Everything Old is New Again:
The Persistence of Republican Opposition to Multilateralism
in American Foreign Policy

Abstract

The last two Republican presidents' hostility toward multilateral rules has produced striking departures from postwar American foreign policy, but this position is not as new as it sometimes appears. It has deep historical roots in the conservative wing of the Republican Party. Using data on congressional voting and sponsorship decisions, we show that Republicans, especially those from the party's conservative wing, have tended to oppose multilateral rules for more than a century. This position fit logically into the broader foreign policy that Republican presidents developed before World War I but posed problems in light of the changing conditions during the mid-20th Century. The increased importance of multilateral cooperation for U.S. national security during the Cold War, as well as the growing international competitiveness of American manufacturing industries, influenced positions on multilateral rules within the GOP, but did not reverse the party's longstanding position on the issue. We argue that congressional leaders' efforts to keep consequential choices about multilateral rules off the legislative agenda for most of the postwar era contributed to the persistence of this position. This move spared conservative members of congress from confronting the costs of opposing multilateral institutions, giving them little incentive to challenge ideological orthodoxy.

Michael Flynn
Kansas State University

Benjamin O. Fordham
Binghamton University (SUNY)

The authors would like to thank James Bisbee, Miles Evers, Jared Finnegan, Scott Guenther, Gerda Hooijer, Elif Kalaycioglu, Katja Kleinberg, Sumin Lee, Helen Milner, Cliff Morgan, Jim Morrow, Rachel Myrick, Glenn Palmer, Francesca Parente, Abigail Vaughn, James Vreeland, Mitchell Watkins, Ryan Weldzius, and participants at colloquia at Princeton University and Rutgers University for their comments and suggestions. Any remaining errors are our responsibility.
We are asked also to give up part of our sovereignty and independence and to subject our own will to the will of other nations, if there is a majority against our desires. We are asked, therefore, in a large and important degree to substitute internationalism for nationalism and an international state for pure Americanism.

–Senator Henry Cabot Lodge (R-MA), concerning the League of Nations, 28 February 1919 (Congressional Record, 65th Congress, Third Session, p. 4522)

It is a big mistake for us to grant any validity to international law even when it may seem in our short-term interest to do so—because, over the long term, the goal of those who think that international law really means anything are those who want to constrict the United States.


The last two Republican administrations have been notably skeptical of multilateral institutions. Among other things, President Trump ended U.S. participation in various multilateral agreements and organizations, including the Paris Climate Accord, the United Nations Human Rights Council, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). The Bush administration took some similar positions, ending U.S. participation in several multilateral agreements, including the Kyoto Protocol on climate change and the International Criminal Court, not to mention showing a preference for "coalitions of the willing" when longstanding allies objected to its plans to invade Iraq. Both administrations objected to other policy commitments their predecessors had made but they were especially skeptical of multilateral rules or organizations that could constrain American freedom of action.¹

¹ Our focus on rules follows from Ruggie's (1992, 571) widely used definition of multilateralism: "an institutional form which coordinates relations among three or more states on the basis of 'generalized' principles of conduct--that is, principles which specify appropriate conduct for a class of actions, without regard to the particularistic interests of the parties or the strategic exigencies that may exist in any specific occurrence."
To observers who value multilateral institutions, these actions read as shocking departures from longstanding American foreign policy. While it is certainly true that this level of hostility to these institutions has rarely been translated into policy since World War II, it does not reflect a new position among conservative Republicans. In fact, a substantial faction within the GOP has consistently opposed potentially binding multilateral institutions for more than a century. Even during the Cold War, members of this group never abandoned the skepticism of multilateral institutions that Henry Cabot Lodge and other Republican leaders expressed during the debate over the League of Nations. Although they were largely excluded from influence over policy for several decades, those hostile to multilateral institutions nevertheless continued to define conservative orthodoxy on the matter.

The persistence of Republican opposition to multilateralism is interesting for several reasons. In contemporary world politics, some multilateral institutions may be able to survive without American leadership, but active opposition from the United States clearly poses a threat. The deep roots of this position among conservative Republicans suggest that it will persist even after Donald Trump has left the political scene. Beyond its contemporary relevance, this pattern bears on some broader theoretical issues in the study of American foreign policy. In some respects, our conclusions parallel the pessimism of Kupchan and Trubowitz (2007) and Busby and Monten (2011) about the fate of the bipartisan liberal internationalist foreign policy consensus that prevailed during much of the postwar era. However, our research suggests that these writers tend to overstate the extent of the consensus during the Cold War. Opposition to multilateralism remained strong within the conservative wing of the Republican Party even then. On this issue, the Cold War consensus was more about keeping these dissenting views off the agenda than about widespread agreement. The renewed importance of Republican opposition to multilateralism suggests that even a marginalized political position may persist within a party or ideological faction for a long time. When circumstances change, it may again become politically important. Relegating a point of view to the fringes of political discussion is not the same thing as changing people's minds.

This paper has three goals. First, we present evidence of consistent Republican hostility toward multilateralism over the last century. This position originated in a coherent set of policies that Republican administrations developed before World War I. Second, we evaluate the impact of changing domestic and international conditions that might well have prompted an
abandonment of this stance during the 20th Century. We focus on constituent economic interests and the demands of the Cold War. Third, we propose an explanation for the persistence of this position through time. Changing an ideologically charged position is costly. Successful efforts to avoid consequential congressional debate about multilateral rules for much of the 20th Century gave conservative Republican little reason to pay this cost.

The Origins and Persistence of Republican Opposition to Multilateralism

Republican skepticism of multilateral rules emerged during the early 20th Century. It was most clearly evident during the debate over the League of Nations, but its roots lie in the policies that Republican administrations pursued during the quarter century before World War I. The GOP was the dominant political party during this period. Controlling the White House continuously from 1897 through the inauguration of Woodrow Wilson in 1913, Republican policymakers developed a new and logically coherent set of foreign policies. These included the acquisition of colonies, the construction of a substantial battleship fleet, and the forceful assertion of American predominance in the Western hemisphere, especially the Caribbean Basin. This surge of foreign policy activism is sometimes seen as a harbinger of the country's role after 1945, but it actually served quite different goals. Just as multilateralism played a logical part in American foreign policy after World War II, so unilateralism fit naturally into the foreign policy that Republicans developed before World War I.²

The Republican Party's commitment to tariff protection for the manufacturing sector was central to its foreign policy. Individual Republican policymakers occasionally expressed interest in tariff reform but serious departures from protectionism quickly encountered decisive opposition from other Republicans. While the pursuit of overseas markets and sites for investment was also a priority, just as it would be for later American policymakers, Republican protectionism complicated this effort and distinguished it from American global activism after 1945. It led to an emphasis on markets in less-developed areas of the world that would not export manufactured products to the United States. Developed trading partners had richer and more promising markets but they demanded reciprocal tariff concessions that Republican legislators

² We have explored the logic of this foreign policy and the sources of political support for it in greater depth elsewhere (Flynn and Fordham 2017; Fordham 2017; Fordham 2019; see also Palen 2015).
were unwilling to make. Republican policymakers thus became pessimistic about the future of these economic relationships and argued that other areas of the world were more promising.

In pursuing these new markets, American policymakers preferred bilateral trade agreements that allowed them to maximize their political leverage over economically smaller, less-developed trading partners. To avoid generalizing the tariff concessions granted in these bilateral agreements, the United States refused to accept the conventional understanding of most-favored nation clauses in commercial treaties. The "American interpretation," which persisted until 1923, greatly limited whether states enjoying most-favored nation status would automatically receive tariff concessions granted to other states (Viner 1924). American foreign economic policy sought unilateral advantages for the United States and did not envision a broader multilateral trading system like the one later American policymakers would pursue after World War II.

American foreign policy before 1914 resembled that of most other imperial powers at the time. Under the aegis of the Monroe Doctrine, American policymakers hoped to supplant European trade and investment, as well as European political influence, throughout the Western Hemisphere. This goal was unrealistic in China, where they instead pursued continued American economic access through international agreement to an "Open Door" policy of non-discrimination. Achieving these goals in the pre-1914 world of competitive, empire-building great powers required assertive diplomacy and power-projection capability. Republicans supported the construction of a battleship fleet for this purpose. Hawaii, the Philippines, and other territorial acquisitions under Republican presidents provided the bases necessary for effective power projection.

This foreign policy's economic and political premises were inconsistent with schemes for multilateral cooperation. The efforts to build an exclusive American sphere of influence in Latin America and to prevent other states from doing so in East Asia, like high U.S. tariffs, inflicted material harm on other developed states and so made cooperation with them difficult. The policy also entailed claims of privilege and unilateral exercises of power that would have been inconsistent with just about any plausible set of multilateral rules. Plans for multilateral cooperation discussed before World War I, such as a broad system of international arbitration, entailed limits on American power that most Republicans proved unwilling to accept, even when
offered by members of their own party (Campbell 1966). The political constraints on reducing American tariffs also removed a major tool that would later be used to pursue such plans, even if Republican policymakers had been interested in doing so.

Did this skepticism of multilateral cooperation really persist through the two world wars and the Cold War? After all, these conflicts revolutionized world politics and presented the United States with very different challenges and opportunities. The old policies arguably no longer made sense. Moreover, once characteristic conservative Republican positions on other foreign policy issues such as trade (Irwin and Kroszner 1999) and military spending (Fordham 2007) became indistinct or reversed themselves during the Cold War. There are reasons to expect their view on multilateral rules to have followed the same course. To assess its continuity over time, we examine five complementary sources of data on Republican foreign policy positions in congress. In each case, we are interested in whether Republicans, especially conservative Republicans, systematically tended to oppose multilateral rules and obligations. It would hardly be surprising to find that some Republicans took this position at every point along the way. The issue here is whether conservative Republicans as a group were much more likely to do so than members of other political factions were. The data suggest that they were, and that this tendency was quite strong.

**The League Fight, 1919-20.** The "League Fight" was arguably the most extensive public debate about the country's role in the world that the United States has ever had. As John Milton Cooper (2001, 8) put it "Democrats and Republicans alike believed they were contending for the soul of American foreign policy." During the course of the long debate over the Treaty, 72 of the 96 Senators gave at least one speech to the body setting out their position. The Senate took more than 160 roll call votes on the issue. The salience of this debate crystallized opposition to

3 Discussing President Taft's arbitration treaties in a 1911 exchange with Theodore Roosevelt, Alfred Thayer Mahan was especially concerned about the Monroe Doctrine. "The more I think, the more certain I am that the Monroe Doctrine is 'justiciable,' that there are settled principles and precedents in international law which apply; and they apply against the Monroe Doctrine. If this is so, the Commission of Inquiry must so decide, if honest; and equally arbitrators when it comes before them must decide against the U.S. This alone, if correct, condemns the treaty as it stands." (Mahan to Roosevelt, 2 December 1911, Mahan Papers, Library of Congress, Subject File, 1797-1915--Theodore Roosevelt.)

4 There are many historical accounts of the issues at stake including Cooper (2001), Knock (1992), and Widenor (1980, 300-348).
multilateralism as an article of faith among many Republicans for the remainder of the interwar period. Every Republican Party platform from 1920 through 1936 included language explicitly objecting to U.S. membership in the League of Nations (Peters 2019).

Pre-1914 foreign policy commitments fueled Republican opposition to the League of Nations. Senator Henry Cabot Lodge (R-MA), the Republican Majority Leader as well as the chair of the Foreign Relations Committee, had been a central figure in developing Republican foreign policy during the McKinley and Roosevelt administrations. Lodge's objections to the League centered on its potential to restrict the freedom of action and claims of privilege on which American foreign policy had rested under previous Republican administrations. The Foreign Relations Committee distilled these concerns into a set of formal reservations to the resolution of ratification. All of these "Lodge reservations" sought to rescind or limit multilateral commitments entailed in joining the League.5 For instance, one reservation forbade the League from objecting to American actions taken under the aegis of the Monroe Doctrine, or from questioning U.S. interpretation of the Doctrine. Another prohibited the League from taking action on issues such as trade and immigration that would have domestic repercussions in the United States. Reservations like these prefigured later conservative Republican objections to multilateral commitments. The Senate considered each of them in November of 1919 prior to the final rejection of the Treaty in March 1920, taking roll call votes on all but one.

According to Lodge's memoir, Senator William Borah, one of the leaders of the "irreconcilable" faction committed to blocking the treaty regardless of the reservations attached to it, informed him that he intended to vote for all of the reservations, then against the final treaty. Borah reasoned that the reservations would improve the Treaty if it passed (Lodge 1925, 147-8). We expect that other Senators who opposed the treaty would follow Borah's example, so we take support for each reservation as evidence of skepticism about the multilateral commitments embodied in the League Covenant.

Figure 1 provides information on the partisan and ideological character of the supporters and opponents of the Lodge reservations. It reports predicted probabilities from a logit model that includes party identification, ideology, and a dummy variable for each roll-call taken on

5 The appendix provides a complete list of the Lodge reservations.
these reservations during the November 1919 debate. As in most studies of roll-call voting, we use the first dimension of the DW-NOMINATE score, to indicate liberal-conservative ideology (Poole and Rosenthal 2007). It ranges from -1 (most liberal) to 1 (most conservative). The mean Republican and Democratic Senators in the Figure reflect the central tendency of the party. The DW-NOMINATE scores for the conservative Republican and liberal Democrat in Figure 1 are set to 0.5 and -0.5, respectively, and will be used as a point of comparison with debates in other congresses. As the Figure indicates, there was a stark party division on the Lodge reservations, with little intra-party ideological difference. Republican support for the reservations exceeded 90 percent on 12 of the 14 votes and never dropped below 50 percent. Democratic support never rose above 22 percent and was below 15 percent on 12 of the 14 votes.

6 The fixed-effect dummies allow the probability of opposing the Court's jurisdiction to vary in each roll call. It is set to the value of the closest vote for computing the predicted probabilities in Figures 1-3. This biases the figures against the relationship we propose. The standard errors used to produce the confidence intervals in the figures are adjusted for clustering on the individual member. We have treated the few Senators from third parties as Democrats in this and subsequent analyses. To the extent that this treatment is incorrect, it should bias our findings toward smaller partisan and ideological differences.
Senate Voting on Adherence to International Courts, 1923-2002. Senate debates on the jurisdiction of international courts offer an opportunity to observe partisan and ideological positions on multilateral rules over a longer period of time. Beginning in the 1920s, the Senate considered whether the country should accept the jurisdiction first of the Permanent Court of International Justice (PCIJ), established in the Versailles Treaty, then of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), established in the UN Charter, and finally of the International Criminal Court (ICC), set up by the Rome Statute of 1998. Although there were substantial differences in the courts in question as well as the circumstances of the debates, acceptance or rejection of their jurisdiction bears on the broader question of whether the United States should accept multilateral rules. All of the debates considered here centered on this issue.7

7 The appendix summarizes the context of each debate and lists all of the votes.
Figure 2 provides information on the partisan and ideological character of the courts' supporters and opponents in each debate. It is based on a series of logit models identical to those we used to produce Figure 1. In spite of the enormous domestic and international political changes that occurred between 1923 and 2002, as well as the important differences in the courts under consideration, Republicans were more likely to oppose international courts' jurisdiction than Democrats have been in every debate. In 1935, 1946, and 1985, there were also statistically significant intra-party ideological differences, with conservatives being more likely to oppose the courts' jurisdiction. These intra-party differences are not apparent in 1994 and 2002 because the Republican Party had become almost monolithically conservative by this time. Indeed, the mean DW-NOMINATE score in 2002 was actually 0.56, slightly to the right of the hypothetical conservative we used in the other debates (DW-NOMINATE = 0.5).

Senate Voting on the Bricker Amendment, 1954. While Senate debates over international courts show conservative and Republican opposition to multilateralism at several points over a long
period of time, the fact that there was only one vote on the issue during the entire Cold War era poses a problem. Conservative Republicans were arguably most likely to have abandoned their skepticism of multilateralism during this period. Multilateral institutions played a critical role in cementing the alliance system that the United States used to contain the Soviet Union. The absence of debate on this topic during the Cold War might indicate that Republicans abandoned their opposition to multilateralism for this reason, and that its recent resurgence reflects current conditions rather than a continuity from the first half of the 20th Century.

Our third source of data helps fill this gap. It arises from the 1954 debate over a proposed Constitutional amendment to limit the legal force of international agreements and the president's power to negotiate them. The amendment, sponsored by Senator John Bricker (R-OH), focused on many of the same issues that concerned opponents of the League of Nations and the international courts, particularly the prospect that these organizations could have jurisdiction over domestic legal matters within the United States. The nature and timing of the amendment suggests the robustness of conservative Republican opposition to multilateralism. Among other things, it would have required enabling legislation before the provisions of any international agreement could have the force of law. Perhaps most radically, it would also have prohibited the president from pursuing executive agreements that did not require Senate ratification. Floor votes on the Bricker amendment took place at the height of the Cold War under a Republican president who strongly opposed the measure. Indeed, at the time Bricker introduced his amendment, the United States was still fighting in Korea under UN auspices. These conditions should arguably have minimized conservative Republican preference for unilateralism in foreign policy. Nevertheless, the proposed amendment enjoyed the support of 63 co-sponsors, and the final version missed the necessary two-thirds threshold by just one vote.

Senate consideration of the amendment involved 7 roll-call votes. Figure 3 summarizes the results of a logit model of these votes identical to those used for the votes on the Lodge Reservations and international courts. It treats agreement with the position of Senator Bricker on these votes as a function of party and ideology. The pattern here resembles what we found for the court votes between 1935 and 1985, with conservatives and Republicans tending to support the

---

8 The measure that reached the floor, S.J. 1, was introduced on 7 January 1953, at the beginning of the 83rd Congress. Bricker had introduced it twice during the 82nd Congress, as S.J. Res. 102 on 14 September 1951, and again as S.J. Res. 130 on 7 February 1952 with 59 co-sponsors.
measure. Conservative Republicans almost unanimously supported the Bricker amendment, in spite of the Cold War and President Eisenhower's objections. Although some moderate Republicans defected, most also backed the measure. Democrats were far less supportive. The measure's narrow defeat came about only through their opposition.

In spite of the amendment's near-success and overwhelming Republican support for it, subsequent observers have usually treated it as an aberration. The conventional view is that it was "the last hurrah of conservative isolationism" (Nolan 1992). The failure of the amendment indeed revealed the inability of conservative Republicans to seize control of American foreign policy at the height of the Cold War, but it did not presage a change of heart by the members of this faction. The Bricker amendment never again reached the floor of either the Senate or the House but support for it persisted in conservative political circles. Various versions of the Bricker amendment were re-introduced 65 times between its February 1954 defeat and the end of the 115th Congress in 2018. These quixotic efforts have become less frequent over time but have
still recurred recent congresses. Most recently, Rep. John Culberson (R-TX) introduced such a measure at the beginning of 111th through 114th Congresses (2011-2015).

**Sponsorship of Anti-UN Measures in the House and Senate, 1973-2018.** Floor debates are informative but episodic. They do not reveal whether conservative Republican opposition to multilateralism was continuous over time or arose only in a few isolated instances. The sponsorship data help address this problem. Sponsorship and co-sponsorship decisions tap opposition to multilateralism that failed to get past agenda-setting by the Congressional leadership. For much of the postwar era, efforts to undermine the United Nations were the province of a small minority in Congress. Few of these proposals ever reached the floor. Nevertheless, members were free to introduce them, either alone or with the support of co-sponsors. That fact that many of them did so on a regular basis gives us a window onto conservative opposition to multilateral rules that might otherwise escape systematic study. Data on bill sponsorship are available from the 93rd Congress (1973-74) through the present—a long period that overlaps the end of the Cold War.

Like opponents of the League of Nations, critics of the UN have expressed concern that it might limit American freedom of action, empower critics and enemies of the United States, and perhaps even infringe on the country's domestic sovereignty. Suspicion of the UN has been a staple of right-wing rhetoric since the organization's founding. Mulloy (2014, 142) notes that Alger Hiss's role in setting up the United Nations helped fuel right-wing opposition, "but at a deeper level it was really about the fear that by joining such 'international monstrosities' as the UN, the World Health Organization, UNESCO, and NATO, the United States was willingly circumscribing its ability to project its enormous power onto the world stage for its own motives and in furtherance of its own interests--that it was yet another step away from the deserved spoils of victory."

Using the congress.gov database provided by the Library of Congress, we gathered data from the 1973-2018 period on bills that would have (1) withdrawn the United States from the United Nations, (2) reduced or eliminated American financial support for the UN, or (3) limited

---

9 Senate Library (1963; 1969) and Davis (1985) provide lists of proposed constitutional amendments that cover the period from 1926 through 1984. The congress.gov database covers the period from 1973 through the present.
UN authority in other ways. We excluded omnibus measures in which actions against the United Nations were only one of many provisions, as well as measures that criticized UN actions without proposing to undermine the organization itself. We then identified the sponsors and co-sponsors of each of the 292 measures we identified using the data gathered by James Fowler and his colleagues (Fowler 2006a; Fowler 2006b; Fowler, Waugh, and Sohn 2019). Most of the 3,402 sponsorships in the House and 578 sponsorships in the Senate proposed cutting funds to the UN, but 131 of the House sponsorships were to measures that would have entirely withdrawn the United States from the organization. The appendix provides a list of these bills and more information about how we identified them.

Figure 4 summarizes the results of a count model of the number of anti-UN bills each member sponsored in each congress. It compares four hypothetical members identical to those we used to examine the roll-call votes, showing the predicted probability that each would sponsor at least one anti-UN bill in a given Congress. The same pattern once again emerges. Conservative Republicans were substantially more likely to sponsor these measures than other Republicans, and many times more likely to do so than almost any Democrat. The patterns are quite similar in the House and Senate. It is worth noting that sponsoring bills to undermine the United Nations was not a rare event among conservative Republicans over the last five decades.
House Votes on the WTO and NAFTA, 1993-94. One possible objection to the evidence presented thus far is that Republican opposition to international courts and the United Nations might be anomalous. Conservatives could have objected to these institutions for reasons other than opposition to multilateral rules in general. If this is the case, then conservatives should not object when multilateral rules advance a goal they support.

The votes on the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) offer a way to test this possibility. The House approved both agreements during the 103rd Congress, on 17 November 1993 and 29 November 1994, respectively. Most of the same members thus voted on both measures. At the time, conservatives generally favored trade liberalization. While both agreements lowered trade barriers, the Uruguay Round agreement established the World Trade Organization (WTO), a broad multilateral organization with a quasi-judicial dispute resolution mechanism. The NAFTA agreement also contained a dispute resolution mechanism, but it was
not broadly multilateral. Indeed, it was essentially two bilateral trade agreements. As such, NAFTA was less open to the objection that it could erode American sovereignty or constrain American freedom of action. Thus, despite a generally similar set of legislators, we should expect to see differences in voting behavior due to the scope of the multilateral rules in the two agreements.

Figure 5 depicts opposition to NAFTA and the WTO by party and ideology using the House votes on final passage of these two agreements. The models used to produce the figure are similar to those we estimated on other roll-call votes, including only party and ideology. In this case, however, we also included a squared term for ideology, allowing it to have a non-linear relationship to the way House members voted on these agreements. Ideological voting patterns differed on the two agreements in ways consistent with conservative concerns about the multilateral rules embodied in the WTO. Conservative Republicans were far more supportive of the NAFTA agreement than Democrats were. By contrast, these same conservatives were nearly as likely to object to the GATT agreement setting up the WTO as were liberal Democrats. Support for the WTO was found mainly among relatively moderate members of both parties.

BIC statistics indicate that the non-linear specification performed far better than an alternative linear model of the roll-call vote on the WTO. As one would expect based on the predicted probabilities in Figure 5, a linear specification produced a somewhat better fitting model for the NAFTA vote. For the sake of comparability, Figure 5 reflects non-linear specifications for both. The appendix reports full model results and comparison statistics.
The floor debate confirms the reason for conservative Republican reluctance to support the WTO. For example, Rep. Howard Coble (R-NC) noted that while he had voted in favor of NAFTA, he "had not yet attained a similar comfort zone regarding the passage of GATT" in part because he worried it might erode American sovereignty. Rep. Duncan Hunter (R-CA) objected to the loss of "bilateral leverage" under the WTO. "Well, we are going to lose all of that in this World Trade Organization because now we are going to give this power away to a committee." Comparing the WTO to the UN, he raised the specter of the United States being out-voted in the WTO by small countries that could be susceptible to bribery by the Japanese or other American trade competitors.\(^1\) Coble and Hunter were not alone among conservatives in raising these

\(^1\) Coble's and Hunter's remarks are both contained in the *Congressional Record* for 29 November 1994, pages 29598-9 and 29597, respectively.
objections. In spite of their general support for trade liberalization evident on the NAFTA vote, conservative Republicans remained antagonistic toward multilateral rules and organizations.

The Impact of Changing Domestic and International Conditions

The persistence of conservative Republican hostility to multilateralism is surprising because the historical circumstances that had shaped it before World War I changed enormously over the century that followed. These changes help explain why many supporters of the postwar multilateral order have long regarded resistance to it as obtuse and anachronistic. In this section we will evaluate the impact of two considerations that should theoretically have increased support for multilateralism: (1) the security demands of the Cold War; and (2) the growing competitiveness of the American manufacturing sector during the mid-20th Century. We will also examine one condition that should increase opposition to multilateralism and thus provide an alternative explanation for the recent growth in Republican unilateralism: the distributional impact of globalization in recent decades.

The Impact of the Cold War. Before World War I, and perhaps even during the interwar period, Republican unilateralism made sense in ways it did not after World War II. It dovetailed with other aspects of American foreign policy. American protectionism and the country's efforts to build and enforce a privileged position in the Western Hemisphere made the acceptance of multilateral rules problematic. This project brought the United States into competition with other major powers, making cooperation with them more difficult. By contrast, American security during and after World War II depended on multilateral cooperation with other developed states. These circumstances should have diminished conservative Republican opposition to multilateral rules.

There are two mechanisms through which the increased importance of multilateralism during the Cold War might have influenced conservative Republicans. First and most obviously, the reliance of American Cold War strategy on multilateral institutions might have directly led them to reconsider their position. After all, these institutions were a means to fight international communism, a goal that they strongly supported. Second, Republican presidential leadership
might have reduced conservative opposition to multilateralism. Regardless of their party affiliation, presidents were directly responsible for managing American foreign policy, a task for which multilateral institutions were useful. Republican presidents were arguably in a position to persuade members of their own party to temper or abandon their hostility to multilateralism.

Because the data on sponsorship of anti-UN bills provide continuous coverage through several Republican and Democratic presidents and overlap the end of the Cold War, they allow us to test these two mechanisms. We focus on the House of Representatives here because the larger number of House members provides more explanatory leverage. Figure 6 shows the number of Republican and Democratic House members who sponsored at least one anti-UN bill, as well as the total number of sponsorships, in each congress from the 93rd (1973-74) through the 115th (2017-18). It suggests members of Congress were indeed less likely to sponsor anti-UN bills before the end of the Cold War. The Berlin Wall came down during the 101st Congress, and the Soviet Union dissolved during the 102nd.

Figure 6.
Sponsorship of Anti-United Nations Bills in House of Representatives, 1973-2018

![Bar chart showing the number of Republican and Democratic House members who sponsored at least one anti-UN bill, as well as the total number of sponsorships, in each congress from the 93rd through the 115th.]
The models in Table 1 test both mechanisms. The first two consider the effect of the Cold War, and whether it had a greater impact on conservative Republicans than on other members of Congress. The last two models test whether Republican presidents—and specifically multilateralist Republican presidents—tempered conservative Republican hostility to the UN in the House. The results indicate that both mechanisms made a difference.

Table 1.
Negative Binomial Model of Changing Political Conditions and Sponsorship of Anti-UN Bills in the House of Representatives, 1973-2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>-0.22 (0.17)</td>
<td>0.39 (0.32)</td>
<td>0.14 (0.25)</td>
<td>0.14 (0.15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DW-NOMINATE, first dimension</td>
<td>3.17 (0.19)*</td>
<td>3.44 (0.27)*</td>
<td>3.28 (0.24)*</td>
<td>3.28 (0.17)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cold War</td>
<td>-0.33 (0.07)*</td>
<td>0.54 (0.23)*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cold War * DW-NOMINATE, first dimension</td>
<td>-1.78 (0.39)*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cold War * Republican</td>
<td>-0.60 (0.38)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican President</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.001 (0.17)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican President * Republican</td>
<td>-0.61 (0.29)*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican President * DW-NOMINATE</td>
<td>-0.27 (0.30)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multilateralist Republican President</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.003 (0.17)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multilateralist Republican President * Republican</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-1.27 (0.32)*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multilateralist Republican President * DW-NOMINATE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.07 (0.42)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Republican President</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.21 (0.14)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Republican President * Republican</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.23 (0.23)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Republican President * DW-NOMINATE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.44 (0.27)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-1.51 (0.09)*</td>
<td>-2.17 (0.21)*</td>
<td>-1.67* (0.15)</td>
<td>-1.71* (0.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>10,231</td>
<td>10,231</td>
<td>10,231</td>
<td>10,231</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * p < 0.05. Standard errors adjusted for clustering on the individual member in parentheses. The unit of analysis is the member-congress.
Figure 7 displays the results graphically. It depicts the probability that a very conservative Republican would sponsor one or more anti-UN bills in a given congress. As expected, the Cold War had a substantial impact. Very conservative Republicans were nearly twice as likely to sponsor at least one anti-UN bill per congress after it ended. Although there is no way to be certain that the end of the Cold War, rather than other historical changes happening around the same time, is responsible for this effect, the evidence is consistent with that claim. Republican presidents also made a difference, especially when they were relatively sympathetic to multilateralism. The most multilateralist Republicans in our sample--Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, and George H. W. Bush--had substantially larger effects on Republicans in Congress, reducing the probability of sponsoring at least one anti-UN bill to 0.41, compared to 0.59 under Reagan, Trump, and the younger Bush. Under Democratic presidents, this probability rose to 0.71. International conditions thus made a difference, but they did not entirely erode Republican skepticism of multilateral rules.
Our finding that the end of the Cold War was associated with an upsurge in Republican opposition to multilateralism is not new. Previous research on bipartisanship in foreign policy has advanced much the same argument (e.g., Busby and Monten 2011, 137; Kupchan and Trubowitz 2007, 27-8). However, these earlier writers tend to overstate the extent of the consensus in support of multilateralism and other elements of the mainstream foreign policy consensus while the Cold War was going on. Opposition to multilateralism remained strong within the conservative faction of the Republican Party even during the Cold War. This pattern matters because it determined the direction of the Republican Party on the issue once the Cold War ended and conservatives became the dominant faction within it.

*The Impact of the Changing Interests of American Manufacturing.* Another potentially important source of pressure for change in conservative opposition to multilateralism is the changing competitiveness of the American manufacturing sector. The foreign policy of the Republican Party during the 1890-1914 period was rooted in this sector's demands for trade protection. The unilateralist policy that prevailed before World War I sought to limit the economic impact of competition with other developed states by excluding those states' manufactured products from the American domestic market. The policy also aimed at carving out an economic sphere of interest in Latin America, and to a lesser extent in East Asia, where American exporters and investors would have privileged access. By contrast, a multilateral order like the one the United States pursued after World War II promised greater access to developed country markets and sites for investment but required greater American economic openness than Republicans could countenance. For this reason, Henry Cabot Lodge specifically excluded American tariffs from the jurisdiction of the League of Nations in his reservations to the Versailles Treaty.

The changing competitiveness of the American economy during the last century raises two issues that are important for our analysis. The first concerns in the increasing competitiveness of American manufacturing during the middle of the 20th Century. American manufacturing became more competitive during the interwar period and especially in the immediate aftermath of World War II. Given the importance of the manufacturing sector to the
Republican Party in the early 20th Century, this development should have influenced their position on multilateralism in much the way the Cold War did, making participation in a multilateral order more attractive.

The second issue concerns the distributive impact of increasing globalization in recent decades. Participation in the global economy created winners and losers in American society, especially as it deepened. This development suggests an alternative explanation for the post-Cold War resurgence in Republican skepticism toward multilateralism rooted in current conditions rather than ideological continuity with the past. Evidence that this skepticism was more widespread among Republican members of congress whose constituents tended to lose from globalization would support this alternative explanation. We will examine several measures of constituent interests to test this possibility.

Indicators of constituent interests such as the size of the manufacturing sector could influence the foreign policy positions of their members of Congress in at least two ways. First, constituent interests could directly shape the views of representatives. Members might consider these interests either because of lobbying or simply because they understood their importance in the economy of their region. This is the direct effect we wish to estimate. Second, constituent interests could indirectly shape members' positions by affecting the party and ideology of those elected to congress. For instance, during the early 20th Century, Republicans tended to win elections in areas with large manufacturing sectors while Democrats had more success in agricultural areas. This indirect effect of constituent interests is less interesting here than it would be in other settings. Multilateralism was rarely salient enough to shape election outcomes, so it makes sense to treat party and ideology as if they were exogenous to constituent economic interests here. With this in mind, we will control for the effects of party and ideology when estimating the impact of constituent interests in this analysis and focus on their direct effect on members' positions.

Another model specification issue concerns the likelihood that the manufacturing sector had different effects on Republicans and Democrats. This is a common pattern in the political impact of congressional voting because some interests bode larger to one party than to the other (Bailey and Brady 1998). In our previous research, we found that the trade interests of the manufacturing sector were strongly associated with Republican foreign policy positions during
the early 20th Century (Flynn and Fordham 2017; Fordham 2017; 2019). We expect its changing interests over time to have a greater impact on Republicans than on Democrats. The models in Table 3 all use an interaction term to estimate separate effects for the two parties. We report conditional coefficients for each party rather than the components of the interaction so that readers can see the significance tests for the effect of the manufacturing sector within each party.

We estimated the effect of manufacturing employment in each set of roll call votes we have discussed, including those on the League of Nations and the Bricker amendment as well as the various debates on international courts. Table 2 presents the results. As the conditional coefficients for each party indicate, the manufacturing sector was indeed a better predictor of Republican than of Democratic positions on multilateralism, particularly during the middle of the 20th Century.
Table 2.
Logit Models of Effect of Manufacturing Employment on Roll-Call Votes Opposing Multilateralism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DW-NOMINATE, first dimension</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9.78*</td>
<td>7.68*</td>
<td>-0.91</td>
<td>6.83*</td>
<td>2.42*</td>
<td>8.14*</td>
<td>9.59*</td>
<td>4.29*</td>
<td>12.02*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2.89)</td>
<td>(3.66)</td>
<td>(2.59)</td>
<td>(1.78)</td>
<td>(0.65)</td>
<td>(1.15)</td>
<td>(4.73)</td>
<td>(1.36)</td>
<td>(2.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>-1.49</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>-1.22</td>
<td>-1.76*</td>
<td>2.71*</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.84)</td>
<td>(2.69)</td>
<td>(1.98)</td>
<td>(0.92)</td>
<td>(0.71)</td>
<td>(0.82)</td>
<td>(3.79)</td>
<td>(1.32)</td>
<td>(2.55)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of workforce in manufacturing sector:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(9.76)</td>
<td>(50.97)</td>
<td>(7.28)</td>
<td>(5.34)</td>
<td>(4.07)</td>
<td>(4.33)</td>
<td>(23.30)</td>
<td>(5.08)</td>
<td>(13.96)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(7.16)</td>
<td>(8.87)</td>
<td>(10.23)</td>
<td>(6.32)</td>
<td>(2.78)</td>
<td>(5.85)</td>
<td>(19.10)</td>
<td>(1.61)</td>
<td>(3.52)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>-0.98</td>
<td>-1.95</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>-0.30</td>
<td>2.31*</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>2.47*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.23)</td>
<td>(1.31)</td>
<td>(1.08)</td>
<td>(0.52)</td>
<td>(0.24)</td>
<td>(0.44)</td>
<td>(2.21)</td>
<td>(0.47)</td>
<td>(0.81)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roll-call votes</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>1,295</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>1,536</td>
<td>698</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>662</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>387</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * p < 0.05. Standard errors adjusted for clustering on the individual member reported in parentheses beneath the coefficient. For ease of comparison, conditional coefficients for each party are reported instead of the components of the interaction. The 1919 debate concerned the Lodge reservations to the League of Nations. The 1954 debate concerned the Bricker amendment. All the others concerned adherence to the PCIJ (1923, 1926-27, and 1935), the ICJ (1945, 1985) and the ICC (1994, 2001-02). All models include a dummy variable for each roll-call vote during the debate.
Figure 8 shows the impact of the manufacturing sector on Republicans in each debate. The extent of employment in this sector had little impact on the first two debates. This began to change as American manufacturing became more internationally competitive during the interwar period and later. At this point, Republicans from manufacturing states--mainly in the Northeast--became more supportive of multilateralism. These changing interests contributed to a substantial rift within the Party that persisted through the early Cold War era. The best-remembered internationalist Republicans of the mid-20th Century, such as Senator Arthur Vandenberg (R-MI), reflected these changing interests. These Republicans were more active participants in the making of American foreign policy and thus play a more prominent role in most historical narratives of the early Cold War era, but their prevalence within the Party should not be overstated. Committed internationalists were a minority among congressional Republicans (Eden 1984; Fordham 1998). The intra-party division associated with the manufacturing sector appears to have disappeared by the end of the Cold War. While the size of the manufacturing sector remained statistically significant in the 1994 and 2001-2 debates, its substantive effect was extremely small.
The data on sponsorship of anti-UN bills offer a better test of the effect of constituent interests for the last five decades. In addition to providing more complete and continuous coverage of legislative opposition to multilateralism during these years, data on House districts provide a more fine-grained picture of constituent interests than do the state-level data we used in our analysis of Senate voting.

Using these data, we evaluate not only the size of the manufacturing sector but also two other indicators of constituents' economic stakes in a relatively open world economy, a central goal of postwar multilateralism. While some manufacturing industries have remained highly competitive as the exposure to the world economy grew during the last 50 years, concerns about the effect of globalization on manufacturing employment has been a major political concern throughout this period (e.g., Trubowitz 1998, 169-234; Autor, Dorn, and Hansen 2013). We expect manufacturing employment to be positively associated with opposition to multilateralism, especially among Republicans, during the 1973-2018 period. The other two constituent interest
variables are factor-based indicators of the distributive impact of globalization. Because high-skill workers in a capital-abundant country like the United States should see their incomes rise with greater participation in the international trading system, we expect that representatives from districts with relatively skilled populations to be less skeptical of multilateralism. To capture this effect, we will exam the percentage of college-educated persons and the percentage of persons in white-collar occupations.12

Table 3 reports the results. As in the models of roll-call voting in Table 2, the models in Table 3 use interaction terms to estimate separate effects for the constituent interest variables on each party. We report conditional coefficients so that readers can see the significance test for these separate effects. As Table 3 indicates, the constituent interest variables had significant effects in most cases, but they were quite different for Democrats and Republicans. The results remain essentially the same with or without control variables for race, income, and immigration.

12 The nature of the Census data we used to construct these variables raises a technical issue that affects model specification. District-level data before the 109th Congress (2005-07) come from decennial censuses. These data thus do not accurately reflect congress-to-congress changes, erroneously implying discontinuous shifts in our economic and social indicators as the source of data moves from one census to another. Data from the annual American Community Survey solve this problem after 2006, but it is a serious issue for most of our sample period. To avoid drawing incorrect inferences based on congress-to-congress changes, our models of the sponsorship data all include fixed effects for each congress.
Table 3.  
Negative Binomial Models of Constituent Characteristics and Sponsorship of Anti-UN Bills, 1973-2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
<th>Model 5</th>
<th>Model 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DW-NOMINATE, first dimension</td>
<td>3.11 (0.20)*</td>
<td>3.19 (0.21)*</td>
<td>3.10 (0.20)*</td>
<td>3.18 (0.20)*</td>
<td>3.07 (0.20)*</td>
<td>3.15 (0.20)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>0.68 (0.24)*</td>
<td>0.63 (0.24)*</td>
<td>-0.91 (0.22)*</td>
<td>-0.99 (0.22)*</td>
<td>-1.49 (0.27)*</td>
<td>-1.63 (0.27)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Among Republicans</td>
<td>-2.00 (0.50)*</td>
<td>-2.03 (0.51)*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Among Democrats</td>
<td>2.87 (0.73)*</td>
<td>2.88 (0.74)*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of workforce in manufacturing sector:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Among Republicans</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Among Democrats</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of district with 4 years of college:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Among Republicans</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Among Democrats</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of district in white-collar occupations:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Among Republicans</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Among Democrats</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Hispanic white proportion of population</td>
<td>0.57 (0.27)*</td>
<td>0.54 (0.26)*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.57 (0.26)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median household income ($1000s of 2016 dollars)</td>
<td>-0.003 (0.002)</td>
<td>-0.003 (0.004)</td>
<td>-0.01 (0.004)*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign-born proportion of population</td>
<td>1.49 (0.65)*</td>
<td>1.65 (0.67)*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.62 (0.66)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-3.96 (0.29)*</td>
<td>-4.29 (0.44)*</td>
<td>-2.88 (0.37)*</td>
<td>-3.95 (0.92)*</td>
<td>-2.54 (0.40)*</td>
<td>-2.73 (0.44)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>10,230</td>
<td>10,212</td>
<td>10,231</td>
<td>10,213</td>
<td>10,231</td>
<td>10,213</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * p < 0.05; For ease of comparison, conditional coefficients for each party are reported instead of components of interaction term. All models include fixed effects for each congress. The hypothetical Republican and Democrat used for comparison purposes is assumed to have the mean ideology score for the party.
The party differences are easier to interpret graphically. Figure 9 shows predicted probabilities of sponsoring at least one anti-UN bill for members of both parties with different constituencies. The size of the manufacturing sector had the expected effect on Democrats, though it was not substantively large. As expected during a time when American manufacturing faced growing international competition, Democrats representing districts with larger manufacturing sectors were somewhat more likely to oppose multilateralism. On the other hand, the effects of these constituent interests on Republicans were both large and the opposite of what we hypothesized. Those from districts with small manufacturing sectors were substantially more likely to sponsor at least one anti-UN measure than were Republicans from districts with large manufacturing sectors. While the source of this surprising pattern is unclear, it rules out the possibility that the negative impact of globalization on manufacturing employment explains Republican skepticism of multilateralism in recent decades.
The results concerning college education and white-collar employment in the district population present the same puzzle. Among Democrats, the proportion of persons with a college degree was negatively associated with sponsorship of anti-UN bills, as we expected. This effect is small but meaningful, regardless of whether the model controls for income, race, and immigration. Among Republicans, on the other hand, the effect was the opposite of what we expected, and was statistically significant when we included control variables. Because college
education and white-collar employment capture the same theoretical relationship and are highly correlated, it is not surprising that they produce nearly identical substantive results. Once again, the expected relationship occurs among Democrats but not among Republicans. For Republican representatives, white-collar employment in their district is associated with more anti-UN sponsorship activity, not less. As with the results concerning manufacturing employment, this pattern is strikingly inconsistent with the claim that the negative effects of globalization are responsible for continuing Republican opposition to multilateralism in American foreign policy.

Taken together, the evidence concerning constituent interests suggests that they played a role in moving some Republicans away from their traditional skepticism of multilateralism during the middle of the 20th Century. It did not move the entire Republican Party away from its skepticism of multilateralism but instead helped produce the split between nationalist and internationalist Republicans during the early Cold War era. This split had largely disappeared by the end of the Cold War. Results for more recent decades are puzzling but entirely inconsistent with the argument that recent Republican opposition to multilateralism reflects the interests of constituents who lose from globalization. If anything, Republicans from districts that lost from globalization were actually less skeptical of multilateralism than were Republicans from districts that tended to benefit from it.

Explaining the Persistence of Republican Opposition to Multilateralism

In the last section we reviewed two considerations that arguably should have changed Republicans' minds about multilateralism. While both the Cold War and changing constituent interests had some effect, neither led conservative Republicans to reverse themselves. Such broad reversals in party positions have happened on other issues including race (e.g., Carmines and Stimson 1989; Schickler 2016), trade policy (e.g., Irwin and Kroszner 1999), and military spending (e.g., Fordham 2008). Why was there no reversal on the question of multilateralism? Our explanation has two parts. First, well-established ideological positions are costly to change. Second, agenda-setting by congressional leaders has avoided most legislative consideration of multilateralism in foreign policy. This evasion may have protected multilateral institutions but it has also spared members of congress from confronting the cost of opposing multilateral rules, removing pressure to revise conservative Republican orthodoxy.
**Ideology as a Stabilizing Force.** One source of stability in Republican positions is the constraining effect of ideology. Few source of explanation have received a greater workout by scholars studying congressional behavior, so this claim may seem obvious. However, if the explanation is to be anything other than a near-tautology--conservative Republicans remained opposed to multilateral rules because that is what conservative Republicans believe--we need to identify the mechanism behind it.

Treatments of ideology in existing research actually suggest at least two different mechanisms behind ideological constraint. The first involves logical connections among the issue positions comprising the ideology. In this line of argument, core beliefs about the appropriate role of government in the economy logically imply positions on a wide range of policy issues. The second mechanism is not ideational but social. In this account, the glue that holds various issue positions together is the traditions and practices of the group rather than the internal logic of the ideas. Leadership and the demands of group solidarity can durably link issues positions even if the logical connections among these positions are weak or ambiguous. Our conjecture that conservative Republican unilateralism is an inheritance from the party’s foreign policy stance during the early 20th Century is consistent with this social mechanism. By contrast, the ideational mechanism implies that the history recounted here is unimportant. If the internal logic of conservative ideology always implied a preference for unilateralism, it was bound to manifest itself at some point.

In the everyday meaning of the term, as well as most scholarly uses of it to explain political choices, ideology is primarily a set of ideas. The logical relationships among them constrains the ideologues who take them seriously. Left-right ideology--liberalism-conservatism in American parlance--is rooted in contrasting beliefs about the appropriate size and role of government in the economy. These core beliefs imply complementary positions on many issues. Hinich and Munger (1994, 20) summarize this understanding of ideology in stark terms: "the set of ideas comprising the ideology must causally imply the set of policies that citizens associate with the position. It is not enough for an ideology to be a shorthand signal, a correspondence between a name and a set of actions by the government."
Many explanations for congressional foreign policy positions point to logical connections between the position they wish to explain and core left-right positions on economic policy and the role of government. For example, Bernstein and Anthony (1974, 1198) explain conservative support for anti-ballistic missile systems in terms of conservative opposition to communism and their belief that "defense is one of the few legitimate concerns of the national government."

Similarly, Thérien (2002) argues that conflict over the growth of foreign aid institutions in the postwar era is a direct outgrowth of left-right differences over the government's role in redistribution at home. Thérien and Nöel (2002) explain left parties' greater support for foreign aid by linking this position to their support for a strong social welfare state. In explaining conservative skepticism of the IMF in congress, Broz (2011, 350) ties it to their belief in "a small role for government in the domestic economy." The IMF represents a similar interference with market forces by a large and potentially corrupt bureaucracy.

A variant of this account of ideology stresses its psychological roots in the minds of adherents rather than the internal logic of the ideas. Carney et al. (2008, 834) find that that liberals tend to be more open, tolerant, and drawn to diversity, while conservatives tend to place more emphasis on convention and order. Hirsh et al. (2010) find that conservatism correlates with traits like traditionalism and orderliness, while liberalism correlated with openness, compassion, and egalitarianism. Rathbun (2011) applies this argument to the political debates over the design of the international order in the 1940s. He finds that liberals tended to be more trusting and community-oriented, while conservatives were generally less trusting and more concerned about the possibility that other states would use multilateral rules to exploit the United States. In these accounts, psychological proclivities take the place of logical coherence in explaining why some positions go together. What the two lines of argument share is an emphasis on the necessity of these connections in the mind of the individual ideologue.

Although it fit with the commonsense meaning of the term, a purely ideational or psychological understanding of how ideology constrains adherents' foreign policy positions is difficult to sustain when viewing the phenomenon over a long period of time. The specific positions associated with particular ideological orientations have changed. Conservative Republicans once held that trade protection and small military budgets followed from the logic of conservatism but reversed themselves over the course of the postwar era (Irwin and Kroszner 1997; Fordham 2008). Finding any consistent ideational content in liberal-conservative ideology
is even more difficult when historical coverage extends before the New Deal, because the terms
themselves were not yet widely used. As Ellis and Stimson (2012, 5) note, "prior to the 1930s,
the term ["liberal"] was used rarely, if at all, by mainstream politicians of any political
persuasion in the United States." In its current form, "conservatism" was initially a shorthand for
opposition to the New Deal, gradually acquiring other connotations over time (Ellis and Stimson
2012, 8-10; Rotunda 1986). The term has a longer history in American politics but has not
retained the same meaning. Henry Cabot Lodge considered himself a conservative because he
sought to build up the reach and power of the American state, a self-conception that would
puzzle modern conservatives interested in limited government (Widenor 1980, 61-2).

Even if one sets aside the anachronistic terms and focuses instead on the issue positions
later associated with liberal and conservative ideological orientations, the political lineup before
the New Deal is inconsistent with the claim that conservative positions on core economic issues
implied opposition to multilateral rules. The internal politics of the Republican Party at the time
of the League fight provide systematic evidence for this claim. At the time, Republicans were
divided between party regulars and insurgent Progressives who had supported Theodore
Roosevelt's third-party campaign for president in 1912. Progressives took a range of leftist
positions on domestic economic policy issues, such as labor rights, anti-trust regulation, and
consumer protection, that have led some historians to identify them as the antecedents of modern
liberals (e.g., Wolraich 2014). Brady and Epstein (1997, 45) identify 12 Progressive Republicans
in the Senate during the 66th Congress where the League fight took place.13 These Senators had
a mean DW-NOMINATE score of 0.22, making them substantially more "liberal" than regular
Republicans, whose mean was 0.49. Both groups were substantially more "conservative" than
any Democrat, whose DW-NOMINATE scores ranged from -0.03 to -0.48, with a mean of -
0.28.14

If the issue positions we now consider liberal and conservative logically implied positions
on multilateralism, then Progressive Senators should have been less likely to support the Lodge

13 The Progressive Senators were Hiram Johnson (CA), William Borah (ID), Albert Cummins (IA), William Kenyon
(IA), Arthur Capper (KS), George Norris (NE), Asle Gronna (ND), Knute Nelson (MN), Wesley Jones (WA), Miles
Poindexter (WA), Robert LaFollette (WI), and Irvine Lenroot (WI).

14 The 15 Senators with the lowest (i.e., most liberal) DW-NOMINATE scores were Southern Democrats whose
views on many issues, particularly race, were far from "liberal." This fact that further underscores the anachronism
of using liberal-conservative ideology during this period.
reservations than other Republicans were. The models in Table 4 test this hypothesis. In fact, Progressives were indistinguishable from other Republicans on these roll-call votes. The coefficients for the two groups of Republicans, which compare each to Democrats, are nearly identical in the first model. When ideology is added in the second model, it appears that Party regulars, not the Progressives, were more supportive of the Treaty and thus less likely to favor the reservations. In reality, this result merely cancels out Progressives' more liberal ideology scores. As the predicted probabilities at the foot of the table indicate, the two groups voted identically.15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regular Republican</td>
<td>6.03 (0.37)*</td>
<td>-2.60 (0.86)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progressive Republican</td>
<td>6.02 (0.48)*</td>
<td>0.54 (0.72)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology (DW-NOMINATE, first dimension)</td>
<td>13.58 (1.44)*</td>
<td>13.58 (1.44)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-2.26 (0.47)*</td>
<td>0.87 (0.57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Votes</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>1,295</td>
<td>1,295</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Predicted probability of supporting a reservation:**

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Progressive Republican</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular Republican</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * p < 0.05. Standard errors in parentheses. The reservations and the outcome of each vote are listed in Table 1. The model includes a dummy variable for each roll-call, to account for the different baseline probability of supporting the various reservations. Predicted probabilities are computed assuming the closest vote taken during the debate. Those from the second model assume the average DW-NOMINATE score for each type of partisan.

The claim that the mechanism behind ideology in American politics is primarily social rather than ideational does not mean that adherents of these ideologies see no connections among the positions they espouse. There are potentially many such connections, though. Not all of them imply the same policy positions. For instance, in linking one's position on the IMF to core conservative beliefs, one could argue either that the organization is a form of big government

---

15 The 1923 and 1926-7 debates on the jurisdiction of the Permanent Court of International Justice produced the same results concerning Progressive Republicans. In 1923 debate, all 7 remaining Progressives and all but one Regular voted against accepting the jurisdiction of the PCIJ. The same 7 Progressives were still in the Senate for the 1926-7 debate, were statistically indistinguishable from other Republicans.
transferred to the international stage, or that it is an international effort to rein in big government and spread free market institutions internationally. Conservatives and their leaders as a social group decide which of these potential connections will be salient. This view of ideology is not uncommon in research in the field of American politics, though it is often presented in elliptical ways. For instance, in their study of the role of ideology in American politics, Stimson and Ellis (2012, 2) write that ideology is defined by "social forces and political strategy." Similarly, Poole and Rosenthal (1997, 35) write that ideological constraint comes about "either through the discipline of powerful leaders or through successful trades."

The frequent re-introduction of specific proposals, such as the Bricker amendment or bills to withdraw the United States from the United Nations, are one of the social processes that reinforced the connection between these positions and membership in the conservative Republican political faction in Congress. By the 1970s, it was surely clear to many of those who introduced these bills that they had little chance of serious consideration. They nevertheless acted to demonstrate their loyalty to the conservative social circles from which they drew political support and inspiration. These demonstrations of loyalty, in turn, reinforced the faction's commitment to the policy. The remarks of Rep. John Ashbrook (R-OH) on re-introducing the Bricker amendment in January 1978 illustrate the social significance of his action:

Since I first came to Congress, I have introduced at the start of each session the famous Bricker amendment. It bears the name of that great patriot and Senator from my state of Ohio, John W. Bricker. Incidentally, it was my privilege to be present at a meeting of the United Conservatives of Ohio in Columbus last Wednesday night and to introduce Senator Bricker and Senator Lausche when they received the well-deserved recognition the UCO bestowed upon them. Both men are in their eighties but there are few now serving in the US Senate who could match their intelligence, understanding of the issues, clarity of thought and speech and, even more important, patriotism and commitment to American principles. The Senate knows few John Brickers and Frank Lausches today.16

Ashbrook's connections to conservatives in his home state find an echo in others who introduced the Bricker amendment long after its 1954 defeat. Rep. Helen Chenoweth (R-ID) introduced the measure in 1997 and 1999, receiving praise in the right-wing press for doing so (The Spotlight 1997). Earlier in her political career, Chenoweth had served as the chief of staff

for Rep. Steve Symms (R-ID), who had introduced the measure four times during his tenure in the House (Archibold 2006). The Bricker amendment was not central to the careers of either Symms or Chenoweth—neither chose to discuss the measure on the House floor when they introduced it—but their actions suggest how a policy position can be transmitted socially through time. Abandoning an established position, even one as arguably extreme and anachronistic as the Bricker amendment, is costly. It risks alienating some group members, impugning past and present leaders associated the old position, and calling into question the solidity of the group's other ideological commitments. Reiterating the party line is generally more rewarding.

The social rather than ideational character of liberal-conservative ideology in American politics matters for the durability of conservative Republican opposition to multilateral rules. If the source of the ideological constraint were the internal logic or psychological roots of conservative thinking, then changing the position would require dispensing with conservative ideology entirely. Otherwise, conservatives would almost inevitably return to the old position for logical or psychological reasons. If ideology is essentially the result of a social process, then the group and its leaders could decide to change their position, even if doing so is costly. Indeed, both liberals and conservatives have made just such moves on other issues in the past. This account of ideology points up the importance of the historical development of these positions and holds open the possibility that they may change.

**Agenda-Setting and Gatekeeping.** By itself, the constraining effect of ideology is not enough to explain continuing Republican opposition to multilateral rules. Changing the party's orthodox position would have been costly but it was not impossible. Moreover, adherence to the old position also had costs. By the mid-20th Century, multilateral rules had become important for managing American relationships with its developed allies and held economic advantages for the American manufacturing sector, with its longstanding ties to the Republican Party. The evidence reviewed in the last section suggests that these considerations led some Republicans to temper or change their position on the issue. Why wasn't this change broader, as it was on other foreign policy issues?

The answer to this question concerns gatekeeping by congressional leaders to keep conservative opponents of multilateralism away from leadership positions on foreign policy.
These leaders then sought to keep measures would seriously undermine the role of multilateralism in American foreign policy, particularly treaty debates where a minority could prevail, off the legislative agenda. These efforts shielded multilateralism from its domestic political opponents but also meant that conservative Republicans rarely had to confront the costs of actually repudiating American commitment to multilateral rules. It meant they had little reason to challenge party orthodoxy.

During the Cold War, presidents and congressional leaders generally supported multilateralism in foreign policy more than conservative Republicans did. This was obviously the case for Democrats, who controlled both the House and the Senate for nearly the entire period, but it remained true even when Republicans held congressional majorities. The Senate was especially important because of its treaty-ratification power. When Republicans took charge, members of its internationalist wing occupied key foreign policy positions. For instance, all of the Republicans who chaired the Senate Foreign Relations Committee during the Cold War had DW-NOMINATE scores to the left of the party mean. Indeed, this was true of every Republican Foreign Relations Committee chair between the death of Henry Cabot Lodge in 1924 and the accession of Jesse Helms in 1995. The famously internationalist Arthur Vandenberg, who sponsored the resolution ratifying the UN Charter in 1945, was actually the closest to the Republican mean during this long period. Republican presidential nominees were also more internationalist than the rest of the party during the crucial years during and after World War II, when the United States made its most important multilateral commitments. Things might have turned out differently if Republicans had chosen an isolationist in 1940, rather than the internationalist Wendell Willkie, or Robert Taft instead of Dwight Eisenhower in 1952.

The nature of the issue made it possible for presidents and congressional leaders to keep the issue of multilateral rules off the legislative agenda. Once the United States made its major initial multilateral commitments in the immediate postwar era, multilateralism required less legislative action than military spending, where a vote on the annual budget was unavoidable, or trade policy, where occasional votes were also difficult to avoid. Presidents could use executive agreements to avoid the necessity of Senate treaty ratification. As one account of Senate treaty powers noted, "since the initial post-World War II security treaties…security commitments have been made almost entirely by means other than treaties" (Congressional Research Service 2001, 247). Beyond that, the central role of the United States in world politics made it possible for
American policymakers to exercise influence over the shape of international institutions even when the United States has not ratified—or even signed—the multilateral agreements that established them.

Avoiding floor votes about multilateral rules no doubt appeared prudent to congressional leaders. The near-passage of the Bricker amendment in 1954 vividly illustrated what might happen if there were a serious debate on the matter. The measures that died in the Foreign Relations Committee included all of the re-introduced versions of the Bricker amendment and nearly all of the anti-UN bills in our sample. Of the 292 anti-UN bills we identified between 1973 and 2018, just 10 (3.4%) received floor consideration and only one (0.3%) became law. By comparison, of the 15,406 bills related to international affairs introduced during this same period, 21.3% received floor consideration, and 3.0% became law.\footnote{Numbers and bill classification drawn from the congress.gov database.} Agenda-setting affected not only efforts to turn back multilateralism but also measures that would have advanced American adherence to it. Many multilateral agreements that the Senate might have embarrassingly rejected were withheld from debate. For example, in a direct response to the Bricker amendment, the Eisenhower administration agreed to shelve the Genocide Convention, then before the Foreign Relations Committee (Tananbaum 1985, 92). The same practice extended to other multilateral human rights agreements. As of 2017, the United States had ratified only 17 of the 46 UN-sponsored human rights treaties it had signed (Von Stein 2019).

While this strategy allowed the executive branch to operate within existing multilateral institutions largely unimpeded during the Cold War, it had the perverse effect of giving conservative Republicans no reason to reconsider their position on the issue. If they had been forced to confront the costly consequences of rejecting multilateral rules, they might have chosen to take a new position and explain it to the party faithful in terms that made it seem consonant with their other partisan and ideological positions. Vandenberg, long considered a leading conservative, did precisely this when supporting the establishment of the United Nations in 1945 (Gazell 1973, 385-6). Even though most Republicans ended up supporting some version of the Bricker amendment in 1954, the measure discomfited some who had initially been inclined to support it, especially given the strong opposition of the Eisenhower administration. Some of the 63 Senators who had sponsored the original measure ended up voting to weaken it, and 12 even
voted against its final passage (Grant 1985, 573-4). If such consequential votes had happened more often, the process might have led to a lasting change in the position associated with the conservative Republican faction. Of course, further votes on measures like the Bricker amendment could have been costly, but the results need not have been disastrous. When it was ultimately brought to the floor in 1986, after decades languishing in committee, the Genocide Convention was ultimately approved by a Senate vote of 83-11, becoming one of the few human rights treaties the United States has ratified in the postwar era.

Congressional gatekeeping and agenda-setting to protect American multilateral commitments ended in the 1990s. The Republican Party became increasingly conservative, and, as we have seen, the connection between conservatism and opposition to multilateralism became stronger. The party no longer consistently chose congressional leaders who supported multilateralism. When Republicans gained control of the Senate following the 1994 elections, Jesse Helms (R-NC) became chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. He sponsored and secured floor passage of a series of measures intended to undermine the functioning of the International Criminal Court, the UN, and other multilateral organizations. These actions are often seen as the end of the bipartisan consensus on American foreign policy. It would be more accurate to understand them as evidence that the bipartisan consensus was never as far-reaching as it sometimes seemed.

**Conclusion**

Republicans, particularly members of the party's most conservative faction, have tended to oppose American commitment to multilateral rules since the early 20th Century. This stance fit logically with other elements of the foreign policy that Republican leaders had developed during their period of electoral dominance before World War I. Opposition to multilateralism became party orthodoxy during the debate over the League of Nations in 1919-20. The increasing international competitiveness of the American manufacturing sector during the middle of the 20th Century, as well as the security demands of the Cold War, produced a split within the party on the issue and muted conservative unilateralism to some extent. Even so, the conservative Republican position on multilateral institutions did not reverse itself or become indistinct, as the party's old positions on military spending and trade did during this same period. With the end of the Cold War and the increasing conservatism of the party as a whole, opposition to
multilateralism reemerged as the dominant position within the party. As the last two Republican administrations suggest, the party's position on this question is not confined to its congressional delegation and has potentially important consequences for American foreign policy and perhaps even for the prevailing world order.

We are certainly not the first to draw attention to potentially important changes in the politics of foreign policy in the United States during the last two decades (e.g., Busby and Monten 2011; Chaudoin, Milner, and Tingley 2010; Kupchan and Trubowitz 2007). However, our work suggests two departures from this line of research. First, different patterns may manifest themselves on different foreign policy issues. Republicans have held fairly consistent views on multilateralism over time but not on military spending or trade. This will complicate efforts to group positions on these and other issues together under the rubric of "liberal internationalism" or other summary foreign policy orientations. Second, the significance of bipartisanship (or its absence) on roll-call votes may be less than meets the eye. It reflects the issues that agenda-setters allowed to reach the floor more than actual agreement on critical foreign issues. To the extent that it depends on the agenda-setter, bipartisanship could come and go without members or their constituents changing their foreign policy positions. Shifts in the political balance within and between two parties could change the agenda-setter, as it did when Republicans took control of the Senate in 1995, and Jesse Helms became chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. These changes, in turn, may have little or nothing to do with foreign policy. Change and continuity in the positions of major factions on specific issues may reveal more about the politics of foreign policy than the presence or absence of bipartisanship.

In understanding the positions of these political factions, it is important to consider their development over time. The cost of changing a position associated with a faction's ideological brand means that these positions can persist for a long period of time. Their origins may lie in the past rather than in current conditions. This should not be surprising. Because it has been more than 70 years since the end of World War II, it is easy to forget just how rapidly the world role of the United States changed in the 30 years before that event. The country went from a marginal player in major-power politics to the most powerful country in the world within the careers of many members of the country's political class. This development must have been all the more bewildering because it was not the result of plans or expectations that American leaders held at the beginning of this period. Changes in the world that seem permanent to us in retrospect may
not have appeared so to them. From this perspective, it is understandable that some would resist abandoning their earlier views and expectations, particularly when their political enemies had developed the policies that constituted the new order of things.

Our findings also suggest that the prospects of reviving the (apparent) bipartisan embrace of multilateralism that prevailed during the Cold War are dim. Not only have the parties moved further apart across a wide range of issues, but the ideological composition of the Republican Party has changed in a way that makes bipartisan cooperation in support of multilateralism less likely. In the 1940s, the appointment of prominent Republicans like Henry Stimson and Robert Lovett served as powerful signals and tools for developing policies that were palatable to both Republicans and Democrats. However, this kind of bipartisanship relied on the presence of low polarization and a substantial number of moderate legislators with whom internationalists could build coalitions (Flynn 2014). With the decline of its Northeastern wing, the Republican Party has grown into a more homogenously conservative organization, and one that more unanimously rejects multilateral rules. During the middle of the 20th Century, Republican legislators were responsive to constituent economic interests that made multilateralism more attractive. We have found no evidence of this moderating effect since the 1970s. This leaves Democrats, who have become the standard bearers of multilateralism, with few viable partners. And even with a Democratic Party solidly in support of U.S. involvement in multilateral institutions, the lack of a bipartisan compact underpinning that involvement may cause other states to question the United States' long-term reliability (Schultz 2018).

Is there any way out of this predicament? A comprehensive electoral defeat might relegate conservative Republican opponents of multilateralism to the marginal position they held during World War II and for much of the Cold War. The pattern of the last century suggests that such an outcome would be temporary. As long as the United States remains a democracy, conservative opponents of multilateralism are highly likely to return to power eventually. This is not the only possible outcome. If conservative Republicans are not politically marginalized, there may be a continuing, high-stakes debate about fundamental aspects of American foreign policy, including multilateralism. This debate might force conservative leaders to confront the actual costs of seriously undermining organizations like the UN, NATO, or the WTO, or of abrogating other American commitments under international law. Serious consideration of these costs might lead them to articulate a new position on multilateralism, just as they have done on other issues.
in the past. Paradoxically, the real possibility that the United States could abandon some of its most central multilateral commitments may be what is necessary to mobilize constituents interested in the issue and persuade conservative Republicans to adjust.
References


