

# The Center Still Holds

Liberal Internationalism Survives

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**H**ow has domestic political support underlying U.S. foreign policy changed over time? A recent, prominent article by Charles Kupchan and Peter Trubowitz,<sup>1</sup> along with many others, claims that the bipartisan liberal internationalist coalition driving U.S. foreign policy since World War II has “unraveled” over time.<sup>2</sup> Rising partisan divisions have fractured this coalition and destroyed the consensus on internationalism. According to Kupchan and Trubowitz, “As the partisan gyre in Washington widens, the political center is dying out, and support for liberal internationalism is dying with it.”<sup>3</sup> With this diagnosis of increasing partisan-

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The authors would like to thank Will Bullock, Terrence Chapman, Thomas Christensen, David Francis, Raymond Hicks, Sarah Hummel, Alexander Lanoszka, Adam Liff, John Londregan, Nolan McCarty, Jason McMann, Andrew Moravcsik, and Sean Theriault for feedback on previous versions of this article, as well as the anonymous referees. For the authors’ statistical analysis and description of data sources, see their appendix at [http://www.princeton.edu/~hmlner/forthcoming%20papers/CenterHolds\\_DataAppendix.zip](http://www.princeton.edu/~hmlner/forthcoming%20papers/CenterHolds_DataAppendix.zip).

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1. Charles A. Kupchan and Peter L. Trubowitz, “Dead Center: The Demise of Liberal Internationalism in the United States,” *International Security*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (Fall 2007), pp. 7–44.

2. For similar claims, see Peter Beinart, “When Politics No Longer Stops at the Water’s Edge: Partisan Polarization and Foreign Policy,” in Pietro S. Nivola and David W. Brady, eds., *Red and Blue Nation? Vol. 2: Consequences and Correction of America’s Polarized Politics* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2008), pp. 151–167; Tom Daschle, “The Water’s Edge,” *Foreign Policy*, No. 103 (Summer 1996), pp. 3–19; Charles A. Kupchan, *The End of the American Era: U.S. Foreign Policy and the Geopolitics of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002); Charles A. Kupchan, “The Rise of Europe, America’s Changing Internationalism, and the End of U.S. Primacy,” *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 118, No. 2 (Summer 2003), pp. 205–231; Jim Leach, quoted in Kwame Holman, “Midterm Elections Oust Several Moderate Republicans,” *PBS Online NewsHour*, November 24, 2006, [http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/politics/july-dec06/gop\\_11-24.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/politics/july-dec06/gop_11-24.html); Nicole Mellow and Peter Trubowitz, “Red versus Blue: American Electoral Geography and Congressional Bipartisanship, 1898–2002,” *Political Geography*, Vol. 24, No. 6 (August 2005), pp. 659–677; Robert Y. Shapiro and Yaeli Bloch-Elkon, “Foreign Policy, Meet the People,” *National Interest*, No. 97 (September/October 2008), pp. 37–42; Peter Trubowitz and Nicole Mellow, “‘Going Bipartisan’: Politics by Other Means,” *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 120, No. 3 (Fall 2005), pp. 433–453; and Howard Wiarda and Esther M. Skelly, *The Crisis of American Foreign Policy: The Effects of a Divided America* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006). Others challenge these claims. See, for example, Joshua W. Busby and Jonathan Monten, “Without Heirs? Assessing the Decline of Establishment Internationalism in U.S. Foreign Policy,” *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (September 2008), pp. 451–472; and Joseph M. Parent and Joseph Bafumi, “Correspondence: Of Polarity and Polarization,” *International Security*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (Summer 2008), pp. 170–172.

3. Kupchan and Trubowitz, “Dead Center,” p. 9.

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*International Security*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (Summer 2010), pp. 75–94

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ship come dire predictions about the possibility of a “coherent” U.S. foreign policy.<sup>4</sup>

The notion that bipartisan support for liberal internationalism has decreased over time has become accepted as conventional wisdom in the mainstream media as well as in academia.<sup>5</sup> Allegedly, U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War and the end of the Cold War irrevocably changed the political coalitions supporting U.S. engagement. The Vietnam War supposedly decreased U.S. tolerance for foreign policy engagement, and the end of the Cold War removed the *raison d’être* for such engagement. Domestic changes, such as the increased regional concentration of political parties and growing inequality, further altered the politics of U.S. foreign policy. These changes have led to growing partisan divisions, which in turn have eroded bipartisan support for a liberal internationalist foreign policy.

We find little support for the claim either that domestic divisions over foreign policy have increased since the conclusion of the Vietnam War or that the end of the Cold War marked the end of bipartisanship in U.S. foreign policy. Instead we show that a systematic analysis of the main evidence about domestic divisions, as well as additional evidence previously unused in this debate, indicate that bipartisanship on foreign policy has not steadily declined since the Vietnam War and that levels of bipartisanship have not been significantly lower after the end of the Cold War than before.

Defining liberal internationalism is a difficult task.<sup>6</sup> Engaging in a debate over its definition is beyond the scope of this article; hence we adopt a definition of liberal internationalism based on the consensual elements of the term as used by mainstream scholars.<sup>7</sup> “Liberal internationalism” implies two features of a foreign policy: first, the country engages with others as opposed to being isolationist; and second, it pursues an agenda that involves promoting “open markets, international institutions, cooperative security, democratic community, progressive change, collective problem solving, shared sovereignty, and the rule of law.”<sup>8</sup> It may be easier to define what liberal internation-

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4. Wiarda and Skelly, *The Crisis of American Foreign Policy*, p. 1.

5. See, for example, “A la Recherche du Temps Perdu,” *Economist*, March 29, 2008; John Aloysius Farrell, “As Congress Meddles, Foreign Policy Churns,” *Boston Globe*, October 17, 1993; Martin Gottlieb, “Stumbling toward a Whole New Foreign Policy,” Cox News Service, September 5, 2002; James Kitfield, “Who Speaks for America?” *Government Executive*, April 1995, pp. 14–20; Brian Knowlton, “If U.S. Looks Inward, Then Who’s to Blame?” *International Herald Tribune*, June 18, 1998; and “Powerful Forces Tug at U.S. Foreign Policy,” *Times Union*, March 24, 1996.

6. Busby and Montan, “Without Heirs?”

7. *Ibid.*; Kupchan and Trubowitz, “Dead Center”; Ole R. Holsti, *Public Opinion and American Foreign Policy* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004); and G. John Ikenberry, “Liberal Internationalism 3.0: America and the Dilemma of Liberal World Order,” *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (April 2009), pp. 71–87.

8. Ikenberry, “Liberal Internationalism 3.0,” p. 71.

alism is not: it is not isolationist, and it is not unilateral. The key issue here, however, is that many scholars believe that the domestic requirements for sustaining such a policy require support from a large majority of the public and a bipartisan coalition in Congress.

We share this view. To pursue a liberal internationalist policy, a president needs broad domestic support because such a policy necessitates costly, long-term strategies that involve cooperation (i.e., credible commitments to mutual adjustment of policies among countries). Bipartisanship in Congress is thus necessary for several reasons. First, such a policy depends on the use of treaties and other international agreements, which requires legislative support, sometimes supermajorities. Trade and investment agreements, military alliances, overseas military bases and operations, foreign aid, and economic sanctions all require congressional consent. Second, sustaining commitments to multilateral partners implies that continuity over time matters. If the governing party changed policy each time a different party came to office, the United States could not make credible commitments to its partners. A policy of foreign engagement through multilateral cooperation requires a long-term commitment by the country; each political party must be willing to continue the main lines of a liberal internationalist policy orientation once in office. Third, a liberal internationalist policy agenda requires that substantial resources be allocated from domestic sources to fund overseas commitments. Congressional approval of such spending and public support for it also call for bipartisan backing. Growing domestic partisan divisions are thus a potential threat to the sustainability of a liberal internationalist policy agenda because that policy agenda demands sustained, broad support across political parties and the public. The converse, however, is not necessarily true: bipartisanship alone does not guarantee a commitment to liberal internationalism.<sup>9</sup>

To assess the existing claims about the erosion of bipartisanship in the United States and its effect on liberal internationalism, we examine four pieces of evidence. This evidence does not directly test the degree of liberal internationalism involved in a policy. Instead, like the Kupchan and Trubowitz article, it focuses on bipartisanship in foreign policy. First, we review two pieces of evidence often used to make claims about how polarization is leading to the demise of liberal internationalism in the United States: congressional roll call votes and public opinion. Next, we present two new pieces of data on congressional gridlock and cosponsorship coalitions, which scholars in American politics have developed to analyze partisan divisions. The gridlock data track whether or not Congress takes action on an important issue, or if partisan grid-

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9. Jack Snyder, Robert Shapiro, and Yaeli Bloch-Elkon, "Free Hand Abroad, Divide and Rule at Home," *World Politics*, Vol. 61, No. 1 (January 2009), pp. 155–187 at p. 155.

lock prevents action. The cosponsorship data describe which representatives choose to jointly sponsor legislation.

None of these pieces of evidence shows a sustained decrease in bipartisan support for liberal internationalism beginning in the early 1970s, with the slow end of the contentious Vietnam War, or again after 1989–91, with the end of the Cold War. On the contrary, some evidence shows that bipartisanship in foreign policy actually begins to increase—not decrease—during the post-Vietnam and post-Cold War periods. Although these events may have had significant political effects, they have not eroded bipartisanship over foreign policy in the United States.

Our reinterpretation of old evidence and use of new evidence suggest better ways to study trends in domestic divisions on foreign policy over time. For roll call voting, we argue that not all congressional votes affect foreign policy equally. Although looking at all congressional votes on foreign policy issues could suggest a decrease in bipartisanship, excluding procedural votes and focusing on substantive votes tells a different story. With respect to public opinion data, we systematically analyze responses to a single question about U.S. engagement asked repeatedly over many years. Response data show sustained public support for internationalism. We also find that gridlock on foreign policy has not increased over time; Congress is still “getting done what needs to be done” on important foreign policy issues. Finally, the bipartisan balance of cosponsorship coalitions has also remained steady over time.

We agree with Kupchan and Trubowitz and others on the importance of examining trends in bipartisanship on liberal internationalism. Our analysis disagrees with the conclusion of Kupchan and Trubowitz and others that bipartisanship on foreign policy has ended, and with it any hope of a continued commitment to liberal internationalism. Bipartisanship has not changed much over the years, and presidents can still construct bipartisan coalitions in support of their preferred foreign policies, if they so desire. At the very least, if liberal internationalism has eroded since the early 1970s, then we would argue that partisan divisions have not been the central cause. Indeed, we think that global pressures have made bipartisan support for U.S. engagement with the world more likely.

The first section of this article reviews the arguments and evidence from the Kupchan and Trubowitz article. The second section analyzes data on congressional gridlock on foreign policy. The third section analyzes data on public opinion. The fourth section analyzes data on bipartisanship in roll call voting. The fifth section examines evidence from cosponsorship patterns on foreign policy legislation. The sixth and seventh sections discuss liberal internationalism more broadly.

### *Review of Kupchan and Trubowitz's Arguments and Evidence*

The Kupchan and Trubowitz article provides some of the most recent and thorough evidence for the conventional argument that liberal internationalism as a U.S. foreign policy strategy is dead because of declining bipartisanship. As they argue, "Bipartisanship was to prove crucial to the emergence and longevity of a U.S. grand strategy that twinned power and international partnership." The Vietnam War is often described as the beginning of the end for liberal internationalism. According to Kupchan and Trubowitz, "The bipartisan consensus behind the compact between power and partnership [extended] until the late 1960s, when it began to be sorely tested by the Vietnam War." The end of the Cold War was a further blow to bipartisanship: "Despite its impressive political foundations, the liberal internationalist compact did not survive the Cold War's end."<sup>10</sup> The end of bipartisanship, for Kupchan and Trubowitz, means the demise of liberal internationalism. The key question then is whether bipartisanship in foreign policy has been declining and has eroded to the point that liberal internationalism is no longer possible. We respond to each of their pieces of evidence in turn.

### *Percentage of Moderates in Congress and Congressional Gridlock*

For their first piece of evidence, Kupchan and Trubowitz calculate the percentage of members of Congress who are moderates, using the ideological scores calculated over all votes (domestic and foreign) for each legislator from 1898 to 2002.<sup>11</sup> They emphasize how the percentage of moderates or centrists increased until the early 1970s, and then decreased afterward.

A decline in the percentage of moderates is not relevant for determining congressional support for liberal internationalism, unless this affects the actual legislative policy outputs that determine U.S. foreign policy. Kupchan and Trubowitz's use of the percentage of moderates in Congress over time implicitly assumes that this measure is correlated with legislative outcomes related to liberal internationalism. Although Kupchan and Trubowitz's argument is not fully developed, presumably, they would argue that a smaller percentage of congressional moderates means less agreement on the policies necessary to sustain liberal internationalism. The Binder article that Kupchan and

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10. Kupchan and Trubowitz, "Dead Center," pp. 8, 13, 20.

11. See Sarah A. Binder, "The Dynamics of Legislative Gridlock, 1947–96," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 93, No. 3 (September 1999), pp. 519–533. Kupchan and Trubowitz define centrists as members whose ideological scores lie closer to the midpoint of the two parties than to their own party's center. See VoteWorld, <http://Voteworld.Berkeley.Edu/>.

Trubowitz cite provides this link.<sup>12</sup> Binder argues that a smaller percentage of moderates is correlated with more legislative “gridlock.” Using newspaper editorials, Binder identifies the “important” issues facing a particular congress and then determines whether or not these issues were addressed with legislation during that congressional session. The issues that are not addressed are characterized as having been casualties of legislative gridlock. The amount of congressional gridlock is the percentage of issues that needed to be addressed but were not.<sup>13</sup> If foreign policy gridlock were increasing, we could conclude that domestic divisions were damaging U.S. abilities to pursue a liberal internationalist foreign policy. Instead of Kupchan and Trubowitz’s indirect approach, we provide a direct examination of gridlock on foreign policy issues.<sup>14</sup> Using updated data from Binder, we show that gridlock on foreign policy issues has not increased since the end of the Vietnam War or the end of the Cold War.

Figure 1 plots the amount of legislative gridlock per session for domestic and foreign policy issues for the 80th–106th Congresses. For each congress, the vertical axis (gridlock) measures the percentage of important issues for which there was no legislative action during that particular congress. The vertical lines mark the 91st and 101st Congresses, which were around the time of the end of the Vietnam and Cold Wars, respectively. Two trends stand out. First, the amount of gridlock on foreign policy issues is almost always lower than the amount on domestic issues. Second, contrary to Kupchan and Trubowitz’s argument, there is no clear increase in gridlock on foreign policy issues after 1970.<sup>15</sup>

Just as gridlock has not been increasing since the Vietnam War, we do not find evidence of an increase in gridlock after the end of the Cold War. Visual inspection of figure 1 does not yield an immediate answer, so we subjected the evidence to statistical analysis to determine if the mean amount of gridlock on foreign policy issues was higher after the Cold War than before.<sup>16</sup> If we define the post–Cold War era as beginning with either the 99th, 100th, 101st, 102d, or

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12. Binder, “The Dynamics of Legislative Gridlock.”

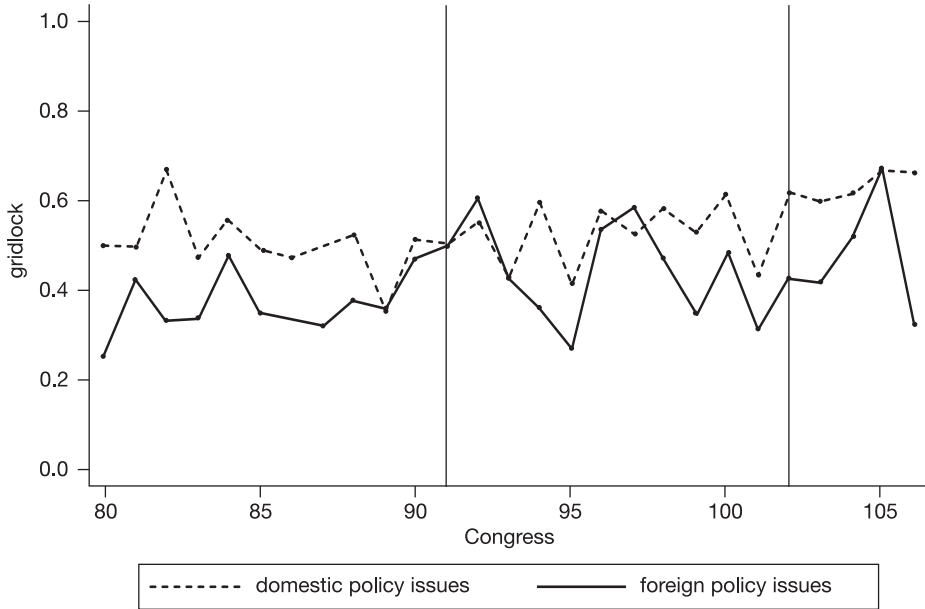
13. For a more precise and extensive explanation, see *ibid.*

14. We considered calculating DW-Nominate-based measures of moderates using only foreign policy votes, but that is beyond the scope of this article.

15. Statistical analysis supports this interpretation of the graph. For this and all later references to the statistical analysis and description of data sources, see our data appendix, [http://www.princeton.edu/~hmlner/forthcoming%20papers/CenterHolds\\_DataAppendix.zip](http://www.princeton.edu/~hmlner/forthcoming%20papers/CenterHolds_DataAppendix.zip).

16. To compare the periods before and after the Cold War, we estimated the probability of gridlock only as a function of a dummy variable that equaled “1” if the issue arose during the post–Cold War era. This result and others below are robust to different combinations of starting and end points.

Figure 1. Legislative Gridlock over Time, 1947–2001



103d Congresses, we cannot find any statistically significant increase in the mean probability of gridlock after the Cold War ended compared with before.

### *Public Opinion and Liberal Internationalism*

Kupchan and Trubowitz use survey data of the American public to show that citizens have grown more divided along partisan lines about critical foreign policy issues. To illustrate this, their figure 3 presents data from public perceptions of threats from major communist countries from 1948 to 1968. Kupchan and Trubowitz calculate differences in responses to the survey questions by party affiliation, and compare these partisan differences to responses to a later set of survey questions about support for military spending fielded from 1994 to 2004, in their figure 6. Kupchan and Trubowitz suggest that differences between figures 3 and 6 in their article show a decline in bipartisanship among the general public.

We take issue with this interpretation. First, there is no secular decline here; the 1952 and 1964 partisan spreads in Kupchan and Trubowitz's figure 3 were approximately 30 percent, which is close to the values in 2000 and 2002 and greater than those in 1994, 1996, and 1998. Second, the two sets of ques-



tions used to generate figure 3 are not the same. The question used for the years 1948–68, “How cooperative towards [the] Soviet Union should the United States be?” is very different from the question used in later years concerning whether to “increase or decrease defense spending.” It is well known in the public opinion literature that responses to different questions even about similar topics can produce different results.<sup>17</sup> It is unclear how to interpret Kupchan and Trubowitz’s data and whether it supports their conclusions.

To provide a consistent comparison over time, we collected more than sixty years of surveys on foreign policy preferences and identified commonly asked questions.<sup>18</sup> The question repeatedly asked on surveys and most pertinent to our discussion was, “Do you think it will be best for the future of this country if we take an active part in world affairs, or if we stay out of world affairs?” This question taps a central element of liberal internationalism, its policy of engagement with world affairs. Three responses were offered: take an active part, stay out, or don’t know. We match individuals’ responses to this question with their self-identification with the Republican or Democratic Parties.<sup>19</sup> For each survey, we calculate the mean response by party and plot the 95 percent confidence interval in figure 2.

Similar to what Ole Holsti shows, U.S. public opinion has consistently supported an active role for the United States in the world.<sup>20</sup> We observe no systematic declines such as those suggested by Kupchan and Trubowitz. Analysis of elite public opinion also shows little change over time in the era we study. More important, we observe relatively small differences between the parties in the public opinion data. Although the smallest differences were before the 1960s, differences after the 1960s were rarely significant, and when they were significant, they were several orders of magnitude smaller than the differences Kupchan and Trubowitz cite in their data. Interestingly, the largest cleavages were in the 1980s, during the Cold War. The post–Cold War era does not exhibit a growing partisan gap in public opinion, as Kupchan and Trubowitz suggest. Our analysis, which uses a single, consistently measured question over many years, does not support either argument about trends in partisan divisions among the public since 1970 or after the Cold War.

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17. Martin Gilens, “Political Ignorance and Collective Policy Preferences,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 95, No. 2 (June 2001), pp. 379–396.

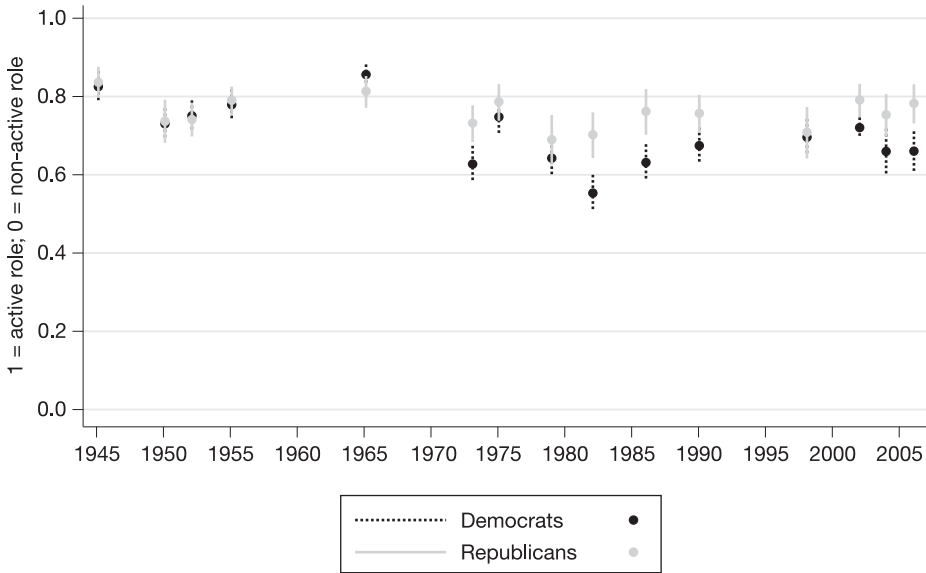
18. For sources, see our appendix.

19. We exclude “don’t know” responses and persons who do not identify with either the Democratic or Republican Parties. Similar analyses with a liberal or conservative dichotomy also supported our conclusions.

20. Holsti, *Public Opinion and American Foreign Policy*, p. 44.



Figure 2. Average Support for U.S. Role by Political Party, 1945–2006



NOTE: Means by party and 95 percent confidence intervals.

### *Bipartisan Roll Call Voting in Congress*

The third piece of evidence that Kupchan and Trubowitz provide plots the percentage of bipartisan House of Representatives votes each year, separated out by domestic and foreign policy votes.<sup>21</sup> Kupchan and Trubowitz define a vote as being bipartisan if majorities in both parties vote in the same direction, or if the two parties opposed each other, the difference in their support levels was less than 20 percent. Figure 1 in Kupchan and Trubowitz, covering the years 1898–1968, shows an increase in bipartisanship in both foreign and domestic policy; their figure 4 shows a decline beginning in 1970.<sup>22</sup>

21. Kupchan and Trubowitz code bills as foreign or domestic based on Keith Poole and Howard Rosenthal's data through the VoteWorld program. See VoteWorld, <http://Voteworld.Berkeley.Edu/>. Our categorization comes from David W. Rohde's data. See Rohde, "Roll Call Voting Data for the United States House of Representatives, 1953–2004," compiled by the Political Institutions and Public Choice Program, Michigan State University, 2004. We do not have any reason to expect any differences between the two data sets on their classification of foreign versus domestic bills, in part because Rohde's data are coded at a finer level.

22. Kupchan and Trubowitz also claim that a "structural break" exists in the data around the end

Kupchan and Trubowitz base their claims about bipartisanship voting patterns using all votes on either foreign or domestic policy. Votes in Congress, however, can be “substantive” or “procedural.” Substantive votes are ones such as “final passage of a bill” or “straight amendments,” whereas procedural votes are votes that “set up and govern the debate on the [floor] of the House.”<sup>23</sup> Procedural votes constitute a nonnegligible amount of the voting behavior analyzed by Kupchan and Trubowitz, as they do for our data: almost 30 percent of the votes from 1953 to 2003.<sup>24</sup>

Distinguishing between the two types of votes is important because substantive votes are clearer indicators of legislator preferences over a policy outcome and are tied more directly to the policy choice.<sup>25</sup> The literature on Congress rarely uses procedural votes to understand substantive policy debates. Research in American politics also demonstrates that procedural votes tend to be highly partisan.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, recent research suggests that the frequency of procedural votes and the degree of party polarization associated with them has been increasing since the early 1970s.<sup>27</sup> Importantly, Sean Theriault and others also argue that different factors drive procedural versus substantive voting.<sup>28</sup> Whereas party discipline explains voting on procedural votes, legislator and district attributes explain voting on substantive votes.<sup>29</sup>

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of the Cold War. This conclusion, however, is an odd interpretation of Kupchan and Trubowitz’s figure 4, which shows an increase in bipartisanship beginning in the mid-1990s. Figure 4 in their article is puzzling for their argument because it suggests an upturn in bipartisanship after the end of the Cold War.

23. Sean M. Theriault, *Party Polarization in Congress* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 162.

24. Some examples of procedural votes are “motions to extend debate” and “motions to disagree.”

25. Kupchan and Trubowitz are aware of the difference between substantive and procedural votes. See Mellow and Trubowitz, “Red versus Blue,” p. 662. They do not include it in their analysis, however.

26. Keith T. Poole, “Changing Minds? Not in Congress!” *Public Choice*, Vol. 131, Nos. 3–4 (June 2007), pp. 435–451; Gary W. Cox and Keith T. Poole, “On Measuring Partisanship in Roll-Call Voting: The U.S. House of Representatives, 1877–1999,” *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 46, No. 3 (July 2002), pp. 477–489; and Stephen Ansolabehere, James M. Snyder Jr., and Charles Stewart III, “The Effects of Party and Preferences on Congressional Roll-Call Voting,” *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No. 4 (November 2001), pp. 533–572.

27. Sean M. Theriault, “Procedural Polarization in the U.S. Congress,” paper presented at the annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, Illinois, April 20, 2006.

28. Frances E. Lee, *Beyond Ideology: Politics, Principles, and Partisanship in the U.S. Senate* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

29. Keith Krehbiel and Jonathan Woon observe that the vast majority of the American politics literature focuses less on procedural votes. See Krehbiel and Woon, “Selection Criteria for Roll Call Votes,” paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, D.C., September 1–4, 2005. Even when international relations/international political economy scholars include all votes in their analysis (which is rare), this typically comes with caveats. See, for example, Stanley D. Nollen and Dennis P. Quinn, “Free Trade, Fair Trade, Strategic Trade, and Protectionism in the U.S. Congress, 1987–88,” *International Organization*, Vol. 48, No. 3 (Summer 1994), pp. 491–525. More principled ways for differentiating votes are rare in the litera-

We do not argue that procedural votes are unimportant; they can certainly affect the legislative process.<sup>30</sup> Basing claims about overall support for liberal internationalism on the effects of procedural votes, however, is potentially misleading. Following other scholars, we disaggregate and include separate analyses of procedural, amendment, and final passage votes.<sup>31</sup> We show that Kupchan and Trubowitz's results stem almost entirely from the inclusion of procedural votes.

We begin with data as similar as possible to those employed by Kupchan and Trubowitz.<sup>32</sup> Our key measure is the same one used to construct figures 1 and 4 in Kupchan and Trubowitz's article, which calculates the percentage of votes in a particular year that were bipartisan and then graphs these percentages over time. Instead of aggregating all foreign policy votes, however, we break votes out by their legislative function.<sup>33</sup> Figure 3 plots the percentage of votes that were bipartisan for all foreign policy votes and for only final passage votes for the entire period for which the Rhode vote-type classifications are available (1953–2003).

Several patterns stand out. Looking at all foreign policy votes, there is indeed some evidence of a decline in bipartisanship over time, beginning as Kupchan and Trubowitz suggest in the early 1970s, though this pattern appears to slightly reverse itself in the mid-1990s. More important, this trend is decidedly less salient for final passage votes. For these substantive votes, bipartisanship does not decrease over time, and the percentage of bipartisan final passage votes hovers around 80 percent, which is much higher than when looking at all votes.

As suspected, the rise in frequency of both amendment and procedural votes and in trends in bipartisanship on procedural votes account for the difference between all foreign policy votes and only final passage ones. The top

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ture, and one attempt relies on classification procedures substantially beyond the scope of this article. Krehbiel and Woon, "Selection Criteria for Roll Call Votes." Excluding potentially important procedural votes must be balanced against the risk of including votes with little bearing on the outcomes. Our argument is that decreased bipartisanship on procedural votes alone would not constitute evidence of increased polarization on liberal internationalism more broadly. We also calculated bipartisanship measures for all Senate foreign policy votes and do not observe the decline in partisanship suggested by Kupchan and Trubowitz.

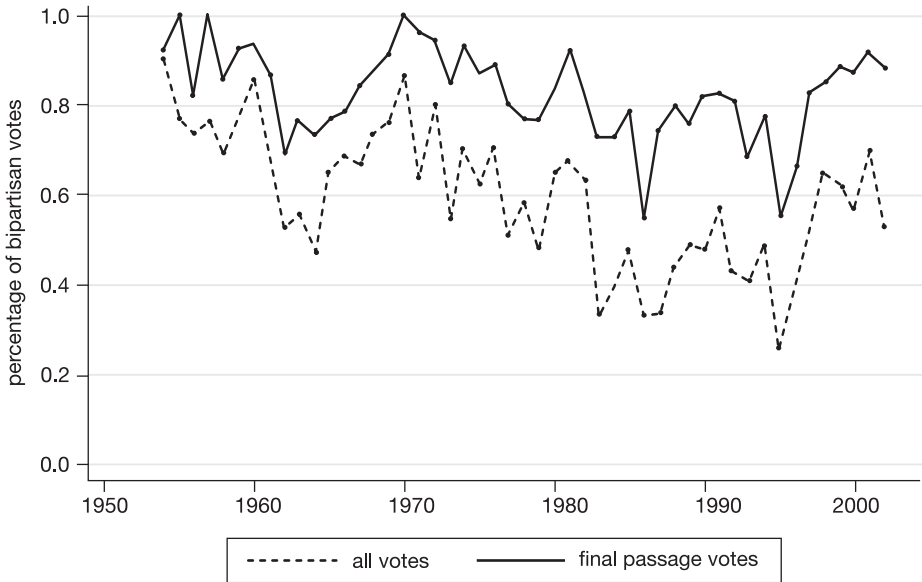
30. Kenneth A. Shepsle and Barry R. Weingast, "When Do Rules of Procedure Matter?" *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 46, No. 1 (February 1984), pp. 206–221.

31. Keith Krehbiel, Adam Meirowitz, and Jonathan Woon, "Testing Theories of Lawmaking," in David Austen-Smith and John Duggan, eds., *Social Choice and Strategic Decisions: Essays in Honor of Jeffrey S. Banks* (Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 2005); and Lee, *Beyond Ideology*.

32. We requested their exact data several times but were unable to obtain it.

33. To classify votes along these lines, we use Rohde's PIPC data, which codified votes by type. See Rohde, "Roll Call Voting Data for the United States House of Representatives." See also our data appendix.

Figure 3. Percentage of Bipartisan Foreign Policy Votes, 1953–2003

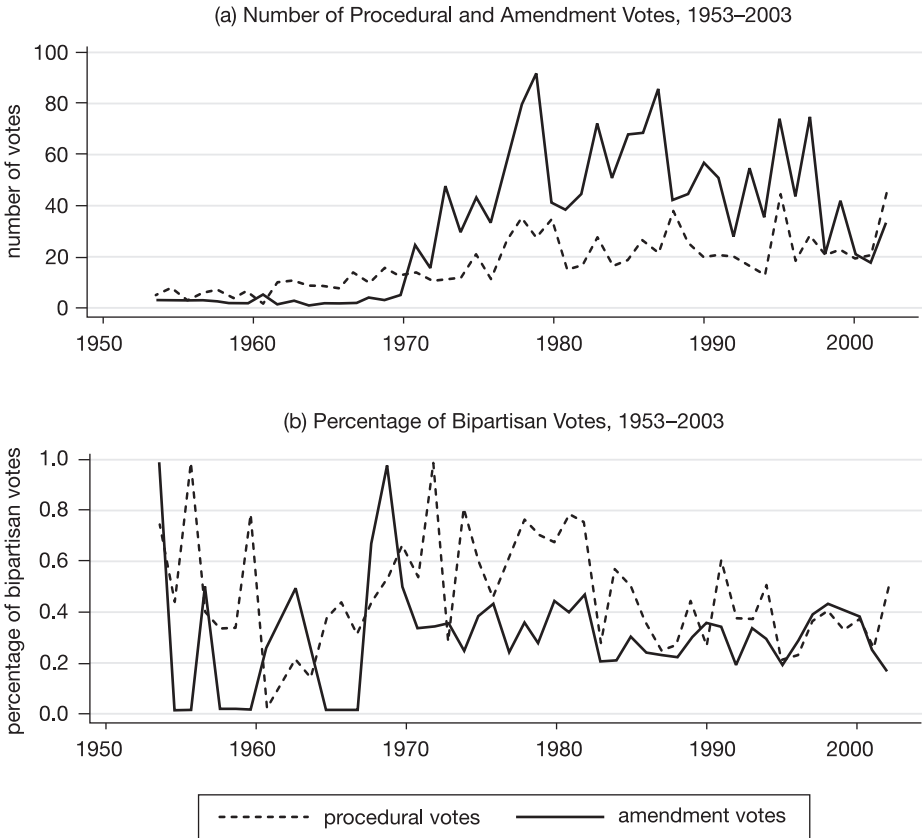


pane of figure 4 graphs the number of procedural and amendment votes over time. There is a sharp increase in the frequency of both types of votes around 1970; other research attributes this to a change in House voting rules in 1971 and the advent of electronic voting in 1973, factors that have little to do with international politics.<sup>34</sup> The bottom pane of figure 4 plots the percentage of bipartisan procedural and substantive amendment votes. Beginning in 1970, there is a steady decline in bipartisanship on procedural votes. For amendment votes, the level of bipartisanship remains steady following 1970, but is relatively low (hovering at 30–40 percent). For the period after 1970, both procedural and amendment votes display much lower percentages of bipartisan votes than do final passage votes.

With these two observations on the frequency and relatively partisan nature of procedural and amendment votes in mind, the puzzling discrepancy

34. Jason M. Roberts and Steven S. Smith, "Procedural Contexts, Party Strategy, and Conditional Party Voting in the U.S. House of Representatives, 1971–2000," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 47, No. 2 (April 2003), pp. 305–317. We also conducted a similar analysis to what we present here on Senate votes where there was not an equivalent rule change. We did not find anything inconsistent with our results.

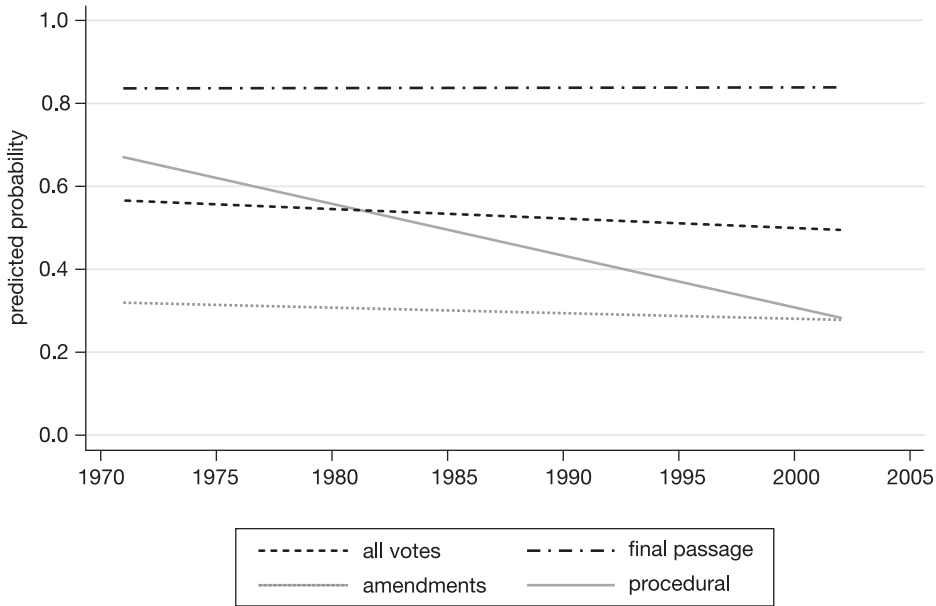
Figure 4. Trends in Procedural and Amendment Votes



between trends regarding all votes and those for only final passage votes becomes clearer. The increase in a form of voting with much less bipartisanship on average (i.e., amendment votes), coupled with declining bipartisanship on procedural votes and a modest increase in their frequency, produces the downward trend in bipartisanship of all foreign policy votes. Thus it seems that changes in procedures within the House, rather than fundamental shifts in support for liberal internationalism, are responsible for any perceived change in the overall pattern of bipartisanship when combining all types of foreign policy votes.

Figure 5 displays statistical analysis consistent with our argument that bipartisanship has not declined steadily since 1970. The lines represent the pre-

Figure 5. Predicted Probability of Bipartisan Votes over Time, 1970–2003



dicted probability that a vote will be bipartisan in a particular year, showing linear approximations of how bipartisanship has changed over time.<sup>35</sup> When looking at all votes, as in Kupchan and Trubowitz’s article, there is a slight decline in this probability from 1970 to 2003, though this trend is far from statistically significant ( $p = 0.388$ ).<sup>36</sup> The predicted probability of a bill being bipartisan decreases slightly for amendment votes, with a statistically insignificant negative coefficient ( $p = 0.439$ ). The predicted probability of bipartisanship on substantive final passage bills is actually increasing, though with a statistically insignificant coefficient ( $p = 0.935$ ). The explanation for the perceived decrease in bipartisanship on all foreign policy votes is apparent: the predicted probability of bipartisanship decreases from around 0.70 to 0.30 for procedural votes, with a significant negative coefficient ( $p < 0.01$ ). Substantive voting on foreign policy issues has not become less bipartisan over time.<sup>37</sup>

35. Our unit of observation was the individual bill. We estimated a probit regression with an indicator for whether a vote was bipartisan as the dependent variable and a time trend independent variable. We then calculated the predicted probability of a vote being bipartisan for each year.

36. We cluster standard errors at the congressional session level to allow for correlated errors within a session.

37. Semi-parametric regression models produce similar results. We do not argue that amendment

The data also do not support similar claims about the impact of the end of the Cold War. Statistical comparisons support the figures in showing that the end of the Cold War did not further erode bipartisanship on foreign policy. To contrast these two time periods, we compare the mean bipartisanship level from 1980 to 1991 (when, according to Kupchan and Trubowitz, bipartisanship would have been higher) to the mean bipartisanship level from 1992 to 2004 (when we should expect to see a decline resulting from the end of the Cold War).<sup>38</sup> We calculate the difference in these two means and test whether this difference is statistically significant. The average level of bipartisanship on all foreign policy votes was 5 percent higher after the Cold War ended. The mean percentage of bipartisan votes actually increases for all foreign policy votes, for amendment votes, and for final passage votes in the 1990s compared with the 1980s. The mean percentage of bipartisan votes decreases only for procedural votes. In short, the period after the end of the Cold War exhibited more frequent bipartisanship on substantive bills than the preceding decade.<sup>39</sup>

### *Cosponsorship of Legislation over Time*

This section presents new evidence about bipartisanship based on cosponsorship of legislation. Research in the American politics literature focuses on cosponsorship as a useful way to study legislators' preferences and bipartisanship over time.<sup>40</sup> Legislators treat cosponsorship as an important way to signal their policy preferences to their constituents<sup>41</sup> or interest groups.<sup>42</sup> They select which bills to cosponsor and actively recruit others to cosponsor legislation

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votes contain no foreign policy substance or importance. See Helen V. Milner and Dustin H. Tingley, "The Domestic Politics of Foreign Aid: American Legislators and the Politics of Donor Countries," *Economics and Politics*, forthcoming; and Helen V. Milner and Dustin H. Tingley, "Who Supports Global Economic Engagement? The Sources of Preferences in American Foreign Economic Policy," *International Organization*, Vol. 65, No. 1 (January 2011). Instead, the sharp increase in amendment voting combined with the remarkably steady level of bipartisanship on amendment voting suggests that procedure is the culprit for the apparent decline in bipartisanship, rather than a fundamental disagreement over substance. If bipartisanship on amendment voting had decreased significantly over time, then this would be more troubling, but additional statistical analysis shows this is not the case.

38. Results do not change if we use various alternative cutoffs for the end of the Cold War, the start date of the first period, or the upper limit of the second period. See our data appendix.

39. Again using standard errors clustered at the congressional level, we do not find that any of the results were statistically significant. Similar analyses of the military and economic votes produce similar null results.

40. Yan Zhang, A.J. Friend, Amanda L. Traud, Mason A. Porter, James H. Fowler, and Peter J. Mucha, "Community Structure in Congressional Cosponsorship Networks," *Physica A: Statistical Mechanics and Its Applications*, March 1, 2008, p. 1706.

41. Gregory Koger, "Position Taking and Cosponsorship in the U.S. House," *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (May 2003), pp. 225–246.

42. Shaun M. Tangera and David N. Laband, "An Empirical Analysis of Bill Co-Sponsorship in



that they have proposed.<sup>43</sup> Cosponsorship patterns also explain some aspects of roll call voting, even when one controls for a legislator's ideology and party affiliation.<sup>44</sup> To our knowledge, cosponsorship has not been studied in the context of foreign policy. Cosponsorship also has the theoretically appealing property of being "roll call independent."<sup>45</sup>

These features of cosponsorship make it directly relevant to our study of bipartisanship. Cosponsorship provides evidence of bipartisanship because it "[allows] all members the opportunity to take a position and side with a coalition of other members . . . absent the strategic considerations of which bills face roll call votes."<sup>46</sup> We find that the bipartisan nature of cosponsorship activity in foreign policy has remained relatively constant since 1970. Members of opposite parties continue to reach across the aisle and cosponsor legislation with members of the opposing party at levels that have not changed since the end of the Vietnam War, or after the end of the Cold War. The bipartisan "balance" of cosponsorship has remained constant over the last four decades.

By "balance," we mean the degree to which the cosponsors of a particular piece of legislation come from both sides of the aisle. If bipartisanship on foreign policy is decreasing over time, then the cosponsors that bills attract should be increasingly homogeneous; bills should be less able to attract cosponsors from both parties. We calculate a measure of cosponsorship balance to capture this notion. If the balance measure is close to zero, then a bill had approximately the same number of Democratic and Republican cosponsors. Increasing partisanship would correspond with an increase in our cosponsorship balance measure, with values getting closer to one.<sup>47</sup>

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the U.S. Senate: The Tree Act of 2007," *Forest Policy and Economics*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (July 2009), pp. 260–265.

43. Zhang et al., "Community Structure in Congressional Cosponsorship Networks."

44. Fowler, "Connecting the Congress"; and Jeffery C. Talbert and Matthew Potoski, "Setting the Legislative Agenda: The Dimensional Structure of Bill Cosponsoring and Floor Voting," *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 64, No. 3 (August 2002), pp. 864–891.

45. Roll call votes are the final stage of an elaborate strategic interaction in Congress. Agenda-setters and party leaders strategically choose which bills will face a formal roll call vote so that they can divide the two parties from each other while maintaining unity within their own party Clifford J. Carrubba, Matthew Gabel, Lacey Murrah, Ryan Clough, Elizabeth Montgomery, and Rebecca Schambach, "Off the Record: Unrecorded Legislative Votes, Selection Bias, and Roll-Call Vote Analysis," *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 36, No. 4 (October 2006), pp. 691–704. Roll call votes are therefore "not a random sample of the bills or issues that have been brought up in Congress." Laurel M. Harbridge, "Bipartisanship in a Polarized Congress," Working Paper (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University, 2009), p. 8.

46. Harbridge, "Bipartisanship in a Polarized Congress," p. 9.

47. For additional details and for how we classified foreign verses domestic bills, see our appendix. If the value is closer to 1, then most of the cosponsors came from the same party. See cosponsorship data from James H. Fowler, "Connecting the Congress: A Study of Cosponsorship Networks," *Political Analysis*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (Autumn 2006), pp. 456–487.

Figure 6. Cosponsorship Balance, 1973–2003

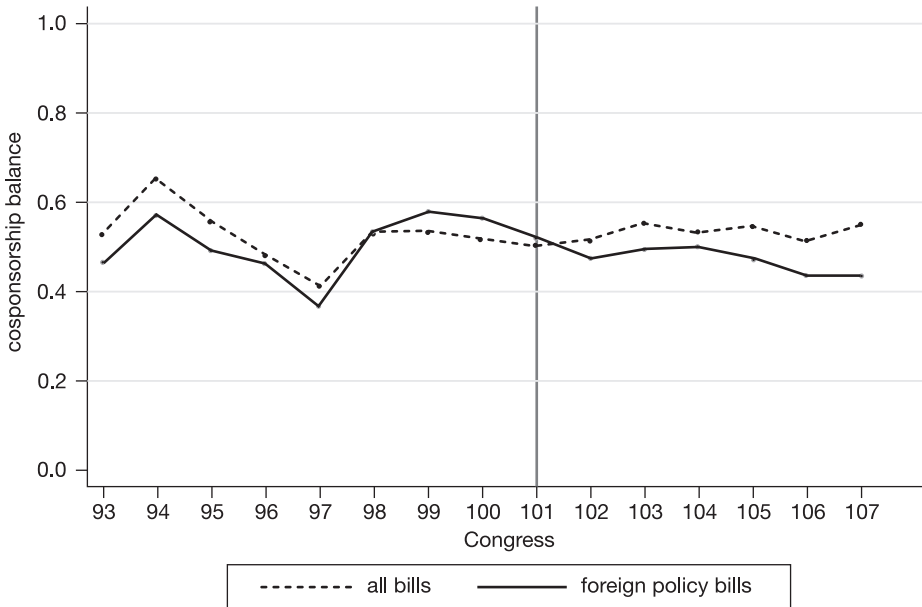


Figure 6 plots the balance in cosponsorship for all bills and for foreign policy bills from 1973 to 2003. The level of cosponsorship balance has remained remarkably constant since the 93d Congress, staying around 0.5.<sup>48</sup> The mean of cosponsorship over this time period is 0.53 for all bills, with a standard deviation of 0.05. For only foreign policy bills, the mean is 0.49, with a standard deviation of 0.06.<sup>49</sup> These findings are consistent with Laurel Harbridge’s study on congressional bipartisanship, which did not make any distinctions between foreign and domestic policy issues. Cosponsorship coalitions show that legislators are supporting one another’s initiatives on foreign policy, even across party lines, suggesting further that bipartisanship has not waned. As shown in figure 6, there is no evidence of a decrease in the cosponsorship balance after

48. Statistical tests support our claims that cosponsorship balances have not decreased over time. For further details, see the data appendix.

49. Harbridge, “Bipartisanship in a Polarized Congress.” Our measure of cosponsorship balance compares well with the measure of bipartisanship used in the roll call sections. A cosponsorship balance of 0.5 means that a bill attracted a cosponsorship coalition that is two-thirds from one party and one-third from the other party (i.e., twenty Democrats and ten Republicans cosponsored the legislation). In the roll call setting, if one-third of the minority party voted for a bill, that bill would almost certainly be considered bipartisan by any of the commonly used measures.

the Cold War. Regression and difference in means tests using various years for the end of the Cold War also support this finding that no change has occurred since the end of the Cold War.<sup>50</sup>

### *Discussion: The Necessity of International Engagement*

Why has bipartisanship in foreign policy remained steady, despite a decrease in bipartisanship on domestic policy? Kupchan and Trubowitz suggest several plausible causes of the decline in bipartisanship: "Over the longer term, the regional and ideological cleavages that have stoked polarization are poised to grow worse; the Red-Blue divide, the income inequalities driven by globalization, and the ideological homogenization of the parties can all be expected to intensify."<sup>51</sup> Many of these trends are evident, but they may affect foreign policy debates less than domestic ones.

Many forces have made the United States increasingly vulnerable to international events; technological change, economic globalization, the proliferation of nuclear weapons and intercontinental missiles, global warming, the easier spread of infectious diseases, and the decline in the costs of transportation are several examples. All of these factors mean that what happens in the rest of the world is more likely to affect the United States. It is hard to know how isolationism, or any serious retreat from liberal internationalism, could possibly make the United States more secure. It is also hard to imagine unilateralism being a successful strategy for maintaining U.S. security in the face of these powerful global forces. Presidents and many in Congress have recognized this and understand that they have to maintain U.S. global engagement. There will be continuous fighting over exactly how to do this, but presidents will be able to construct bipartisan coalitions for internationalism as long as this remains true. Today myriad global changes, which make it paramount for the United States to stay engaged and "internationalist," are more powerful than ever, and they are perhaps more influential than the domestic trends that work against bipartisanship. To be sure, the divisions that Kupchan and Trubowitz highlight are likely strong, but the ramifications of globalization may be stronger. Our data suggest that bipartisanship in foreign policy is not dead and that a liberal internationalist strategy, which relies on international cooperation and multilateral institutions, remains supportable at home.

Our analysis here focused on the degree of bipartisanship in foreign policy, but not on whether particular bills were pro- or anti-liberal internationalism. It

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50. For details, see the data appendix.

51. Kupchan and Trubowitz, "Dead Center," p. 40.

is possible that politicians have continued to agree over time on foreign policy, but that they are agreeing on policies that are less liberal internationalist. The field needs a clearer definition of liberal internationalism and a way to code foreign policy as being more or less liberal internationalist. Examining public and elite opinion, congressional activity, and executive branch policies all together to assess the state and future direction of U.S. foreign policy would be ideal.

### *Conclusion*

We agree with Kupchan and Trubowitz on the importance of the grand strategy of liberal internationalism that the United States has pursued since 1945. We believe that they correctly emphasize its domestic political foundations. We do not, however, find evidence consistent with their claim that “the halcyon era of liberal internationalism is over; the bipartisan compact between power and partnership has been effectively dismantled.”<sup>52</sup> Instead, we find that bipartisanship over foreign policy has remained strong since the 1970s. Despite increasing partisan divisions on domestic policy, there has been no trend toward increasing division around foreign policy. Even the contentious Vietnam War and the end of the Cold War have not changed this, though some analysts have pointed to an increase in the polarization of both elite and public opinion since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.<sup>53</sup>

We have proposed several ways to better analyze trends in domestic partisan divisions over time. Our four sets of indicators of partisan divisions are the broadest and most comprehensive measures used to date to examine trends in foreign policy. These data show no clear sign of a breakdown of bipartisanship on foreign policy. Legislative gridlock has not increased in foreign policy. Partisan divisions among the public over international engagement have not grown over time. In addition, bipartisanship on roll call votes on substantive foreign policy issues and cosponsorship of bills by legislators from different parties have not changed in the foreign policy area. All of these results indicate a continuing basis of support across a broad spectrum of partisan actors for a liberal internationalist foreign policy agenda. Presidents have to construct bipartisan coalitions of support on the many issues that make up a liberal internationalist foreign policy. These coalitions vary as the challenges of liberal

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52. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

53. See Snyder, Shapiro, and Bloch-Elkon, “Free Hand Abroad, Divide and Rule at Home”; and Shapiro and Bloch-Elkon, “Foreign Policy, Meet the People.” The active role question we use was not covered by these authors, who focus on the changes following the September 11 terrorist attacks, nor was the Kupchan and Trubowitz argument about this more recent era.

internationalist foreign policy change. Although they may not always choose to do so, presidents have been consistently able to devise such bipartisan coalitions, even after the Vietnam War and the end of the Cold War. In part, external pressures for continued engagement with the world and the costs of unilateralism have forced Americans to overcome domestic partisan divisions and work together to survive and prosper in a globalized world.

We also examined the conventional wisdom regarding the political effects of large geopolitical events such as the conclusion of the Vietnam War and the end of the Cold War on U.S. foreign policy. Although Kupchan and Trubowitz and others are again correct that these events affected political trends in foreign policy, any declines in bipartisanship resulting from these watershed events were only temporary. Over time bipartisanship reasserted itself and soon returned to its generally high levels. We speculate that the global nature of most problems facing the United States increases pressure for sustained, broad political support for international engagement. Liberal internationalism has not fallen victim to increasing partisan divisions, and it has the potential to remain a powerful guiding framework for U.S. foreign policy.

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