit	19	30	41	81	95	49	315	64.9
G-7, G-8, and G-20	4	7	3	8	7	14	43	8.9
Other Multilateral Summit	1	2	3	12	7	8	33	6.8
NATO Meeting	2	1	4	3	7	4	21	4.3
APEC Summit	0	0	0	5	6	4	15	3.1
Bilateral Summit in a Third Country	2	2	3	2	3	0	12	2.5
European Union Meeting	1	1	1	4	4	3	14	2.9
Summit of the Americas	0	0	0	1	3	3	7	1.4
Funeral	1	0	0	4	0	1	6	1.2
Middle East Peace Conference	0	0	1	4	0	0	5	1.0
United Nations Event	0	0	1	1	1	2	5	1.0
ASEAN Summit	0	1	0	0	0	4	5	1.0
Non-governmental Conference	0	0	0	2	0	2	4	0.8
<i>Total</i>	30	44	57	127	133	94	485	100.0

*Source:* Data compiled by the author from the *Public Papers of the Presidents*, the "Digests of Other White House Announcements," White House schedules and press briefings, and Associated Press and other news articles.

In most years, presidents regularly have attended G-7 and G-8 summits, NATO summits, European Union meetings, APEC summits, and various regional summits. All of these events rotate location from year to year, and all but the European Union meetings<sup>7</sup> sometimes take place in the United States. Obama is the first president to attend regularly ASEAN summits, as well as meetings of the newly created G-20. The

<sup>6</sup> The total of 485 visits in Table 5 exceeds the total of 482 in previous tables and figures because Carter attended both a NATO meeting and a European Union meeting during one visit and both a NATO meeting and a G-7 Summit during another, while Obama attended both a NATO and a European Union meeting once; thus these three visits were each counted under two separate categories.

<sup>7</sup> European Union meetings include meetings of related bodies such as the European Commission and the European Parliament.

relative decline in the proportion of bilateral visits under Obama likely reflects the proliferation of multilateral groups and meetings, including recent United Nations events focused on climate change. Many presidential trips for a multilateral summit often also include a number of one-on-one meetings with individual heads of state. In addition to their meetings with foreign leaders, presidents often visit American troops stationed abroad as part of their many trips around the world.

Presidents have conducted bilateral summits in a third country with relative frequency, with an average of almost one every third year. Nine of the 12 such meetings in this study were with the leader of the Soviet Union or Russia, beginning with Carter in 1979 in Vienna, Austria, followed by Reagan's 1985 summit in Geneva, Switzerland, and his 1986 summit in Reykjavik, Iceland. George H.W. Bush met with the Soviets in Malta in 1989, and again in Helsinki, Finland, in 1990. Clinton continued this practice, meeting with the Russian president in 1993 in Vancouver, Canada, and again in Helsinki in 1997. George W. Bush held a summit with the president of Russia in 2001 in Slovenia and again in 2005 in Slovakia. Additionally, Carter and George H.W. Bush each met with the president of Syria in Geneva in 1977 and 1990, respectively, and in 2006, George W. Bush met in Jordan with the prime minister of Iraq.

About one in every 14 presidential visits abroad has been for the purpose of attending a multilateral or regional summit that is not one of the specific meetings referenced in Table 5. These events have included Conferences on Security and Cooperation in Europe, Central American summit meetings, a World Trade Organization meeting, and other gatherings of regional leaders in places such as Africa, the Caribbean, the Baltics, and Asia. Presidents have rarely traveled to funerals in other countries, often sending the vice president or other representatives in their stead to head the American delegation. Carter journeyed to Japan to pay tribute to a deceased head of state, Clinton did so for funerals in Israel, Jordan, Morocco, and Japan, and Obama did so for Nelson Mandela's funeral in South Africa. Presidents have occasionally planned an international journey to coincide with the anniversary of a major historical event. Several recent presidents have chosen to travel to France to commemorate the D-Day invasion of Normandy during World War II and have given memorable speeches atop the cliffs that Allied troops scaled in June 1944 after landing on the beaches below.

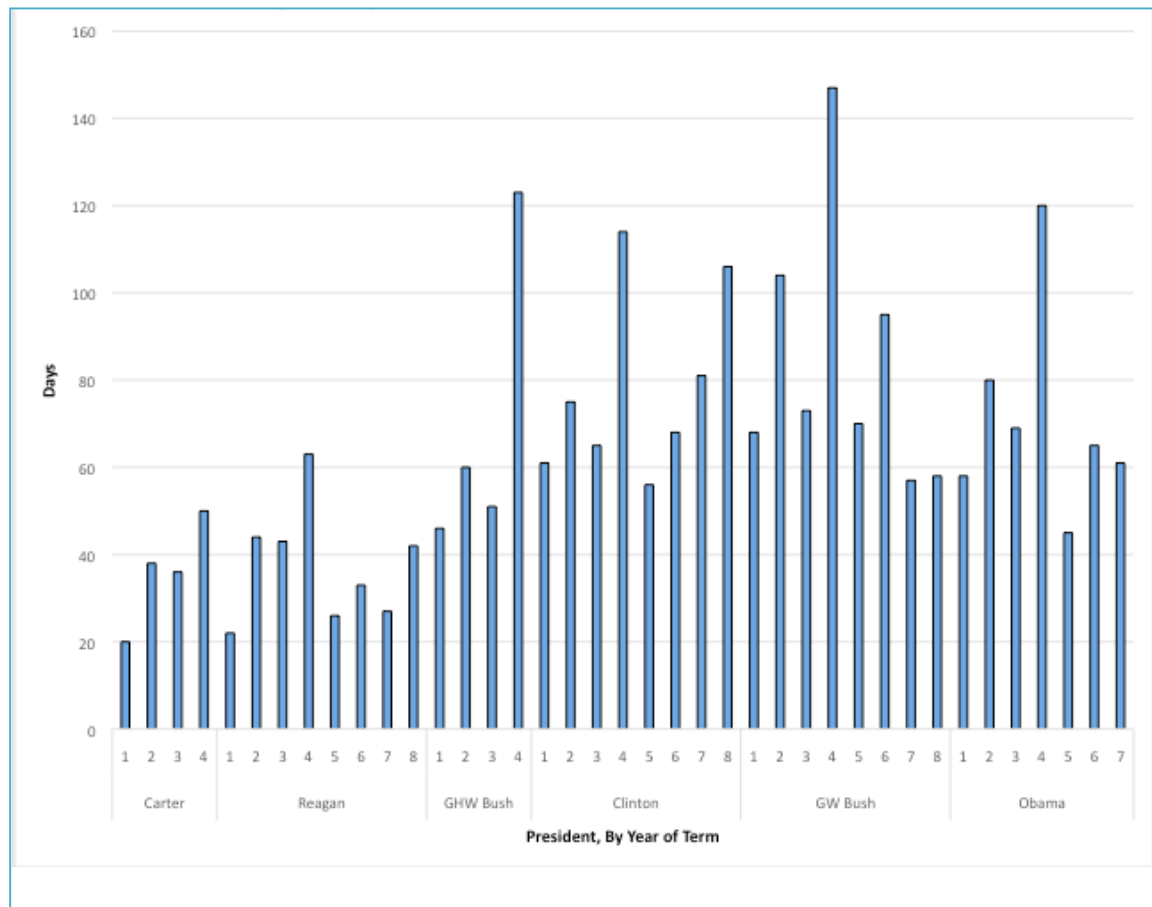
International presidential travel increased substantially over the 39 years of this study, and the distribution of international travel within a president's term has varied. Recent presidents have embarked on more international journeys of shorter duration, on average, although each of the past six presidents has made multiple trips that consist of more than a week of events abroad. Patterns of international travel during a president's first year have varied a great deal, illustrating both the personal priorities of each president and the nature of the events that presidents attend abroad. Recent presidents have traveled more broadly, though Europe is still the most visited region. While more than half of all presidential visits abroad have been for bilateral visits, a series of multilateral summits compose an important and growing part of a president's international travel agenda.

## DOMESTIC PRESIDENTIAL TRAVEL

### *When*

Presidents travel domestically far more frequently than they journey abroad, as they take trips around the country in order to meet and communicate with the people they represent. A president has a great deal of discretion in deciding when, where, and for what purpose to travel, and his or her allocation of the scarce resource of time can reveal a great deal about the president's strategic priorities. As a reminder, the data discussed here exclude events in Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia, since so many events presidents attend there occur in the suburbs of Washington, D.C., at locations like the Pentagon and thus are not directly comparable to other presidential travel.

**Figure 5: Days Presidents Held Domestic Non-D.C. Area Events, 1977-2015**

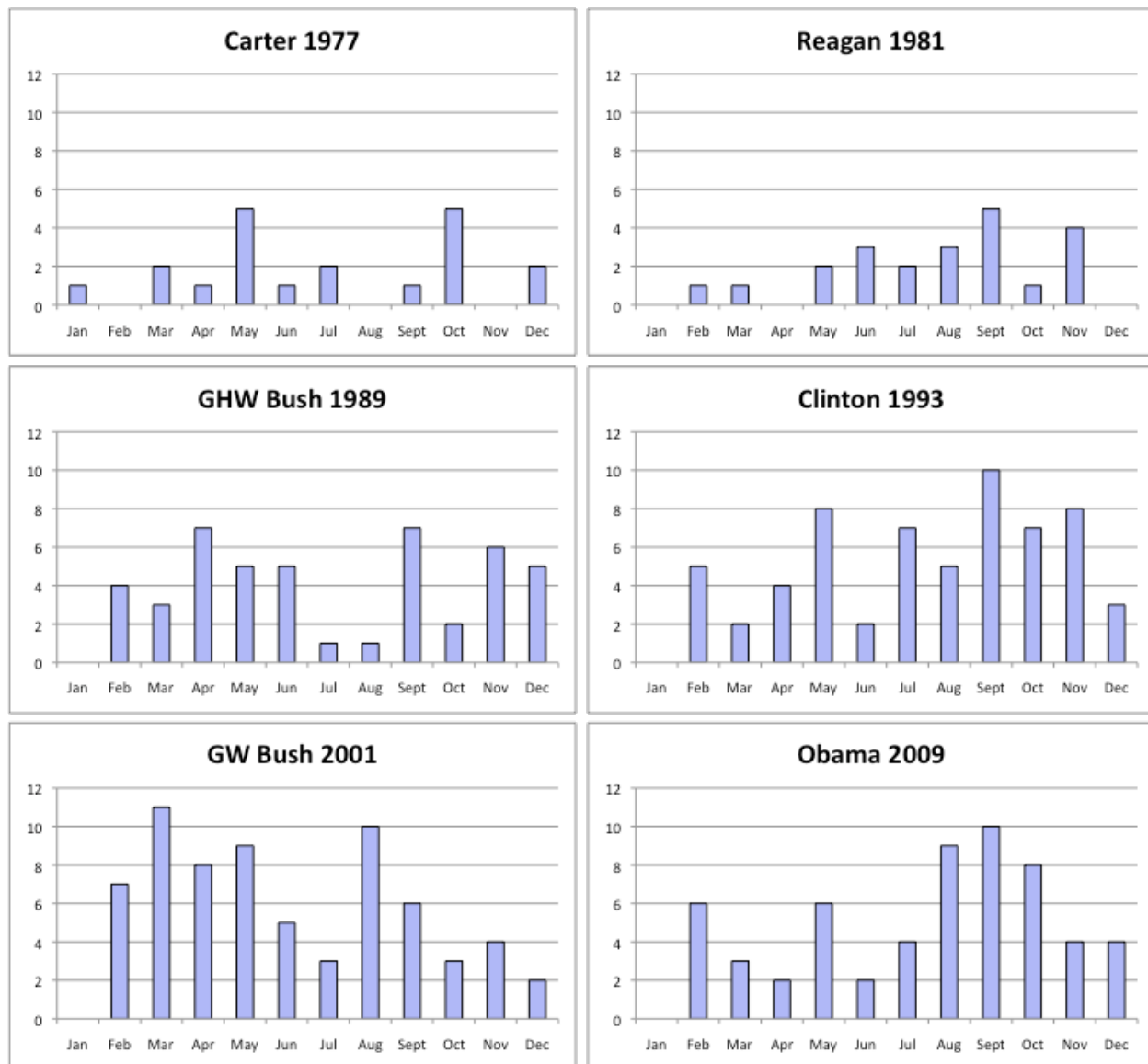


*Source:* Data compiled by the author from the *Public Papers of the Presidents*, the “Digests of Other White House Announcements,” White House schedules and press briefings, and Associated Press and other news articles.

Analysis of domestic travel within a president's term reveals first-term patterns that are remarkably consistent for each of the six presidents in this study. Figure 5 illustrates that the greatest numbers of presidential events in the states consistently take place in the reelection year, followed by the second year of a term—in which presidents

frequently campaign and raise money for their co-partisans in the midterm elections—then the third year, and finally the first year in office. The figure also illustrates the dramatic increase in domestic travel over time, as Clinton, George W. Bush, and Obama traveled about as much in their least active years as Carter did in his busiest year of travel.

**Figure 6: Days of Non-D.C. Area Domestic Presidential Travel by Month, First Year in Office, 1977-2009**



Source: Data compiled by the author from the *Public Papers of the Presidents*, the “Digests of Other White House Announcements,” White House schedules and press briefings, and Associated Press and other news articles.

There is less consistency in the second-term domestic travel patterns of the four presidents in this study who were elected to two terms in the White House. Reagan



traveled less in his second term than he did in three of the corresponding years of his first term, likely due in part to his status as our nation's oldest president. Clinton, in contrast, embarked on an aggressive public travel schedule in his second term, traveling successively greater numbers of days in each of his final four years in office. George W. Bush traveled least in his final two years in office when his approval ratings were low and he was confronting daunting economic and foreign policy challenges. Obama's first three years of his second term have seen fewer days of domestic travel than in the corresponding years of his first term. Interestingly, Bill Clinton traveled a great deal in his final year as president in an effort to elect Hillary Clinton to the Senate. Sixteen years later, Obama in his final year might travel extensively to help elect Hillary Clinton to the White House.

Examination of Figure 6, which depicts non-D.C. area domestic travel by month within the first year in office for each president, reveals much more activity than was the case for international travel. The four most recent presidents traveled more in their first year than the first two presidents in this study, and they undertook more extensive travel agendas earlier in the year. Carter did not have his first five-day domestic travel month until May, and Reagan, who spend much of the spring and summer recovering from the attempt on his life, did not do so until September.

### *Where*

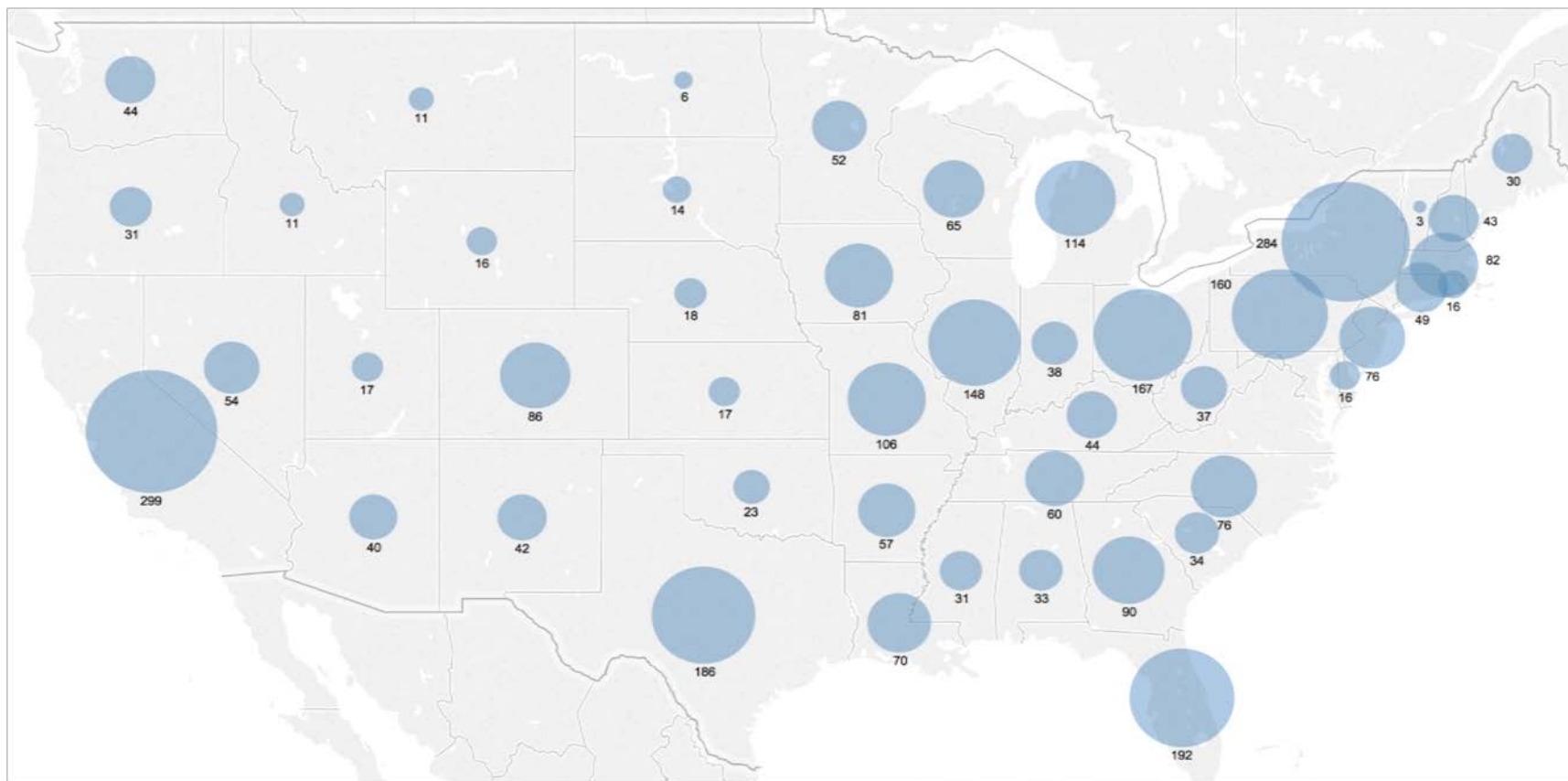
How has domestic presidential travel been distributed geographically? Which states have presidents visited most and least? Figure 7 depicts the total number of days that presidents held domestic events in each state between January 20, 1977, and 2015. For the sake of compact presentation of data, Alaska, which hosted presidential events on 17 days over 39 years, and Hawaii, which hosted events on 30 days over this period, are not depicted.

The map depicts patterns of presidential attention that are strongly correlated with state populations. The four states that hosted the most presidential visits—California, New York, Florida, and Texas—were the four most populous states in the U.S. Census Bureau's 1996 population estimate, which fell at the midpoint of this 39-year study, and the four next most populated states—Ohio, Pennsylvania, Illinois, and Michigan—were the next four most-visited states.<sup>8</sup> At the other end of the spectrum, Vermont, the second-least populated state, hosted the fewest days with presidential visits—just three over 39 years—and the eight least populated states hosted an average of 12.4 days of events over almost four decades. The correlation coefficient between the states' population and the number of days of visits hosted is 0.94, suggesting a very strong relationship. Unsurprisingly, presidents travel most often to hold events in states where greater numbers of people live.

---

<sup>8</sup> The U.S. Census Bureau's 1996 population estimates for each state can be found at <https://doe.state.wy.us/lmi/0197/0197a3.htm>.

Figure 7: Days Presidents Held Domestic Non-D.C. Area Events in Each State, 1977-2015



Source: Data compiled by the author from the *Public Papers of the Presidents*, the “Digests of Other White House Announcements,” White House schedules and press briefings, and Associated Press and other news articles. Maps made using Tableau software.

Table 6: Non-D.C. Area Cities in which Presidents Held the Most Public Events, 1977-2015

Carter		Reagan		Bush 41		Clinton		Bush 43		Obama	
City	No.	City	No.	City	No.	City	No.	City	No.	City	No.
New York	40	New York	42	New York	31	New York	153	New York	72	New York	144
Los Angeles	13	Los Angeles	33	Los Angeles	31	Los Angeles	59	New Orleans	25	Chicago	51
Atlanta	12	Chicago	12	Houston	30	Chicago	57	Atlanta	18	Los Angeles	35
Boston	8	Philadelphia	11	Chicago	20	Philadelphia	40	Chicago	18	San Francisco	31
Philadelphia	8	Atlanta	11	Dallas	20	San Francisco	35	St. Louis	17	Miami	29
Chicago	6	Columbia	11	St. Louis	15	Houston	31	Albuquerque	16	Boston	21
Cleveland	6	Columbus	11	Columbus	14	Boston	30	Philadelphia	16	Las Vegas	21
Houston	6	Dallas	11	Atlanta	11	Miami	29	Little Rock	15	Philadelphia	19
Portland	6	Houston	11	Miami	10	Denver	28	Milwaukee	15	Columbus	16

Source: Data compiled by the author from the *Public Papers of the Presidents*, the “Digests of Other White House Announcements,” White House schedules and press briefings, and Associated Press and other news articles.

Which cities have presidents visited most? Table 6 reveals substantial consistency among the top nine cities in which the six presidents in this study held the most events. New York was the leading city for all six presidents, though it was farther ahead of the second city for the Democratic presidents than for the Republicans. One other city, Chicago, was among the top nine cities for all six presidents, while Los Angeles and Philadelphia were on the lists of five of the six presidents, and Atlanta and Houston were among the top nine destinations for four of these presidents. It is worth noting that these data are by city and not by metropolitan area, so these totals do not capture visits to nearby cities such as Long Beach, Santa Monica, and Beverly Hills, all of which are in the Los Angeles area. Nevertheless, they do indicate which specific cities hosted the most presidential events. Across parties and over time, these six presidents tended to hold the most events in many of the same places.

The individual priorities of the presidents are reflected in this table as well. Atlanta ranked third for Georgia native Carter, and Los Angeles was second for Californian Reagan. George H.W. Bush held the third most events in his home-state city of Houston. Clinton's propensity to travel more than his predecessors can be seen in this table as well, as his 153 events in New York during his eight years in office ranked far above the top cities for four of the other presidents, even when taking into account that the data for two of the presidents represent only four years of travel. This high level of activity is in part explained by his purchase of a home in New York late in his term and his subsequent travel around the state in support of his wife's U.S. Senate campaign. New Orleans' place on George W. Bush's list is due to his many visits there in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. Las Vegas makes Obama's list due both to that state's status as a battleground state in presidential elections and because of Obama's multiple trips to campaign and fundraise on behalf of Democratic Senate leader and Nevada Senator Harry Reid.

While the analysis above explores some of the dynamics of when and where presidents hold events around the country, the *Public Papers of the Presidents* do not fully capture time spent at the most common destinations for presidents when they leave Washington, as they hold relatively few events at these places that are recorded in the *Public Papers of the Presidents*: the presidential retreat Camp David in northwest Maryland and, for those presidents who have one, a second home. Drawing on data provided by Mark Knoller of CBS News, the Carter Presidential Library, the George H.W. Bush Presidential Library, and the Clinton Presidential Library, Table 7 presents the number of full and partial days that each of the presidents in this study spent at Camp David, at second homes, and on vacation at another location.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> Mark Knoller of CBS News provided the data on Carter's days at Camp David; Reagan's days at Camp David and at his ranch or on vacation; Clinton's days on vacation; George W. Bush's days at Camp David, at his ranch, and at his parent's home in Kennebunkport; and Obama's days at Camp David and on vacation. The Carter Library provided the data on Carter's time in Plains, Georgia, and on vacation. The George H.W. Bush Library provided estimates of the number of days Bush spent at Camp David and in Kennebunkport. The Clinton Library provided the data on the number of days Clinton spent at Camp David.

**Table 7: Time at Camp David, at Second Homes, and on Vacation,  
1977-July 25, 2016**

	Carter	Reagan	Bush 41	Clinton	Bush 43	Obama
Full and Partial Days at Camp David	376	517	65	173	487	91
Full and Partial Days at a Second home or on Vacation	97	335	174	174	533	201

*Source:* Data provided by Mark Knoller of CBS News, the Carter Presidential Library, the George H.W. Bush Presidential Library, and the Clinton Presidential Library. The numbers provided by the George H.W. Bush Presidential Library are estimates, and not exact counts, of the days that George H.W. Bush spent at his home in Kennebunkport and at Camp David.

It is important to note that a president is never truly on vacation. No matter where he or she goes, a president must always be on the job, tending to critical affairs of state, whether it be at the White House, on Air Force One, at Camp David, at a second home, or in another location, taking a break from some but not all of the duties of the job. The press briefing room at George W. Bush's Crawford ranch included a sign bearing the name "Western White House," likely at least in part to contest journalists' and comedians' assertions that the president's lengthy stays there were vacations. While presidents are at work no matter where they are, it is also worth noting that presidents cannot always accomplish the same goals remotely that they can while in the nation's capital. For example, in the midst of a crisis in the Republic of Georgia in August 2008, George W. Bush delayed a trip to his ranch in Crawford so that he could communicate face to face with key advisers in Washington (Perino 2008).

George H.W. Bush frequently held events at his home in Kennebunkport, Maine, just as George W. Bush did at his ranch in Crawford, Texas. Both Bushes used their private homes as an extension of the White House, often meeting with foreign leaders there or conducting other presidential business. Ronald Reagan spent a great deal of time at Rancho del Cielo, his California home near Santa Barbara, California, but, unlike the Bushes, rarely held official events there. Carter, Clinton, and Obama had no equivalent second home, though Carter did visit his family home in Plains, Georgia for many holidays and Obama occasionally traveled to his home in Chicago. Additionally, Carter journeyed to various vacation locations around the country. Clinton embarked on a family trip each summer, journeying six times to the island of Martha's Vineyard and twice to Wyoming. Obama took yearly trips to Hawaii at the end of the year and to Martha's Vineyard in six of his first seven years in office, as well as shorter visits to other destinations.

Reagan is the clear leader in days at Camp David, spending all or part of 517 days there during his eight years in office, followed by George W. Bush's 487 days. Had Carter served a second term, his total numbers might have rivaled Reagan's. While presidents do go to Camp David to relax at times, it is often very much a working retreat where presidents can take the time to think about bigger-picture or longer-term issues and meet with staff or even foreign leaders. According to Knoller, George W. Bush

hosted foreign leaders there on 19 occasions, and Obama's visits there include hosting a G-8 Summit in 2012 and a Gulf Cooperation Council Meeting in 2015. Perhaps most famously, Camp David was the site of the Carter-led peace negotiations between the Israelis and the Egyptians in the late 1970s.

George W. Bush's 533 days spent either at his Crawford ranch or at his parents' house in Kennebunkport, Maine, are the most among the past six presidents at a second home or otherwise on vacation. Reagan came in a distant second, with 335 days during his eight years in office. Bush did indeed work during much of his time in Crawford. Most prominently, Knoller notes that he hosted 20 visits by foreign leaders at his ranch, demonstrating the frequency with which a modern president performs the duties of his office remotely (Knoller 2009). A president is never off the job—the demands of the office are unceasing, regardless of a president's location.

### *For What Purpose*

Presidents travel domestically for a myriad of reasons—to advance their own reelection interests, to raise funds, to support their fellow party members, to exert pressure on recalcitrant legislators, to promote their policy agenda or achievements in a setting outside the nation's capital, to attend ceremonial events, to respond to natural disasters or other crises, to influence public opinion, to meet with key leaders or organized interests, to see the people they represent, or simply to get out of Washington.

While chronicling and exhaustively categorizing the many types of events a president holds around the country is beyond the scope of this study, there are recurring patterns of events throughout a president's term in office. For example, after delivering the annual State of the Union address in January or February, the president often embarks on a trip to highlight the themes and policy priorities emphasized in the speech to Congress. After giving his penultimate State of the Union address on January 19, 1999, Clinton made speeches to the communities in Norristown, Pennsylvania, and Buffalo, New York, the following day. On January 29, 2003, George W. Bush journeyed to Grand Rapids, Michigan, where he told a crowd of local citizens why presidents travel regularly after giving a State of the Union address: "I want to share some of my thoughts about that speech I gave last night. It's important for me to come to parts of our country and explain why I said what I said, so that you and others around our country clearly understand some things about the country and the problems we face" (*Public Papers of the Presidents* 2003).

Each spring, the president traditionally addresses at least three college commencement ceremonies, including one private college or university, one public civilian college or university, and one of the military service academies. Presidents, of course, have great discretion about which schools they address. In the spring of 1989, George H.W. Bush delivered commencement addresses at five schools: Texas A&M University, Alcorn State University, Mississippi State University, Boston University, and the United States Coast Guard Academy.

Each August, presidents traditionally leave Washington for a family vacation, which, as discussed above, is most accurately viewed as a working vacation. In 1978, Carter spent a week during August in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. The following year, he

took a week-long cruise on the Mississippi River aboard the Delta Queen. Clinton made trips in 1993 and 1994 to Martha's Vineyard in August, before going to Jackson Hole, Wyoming, and the nearby national parks in 1995 and 1996. During each year of his second term, he and his family spent time once again in Martha's Vineyard during August. Reagan and both Bushes spent much of the month of August during each year of their presidencies at their homes in California, Maine, and Texas, respectively, while Obama has vacationed regularly in August on Martha's Vineyard and at the end of each year in Hawaii.

At any time of year, but especially during the summer and fall hurricane season, presidents travel around the country to respond to disasters, both natural and human-made, including hurricanes, floods, earthquakes, wildfires, volcanoes, and more. While any individual event is difficult to predict, patterns do seem to recur, as some disasters tend to be seasonal. For example, George H.W. Bush journeyed to South Carolina in September 1989 after Hurricane Hugo struck, and then to Florida in August 1992 in response to Hurricane Andrew. In September 1999, Clinton traveled to North Carolina following Hurricane Floyd, and in 2005, George W. Bush journeyed to Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas in the wake of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Whether it is the eruption of Mount St. Helens, the nuclear accident at Three Mile Island, or the terrorist attacks in Oklahoma City, a good deal of presidential travel involves responding when disaster strikes. Presidential journeys responding to human-caused tragedies are a regular and unpredictable component of presidential travel, as demonstrated by Obama's trips in the wake of mass shootings in places like Newtown, Connecticut; Aurora, Colorado; Orlando, Florida, and more.

Each September or October, presidents usually travel to New York to address the General Assembly of the United Nations. Additionally, presidents often travel around the country on the patriotic national holidays of Memorial Day, the Fourth of July, and Veterans Day, as well as on the anniversaries of key events in American history, such as the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, and the attacks of September 11, 2001. Presidents frequently travel to varying locations to attend the national conferences of key groups or constituencies, including the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the National Baptist Convention, and the National Governors Association. While many states are presidential destinations in and of themselves, others are often merely way stations. Most presidential visits to Hawaii and Alaska have been brief, occurring during stopovers as presidents journey to and from Asia, with the exception of Obama's regular visits to his boyhood home state in the Pacific.

Presidents spend a great deal of time on the road campaigning for themselves and their co-partisans during even-numbered years when congressional and presidential elections take place. Previous research has found that the number of presidential fundraising events has increased over time, and that in the three and a half decades since 1977, approximately one in every four presidential events outside of Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia was a political fundraiser. Additionally, almost two out of every five such presidential events was either a fundraiser or another event held within 30 miles of a fundraiser on the same, previous, or next day, demonstrating the frequency

with which presidents dedicate themselves to raising funds while they travel (Doherty 2012, 97-99).

Presidents often visit military installations around the country to meet with the men and women in uniform and thank them for their service, while at the same time projecting an image of the president as a strong and effective leader by emphasizing their role as commander-in-chief, and thus as the principal defender of our nation. From 1977 through 2004, an average of 5.5 percent of all presidential events outside the Washington, D.C. area took place in a military setting (Doherty 2008).

Domestic presidential travel has increased substantially over time, and is largely concentrated in major cities in the most populous states. With growing levels of travel over time has also come increased breadth of travel, as recent presidents have traveled to more states per year than did their predecessors. In each year of their first terms, George W. Bush and Obama made a disproportionate number of visits to the respective states each had narrowly won or lost in their first campaign for the White House, illustrating the importance of the strategic targeting of key electoral states not just in the election year but throughout a president's first term in office (Doherty 2012). Presidents travel around the country for a wide range of purposes as they seek to move the nation closer to their particular vision of a more perfect union.

## CONCLUSION

Presidents will always have many more demands on their time than they can possibly fulfill. Presidential journeys require a particularly substantial investment of time and energy on the part of the president and the White House staff, but can also yield great dividends as the president travels to countries around the world and different regions of the United States to meet with other leaders and key constituencies, promote a policy agenda, and much more. Doing so helps the president to achieve various concrete goals, while at the same time helping to shape his or her public image as president.

Over the past four decades, recent presidents have traveled more than their predecessors did, both internationally and domestically, and have done so more frequently as they have journeyed to a wider range of destinations. Most often, their travel abroad has taken them to Europe and their travel at home has taken them to a relatively common set of cities in the most populated states. They travel abroad for bilateral visits and to attend a relatively regular series of multilateral conferences around the world. At home, they traverse the 50 states for a plethora of reasons and a dizzying array of events.

The precedents set by the past six presidents of the United States will in part shape the choices made by the nation's next chief executive. While each president and his or her staff have a great deal of discretion when it comes to deciding how to allocate the president's time, heads of state around the world, leaders within the United States, and the American people expect to see the president in person for events ranging from G-8 summits to meetings of the National Governors Association and personal responses in



the aftermath of natural disasters and other tragedies. It is up to each president to forge his or her own path, using the experiences of previous presidents as points of reference, as he or she decides when, where, and for what purpose to travel.

## REFERENCES

- Allen, Mike. 2002. "On the Way to the Fundraiser; Stopovers Let Bush Charge Taxpayers for Political Trips." *Washington Post*, May 20, p. A1.
- Allen, Mike. 2004. "Bush Capitalizes On Travel Bargain; President Uses Air Force One for Price of 1st Class." *Washington Post*, May 4, p. A21.
- Babcock, Charles R. 1991. "Campaigning via Air Force One: Public Foots Much of Bill." *Washington Post*, December 31, p. A15.
- Babcock, Charles R. 1992. "Flying Political Class on Air Force One; Commercial Rates Make Every Trip an Incumbent Advantage." *Washington Post*, October 19, p. A19.
- Bauder, David. 2013. "Documentary Brings Together 20 Presidential Chiefs." *Associated Press*, September 10.
- "Composition of macro geographical (continental) regions, geographical sub-regions, and selected economic and other groupings." United Nations Statistics Division. Available online at: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/m49/m49regin.htm>.
- Doherty, Brendan J. 2012. *The Rise of the President's Permanent Campaign*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.
- Doherty, Brendan J. 2008. "Presidential Image and the Military." In *Inside Defense: Current Controversies in U.S. Civil Military Relations*, edited by Derek S. Reveron and Judith Stiehm. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Donilon, Thomas. 2012. "President Obama's Asia Policy and Upcoming Trip to the Region." Center for Strategic and International Studies. Available online at: [www.csis.org/files/attachments/121511\\_Donilon\\_Statesmens\\_Forum\\_TS.pdf](http://www.csis.org/files/attachments/121511_Donilon_Statesmens_Forum_TS.pdf).
- George H.W. Bush Presidential Library. July 29-31, 2008. Personal communication.
- Jimmy Carter Presidential Library. July 30, 2008. Personal communication.
- Knoller, Mark. July 23-30, 2008, July 25, 2016. Personal communication.
- Knoller, Mark. 2009. "President Bush By the Numbers." *CBS News*, January 19. Available online at: <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/president-bush-by-the-numbers/>.
- Leip, Dave. *Dave Leip's Atlas of U.S. Presidential Elections*. Available online at: <http://www.uselectionatlas.org/>.
- Milbank, Dana. 2002. "The Cost of Presidential Travel is Anyone's Guess." *Washington Post*, October 29, p. A19.
- Nakashima, Ellen. 2000. "White House Travel Bill: \$292 Million; Republican Senator Says Clinton's Air Transport Expenses Are 'Exorbitant.'" *Washington Post*, August 18, p. A2.
- Perino, Dana. 2008. White House Press Briefing, August 14. Available online at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2008/08/20080814-4.html>.
- Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States*. 1997-2015. Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office. Available online at: [www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws](http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws); [www.gpoaccess.gov/pubpapers/index.html](http://www.gpoaccess.gov/pubpapers/index.html); [www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/publicpapers.html](http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/publicpapers.html);

- <http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/paper.html>; <http://clinton6.nara.gov/>;  
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/>.
- Smale, Alison and Michael D. Shear. 2014. "Russia is Ousted from Group of 8 by U.S. and Allies." *New York Times*, March 24. Available online at <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/25/world/europe/obama-russia-crimea.html?ref=world&r=2>.
- United States Census Bureau. 1996. Population Estimates. Available online at: <https://doe.state.wy.us/lmi/0197/0197a3.htm>.
- Walsh, Edward. 1977. "U.S. Spent Over \$100,000 on Trip Carter Postponed." *Washington Post*, November 9 p. A2.
- William J. Clinton Presidential Library. July 31, 2008. Personal communication.