

**Political Party and Presidential Decisions to Use Force:  
Explaining a Puzzling Non-Finding**

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### **Abstract**

Conventional wisdom holds that Republicans have hawkish foreign policy preferences compared to Democrats but quantitative research on the use of force finds no relationship between the party of the president and his propensity to use force. This paper offers two reasons for this puzzling non-finding. First, although Republicans have favored military spending and intervention more than Democrats have since the mid-1960s, the two parties' positions on these issues were reversed before that time. Analyses that cover the entire postwar era conflate periods when party had opposite effects. Second, previous research has generally focused on actual uses of force. Strategic conflict avoidance by potential targets is more likely to obscure a party effect when examining these relatively high-level conflict events. Examining events data, which include many lower-level conflict events, we find evidence that Democrats were more hawkish than Republicans during the 1949-65 period and that Republicans were more hawkish during the 1966-92 period.

Quantitative research on the use of force by the United States confronts scholars with a puzzle: in spite of strong conventional wisdom that Republicans tend to be hawkish and Democrats dovish, there is little empirical evidence that Republican behave more aggressively than Democrats. More confounding is the fact that, on one hand, there is ample evidence that Republicans in Congress and in the general public have supported military spending and military intervention more than Democrats have during most of the post-World War II era. But, on the other hand, few of the many empirical studies of American foreign policy behavior have tested the hypothesis that these partisan differences have carried over into actual military action. The few that have conducted such tests find no evidence for it. What accounts for this non-finding? Is the conventional wisdom wrong, or should we be rethinking models of partisanship and conflict behavior?

In this paper, we will present evidence that two limitations in the design of previous studies have likely produced the non-finding. First, these studies have generally treated the Democrats and Republican as if they had *consistently* hawkish or dovish positions across the entire postwar era. In fact, research on the parties' foreign policy positions finds that they have not been consistent over time. Democrats were decidedly more hawkish than Republicans before the mid-1960s. In the mid-1960s, the parties effectively switched foreign policy stances, a fact documented in the historical and even quantitative literatures, but one neglected in examinations of party and uses of force.

Second, previous research has focused on relatively serious conflict events, mainly uses of force rather than more broadly conceived indicators of foreign policy orientation. The strategic behavior of potential target states makes it difficult to draw inferences about party differences based on these serious events. These events often occur at the end of a

long chain of strategic interaction between the initiator and the target of the use of force. These events may attenuate the effect of each side's initial--perhaps ideologically tinged--intentions. Party differences, if they exist in foreign policy orientation, are more likely to be visible in analyses that include low-level events that precede the actual movement of military forces. Put differently, evidence of hawkishness should not be confined to major uses of force. Limiting analysis to these acts will miss most of the behavioral differences that a more realistic account of the role of party implies. Because previous research on the use of force has been concerned mainly with other theoretical issues, such as the diversionary argument, their tests have not necessarily been inappropriate, but have produced less-than-ideal tests of if or how partisanship matters to foreign affairs. On these grounds, we believe the role of party in shaping foreign aggression deserves reconsideration.

Rethinking the relationship of party and foreign policy on these two fronts leads us to a set of models that suggest strong party effects on American foreign policy choice. But the results suggest important two nuances to how party affects aggression. First, the fact that parties can change their policy positions must be considered. Because the parties switched their hawkish/dovish orientations in the 1960s, the effect of party on conflict behavior in our models also switches direction. Second, foreign observers see this same switch and change their own behaviors accordingly, suggesting an important strategic consideration regarding beliefs about partisan hawks or doves.

The remainder of this paper proceeds in four sections. The first outlines the broad evidence of party differences on issues related to the use of force and the contrasting paucity of evidence that Republican presidents are more likely to do so than Democrats

are. The second sets out the limitations of previous research designs for testing the effect of party and outlines our strategy for overcoming these problems. The third offers new quantitative evidence to support this explanation, and the fourth section summarizes and concludes.

### **Democrats, Republicans, and the Use of Force**

Despite frequent appeals to bipartisanship and invocations of the dictum that politics should stop at the water's edge, there have been sharp partisan differences over foreign policy at many points in American history. There has been substantial research on partisan differences over foreign economic policy issues such as trade protection (e.g., Weingast, Goldstein, and Bailey 1997; Irwin and Kroszner 1999; Milner and Judkins 2004). There is also evidence that party differences extend to such purely military matters as the allocation of the Pentagon budget over nuclear weapons and conventional forces (Fordham 2002). These party differences extend to the use of force. For the last few decades, the conventional wisdom in American politics has held that Republicans are generally more willing to spend money on the military and more likely to support the use of military force against foreign adversaries than are Democrats. Evidence from surveys of the general public and the voting records of members of Congress suggests that this conventional wisdom correctly assesses party differences since the late 1960s.

It is easy to show that there are party differences in Congress on questions of military intervention and the use of force. Figure 1 shows the proportion of Democrats and Republicans in the U.S. Senate voting in favor of military intervention on *Congressional Quarterly Almanac* Key Votes during the last half of the twentieth

century. Although Key Votes on intervention did not take place every year during this period, it is clear the Republicans were more likely to support intervention than were Democrats from the late 1960s through the end of the Cold War.

[Figure 1 about here.]

Because *Congressional Quarterly* selected more Key Votes on military spending, the pattern of party differences is clearer on this closely related issue. Figure 2 shows Democratic and Republican support for military spending on Key Votes since 1947. Congressional Democrats were more supportive of military spending and foreign policy activism than were Republicans through the early 1960s. By the late 1960s, the two parties had switched places, with Republicans becoming relatively the more supportive party. This pattern persisted through the end of the Cold War. Previous research that has examined party differences on military spending and foreign policy activism in greater depth finds the same pattern (Cronin and Fordham 1999; Fordham 2007). Fordham (2008) finds a complementary pattern in liberal and conservative support for military spending in the Senate.

[Figure 2 about here.]

Why did the parties change their positions on foreign and defense policy? Previous research has explored this question in some depth. We can only offer a brief summary here. Military spending and intervention can be understood as the overhead costs of the hegemonic leadership role the United States assumed after World War II. The most persuasive explanations for the party switch concern the changing implications of this leadership role for the constituencies most strongly associated with each one. Democrats developed the policies associated with American hegemony, but the benefits

of the postwar order in general, and of military power in particular, declined over time from their point of view. As Trubowitz (1998, 229-32), Fordham (2008), and others have shown, the beneficiaries of the open international trading system were the strongest supporters of American military power. The Northeastern industries associated with the Democratic Party benefitted enormously during the early postwar era, but their position eroded over time. Even before this change became clear, American overseas military spending began to undermine the international monetary system that Democratic policy makers had constructed during the 1940s. There is evidence that the so-called "wise men" turned against further escalation in Vietnam after the 1968 Tet Offensive when informed of its likely consequences for the Bretton Woods System (Collins 1996, 415). Military spending also competed with the growing domestic social programs Democrats supported during the 1960s (Fordham 2007, 625-6).

While the appeal of maintaining and using military force diminished for Democrats, it tended to grow for Republicans. Many Republicans had objected to the considerable fiscal and regulatory consequences of the high levels of military spending prevailing during the 1950s (Fordham 2007, 624-5; Hogan 1998, 316-65; Lo 1982). The growth of the American economy by the mid-1960s meant that even the growing level of spending associated with the war in Vietnam did not force the adoption of price controls on strategic raw materials and other measures that Republicans had found so distasteful during the Korean War. Indeed its principal effect was to curtail Lyndon Johnson's Great Society programs, an outcome they supported (Collins 1996: 401-4, 411-12). Coupled with substantial tax cuts, the Reagan administration's military buildup had similar budgetary consequences, limiting the growth of domestic social programs that Democrats

tended to support, and Republicans to oppose (Kamlet, Mowery, and Su 1988). The decline of protectionism within the Republican Party also paralleled its rise among Northeastern Democrats.

Fordham (2007, 626-7) finds less support for the possibility that Southern Democrats' shift to the Republican Party can explain the change in the two parties' positions. This shift occurred only gradually, and was not completed until the 1990s. Moreover, Northern Democrats were just as hawkish as their Southern co-partisans until the mid 1960s. Northern Republicans also changed their position on military spending and intervention after this date; the Party did not alter its position simply through the addition of Southerners. Reaction to the violence of the Vietnam War offers another tempting but ultimately unsatisfying explanation. It might help explain some Democrats' growing concern about the global role of the United States, but it fails to account for Republicans' move toward greater hawkishness.

Whatever its underlying causes, this shift in the foreign policy orientation of the two major parties has important implications for research on the role of domestic politics in shaping American decisions about the use of military force abroad. Among other things, it helps explain why there is essentially no quantitative evidence that Republican presidents have been more likely to use force than Democrats have been. The large empirical literature on United States uses of force rarely includes party of the president as an independent variable, and when it does, it almost never indicates any difference in how willing Democratic and Republican presidents are from one another in terms of using military force abroad. Gowa (1998) tests a variable indicating unified control of the government by the Democratic or Republican parties on the frequency of American

dispute initiation but finds no relationship. Fordham (1998) and Clark (2003) present evidence that party mediates the effect of economic conditions on the U.S. propensity to use force, but not that it has a simple direct effect on the propensity to use force. Similarly, Morgan and Bickers (1992) find that presidents paid more attention to declining support among members of their own party, but not that whether the president was a Republican or a Democrat made a difference. Refining this work, Foster and Palmer (2006) find even less evidence of consistent party differences in the propensity to use force. Though they do not test the possibility, Foster and Palmer (2006, 284) suggest, as we do here, that this lack of evidence might stem from changes in the parties' foreign policy orientations during the 1960s.

Finally, in their comprehensive book-length study of the relationship between domestic politics and the use of force in the United States, Howell and Pevehouse (2007) find little evidence of party differences. They incorporate a variable indicating the party of the president into many of their statistical models of U.S. uses of force. The primary results show that in three of the four analyses (those with dependent variables measured as initiation of all uses of force, minor uses of force, and militarized interstate disputes) no statistical difference exists for presidents of different parties. Their evidence does show that Republican presidents appear to be more inclined to initiate major uses of force. However, this finding is not reproduced in the analyses that incorporate opportunities to use force, as the results of these analyses show no inter-party differences at all. Their additional analyses of the timing of military deployment after a use of force and of responses to different kinds of crises reinforce the finding that no difference exists between presidents of the two parties.

Although Palmer, London, and Regan (2004) show that differences exist in the conflict propensities of left and right parties in parliamentary democracies, the bottom line is that we could find no study presenting evidence of a straightforward party difference in the propensity of American presidents to use force.<sup>1</sup> Given the volume of published research on United States uses of force as well as the rather transparent logic of party differences, it seems unlikely that this hypothesis has never been tested. A more likely explanation for the lack of attention to it is that scholars have found no support for the hypothesis, and have chosen instead to focus their attention on arguments for which they could provide more empirical evidence. What accounts for this puzzling non-finding? Why are there no apparent differences in the propensity of Democratic and Republican presidents to use force?

### **Why Don't Partisan Differences Appear in the Data?**

Failure to reject the null hypothesis is not evidence that the null hypothesis is correct, but the lack of evidence for party differences in the use of force makes it tempting to conclude that the conventional wisdom is wrong. Perhaps partisan differences on this particular issue are simply overstated. Before reaching this conclusion, however, we will point to two assumptions built into most quantitative efforts to test for party differences, and we will argue that both of these assumptions are problematic, even contrary to the historical record.

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<sup>1</sup> Examples of research on the United States use of force in the postwar era that have not tested a party difference hypothesis include Ostrom and Job 1986; Howell and Pevehouse 2005; Meernik 1994; Hess and Orphanides 1995; and James and Hristoulas 1994, among many others.

<sup>2</sup> Both Clark (2003) and Fordham (2005) produce empirical evidence in support of the strategic conflict avoidance position.

<sup>3</sup> Marxist-Leninist parties governed the following states during the 1948-1992 period are Afghanistan, 1978-92; Albania, 1948-89; Angola, 1975-92; Benin, 1972-79; Bulgaria, 1948-89; Cambodia, 1975-91; China, 1949-92; Congo, 1969-92; Cuba, 1959-92; Czechoslovakia, 1948-89; East Germany, 1954-89;

The first assumption is that the hawkish or dovish orientation of the two parties is time-invariant; that Republicans have always been more hawkish than their Democratic and dovish counterparts. The research on party preferences over foreign policy that we reviewed in the last section shows that this assumption is incorrect. Democrats have not always been doves and Republicans have not always been hawks. Before the mid-1960s, Democrats in both Congress and the general public were more likely than Republicans to support wars, military spending, and the like. Nevertheless, most previous tests of a hypothesized party effect on conflict behavior have used data that stretches across periods when different parties took relatively hawkish positions, and have failed to account for those preference shifts. For obvious reasons, estimating a single coefficient for the effect of political party on a president's propensity to use force is not likely to produce meaningful results. In fact, if Republicans are less hawkish before the mid-1960s and more hawkish thereafter, the effect of party on the use of force should probably wash out, producing exactly the null result that the literature reports.

One simple way to deal with this problem is to examine party differences before the mid-1960s and afterwards. Both figures above and Table 1 support the notion that how the parties are oriented toward national security issues shifts in the 1960s. By accounting for the shift, we expect to see Democratic presidents behaving more aggressively in the early period, and less aggressively in the later period.

The second problematic assumption has to do with what it means to behave hawkishly or dovishly. Most of the literature focuses on decisions to use force, and expects these orientations to translate directly into higher and lower propensities to select this policy option. In reality, even if these different orientations were mainly about the

use of force, they would have implications for many other foreign policy behaviors that precede such a dire decision. In order to avoid military conflict, doves might be more likely to offer and reciprocate cooperation, to avoid inflammatory rhetoric toward international adversaries, and the like. All these behaviors typically occur well before the use of force in the chain of interaction with potential targets. Whether they actually result in less frequent uses of force depends on the behavior of the potential target. If potential targets strategically avoid conflict with resolved "hawks" but run greater risks when dealing with more conciliatory "doves," even a large and genuine divergence between these two types might not result in observable differences in their propensity to use force.

Most analyses of American foreign policy decisions rely on data about uses of force of one kind or another. The most common datasets include those collected by Blechman and Kaplan (1978), the International Military Intervention data (Pearson and Bauman 1993; Kisangani and Pickering 2008) and the Militarized Interstate Dispute (MID) data developed by the Correlates of War Project (Jones, Bremer, and Singer 1996; Ghosn, Palmer, and Bremer 2004). While these data are appropriate for analyses of actual uses of force, they do not include most of the lower-level conflict events likely to precede this choice. The coding rules that Blechman and Kaplan (1978, 12) set out specify that

[a] political use of the armed forces occurs when physical actions are taken by one or more components of the uniformed military services as part of a deliberate attempt by the national authorities to influence, or to be prepared to influence specific behavior of individuals in another nation without engaging in a continuing contest of violence.

Pearson and Bauman (1993, 3) also focus on actual military operations, defined as

the movement of regular troops or forces (airborne, seaborne, shelling, etc.) of one country into the territory or territorial waters of another country, or forceful military action by troops already stationed by one country inside another, in the context of some political issue or dispute.

The MID data include instances where force was threatened but not actually used. Nevertheless, Jones, Bremer, and Singer (1996, 172) caution that "[t]he classification of events is in accordance with the categories of codable acts; hence, a good part of the story is missing already since any number of non-military actions, some conciliatory in nature, are not included in this basic chronology."

The omission of low-level conflict events matters for assessing whether Democrats or Republicans are hawks or doves because these characteristics are most likely to be manifested in precisely these kinds of events. A president is a "hawk" because he or she has a greater propensity to use force than do other presidents. This propensity cannot be directly observed, and the strategic behavior of other states complicates its relationship to actual (observable) uses of force. Even a president who is willing to use military force is not likely to do so without some prior interaction with the target short of force. Indeed, even explicit threats to use force of the sort recoded in the MID data are uncommon before some prior diplomatic interaction. If a potential target infers that a president is hawkish—perhaps in part because of the president's party affiliation—that state might be more likely to back down before military force enters the picture. Strategic interaction between the United States and potential targets might obscure the relationship between observed uses of force and party affiliation even if members of one party had a greater underlying propensity to use force.

This problem is closely related to recent research on strategic conflict avoidance in relation to the diversionary use of force. Much recent work in this area has focused on the idea, first advanced by Smith (1996), that the straightforward diversionary logic

might be complicated by strategic behavior. Potential target states, he argues, can and do observe the domestic problems in foreign states. When domestic troubles arise (and thus diversionary pressures increase) in another country, potential targets can adjust their behavior in ways that make them less likely to be chosen from the list of possible scapegoats. Smith concludes that foreign states will generally interpret domestic trouble in another state as a threat, thus reducing opportunities for a leader facing domestic challenges to scapegoat foreign enemies.<sup>2</sup> This line of argument suggests that just when the need for diversion is greatest, the opportunity to divert is least as potential targets avoid conflict with presidents from a relatively hawkish political party. This expectation contrasts with the possibility that foreign states will see little gain in cooperating with hawkish presidents, and behave more conflictually toward them. We will return to this question in reviewing our empirical results.

Whatever one's position on the question of strategic conflict avoidance, it makes sense to look not only at uses of force but also at the low level conflict events that characterize the early stages of a hostile interaction in order to infer presidents' hawkish or dovish dispositions. Strategic behavior by potential targets is far less likely to prevent presidents' verbal expressions of hostility than actual uses of force. Because they are less interested in avoiding military conflict, hawkish presidents should initiate more hostile interactions with other states, perhaps demanding changes in their domestic or foreign policies. The target of these demands might then take steps to head off further confrontation, especially if its leaders believe the president making them intends to back

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<sup>2</sup> Both Clark (2003) and Fordham (2005) produce empirical evidence in support of the strategic conflict avoidance position.

them with military force. However, this kind of strategic behavior is less likely to prevent hostile rhetoric than the use of force.

Many models in the foreign policy literature examine narrowly measured foreign policy actions like uses of military force, and doing so may well be appropriate for the purposes of finding foreign policy patterns. Doing so in an effort to examine broader orientations toward conflictual or cooperative behavior, however, is problematic because such narrow measures limit the very latitude in choice that should differentiate between hawkish and dovish behavior. By these we mean not merely discrete episodes of hawkishness or dovishness, but patterns of more or less aggressive behavior. Uses of force are episodes of hawkishness; they cannot represent dovish behavior under any circumstance. So looking for systematic differences in how presidents of different parties use force can really only reveal more or less frequent uses, and as the literature shows, using force is a function of many different things ranging beyond partisanship. In fact, using force may be in large part a function of the international environment and the presence of strategic opportunities, things possibly related to partisanship, but only indirectly so.

Different orientations toward foreign policy are far more likely to manifest themselves across a broader swath of foreign policy actions including military force, but also including other forms of coercion like sanctions, alliance building, etc. Capturing a broader set of foreign policy alternatives in the outcome variable will permit a better assessment of whether and to what extent presidents differ in their foreign policy approaches based on partisanship. In order to capture the relatively minor incidents of conflict that should help distinguish hawks and doves, we will employ events data.

## **Empirical Analysis**

We have proposed two answers to the puzzle that partisan differences rarely appear in models of presidential foreign policy making, the first having to do with an important structural shift in how American political parties are oriented toward matters of defense and foreign policy, and the second rooted in the nature of the sorts of data most analysts use. This section of the paper develops a research design for evaluating whether and under what circumstances Republican and Democratic presidents pursue different sorts of foreign policy.

The first challenge is to identify appropriate data measuring foreign policy actions across a sufficiently broad range to characterize hawkish and dovish behavior, as we noted above, we turn to events data. Both the Conflict and Peace Data Bank (COPDAB) and the World Event/Interaction Survey (WEIS) can be used to generate summary measures of conflict by aggregating events over relatively short periods of time. The COPDAB data include intensity scores for the level of conflict or cooperation implied by each coded event (Azar 1993). Goldstein (1992) has developed a similar conflict-cooperation scale for the WEIS data (McClelland 1978). We focus on the conflictual events in these data sets, and generate summary scores that we aggregate over quarters to indicate the level of conflict any foreign state directs at the United States, and the level of conflict the US directs at a foreign target. The unit of analysis therefore is the dyadic quarter, where the dyad is the US and each foreign state.

COPDAB and WEIS cover overlapping, but different periods of time, and thereby not only allow us to capture more nuanced elements of foreign policy action, but also

allow us to test the structural break we believe takes place in the mid-1960s. COPDAB spans 1949-1979, and WEIS spans 1966-1992. In our models, we expect the effect of partisanship to switch between these time periods represented in the two data sets. In the COPDAB models (which run from 1949-1965) we expect Democrats to be more hawkish than Republicans. In the WEIS models, running from 1966-1992, we expect Democrats to be more dovish than Republicans, so the effect of partisanship should reverse itself across these models. The remaining variables should exert consistent effects, provided the two data sets are essentially comparable.

We measure partisanship with a dichotomous variable indicating whether or not the President is a Democrat. The coefficient on this variable should be positive (indicating more conflictual behavior) in the early period models using COPDAB, and should be negative (indicating less conflictual behavior) in the later period models using WEIS. We also include a set of control variables aimed at accounting for other sources of variation in how hostile or friendly US foreign policy is toward any particular state. First, since the entire span of time in the analysis is either Cold War or during the lifespan of the Soviet Union, we believe communist states are liable to be more frequent targets of conflictual American policy than will non-communist states. We include a dummy variable for Communist states, and we exclude OECD states from the analysis.<sup>3</sup> In addition, we control for foreign states' capabilities using the Correlates of War projects CINC index (Correlates of War Project 2005; Singer, Bremer, and Stuckey 1972; Singer 1987).

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<sup>3</sup> Marxist-Leninist parties governed the following states during the 1948-1992 period are Afghanistan, 1978-92; Albania, 1948-89; Angola, 1975-92; Benin, 1972-79; Bulgaria, 1948-89; Cambodia, 1975-91; China, 1949-92; Congo, 1969-92; Cuba, 1959-92; Czechoslovakia, 1948-89; East Germany, 1954-89; Ethiopia, 1974-91; Grenada, 1979-83; Hungary, 1948-89; Laos, 1975-92; Madagascar, 1975-91; Mongolia, 1948-90; Mozambique, 1975-92; Nicaragua, 1979-90; North Korea, 1948-92; North Vietnam/Vietnam, 1954-92; Poland, 1948-89; Romania, 1948-89; South Yemen, 1970-90; Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, 1948-91; Yugoslavia, 1948-89.

Because a large body of work finds that domestic conditions influence US foreign policy choices, we control for American civilian unemployment (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2009). Finally, we include a dummy variable to control for wars involving the US since the levels of conflict toward participant states are especially high. For the time period in question, these wars (and opponents) are Korea (China, North Korea), Vietnam (North Vietnam), and the Gulf War (Iraq).

We begin with two simple linear regressions:

- (1) 1949-1965 (COPDAB) US quarterly conflict = (+) Democratic President, Unemployment, Communist, Capabilities, War
- (2) 1966-1992 (WEIS) US quarterly conflict = (-) Democratic President, Unemployment, Communist, Capabilities, War

Our argument suggests the events data will allow us to discern hawkish and dovish behavior, and that party orientations toward hawkishness/dovishness change during the Cold War. Table 1 reports estimates from these two regressions.

[Table 1 about here.]

Two things are striking about these models. First and most notably, the party of the president seems to matter a good deal for how conflictual American foreign policy is. Second, the structural break is rather dramatic; Democrats are significantly more conflictual than Republicans in the early period, and are significantly less so than Republicans in the later period. Partisan orientation toward hawkish foreign policy was

not always the province of Republicans, and it appears as if Presidents not only matter to that orientation, but party leanings fundamentally changed in the middle of the Cold War. It is also noteworthy that the control variables are entirely stable across these periods. This gives us some confidence that the change in the party coefficient is not merely an artifact of the two data sets.

To further insure that the differences between the COPDAB and WEIS datasets are not the source of our findings, we re-scale the two series and splice them together. Other scholars have pointed out that this approach entails some potentially problematic assumptions about the comparability of the sources and coding strategies employed in each one (e.g., Vincent 1983; Ward and Rajmaira 1992). We offer this primarily as a robustness check on the primary results in Table 1. Table 2 presents the results using the spliced data.

[Table 2 about here.]

What differs among the three models in Table 2 is how we expand the sample to include time on both sides of 1966. Model 1 joins the COPDAB and WEIS at the end of the COPDAB period, 1979. The sample includes all COPDAB coverage 1948-1979, then WEIS from 1980-1992. Model 2 includes all of the WEIS coverage, 1966-1992, and fills 1948-1965 with COPDAB. Model 3 takes advantage of the fact COPDAB spans 1948-1979, covering significant periods on either side of the 1966 break. Figure 3 plots the marginal effect of party over the two time periods from Models 2 and 3 (the effects in Model 1 are not distinguishable between the two periods). The two panels present the 95% confidence intervals around Democratic presidents' conflict behavior before 1967,

and after 1966. In each case, Democratic presidents are significantly more conflict prone before 1967 than in the later period.

[Figure 3 about here.]

An additional source of concern about our results is that these models of US conflictual actions abroad are almost certainly related to what foreign states are doing at the time toward the US. We have already accounted for who those foreign states are (are they weak or strong, communist or not), and for those few that go to war with the US, but all these states interact with the US and will have variously good or bad relations with the US. The most straightforward way to account for foreign action might be to include the COPDAB or WEIS aggregation of foreign states' actions toward the US in each model. Doing so is problematic because, as many of the strategic arguments in the literature would imply, foreign action toward the US will be a function of many of the same variables already in the model. Including a measure of foreign action would produce an endogeneity problem.

We resolve this by estimating two systems of simultaneous equations (seemingly unrelated linear regressions), one using COPDAB, the other using WEIS. In each system, the first equation is exactly like those reported in Table 1. The second (simultaneous) equation in each system predicts the quarterly level of conflict the foreign state directed toward the US. The model is estimated in FIML and assumes the two disturbance terms are jointly distributed bivariate normal; the correlation of the disturbances is measured by  $\rho$ . These models permit two important things. First, we can control for the relationship between what the US is doing abroad, and what other states are doing to the US at the same time. Second, the structure of this model allows us to evaluate the extent to which

there is a pattern of strategic action-reaction behavior, and if such a pattern exists, whether it tends to be reciprocal, and tit-for-tat, or otherwise. Table 3 reports the estimates from these regressions, predicting US quarterly levels of conflict in the top portion of the Table, and the quarterly levels of foreign conflict directed at the US in the bottom portion.

[Table 3 about here.]

Most important in the top portion of Table 3 is the stability of the main result that Democratic presidents are more hawkish compared to Republicans in the early period and are less hawkish in the later period. Again, the controls are stable as well. Interestingly, foreign states adjust their levels of conflictual behavior depending on the party of the president. Foreign expectations seem to change across the two periods as well. These changes suggest foreign reciprocity for American conflictual behavior rather than strategic conflict avoidance. Foreign states direct more conflict at Democrats than at Republicans in the early part of the Cold War, but direct more conflict at Republicans than at Democrats in the later Cold War years. In some ways, this is not surprising. If American observers share the conventional wisdom that one party or the other is hawkish, certainly foreign observers should have access to that same conventional wisdom. Any rationalist argument would hold that foreign observers would make use of this information and act on the basis of beliefs, and so induce behavioral differences depending on what party holds the White House. The direction of the effect also provides some evidence that those beliefs and actual US foreign policy actions either mirror or are mirrored by foreign actions, so the action-reaction sequence seems to produce a tit-for-tat pattern of reciprocity. In the COPDAB model, foreign states believe Democrats are more

hawkish (and the coefficient in the US behavior equation bears this out) and so behave more combatively toward Democrats than toward Republicans. In the later period, foreign states believe Democrats are more dovish than are Republicans (again, the coefficient in the US behavior equation supports such a belief), and those states behave less conflictually toward Democrats than toward Republicans.

### **Conclusion**

The conventional wisdom that Democrats are more dovish than Republicans is widely held but finds precious little empirical support in the foreign policy literature. We have proposed two reasons so little evidence exists, one having to do with a structural shift in partisan orientation toward defense matters, the other having to do with the sort of data most analyses employ. The models we report here provide insight on a number of issues, but most importantly indicate strong partisan differences in foreign policy orientation and support a modified version of the conventional wisdom: Democrats are doves and Republicans are hawks *after 1965*. The nuances surrounding this finding are particularly interesting in terms of understanding partisanship and foreign policy, and in light of claims about strategic behavior shaping American foreign policy. In the former case, it turns out there are significant differences in what foreign policies presidents of different parties pursue. Further, just as partisan attitudes in Congress about foreign policy changed during the Cold War, so did presidential actions. That the parties are dovish or hawkish is something we can confirm, but an important finding is how the parties exchange those roles in the middle of the Cold War. From the standpoint of foreign leaders trying to understand what American politics mean in international relations, this

shift had to be confusing in some ways, but on average, it appears foreign leaders understood the shift for what it was and altered their own behaviors accordingly.

The strategic interplay here, though not the main focus of this paper, is particularly interesting for what it indicates about the willingness and capacity of foreign observers to take note of, and to make sense of, American party politics. It is not enough to say that partisanship matters to US foreign policy as our results suggest it does. Partisanship shapes foreign states' beliefs about the orientation of American foreign policy and leads those states to change their behavior. Foreign states not only make policy decisions toward the US in light of American politics, but change those policy decisions when American politics change. This is fairly stark evidence of significant attention to US politics abroad with the specific intent of shaping policy toward the US appropriately. If there is a question lurking around strategic arguments of whether foreign observers really pay attention to other states' internal politics, and to whether they react to those domestic politics, the results here suggest the answer is that they do.

Not only do foreign states take note of US partisan inclinations, but they seem on the basis of those hawkish or dovish expectations to form reciprocal policies, effectively mirroring American policy. This too makes some sense insofar as behaving cooperatively toward a hawkish American president is likely to gain you little, whereas doing so toward a dovish president is more liable to gain you a lot. The result of a keen understanding of partisan orientations toward hawkishness or dovishness is a more nuanced policy toward the US.

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**Table 1.**  
**OLS Models of US Conflict Behavior**

	<b>COPDAB (1949-1965)</b>	<b>WEIS (1966-1992)</b>
<b>Conflict Actions, US to Foreign State</b>		
Democratic President	5.45* 1.72	-1.84* 0.50
Unemployment %	1.45 0.93	0.22* 0.08
Communist state	14.95* 3.21	1.29* 0.50
Capabilities	668.01* 144.53	195.80* 21.07
War with US	737.35* 222.73	394.58* 90.33
constant	-9.13 4.91	-0.71 0.53
N	5048	13836
R <sup>2</sup>	0.28	0.36

OLS estimates, robust standard errors; \*  $p \leq .05$

**Table 2.**  
**Models of U.S. Conflict Behavior Splicing the WEIS and COPDAB Data**

	(1) COPDAB/WEIS Spliced at 1979	(2) COPDAB/WEIS Spliced at 1966	(3) COPDAB 1948-79
Democratic president	4.000* (1.833)	3.347** (1.262)	4.072* (1.675)
Post 1966	1.237 (1.692)	-3.647** (1.165)	4.987** (1.732)
Democratic president * Post 1966	-4.863* (2.357)	-4.659** (1.623)	-7.634*** (2.277)
Communist state	8.934*** (1.547)	5.965*** (1.065)	13.054*** (2.185)
COW capability index	438.011*** (27.535)	381.934*** (18.955)	513.995*** (79.516)
Unemployment %	-0.263 (0.339)	0.441 (0.233)	0.576 (0.392)
US war opponent	1008.332*** (9.788)	569.852*** (6.738)	1037.286*** (177.786)
Constant	0.898 (2.213)	-0.713 (1.524)	-4.555* (2.243)
Observations	22956	22956	13896
Adjusted $R^2$	0.335	0.264	0.346

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

**Table 3.**  
**Seemingly Unrelated Regression Models of US and Foreign State Conflict Behavior**

	<b>COPDAB (1949-1965)</b>	<b>WEIS (1966-1992)</b>
<b>Conflict Actions, US to Foreign State</b>		
Democratic President	5.46* 1.72	-1.91* 0.51
Unemployment %	1.33 0.90	0.16* 0.06
Communist state	14.95* 3.21	1.30* 0.50
Capabilities	667.97* 144.45	195.80* 21.11
War with US	737.15* 222.61	394.48* 90.31
constant	-8.53 4.78	-0.33 0.37
<b>Conflict Actions, Foreign State to US</b>		
Democratic President	2.31 1.46	-0.73* 0.29
Communist state	14.01* 3.13	0.88* 0.29
Capabilities	1097.01* 117.24	276.86* 19.82
War with US	61.12* 28.69	236.72* 42.93
constant	2.86* 1.14	0.58* 0.10
$Q_{1,2}$	0.15*	0.51*
N	5048	13836
$\chi^2$	160.12*	265.95*

Full-information maximum likelihood SUR estimates, robust standard errors; \*  $p \leq 0.05$

Figure 1.  
Party Support for Intervention in Senate, 1951-2000

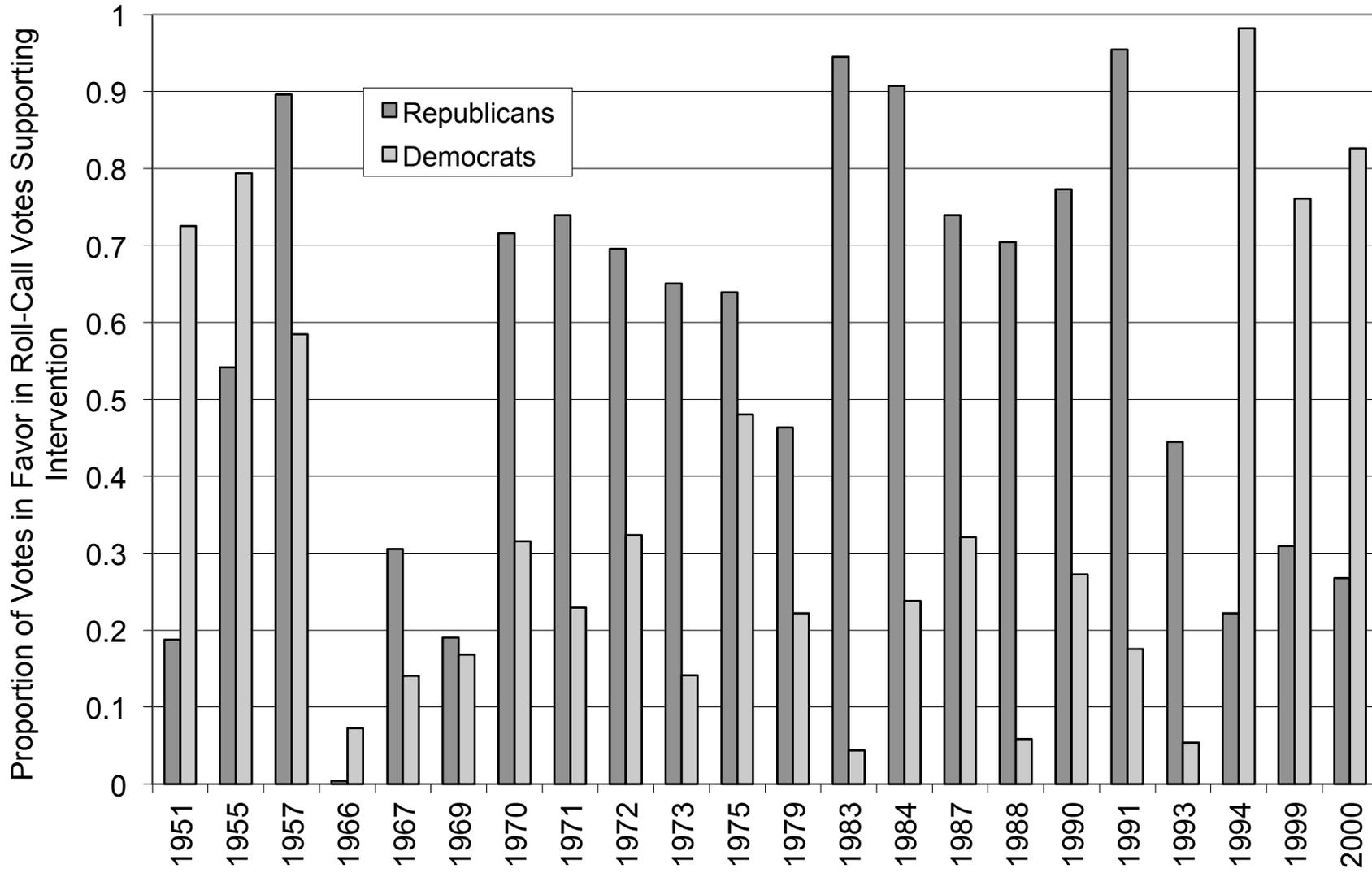


Figure 2.  
Party Support for Military Spending in the Senate, 1947-2000

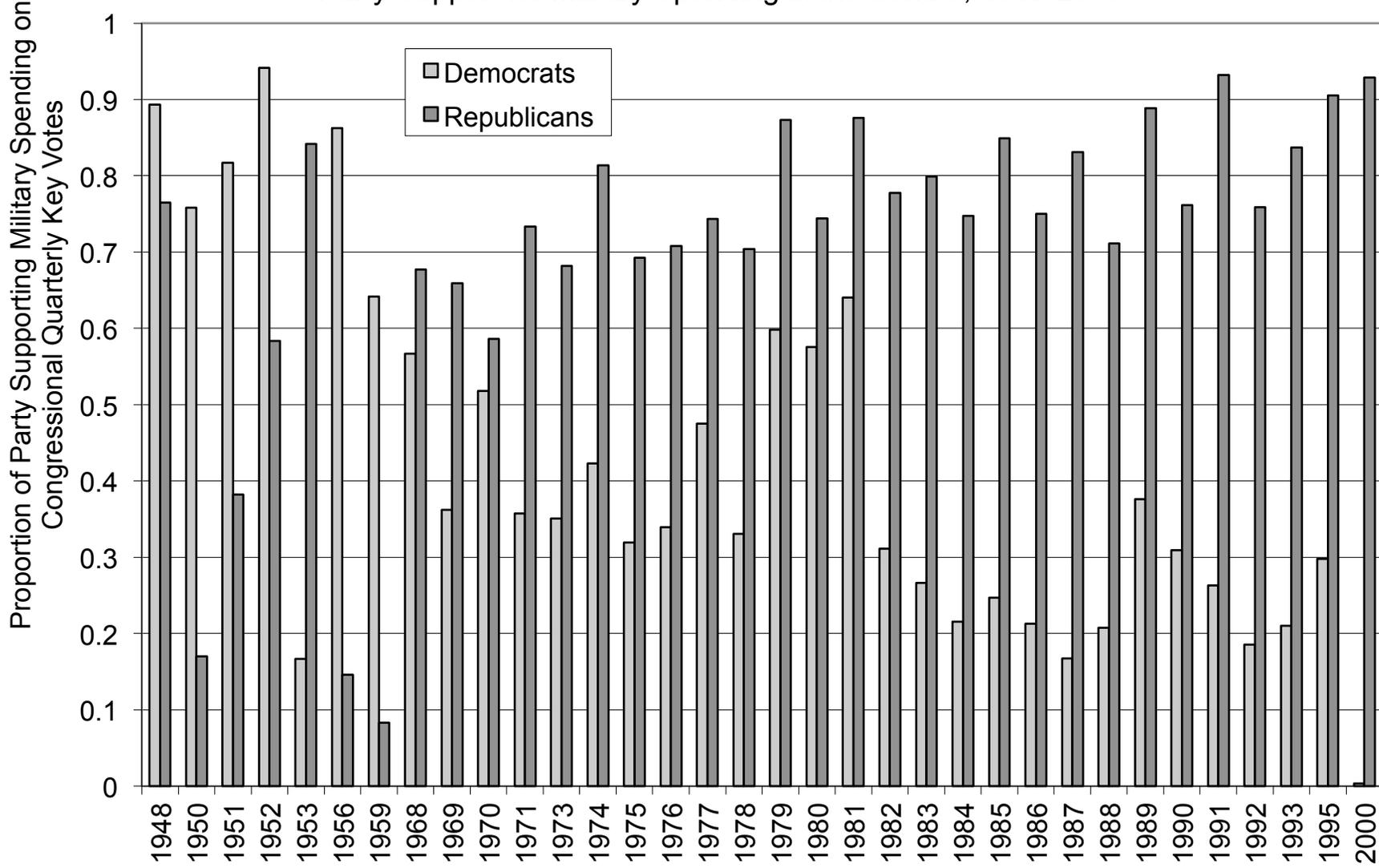


Figure 3.  
Marginal Effects of Party on Conflict Behavior with Alternative Data

