

Presidential Rhetoric, the Public Agenda,
and the End of the Golden Age of Television*

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Abstract:

While presidents are often credited with agenda-setting powers over the public, empirical support is limited. Important exceptions to this limited evidence were provided by Cohen (1995, 1997) and Hill (1998). They found a link between the content of State of the Union addresses and subsequent public concern about policy problems for the period 1953-1989. Recently Baum and Kernell (1999) demonstrated that the rise of cable television has undercut the president's ability to communicate directly to the public. Has this end of the 'Golden Age of Presidential Television,' affected the impact of presidential rhetoric on public opinion? Looking at the period 1954-2003 we find evidence that presidential rhetoric today has less impact than it did prior to the rise of cable television.

Presidential Rhetoric, the Public Agenda, and the End of the Golden Age of Presidential Television

Observers often claim that presidents effectively use their “bully pulpit” to influence the public agenda. For example, Kingdon (1995, 23) argued, “the president can single handedly set the agendas, not only of people in the executive branch, but also of people in Congress, and outside the government.” Such claims by Kingdon and others helped spark a vibrant literature on presidential agenda-setting influence over Congress (Kernell 1986; Edwards and Barrett 2000), the media (Wood and Peake 1998; Edwards and Wood 1999; Peake and Esbaugh-Soha 2003) and public opinion (Behr and Iyengar 1985; Iyengar and Kinder 1987; Cohen 1995 1997; Hill 1998; Lawrence 2002).

Yet, in general, strong evidence that supports these claims remains largely elusive (Edwards 2003). Results found in Cohen (1995 1997) and Hill (1998) provide a crucial exception by demonstrating a direct link between the content of presidential rhetoric and the public agenda. Namely, these studies found that an increase in public concern for economic, foreign policy, or civil rights issues followed presidential emphasis on these respective issue areas in the annual State of the Union address.

The Cohen and Hill studies covered the period 1953-1989, a period that coincides with the rise and dominance of broadcast television. Yet, Baum and Kernell (1999) show that by the end of the 1980s a critical change was occurring in the television landscape. The long-standing dominance of the big three broadcast networks gave way to an explosion of cable channels. Some of these new channels, such as CNN, covered major presidential addresses. Many others, such as ESPN and HBO, provided no presidential coverage at all. Now given the option of watching presidential addresses or something else, people began watching something else in

increasing numbers. Television ratings for presidential addresses began declining; in reaction, the broadcast networks decreased their coverage of presidential addresses, and presidents in turn reduced the frequency of their national addresses (Baum and Kernell 1999).

The implications of these changes for the presidential bully pulpit are potentially profound. Televised speeches offer presidents their only means of speaking directly to the entire nation free of the potential distortions caused by media interpretation and editing. Such speeches have been central to a president's ability to 'go public' and provoke the public into applying pressure on Congress (Kernell 1986). This raises a key question. Has the end of "the Golden Age of presidential television" (Baum and Kernell 1999) undercut the impact of presidential rhetoric on public opinion? If the changes in the television environment are significant, then we should see predictable changes in the influence of State of the Union addresses on public opinion.

In this paper, we investigate the relationship between presidential rhetoric and public opinion in the context of the changing television landscape by examining the period 1953-2002. Using two different specifications for the impact of cable, we find consistent evidence that the changing television climate has made presidential rhetoric less influential over the public agenda.

Design

Cohen provided compelling evidence that presidential rhetoric affects the public's consideration of an issue. He did this by first examining all State of the Union addresses for the 1953-1989 period. He then evaluated the impact of presidential emphasis on a given issue – economics, foreign policy, and civil rights – on the public's perception of the issue's importance. Cohen found a positive relationship between the president's issue emphasis and the public's

issue emphasis across all three policy categories. Using the same time period, Hill (1998) re-specified the original models, but produced results quite consistent with Cohen's.¹

Extending the Speech and Poll Data

We extended Cohen's original speech data (Cohen 1995, 104) by performing a content analysis on all State of the Union addresses given from 1990 to 2002 – a period that includes the maturation of cable television and subsequent changes in viewing habits.² We estimated the percentage of policy content in a given address devoted to economics, foreign policy, or civil rights by counting sentences devoted to the topic in relation to the overall number of policy-oriented sentences in the address. Based on the assumption that the president devotes more time to issues of greater importance, this approach yields a measure of presidential emphasis or the president's "Most Important Problem" (Cohen 1995, 91). The public's issue emphasis is then measured using the familiar Gallup Poll "Most Important Problem" series. We gathered the relevant poll numbers for the 1990-2002 period and also corrected several errors in Cohen's original coding of the poll data. As we discuss, with a key exception these errors played little substantive role in Cohen's original results.

Other Control Variables

To prevent misspecification our models include several controls.³ In the foreign policy model we included U.S. military intervention and the number of active-duty personnel, both

¹ Lawrence (2002) recently analyzed State of the Union addresses over the period 1946-2002. His findings largely support Cohen's. Lawrence did use a rough control for television, but did not test for interactive effects between the television environment and rhetoric.

² As Cohen notes, newly inaugurated presidents often do not issue a State of the Union address. However, they do normally schedule a major policy speech relatively early in their administration. Cohen (1995: 92n5) lists the substitute speeches included for the 1953-1989 period. For the 1990-2002 period we added speeches by Bill Clinton (February 17, 1993) and George W. Bush (February 27, 2001).

³ Cohen (1995) used the post-speech Most Important Problem poll results for the given area (i.e., foreign policy, civil rights, or economics) as his dependent variable. He then analyzed the impact of presidential emphasis on the post-speech poll (in the relevant policy area). In each of the three models he provided controls for inflation, unemployment, and the presence of war. In his replication and extension, Hill (1999) discarded the economic

lagged by one year, with the expectation that these variables will be positively related to the public's concern with foreign policy. We also included controls for inflation and unemployment with the expectation that both would be negatively related to the public's concern with foreign policy. In the civil rights models we included a control for military intervention with the expectation that such intervention would detract from concern with civil rights. Likewise we included controls for inflation and unemployment with the expectation of a negative relationship. Because we had no way to directly measure civil rights activity, we scored a dummy variable for "civil rights era" defined as the period 1954-1968.⁴ Finally, our economic policy models included controls for inflation and unemployment with the expectation that these variables related positively to public concern with economic problems, and a control for military intervention with an expectation of a negative relationship.⁵

Accounting for the Rise and Fall of Television Ratings

While the major networks continue to dutifully televise State of the Union addresses, ratings for these addresses steadily declined as the broadcast oligopoly gave way to the rise of cable television (Kernell and Jacobson 2002, 266). By 1986, the broadcast networks' audience shares met and then fell below the percentage of households with cable (Baum and Kernell 1999, 101).

controls in the foreign policy and civil rights models, and the war control in the economics and civil rights models. In his foreign policy model, Hill augmented the war control to include major military interventions and lagged the variable by one year. He also included a lagged measure of the number of active-duty military personnel in the foreign policy model. In the economic model he lagged the inflation and unemployment variables by one year, while in his civil rights model he included controls for civil rights demonstrations and civil disturbances.

⁴ In his civil rights model, Hill (1998: 1330) included controls for the number of civil rights demonstrations and civil disturbances that themselves were based on Adams (1995). Due to changes in National Guard deployment reporting, we were unable to extend this variable to the current period, thus we use the era variable instead. The period definition is rather arbitrary but not crucial to the results. (It extends from the year of the first *Brown* decision to the year of Martin Luther King's death.)

⁵ Our results are very robust to different specifications of the models. For example, the inclusion or exclusion of economic variables in the foreign policy and civil rights models has no effect on the emphasis results.

The most straightforward way to account for the effect of the changing television climate is with a measure of the percentage of U.S. households watching each speech. Unfortunately, television ratings data is spotty prior to 1978 and virtually unavailable prior to 1969. Lacking a reliable direct indicator for the full time period, we developed two indirect indicators. First, we devised dummy variables meant to represent three distinct periods in television history. In the early days of television few people owned televisions. While the numbers skyrocket over the course of the 1950s, it is not until the 1960s that the percentage of American households owning televisions reached 90% (Bureau of the Census 1976). Thus while it is likely that a high percentage of those who did own televisions in the 1950s watched the State of the Union addresses, the effects of presidential rhetoric during this period may have been weaker than in later years. Furthermore, as we noted earlier, by 1986, cable was drawing larger audiences than broadcast television. We thus created a set of models that distinguish among three periods of television history: the 'Pre-Golden Age' (1953-1962), the 'Golden Age' (1963-1985) and the 'Post-Golden Age' (1986-2002).⁶ For the estimates reported in tables 1 - 3 we used dummy variables representing the two latter eras (Golden and Post-Golden) thus leaving the first era (Pre-Golden) as the reference group.

As our second indirect indicator we calculated the percentage of U.S. households that owned televisions but did not subscribe to cable, calling this new variable *Broadcast Television Households*. This is presented in Figure 1. The figure indicates the initial rise and plateau of television ownership. With the introduction of cable in the late 1960s, the percentage of U.S. households that owned a television but that did not subscribe to cable declined quickly so that by 2002 only about 30% of households relied solely on broadcast television. The other 70% either remained television-free or, much more commonly, subscribed to some type of cable service.

⁶ The results are insensitive to modest shifts in the cutoff points.

[Figure 1]

Baum and Kernell (1999) demonstrated that declines in viewership of presidential speeches are due primarily to the rise of viewing alternatives, rather than other factors, such as political disaffection. Thus our measure captures both the climate of low television ownership in the 1950s, which necessarily limited speech viewership, and the later rise of cable, which gave people the option to watch something else.⁷

We provide greater detail on all the data used in our analysis in the Appendix.

Results

Foreign Policy

Table 1 presents the results for Foreign Policy. The dependent variable in each estimate is the Most Important Problem poll taken after the given speech.⁸ The first model excludes variables that account for changes in the television landscape and is thus most comparable to the original Cohen and Hill models. For most of the independent variables, the results are similar to the earlier findings. This included the *President's Emphasis on Foreign Policy* variable, which is positive and statistically significant.

Thus, at first the original Cohen and Hill results appear to hold up well, despite the addition of the years 1990-2002. What happens when we account for different eras of television? For the second model in Table 1 we included the *Golden Age* (1963-1985) and *Post-Golden Age* (1986-2002) variables. To facilitate interpretation we centered the *President's Emphasis* variable

⁷ In the interests of space we do not include the results here, but we also produced estimates using television ratings data supplied by Samuel Kernell (Kernell and Johnson 2002: 266). Not surprisingly, given Baum and Kernell's (1999) results, our *Broadcast Television Households* variable correlates ($r=.66$) with the Nielson speech ratings data for the period 1969-2002. The estimates using the ratings data are very similar to those presented here, despite the truncated time period.

⁸ For all estimates in the paper we tested for serial correlation using a battery of Durbin-h (Durbin 1970) and Breusch-Godfrey Lagrange multiplier tests (Breusch 1978; Godfrey 1978) for up to five lags, and estimated subsequent models accordingly. Additionally, we ran all the models using OLS with Newey-West (Newey and West 1987; Greene 1990) standard errors (for up to five lags) with virtually identical results.

making its mean equal to zero.⁹ We then multiplied each dummy variable with the centered *President's Emphasis* variable to capture the interaction effects between presidential emphasis and television period.

Evaluating a model with interaction effects is more complicated than standard OLS models since the results have to be understood within their conditional context (Friedrich 1982). The first issue to address is whether the interaction terms themselves add substantive explanatory power to a model that includes just the main effects. This is done with a conventional F-test where a main-effects model (all the variables from Model 2, Table 1, sans the two interactive variables) is compared to a model that includes the interactive effects (Jaccard and Turrisi 2003). In this case the F-test revealed that the interactive (or 'product-term') model significantly ($p < .05$) improves explanatory power over the main-effects model.

In Table 1, Model 2, the coefficient for *President's Emphasis* indicates the impact of the president's speech for the reference group. (This is the Pre-Golden Age in this case, when both the Golden and Post-Golden dummy variables are equal to zero.) The results indicate that presidential emphasis did not have a statistically significant effect during Pre-Golden Age. The two interactive variables are interpreted in respect to the reference group (Jaccard and Turrisi 2003). As Table 1 indicates, *Post-Golden Age x President's Emphasis* is positive relative to the reference group, but not statistically significant. In contrast, the *Golden Age x President's Emphasis* is positive and statistically significant relative to the reference group.

[Table 1 about here]

The remaining task to isolate the slope and statistical significance of presidential emphasis, conditional on each individual period. We did this by recoding the period dummy variables so that the period of interest became the reference group. The regression analysis was

⁹ On the advantages of mean centering, see Jaccard and Turrisi 2003: 24-28.

then repeated (Jaccard and Turrisi 2003, 34-35). So, for example, to examine the Golden Age, we removed the Golden Age dummy variables and replaced them with Pre-Golden Age dummy variables. The Golden Age thus became the reference group.¹⁰

Figure 2 indicates the respective slopes for presidential emphasis conditional on the given period. (The horizontal axis is based on the *centered* range of presidential emphasis on foreign policy that actually occurred over the 1953-2003 time span, thus the presence of negative values.) A solid line indicates that the effect is statistically significant from zero ($p < .05$). As Figure 2 shows, the impact of presidential emphasis on foreign policy during the Golden Age of television was strongly positive and statistically significant ($b = .33$, $t = 3.37$, $p = .002$). In contrast, during the Post-Golden Age the slope is shallower and not statistically significant ($b = .10$, $t = .60$, $p = .55$). For the Pre-Golden Age the slope is actually negative but is not statistically significant from zero ($b = -.28$, $t = -1.40$, $p = .17$).

[Figure 2 about here]

What does this mean substantively? Recall that the *President's Emphasis* variable indicates the percentage of a speech devoted to a given topic -- in this case foreign policy. Thus, for example, the model predicts that during television's Golden Age, a speech that devoted 30% of its content to foreign policy corresponded with a 10% increase in the public's concern with foreign policy. The periods prior and after the Golden Age show no statistically significant emphasis effect.

The third model in Table 1 confirms these same basic results. After centering the *Broadcast Television Household* variable we multiplied it by the centered *President's Emphasis on Foreign Policy* variable. An F-Test between Table 1, Model 3, and a main-effects model

¹⁰ Alternatively, the same information can be derived algebraically using the coefficients, standard errors, and variance-covariance matrix from a single regression. See Friedrich (1982) or Jaccard, Turrisi, and Wan (1990: 42-48).

without the product-term showed the product-term model significantly ($p < .05$) increased explanatory power. Note that in this context the variable *President's Emphasis on Foreign Policy* is an estimate for the impact of emphasis when the *Broadcast Television Households* variable is equal to zero (Jaccard and Turrisi 2003). Since *Broadcast Television Households* is mean centered at zero, the estimate coefficient suggests that presidential emphasis has a positive but only weakly significant impact conditional on *Broadcast Television Households* being at its mean.

In Figure 3 we present the effects of presidential rhetoric, conditional on high, medium, and low values of the broadcast television variable. We did this in a standard manner (Jaccard and Turrisi 2003, 27) by defining “Medium” as the mean value of *Broadcast Television Households*, “High” as one standard deviation above the mean, and “Low” as one standard deviation below the mean. With *Broadcast Television Households* at Medium, the slope for *Presidential Emphasis on Foreign Policy* was positive though not significant at the conventionally accepted level ($b = .200$, $t = 1.63$, $p = .12$). However, when *Broadcast Television Households* was set at High, the effect was more strongly positive and statistically significant from zero ($b = .285$, $t = 2.89$, $p = .01$). In contrast, emphasis conditional on a Low television score yielded a positive but statistically insignificant slope ($b = .115$, $t = 0.55$, $p = .59$).¹¹

Civil Rights

Table 2 presents the results for civil rights policy. Model 1 mainly reflects a time extension of the original Cohen (1995) and Hill (1998) specifications, though for reasons

¹¹ Is there a possible counter explanation for the foreign policy results? If the public's reaction to foreign policy issues was conditioned by the Cold War, then it is possible that the Cold War's end, rather than a declining television audience, is the cause of the interaction effects seen here. Yet, the Cold War's end does not explain why we see a no effect for the Pre-Golden Age, a period that also coincides with the Cold War. Regardless, we tested a Cold War (1953-1989) dummy variable. It was not statistically significant and had negligible effects on the other results.

explained earlier we use a dummy variable for Civil Rights Era rather than the events measure used by Hill. Nonetheless, looking at the Table 2, Model 1, the Cohen and Hill results hold up quite well. Namely, President's *Emphasis on Civil Rights* coefficient is positive and statistically significant.

For Model 2, we included the period dummy variables along with the interaction terms between the period dummy variables and presidential emphasis. An F-Test indicated that the product-term model significantly ($p < .05$) increased explanatory power relative to the main-effects model. Here again we left the Pre-Golden Age as the reference group. Thus, the coefficient for *President's Emphasis on Civil Rights* indicates that during the Pre-Golden Age the impact of presidential emphasis on public opinion was strongly positive and statistically significant. In contrast, the interactive variable *Golden Age x President's Emphasis* is negative and weakly statistically significant ($p < .10$) while the *Post-Golden Age x President's Emphasis* variable is negative and statistically significant. These interactive variables' negative coefficients and statistical significance are not relative to zero, but relative to the slope for the *President's Emphasis on Civil Rights* variable.

[Table 2 about here]

To determine the independent slopes and significance for each variable we again rescored the dummy variables so that first the Golden Age -- and then the Post-Golden Age -- was the reference group. As Figure 4 shows, the impact of *Presidential Emphasis on Civil Rights* during the Pre-Golden Age is steeply positive and statistically significant from zero ($b = .801$, $t = 2.73$, $p = .01$). For the Golden Age the effect is statistically significant but not as steeply positive ($b = .22$, $p = .02$). For the Post-Golden Age the effect is negatively sloped but not statistically significant ($b = -.06$, $t = -0.68$, $p = .50$).

These results partially support our television argument since presidential emphasis does not have an impact after the rise of cable. Yet presidential emphasis has a greater impact in the Pre-Golden Age than in the Golden Age. What happens when we estimate a model using the *Broadcast Television Households* variable rather than the blunter period-based dummy variables? As Table 2, Model 3, indicates, the *President Emphasis on Civil Rights* variable is positive and statistically significant. Since the television variable is mean centered at zero, when the television ownership levels are at their mean, presidential emphasis positively affects public opinion. Likewise the interactive variable *Broadcast Television Households x President's Emphasis* is positive and significant. Furthermore, an F-Test indicates this product-term model significantly ($p < .05$) improves on the main-effects model.

Figure 5 presents the impact of presidential emphasis given high, medium, and low levels of broadcast television-only ownership. As indicated, when *Broadcast Television Households* is at its mean – the medium category – the *Presidential Emphasis* variable is positive and significant ($b = .149$, $t = 2.36$, $p = .02$). However, when *Broadcast Television Households* is set at a high level -- i.e., one standard deviation above its mean -- the president's impact is more steeply positive and also statistically significant from zero ($b = .35$, $t = 3.62$, $p = .001$). In contrast, when *Broadcast Television Households* is at a low level, the president's impact is negative but statistically insignificant ($b = -0.06$, $t = -0.65$, $p = .52$).

Economic Policy

Table 3 presents the results for economic policy. In the first model *President's Emphasis* is not statistically significant. This contrasts notably with the earlier publications. Has adding the years 1990-2002 caused this change? It turns out that the answer is no. The second model keeps the same variables and adds period dummy variables and the interactive variables. F-Tests

reveal the product-term models add no explanatory power and, as is shown in the Table 3, Model 2, estimate, adding the new variables has no effect. We see the same basic result in model three.

[Table 3 about here]

This result puzzled us until we revisited the original Cohen results. As we noted earlier, we did find some errors in Cohen's coding of the Most Important Problem poll series. When we replicated Cohen's analysis for 1953-1989, using the uncorrected polling data he used, we replicated his results almost exactly. However, when we ran the same 1953-1989 model using the corrected data, the emphasis effect disappeared.

We thus conclude that the emphasis effect never existed for economic policy. This is perhaps not surprising. Economic conditions are intensely and consistently covered in the media. Plus every member of the public has some level of direct experience with the economy, something they do not have with civil rights and foreign policy. In the face of such knowledge, the president's use of the bully pulpit has had little effect, even during the golden age of presidential television.

Conclusion

Our results raise some interesting issues about the contemporary presidency and about our current understanding of presidential agenda-setting. To be sure, we have considered only one portion of the president's public arsenal, i.e., the State of the Union address. Presidents attempt to influence public opinion in ways that go beyond their mandated annual address. These include other national speeches, press conferences, speeches to various groups around the country (and world), and media interviews. Further, the president can employ the fuller arsenal of the presidency through coordinated staff speeches, interviews, talk show appearances, media leaks, and editorial writing. Indeed, others have shown that presidents who focus the weight of

their presidency behind a particular policy position can, in some contexts, move public opinion in the president's direction (e.g., Bailey, Sigelman, and Wilcox 2003). This suggests the potential for a broader research agenda, one that considers the conditions under which presidents can and do direct parts of their public arsenal to the task of mobilizing public opinion. In light of our results, such a research project should also consider the ways that changing contexts, such as changes in television, affect presidential strategy and success in affecting public opinion.

Still, the State of the Union address remains a speech of considerable media anticipation and it continues to attract full coverage from the type of stations that cover political news. Other national addresses do not necessarily receive the same consideration, and presidents no longer have as much control over the timing and frequency of their national addresses (Kernell and Baum 1999). Despite these limitations, State of the Union addresses and other national addresses are a president's only means of speaking directly to a substantial audience. Coverage of local speeches and interviews are subject to a media filter that may or may not work to the president's advantage (Iyengar and Kinder 1987). Thus, as the impact of these television addresses declines, the ability of the president to go public (Kernell 1986) is severely compromised.

Finally, we address a central point of contention. Does presidential rhetoric matter? For Cohen (1995 1997), Hill (1998), and Lawrence (2002) the answer clearly is yes. For Edwards (2003), who focuses on just the most recent presidents, the answer is not much. Our results suggest the possibility that both sides are correct. During television's Golden Age national addresses served as an effective bully pulpit. Now presidents must find other methods to be heard over the cacophony.

Appendix

Data for this paper were collected as follows:

Presidential Emphasis: Cohen's (1995, 104) original data for the years 1953-1989. He performed a content analysis on all State of the Union addresses during the period and estimated the percentage of policy content in a given address devoted to economics, foreign policy, and civil rights by counting sentences devoted relative to the address's overall number of policy-oriented sentences. We performed the same analysis for the year 1990-2002 using various editions of the Public Papers and the *New York Times* where necessary. As Cohen notes, newly inaugurated presidents often do not issue a State of the Union address. However, they do normally schedule a major policy speech relatively early in their administration. Cohen (1995, 92n5) lists the substitute speeches included for the 1953-1989 period. For the 1990-2002 period we added speeches by Bill Clinton (February 17, 1993) and George W. Bush (February 27, 2001).

Pre-Speech and Post-Speech Polls: Gallup's "Most Important Problem" results in national polls held before and after the speech.

Inflation and Unemployment: Rate of inflation (Consumer Price Index at annual rates) and rate of unemployment (at annual rates) for the month previous. Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Foreign Military Intervention: Scored 1 if the U.S. overtly intervened militarily in a foreign nation, during the prior year, as defined by Tillema (1995). Sources: Years 1953-1991 from Tillema (1995) while the subsequent years were coded by the authors from *Keesing's Record of World Events*, various years and from Fordham (2002).

Military Personnel: The number of active duty military personnel during the prior year. Source: Department of Defense.

Pre-Golden Age, Golden Age, and Post-Golden Age: Scored 1 for the years 1953-1962, 1963-1985, 1986-2002, respectively.

Broadcast Television Households: The percentage of U.S. households that own a television but do not subscribe to cable television. The variable was calculated by multiplying the percentage of households with televisions by the percentage of television households not subscribing to cable (divided by 100). Sources: Stanley and Niemi 2001: Table 4-1; Bureau of the Census. 1976. *Historical Statistics of the United States* Tables A288 and R105.

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Table 1
Post-Speech Most Important Problem: Foreign Policy, 1953-2002
(s.e.)

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Pre-Speech Poll (Most Important Problem)	0.478*** (0.125)	0.571*** (0.125)	0.560*** (0.168)
President's Emphasis on Foreign Policy	0.231** (0.088)	-0.276 (0.197)	0.200 (0.122)
Golden Age (1963-1985)	--	-5.037 (5.917)	--
Post-Golden Age (1986-2002)	--	-15.435** (6.403)	--
Golden Age x President's Emphasis	--	0.610*** (0.214)	--
Post-Golden Age x President's Emphasis	--	0.377 (0.2425)	--
Broadcast Television Households	--	--	0.418* (0.211)
Broadcast Television Households x President's Emphasis	--	--	0.418* (0.210)
Inflation (prior month)	0.106 (0.454)	-0.210 (0.443)	0.033 (0.482)
Unemployment (prior month)	-1.272 (1.191)	-1.243 (1.149)	-0.984 (1.421)
Foreign Military Intervention (prior year)	2.830 (3.101)	2.773 (3.005)	0.773 (3.441)
Number of Military Personnel (prior year)	0.007* (0.003)	0.000 (0.004)	0.001 (0.005)
Constant	-6.579 (11.520)	23.556 (15.039)	10.531 (15.450)
Model Type	AR1	AR1	AR2
R ²	.78	.84	.76

*** p < .01, ** p < .05, * p < .10 (two-tailed)

Table 2
Post-Speech Most Important Problem: Civil Rights, 1953-2002
(s.e.)

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Pre-Speech Poll (Most Important Problem)	0.559*** (0.055)	0.508*** (0.063)	0.507*** (0.049)
President's Emphasis on Civil Rights	0.174** (0.075)	0.801*** (0.294)	0.149** (0.063)
Golden Age (1963-1985)	--	0.961 (1.298)	--
Post-Golden Age (1986-2002)	--	-0.759 (1.203)	--
Golden Age x President's Emphasis	--	-0.580* (0.307)	--
Post-Golden Age x President's Emphasis	--	-0.865*** (0.304)	--
Broadcast Television Households	--	--	0.035** (0.015)
Broadcast Television Households x President's Emphasis	--	--	0.009*** (0.003)
Inflation (prior month)	0.032 (0.123)	-0.094 (0.138)	-0.089 (0.125)
Unemployment (prior month)	-0.477** (0.206)	-0.636 (0.215)	-0.498** (0.193)
Foreign Military Intervention (prior year)	0.688 (0.877)	0.056 (0.794)	-0.158 (0.764)
Civil Rights Era (1954-1968)	2.35*** (0.863)	2.311* (1.219)	1.66*** (0.907)
Constant	2.375 (1.679)	4.969** (1.981)	4.491** (1.737)
Model Type	AR2	AR2	AR2
R ²	.83	.90	.89

*** p < .01, ** p < .05, * p < .10

Table 3
Post-Speech Most Important Problem: Economics, 1953-2002

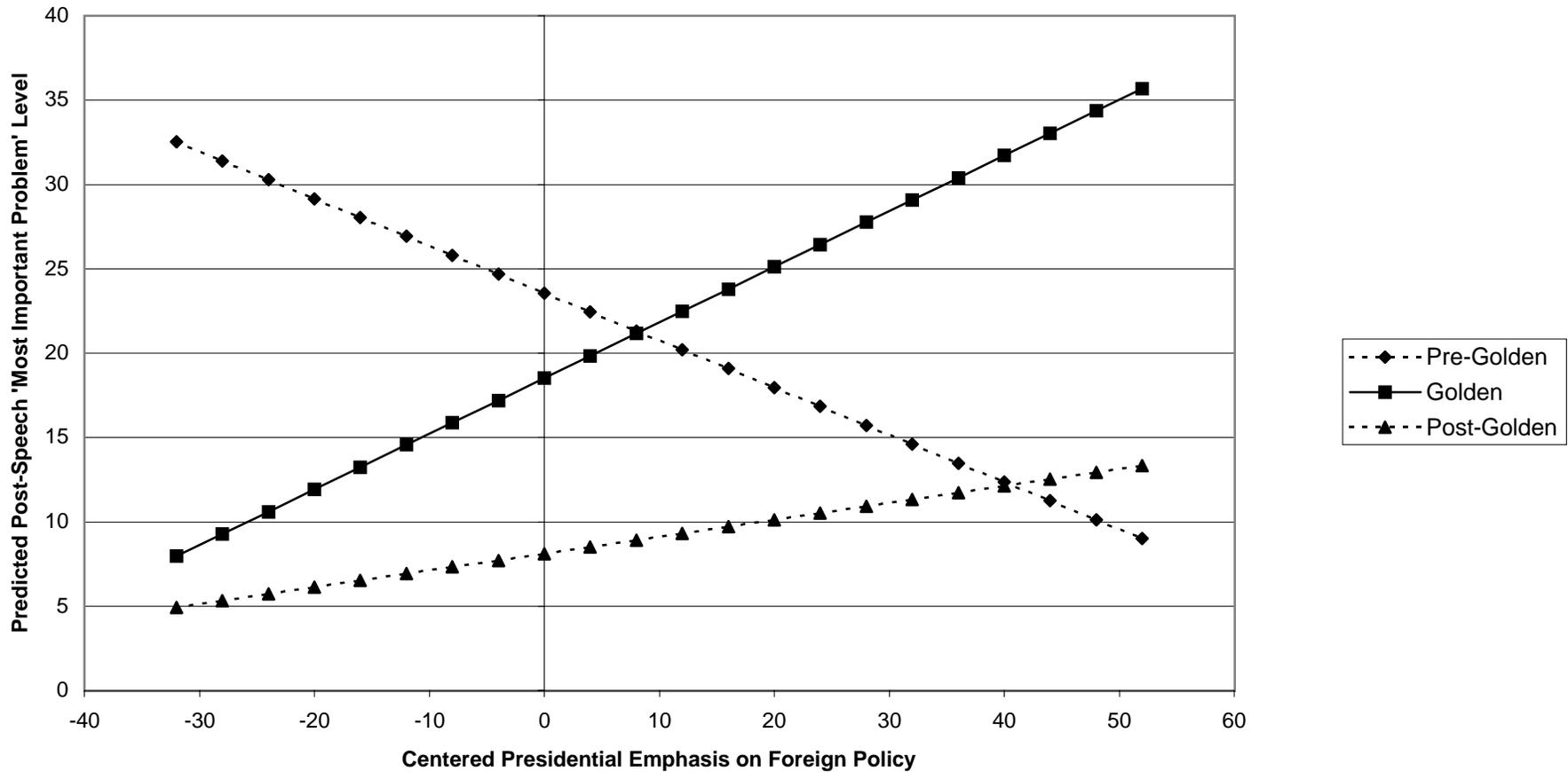
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Pre-Speech Poll (Most Important Problem)	0.330** (0.139)	0.337** (0.149)	0.333** (0.143)
President's Emphasis on Economics	0.148 (0.160)	-0.312 (0.700)	0.147 (0.163)
Golden Age (1963-1985)		0.877 (6.906)	--
Post-Golden Age (1986-2002)		2.075 (6.704)	--
Golden Age x President's Emphasis	--	0.549 (0.726)	--
Post-Golden Age x President's Emphasis	--	0.362 (0.726)	--
Broadcast Television Households	--	--	-0.016 (0.067)
Broadcast Television Households x President's Emphasis	--	--	0.002 (0.006)
Inflation (prior month)	0.127 (0.503)	0.155 (0.580)	0.089 (0.531)
Unemployment (prior month)	5.286*** (1.622)	5.126*** (1.803)	5.268*** (1.666)
Foreign Military Intervention (prior year)	-8.672** (3.389)	-8.154** (3.678)	-8.602** (3.476)
Constant	-8.271 (7.932)	-5.855 (9.578)	-4.245 (8.393)
Model Type	AR1	AR1	AR2
R ²	.72	.72	.72
*** p < .01, ** p < .05, * p < .10			

Figure 1
Broadcast Television Households



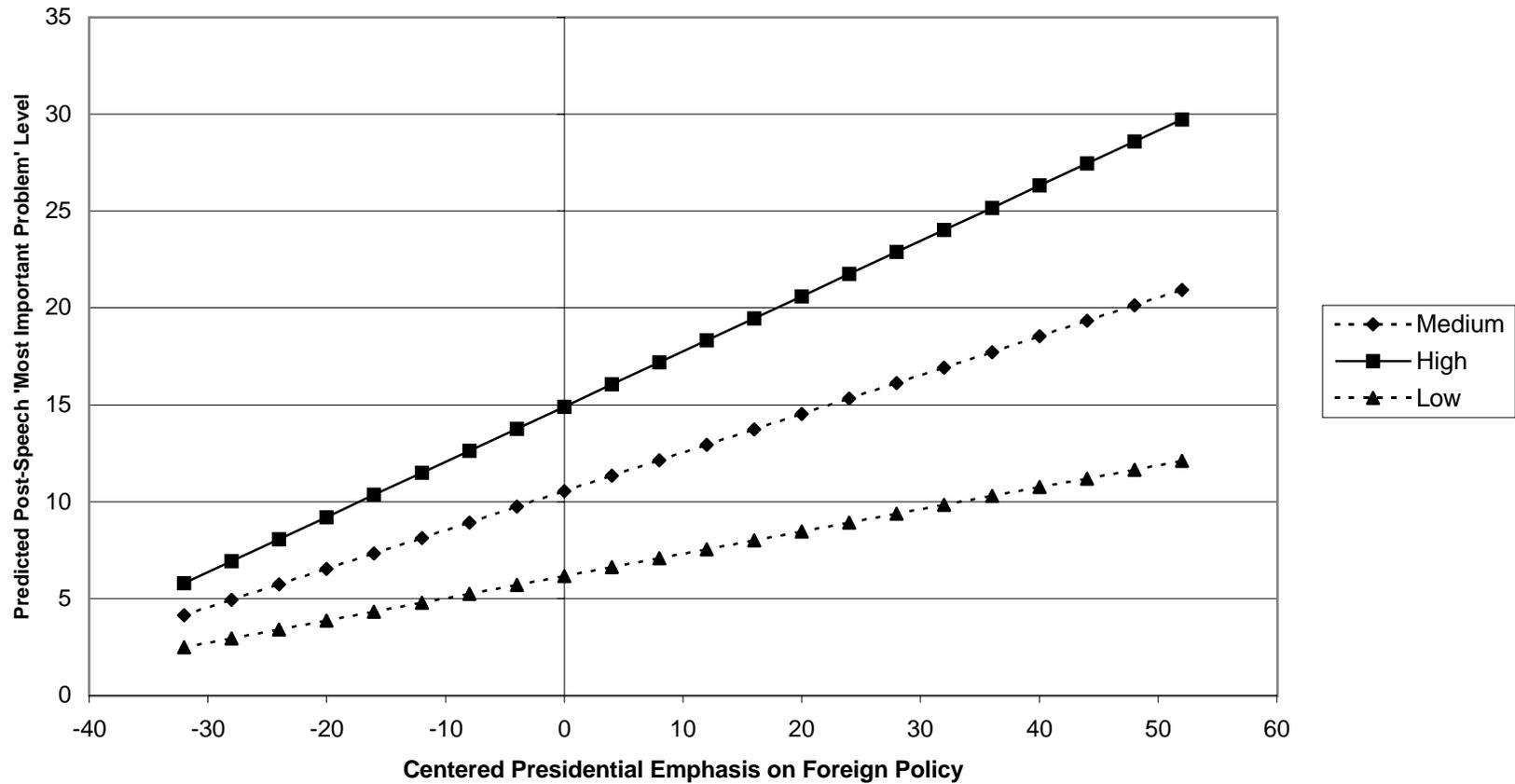
Note: Figure indicates the percentage of households that own a television but do not subscribe to cable.
Sources: Bureau of the Census 1976, Tables A288 and R105; Stanley and Niemi 2001, Table 4-1.

Figure 2
Impact of Presidential Foreign Policy Emphasis
on Public Opinion, Conditional on Television Period



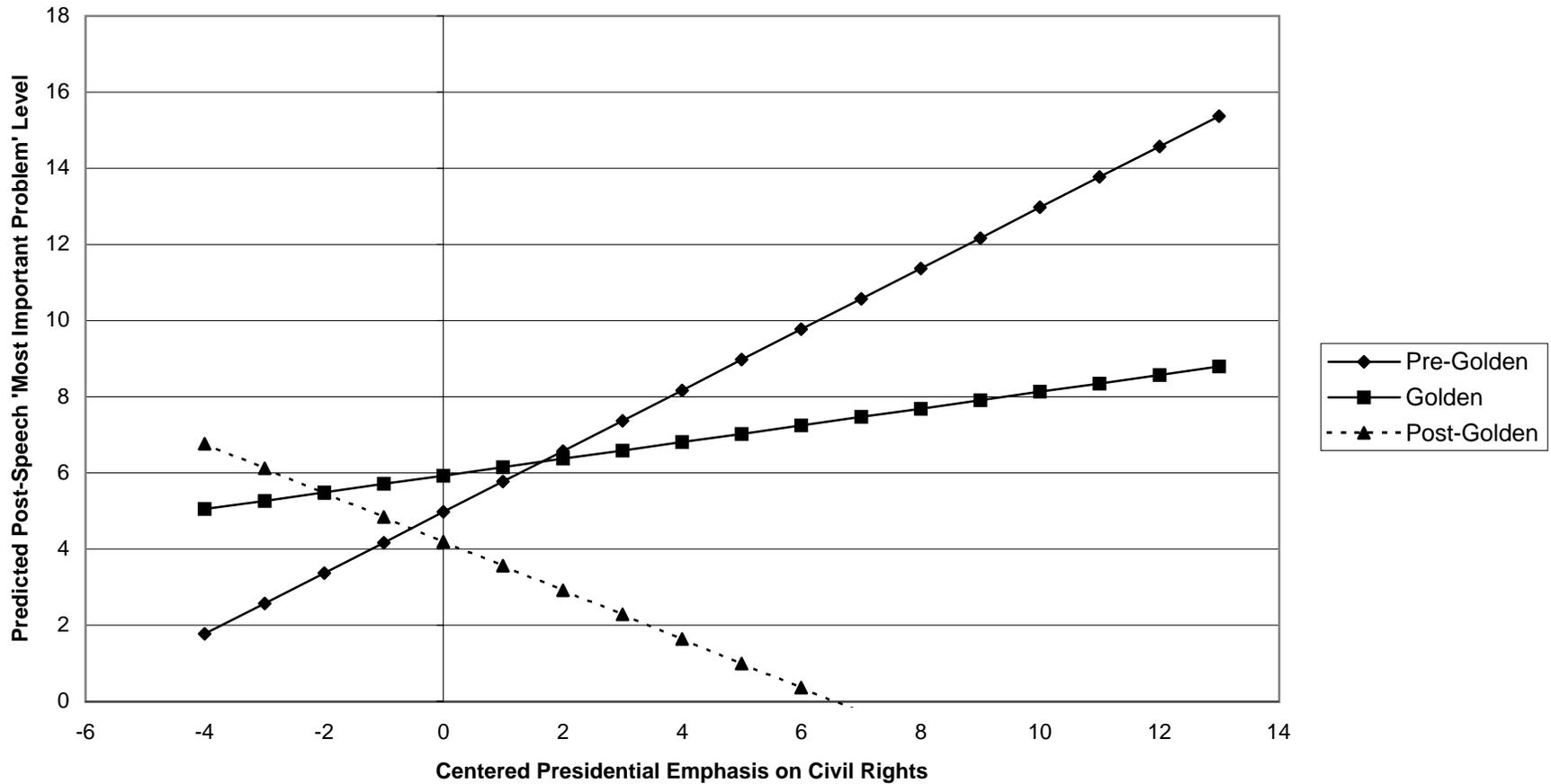
Note: Lines indicate the impact of presidential emphasis on public opinion given particular television periods, defined as Pre-Golden (1953-1962), Golden (1963-1985), and Post-Golden (1986-2002). The emphasis measure is centered so that the mean is equal to zero. Solid lines indicate the effect is statistically significant from zero ($p < .05$).

Figure 3
Impact of Presidential Foreign Policy Emphasis on Public Opinion,
Conditional on Broadcast Television Households



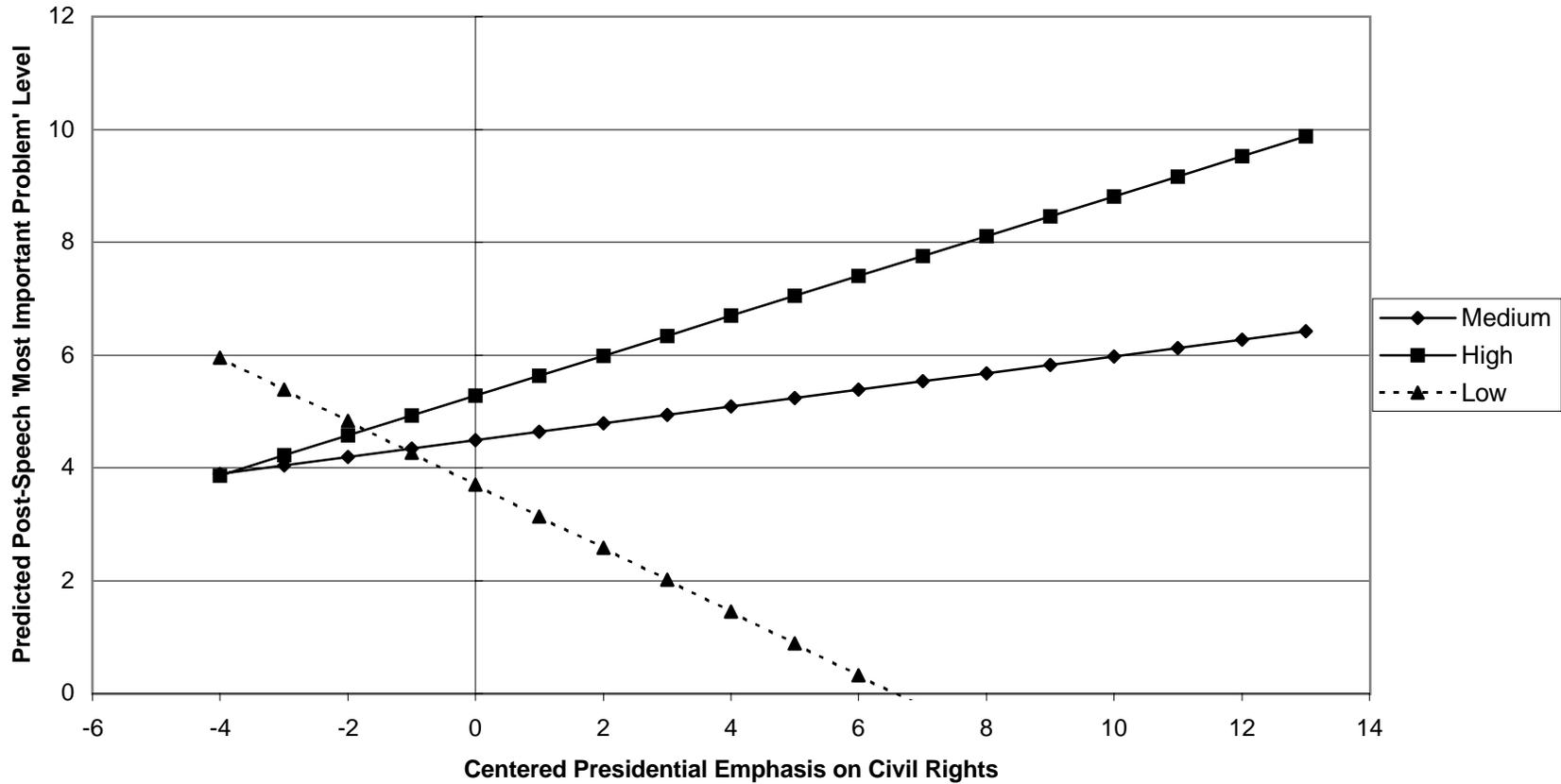
Note: Lines indicate the impact of centered presidential emphasis on public opinion given particular levels of households owning televisions but not subscription to cable (Figure 1). The emphasis measure is centered so that the mean is equal to zero. For moderator variable (*Broadcast Television Households*), High is defined as one standard deviation above the mean, Medium as the mean, and Low as one standard deviation below the mean. Solid lines indicate the effect is statistically significant from zero ($p < .05$).

Figure 4
Impact of Presidential Civil Rights Emphasis
on Public Opinion, Conditional on Television Period



Note: Lines indicate the impact of presidential emphasis on public opinion given particular television periods, defined as Pre-Golden (1953-1962), Golden (1963-1985), and Post-Golden (1986-2002). The emphasis measure is centered so that the mean is equal to zero. Solid lines indicate the effect is statistically significant from zero ($p < .05$).

Figure 5
Impact of Presidential Civil Rights Emphasis on Public Opinion,
Conditional on Broadcast Television Households



Note: Lines indicate the impact of presidential emphasis on public opinion given particular levels of households owning televisions but not subscription to cable (Figure 1). The emphasis measure is centered so that the mean is equal to zero. For moderator variable (Broadcast Television Households), High is defined as one standard deviation above the mean, Medium as the mean, and Low as one standard deviation below the mean. Solid lines indicate the effect is statistically significant from zero ($p < .05$).