Original Article

Foreign policy, bipartisanship and the paradox of post-September 11 America

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Abstract The attacks of September 11 and the resulting war on terrorism present a puzzle to conventional explanations of foreign policy bipartisanship. Public anxiety about the international environment increased sharply after the attacks in 2001, but this did not translate into greater foreign policy consensus despite the initial predictions of many analysts. In this article, we advance a theory of foreign policy bipartisanship that emphasizes its domestic underpinnings to explain the absence of consensus in Washington. We argue that bipartisanship over foreign policy depends as much on domestic economic and electoral conditions as on the international security environment. Using multivariate analysis of roll call voting in the House of Representatives from 1889 to 2008, we show that bipartisanship over foreign policy is most likely not only when the country faces a foreign threat but also when the national economy is strong and when party coalitions are regionally diverse. This was the case during the Cold War. Despite concern about terrorism in recent years, economic volatility and regional polarization have made bipartisan cooperation over foreign policy elusive.
International Politics (2011) **48,** 164–187. doi:10.1057/ip.2011.12

Keywords: foreign policy; bipartisanship; party politics; regionalism; foreign threats

Introduction

Conventional theories of foreign policy-making predict that international threats will enhance domestic consensus and cooperation. These theories appear inadequate in light of September 11 and the war on terrorism. Public anxiety about the international environment deepened after the attacks in 2001. Yet contra widely held expectations among international relations

scholars and foreign policy analysts (Miller, 2002; Gaddis, 2004), the kind of sustained bipartisan cooperation in Washington that followed other attacks on American territory did not materialize. The initial surge in bipartisan unity that followed the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon soon subsided (Trubowitz and Mellow, 2005; Busby and Monten, 2008). And as the partisan divide over the conflict in Iraq and the 'war on terrorism' demonstrates, Republicans and Democrats continue to disagree about the proper mix of power and diplomacy in foreign affairs (Abramowitz and Saunders, 2005; Shapiro and Block-Elkon, 2007; Holsti, 2008). Whatever else future historians say about American politics in this period, they will not say that the start of the twenty-first century was a time of consensus and unity over foreign policy.

In the 2008 election campaign, President Obama promised to change the policies and the partisan politics that prevailed during the Bush administration. Yet try as he might to reach across the aisle as president, Obama's calls for renewed bipartisanship have gone unanswered (Kupchan and Trubowitz, 2010). Congress remains deeply divided over foreign policy. Meanwhile, public opinion polls reveal striking gaps between Republican and Democratic voters on issues ranging from the war on terrorism, to Pentagon spending, to free trade. Why has foreign policy bipartisanship been in such short supply? Is the post-September 11 bipartisan deficit an anomaly? These questions are important because they touch on classic questions about the relative importance of international and domestic politics in shaping judgments about the national interest. They also speak to debates about the democratic character of foreign policy-making in the United States (Bartels, 1991; Page and Shapiro, 1992; Jacobs and Page, 2005). Indeed, the absence of bipartisanship today is not only puzzling for theories of foreign policy that stress the importance of the international environment in explaining foreign policy choice. It also runs counter to theories of deliberative democracy, which argue that public scrutiny and political deliberation foster domestic consensus (Fishkin, 1991; Gutmann and Thompson, 1996). According to democratic theories of governance, elected officials should eschew, or at least temper, partisan extremism on highly salient issues that draw intense attention from the media and voters. Yet the public's concern about national security has not quelled partisan politics.

In this article, we argue that bipartisanship stems at least as much from political conditions *inside* the United States as political developments beyond the nation's shores, and that this goes far in explaining the current absence of consensus over foreign policy. Briefly, we show that politicians are more likely to reach across the aisle on foreign policy when voters are relatively satisfied with the performance of the domestic economy and when elected officials must balance party loyalty against regional interests. We find that foreign dangers

do have a dampening effect on the nation's normal partisan politics. Yet how resolutely lawmakers stay the bipartisan course depends on the state of the economy and the depth of regional rivalries. When voters are worried about their pocketbooks and the nation's politics is sharply divided along regional lines, bipartisanship over foreign policy suffers.

We begin by surveying competing international and domestic explanations of bipartisanship. We then test them through a time series analysis of over a century of roll call votes in Congress. We show that the reason bipartisanship over foreign policy is atypical is that the domestic conditions that make such cooperation possible in Washington are rare and unstable. Post-September 11 American foreign policy is no exception in this regard. We conclude with some thoughts about the implications of our analysis for theories of foreign policy-making and for bipartisanship in US foreign policy during Barack Obama's presidency.

Bipartisanship's Ebb and Flow

'Partisan politics', the old adage goes, 'stops at the water's edge'. For much of the Cold War, it was possible to take this saying at face value: no matter the level of domestic discord, foreign policy bipartisanship was commonplace. However, as Figure 1 suggests, the Cold War is the exception, rather than the rule.[1] Historically, the average Congress generated bipartisan foreign policy just 54 per cent of the time. This is only slightly higher than the average rate of bipartisan voting on domestic policy.[2] Moreover, bipartisanship in foreign policy has fluctuated considerably over time, ranging from highs of more than 80 per cent of all votes to lows of less than 10 per cent.

Amidst the ups-and-downs, some periods have been noticeably more bipartisan than others. In the twentieth century, the first sustained 'moment' of bipartisanship occurred a few years before the outbreak of World War I. It lasted until the Great Depression, surging briefly during Woodrow Wilson's first term and then again when Calvin Coolidge was in power. Before that, bipartisanship had been a rarity in Washington, occurring just 30 per cent of the time overall on foreign policy issues and only occasionally rising above 50 per cent of the foreign policy votes of a single congress. Democrats and Republicans of the late nineteenth century regularly clashed on all the major foreign policy questions before the nation, including overseas expansion, military modernization and tariff reform.

The bipartisan moment of the 1910s and 1920s ended in the 1930s as questions about how the country should respond to the gathering storm on the European continent began to generate partisan debate. It was not until the United States entered World War II in 1941 that bipartisanship returned with

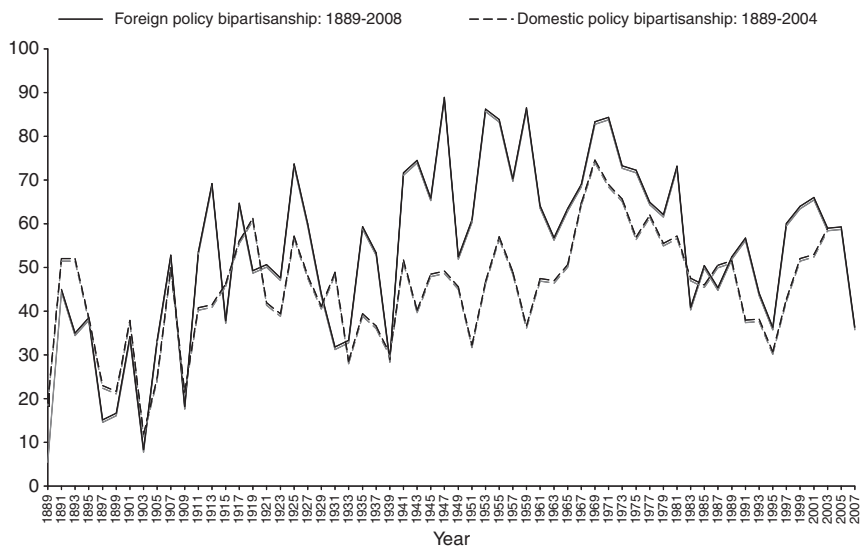

Figure 1: Trends in bipartisanship, 1889–2010: Congresses 51–110.
Source: Calculated from data available at Voteview.com.

any regularity to the country's politics. This second phase of bipartisanship proved to be robust; in the years between 1941 and 1970, the average congress generated bipartisan support for foreign policy 72 per cent, giving rise to such landmark policies as Lend-Lease, Bretton Woods and the Marshall Plan. The heart of the bipartisan coalition of this era was an alliance between Democrats and moderate, Northeastern 'Rockefeller' Republicans in favor of a grand strategy that combined the principles of forward defense, liberalized trade and collective security (Snyder, 1991; Fordham, 1998). The Western wing of the Republican Party remained skeptical and often actively opposed this vision of American security.

This bipartisan consensus lasted for roughly two decades, interrupted only by divisions over Truman's handling of the Korean War. In the 1960s, however, bipartisanship began to drop sharply in Congress. The Vietnam War was the proximate cause (McCormick and Wittkopf, 1990; Meernik, 1993; Prins and Marshall, 2001). The war, however, did not prevent bipartisan cooperation over foreign policy entirely; as Figure 1 suggests, bipartisanship returned in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Yet unlike the bipartisanship of the early Cold War era, the bipartisan coalition of the 1960s and 1970s did not include the Northern Democrats who had been the bulwark of earlier Cold War internationalism; their support disappeared during the Vietnam years. Instead, this new bipartisanship was built on an alliance between a now

unified Republican Party and conservative Southern Democrats (Shelley, 1983; Rohde, 1994). This 'conservative coalition' on foreign policy lasted until about 1980, when bipartisanship began a long slow decline, reaching a post-World War II nadir in the 104th Congress (1995–1996), when just 36 per cent of foreign policy votes garnered bipartisan support. The erosion of foreign policy bipartisanship in this era is consistent with standard scholarly accounts of a growing partisan divide in Congress (Rohde, 1991; Aldrich, 1995; Coleman, 1997; Poole and Rosenthal, 1997) and the electorate at large (Bartels, 2000; Jacobson, 2000; Abramowitz and Saunders, 2005; Brewer and Stonecash, 2006; McCarty *et al*, 2006).

Bipartisanship staged a comeback in the latter half of the 1990s, reaching a high of 66 per cent by the end of the 107th Congress (2001–2002). There can be little question that this increase in bipartisanship owed something to the September 11 attacks. In the immediate aftermath of the attacks, bipartisanship increased. Yet, interestingly, foreign policy bipartisanship had begun to climb in the two congresses *preceding* the attacks. In addition, there has been a marked drop in bipartisanship since the attacks, despite America's continued worries about terrorism, its involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan and growing concerns about Iran and North Korea. By the 110th Congress (2007–2008), foreign policy bipartisanship had fallen to just 36 per cent – on par with the level of the mid-1990s.

Recent fluctuations aside, most striking is the overall erosion of bipartisanship since the 1970s. It constitutes the longest sustained decline in foreign policy bipartisanship in over a century. When viewed in historical context, the level of bipartisanship in the last decade, averaging 57 per cent, is higher than it was 100 years ago (in the 1890s bipartisanship averaged less than 30 per cent) but considerably lower than in bipartisanship's halcyon years of the 1940s, when it averaged over 70 per cent. Not surprisingly, the decline in bipartisanship since September 11 has prompted impassioned calls (Roman, 2005; Lieven and Hulsman, 2006; Chollet *et al*, 2007) to restore some semblance of consensus to foreign policy – itself an indication of just how little bipartisan cooperation there is today over the national interest.

Explaining Bipartisanship

Perhaps the most often invoked explanation by foreign policy scholars for bipartisanship is the existence of foreign danger. It argues that partisan politics stops at the water's edge when international threats are manifest and the nation's physical safety or overseas interests are believed to be at risk. It builds, implicitly or explicitly, on Coser's (1956) seminal theory about the internally cohesive function of external conflict (Stein, 1976). When faced with a grave

threat to the nation's security, the argument goes, elected officials set narrow partisan loyalty aside and weigh alternative responses to the threat (for example, defense spending, security alliances and military intervention) on largely substantive grounds. Vasquez's (1985) theory of 'issue cycles', Schweller's (2006) theory of elite consensus and Wildavsky's (1975) theory of foreign policy deference, among others, attribute bipartisanship and consensus building at home to 'external shocks', or rising geopolitical challengers or military threats. The clearer the external threat, the more likely 'in-group' (for example, partisan) differences will dissipate and internal cohesion (bipartisanship) will strengthen.

There is some evidence in support of this explanation of foreign policy bipartisanship. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor prompted a rally behind Franklin Delano Roosevelt that transcended party lines (Westerfield, 1963). Similarly, fears of communism in the late 1940s made it easier for Harry Truman to win bipartisan support for security and trade policies aimed at Europe (Block, 1980; Patterson, 1988) and Asia (Christensen, 1996) than would have otherwise been the case. Meanwhile, partisanship in the years before World War II is often explained as a response to public apathy and indifference to foreign affairs (Grassmuck, 1951). So is the apparent rise in partisanship after the Cold War ended. In the absence of a Soviet style threat in the 1990s, it is argued, public indifference to foreign policy increased, leaving politicians freer to treat foreign policy as though it was domestic policy: a tool to achieve partisan ends (Huntington, 1997; Schlesinger, 1997; Lindsay, 2000).

Foreign threats do not, however, always translate into increased bipartisanship at home. As others have observed (Prins and Marshall, 2001; Souva and Rohde, 2007), the decline in bipartisanship over foreign policy that accelerated after the end of the Cold War began well before the Soviet empire collapsed. Moreover, bipartisanship over foreign policy *can* occur when security is abundant. As Figure 1 indicates, bipartisanship was prevalent shortly before and after World War I (while comparatively weaker during the war itself). Finally, with the exception of the early decades of the Cold War, the foreign policy and domestic policy bipartisanship indexes reported in Figure 1 are highly correlated. During the height of the Cold War (1947–1968), the correlation between the two indexes is weak ($r = 0.100$) and statistically insignificant. However, during the rest of the study period, the correlation is relatively strong and significant, 0.815 ($P \leqslant 0.01$). This suggests that there is more to foreign policy bipartisanship than just factors of national security.

A second explanation for foreign policy bipartisanship focuses on foreign policy's domestic costs and the cross-pressures that politicians face. From this perspective, elected officials must weigh foreign policy choices against public concerns about domestic policy and, in particular, the widely held perception

that foreign policy and domestic policy are in competition. As Lee Hamilton (Nincic, 1997, p. 599), the former Chairman of the then House Committee on Foreign Affairs, observes, voters 'believe that foreign policy competes with domestic issues for attention and resources'. Rightly or wrongly, voters think that when policy-makers focus on international problems and challenges they do so at the expense of domestic needs and wants (for example, tax relief, health care and education reform).

How sensitive voters are to these guns versus butter trade-offs depends on many things, but the state of the economy is especially important (Nincic, 1997). During good economic times, voters generally worry less about the domestic 'opportunity costs' of foreign policies such as freer trade, forward defense and foreign aid, because the trade-offs are less acute. By contrast, hard economic times heighten public attentiveness to what the government is doing and to the possible 'costs' of imported goods, military commitments and international aid, offering the party-out-of-power opportunities to attack the party-in-power's foreign policies as 'insensitive', 'wasteful' and 'misguided'. During the economic recession of 1991–1992, for example, when voters identified the economy and job security as their top priorities, Democrats excoriated George H. W. Bush and the Republicans for being too preoccupied with foreign policy and 'out of touch' with the domestic needs of the American people (Halberstam, 2001; Jacobson, 2001; Klein, 2002).

The domestic costs explanation starts from the assumption that politicians are responsive to public opinion. The central idea is that public scrutiny of foreign policy intensifies as the domestic costs or trade-offs (for example, higher taxes, fewer jobs and less social spending) the public associates with foreign policy become more visible. And the more voters' worry about their pocketbooks, the more vulnerable the President is to attack by the party-out-of-power for investing too much time, energy and resources in foreign affairs.[3] In short, good economic times make it easier to garner bipartisan support for foreign policy; hard times make it more difficult.

There is some evidence that bipartisanship over foreign policy fluctuates with the economy. During the 'long boom' of the 1950s, for example, there was a corresponding rise in bipartisan cooperation over foreign policy (see Figure 1). Bipartisanship also occurred during the growth spurt before World War I and again, during the high-flying economy of the late 1990s. Meanwhile, hard economic times coincide with increased foreign policy partisanship. Throughout the cycle of 'boom and bust' that marked economic development in the late nineteenth century bipartisan cooperation over foreign policy was limited and sporadic. Bipartisanship also dropped off sharply during the Great Depression and, again, during the economic recession of the 1970s.

A third possible explanation for bipartisanship is found in interest-based models of policy-making. A central finding of work in this area is that

party politics and platforms typically echo the functional interests of the constituencies they represent. These constituencies are variously defined in regional, sectoral and class terms (Ferguson, 1984; Gourevitch, 1986; Frieden, 1988; Milner, 1988; Fordham, 1998; Trubowitz, 1998; Shoch, 2001; Narizny, 2003). One important, if not fully explored, implication of this research is that how closely the parties align on foreign policy depends on how homogeneous the interests of their respective constituencies are. When the parties' constituencies have distinctly different functional interests, their political representatives will espouse different views about the national interest and how best to promote it. Politics become more zero-sum in nature. Conversely, when Republicans and Democrats represent or compete for the same regions, sectors or groups, the chances of policy convergence and bipartisan cooperation should improve.

To test this argument, we focus on the regional bases of party convergence and divergence. Regionalism is one of the most distinctive and enduring features of American politics, and there is a growing scholarship on its sources and impact on foreign policy (Trubowitz, 1998; Schiller, 1999; Silverstone, 2004; Narizny, 2007; Fordham, 2008). A central finding in this work is that regions of the country that stand to benefit from international trade or investment are likely to support foreign policies, economic as well as military, aimed at promoting or maintaining international openness. Conversely, regions whose income, profits or influence domestically are threatened by international competition are less likely to support the 'overhead charges' of maintaining international openness: they are less likely to favor easy credit for foreigners, an open domestic market and so on.

How such regional differences reveal themselves at the national level, and whether lawmakers find themselves having to choose between region and party, depends to a large extent on whether the party system is organized in ways that amplify regional differences over international openness. Historically, when the parties have been rooted in sections of the country with significantly different stakes in international openness, partisanship has intensified. In the 'great debate' over expansionism in the 1890s, for example, each of the two parties was regionally concentrated: Republicans centered in the Northeast and Midwest; Democrats based in the South (Bensel, 1984; Narizny, 2007). When Republicans clamored for a neo-mercantile strategy of overseas expansion, they championed causes that resonated strongly in the large urban industrial regions of the Northeast and Midwest that sought to protect the home market while promoting trade and investment abroad. When Democrats made the case for free and open trade, they did so knowing that their Southern constituencies stood to gain economically from international openness.

During the late nineteenth century, Republican and Democratic lawmakers experienced comparatively little cross-pressure from region and party. Instead,

partisan and regional interests reinforced one another; for lawmakers of that era, advocating foreign policies that appealed to local constituencies also confirmed their loyalty to party. Under such conditions, lawmakers have little electoral incentive to cross party lines to form extra-regional, bipartisan coalitions. The reverse would also appear to be true: the less regionally polarized and internally homogeneous the parties, the harder it is for party leaders to articulate distinctly different foreign policy orientations (for example, imperialism versus anti-imperialism, internationalism versus nationalism). Instead, when parties are competing in the same regions, we would expect partisan passions over foreign policy to ebb and opportunities for bipartisan coalition building across regional divides to open up. In short, the more regionally diverse each of the parties' coalitions (or, put another way, the more national in scope the parties' bases), the more likely their representatives are to engage in bipartisanship over foreign policy.

Analysis of Foreign Policy Voting

We developed a multivariate model to test our argument about the impact of domestic conditions on foreign policy bipartisanship. Our dependent variable is the frequency of bipartisan voting over foreign policy (as illustrated in Figure 1). This index includes all roll call votes dealing with foreign policy, including votes on defense policy, international trade, foreign aid, international institutions and military intervention.[4] Following standard practice in analyses of partisanship and bipartisanship, our unit of analysis is a single Congress (Brady *et al*, 1979; McCormick and Wittkopf, 1990; Poole and Rosenthal, 1997). The time period under study is 1889–2008, from the 51st through the 110th Congress. The time frame is long enough to avoid, or at least reduce, the risk of producing findings that are too narrowly time-bound and framed by the politics of the Cold War era.

Model

The model tests the effects of six independent variables. To test the conventional wisdom that bipartisanship increases in the face of foreign danger, we measure the percentage of the population in the military ('Foreign Threat'). Shifts in the size of the military, even after the advent of an all-volunteer military in 1973, have been a response to government actions and thus are an important signal about perceived threats to the nation's security.[5] Our hypothesis is that bipartisanship increases when the US government expands the size of the military in response to a perceived threat. Because there

can be a time delay between the emergence and recognition of a threat, congressional debate, and congressional vote action, we lagged this variable by a single congressional cycle.

The second explanation focuses on domestic trade-offs, and voter perception of the opportunity costs associated with the president's foreign policy. We hypothesize that in good economic times, voters are less concerned about the costs of foreign policy; the guns versus butter trade-off is less acute. In contrast, hard times increase voter concern about the perceived trade-offs between foreign and domestic policy goals in ways that fuel partisanship. As voter attention to foreign policy and its costs mounts, the party-out-of-power gains politically from defining issues in strictly partisan terms and from challenging the president's foreign policy priorities. In short, we hypothesize that a growing economy makes bipartisanship over foreign policy easier, whereas domestic economic difficulties make foreign policy bipartisanship more difficult.

To test for the possibility that economic growth enables foreign policy bipartisanship, we use economic variables that capture two different facets of the phenomenon.[6] The first is a measure of the economy's overall health (National Growth Rate). We use the national growth rate, or the growth rate of per capita gross national product (GNP) from one Congress to another. To generate the per capita GNP for each Congress, we took the average of the annual per capita GNP for the 2 years of each Congress.[7] Because the distribution of economic growth often has political implications, we include a second measure of economic well-being, that of unemployment. The rate of unemployment (Unemployment Rate) serves as a proxy for the pocketbook concerns of working Americans and the partisan pressures that this brings.[8] This variable is the average of the annual unemployment rate in the 2 years of a given Congress. Because there is a time lapse between the job losses, calculation of the national unemployment rate and the dissemination of that information, we lagged this variable by one congressional cycle.

The third explanation, stressing regional interests, suggests that the nature and organization of the party system matters to bipartisanship. If the party system is divided along a regional axis, with the two major parties concentrated in different regions, bipartisanship is unlikely, because the parties' regional constituencies have divergent interests. Conversely, if the party system is not divided along a regional axis – if, in other words, the party system is nationally competitive – then foreign policy bipartisanship is more likely, because the parties will be competing to represent the same regional interests. To test this theory, we relied on Richard Bensel's (1984) well-known core-periphery regional taxonomy to construct a measure of regional polarization.[9] In Bensel's model, the northern core consists of the earliest industrializing states in the Northeast, Midwest and, sometimes, the Pacific Coast, which was a

somewhat delayed industrial developer, but one that for economic, social and geographical reasons had more in common with states in the core than with the late industrializing states in the South, Great Plains and Mountain West.[10] As Bensel and others have pointed out, because the core and periphery's stakes in international openness have often diverged, foreign policy has been a continuing source of tension between these great regions. We use this core–periphery classification, recognizing that it, like any regional taxonomy, cannot do full justice to the complexity of America's political geography or the sectional bases of conflicts over foreign policy.

To generate a variable for the 'Regional Polarization' of the party system, we first calculated location quotients for Democrats in the core and in the periphery as well as for Republicans in both regions. A location quotient (Griffith and Amrhein, 1991) is a statistic commonly used by geographers and economists to determine the spatial concentration of an activity (here the degree to which a party's congressional membership is geographically concentrated).[11] We calculated the absolute difference between the core and periphery location quotients for Democrats and, separately, between the two regional location quotients for Republicans. If, within the party, there is no difference between the two regions, the resulting number will be zero, and the party is distributed evenly in both regions; the higher the difference between the two regions (within one party), the more concentrated the party is in one of the regions. Once we had a single number to represent the degree of regional concentration, and thus homogeneity, for each party, we added these two numbers together to create an index. The result is a single measure of regional polarization within the party system that indicates how internally homogeneous the parties are and how distinct they are from each other. The greater the level of regional polarization within the party system, the lower the incentive for cooperation because of the conflicting imperatives of the regions, and thus we expect to see lower levels of bipartisanship.

Our model controls for two additional factors that might reasonably be expected to effect levels of bipartisanship over foreign policy. The first is public perceptions of foreign policy success. Public attentiveness to foreign affairs increases when military force is used overseas. Initially, the so-called 'rally-around-the-flag' effect produces broad public support for deployment. However, prolonged or multiple instances of seemingly unsuccessful military engagement generates public apprehension about putting more American servicemen and women in harm's way (Mueller, 1973; MacKuen, 1983; Brody, 1991; Kernell, 1993; Meernik and Waterman, 1996). When the military appears to be meeting with little success in an enduring conflict or when it appears overextended on multiple fronts, American skepticism about the wisdom of the Administration's foreign policy is likely to grow. In these

instances, as public commitment wavers, the congressional party in opposition to the Administration has a strong incentive to capitalize on the disenchantment, and bipartisanship is likely to erode.[12] To capture this effect, we included in our model a variable that is a count of instances per decade where Washington used or projected military force abroad ('Power Projection').

To create this variable ('Power Projection'), we used data on the number of times US forces were deployed overseas per decade, as reported in Harold Stanley and Richard Niemi's *Vital Statistics on American Politics, 2001–2002*.[13] Stanley and Niemi's data, which include both declared wars and undeclared military actions, provide numbers per decade (for example, 16 instances of the use of force occurred in the decade 1901–1910). We averaged across Congresses per decade. This imposes an artificial smoothness on the data.[14] However, it also allows us to control for the effects of war weariness on foreign policy bipartisanship.[15]

The second control in our model is a measure of the party make-up of government. Scholars argue that when party control of the machinery of government is divided (that is, when the president's party does not control Congress), party moderates have more clout (Quirk and Nesmith, 1995). This is because presidents must reach out to the party in control of Congress if they hope to get items on their legislative agenda passed, and those most likely to be sympathetic to the president's goals are the moderates in the opposition party. Conversely, when one party dominates nationally, bipartisanship is less likely to occur. Not only do moderates potentially have less clout in these times but the minority party is truly the 'out-party', giving its members little incentive to embrace the president's agenda (Patterson and Caldeira, 1988). This might help explain the sharp declines in bipartisanship in Figure 1 following the electoral landsides of 1896 (McKinley), 1936 (Roosevelt), 1964 (Johnson) and 1980 (Reagan). In all but the Reagan case, the election gave the White House party control of Congress.[16] To test for these effects, we included a dummy variable (Divided Government) that is coded '1' for divided party government and '0' for unified party government. Again, our expectation is that when one party controls Congress and the other, the presidency, bipartisanship will increase.

Results

The measure of foreign policy bipartisanship that was illustrated in Figure 1 was regressed on the six variables described above. The results of subjecting the model to ordinary least squares regression are provided in Table 1. (Descriptive statistics for the variables in the model are provided in Appendix Table A1.) Overall, 41 per cent of the variance in foreign policy bipartisanship was

Table 1: Explaining bipartisanship over foreign policy, 1889–2008

	B (*SE*)
Foreign Threat (lag)	3.823*
	(1.825)
Power Projection	−0.094**
	(0.028)
National Growth Rate	0.452**
	(0.155)
Unemployment Rate (lag)	−1.138*
	(0.478)
Regional Polarization	−0.069*
	(0.034)
Divided Government	0.053
	(0.044)
Constant	0.751**
	(0.092)

Adj. R^2: 0.41, DW = 1.6.
*$P \leqslant 0.05$; **$P \leqslant 0.01$.

explained by these six factors.[17] More importantly for our purposes, the results offer strong evidence that domestic conditions influence the likelihood of foreign policy bipartisanship.

As the results in Table 1 indicate, increasing America's military leads, as expected, to greater bipartisanship. The size of the armed forces has a large effect on bipartisanship: a 1 per cent increase in the number of military personnel leads to a nearly 4 per cent increase in bipartisanship. This is not surprising and is consistent with the 'rally-around-the-flag' phenomenon discussed above. Increasing troop levels draws voter attention to foreign affairs in a very public way and lawmakers who appear to be putting partisan ambition ahead of the national interest run the risk of electoral punishment.

All of this only makes the absence of bipartisanship since September 11 more puzzling. Several years after the terrorist attacks, the public still considered foreign policy, and especially the war in Iraq critical challenges facing the nation (Pew Research Center, 2008). Yet public anxiety about terrorism and war did not translate into sustained bipartisanship on Capitol Hill. Part of the explanation may lie with our second (control) measure of foreign threat, Power Projection, which is negatively correlated with bipartisanship. Quick successful wars (for example, the 1991 Persian Gulf War) enjoy broad public support, leaving little room for the party-out-of-power to make political hay. By contrast, protracted wars such as the 2003 Iraq War that lead to mounting public frustration create political openings for the opposing party. When

public support for the Korean and Vietnam interventions flagged, for example, the party-out-of-power used the war to mobilize its partisans and challenge the White House (Divine, 1974; Miroff, 2007).

It could also be that the absence of bipartisanship since September 11 is the result of domestic economic and political trends. Certainly, the results of the model indicate that both economic conditions and the organization of the party system have a powerful effect on the prospects for foreign policy bipartisanship. We hypothesized that hard economic times would make bipartisanship difficult, and as expected, unemployment has a strong and inverse relationship to bipartisanship. A 1 per cent increase in the unemployment rate leads to a more than 1 per cent decrease in the degree of bipartisanship, *ceteris paribus*. When unemployment is high, voters are more sensitive to the domestic opportunity costs (real or imagined) of investing resources in foreign policy. For example, when unemployment skyrocketed during the Great Depression, voters demanded that Washington devote greater attention to solving domestic problems. Republican attacks on Roosevelt's foreign policies increased; bipartisanship waned.

Economic growth has the reverse effect, all things equal. When the economy is strong and growing, the trade-off between foreign and domestic policy is less salient politically and foreign policy bipartisanship easier to achieve. A 2 per cent increase in the rate of growth leads to a nearly 1 per cent increase in bipartisanship. This helps to explain the higher levels of foreign policy bipartisanship in the 1920s and during the 'long boom' of the 1950s. It might also explain the re-emergence of bipartisanship during Clinton's second term and its subsequent decline during George W. Bush's stewardship of the economy.

Results of the data analysis confirm a second domestic source of foreign policy-making as well. Specifically, the results show that when the party system is polarized around distinct regional interests, foreign policy bipartisanship is less likely.[18] In such times, lawmakers are more attentive to the mutually reinforcing demands of party activists and their distinctive regional constituents. As a result, partisanship flourishes. We suspect something like this occurred in the late 1890s during the 'Great Debate' over territorial versus commercial expansionism. The country's electoral geography suddenly and dramatically hardened with the watershed election of 1896 (Burnham, 1981). With Democrats paying heed to their agrarian southern constituency and Republicans focused on the demands of their northern industrialist base, partisan conflict in Congress quickly escalated.

The reverse seems to have occurred during the New Deal realignment of the 1930s. Franklin Roosevelt and the Democrats picked the Republican electoral 'lock' on the traditional manufacturing belt states in New England, the Mid-Atlantic and the Great Lakes. The Democrats, long the party of the Deep South, were now electorally competitive in the big metropolises above the

Mason–Dixon line as well (Burner, 1967; Gamm, 1986). As a result, Northeastern, 'Rockefeller' Republicans found it harder to put party loyalty before regional interests and oppose foreign policies that appealed to the northern wing of the Democratic Party – free trade, collective security and, with the start of the Cold War, foreign aid (Gazell, 1973; Divine, 1974; Gould, 2003).

As the Cold War unfolded a second source of bipartisanship developed – an 'alliance' between Southern Democrats and Republicans, especially Western Republicans. In the area of foreign policy, this alliance first appeared during the Eisenhower years but it was not until Nixon's presidency that it became a principal source of bipartisanship over foreign policy (and as Figure 1 suggests, domestic policy). Increasingly Southern Democrats found themselves in the same position Northeastern Republicans had a generation earlier: electorally vulnerable (Bensel, 1984; Black and Black, 1987; Rae, 1994). As the Republican Party became a political force in the South, Southern Democrats found it harder to resist Republican foreign policy positions. The fact that Northern Democrats were by the 1970s increasingly less willing to support such traditional Cold War policies as forward defense and free trade only made the choice to spurn the party leadership that much easier for Southern Democrats (Gillon, 1988).

Finally, the analysis indicates that divided government does not have a significant relationship to foreign policy bipartisanship. Some analysts have shown that divided government encourages partisanship over the use of force (Howell and Pevehouse, 2007). Our results raise questions about the generalizability of this finding to other areas of foreign policy, as well as about our own view that divided government encourages bipartisanship. We had anticipated that moderate lawmakers would play a larger role in presidents' foreign policy coalition building during years of divided government, with the result being greater bipartisan legislation. However, this does not appear to be the case, at least not to a significant degree.

Conclusion

During the 2008 presidential campaign, Barack Obama stressed the need for more bipartisanship in Washington. In doing so, Obama echoed a widely held view that bipartisanship leads to sounder, more effective public policy. In the mass media, bipartisanship is regularly used as a synonym for 'apolitical', 'balanced' and 'open-minded', and its presence in foreign policy-making is cited as an example of politicians putting 'the national interest' above parochial concerns. Meanwhile, scholars and pundits look back approvingly on the pattern of bipartisan cooperation that shaped pivotal foreign policy decisions during the Cold War, judging bipartisanship an essential ingredient of wise and effective statecraft.

One need look no further than the Cold War to recognize that bipartisanship is not the panacea it is often made out to be. Few scholars who have carefully examined America's wars in Korea and Vietnam would characterize the conduct of either war as an example of prudent statecraft. Yet both wars were fought, at least initially, with broad bipartisan backing. The point is not that bipartisanship necessarily makes for bad policy. As former Secretary of State Dean Acheson wisely observed: 'It isn't the fact that [foreign] policy is nonpartisan that's important, it's the fact that it's good' (Acheson, 1971). Acheson rightly judged bipartisanship to be a means not an end: a strategy that can help presidents overcome the challenges of America's electoral system and federal structure as they strive to make foreign policy.

Acheson's reflections are also an important reminder that bipartisanship, like partisanship, is inherently political. Politicians favor a bipartisan rather than partisan approach to foreign policy coalition building when moving toward the center is in their political self-interest. As we have shown, their incentive to reach across the aisle is stronger when national security is thought to be scarce, when the domestic costs of investing in foreign policy are perceived to be low, and when the parties are nationally competitive. Conversely, when security is more plentiful, when the economy is doing poorly, and the parties are polarized along regional lines, lawmakers have less incentive to find common ground. This helps explain the paradox of September 11: though public anxiety about national security increased, economic volatility and regional divisiveness made foreign policy bipartisanship difficult to sustain.

The argument that key sources of foreign policy bipartisanship are domestic and political in nature stands in stark contrast to explanations of bipartisanship that stress international determinants alone. As our analysis suggests, whether foreign challenges result in bipartisanship depends on public perceptions of those threats and the broader domestic context within which those threats arise. Looking back on the 1930s today, the danger posed by German and Japanese expansionism seems self-evident. But during the 1930s, those threats appeared far more ambiguous and uncertain to an American public also concerned about a struggling economy. Meanwhile, public frustration with the costs involved in checking a foreign threat, measured in blood as well as dollars, can also weaken support for bipartisanship. This appears to be what happened to George W. Bush's foreign policy, as Democrats capitalized on mounting public frustration with the administration's policies in Iraq to recapture Congress in 2006 and, arguably, the White House in 2008.

This interpretation does not mean that international explanations of foreign policy-making are wrong. What our analysis indicates is that the judgments of political leaders about the national interest are more responsive to domestic

conditions than conventional wisdom suggests, and especially to the state of the national economy and the parties' electoral makeup. Historical evidence supports this multi-factored view of the sources of foreign policy bipartisanship. For much of the Cold War, bipartisan cooperation over foreign policy was possible not only because of the challenge posed by Moscow to American interests, but also because most Americans enjoyed the fruits of sustained economic growth in an increasingly open and integrated world economy. This was helped by the fact that Democrats *and* Republicans drew substantial electoral support from those regions of the country benefiting most from foreign policies that promoted international openness and stability. Bipartisanship over foreign policy was possible because it delivered, politically as well as economically.

This is much less true today. Public anxiety about the outsourcing of jobs and declining American competitiveness is exacerbating partisan tensions that stem from widening income disparities (McCarty *et al*, 2006). This unease has also contributed to a sharp reduction in public support for international engagement (Kupchan and Trubowitz, 2010). Meanwhile, the division of the electoral map into so-called 'red' states that benefit from military spending, export promotion and import liberalization and 'blue' states that do not has heightened public concern about who 'wins' and who 'loses' from globalization and the liberal internationalist policies (for example, free trade) that encourage it. This has narrowed the possibilities for bipartisan cooperation over foreign policy and helps explain why nearly a decade after the September 11 attacks, the country is still debating how it should define and pursue its interests in the world.

Under these political circumstances, calls for a new spirit of bipartisanship over foreign policy are likely to go unheeded. While public fears about terrorist attacks on the United States will persist for the foreseeable future, the domestic economic and political conditions that once sustained high levels of bipartisan cooperation over foreign policy have weakened considerably. This does not mean that Democrats and Republicans can find no common ground on foreign policy or that questions of war and peace will always be embroiled in partisan rivalry. But it does mean that strong, bipartisan support for Obama's foreign policies is unlikely to emerge. Those who argue that partisanship hampers America's ability to respond effectively to international challenges may be right, but so long as current domestic conditions persist, foreign policy solutions that enjoy broad bipartisan backing will remain elusive.

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Notes

1 Following common practice, bipartisanship is defined here as the extent to which majorities or near majorities of both parties in Congress vote together. Operationally, we classified each foreign policy roll call vote cast in Congress as receiving 'bipartisan' support if either (a) a majority of both parties voted together on the measure or (b) majorities of each party were opposed, but the difference between them was less than or equal to 20 per cent. As an example of this latter criterion, if 65 per cent of Democrats supported a measure and 45 per cent of Republicans supported that measure, the vote was considered bipartisan. (Cooper and Young (1997) refer to this as 'cross-partisanship.') Our measure of bipartisanship is similar to other, commonly used measures of partisan ideological similarity in Congress. For example, when using all foreign and domestic policy votes, our measure of bipartisanship is inversely correlated with a Poole and Rosenthal party difference index that relies on DW-NOMINATE scores ($r = -0.584$, $P = 0.000$).

2 Bipartisanship on domestic policy issues (from 1889-2004) occurs about 45 per cent of the time on average. Votes were labeled as foreign policy or domestic policy using Clausen's (1973) policy issue schema at *Voteview.com*, a widely used source of congressional votes. Clausen's foreign policy category covers a broad range of issues and importantly, includes roll call votes on defense policy matters. To construct a single measure of domestic policy we combined roll call votes that Clausen labelled as government management, social welfare, agriculture, or civil liberties. Roll call votes that Clausen categorized as 'miscellaneous' issues were dropped from the analysis.

3 The domestic trade-off explanation of bipartisanship thus assumes some 'stickiness' in foreign policy preferences. This strikes us as plausible, especially for the party-in-power because presidents who invest heavily in foreign policy assume domestic 'audience costs', for themselves and for their parties (Fearon, 1994).

4 The difficulty with this aggregation is that it includes significant legislation with less significant votes. A standard procedure to weed out insignificant votes from analysis is to exclude universal votes, those on which more than 90 per cent of both parties agree. As our interest is in bipartisanship and this includes universal voting, this is not an option.

5 Although changes in military size are the result of federal-level decisions, votes in Congress on this issue make up a very small portion of all foreign policy votes. For example, during the 1970s when manpower issues (for example, selective service; volunteer army) were especially prominent, they averaged just 3 per cent of the foreign policy votes per Congress. Thus, there is little risk of endogeneity using this variable.

6 One of the challenges in constructing the data set for this model was to find data that were consistent across the entire (century-plus) time period under study. In particular, it would be preferable to use public opinion data to directly test our hypotheses about the domestic economy. Unfortunately, these public opinion measures are unavailable to us because reliable survey data do not exist for the first five decades of our time series. Instead, we relied on aggregate indicators of the economy to indirectly measure public anxiety and its effect on congressional bipartisanship. The assumption here is that changes in these aggregate indicators ultimately find expression in public sentiment (Page and Shapiro,1992; Nardulli, 2005).

7 The difference from one Congress to the next was calculated and this number was then divided by the per capita GNP in the first Congress (that is, $(t_2-t_1)/t_1$). This produces the rate of growth and allows us to control for exponential growth in per capita GNP over time. One difficulty with this measure is that current dollars are used, because chained dollars, annual amounts that are standardized to one selected year, were not available in a consistent fashion for the entire time period. While taking the rate of growth is a useful corrective, periods of rampant inflation may drive the number up in ways that do not necessarily indicate positive economic news.

8 It could be argued that change in the unemployment rate is a better measure, as it controls for changes in the absolute level of unemployment and historical differences in how Americans have perceived and responded to unemployment. However, as we use unemployment as an indicator of pocketbook and class pressures on lawmakers, the actual rate of how many people (constituents) are out of jobs at any given time is the most useful measure.

9 The states that make up the 'core' include: CA, CT, DE, IL, IN, ME, MD, MA, MI, NH, NJ, NY, OH, OR, PA, RI, VT, WA and WI. The 'periphery' consists of AL, AZ, AK, CO, FL, GA, ID, IO, KA, KY, LA, MN, MS, MO, MT, NE, NV, NM, NC, ND, OK, SC, SD, TN, TX, UT, VA and WY.

10 Some researchers (Sanders, 1999) refer to the Pacific Coast states as 'mixed', given the timing of their industrial development and their combination of core and periphery activities.

11 The formula as it applies to Republicans (R) in the core is: LQ R_core = ((# of R in core/# of R in US)/(# of representatives in core/# of representatives in US)). When the number is greater than 1, it indicates over representation in the region (relative to the national average); a number less than 1 indicates under-representation. This same formula was used to produce a location quotient for Republicans in the periphery and for Democrats in core and periphery.

12 There is large literature on the effects of casualties on American public support for the use of military force. Some scholars argue that public support declines consistently and inexorably in response to combat operation casualties. Other studies suggest that relationship is more nuanced and contingent on mediating factors, most notably, the level of elite consensus over the policy, international support for the military mission, and public expectations about the likelihood of military success. What is not in dispute among opinion experts is that public attention to foreign policy increases as US combat losses mount (for a survey of the literature see Aldrich *et al*, 2006).

13 The data for more recent congresses were calculated by the authors, following Stanley and Niemi's logic.

14 An alternative method would be to count the number of instances of force used per Congress, but this is potentially problematic because Congresses with the same number of deployments but very different types of conflicts would be treated equally. For example, a Congress during the Vietnam conflict would be seen as equivalent to a Congress during which the United States intervened in Somalia: both actions counted as one instance. In contrast, the decade number treats the Somalia intervention as one instance because the duration was limited to one congressional cycle, but treats the Vietnam conflict as many instances because it endured over successive congressional cycles.

15 On the chance that the smoothness of the data was problematic, we tried an alternative measure, also using the Stanley and Niemi data, that more closely resembles a moving average, but this produced no appreciable differences in the results. We also considered a measure of US relative power, the Composite Index of National Capability, that is part of the Correlates of War data set. This variable, too, produced similar results, but it was highly correlated with the 'Foreign Threat' variable.

16 In the case of 1980, the election gave Reagan's Republican Party control of the Senate, the first time in 25 years that Republicans controlled one of the two chambers of Congress. Given talk of the 'Reagan Revolution', it is not unreasonable to speculate that the electoral success of 1984, and the anticipation of more to come, emboldened Republicans across the board while stiffening Democratic resistance.

17 Data used to create the variables in the model are from the following sources: Bipartisanship and Regional Polarization: *Voteview.com* and *New York Times*; Unemployment and GNP growth rate: Kurian (2001) and *US Statistical Abstracts 2004–2005* and *2010*; Power Projection: Stanley and Niemi (2001); and Foreign Threat: Correlates of War (National Material Capabilities, v3.02) and Singer (1987).

18 To ensure that our results were robust, and not simply an artifact of how we measured regional polarization, we ran the same model using a 'sectional stress' variable, a measure developed by Bensel (1984) that is designed to capture the degree to which the votes of core and periphery congressional delegates are in opposition. As we do not have sectional stress data after 1984, we ran the regression model on Houses 51 (1889–1890) through 98 (1983–1984). As with our regional polarization measure, the variable for sectional stress was also statistically significant, with a high degree of sectional stress resulting in less bipartisanship.

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Appendix

Table A1: Mean and standard deviation of dependent and independent variables

Variable	*Mean (SD) %*
Foreign Policy Bipartisanship	54.81 (18.90)
Foreign Threat (lagged)	0.94 (1.2)
Power Projection	1.60 per decade (0.78)
National Growth Rate (growth in per capita GNP)	10.44 (13.19)
Unemployment Rate (lagged)	6.90 (4.50)
Regional Polarization	Index of 1.14 (0.66)

Government was divided 39 per cent of the time, or for 23 congresses.
$N = 59$.