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Presidential Support in Congress: Conflict and Consensus on Foreign and Defense Policy

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In a recent article appearing in *The Journal of Politics*, McCormick and Wittkopf (1990) argue that the Vietnam War did not exercise a significant impact on bipartisan presidential support in the U.S. Congress and that a bipartisan Cold War consensus on foreign policy and defense issues in the House and Senate was not as prominent as many had assumed. I develop a comprehensive model of bipartisan congressional support of presidents from 1947–1988 on foreign policy and defense roll-call votes in the House and Senate that test the impact of many factors, such as presidential influence and legislative processes not accounted for in McCormick and Wittkopf's analysis. Using probit analysis of individual roll-call votes, I show that before the Vietnam War, substantial consensus existed in both the House and Senate and after this conflict, such consensus has become much more infrequent. In addition, I find that forces originating in Congress exercise much more influence over the incidence of bipartisan support than presidential resources.

> The security of free peoples and the growth of freedom both demand a restoration of bipartisan consensus in American foreign policy.
>
> Henry Kissinger and Cyrus Vance
> *Foreign Policy*, 1988, 899

INTRODUCTION

With such profound consequences as these potentially in the balance, the quest for bipartisanship in American foreign policy, according to the two former secretaries of state, is as important now as it ever was. Consensus of this nature in government, however, requires that the president and Congress overcome political institutional rivalries to establish common foreign policy goals and an agreed upon framework for reconciling their differences. It is a commonly held assumption that such a situation existed in this country beginning in the aftermath of World War II and ending in the American involvement in Vietnam (Destler, Gelb, and Lake 1984; Peppers 1975). According to Wittkopf (1990):

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> The experience of the United States in the protracted and tragic war in Southeast Asia caused a fundamental reorientation of the thinking of political leaders and the mass public about the appropriate role of the United States in world affairs. Before the Vietnam War, a fundamental consensus about that role existed. Vietnam led to its demise, and in its wake American foreign policy has become the subject of an unprecedented level of partisan and ideological dispute. (xvii)

One of the primary manifestations of both bipartisanship and its replacement by a partisan Vietnam syndrome ought to be found in congressional support of presidents' positions on foreign policy and defense issues. For example, during the heyday of Cold War consensus Republicans and Democrats provided President Truman with near-unanimous support for many of the nation's most far-reaching foreign policy initiatives such as the Marshall Plan and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Yet in 1973, after the breakdown of consensus, the two parties combined to hand President Nixon a profound foreign policy defeat with the passage of the War Powers Resolution. Recently, however, McCormick and Wittkopf (1990) have questioned much of the common wisdom concerning bipartisanship and its demise after Vietnam. They find that partisan political differences were also salient during the peak of Cold War consensus and that the effects of the war in Vietnam on the breakdown of bipartisan presidential support in Congress cannot be distinguished from other concurrent political developments. Given these findings, it is important for researchers to explore more systematically alternative explanations of the rise and decline of bipartisanship. If this phenomenon never really characterized American foreign policy, the possibility of its return as envisioned by Kissinger and Vance is dubious at best.

My primary goal is to develop a comprehensive model of bipartisan congressional support of presidents from 1947 through 1988 on foreign policy and defense roll-call votes to determine what factors lead Republicans and Democrats to overcome their political differences on these issues. Such a model will serve two purposes. First, I seek to bring together the research findings not only on bipartisanship in foreign policy but also on presidential influence in Congress and legislative processes to develop a more fully integrated framework for explaining and predicting executive-congressional relations. The statistical test of this model via probit analysis ought to provide us with a more rigorous examination of the impact of the diverse universe of explanatory factors than is often obtained in this type of research. Probit allows me to focus on the individual roll-call vote as the unit of analysis in order to gain a clearer appreciation of specific explanatory factors than is normally possible with more aggregated data. Second, the model will give us a means by which to analyze more systematically the impact of the war in Vietnam on bipartisanship in American foreign policy. Did a Cold War consensus ever exist; was it later destroyed or damaged by Vietnam; and if Vietnam is not responsible for its demise, what is? If this article should serve these purposes, this research ought to help us better understand executive-congressional relations and better forecast future developments in American foreign policy in the post-Cold War era.

WHERE DO POLITICS STOP?

McCormick and Wittkopf examine House and Senate bipartisan presidential support on foreign policy issues from 1947 through 1988. They define bipartisanship as the percentage of foreign policy votes on which a majority of Democrats and a majority of Republicans agree with the president's position in a given year (1082). The authors find bipartisanship on foreign policy issues in the first two decades of the postwar era, but argue that a political, partisan perspective applies equally well to the periods both before and after the Vietnam War. Partisan and ideological differences between the president and Congress have always been a part of the American political landscape, although during the height of the Cold War they may not have been as noticeable. McCormick and Wittkopf conclude that, "While some substantive differences in the levels of bipartisanship between the pre- and post-Vietnam periods are evident in our data, they are not large enough to support the contention that Vietnam was primarily responsible for them" (1097). Instead, they argue that Watergate, the 1979 takeover of the American embassy in Teheran, and other forces have created a more divisive foreign policy climate and relationship between the president and Congress.

When examining all foreign policy and defense presidential support roll-call votes in the House of Representatives and Senate from 1947 through 1988, however, there appears to be at least a prima facie case for the existence of some sort of Vietnam syndrome affecting congressional-executive relations. Before 1973 in both the House and Senate, presidents were supported with bipartisan majorities 61.3% of the time, while after this date such coalitions appeared only 38.7% of the time—a drop of 22.6%. In addition, as table 1 and table 2 show, foreign policy issues have become even more divisive. Majorities of Republicans and Democrats supported Ronald Reagan and Jimmy Carter less than any other presidents since World War II. If other factors are contributing to the demise of bipartisanship in foreign policy, they appear to be obscured in this data. Furthermore, in view of the substantial body of evidence of such a syndrome existing in other sources (Holsti and Rosenau 1979a, 1979b, 1984, 1990; Pepper 1975; Destler, Gelb, and Lake 1984), a more comprehensive approach that incorporates concurrent political developments is necessary to validate and expand on McCormick and Wittkopf's findings.

This research effort examines bipartisan support of presidents in the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate on foreign policy and defense roll-call votes from 1947 through 1988 on which the president had taken a position as determined by *Congressional Quarterly*. When *Congressional Quarterly* did not provide direct evidence of the president's position, the yearly almanac was used as the primary data source. The dependent variables, H-BIPART and S-BIPART, are defined as occurring when a majority of Republicans and a majority of Democrats support the president's position in the House of Representatives and Senate, respectively. The foreign policy and defense issues include all roll-call votes pertaining to issues

TABLE 1

BIPARTISAN PRESIDENTIAL SUPPORT IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES 1947–1988 ON FOREIGN POLICY AND DEFENSE ROLL-CALL VOTES

Administration	Percentage of Bipartisan Support on Foreign Policy and Defense Issues	Percentage of Nonbipartisan Support on Foreign Policy and Defense Issues
Truman	55.8%	44.2%
	(24)	(19)
Eisenhower	68.3%	31.7%
	(56)	(26)
Kennedy	48.9%	51.1%
	(22)	(23)
Johnson	43.5%	56.5%
	(37)	(48)
Nixon	44.6%	55.4%
	(37)	(46)
Ford	33.3%	66.7%
	(14)	(28)
Carter	26.7%	73.3%
	(40)	(110)
Reagan	24.7%	75.3%
	(62)	(189)

Number of votes in parentheses.

TABLE 2

BIPARTISAN PRESIDENTIAL SUPPORT IN THE SENATE 1947–1988 ON FOREIGN POLICY AND DEFENSE ROLL-CALL VOTES

Administration	Percentage of Bipartisan Support on Foreign Policy and Defense Issues	Percentage of Nonbipartisan Support on Foreign Policy and Defense Issues
Truman	53.9%	46.1%
	(41)	(35)
Eisenhower	72.2%	27.8%
	(135)	(52)
Kennedy	61.3%	38.7%
	(57)	(36)
Johnson	72.0%	28.0%
	(167)	(65)
Nixon	57.9%	42.1%
	(62)	(45)
Ford	57.9%	42.1%
	(62)	(45)
Carter	40.9%	59.1%
	(81)	(117)
Reagan	42.1%	57.9%
	(62)	(189)

Number of votes in parentheses.

such as relations with other nations, economic and military aid, the use of military force, appropriation and authorization votes for the State and Defense departments, and foreign economic policy. All foreign policy and defense votes were individually coded for their specific issue, the type of vote being taken (e.g., passage of bill, amendment, motion to recommit), and the president's position. One feature of this data set warrants further explanation. Because all individual roll-call votes in both chambers are analyzed, unanimous and nearly unanimous votes on foreign policy and defense issues are included.[1] Some researchers (Bond and Fleisher 1984; Sigelman 1979) have argued that the inclusion of many trivial nonpartisan issues does not provide us with a truly accurate picture of the depth of presidential support in Congress. A more realistic approach would involve examining congressional acquiescence to presidents on more controversial and divisive issues. Nonetheless, I include all roll-call votes in my analysis because many of the most important votes during the Cold War found Republicans and Democrats in near-unanimous agreement, such as the Formosa Resolution in 1955 and the Tonkin Gulf Resolution in 1964. To exclude such votes would seriously underrepresent the solid consensus that existed between the president and Congress on many key foreign policy issues.

To explain and predict bipartisanship in congressional-executive relations, the term must be defined and the theoretical perspective that guides this research outlined. While my operational definition of bipartisanship in foreign policy does not differ from that offered by McCormick and Wittkopf (except that I use the individual roll-call vote as the unit of analysis), a more amplified conceptualization of the term is necessary to establish the validity of its possible causal antecedents. First, bipartisanship in foreign policy is ultimately a response to domestic and/or international pressures that bring the two political parties and the two branches of government together. Absent any compelling interest in muting partisan views on this subject, we might expect these actors to develop a foreign policy agenda that mirrors their differences on domestic issues. Bipartisanship ought to be most prevalent when political developments outside Washington create for Republicans and Democrats, and Congress and the White House, a shared perception of common political goals. Second, the existence of bipartisanship in congressional-executive branch relations implies agreement between the two branches on both the policy itself and the framework for developing consensus on foreign policy issues (Crabb 1957). The existence of bipartisanship thus requires that Congress produce legislation the president agrees or acquiesces to, and that the president retain a capacity to bring about a favorable compromise if and when political differences arise. Thus, the practices, strategies, and resources of each branch ought to play a crucial role in determining the likelihood of consensus. The congressional environment in which legislation takes shape and the role and influence of the president in this process provide the institutional political context within which bipartisanship may

[1]I have excluded votes pertaining to immigration policy, veterans issues, and domestic military construction projects.

emerge. Thus, I take the view that "legislative behavior and legislative outputs are a result of various combinations of external and internal variables" (Brady, Cooper, and Hurley 1979, 235).

A MODEL OF BIPARTISAN CONGRESSIONAL SUPPORT OF PRESIDENTS ON FOREIGN POLICY AND DEFENSE ROLL-CALL VOTES

The External Environment

Consensus on foreign policy issues is often created by perceived threats to the nation's security. For example, many researchers (Hinckley 1988; Lee 1977; Russett 1990) have described the existence of a "rally-round-the-flag" effect wherein large numbers of the public and Congress flock to the president's side after highly visible international events (e.g., Sputnik, the Cuban missile crisis, the U.S. bombing of Libya). It is reasonable to suppose that during times of heightened tension the likelihood of bipartisan consensus on the foreign policy issues facing the country should increase. Whether congressmen simply pay lip service to the notion of a united front or they legitimately believe in it, the idea that politics ought to stop at the water's edge has been a constant refrain in executive-legislative relations in times of peril. Thus, even if members' personal preferences would lead them to disagree with the president, their operative preferences (Rohde 1991) are likely to be shaped by public support for the White House during periods of international tension. I describe below when such conditions are likely to arise.

The Cold War Consensus. As was mentioned previously, one of the primary purposes of this research is to evaluate the degree to which Congress united in bipartisan support of presidents before the Vietnam War and the extent to which their relationship deteriorated after that conflict. Many have argued persuasively that a Cold War consensus oriented around containment of the communist threat through an active American military presence abroad existed before the Vietnam War, but that in the war's wake many inside and outside Washington called into question the need for constant vigilance against the Soviets and their allies, and the desirability of placing so much control over foreign policy in the executive branch (Destler, Gelb, and Lake 1984). Before American involvement in Vietnam there was widespread support in Congress for the NATO alliance, the Marshall Plan, initial American involvement in Korea, and for President Eisenhower's handling of the various Berlin and Formosa crises. There was presidential acquiescence to congressional participation in the founding of the United Nations and in the Marshall Plan, and congressional disapproval over American involvement in Vietnam in 1954 during the siege at Dienbienphu. After Vietnam, the War Powers Resolution, the Panama Canal Treaty, arms control negotiations, American involvement in Central America, and a host of other issues either created or publicly demonstrated the division in presidential–congressional relations. Peppers argues

that "implicit premises, most of them resting on assumptions about the exigencies of the Cold War and a basically trusting public, now have been drastically affected by subsequent events" (1975, 462). The weight of this evidence and similar data on public opinion (Holsti and Rosenau 1979a, 1979b, 1984, 1990; Wittkopf 1990) suggest the presence of strong bipartisanship before Vietnam and increased partisanship after. Therefore, rather than assuming, on the basis of largely bivariate correlations, that the Vietnam War did not bring about such changes (Fleisher and Bond 1988; McCormick and Wittkopf 1990), I seek to show through a more comprehensive model that the Vietnam War did exercise a significant effect on the likelihood of bipartisan presidential support in Congress.[2] I code all roll-call votes before the end of the war in 1973 as falling in the era of cold war consensus and all subsequent votes as part of the Vietnam syndrome era. This leads to the following hypothesis:

H_1: The probability of bipartisan presidential support should be greater before the end of U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War.
Variable Name = Cold War Consensus

Korea and Vietnam. Most researchers agree that there was strong public support for initial American involvement in Korea and Vietnam (Hinckley 1988; Mueller 1973). Yet despite these wars' many similarities, the impact of the Korean and Vietnam wars on American domestic politics was often quite different. In their study, McCormick and Wittkopf (1990) find that the Korean War created more problems for Harry Truman than did the Vietnam War for Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon. They write that "the Korean War appears to have produced a more pronounced short-run erosion of bipartisanship than did the Vietnam War" (1098). The unforeseen Chinese involvement in that war and the firing of General MacArthur may have crystallized dissatisfaction with and opposition to the Truman administration in a way that the slow buildup of antiwar sentiment during the late 1960s and early 1970s never did for Johnson and Nixon. Mueller (1973) also argues that during the 1960s the Johnson administration "assiduously cultivated bipartisan support for the war" (228). Likewise, Nixon's policy of gradual withdrawal from Vietnam conceivably muted congressional opposition to that administration's conduct of the war. Finally, there were relatively few roll-call votes in Congress on U.S. policy in Vietnam until the 1970s perhaps due to sharply polarized public opinion. So while Truman's conduct of the latter part of the Korean War appears to have resulted in a short-run drop in bipartisanship, only after the Vietnam War was over did a long-term breakdown in consensus result. Therefore, we should expect initial public support for both wars, but a gradual

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[2]It should be noted that McCormick and Wittkopf (1990) find slightly more evidence of a Vietnam syndrome effect on voting patterns in the House than in the Senate in their difference in means test (1087).

erosion of bipartisanship during the Korean War and relatively constant or possibly increasing levels of bipartisan presidential support during the Vietnam War. Unfortunately, there is no completely satisfactory method of accounting for a gradual change in bipartisanship that does not entail arbitrary statistical assumptions about the rate of decay of such support. I simply count the number of years that elapse as each war continues until it ends. All observations before and after either war are coded as zeros. Therefore:

H_2: As the number of years the United States is involved in the Korean War increases, the probability of bipartisan presidential support should decrease.
Variable Name = Korean War

H_3: As the number of years the United States is involved in the Vietnam War increases, the probability of bipartisan presidential support should remain the same or increase.
Variable Name = Vietnam War

The Internal Environment—The Congressional Institutional Context

By the congressional institutional context I mean those norms (predictability, courtesy, reciprocity, etc., Polsby 1968) and procedures (measures "employed to define, restrict, or expand the policy options available to members during floor debate," Oleszek 1989, 10) that shape the incentive structure of members of Congress and determine the likelihood of consensus on foreign policy issues. Since Congress frames and decides on policy in such a manner that policy is often shaped by the process itself (Shepsle 1979; Smith 1989; Oleszek 1989), presidents will frequently take positions on congressional bills rather than their own institutionally crafted legislation. We may expect the existence of these congressional norms and procedures (or conditions as they are henceforth designated) to increase or decrease the likelihood that a majority of Republicans and a majority of Democrats will adopt a foreign policy that is congruent with the president's wishes. Below I outline those conditions I expect will influence the voting alignments of roll-call votes in such a way as to make the probability of bipartisan support of presidents significantly more or less likely.

Salient Issues. In his analysis of bipartisanship, Hughes (1978) finds that Congress is most likely to become involved in the policy-making process when there is an economic component to a foreign policy issue. Congressional control of the purse strings and interest in international economic issues that affect important constituencies give Congress more of an incentive to follow its own particular preferences than a more nationally minded president. Hughes demonstrates that votes on economic issues such as tariff rates and foreign aid engender significant levels of partisanship across time. In addition, Peppers (1975) argues that the increasing salience of nonsecurity issues in the 1970s constrains presidential latitude in foreign policy. He writes that "the seamlessness of the distinction between international economic and domestic economic policy may simply extend the president's weakness in domestic policy to foreign policy as well" (469). Therefore, we ought to expect that the likelihood of

bipartisan presidential support on roll-call votes on these policies will be low. While it is not possible to measure the domestic economic import of all foreign policy and defense votes, it is possible to isolate three particular issue areas where such concerns are likely to arise: (1) appropriations, (2) foreign aid, and (3) international economic policy broadly defined. Separate variables were created for votes on each of these issue types. Thus:

H_4: The probability of bipartisan presidential support on foreign policy and defense appropriations votes should decrease.
Variable Name = Appropriations

H_5: The probability of bipartisan presidential support on foreign aid votes should decrease.
Variable Name = Foreign Aid

H_6: The probability of bipartisan presidential support on international economic policy votes should decrease.
Variable Name = International Economic Policy

A Republican Minority Party Strategy. In their analysis of the two presidencies thesis, Fleisher and Bond (1988) discuss the voting strategies employed by majority and minority parties in Congress. They argue that "when there is divided party control, the responsibility to share in governance may constrain members of a majority opposition to cooperate with the president more on foreign and defense policy, in order to maintain the nation's security" (765). A minority opposition party, on the other hand, is often free to pursue its own political preferences and electoral goals through the legislative process without the added responsibilities of governance. Interestingly, Fleisher and Bond find that this principle appears only to affect Republican minority opposition parties when the Democrats control Congress and the White House. When the Democrats are the minority opposition party, they are still quite likely to offer significant support to Republican presidents on foreign policy issues. If Democratic presidents confront Republican minorities in the Congress, however, they are unlikely to enjoy bipartisan endorsement of their views. The strategy of Republican minorities in Congress when confronted with Democratic presidents has been oriented more toward establishing a unique agenda and emphasizing their differences with the party controlling both branches of government than setting aside political differences to create a bipartisan foreign policy. Part of this may be due to what Jones terms a "minority party mentality" wherein an entrenched minority party becomes accustomed to obstruction, criticism, and oppositions (1970, 18). Or, as Bond and Fleisher (1990) argue, Republican rather than Democratic presidents have been more successful at attracting the votes of influential opposition committee and party leaders. Thus, during these periods (1949–1952, 1961–1968, 1977–1980) we ought to find the incidence of bipartisanship in Congress declining.

H_7: When the Republicans are the minority opposition party in Congress and the Democrats control the White House, the probability of bipartisan presidential support should decrease.
Variable Name = Republican Minority/Democratic President

Political Strategies on the Floor. In his work on the legislative processes on the House and Senate floors, Smith (1989) demonstrates how the congressional reforms of the 1970s along with increased constituent demands, the growth of interest groups, and the increased scrutiny of congressional activity have encouraged more representatives to become involved in creating and amending legislation (see also Edwards 1989 and Rohde 1991). The advent of electronic recorded teller voting in the House and in the Committee of the Whole created further incentives for legislators to go on record more often with their views. In addition, the Democratic caucus did away with many restrictions on the ability of representatives to offer amendments to bills on the House floor and provided more time for debate, thereby making it easier for those offering amendments to win adherents to their cause. Thus, rather than allowing party barons and committee chairmen to dominate policy, these rule changes, coupled with the electoral incentives of becoming a more active participant in the legislative process, caused a dramatic surge in the number of amendments offered on the floor of the House and Senate. Smith points out that between 1961 and 1966 only seven floor amendments were presented in the House on the Defense Authorization bill, while in 1988 alone, 240 amendments were offered (1989, 2). Often this amending process was characterized by increased partisanship as well. Republicans began to utilize their parliamentary options more readily and exhaustively to express their displeasure with Democratic legislation and their minority party status (61). Additionally, Smith finds that bills coming out of the Foreign Affairs and Armed Services committees were subjected to some of the most divisive amendments and counteramendments (176–79).

Given the partisan nature of many amendments, presidents who weigh into this legislative wrangling to express positions on such votes ought to find their chances of success considerably diminished. Given the increasing number of Republicans and Democrats alike who use the amending process to score political with interest groups and constituents back home, we should find the probability of bipartisan support on amendments severely constrained by the very nature of the vote itself. It is possible that the expansion of such votes during the 1970s and 1980s helped in part to create the perception of the Vietnam syndrome because many of the congressional reforms occurred in close proximity to the end of the Vietnam War. Ultimately, however, the use of amendments has often been a means by which minority parties and disgruntled members of the majority have attempted to challenge the work of committees. As such, we ought to expect that whenever presidents take a position on such votes, the probability of bipartisan support ought to decrease. Thus:

H_8: The probability of bipartisan presidential support on amendments in Congress should decrease.
Variable Name = Amendment[3]

[3]Regular amendments, amendments to amendments, reservations to treaties in the Senate and substitute amendments are all included.

Senate Treaty Votes

One unique feature of the Senate that might exert a significant influence on the incidence of bipartisan presidential support is the Senate's role in ratifying treaties the executive branch has concluded with foreign nations. As others have indicated, treaties are routinely passed by overwhelming majorities (Sigelman 1979). Only the most contentious foreign policy issues tend to result in anything less than Senate unanimity. Therefore, I create a separate variable for all treaty ratification votes to control for its possibly confounding effects. Thus:

H_9: The probability of bipartisan presidential support should increase on treaty ratification votes in the Senate.
Variable Name = Treaties

The Internal Environment—Presidential Influence in Congress

Presidents' abilities to gain support in Congress on foreign policy issues have been undergoing an extensive revision in the literature (Peppers 1975; LeLoup and Shull 1979; Sigelman 1979; Fleisher and Bond 1988; McCormick and Wittkopf 1990). Yet, while many have shown that presidential support on foreign policy issues has been declining, few have attempted to develop a comprehensive model to test alternative explanations of this phenomenon. Further still, little research has been devoted to determining if the locus of responsibility for this trend lies in presidential relations with the Congress or legislative developments over which presidents have little control. I attempted earlier to outline those factors originating in Congress that we might expect to contribute to the decline in presidential support. Now I discuss presidential resources and strategies that ought to affect the formation of bipartisan coalitions. I explain later why we might expect congressmen to be more or less responsive to particular presidential strategies and sources of influence.

The President's Position on Legislation. When attempting to analyze presidential influence in Congress, it is important to know if presidents are working to pass or block final passage of legislation. Given the dominant tendency of Congress to pass the bills, resolutions, and conference reports that make it to the floor, presidents wishing to prevent legislation from becoming law will be at odds with the preference and goals of a majority party that dominates the legislative process. Although there are numerous points during this process where the president may derail legislation, once bills make it to a roll-call vote, they are almost always passed (Rohde 1991, 209). Therefore, when the president takes a position against passage of legislation by disapproving of a bill, resolution, etc. (this does not include amendments), opposing passage of the rule governing debate on the bill, or approving of motions to recommit or table that would kill bills, conference reports, etc., he is coded as opposing legislation. This leads to the following hypothesis:

H_{10}: When presidents are opposed to passage of legislation, the probability of bipartisan presidential support should decrease.
Variable Name = Presidential Opposition

Presidential Popularity. The impact of public approval as a presidential resource in influencing Congress has been extensively debated in the literature. Although several researchers find evidence of such a link (Rivers and Rose 1985; Rohde and Simon 1985), many conclude that its impact is marginal (Bond and Fleisher 1984; Edwards 1989). Bond and Fleisher (1990, 194) assert that "the findings are consistent and clear: the effects of the president's public approval on success in Congress are limited." Still, even those who downplay its potential for influencing congressmen argue that it is an important tool in executive-congressional relations. Edwards claims that "Without question, public support is a primary resource for presidential leadership of Congress" (1989, 101). Rather than attempting rhetorically to resolve these differences, I simply propose yet another test of presidential influence in Congress. Those who believe it affects the voting behavior of congressmen and Congress argue that as the president's approval rating among the public increases, congressmen feel increased pressure either directly or indirectly from their constituents to support the president. The percentage of the public as polled by the Gallup organization approving the president's job performance in closest proximity prior to presidential support votes was employed in the model. Therefore:

H_{11}: The greater the president's public approval rating, the greater the probability of bipartisan presidential support.
Variable Name = Presidential Popularity

METHOD OF ANALYSIS

As defined for each case, the dependent variables H-BIPART$_i$ (House bipartisanship) and S-BIPART$_i$ (Senate bipartisanship) are dichotomous and assume a value of one when a majority of Republicans and a majority of Democrats vote in favor of a president's position on a foreign policy or defense roll-call vote and zero otherwise. I argue that the probability of bipartisan support increases as a function of (1) external events, (2) the congressional institutional context, and (3) presidential influence and strategies. Because of the unsuitability of ordinary least-squares regression in modeling the probability of binary outcomes (Aldrich and Nelson 1984), a maximum likelihood technique, probit, is used. Estimates of the parameters of the independent variables are generated in probit by a maximum likelihood procedure that also calculates standard errors of the estimates and generates predictions of the endogenous variable to test the accuracy of the theoretical model (Aldrich and Nelson 1984; Greene 1990). The significance of the individual variables is assessed as it is in ordinary regression by comparing coefficients with their standard errors to calculate T-statistics. To generate predictions, the probit

technique sets the threshold (h) of bipartisan presidential support at zero and any predicted value (H-BIPART*$_i$ or S-BIPART*$_i$) that falls below it is predicted as a nonbipartisan vote, while a predicted value greater than zero generates a prediction of bipartisanship. The results of this procedure are discussed below.

<div align="center">MODEL RESULTS</div>

The results for the models are displayed in table 3 and table 4 and demonstrate substantial support for the hypotheses outlined above. Most of the variables are statistically significant and in the expected direction for both equations and the overall fit of the models is quite good. The Cold War consensus variable is highly significant in both equations as demonstrated by its T-statistic, and appears to exercise a substantial effect on the likelihood of bipartisanship. The most important determinants of such support, however, turn out to be the manner in which the issue was brought to a vote, the president's position on the legislation, the issue type and whether the vote was on a treaty in the Senate. Before proceeding to explore the impact of the independent variables; however, it is instructive to examine several of the goodness-of-fit measures the probit procedure generates. In order to test the significance of the model as a whole, twice the log likelihood ratio is computed (Aldrich and Nelson 1984). This measure is analogous to the F-statistic in regression and is distributed as a chi-square variable. It is 213.0 and 598.0 for the House and Senate models respectively, and both are significant at the .0001 level, which allows us to reject the null hypothesis that all coefficients, except the constant, are equal to zero. The probit technique also produces predictions of the actual values of the dependent variable. We find that the House model specified earlier is correct 74.1% of the time in predicting bipartisan presidential support and the absence of such endorsement. There is a 32% proportionate reduction in error over the null model that predicts the model value of the dependent variable in every case. No bipartisan presidential support occurs in 62.5% of the cases and is the predictive accuracy of the null model. The Senate model performs slightly better. It is correct in 76.1% of the cases, a 54% proportionate reduction in error over the null model that predicts bipartisanship to occur in every case. In the Senate, bipartisanship occurs 56.4% of the time. The theoretical models were also tested against another alternative that employed only dummy variables for all presidents. The predictive capacity of this model was only 67.1% for the House and 62.4% for the Senate.

Because of the difficulty in interpreting probit coefficients (Aldrich and Nelson 1984), I use the derivative at mean statistic to gauge the impact of the individual variables. The derivatives at mean gives the estimated increase in probability of a bipartisan coalition associated with a one-unit increase in an independent variable holding all other variables constant at their mean value. For example, the derivative at mean for the appropriations variable is −.129 in the House model, indicating that, on votes concerning this issue, the probability of a bipartisan presidential

TABLE 3

BIPARTISAN PRESIDENTIAL SUPPORT MODEL—HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Independent Variable	Coefficient	T Statistic	Derivative at Mean
Cold War Consensus	0.373	2.33	.122
Korean War	0.029	0.13	.006
Vietnam War	0.028	0.86	.009
Appropriations	–0.396	–2.80	–.129
Foreign Aid	–0.600	–4.60	–.196
International Economic Policy	–0.602	–3.82	–.197
Amendment	–0.971	–7.18	–.318
Republican Minority/Democratic President	–0.345	–3.09	–.112
Presidential Opposition	–2.261	–7.05	–.740
Presidential Popularity	0.007	1.67	.002
Constant	0.127		

Percent correctly predicted: 74.1%.
Twice log likelihood ratio: 213.0, $p < .0001$.
$N = 777$.

TABLE 4

BIPARTISAN PRESIDENTIAL SUPPORT MODEL—SENATE

Independent Variable	Coefficient	T Statistic	Derivative at Mean
Cold War Consensus	1.051	8.23	.690
Korean War	–0.535	–2.79	–.352
Vietnam War	–0.069	–2.96	–.045
Appropriations	0.150	1.38	.098
Foreign Aid	–0.257	–2.58	–.169
International Economic Policy	–0.186	–1.42	–.122
Amendment	–0.363	–4.17	–.238
Republican Minority/Democratic President	–0.049	–0.50	–.028
Presidential Opposition	–2.206	–4.61	–1.447
Presidential Popularity	0.000	0.00	.000
Treaties	2.370	11.23	1.559
Constant	–0.280		

Percent correctly predicted: 76.1%.
Twice log likelihood ratio: 598.0, $p < .0001$.
$N = 1,406$.

support coalition in the House of Representatives decreases by 12.9% when the values of all other variables are held constant at their mean value.

The estimated increase in probability of a bipartisan presidential support coalition for the Cold War Consensus variable is 12.2% for the House and 69.0% for

the Senate, holding all other factors at their mean value.[4] There is strong evidence that Congress was willing to grant presidents an extra margin of support during the Cold War and that this assistance evaporated after Vietnam. It is possible that the lack of such a finding in previous research is due to the use of aggregated data, which may have obscured the relationship between the Cold War consensus and bipartisanship. Whether these findings indicate congressional deference to presidential policies or a coincidence of interests between the two branches does not diminish the fact that the foreign policy conflict was much less visible before the end of the war in Vietnam. Interestingly, consensus appears to have been much more prevalent in the Senate during the Cold War. The enhanced role of the Senate in foreign policy and the noteworthy example of bipartisanship set early during the Cold War by Senator Vandenberg may have promoted greater cooperation between the two parties and the chief executive in the upper chamber of Congress, although more research in this area would seem to be needed.

Interestingly, when controlling for other factors, the effect of the Korean and Vietnam wars on bipartisanship is quite different in the House and the Senate.[5] During both the Vietnam and Korean wars, the probability of bipartisan presidential support in the House increased by a very slim margin every year controlling for other factors, while in the Senate the probability of such support decreased every year by an estimated 35.2% for the Korean War and 4.5% during the Vietnam War. Both variables are quite insignificant in the House model and statistically significant in the Senate version. These differences may in part be explained by the greater electoral insulation and influence over foreign policy senators enjoy that allowed them to criticize more freely the executive branch's handling of the wars. Yet both sets of results seem to indicate that bipartisanship did not suffer greatly in Congress over the course of the war in Vietnam. While opposition to the war may have been building throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s, the political fallout of this debate does not appear to have registered until Congress felt it was safe to attack the president and U.S. foreign policy after the American withdrawal from Vietnam. While the results for the Korean War variable in the House equation are inconclusive, the strength of this variable in the Senate model would seem to indicate that President Johnson and President Nixon were more adept at working with Congress than was President Truman during the Korean War. In order to understand more fully these results, however, future research needs to focus on different presidential strategies for dealing with Congress and the nature of the legislative agenda during wartime.

Votes on issues concerning appropriations, foreign aid, and international economic issues were all negatively related to the incidence of bipartisanship in the

[4]Even using different years as the end points of the Cold War consensus (e.g., 1964, 1965, 1968) generally resulted in similar findings.

[5]Dummy variables for each war were also employed in the statistical model with almost identical results.

House, while only the foreign aid variable was statistically significant in the Senate model. The impact of each of these variables controlling for other factors is to decrease the estimated probability of bipartisanship in the House by 12.9%, 19.6%, and 19.7% respectively. In the Senate, the probability of bipartisanship on foreign aid votes decreases by an estimated 16.9%. The House at least does not appear willing to afford presidents general support on those issues most likely to affect their constituents. Perhaps because of the electoral cycle of the House, representatives feel they must be more attentive to their constituents' demands than senators. Yet as the distinction between domestic and foreign policy becomes ever more blurred and security issues lose their former salience, presidential-congressional disputes over these areas of legislation most probably will increase in both chambers.

As expected, Democratic presidents confronted with Republican congressional minorities face an uphill battle in gaining bipartisan endorsement of their views. Yet this variable is statistically significant only in the House. Here, the probability of such endorsement declines by 11.2% holding other variables constant at their mean value. As Fleisher and Bond (1988) argue, there are many incentives for minority parties, and the Republican party in particular, to express their differences with the party controlling both branches of government. Given the increasingly conservative nature of the Republican party it seems unlikely that such tactics will be dropped in the future. The absence of such an effect in the Senate may be due to the informal legislative procedures that smaller body is permitted that allow minority party members more opportunity to express their views.

Votes on amendments substantially reduce the possibility of bipartisanship. When controlling for other factors, the estimated probability of bipartisan presidential support on amendments declines by 31.8% in the House and 23.8% in the Senate. Often amendments have been used to introduce issues and viewpoints at variance with the majority party and as such are unlikely to gather widespread bipartisan backing. Although it is generally the case that whenever presidents take positions on such votes they are unlikely to be favored with the support of majorities in both parties, during the 1970s and 1980s the increased use of amendments very likely expanded the scope of political conflict on the floor. Future research should investigate the substantive content of votes on amendments to study the changing nature of the legislative agenda and its effect on presidential support. In the Senate, votes on treaties result in bipartisanship on nearly every occasion. The probability of such support increases by an estimated 237.0%, holding other variables constant at their mean value. This unrealistic estimate of the effect of treaty votes on bipartisanship is due largely to a skewed distribution of the variable. Only 1.2% of these votes (4 out of 338) were not bipartisan. The insignificance of many of these treaties appears to make bipartisan unanimity only a formality.

Presidents in general appear to have only limited influence over roll-call votes in Congress. The presidential popularity variable is significant and in the expected direction in the House, although its impact is rather weak. The estimated increase in probability of bipartisan coalitions occurring with every additional increment in public approval is only .2%, holding other variables constant at their mean value.

For example, on average a president with a 60% approval rating is only 4% more likely to be supported by a bipartisan coalition than a president with a 40% approval rating. In the Senate, the variable is statistically insignificant and exerts no measurable influence on the incidence of bipartisanship. This finding would seem to support Edwards' and Bond and Fleisher's contention that popularity operates largely on the margins in influencing a congressman's votes. Perhaps most importantly, the results demonstrate that when presidents are opposed to legislation, the probability of bipartisanship declines by nearly 74% in the House and 144.7% in the Senate with the usual caveats. Again, the unrealistic derivative at mean statistic for the presidential opposition variable largely results from its skewed distribution. For example, only on two occasions when presidents were opposed to passage of a bill, resolution, or conference report was their position endorsed by a bipartisan majority in the House. The majority parties in Congress appear committed to implementing their agendas often regardless of the wishes of the president. Clearly, there is little a president can do to derail a determined legislative juggernaut. Such findings demonstrate the need for more of an emphasis on the legislative process and congressional preferences in the literature on presidential influence. Because presidents may often be reacting to a proactive legislative agenda, the possibilities for influence may not always be great. I now turn to possible improvements in the model and the implications of these findings.

CONCLUSIONS

Obviously there was a strong degree of bipartisanship in congressional support of presidents on foreign policy and defense issues before America's involvement in Vietnam. After this conflict, consensus broke down and was replaced with much more conflictual voting behavior. While I agree with McCormick and Wittkopf (1990) and others who find evidence of partisanship during earlier years, such conflict was not nearly as visible, frequent, and deep as it has been in later times. Having made these claims, however, it is also extremely important to call attention to the findings in this paper concerning the significance of the congressional institutional context, and the ineffectiveness of presidential resources. The most significant and powerful explanatory factors were related to the manner in which issues were brought up for a vote, the issue type, and the president's position on a vote. These factors, coupled with the limited influence of presidential popularity, illustrate the problems of both pre- and post-Vietnam syndrome presidents in obtaining bipartisan support for their views. Presidential support in Congress seems to be predominantly affected by congressional procedures and norms rather than by presidential actions. Future research in this area, however, should focus on the evidence of bipartisan presidential support on major legislation to determine whether these findings are generalizable. Given that all roll-call votes were analyzed in this study, it is conceivable that presidential influence and support is greater on more important votes and/or that a large number of roll-call votes on narrow and previously insignificant legislation are making the post-Vietnam years

appear much more divisive than they really are. This possibility and the changing nature and expansion of the legislative agenda will be explored in later research.

Finally, in the absence of any compelling threat to the nation's security, the prospects for the return of a more solid consensus on foreign policy and defense issues appear negligible. Congressional incentives to appeal to important constituents with contentious legislation, to criticize weak chief executives, and ever-mounting domestic problems make all but the most short-run bipartisanship seem a thing of the past. And while the Persian Gulf war witnessed a largely subservient and supportive Congress, both the prewar buildup and postwar problems in Iraq and the Middle East were the subject of considerable partisan debate. In addition, in this era of divided party control of government, rather than forming long-term alliances with Congress to confront national security problems, presidents may have to focus their attention on developing specific issue-based coalitions to obtain congressional support. Ultimately, without any strong incentives for stopping politics at the water's edge, the president and Congress will in all probability continue to shape foreign policy according to their own political needs.

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