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INTERNATIONAL THREATS AND UNITED STATES CONGRESSIONAL
BEHAVIOR FROM 1981 – 2013

by

Elizabeth Randall

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in

Political Science

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ABSTRACT

International Threats and United States Congressional Behavior from 1981 – 2013

by

Elizabeth Randall, Master of Science

Utah State University, 2021

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This paper asks: how does the presence of a unifying foreign threat affect party cohesion and bipartisanship in the United States House of Representatives?

Understanding congressional response to such events is crucial in interpreting U.S. foreign policy decisions and forecasting future responses to rising foreign threats. Using a unique dataset containing roll-call voting records, individual characteristics of legislators, and information about bill content, I created an ideology score for each member of the House based on foreign policy votes only (Foreign Policy NOMINATE). Using these scores, I analyze the distance between members' original NOMINATE scores and the Foreign Policy Nominate scores, as well as party-level cohesion and inter-party polarization from 1918 – 2013.

I find that both parties moderate their positions on foreign policy (relative to all other issues) during a period of foreign threat; the substantive effect, however, is modest. I also find that party cohesion on foreign policy is lower than on other issues, and that party cohesion and polarization do not appear to be influenced by the presence of a foreign threat.

60 pages

PUBLIC ABSTRACT

International Threats and United States Congressional Behavior from 1981 – 2013

Elizabeth Randall

This paper explores the relationship between a foreign threat and the behavior of members of Congress. Understanding how members of Congress respond to potentially threatening international situations can provide important insight into foreign policy and future responses to new threats. I use information about how legislators vote, their ideology and party, and the topic of legislation to measure how liberal or conservative members of Congress are on foreign policy legislation. This allows me to analyze both how members of Congress behave inside their parties and how they interact with the other party, or in other words, intraparty cohesion and interparty polarization.

I find that the parties moderate their positions on foreign policy (relative to all other issues) when a foreign threat is present and the majority in Congress will approach foreign policy from a more moderate angle than the minority party at times of foreign threat; these effects, however, are substantively modest. I also find that party members agree amongst themselves less on foreign policy than on other issues. My results indicate that internal party behavior and interactions between parties are not strongly affected by the presence of a foreign threat.

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CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT.....	iii
PUBLIC ABSTRACT	iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	v
LIST OF TABLES.....	viii
LIST OF FIGURES	ix
INTRODUCTION	1
ARGUMENT.....	5
Trends in Congressional Behavior since 1964: Party Cohesion Rises and Bipartisanship Declines	5
What is party cohesion?.....	5
The rise in party cohesion in the past decades	6
Determinants of divergent voting	7
<i>Expertise is a weak predictor of divergence on the final vote</i>	7
<i>Regional interests predict divergence</i>	7
<i>Majority status predicts divergence</i>	8
Bipartisanship	9
What is Bipartisanship?	9
The decline in bipartisanship in the past decades	10
Bipartisanship in foreign policy: Do partisan politics stop at the water's edge?	11
May External Threats Shape Congressional Behavior?.....	11
What powers does Congress have over U.S. foreign policy?	11
<i>Legislative process</i>	12
<i>Shaping public opinion</i>	13
Voters' Interest in Foreign Policy.....	13
Understanding Audience Costs.....	15
Electoral Constraints	15
RESEARCH DESIGN.....	19
Data Sources	19
Operationalization.....	20
Dependent variables.....	20
<i>Distance between DW-NOMINATE and FPN by Member-Congress</i>	21
<i>Measures of Cohesion by Party-Congress</i>	22
<i>Measures of Polarization by Congress</i>	23
Independent variable <i>External Threat</i>	25

Empirical Strategy	26
ANALYSIS.....	27
Analysis at the Member-Congress Level.....	27
Analysis at the Party-Congress Level.....	31
Analysis at the Congress Level.....	36
CONCLUSION.....	39
REFERENCES	42
APPENDIX.....	49

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1: Descriptive Statistics at the Member Level	21
Table 2: Descriptive Statistics at the Congress Level.....	24
Table 3: The Impact of External Threat on Distance between DW-NOMINATE and FPN	28
Table 4: The Impact of External Threat on Distance between DW-NOMINATE and FPN, Accounting for Majority Control.....	29

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1: Foreign Policy Scores Across 97 th – 112 th Congresses	31
Figure 2: Average Democratic and Republican DW-NOMINATE Scores in 97 th –112 th Congresses	33
Figure 3: Democratic and Republican Cohesion on Foreign Policy in 97 th –112 th Congresses	34
Figure 4: Democratic and Republican Cohesion on All Issues in 97 th –112 th Congresses	36
Figure 5: Polarization on Foreign Policy in 97 th –112 th Congresses	37

INTRODUCTION

Since 1964, party cohesion increased, while bipartisanship significantly declined — these phenomena resulted from southern Democrats switching to the Republican party after the Civil Rights Act passed under President Johnson (Aldrich & Rohde, 2000). Even after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, which should have increased interparty agreement, we see that bipartisanship largely maintained its downward trend. Yet, it is often said that American voters are not concerned with foreign policy issues (Hrynowski, 2020), which implies that foreign policy is possibly one issue area where these trends of heightened party cohesion and reduced bipartisanship may not manifest to the same extent. After all, nothing has quite as unifying an affect as a looming threat from a foreign enemy.

This paper asks: how does the presence of a unifying foreign threat affect party cohesion and bipartisanship in the United States House of Representatives? Understanding how national security hazards may affect congressional behavior is essential for interpreting and forecasting the nation's response to such events. The rise of China precipitates fears of another potential grand power rivalry in the near future, as well as brings up a practical question about the U.S. domestic politics — shall we observe more bipartisanship if China is viewed as a rival threatening U.S. hegemony? Will there be a gap in bipartisanship between domestic and foreign policy? Examining the past history of congressional response to the USSR and then 9/11 allows us to better understand and anticipate changes in congressional member behavior surrounding future foreign threats.

To answer this question, I first build the argument that members of the House are careful about their voting because they do not always know which votes will become controversial. Intraparty cohesion, the degree to which party members behave alike on a variety of issues (e.g., Grumm 1964; Krehbiel, 2000) has been rising since the 1970s when southern Democrats realigned themselves with Republicans (e.g., Aldrich & Rohde, 2000; Cox & McCubbins, 1991). A number of factors predict (to varying degrees) divergence from party positions, including expertise, regional interests, and majority party status; the international environment has, however, been overlooked by the extant literature as a possible determinant of intraparty cohesion.

In contrast, interparty cooperation, known as bipartisanship, has declined since the 1970s when more members of Congress began to strongly identify with their party and have subsequently moved closer to their party extremes (e.g., Harbridge, Malhotra, & Harrison, 2014; Poole & Rosenthal, 1984). The decline in bipartisanship has been almost entirely uninterrupted and has persisted across domestic and foreign policy issues (e.g., Flynn, 2014; McCormick & Wittkopf, 1990).

Congress's involvement in foreign policy has changed throughout American history, but legislators generally defer to the president on foreign policy issues when the U.S. is facing a national security threat (e.g., Lindsay, 1992; Trubowitz & Mellow, 2011). Although much foreign policy literature has underscored that voters know or care little about international politics, members of the House are careful about how they vote because they never know *ex ante* which votes will become controversial in their next election cycle (e.g., Aldrich, et al. 2006; Baum & Potter, 2008). One therefore should expect votes on foreign policy to be given just as much (or potentially more)

consideration by the members as on other issue areas. No extant work systematically examines how the international environment shapes inter-party polarization in the US House.

Relying on the conclusions from social psychology, I argue that social identity awareness in the face of a threat causes legislators to prioritize their identity as Americans over their party identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). When faced with an outside enemy, legislators can put their party affiliation on the backburner to prioritize their national identity and present the challenger with a unified American front rather than a fractured partisan one. My hypothesis anticipates that during the times of foreign threat presence, bipartisanship rises. This implies that a decline in both the intraparty cohesion (because members will cross the aisle to compromise with the other party) and inter-party polarization (because the gap in average party voting positions should shrink due to compromise on foreign policy issues).

To test this expectation, I use two sets of data. First, the NOMINATE data set by Lewis et al. (2021) provides me with measures of overall party cohesion in 1981–2013 (across all members for each party in each of 16 congresses of this period). This 32-year time period provides two windows of perceived foreign threat from different sources: the USSR in 1981–1988 and from Al Qaeda in 2001–2005. I also use the rollcall data on the House of Representatives in 1981–2013 to create a new Foreign Policy NOMINATE score for each member of the House for each congress by using votes on foreign policy legislation. Using those scores, I analyze the distance between members' original NOMINATE scores and Foreign Policy NOMINATE scores, as well as party-level cohesion and inter-party polarization in 1981–2013.

I find that the presence of a unifying threat decreases the distance between NOMINATE scores and Foreign Policy NOMINATE scores for all members of the House. Additionally, majority party members' distance between foreign policy votes and all other issue votes widens, suggesting that majority parties moderate their positions on foreign policy during a period of perceived threat. There is no significant trend in divergence between foreign policy ideology scores and ideology scores for all other issues over time. I find that party cohesion on foreign policy is lower than on other issues (especially for Democrats); however, party cohesion does not appear to be influenced by the presence of a foreign threat.

ARGUMENT

Trends in Congressional Behavior since 1964: Party Cohesion Rises and Bipartisanship Declines

This section overviews two big trends in American politics due to southern Democrats switching to the Republican party in the post-Civil Rights Act decades: party cohesion rose (intraparty behavior), and bipartisanship declined (interparty behavior) in the U.S. Congress.

What is party cohesion?

Political parties shape behavior and influence Congressional agendas, as well as create a mechanism through which constituents can view politicians as representing or not representing their views with little effort towards understanding the issues (Grumm, 1964). Representatives group themselves within the House of Representatives in a variety of ways, which are influenced by internal expectations and norms. Through voluntary groupings, representatives may diverge from the party line in certain issue areas. Party cohesion is the degree to which members of a party vote together as compared to members of the opposition party (Grumm 1964; Norpoth, 1976; Volden & Bergman, 2006). Party affiliation and party cohesion is “rooted in shared policy attitudes;” it allows members of the group to rely on certain “experts” to signal how they should support a bill in order to reduce the information cost of casting informed votes on a piece of legislation (Norpoth, 1976; Krehbiel, 2000). While party line voting is by no means a given, it is often viewed as the default position for busy legislators.

Congressional procedure and norms have been shaped overtime, influenced both by consensus and disagreement about the rules of the House (Bach, 1990, 49). There is some disagreement about which norms are the most important – whether majority numbers or agenda setting power have more influence over legislative outcomes (Bianco & Sened, 2005). Party organization allows “kindred legislative spirits” to solve the legislative problems they confront through engaging in the process under a more coordinated uniform grouping (Shepsle & Weingast, 1994, 153). Some scholars argue that the majority party’s agenda setting power gives them power over legislative outcomes because party members want to opt into the benefits provided by majority party leadership to ensure their electorate is satisfied with their legislative success (Aldrich & Rohde, 1998; Aldrich & Rohde 2000). Krehbiel’s assessment attributes majority party power to the number of votes available to advance the party’s legislative priorities (1999, 2000). Because these groupings are voluntary, studying group behavior can provide important insight into the legislators’ incentives that result in which legislation is successful and what gets voted on, including foreign policy bills.

The rise in party cohesion in the past decades

Scholars have categorized the majority of the twentieth century (Congresses until the 1970s) as a period of relatively stable, albeit low, party unity (Cox & McCubbins, 1991; Clubb & Traugott, 1977). During the late 1960s and 1970s, southern Democrats began to contend with black voters in much larger numbers than before, requiring southern Democratic candidates to more closely align with northern democrats to win in a liberalized Democratic party. While many districts traded their southern Democrat representative for a Republican, other democrats were able to retain their seats in a newly

liberal district, creating greater unity within the Democratic party (Aldrich & Rohde, 2000). This explains the significant increase in party cohesion in the 1980s — Democratic cohesion in 1987 was higher than it had been since 1909 (Rohde, 1990).

Determinants of divergent voting

Expertise is a weak predictor of divergence on the final vote

One place in which members diverge from their groupings is voting differently in committee votes and floor votes as compared to the larger group. Representatives are more likely to vote differently than their party on bills that came through their committee before coming to a floor vote. This is known as committee-floor divergence (Carson, Finocchiaro, & Rohde, 2002, 5-6). Increased exposure to the issue and understanding of the bill can lead members to vote in opposition to their party when they otherwise would not. However, this effect is not present in final passage votes “because many members will prefer passing a bill as a whole (even in a slightly altered form) to not passing one at all” (Carson, Finocchiaro, & Rohde, 6).

Additionally, in final passage votes other members of the party without specific knowledge of the subject matter in the bill will look to the committee members they trust for cues about whether to support such a bill, which would offset the divergence observed in other vote types (Norpoth, 1976).

Regional interests predict divergence

Some divergence in voting patterns has also been attributed to distributive policies in which the benefits are targeted towards a specific geographic area, but the costs are distributed across the whole (Collie, 867). In this case, an individual legislator

may diverge from the party position to protect or better serve the interests of their constituency. This divergence has affected overall party cohesion across Congresses. Indeed, decreasing party cohesion has been attributed to “increasing defections by a minority regional grouping within each party from the positions taken by the majority segment of the party” (Sinclair, 1977, 121).

These groupings vary in size and membership depending on the subject matter in a bill. During the Cold War, non-southern Democrats were the most internationalist while their southern party members were the most isolationist (Norpoth, 1976). In the same period southern Democrats and Republicans sometimes formed a “conservative coalition” on civil rights legislation showing that regional opposition to integration could overshadow party loyalty in some cases (Norpoth, 1976, 1161).

Majority status predicts divergence

In addition to regional defection, majority party status can increase cohesion within a party (Sinclair, 1977, 155). Majority party leadership can create “a structuring coalition, stacking the deck in its own favor — both on the floor and in committee — to create a kind of legislative cartel that dominates the legislative agenda” (Cox & McCubbins, 1993, 270). This structure can be used to incentivize members to vote with the party or punish members who diverge from the party line (Aldrich & Rohde, 1998). Although members of the majority party from vulnerable districts may be more likely to vote against the party regardless of benefits derived from adhering to the party’s agenda on a given bill (Flinn, 1964), they may feel more pressure to support party cohesion when the party enjoys majority status and the preferences of the opposing party are further from the preferences of the majority party (Volden & Bergman, 2006).

Bipartisanship

What is Bipartisanship?

Another way to measure behavior in Congress is to look at bipartisanship, commonly defined as “the extent to which majorities or near majorities of both parties in Congress vote together” (Trubowitz & Mellow, 2011, 181). It is the mechanism by which Congress and the President can attain mutual legislative success (McCormick & Wittkopf, 1990). Bipartisanship is discussed frequently in the public sphere, and a majority of Americans believe bipartisan legislation should be the goal of Congress — approval or disapproval of Congress often hinges on the public’s perception of cooperation between the parties (Harbridge, Malhotra, & Harrison, 2014). In the public debate it has commonly been insinuated that bipartisanship is preferable to partisanship because it is less political and more devoted to principle than to electoral success. Presidents often make appeals for the need for more bipartisanship in Congress and, as suggested previously, voters evaluate Congress based on their perceived bipartisan cooperation.

Consistent with this common understanding of the role of bipartisanship in American politics as preferable by voters, some scholars identify bipartisanship as an electoral strategy used by some to widen a legislator’s appeal to different types of voters (Trubowitz & Mellow, 2005). In contrast, other scholars have found that in reality, voters prefer their own partisan legislative priorities rather than bipartisan legislation that could indicate a loss for their party (Harbridge, Malhotra, & Harrison, 2014). Though voters in very moderate districts may certainly prefer a candidate who supports a wider range of policy, legislators from more ideologically secure districts can confidently pursue their

party's priorities. Understanding party cooperation in Congress is incredibly complex. It has changed significantly over the course of American political history.

The decline in bipartisanship in the past decades

Inter-party cooperation in Congress is subject to many forces and has changed significantly over the course of the past century. In the first decades of the twentieth century, partisan conflict was relatively low. The New Deal provided an uptick in disagreement between parties, but only had a temporary effect on bipartisanship trends (Collie, 1988). Since the 1970s, bipartisanship has been declining as more members of Congress identify more strongly with their political party (Harbridge & Malhotra, 2011).

As bipartisanship in Congress has been declining in recent decades, polarization has become more deeply entrenched in American politics (Jeong & Quirk, 2019, 58-87). Members of Congress represent their party extremes more often than moderate voters (Poole & Rosenthal, 1984, 1061). For incumbents, greater levels of partisan loyalty in Congress equal greater success in future primary elections, even though ideological extremes are often punished in elections (Pyeatt, 2015). Party realignment over the last 50 years has produced ideologically uniform political parties — that is, Democrats are now seen as synonymous with liberal and Republicans with conservative, leaving few people to breach the gap between party and ideology (Schultz, 2017; Mason, 2014). This has resulted in both parties shifting to the extremes of their ideology leaving few representatives from either party to overlap in the middle of the political spectrum (Schultz, 2017, 8). Another factor in decreasing bipartisanship is “Affective polarization” or the dislike (and in some cases loathing) of one's political opponents (Iyengar, Sood, & Lelkes, 2012). These patterns of increased polarization and diminishing bipartisanship

lead to higher levels of party cohesion as representatives reach across the aisle less and less.

Bipartisanship in foreign policy: Do partisan politics stop at the water's edge?

Scholars have suggested that the fall of the Soviet Union would precipitate a permanent decline in congressional bipartisanship if significant efforts to renew commitments to bipartisan government were not undertaken, and this decline has been substantiated through analysis of roll-call voting (Winik, 1991, 115; McCormick & Wittkopf, 1990; Meernik, 1993). Indeed, foreign policy bipartisanship did not increase following the events of 9/11 as previous trends suggested it should, showing that the decline in domestic bipartisanship was also affecting cross-partisan agreement about foreign policy and national security (Trubowitz & Mellow, 2011, 164-165).

Bipartisanship in foreign policy related legislation has declined consistently due to the increased importance of domestic policy considerations across the board (Jeong & Quirk, 2019; Trubowitz & Mellow, 2011; Schultz, 2017; Flynn, 2014).

May External Threats Shape Congressional Behavior?

What powers does Congress have over U.S. foreign policy?

Congressional approaches to foreign policy have varied over time, ranging from complete deference to the President to more involvement in recent years (Trubowitz & Mellow, 2011, 166-168). The constitution grants both Congress and the President significant foreign policy powers, so the deference Congress often shows to the executive on matters of foreign policy is a political balance rather than institutional. When the United States views itself as threatened the deferential relationship remains intact, but

when the nation views itself as secure Congress pushes back and opposes the president's agenda much more often (Lindsay, 2003). The executive branch has traditionally controlled much of the agenda-setting and decision power when it came to foreign policy legislation. Despite the apparent disadvantage Congress faces when it comes to foreign policy, it still plays an important role in defending their constituents' immediate preferences through the legislative process and through grandstanding (Lindsay, 1992, 608). I review each of these approaches in turn.

Legislative process

The more traditional way Congress can subvert executive branch control of foreign policy is through legislative means. Blocking legislation or refusing to approve actions abroad can frustrate a president's foreign policy agenda but is unlikely to occur when political conflict could damage a president's stature against a foreign threat (McCormick & Wittkopf, 1991; Lindsay, 2003). When a unifying threat is present, opposition to the president's foreign policy agenda can be viewed as unpatriotic and even dangerous so Congress defers to the president (Lindsay, 2003).

Members of the House of Representatives are often involved in specific areas of foreign policy tied to benefits for their district and are incentivized to participate more fully in the creation and passage of foreign policy legislation by electoral factors and special interest groups (Jacobs, Lawrence & Page, 2005). As domestic considerations like the economy and regional rivalries have become more important to voters, members of Congress have become more assertive of their legislative powers over foreign policy (Trubowitz & Mellow, 2011). This trend has followed the warnings from scholars that

the end of the Cold War era would significantly diminish congressional bipartisanship on foreign policy (McCormick & Wittkopf, 1991).

Shaping public opinion

Congress may oppose a president's foreign policy agenda through public opinion. Members of Congress have significant sway over their districts' views of the executive, creating an opportunity for members to raise the cost of a president's agenda in the court of public opinion, particularly when it comes to engagement in risky foreign conflicts (Howell & Pevehouse, 2005). Grandstanding allows legislators to draw attention to an overlooked foreign policy issue, build public popularity for policy supported by Congress, or create enough pushback that a president reverses their course of action (Lindsay, 1992).

Voters' Interest in Foreign Policy

It is a widely held belief among political scientists that voters have little interest in foreign policy and legislators can therefore ignore considerations about electoral consequences for decisions they make in relation to that issue area. Scholarship from the mid-twentieth century characterized public opinion on foreign policy as irrational, uninformed, and inconsistent (Almond, 1950; Lippmann, 1955). During the Vietnam war, the public maintained consistent opposition to the conflict and appeared, in survey data, to be both moderate in foreign policy preferences and logical (Verba et al., 1967; Aldrich et al, 2006)¹. One area in which public opinion on foreign policy is demonstrably stable

¹ In this instance, logical refers to the consistency of public opinion. The public is considered logical on foreign policy in this literature because they exhibit consistent preferences that only undergo major shifts when something significant in international politics occurs.

and logical is decreasing support for a conflict as combat deaths increase (Mueller, 1973). Aldrich et al. (2006) identify three criteria that must be met in order for public opinion on foreign policy to affect how people vote: “ (a) the public must have coherent attitudes about foreign policy, (b) the public must be able to access these attitudes when they vote, and (c) the political parties must uphold distinct foreign policy platforms so that voters can use their attitudes to distinguish between candidates” (496). Outside of academia, policy makers often insist that public opinion on foreign policy cannot be trusted (Page & Bouton, 2006).

Despite disagreement about the effect of public opinion, most scholars agree that government consults public opinion on foreign policy creation less than on almost any other issue. Verba et al. (1967) contends that even if government doesn't take public approval into account when making decisions, public disapproval over foreign policy can influence national elections. The public's influence on foreign policy changes as a conflict continues so that “the public's influence on foreign policy appears to be lowest when it is informationally weakest (typically in early stages of conflicts) but somewhat higher in longer conflicts as the information gap dissipates” (Baum & Potter, 2008, 48). Despite this trend, the public struggles to access information independent of the mass media. In the area of foreign policy, mass media is uniquely reliant on public officers and policy makers, so opinions expressed by journalists are often “in harmony with official foreign policy” (Page & Bouton, 2006, 27). The public's difficulty in accessing information has been aggravated by social media's polarizing affects. As voter polarization has increased, consensus on foreign policy among leaders and voters has declined (Baum & Potter, 2019). Because Congress' role in foreign policy creation is

secondary to the president and subject to more immediate electoral accountability, legislators may consult constituent opinions more frequently than executive branch officials.

Understanding Audience Costs

During conflict, national executives are subject to audience costs related to international engagement and foreign policy. Particularly in a democracy, these costs are a significant factor in determining how much or how little a country will engage with an enemy and are an important signal for opposing countries to consider (Fearon, 1994). National executives fear punishment for unpopular or weak responses to international conflict, and that fear conditions their behavior (Fearon, 1994). The cost of backing down from a threat has only been empirically shown for executives, however, and may not apply to Congress and legislators' decision-making.

Electoral Constraints

Members of the House operate under the assumption that constituents closely monitor their behavior. This belief acts as a constraint on roll call voting across all issues. According to Richard Fenno, members of Congress always approach reelection with a great deal of uncertainty even when their "reelection constituency" is large enough to provide a sense of security (1978, 10-12). One of the sources of uncertainty is the possibility that an unforeseen or new issue will arise during their campaign for reelection. Because of this, legislators are cautious when casting potentially controversial votes because they cannot know what will matter to voters in the next election cycle (Fenno, 1978). This means that even though the public's opinions about foreign policy are not

taken seriously by policy makers, legislators casting votes on bills relating to foreign policy will behave as though that particular vote could become salient in a future election. Even though the public generally knows very little about foreign policy, legislators cannot be certain that their foreign policy voting record will not be called into question in a tough election. Though legislators are certainly familiar with their constituents' preferences, they cannot predict how events will unfold, possibly making a seemingly unimportant vote controversial or salient in the future.

Roll call voting can be particularly important in a future election because “roll calls usually are taken on relatively major and relatively controversial issues... few major decisions are made without benefit of at least one recorded vote” (Matthews & Stimson, 1975, 10). Legislators understand that their voting record can be used against them and behave accordingly in order to win reelection (Matthews & Stimson, 1975). In addition to the caution exercised generally, legislators are even more cautious when they know ahead of time that a vote or issue will be controversial. Survey data shows the legislators carefully weigh their options on controversial votes. They consider information from a variety of sources to inform them about potential outcomes (Sullivan et al. 1993). When surveyed about valuable cue-givers, both Democrats and Republicans ranked constituency as a one of the most valuable sources of information for voting decisions in the area of foreign policy (Sullivan et al. 1993). This shows that even though the public is often uninformed or misinformed about foreign policy, legislators still consider how a vote could be perceived in the future.

Members of the House are punished for voting in a way that is inconsistent with constituent preferences, mainly because roll-call voting is the most visible and easily

observed part of their job (Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart, 2001). This leads legislators to fear that one bad vote can wipe out an otherwise favorable voting record since they are operating under the assumption that they are closely monitored by constituents (Matthews & Stimson, 1975). Electoral safety has been closely linked to moderate voting patterns, indicating that voters punish members for voting with party extremes, all else equal (Canes-Wrone, Brady, and Cogan, 2002). Roll-call voting patterns can be shaped by constituent preferences as long as a legislator believes they will be punished, regardless of voters' actual response to a particular issue (Erikson, 1990). The more a legislator departs from the preferences of their constituents, the more likely they are to see a decline in vote-share even if they have a "safe" seat or do not lose office (Canes-Wrone, Brady, and Cogan, 2002).

Even though voters may be relatively uninformed on matters of foreign policy, legislators may estimate a greater potential cost when casting votes during a period of international threat, causing them to be more cautious or more closely consider the preferences of their constituents on those votes. If legislators are punished for being too extreme, as stated above, this effect could increase when the U.S. is faced with a national security threat from a foreign source. Members of the House may estimate the future danger of foreign policy votes during that period as higher and moderate their behavior accordingly.

According to social identity theory from social psychology, people often view themselves and others primarily as group members, prioritizing their social identity over their personal identity (Ellemers & Haslam, 2011). Social identity awareness in the face of a threat causes legislators to prioritize their identity as Americans over their party

identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). When faced with an outside enemy, legislators can put their party affiliation on the backburner to prioritize their national identity and present the challenger with a unified American front rather than a fractured partisan one. Patriotism subsumes party loyalty, making legislators less likely to oppose executive priorities or proposals from the other party.

Hypothesis: The presence of a unifying national security threat will increase bipartisanship in the U.S. House of Representatives.

A rise in bipartisanship implies more inter-isle compromise, which is why in the following sections, I focus on intraparty cohesion and inter-party polarization. Greater bipartisanship should imply lower cohesion, since more members agree to compromise. In addition, bipartisanship implies that polarization, i.e., the gap between each party's average member's voting position, should decline as well. Therefore, my hypothesis implies a *reduction* in both cohesion and polarization in times of threat on foreign policy issues.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Data Sources

To estimate the effect of the presence of a unifying threat on party cohesion and bipartisanship on bills relating to foreign policy, an original dataset was assembled; it includes data from the Political Institutions and Public Choice Roll-Call Database (PIPC) compiled by Michael Crespin and David Rohde,² Legislative and District Data compiled by Ella Foster-Molina,³ and Members' Votes data from Voteview: Congressional Roll-Call Votes Database.⁴ Together these datasets provide information about roll call voting, party cohesion, content of legislation, and individual characteristics of bill sponsors. This information was used to produce individual NOMINATE scores for each member on the issue of foreign policy.

The NOMINATE and FP NOINATE scores are aggregated in two ways. The first dataset includes 7,059 observations at the individual member level covering the 97th-112th congresses (16 congresses during 31 years of 1981–2013); the unit of analysis is member-congress. The second dataset includes this information collapsed by congress and by party to provide a congress level view of the variables for the same timeframe; the unit of analysis is party-congress.

² Crespin, Michael H. and David Rohde. (2019). Political Institutions and Public Choice Roll-Call Database. Retrieved from <https://ou.edu/carlalbertcenter/research/pipc-votes/>

³ Foster-Molina, Ella. (2017). "Historical Congressional Legislation and District Demographics 1972-2014" <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/CI2EPI>, Harvard Dataverse, V2, UNF:6:yiLGWnus7Bn3psO0Tjzi2A== [fileUNF]

⁴ Lewis, Jeffrey B., Keith Poole, Howard Rosenthal, Adam Boche, Aaron Rudkin, and Luke Sonnet (2021). *Voteview: Congressional Roll-Call Votes Database*. <https://voteview.com/>

Operationalization

Dependent variables

The dependent variables compare the foreign policy NOMINATE scores (hereafter, FPN scores) created for this paper with the DW-NOMINATE scores created by Poole and Rosenthal. NOMINATE scores measure a congressional member's ideological position throughout their career. For this paper, the first-dimension score is used, which measures economic liberalism or conservatism. Ideology is scored as a continuous variable so that -1 is the most liberal and 1 is the most conservative. All members of the House in every congress are assigned a value between -1 and 1 based on their voting record, with both parties skewing towards the center.

Foreign Policy legislation is measured using the coding system set up for the PIPC Database to track the content of legislation brought to vote in the House of Representatives. The foreign policy category includes immigration, foreign aid, arms control, State Department funding, human rights, terrorism, etc. It is separate from bills about defense or funding for other cabinet departments that could be related to foreign policy. Using only the votes on foreign policy bills, I created a score using the NOMINATE formula for each member of the House in each congress from 1981–2013. The scores use the same measurement system as the traditional NOMINATE score so that -1 equals the most liberal on foreign policy, 0 is the center, and 1 equals the most conservative on foreign policy. In general, foreign policy favored by conservatives is associated with hard power, high defense spending, and a “proactive” response to terrorist threats. Foreign policy favored by liberals is associated with non-military

solutions to foreign disputes, reduced defense spending, and greater willingness to end military involvement overseas (Rubenzer, 2017).

Distance between DW-NOMINATE and FPN by Member-Congress

Table 1 summarizes both the FPN Score and the DW-NOMINATE Score at the member-congress level. Table 1 also summarizes the first outcome variable used in the regression analyses—the *Distance between the DW-NOMINATE and the FPN Score*, which is as simple difference between these two scores per member per congress; it captures the difference between members’ voting behavior on foreign policy issues and their voting behavior in all issue areas. This provides an individual-level measure of whether foreign policy is distinct from other issue areas.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics at the Member Level

	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
FPN-NOMINATE (FPN) Score	6,955	0.00477	0.504	-0.999	0.989
DW-NOMINATE Score	6,955	-0.0029	0.399	-0.766	0.913
Distance between DW-NOMINATE and FPN	6,955	-0.00813	0.355	-1.544	1.657
FPN Democrats	3,734	-0.354	0.355	-0.999	0.885
FPN Republicans	3,221	0.421	0.282	-0.965	0.989
DW-NOMINATE Democrats	3,771	-0.343	0.158	-0.766	0.884
DW-NOMINATE Republicans	3,260	0.391	0.158	-0.044	0.913

The expectation is that when a foreign threat is present, members should be less likely to take extreme positions, and instead will be more likely to cooperate with the other side. Hypothesis 1 anticipates less cohesion and more bipartisanship in foreign policy voting during the times of threat. During both threat periods (1981–1988 and 2001–2005), Republican presidents held office. Given that the US president has an outsized role in directing foreign policy, I expect the Democratic party, the opposition to the President, to exhibit lower cohesion, such that some members of the opposition will join the President’s party to back his foreign policy when the national interests of the US are perceived as being threatened by a rival or challenger. This is why I estimate the regressions on the split sample by party to evaluate this dynamic.

Measures of Cohesion by Party-Congress

At the party-congress level, party cohesion is captured by four dependent variables:

- *Democratic Cohesion on FP*, measured as the standard deviation of the FPN Score for Democrats.
- *Republican Cohesion on FP*, measured as the standard deviation of the FPN Score for Republicans.
- *Democratic Cohesion on All Issues*, measured as the standard deviation of the DW-NOMINATE Score for Democrats.
- *Republican Cohesion on All Issues*, measured as the standard deviation of the DW-NOMINATE Score for Republicans.

The standard deviation reflects variation within each party in each congress. For instance, *Democratic Cohesion on FP* captures the extent to which the Democratic party stuck together on foreign policy legislation for the given congress, because standard deviation measures the degree to which Democratic party members differ from the average Democrat in a given congress. The same is true for *Republican Cohesion on FP*. Similarly, *Democratic/Republican Cohesion on All Issues* reflects the amount of coordination on votes within the Democratic/Republican party respectively on all legislation for the given time period.

Measures of Polarization by Congress

Additionally, to understand the degree of polarization, I use:

- *Average Democratic FPN Score*, measured as the mean for Democrats in a given congress.
- *Average Republican FPN Score*, measured as the mean for Republicans in a given congress.
- *Polarization on FP*, measured as the difference-in-means between these two FPN scores of the two parties per congress.
- *Average Democratic DW-NOMINATE Score*, measured as the mean for Democrats in a given congress.
- *Average Republican DW-NOMINATE Score*, measured as the mean for Republicans in a given congress.
- *Polarization on All Issues*, measured as the difference-in-means between these two FPN scores of the two parties per congress.

Using the difference-in-means of FPN Scores for Democrats and Republicans by congress provides reflects polarization because it demonstrates the distance between Democrats and Republicans on foreign policy bills during a given congress. Similarly, the difference-in-means of NOMINATE for Democrats and Republicans by congress demonstrates the distance between Democrats and Republicans on all legislation during that congress.

It is expected that *Polarization on All Issues* (the inter-party gap between the NOMINATE scores) grows faster during the times of threat than *Polarization on FP* (the gap between FPN scores).

Table 2 summarizes all congress-level outcomes.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics at the Congress Level

	Mean	SD	Min	Max	N
Foreign Policy Score	0.025	0.429	-0.567	0.714	32
<i>Average Democratic FPN Score</i>	-0.316	0.231	-0.567	0.355	16
<i>Average Republican FPN Score</i>	0.366	0.280	-0.479	0.714	16
<i>Democratic Cohesion on FP</i>	0.304	0.106	0.132	0.490	16
<i>Republican Cohesion on FP</i>	0.214	0.112	0.066	0.497	16
<i>Polarization on FP</i>	-0.647	0.534	-1.162	1.077	16
NOMINATE Score	0.020	0.374	-0.395	0.469	32
<i>Average Democratic DW-NOMINATE Score</i>	-0.346	0.034	-0.395	-0.299	16

<i>Average Republican DW-NOMINATE Score</i>	0.386	0.050	0.306	0.469	16
NOMINATE SD	0.151	0.015	0.123	0.194	32
<i>Polarization on All Issues</i>	-0.833	0.064	-0.945	-0.758	16
<i>Democratic Cohesion on All Issues</i>	0.152	0.021	0.123	0.195	16
<i>Republican Cohesion on All Issues</i>	0.151	0.007	0.143	0.167	16

Independent variable *External Threat*

This project hypothesizes that the presence of a unifying threat will affect party cohesion and bipartisanship over issues relating to foreign policy legislation. To use the presence of a unifying threat as the independent variable the available data is divided into two time periods where a threat was present: legislation passed during the perception of the USSR as a rival and legislation passed in the years following September 11, 2001. It also includes two periods where a threat was not present: the period of time between 1991 and 2001 and years after 2005. Using these two periods with no serious national security risk allows us to compare levels of cohesion and bipartisanship between periods of relative emergency and relative peace.

I use Gallup polls to determine when the public perceives a foreign threat from either the USSR or Al-Qaeda. This results in a binary indicator of *External Threat*, that takes on the value of 1 in years 1981-1988 (the Berlin Wall fell in 1989) and 2001-2004 and the value of 0 in years 1989-2001 and 2005-2013 (Richman, 1991; Gallup, 2020). Accordingly, the congresses coded 1 are the 97th – 99th and the 107th – 109th congresses.

The 100th and 108th congresses are coded 0.5 to represent a threat during only one year of the congressional session.

For robustness, I also recode *External Threat* so that in one model, *external threat* takes on the value of 1 in 2001–2002 only; another model includes *external threat* with a value of 1 in 1981–1991 only. These results are included in the appendix.

Empirical Strategy

This paper's approach is threefold. First, I use a t-test to determine whether the means of FPN score and NOMINATE score are meaningfully different over time. Second, to evaluate how foreign threats influence individual members' tendency to widen or shrink the gap between their voting behavior on foreign policy as opposed to all other issues, I estimate a series of OLS regressions using different subsamples.

Next, I also use descriptive analyses to investigate the over time variation in these scores. I employ time-series plots to visualize how party-level coherence has changed in 1981–2013. Finally, the time-series plots also visualize interparty polarization in 1981–2013.

ANALYSIS

Analysis at the Member-Congress Level

The primary contribution of this paper is the creation of Foreign Policy NOMINATE scores, which allow us to see how members of the House behave on foreign policy legislation relative to their general voting behavior. Using these scores and the original NOMINATE scores, I test whether the presence of a threat increases party cohesion and bipartisanship at the level of individual member. Taking the difference in scores allows us to evaluate whether the presence of a (supposedly) unifying threat alters voting behavior on foreign policy legislation in a different way than total voting behavior.

Hypothesis 1 anticipates more bipartisanship (i.e. less cohesion and less polarization) on foreign policy issues under threat. During both threat periods (1981–1988 and 2001–2005), Republican presidents held office. Given that the US president has an outsized role in directing foreign policy, the Democratic party, the opposition to the President, is expected to exhibit lower cohesion, such that some members of the opposition will join the President’s party to back his foreign policy. This is why I estimate OLS regressions on the split sample by party to evaluate this dynamic. Table 3 demonstrates the results of the OLS analysis at the member-congress level. The dependent variable in all models is *Distance between DW-NOMINATE and FPN*.

I first use a t-test to determine whether the means of FPN score and NOMINATE score for Democrats is meaningfully systematically different over time. In repeated samples, the true difference-in-means falls within [-0.024, 0.0009] 95% of the time. The test results in a p-value of 0.06853, which is not statistically significant at the 0.05 level. I use the same test to determine whether the means of FPN score and NOMINATE score

for Republicans are systematically different over time. In repeated samples, the true difference-in-means falls within [0.0194, 0.0417] 95% of the time. The test results in a p-value of 7.831e-0, which is statistically significant at the 0.05 level and is discernible from 0. This result implies that Democrats' overall voting in 1981–2013 did not systematically differ on foreign policy issues from all other issues, while Republicans' average voting on foreign policy was systematically more moderate (closer to 0) than on all other issues.

Table 3

The Impact of External Threat on Distance between DW-NOMINATE and FPN

	(2)	(3)
	Democrats	Republicans
External Threat	-0.303*** (0.02)	0.133*** (0.02)
Intercept	0.171*** (0.02)	-0.074*** (0.01)
Congress FEs	Yes	Yes
N	3,734	3,221
Adjusted R ²	0.2142	0.3838

Note: Numbers in cells are coefficient estimates, standard errors are in parentheses. Models fit with OLS regression. Dependent variable is *Distance between DW-NOMINATE and FPN*. * $p < .05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Models 2 and 3 use the subsamples of only Democrats and only Republicans respectively. The fit of Models 2 and 3 yield adjusted R² indicators of 0.21 and 0.38 respectively. In Model 2, the presence of a unifying threat reduces the gap between the two scores by 0.303 units for Democrats in the House, which is equivalent to explaining

3.2% of the variation in the Democrats' distance between the two scores. In Model 3, the presence of a unifying threat also reduces the gap between the two scores by 0.133 units for Republicans in the House, which is equivalent to explaining 1% of the Republicans' variation in the distance between the two scores. This suggests that both parties moderate their positions during a period of foreign threat.

Consider Table 4, in which I further split the sample by party (Models 4–5 include only Democrats vs. Models 6–7 include only Republicans) and by majority control. In multiple congresses the House majority was controlled by the party in opposition to the President: Democrats held majorities during the entire Reagan and G. H.W. Bush presidencies and lost control under Clinton in the 1994 midterms, such that Republicans held majorities in 104th–109th congresses in 1995–2007. Democrats then controlled 110 and 111th congresses under G.W. Bush and Obama in 2007–2011. The last 112th congress of 2011–2013 included in the data set was controlled by Republicans under President Obama.

Table 4

*The Impact of External Threat on Distance between DW-NOMINATE and FPN,
Accounting for Majority Control*

	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
	Democrats		Republicans	
	Dem House Control	Rep House Control	Dem House Control	Rep House Control
External Threat	0.163*** (0.028)	-0.082*** (0.021)	-0.254*** (0.028)	0.112*** (0.017)
Intercept	-0.294*** (0.019)	0.198*** (0.014)	0.314*** (0.021)	-.0116** (0.012)

Congress FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	2,306	1,428	1,625	1,596
Adjusted R ²	0.3781	0.276	0.604	0.309

Note: Numbers in cells are coefficient estimates, standard errors are in parentheses. Models fit with OLS regression. Dependent variable is *Distance between DW-NOMINATE and FPN*. * $p < .05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

A curious pattern emerges: when a party controls the majority in the House (Models 4 and 7) the members' distance between voting on foreign policy and all other issues widens. In contrast, when a party is the minority in the House (Models 5 and 6), the distance between the two scores shrinks. This implies that majorities—in the face of a foreign threat—moderate their positions on foreign policy to a greater extent (less alignment between FP and DW-NOMINATE scores) than minorities (a smaller distance implies more alignment). This pattern is somewhat puzzling, since Democrats controlled the majority facing a threat from the USSR in 1981–1988 under a Republican president, but Republicans were in the majority in 2001–2005 under G.W. Bush, a Republican president. Further qualitative examination is needed to substantiate this finding.

In particular, *External Threat* boosts the gap in the two scores for the majority party members by 0.16 units for Democrats in Model 4 (explains 1.4% of variation in the dependent variable) and by 0.11 units for Republicans in Model 7 (explains 2.5% of variation in the outcome).

Minority party members (Models 5 and 6) tend to vote such that the distance between the two scores shrinks; this effect is especially large for Republicans in Model 6. *External Threat* reduces the gap in the two scores for the minority party members by 0.08 units for Democrats in Model 5 (explains 1% of variation in the outcome) and by 0.25 units for Republicans in Model 6 (explains 4.7% of variation in the outcome). The effect

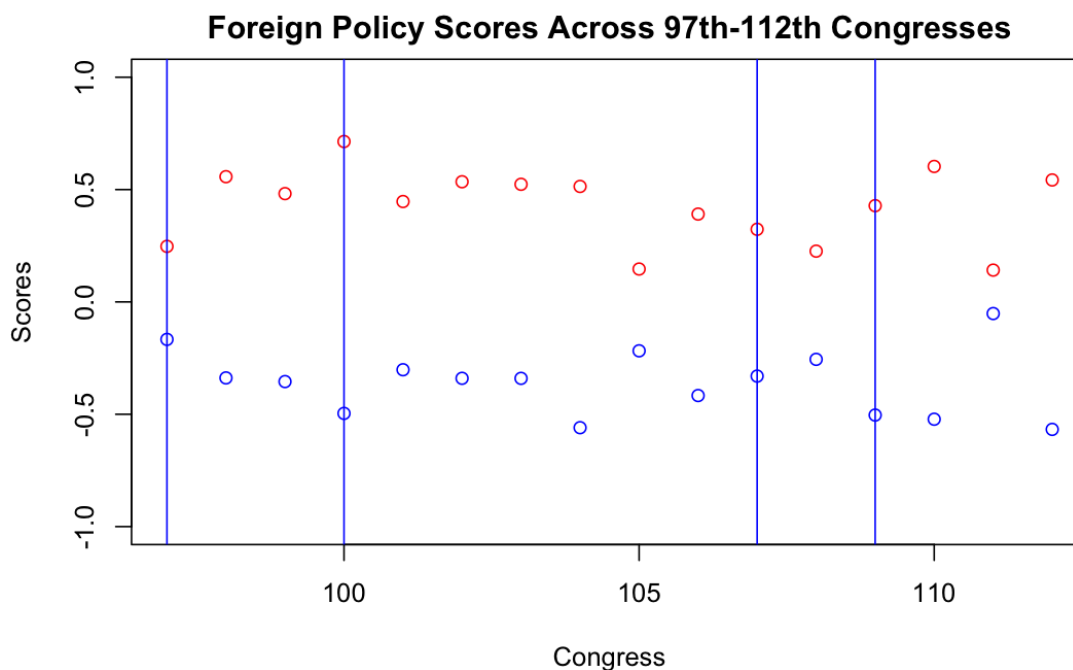
in Model 6 is by far the largest substantive effect across all Models, implying that until 1988, Republicans tended to have a 4.7% narrower gap between their foreign policy votes and all other issues than they did during under H.W. Bush presidency and in 2007–2011 during the Obama presidency.

Analysis at the Party-Congress Level

Figures 1–4 chart the parties' voting behavior in the House across congresses. In all plots, red markers indicate Republicans, while Democrats are represented in blue. Figures 1–2 visualize party-level average voting per congress based on the FP-NOMINATE scores (Figure 1) and based on the DW-NOMINATE scores (Figure 2).

Figure 1

Foreign Policy Scores Across 97th – 112th Congresses

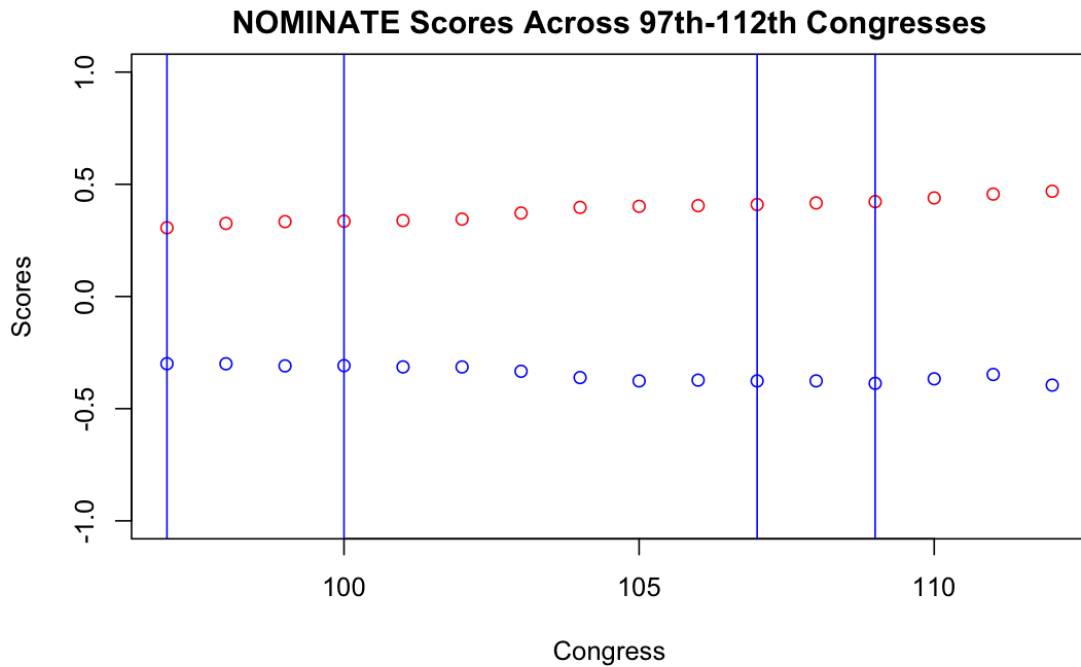


Note: The blue markers indicate Democrats, the red markers indicate Republicans. *Average Democratic FPN Score* is the mean for Democrats in a given congress. *Average Republican FPN Score* is the mean for Republicans in a given congress.

Two patterns emerge. First, Republicans tend to espouse more conservative positions (more positive scores on the NOMINATE scale of -1 to 1) than Democrats in foreign policy issues as well as all issue areas. Second, the FPN score is characterized by greater variation from congress to congress than the DW-NOMINATE party-level score. In particular, two congresses stand out: in the 99th congress (1985–1987), Democrats had a higher average of 0.35 on foreign policy than Republicans (-0.47); in the 111th congress (2009–2011), the gap between the two parties was very narrow (-0.05 for Democrats vs. 0.14 for Republicans). This variation in the FPN scores (and the corresponding lack of variation in the DW-NOMINATE scores, which appear as almost straight lines diverging over time) indicates that foreign policy voting behavior can be modified by presence or lack of a unifying foreign threat.

Figure 2

Average Democratic and Republican DW-NOMINATE Scores in 97th–112th Congresses

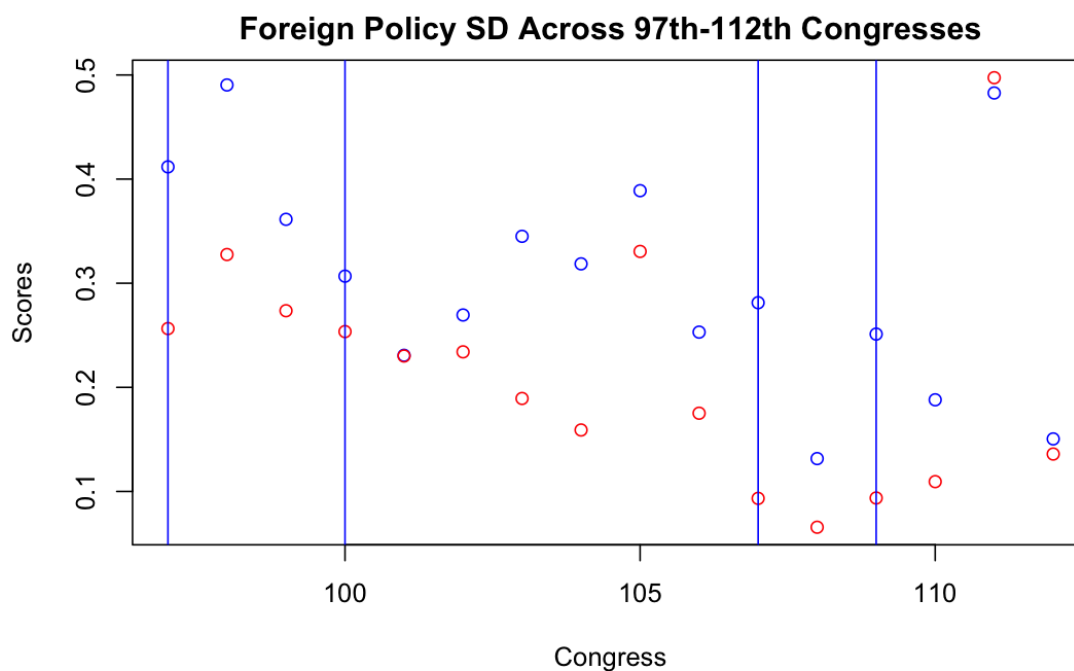


Note: The blue markers indicate Democrats, the red markers indicate Republicans. *Average Democratic DW-NOMINATE Score* is the mean for Democrats in a given congress. *Average Republican DW-NOMINATE Score* is the mean for Republicans in a given congress.

My argument implied that that the gap between parties' DW-NOMINATE scores would grow faster over time than in FPN scores, but that does not appear to be the case. While party-level DW-NOMINATE scores diverge from each other over time, the FPN scores do not exhibit any over time pattern.

Figure 3

Democratic and Republican Cohesion on Foreign Policy in 97th–112th Congresses



Note: The blue markers indicate Democrats, the red markers indicate Republicans. *Democratic Cohesion on FP* is the standard deviation of the FPN Score for Democrats, while *Republican Cohesion on FP* is the standard deviation of the FPN Score for Republicans.

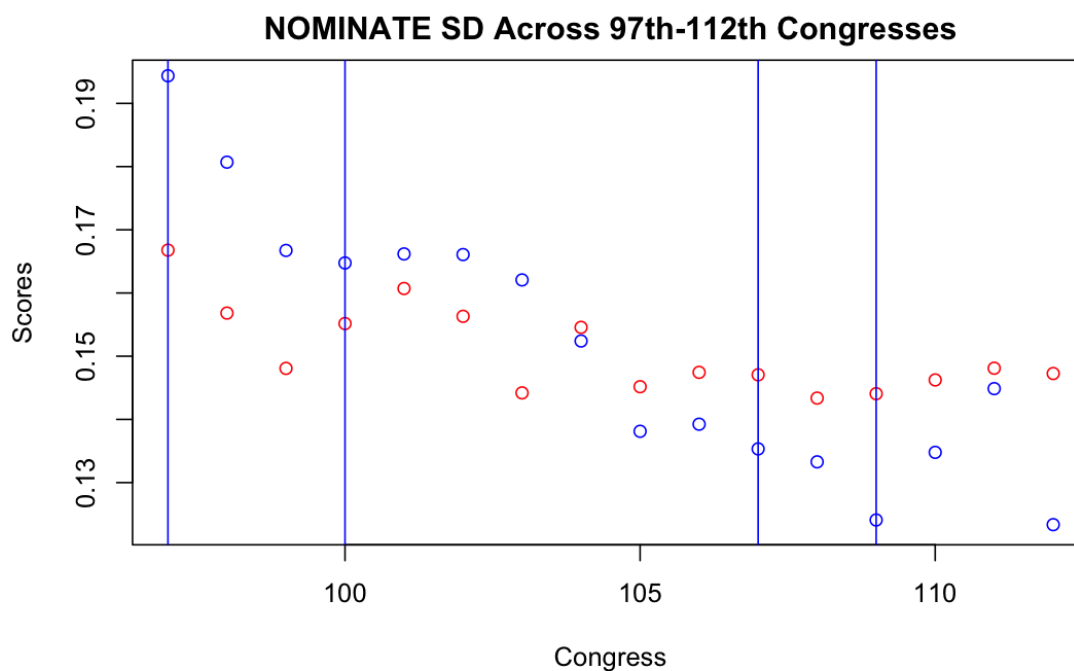
Figures 3 and 4 show that the intraparty cohesion indicators, measured as standard deviations for FPN scores in Figure 3 and as standard deviations for the DW-NOMINATE scores in Figure 4. These figures indicate that, first, Democrats as a party have substantially more variation in voting on foreign policy than Republicans, i.e., Democrats exhibit lower coherence as a party on foreign policy than Republicans do. In all congresses (except the 111th congress of 2009 –2011), the standard deviation for Democratic FPN score is on average 1.6 times larger than the standard deviation for

Republican FPN score (the minimum is 0.97 times in the 111th congress and 3 times larger in the 107th congress).

Second, both Democrats and Republicans are less cohesive on foreign policy (Figure 3) than on all issues (Figure 4). Indeed, while the average the *Democratic Cohesion on FP* is 0.3, the average the *Democratic Cohesion on All Issues* is 0.15. For Republicans the difference is less pronounced: the average the *Republican Cohesion on FP* is 0.21, the average the *Republican Cohesion on All Issues* is 0.15. For Democrats, their cohesion on all issues has increased over time (the standard deviation has declined during the 16 congresses under examination).

Figure 4

Democratic and Republican Cohesion on All Issues in 97th–112th Congresses



Note: The blue markers indicate Democrats, the red markers indicate Republicans. *Democratic Cohesion on All Issues* is the standard deviation of the DW-NOMINATE Score for Democrats. *Republican Cohesion on All Issues* is the standard deviation of the DW-NOMINATE Score for Republicans.

Consistent with my expectation, the parties exhibit less cohesion on foreign policy (this is particularly characteristic of Democrats), than they do on all issues. In contrast to my expectation, the presence of threat during in 1981–1988 and 2001–2005 does not appear to influence the amount of party cohesion.

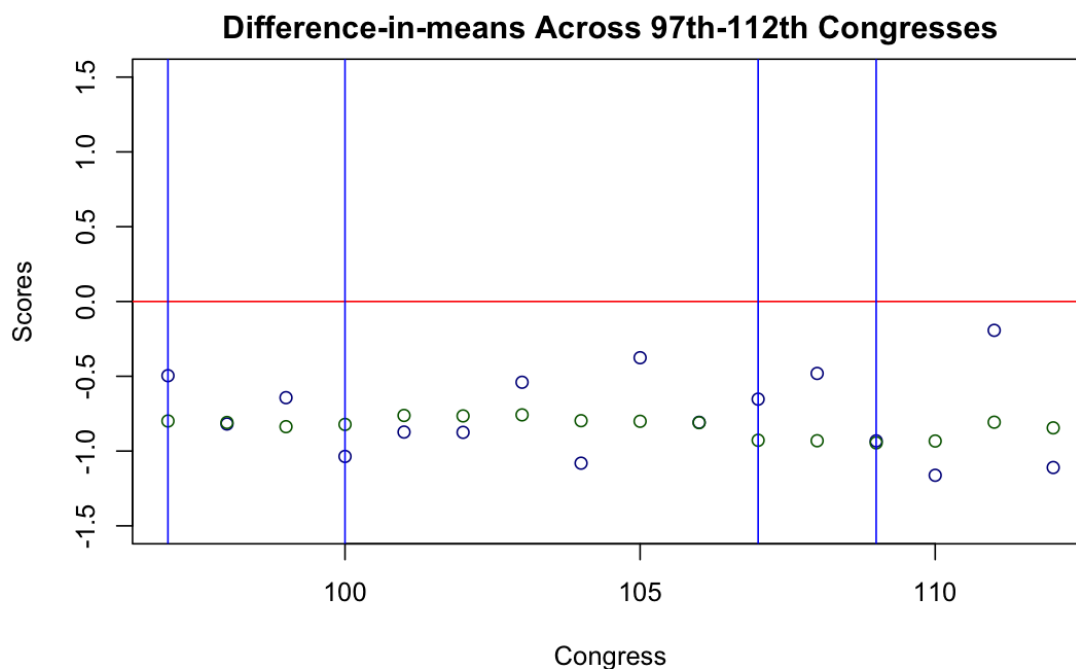
Analysis at the Congress Level

In Figure 5, *Polarization on FP* (shown in dark blue) is the differences between *Average Democratic FPN Score* and *Average Republican FPN Score* per congress.

Polarization on All Issues (shown in green) is the differences between *Average Democratic DW-NOMINATE Score* and *Average Republican DW-NOMINATE Score* per congress.

Figure 5

Polarization on Foreign Policy in 97th–112th Congresses



Note: The dark blue markers indicate polarization on all issues, the green markers indicate polarization on FP. *Polarization on FP* is measured as the difference-in-means between *Average Democratic FPN Score* and *Average Republican FPN Score* per congress. *Polarization on All Issues* is measured as the difference-in-means between *Average Democratic DW-NOMINATE Score* and *Average Republican DW-NOMINATE Score* per congress.

Figure 5 complements Figures 1–2, as Figure 5 simply shows the differences-in-means between the average FPN and average DW-NOMINATE by party by congress.

My expectation was that *Polarization on FP* would be lower (closer to 0) than

Polarization on All Issues. In particular, I expected that the movement towards 0 would

occur during the times of foreign threat presence, i.e., during 97–100th congresses and during 107–109th congresses. No such pattern is emerging.

In summary, I conclude that the data are largely inconsistent with my expectation (although some of the anticipated patterns were borne out in the data) that foreign threats substantially reduce intraparty cohesion and inter-party polarization.

CONCLUSION

This paper asked: how does the presence of a unifying foreign threat affect party cohesion and bipartisanship in the U.S. House? This is an important question, because understanding congressional response to such events is crucial information in understanding U.S. foreign policy and forecasting future responses to rising foreign threats. My expectation was based on the reality that legislators are careful with their votes because they don't know which votes will become controversial in the next election. In addition to fear of electoral punishment, opposition from a foreign threat allows members of the House to prioritize their national identity over their party membership. I expected to see a rise in bipartisanship, and therefore a decline in party cohesion as party members abandoned party positions to compromise with the other party, in years where a perceived foreign threat was present. The anticipated pattern that US political parties facing foreign threats tend to reduce the distance between their voting on foreign policy and on all other issues were borne out in the data, yet these results are substantively modest. The descriptive analysis reveals that my expectations that foreign threats substantially reduce intraparty cohesion and inter-party polarization largely inconsistent with the data.

First, when a party controls the majority in the House and the external threat is present, the majority members' distance between voting on foreign policy and all other issues widens. In contrast, when a party is the minority in the House, the distance between the two scores shrinks in the face of an external threat. This implies that majorities—when confronting a foreign threat—moderate their positions on foreign policy to a greater extent (less alignment between FP and DW-NOMINATE scores) than

minorities do (a smaller distance implies more alignment between FP and all other issues). This pattern is somewhat puzzling, since Democrats controlled the majority facing a threat from the USSR in 1981–1988 under a Republican president, but Republicans were in the majority in 2001–2005 under G.W. Bush, a Republican president. Further qualitative examination is needed to substantiate this finding.

Second, my argument implied that that the gap between parties' DW-NOMINATE scores would grow faster over time than in FPN scores, but the descriptive analysis demonstrates that it does not appear to be the case. While party-level DW-NOMINATE scores diverge from each other over time, the FPN scores do not exhibit any over time pattern dependent on the presence of foreign threats. Furthermore, I expected to observe reductions in polarization during the times of foreign threat presence, i.e., during 97–100th congresses and during 107–109th congresses. No such pattern emerges in the data.

Third, consistent with my expectation, the parties exhibit less cohesion on foreign policy (this is particularly characteristic of Democrats), than they do on all issues. In contrast to my expectation, the presence of threat during in 1981–1988 and 2001–2005 does not appear to influence the amount of party cohesion.

The robustness checks in the appendix include the independent variable *foreign threat* recoded such that in one model, *external threat* takes on the value of 1 in 2001–2002 only; another model includes *external threat* with a value of 1 in 1981–1991 only.

There are several limitations of this work. One such limitation is the timeframe covered in this analysis. Future work should expand to include a broader stretch of time that includes different periods of both perceived threat and perceived safety. Looking

specifically at the Vietnam War would also provide interesting insight into how military engagement affects congressional behavior in the context of a broader foreign threat such as the Cold War. Additionally, future work should remove foreign policy votes from the DW-nominate comparison score such that FPN score is the only measure of member ideology on foreign policy. This would also provide an opportunity to conceptualize foreign policy differently. The category could be expanding to include votes on defense spending and other related issues or could be limited to a specific foreign policy issue such as foreign aid.

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APPENDIX

Table A1 Measuring Polarization through Difference-in-means

	Polarization on FP	Polarization on all issues
97 th Congress	-0.799	-0.496
98 th Congress	-0.809	-0.819
99 th Congress	-0.837	-0.643
100 th Congress	-0.822	-1.036
101 st Congress	-0.762	-0.873
102 nd Congress	-0.765	-0.875
103 rd Congress	-0.758	-0.540
104 th Congress	-0.797	-1.081
105 th Congress	-0.801	-0.376
106 th Congress	-0.810	-0.808
107 th Congress	-0.928	-0.653
108 th Congress	-0.931	-0.481
109 th Congress	-0.945	-0.932
110 th Congress	-0.933	-1.162
111 th Congress	-0.807	-0.193
112 th Congress	-0.845	-1.110

Table AII: Standard Deviation Within Party Per Congress

	Democrats		Republicans	
	FPN Score	NOMINATE Score	FPN Score	NOMINATE Score
97 th Congress	0.412	0.195	0.257	0.167
98 th Congress	0.490	0.181	0.328	0.157
99 th Congress	0.361	0.167	0.274	0.148
100 th Congress	0.307	0.165	0.254	0.155
101 st Congress	0.231	0.166	0.230	0.161
102 nd Congress	0.270	0.166	0.234	0.156
103 rd Congress	0.345	0.162	0.189	0.144
104 th Congress	0.319	0.152	0.159	0.155
105 th Congress	0.389	0.138	0.331	0.145
106 th Congress	0.253	0.139	0.175	0.147
107 th Congress	0.281	0.135	0.093	0.147
108 th Congress	0.132	0.133	0.066	0.143
109 th Congress	0.251	0.124	0.094	0.144
110 th Congress	0.188	0.135	0.109	0.146
111 th Congress	0.483	0.145	0.497	0.148
112 th Congress	0.151	0.123	0.136	0.147

Table AIII: Robustness Checks

	(1)	(8)	(9)
	All obs.	USSR	9/11
	97–112 th Congresses		
External Threat	-0.082*** (0.02)	-0.083*** (0.02)	-0.083*** (0.02)
Intercept	0.035* (0.01)	0.035* (0.01)	0.035* (0.01)
Congress FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	6,955	6,955	6,955
Adjusted R ²	0.0214	0.0214	0.0214

Note: Numbers in cells are coefficient estimates, standard errors are in parentheses. Models fit with OLS regression. Dependent variable is *Distance between DW-NOMINATE and FPN*. * $p < .05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Model 1 uses all individual-level observations. The presence of a unifying threat reduces the gap between the two scores by 0.082 units for all members of the House. The entire model has a poor fit; it explains 1.4% of variation in the distance between the two scores. Although the impact of *External Threat* is statistically discernible, this effect is substantively negligible, because it explains 0.2% of variation in the distance at the individual level (partial $\eta^2 = .0016$). Models 8 and 9 use a recoded Independent Variable. Model 8 uses *external threat* coded as 1 during 1981-1991 and 0 during all other years. Model 9 uses *external threat* coded as 1 during 2001-2002 and 0 during all other years.