

**The Foreign Policy Activism of First Lady Clinton**  
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What are the variables or factors that make for an activist first lady? In this paper we will develop and describe the various factors that lead to first lady activism. These factors can be grouped into essentially five variable sets.

The first set isolates factors pertaining to the first lady's personal attributes. As such a first lady's background, ideology, ambition and vision of public policy will guide her propensity toward activism. Administrative factors are also important. What type resources are available to the first lady? What are her relations with other government officials and agencies? How tightly integrated is her office with the White House Office? An issues factor or variable set will also affect activism. Does a first lady prefer a non-public policy perhaps more charitable issue oriented advocacy or will she actively engage the issues by interacting with legislators and testifying before Congress on more public issues? What will be or has been her legislative success ratio? What type of alliances of power has she formed in the Washington community to guide her issues toward legislative success?

Another important set of variables is the first lady's professional relationship with the president. What type of presidency is the first lady a part of? Is it passive or activist in nature? Are the preferences of the president compatible with those of the first lady? Is the president supportive or non supportive of these issues? How does the strength of the presidency relate to the strength of the first lady? Finally the public plays a role here. What are the public expectations concerning the first lady's role? All of this is affected by the media. Events, public opinion polls and public approval or criticism of first lady activism all play a role in her ability to get things done. What type of political climate is the first lady operating within?

An assessment of these factors as applied to Mrs. Clinton will go a long way in establishing her type of activism. The second part of our paper will apply this type of activism in the foreign policy realm with specific concentration upon her human rights policy as evidenced at the Beijing Conference. We will adopt a foreign policy framework to analyze her efforts in this area. This paper is part of our ongoing work on first ladies as illustrated by our contributions in Robert Watson and Anthony J. Eksterowicz, eds., *The Presidential Companion: Readings on First Ladies* (University of South Carolina Press), 2004.