ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: *DIVIDED WE STAND: PARTISAN CONTROL AND U.S. FOREIGN POLICY*

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How does U.S. foreign policy differ under unified versus divided government? Much of the existing scholarship concentrates on the repercussions of divided government on domestic affairs. Yet, there is little research exploring the influence divided government might have on U.S. foreign policy. My dissertation aims to bridge this gap in literature. My central argument is that U.S. foreign policy garners less attention from politicians and is accorded less agenda space under unified government compared to divided government. This disparity holds important implications in three main areas: the progression of foreign policy bills through legislative processes, the decision to impose sanctions through the United Nations or alternative approaches, and the frequency of change in the policies towards China. Under unified government, the majority party often seizes this opportunity to focus on issues that will bolster their prospects in the next election.

Typically, these issues are domestic in nature. Given the limited attention span of politicians and the constraints of institutional agenda, the consideration of foreign policy issues tends to be postponed. By contrast, under divided government, domestic issues negotiations frequently face gridlock. Foreign policy issues, which are more likely to see bipartisan consensus, receive more attention and greater agenda space. Empirically, I analyzed the entire corpus of foreign policy bills in Congress and all sanctions imposed by the U.S. over the last two decades. I also incorporated a wide array of official documents and politicians' speeches concerning U.S.-China relations. The results show that foreign policy bills are more likely to be considered by the House floor under divided than under unified government, the U.S. is more likely to impose sanctions on a target through the United Nations under divided than under unified government, and Washington is more likely to formulate new policies towards China under divided than under unified government.

DIVIDED WE STAND: PARTISAN CONTROL AND U.S. FOREIGN POLICY

by

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Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
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Chapter 1: Introduction

In the United States, three primary political institutions manage both domestic and foreign affairs on a daily basis. These institutions consist of the executive branch, represented by the President of the United States, along with the two chambers of Congress: the House of Representatives and the Senate. Depending on the outcomes of the biennial congressional elections and the quadrennial presidential elections, these three institutions may occasionally be under the control of the same political party. In such instances, the U.S. government is considered unified. Conversely, when these three institutions are governed by different parties, the U.S. government is characterized as divided.

How does U.S. foreign policy vary under unified versus divided government? Since the seminal book *Divided We Govern* by David Mayhew, numerous scholars have endeavored to explore the impact of divided versus unified government. The existing scholarship predominantly concentrates on the repercussions of divided government on domestic affairs. Yet, there is a notable scarcity of research exploring the influence divided government might have on U.S. foreign policy, as well as whether its effects vary between domestic and international contexts. My dissertation aims to bridge this gap in literature. Crucially, I find that theories of congressional politics that were developed to explain domestic policies are not generalizable to foreign policy. Considering the two policy types in isolation can provide fruitful opportunities to understand puzzling behavior in U.S. foreign policy.

My central argument is that foreign policy garners less attention from U.S. politicians under unified government than divided government. This disparity holds significant implications in three main areas: the progression of foreign policy bills through congressional legislative processes, the decision for Washington to impose sanctions on a target through the United Nations or through

alternative approaches, and the frequency of change in the policies towards China. Under unified government, the majority party has a unique opportunity to focus on issues that they believe will bolster their prospects in the next election. Typically, these issues are domestic in nature. Given the limited attention span of politicians and the constraints of institutional agenda capacity, the consideration of foreign policy issues tends to be postponed. By contrast, under divided government, the negotiations of domestic issues frequently face gridlock. As a result, foreign policy issues, which are normally more likely to see bipartisan consensus, receive more attention and greater agenda space.

The remainder of the dissertation delves into the disparities in U.S. foreign policy under unified versus divided government over the past two decades, including the administrations of George W. Bush (2001-2008), Barack Obama (2009-2016), Donald Trump (2017-2020), and Joe Biden (2021-). I focus on this specific timeframe for several reasons. Firstly, over the past two decades, the three pivotal institutions in the U.S. government—the White House, the Senate, and the House of Representatives—have all experienced several shifts in party control. This timeframe encapsulates the majority of potential permutations of party leadership across both congressional chambers and the presidency. Secondly, this period delineates the trajectory of American politics towards escalating polarization. This trend provides valuable insights into the formulation of U.S. foreign policy amid heightened political divisions. Given the continued manifestation of profound polarization in American politics, the selection of this particular timeframe bears significant implications for understanding the prospective trajectory of U.S. foreign policy. The data analyses of the two quantitative chapters (2 and 3) start from 2003, thus excluding the 107th Congress (2001-2002), which corresponds to the first two years of the Bush Administration. This is because the control of the U.S. Senate during the 107th Congress underwent multiple transitions between

Democrats and Republicans, resulting in several shifts between unified and divided government scenarios. These dynamics pose challenges in coding variables. Furthermore, the events of 9/11 in 2001 profoundly reshaped both the congressional and presidential agendas during the years 2001 and 2002, diminishing the comparability of these two years with other periods. Nevertheless, the third section of my dissertation contains a discussion of President Bush's China policy during his initial two years in office (2001-2002).

The first empirical section of my dissertation delves into a comparative analysis of the likelihood of foreign policy bills receiving floor consideration in Congress under unified versus divided government over the last two decades. The findings show that foreign policy bills introduced under divided government have a significantly higher likelihood of being considered on the House floor. This trend remains consistent even after accounting for various factors, previously highlighted in literature, that can influence the legislative trajectory of bills—this includes aspects related to the bill's sponsor and the content of the bill itself.

The second empirical section investigates the probability of the U.S. imposing sanctions via the United Nations under both divided and unified government. Based on an original dataset that encompasses all sanctions the U.S. has participated in over the last two decades, my findings show that U.S. is more likely to impose sanctions through the UN under divided government. The process of negotiating these sanctions within the UN often demands substantial diplomatic efforts, especially with China and Russia, and often necessitates the direct involvement of the President. This option becomes less attractive under unified government, as the majority party tends to prioritize domestic issues.

The final section of my dissertation probes into the influence of governmental structure -- unified versus divided -- on U.S. policies towards China. Navigating U.S.-China relations is

intricate, and formulating an effective China policy is time-intensive, given the myriad intertwined interests between the two countries. I argue that under unified government, when the majority party emphasizes domestic issues, Washington's policies towards Beijing tend to be more consistent with past stances. Conversely, under divided government, where foreign policy garners greater attention from politicians, the policies towards Beijing are more likely to undergo changes.

My dissertation makes three major contributions to existing literature. First, it reveals that policy area matters when seeking to understand the impact of partisan control of the government, as indicated by the distinct impacts of divided and unified government on domestic and foreign policies. Second, while numerous studies have delved into the *influence* or *efficacy* of U.S. foreign policy across different periods, engaging in debates regarding the success or failure of specific policies in achieving their objectives, my research adopts a distinct approach by focusing on the *process* of policy formulation itself. Specifically, I investigate the conditions under which policymakers prioritize foreign policy and allocate greater agenda space to it. Finally, the findings in the dissertation contribute to a large but still growing body of literature concerning the influence of domestic politics on foreign policy. Previous studies have often overlooked the interplay between domestic and foreign policies, which vie for agenda space and can thereby exert mutual influence on each other. My study sheds light on how policymakers' focus on domestic issues can constrain their attention and resources available for formulating foreign policy.

My research also has implications for the policymaking community. The decision-making process of U.S. government, particularly concerning the timing and selection of issues to address, holds significant implications given the plethora of issues demanding attention and the constraints imposed by politicians' attention span and institutional agenda capacity. As the government grapples with a diverse array of issues competing for action, effectively prioritizing and allocating

resources becomes a formidable challenge. Ultimately, these decisions shape the policy agenda and determine the course of legislative as well as presidential action. Despite persistent concerns that divided government fosters gridlock and dysfunction, my findings demonstrate that U.S. government allocates greater attention to foreign policy under divided government. When negotiations on domestic issues are unlikely to progress, foreign policy receives more agenda space, and this impacts the legislative process of foreign policy, the choice among different foreign policy tools, as well as U.S. relations with certain countries. Conversely, unified government provides the majority party with an advantage in advancing its domestic agenda, but such domestic momentum probably makes foreign policy left behind.

Chapter 2: Divided We Stand: Partisan Control and Attention to Foreign Policy in U.S. Congress

How does unified or divided government affect U.S. foreign policy? In this paper, I argue that a Congress under unified government pays less attention to foreign affairs than divided government. This is because under unified government, the majority party would like to take this hard-won and fleeting opportunity to pass legislation that they think will help them in the next election, and such legislation, in most cases, concerns domestic issues. Due to the limitation of legislators' attention span and Congress's agenda space, consideration of foreign affairs-related bills is postponed. Under divided government, domestic issues negotiations frequently face gridlock. Foreign policy issues, which are more likely to see bipartisan consensus, thus receive more attention and greater agenda space. I analyze all bills related to foreign policy introduced in the Houses from the 108th to 117th Congresses (2003-2022). My findings reveal that foreign policy bills are more likely to receive consideration on the House floor under divided government than unified government. This suggests that the partisan composition of government plays a crucial role in shaping U.S. foreign policy.

2.1 Introduction

Following David Mayhew's 1991 seminal book *Divided We Govern*, which provided a null result for the impact of divided government on lawmaking, many scholars have sought to investigate the same question (e.g., Kelly 1993; Edwards, Barrett, and Peake 1997; Binder 1999; 2004; W. Howell et al. 2000; Fiorina 2019). Binder (2011) notes that scholars after Mayhew reexamined his findings mainly from two aspects: (1) redefining "landmark lawmaking" and (2) accounting for not only what Congress accomplishes but also what it fails to do. These subsequent studies have provided a more comprehensive understanding of the effects of divided government on lawmaking.

Relatively little research has been conducted on the potential differences in the impact of divided government on foreign vs. domestic policy. This is surprising given that, as Lapinski (2008, 249) points out, "theoretical reasons have been presented that explain why policy issue substance is important". Furthermore, American politics scholars share the belief that policy substance matters, as indicated by a large body of research on the importance of using issue areas to answer important questions.

Admittedly, previous research has made attempts to examine the effect of divided versus unified government on some individual issue areas, such as trade (Karol 2000; Milner and Rosendorff 1997; O'Halloran 1994; Lohmann and O'Halloran 1994), presidential war power (Howell and Pevehouse 2007), U.S. influence in financial institutions (Kersting and Kilby 2021), domestic financial market (Monroe 2010), and congressional investigations (Kriner and Schwartz 2008). However, an intermediate-level analysis is necessary to avoid treating all bills as homogeneous on the one hand, and ignoring the commonalities that exist across them by focusing too narrowly on individual policy domains on the other.

One such approach is Lapinski's studies (2008; 2013), which categorize bills in Congress into four main groups: sovereignty, organization and scope, international relations, and domestic affairs. Lapinski's research provides theoretical explanations for why lawmaking may vary by policy substance and empirically demonstrates how incorrect conclusions can be drawn if lawmaking is studied by pooling enactments instead of disaggregating laws by issue areas. However, Lapinski's analysis only covered until 1994. As almost three decades have passed, it is time to re-examine the question of whether divided versus unified government has varying effects in different issue areas.

In this paper, I explore the impact of divided versus unified government on one policy issue area in Congress, namely foreign policy. While previous studies have predominantly focused on narrow issue areas, my aim is to examine the broader scope of foreign policy as a whole. More precisely, I ask: does the extent of politicians' attention and the allocation of the congressional agenda space for foreign policy vary depending on whether the government is divided or unified? I argue that unified U.S. government gives less attention to foreign policy than divided government because, under unified government, the majority party would like to take this hard-won victory but fleeting opportunity to pass legislation that they think is going to help them in the next election. Such legislation, in most cases, concerns domestic issues. Due to the limitation of legislators' attention span and congressional agenda space, consideration of foreign affairs-related bills is postponed. By contrast, under divided government, domestic issues negotiations frequently face gridlock. Foreign policy issues, which are more likely to see bipartisan consensus, thus receive more attention and greater agenda space.

To test my hypotheses, I examine whether a foreign policy bill is more likely to receive House floor action under divided government than under unified government. I collect data on all House

foreign policy bills from the 108th to the 117th House (2003-2022), and consider a host of bill and legislator specific factors. The empirical results reveal that divided government increases the likelihood of a foreign policy bill being considered by the House.

My paper makes three major contributions to the existing literature. First, the paper reveals that policy area matters when seeking to understand the impact of partisan control of the government, as indicated by the distinct impacts of divided and unified government on domestic and foreign policies. Second, many studies have explored the *influence* or *effectiveness* of U.S. foreign policy across various periods, engaging in debates about whether particular policies succeeded or failed to achieve the goal. This paper takes a different approach by focusing on the process of policy formulation itself. Specifically, I investigate the conditions under which policymakers turn their attention to foreign policy and allocate it greater agenda space. More broadly, the paper contributes to a growing literature on the influence of domestic politics on foreign policy. Prior studies have overlooked the interplay between domestic and foreign policies, which compete for agenda space and can thereby mutually influence each other. My study highlights how politicians' preoccupation with domestic issues can limit their attention and resources for foreign policy formulation.

The rest of the paper proceeds as follows: in the next section, I review the relevant literature. In the section that follows, I lay out my theoretical arguments and hypothesis. In the fourth section, I discuss an alternative explanation. The fifth and sixth sections present my research design and empirical results. The final section discusses and concludes.

2.2 Literature Review

The existing literature on the role of the U.S. Congress in foreign policy has come to competing conclusions, with some claiming an assertive Congress and others a passive one. A key

factor that causes these ambiguous findings is that according to the U.S. Constitution, the legislative and executive branches share the power of foreign policy making. In addition, Congress's influence on foreign policy has witnessed variation across specific topics over the years. Depending on the topic and time period that scholars examine, Congress may be seen as having a strong influence or very little influence.

Not surprisingly, the role of Congress in foreign policy is closely related to the discussion of legislative-executive relations (Lindsay 1992). It is widely claimed that Congress became more active in foreign affairs during the 1970s, reacting to the presidency of Watergate and the Vietnam War (Burgin 1991). Scholars have found the constraints of Congress on the executive branch in many foreign policy areas, such as military action (Howell and Pevehouse 2007), credibility to international commitments (Martin 2000), international financial institutions (Lavelle 2011; Kersting and Kilby 2021), and sanctions (Tama 2020). Building upon previous work, Milner and Tingley (2016) argue that Congress's constraints on the executive branch varies across policy instruments. They also show that "close to a third of the time when the president endorses a crucial foreign policy vote, he is unsuccessful in obtaining congressional approval" (12).

Other scholars argue the presidency is still the dominant foreign policy-making institution and Congress remains a secondary player. For instance, the executive branch possesses more secret information and acts faster than the legislative branch (Trimble 1989), which give the former a significant advantage in dealing with foreign affairs. In her book *Less than Meets the Eye*, Hinckley (1994) found little evidence for an increase in congressional activity in foreign affairs across the years. Moreover, the author argued that the struggle between the executive and legislative branches over the making of foreign policy is illusionary as both branches leave most of the foreign policy issues unattended. More recently, others point out the President's dominance in foreign affairs is

partly due to the lack of interest of Congress and its dysfunction resulting from polarization (Drezner 2019).

Regardless of Congress's role in U.S. foreign policy, any foreign policy bill must undergo the same lengthy legislative process as all other bills. Thousands of bills are introduced in every congressional term, yet only a small fraction progresses through the entire legislative process to become public laws. Previous research has identified many factors that can affect how far a bill advances in the legislative process, among which the sponsor-specific factors play a crucial role. Generally, a bill is more likely to progress further if the sponsor is from the majority party, a party leader (including committee chairs), senior member, sits on the committee that the bill was referred to, ideologically moderate, loyal to the party, and actively promotes her bill (e.g., Krutz 2005; Hasecke and Mycoff 2007; Anderson, Box-Steffensmeier, and Sinclair-Chapman 2003; Garand and Burke 2006; Wilson and Young 1997; Cox and Terry 2008; Harbridge-Yong, Volden, and Wiseman 2020; Volden and Wiseman 2014). These factors sometimes interact with each other, creating more variation among bills.

Meanwhile, other scholars examine the institutional context of congressional activities. Specifically, how far bills in the House can move along the legislative process is determined by the overall agenda of Congress, which is controlled by the majority party leaders and the committee chairs (Cox and McCubbins 2007). The Speaker's power to select which reported bills will receive floor consideration is tantamount to a "suspensory veto" (Cox and McCubbins 2007, 215), in that those bills not selected are, at least temporarily, blocked. Relatively less attention has been given to how the content of the bill may also affect its final destiny. Some examples include the scope and urgency of the legislation (Adler and Wilkerson 2005) and whether it addresses a hot issue (Krutz 2005).

However, little attention has been paid to how foreign policy bills in Congress are affected by whether the government is unified or divided. In particular, compared with the research on foreign policy *effectiveness* or *influence*, not enough work has examined the *process* of making foreign policy, such as under what conditions foreign policy bills are brought to the agenda and receive more attention. Does the partisan control of the government affect how much attention lawmakers pay to foreign policy issues? This paper focuses on this important question and provides empirical evidence of the difference that divided government makes.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

The bills considered by Congress each year show that divided and unified government do have an impact on foreign policy. For example, during the 110th Congress (2007-2008), which was a divided government with the Democrats controlling Congress and the Republicans controlling the Presidency, the House considered 45 bills marked by Congressional Research Service as "International Affairs",[1] making it the seventh most considered category on the House floor. However, in the subsequent 111th Congress (2009-2010) when the Democrats had unified control of the government, the House only considered 15 international affairs bills. This represented a significant reduction compared to the previous Congress. In fact, "International Affairs" slipped to the 17th most considered category among all bills. Furthermore, data from the Comparative Agendas Project indicate that during the 110th House, the Foreign Affairs Committee held a total of 205 hearings, whereas in the 111th House, the same committee only held 114 hearings.[2] This suggests that foreign policy was given less agenda space under unified than under divided

[1] In Congress, each bill and resolution are assigned one of the 32 policy areas by legislative analysts in the Congressional Research Service. Primary focus of International Affairs measures is matters "affecting foreign aid, human rights, international law and organizations; national governance; arms control; diplomacy and foreign officials; alliances and collective security." See https://www.congress.gov/help/field-values/policy-area for details. For the number of bills in each category, see Appendix 1.
[2] *Hearings*. The Policy Agendas Project at the University of Texas at Austin, 2017. www.comparativeagendas.net. Accessed September 21, 2022.

government.

The contrasting destinies of certain foreign policy bills under unified versus divided government also suggest that government's structure matters. Consider the Palestinian International Terrorism Support Prevention Act, which requires the President to submit to Congress an annual report identifying foreign persons or agencies who assist Hamas or the Palestinian Islamic Jihad and impose sanctions accordingly. The bill was first introduced in the House in 2017 by Brian Mast (R-FL) under a unified government controlled by Republicans and attracted widespread bipartisan support. Among 31 cosponsors, 20 were Republicans and 11 were Democrats, including the House Foreign Affairs Committee Chair Ed Royce (R-CA) and Ranking Member Eliot Engel (D-NY). The bill passed the House Foreign Affairs Committee unanimously and was expected to be considered on the House floor. However, that never happened. Two years later, Representative Brian reintroduced the bill after the House majority shifted to Democrats and the government transitioned from unified to divided, the bill was given House floor action and passed the chamber without opposition.

Why does a unified government give less attention to foreign policy than a divided government? In this section, I propose a theory to explain how unified and divided government affects the amount of attention legislators give to foreign affairs differently. The theory is rooted in electoral incentives and the realities of congressional capacity that lead to a new understanding of how divided government uniquely affects foreign policy.

2.3.1 Attention allocation

It is well known that Congress is overwhelmed (LaPira, Drutman, and Kosar 2020). Demands on the government have increased markedly as the scope of government has expanded. On the one

hand, government has been taking new responsibilities by moving into many issues previously left to civil society and state or local government, a phenomenon called "the Great Broadening" by Jones, Theriault, and Whyman (2019). On the other hand, new issues keep emerging. For instance, the development of social media requires the government to take action to protect personal data, and the rising sea level makes combating climate change an unavoidable topic. Furthermore, the volatile nature of international relations is very likely to give U.S. officials headaches frequently.

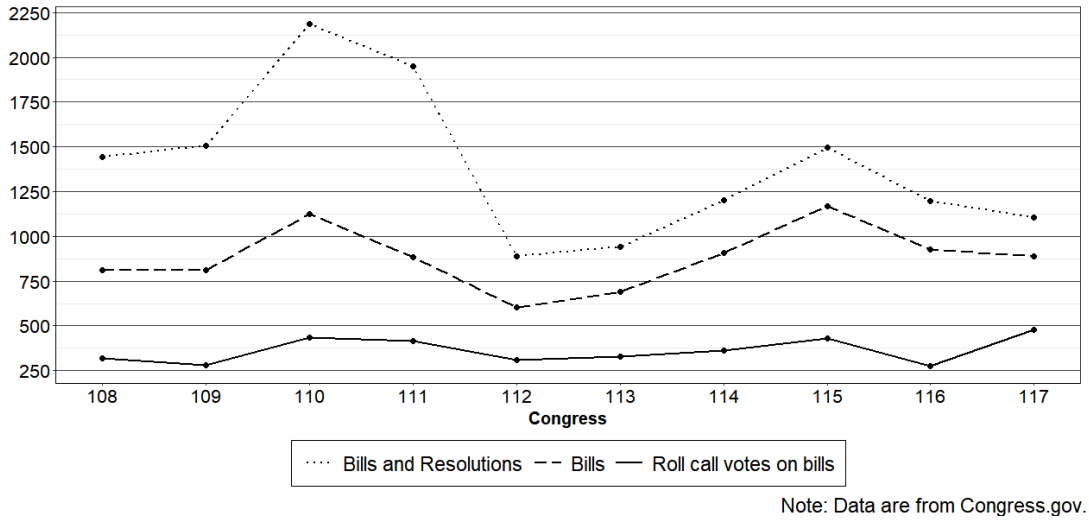
For lawmakers, however, there are only 24 hours a day and there are many demands on their time (Davidson et al. 2017). They must "spend time dialing for dollars, assessing program performance, investigating market failures, uncovering social problems, or studying the issues of the day that they were elected to solve (LaPira, Drutman, and Kosar 2020, 2)." Legislators conduct their work not only on Capitol Hill to make laws but also in districts hundreds or thousands of miles away to get re-elected. According to a 2013 study, members of Congress work an average of seventy hours a week when Congress is in session and fifty-nine hours when they are home in the district (Congressional Management Foundation and Society for Human Resource Management 2013). Although some lawmakers (e.g., committee chairs) have additional staff, none can engage in all the activities needed to make maximum progress toward all the objectives they and their constituents care about (Hall and Deardorff 2006).

Just like individuals, Congress as an institution has limited agenda space. Although it may deal with multiple problems through the division of labor, it is unrealistic to expect legislators and their staff to work 24/7 or to expect Congress to debate thoroughly about every single proposed legislation from every single member. A Washington Post article reveals that from 1978 to 2014, both chambers of Congress have been in session at the same time for only about a third of the total time and a little fewer than half of all weekdays. In addition, the House and Senate held a full five-

day work week for only 13.5 percent of the time (Bump 2014). When Congress is not in session or when lawmakers are not in Washington D.C., it is hard to expect significant lawmaking to be done. Furthermore, it takes a lot of work to advance a major piece of legislation through even one chamber of Congress, especially on issues with little bipartisan consensus. Compromises between two parties or within one party can take days, weeks, or even months, making the maximum number of bills that can passe far below what is proposed.

Figure 1 shows the number of bills and resolutions that the House of Representatives considered from the 108th to 117th Congress. Over the past two decades, the House floor has considered a varying number of measures (bills and resolutions combined) across Congresses, with a standard deviation of 419. However, the variation becomes much smaller when resolutions, which are limited in effect to the Congress or only one of its chambers, are removed. Finally, the number of bills that received roll call votes has been consistently low in the House over the years and the variation is small, with the standard deviation being only 71.[3] This suggests that the House agenda space is relatively stable and not unlimited.

Figure 1 House Agenda Space: Bills and Resolutions Considered



Note: Data are from Congress.gov.

[3] The figure includes measures originated from the House as well as the measures passed the Senate and presented to the House.

The consequence of the infinite demand for government service and limited time as well as agenda space supply is that issues must compete for agenda space and politicians' attention (Kingdon 1984; Baumgartner and Jones 1993). As a result, some issues will be prioritized while others must be postponed or canceled. Simply put, "[f]ocus on one issue, and you become inattentive to others (Jones and Baumgartner 2005, 20)."

2.3.2 Electoral returns of domestic and foreign policy issues

Given the limitations of the issue-processing capacity of officials and political institutions, it is reasonable to believe that at any point, politicians would select some issues to address first (from a large pool of all the issues that need to be addressed). The consideration of other issues has to be postponed (or canceled). People and organizations alike use heuristic shortcuts to handle the overabundance of issues that need to be addressed. One important shortcut is to pay attention to certain indicators rather than others (Jones and Baumgartner 2005; Gelman 2020; Miler 2010).

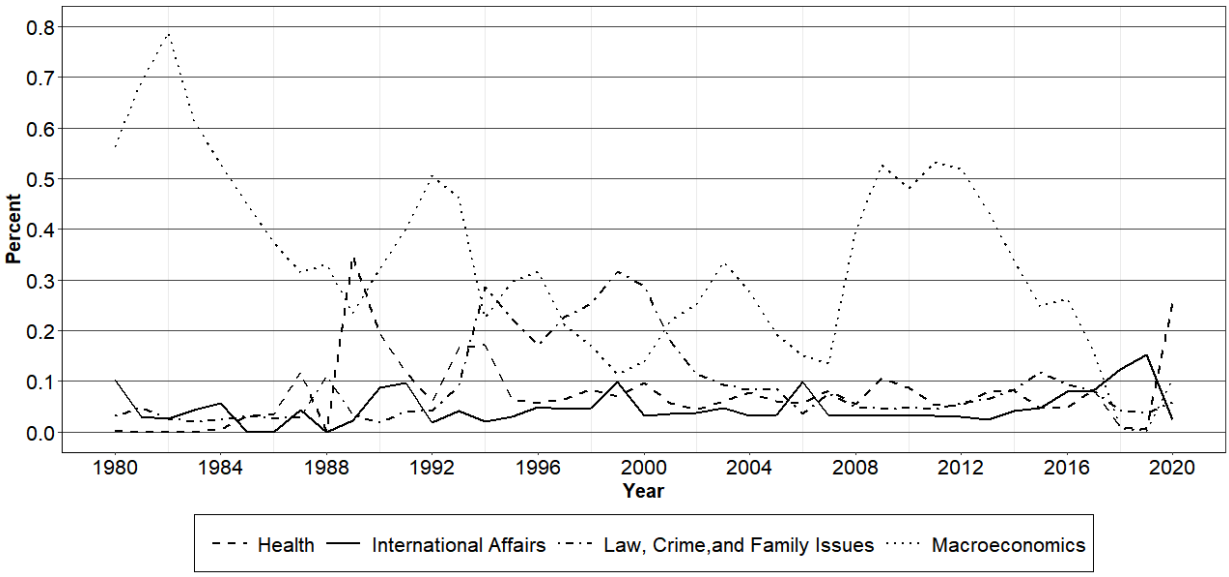
I argue that the most critical indicator for officials is how the policy would boost officials' odds of winning the next election. In his seminal book *Congress: The Electoral Connection*, Mayhew offers a simple assumption: members of Congress are "single-minded seekers of reelection" (Mayhew 1974). Although successive generations of scholars have raised the limitations of Mayhew's work, they agree that Mayhew's assumption "explains a large amount of congressional behavior" (Carson and Roberts 2011, 143)[4].

Which type of policy is more likely to help politicians in their next elections? I argue that a successful policy addressing domestic issues is more likely to be rewarded in elections than a policy addressing foreign affairs. What Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock (1993) call

[4] Others point out the additional goals of legislators, such as crafting good public policy and gaining political power and prestige. See Fenno and Hibbing (2002).

'minimalism'—the view that the public lacks both political knowledge and meaningful political attitudes—was for decades the received wisdom about public opinion on foreign policy (Isernia, Juhász, and Rattinger 2002; Brewer et al. 2004). Polls indicating that voters rank the importance of foreign policy issues behind domestic issues are abundant. For example, since the presidency of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Gallup has asked Americans an open-ended question: "What do you think is the most important problem facing this country today?" Figure 2 presents the responses aggregated at the annual level and coded by major topic.[5]

Figure 2 Gallup Poll: What Do You Think Is the Most Important Problem Facing the U.S. Today?



The poll results suggest that the proportion of respondents who think international affairs is the most important problem facing the U.S. is low and never exceeds 20 percent (mostly below 5 percent with a few exceptions, i.e., the Iran Hostage Crisis during 1979-1981 and the Gulf War during 1990-1991, and these exceptions dissipate quickly). By contrast, macroeconomics is

[5] This dataset code public opinion polls from Gallup's Most Important Problem Survey using the Policy Agendas Project's content coding scheme. See The Policy Agendas Project at the University of Texas at Austin, 2017. www.comparativeagendas.net. Accessed 12/02/2021.

usually identified as the most important issue by many respondents (rarely below 20 percent). Other issues, such as law and crime and health, are also often deemed much more important than international affairs. Previous research also finds that during economic recessions, even dramatic international crises may not divert the public's attention away from the economy (Heffington, Park, and Williams 2019). Furthermore, politicians' success in foreign policy alone does not seem very helpful when seeking reelection. For instance, Peterson (1994) notes that despite President George H.W. Bush's tremendous success in foreign policy, including having brought the Cold War to an end, he was defeated by Clinton, who was advised that the issue was "The Economy, Stupid!"

Americans' lack of interest in foreign policy is partly reflected in their declining interest in joining military service. According to Defense Department polling data from 2022, only 9% of young people currently exhibit a willingness to serve, marking the lowest number observed in 15 years (Seyler 2022). In addition, as war has gotten more technologically advanced, the percentage of Americans that bear the burden of fighting in conflict has fallen to 0.5 percent, making it more difficult for most people to envision the effects of foreign policy that previous generations could.[6] Furthermore, due to the information advantage that political officials have relative to the public, the public is more likely to be affected by elite cues on foreign policy than on domestic policy (Baum and Potter 2015; 2019; Guisinger and Saunders 2017; Kriner 2018). In sum, foreign policy is not seen as something that the constituents deeply care about, and therefore is not as valuable to the reelection goal.

The point here is not that politicians prioritizing domestic issues always win elections, nor that the public or members of Congress do not care about foreign policy at all. Rather, time and

[6] Pew Research Center, "The Military-Civilian Gap: Fewer Family Connections". 2011. https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2011/11/23/the-military-civilian-gap-fewer-family-connections/#fn-9923-1 (Accessed 12/03/2021)

resource constraints combine with the electoral imperative to encourage members of Congress to conduct their legislative work in ways that help their electoral chances (Lindsay 1994). Since most constituents, in most cases, are directly affected by the consequences of domestic policies and rarely interact with the effects of what happens in countries thousands of miles away, politicians attach more importance to domestic issues than foreign policy issues.[7]

2.3.3 Unified government: a hard-won victory and fleeting opportunity

The discussion above suggests that politicians always must decide how to allocate their attention to various issues. Under unified government, the majority party has an excellent opportunity to shape domestic policies, pass legislation and claim credit. What makes the majority party more likely to do so is the fact that holding unified government is a fleeting opportunity. Indeed, one of the most mysterious rules in American politics is that the president's party loses ground in midterm elections (Bafumi, Erikson, and Wlezien 2010). Lee (2016) points out that after the persistent Democratic majorities in the House came to an end in 1994, switches in party control of Congress occurred with greater frequency, and "neither party sees itself as a permanent majority or a permanent minority" (4).

On the one hand, the party structure of the government faces a shuffle every two years. On the other hand, political opponents implement the strategy of replacing the majority party from day one after the election. As Representative John Boehner famously said in a letter to House Republican colleagues: "What is the job of Republican leader in the minority? It's to hold the job for as short a time as possible" (Hulse 2006).

In addition, political parties in the U.S. have grown increasingly distinct from each other (Lee

[7] It is possible that when something in American foreign policy "goes wrong", politicians may spend more time on such issues to respond to voter's (temporary) concerns.

2015) and divided on all the major policy dimensions (Layman, Carsey, and Horowitz 2006). Given the difficulty of reaching bipartisan cooperation, the majority party members see a much smaller chance for their policy proposal to be enacted once they become the minority party. As a result, when they are in control, they spare no effort to push for their own agenda.

2.3.4 Foreign policy under unified government vs. divided government

Following previous discussion about the U.S. Congress, I argue that the amount of attention that foreign affairs receive in Congress differs under divided government and unified government. Under unified government, the majority party members prioritize domestic issues. First, the agenda space is quite limited. Facing countless issues that need to be addressed, they have to select some that need to be dealt with first. Second, knowing that most Americans may not pay enough attention or care enough about foreign affairs to reward legislators, but they may punish elected officials for failed domestic policy, the majority party members will prioritize domestic issues and try to pass relevant bills. Finally, unified government is only temporary. A short two-year window makes the majority party focus on issues that can help them the most in the next election. The consideration of foreign affairs-related bills, unless urgent, will be postponed or even canceled.

In contrast, when the government is divided, the negotiation process for domestic issues is usually more complicated. Both parties want the bill to be as close to their ideal points as possible. Intra-party differences can drag on negotiation, but not as much as inter-party differences, especially during a highly polarized era. Polarization among voters can add to the pressure for legislators to hold out for their preferred policy and decrease the chances of compromise and agreement (Anderson, Butler, and Harbridge-Yong 2020). If intra-party differences mean lots of time needs to be spent on the negotiating table, inter-party differences mean lots of time needs to

be spent on getting the other side on the negotiating table.

Consider two forms of divided governments: 1) a unified Congress with a president from the opposing party, and 2) one party controls the presidency and one chamber of Congress, while another party controls the other chamber of Congress. In both cases, the negotiation process can be long and difficult. In the first scenario, Congress needs to take a potential presidential veto into account when drafting bills (Edwards, Barrett, and Peake 1997). In the latter, the majority party leader of one chamber of Congress can simply choose not to schedule the bill passed by the other chamber.

By contrast, the negotiation process for foreign policy issues under divided versus unified government is not so startingly different. Previous research finds that partisanship and political polarization is generally weaker and less distinct in foreign affairs than in domestic politics among the public and in Congress (Kertzer, Brooks, and Brooks 2021; Bryan and Tama 2021; Lapinski 2008).[8] Even on high-profile issues like war, historical data reveal that both parties have been equally prone to utilizing force. According to the statistics on militarized interstate disputes (MIDs) (Palmer et al. 2015), Democrats are no less likely than Republicans to launch fatal MIDs.

Scholars have offered several explanations for the less partisan nature of foreign policy. Tama (2023) points out, first, unlike domestic issues, many foreign policy debates do not neatly align with a simple left-right spectrum. This can occur either because the foreign policy issue per se lacks much ideological content or because liberal and conservative values can each point toward opposing positions on an issue. Consequently, both elites and the public are less inclined to engage in partisan debates. Second, many advocacy groups focusing on foreign policy either are not very active or they maintain close connections with members across both parties, leaving room for

[8] For a literature review on foreign affairs are less partisan than domestic politics, see Kertzer, Brooks, and Brooks, 2021.

bipartisan cooperation on foreign policy.

Some may argue that since domestic policy bills bring more electoral payoffs than foreign policy bills, the majority party leaders should always schedule the former, no matter if the government is divided or unified. However, Cox and McCubbins (2007) point out that when the majority party leaders consider which bill to schedule, they think about not only the payoffs of the bill (if passed) but also the chance of passage.[9] In other words, rational politicians take into account not only the benefits but also the costs of their actions. Although the majority party leaders still want to schedule domestic policy bills under divided government, given that such bills are much less likely to pass both chambers of Congress and be enacted into law, it is unwise for the majority party leaders to keep bringing domestic policy bills to the floor when the government is divided due to the potential considerable time costs. Foreign policy bills are thus more likely to be allocated some agenda space.

To clarify, the preceding discussion does not imply that foreign affairs issues are always bipartisan. Instead, it highlights that compared to domestic issues, foreign affairs matters are generally more conducive to bipartisan cooperation. Consequently, the impact of divided versus unified government on the advancement of foreign policy bills is relatively less significant.

To summarize, given that the majority party pushes for its domestic agenda, foreign policy issues are postponed under unified government. Under divided government, however, due to the stalemate on negotiating domestic issues, foreign policy issues can get more agenda space.

Hypothesis: A foreign policy bill is more likely to receive floor action in Congress under divided government than under unified government.

[9] The other factor that the majority party leaders consider is the amount of time a bills takes on the floor.

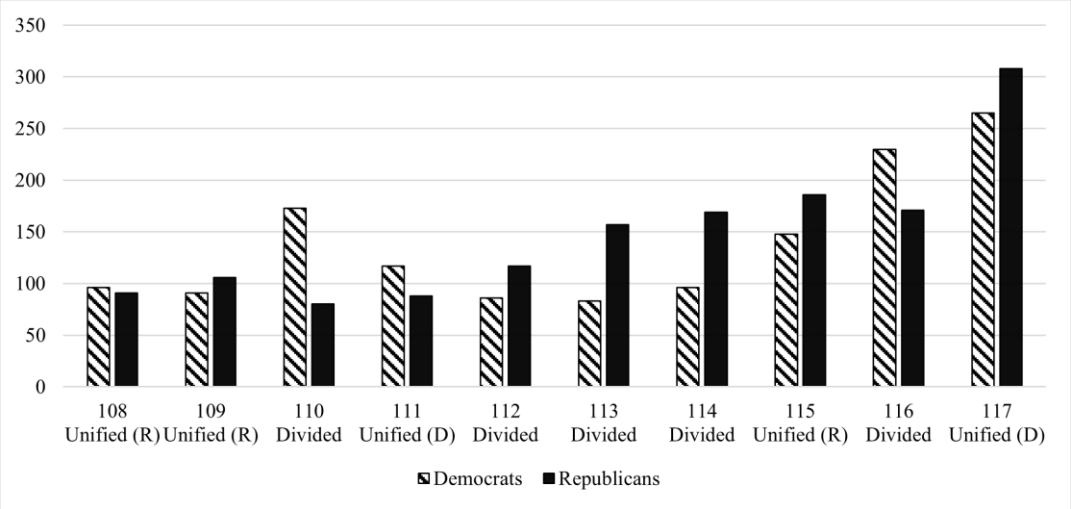
2.4 Alternative Explanation

One alternative explanation is that under unified government, Congress delegates more power in making foreign policy to the President, while under divided government, the partisan differences lead Congress to be more active in foreign policy (Martin 2000). If the explanation holds, then when a party gains complete control of the government, its members should be less active on foreign policy, possibly reducing the number of bills they introduce. However, an examination of the data reveals a different trend. Figure 3 illustrates the number of International Affairs bills introduced by Democrats and Republicans in each congress over the past twenty years. During the Obama administration, the Democratic Party had unified control of the government in the 111th Congress (2009-2010). During those two years, Democrats introduced more International Affairs bills than they did in the subsequent years of the Obama administration (112th-114thCongress, i.e., 2012-2016). This suggests that House Democrats were, in fact, no less active on foreign policy when their party held full control of the government. Similarly, for the Republican Party, the 115th Congress marked a period when they exercised unified control over the government. During this time, Republican members of the House put forth an exceptional number of foreign policy bills, ranking second highest in the last ten congresses. In other words, when a party has unified control of the government, its members may be more active in foreign policy, perhaps viewing it as a favorable opportunity to get their proposals passed.

In addition, it is not unusual for lawmakers from the President's party to have divergent preferences from the President on foreign policy. Previous research have found that anti-presidential bipartisanship, which refers to instances in which majorities from both parties in Congress are at odds with the President, is common in foreign policy (Tama 2023), especially on sanctions (Tama 2020). President George H.W. Bush's conciliatory approach to dealing with

China after the Tiananmen Square protest was widely criticized by Republicans (Skidmore and Gates 1997). President Obama's veto of a bill that would allow families of the victims of 9/11 to sue Saudi Arabia was viewed as disappointing by Democrats and was subsequently overridden (Kim 2016). Similarly, the Biden administration's withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021 triggered harsh reviews from top Democrats in Congress (Blake 2021). In sum, members of Congress under unified government do not necessarily relinquish their influence on foreign policymaking. The delegation of power to the President does not seem to be the sole explanation for why unified government gives less attention to foreign policy than divided government.

Figure 3 Number of International Affairs Bills Introduced by Democrats and Republicans in Each Congress



2.5 Research Design

To test my hypothesis, I collected all House bills that deal with foreign policy issues from the 108th to 117th Congress (2003-2022). [10] I classified a bill as a foreign policy bill if the Congressional Research Service (CRS) categorized the policy area of the legislation as

[10] Congressional bills refer to bills and joint resolutions, i.e., H.R. and H.J.Res.

"International Affairs".[11] [12] The unit of analysis is each bill. I focus on the House, recognizing that the dynamics in the Senate may be different.

In many ways, this period is an ideal time to study how U.S. foreign policy under unified government is different from that under divided government. Table 1 lists all the possible combinations of the two chambers of Congress and the presidency controlled by different parties. The 108th through 117th Congresses cover most possible combinations, except for (1) a Democrats-controlled House, a Republican-controlled Senate, and a Democratic president and (2) a Republican-controlled House, a Democrat-controlled Senate, and a Republican president. To include the former situation, one needs to go back to the 1880s (the 49th and 50th congresses), and the latter situation has never appeared in U.S. history as a full two-year term. In addition, 2003-2022 marks the evolution of American politics towards increasing polarization. This trend offers valuable insights into the formulation of U.S. foreign policy within the context of heightened political division. As American politics continues to exhibit signs of deepening polarization, the selection of this particular time frame holds substantial significance for understanding the potential future trajectory of U.S. foreign policy.

Table 1 Party Control of Congress and Presidency

Presidency: D				Presidency: R			
		Senate Majority				Senate Majority	
		D	R			D	R
House Majority	D	**111, 117**	-	House Majority	D	110	116
	R	112, 113	114		R	-	**108, 109, 115**
Note: "D" and "R" stand for Democrats and Republicans, respectively. Unified governments are in bold.							

[11] For a full list of policy areas, see https://www.congress.gov/help/field-values/policy-area. Other scholars include bills that fall in "Armed Services and National Security", "Foreign Trade and International Finance" or "Immigration" in similar analysis. For example, see Bryan and Tama (2021). I excluded bills in these categories because a close examination of these bills revealed that 1) many "Armed Services and National Security" bills deal with veterans' affairs; 2) Trade and Immigration policies are believed to lie at the intersection of domestic and foreign policies.

[12] An alternative way of categorizing congressional bills is to follow the Policy Agendas Project (See "E. Scott Adler and John Wilkerson, Congressional Bills Project, NSF 00880066 and 00880061"). As of writing the paper, the Policy Agendas Project only covers bills up until 2016 while CRS's data is updated on a regular basis.

Extending this time frame further back, the 107th Congress (2001-2002) stands out as an anomaly in various aspects. The control of the U.S. Senate during the 107th Congress changed multiple times between Democrats and Republicans, resulting several shifts between a unified and divided government. These dynamic posed challenges to coding variables. Moreover, 9/11 dramatically reshaped the congressional as well as presidential agenda between 2001 and 2002 (Binder and Frenzel 2002). Many issues were put on hold as emergency matters - including disaster relief, an airline bailout, and the enhancement of homeland security enforcement powers - took center stage. The President's focus was not just redirected from domestic issues due to the ongoing war on terrorism, but a significant portion of his time was also consequently absorbed.

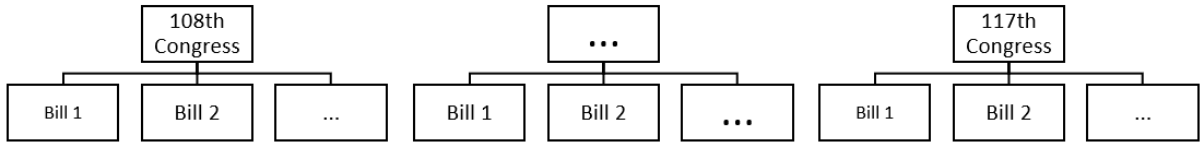
The dependent variable is whether the bill received the House floor action. This is a critical stage in the lawmaking process and also a point in the process that is constrained by Congress's limited agenda space. Foreign affairs, together with other issues, such as economy, social welfare, and education, compete for limited Congress's agenda space and lawmakers' attention.[13] With numerous bills being introduced in each session, giving priority to one foreign policy bill on the agenda implies that another bill may not see the light of day on the House floor for discussion. The scheduling of a bill on the agenda serves as a clear indicator that Congress is affording it the necessary attention. From 2003 to 2022, a total of 2,858 international affairs bills were introduced, of which 398 underwent floor action. 108 were successfully enacted into laws.

The independent variable is whether the government was divided or unified when the bill is introduced. I used an indicator variable that is coded as 0 when there is unified government (i.e., the House, the Senate, and the Presidency are controlled by one party), and 1 otherwise.

[13] Some may argue that committee consideration is an equally valid measurement of whether the bill gets attention in Congress. However, receiving House committee consideration does not guarantee that the bill will be considered by the whole chamber. For instance, from the 108th to 117th House, only 80% of international bills considered by committee received House floor attention.

Given that my unit of analysis is each international affairs bill introduced over the span of ten congresses (i.e., twenty years), in this context, bills are nested within congresses, which creates a hierarchical data structure (Figure 4). Furthermore, the use of a congress-level independent variable, *Divided government*, that does not vary within each congress presents collinearity issues when included with congress indicators in traditional regression models. Therefore, I chose to use a multilevel model with random intercepts varying by congress. Such a model can account for both bill- and congress-level variation in estimating the congress-level regression coefficient (Gelman and Hill 2006). I used a fully Bayesian approach due to its benefit of accounting for the uncertainty in the parameter estimates and reducing bias (Stegmueller 2013).[14]

Figure 4 Multilevel Structure of Data



Based on exiting literature, the model includes a series of control variables that are likely to affect bill consideration on the floor. I categorized them into two levels: bill-level and congress-level factors. For bill-level factors, I further categorized them into three groups: sponsor-related, content-related, and time-related factors. Table 2 lists all these variables and how they are expected

[14] All models are estimated using the rstanarm package in R. See Lee et al. (2018). The Bayesian approach employed in this paper is different from traditional frequentist approach in two important ways. First, unlike frequentist approach that offers a single "best guess" for parameters, Bayesian analysis considers all possible values that a parameter might take, representing them as a distribution and reflecting the uncertainty inherent in statistical estimation. Second, the two approaches differ in their interpretations. A 95% confidence interval in the frequentist approach tells us that if we were to conduct the experiment repeatedly, 95% of the computed confidence intervals would contain the true parameter value. A 95% credible interval in Bayesian approach, on the other hand, is the parameter range that has a 95% probability of including the true parameter value. It is a common misunderstanding to apply Bayesian interpretation methods when interpreting confidence intervals within the framework of the frequentist approach (Western and Jackman 1994).

to affect the dependent variable. Table 3 summarizes the statistics. The mathematical representation of the model can be formulated as follows:

Bill-level (Level 1):

$Pr(y_i=1)=logit^{-1}(\alpha_{j[i]}+\beta_1 X_{1i}+\ldots+\beta_p X_{pi})$, for i=1,…,n. α_j is the random intercept for Congress j. $\beta_{1,\ldots,}$ β_p are the fixed slopes for bill-level independent variables $X_1,\ldots, X_p$.

Congress-level (Level 2):

$\alpha_j=\delta+\gamma_1 Z_{1j}+\ldots+\gamma_p Z_{pj}+u_j$, where α_j is the random intercept for Congress j. δ, $\gamma_1,\ldots, \gamma_p$ are the parameters associated with congress-level predictors $Z_{1,\ldots}Z_p$. u_j is the Congress-level residual term.

Table 2 Control Variables and Expectations (1)

Level	Variable	Coding	Expected Sign	Explanation
Bill-level	**Sponsor-related factors**			
	Majority party member	A bill is coded as 1 if its sponsor is a majority party member and 0 otherwise	+	The majority party members are more influential in setting the agenda
	Majority party leader	A bill is coded as 1 if its sponsor is the chair of one of the committees that the bill was referred to, or a majority party leader, and 0 otherwise	+	The majority party leaders are more influential in setting the agenda
	First committee member	A bill is coded as 1 if its sponsor sits on the first committee that the bill was referred to and 0 otherwise	+	Members are more successful advancing their bills referred to their committees
	Content-specific factors			
	Appropriations/ Reauthorization	A bill is coded as 1 if it deals with appropriations or reauthorization and 0 otherwise. Appropriation bills were selected by checking if the title or the summary of the bill has the word "appropriations". These bills were double-checked to ensure that they were not referring to an authorization. The coding of reauthorization bills follow Adler and Wilkerson (2005)	+	Bills that fund existing government programs keep the government run, and thus are more likely to be assigned some agenda space

	# Committees referred to	The number of committees that the bill was referred to	-	Going through many committees may slow down the legislative process (Oleszek et al. 2019)
	#cosponsors	The number of cosponsors that the bill attracted (inverse hyperbolic sine)[15]	+	The more cosponsors a bill gets, the more support it has, and the more likely the bill receives floor attention
	Bipartisan consensus	Bills are coded as 1 if at least 20% of cosponsors are from the sponsor's opposing party and 0 otherwise (Harbridge 2015)	+	Bills that have bipartisan consensus are more likely to pass the chamber and therefore are more likely to receive agenda space
	#cosponsors)× Bipartisan consensus	--		The effect of the number of cosponsors is conditional on whether the bill has received bipartisan support. For bills that have the same number of cosponsors, those that receive bipartisan support are more likely to be put on the congressional agenda.
	Timing factors			
	Months since beginning of Congress	The number of months that passed when the bill was introduced	-	The earlier the bill introduced, the more likely the bill will be considered
Congress-level	Int'l Affairs Salience	The number of International Affairs bills introduced in each Congress (hundred)	-	The likelihood of considering international affairs bills increases with the salience of international affairs increases
	Congressional productivity	The number of public laws enacted in each congress (hundred)	+	Higher levels of congressional productivity are positively associated with a greater likelihood of bills being placed on the legislative agenda

[15] I did not take the log value of the number of cosponsors because there are many bills that do not have any cosponsors. I chose not to add one cosponsor to all bills because doing so would turn bills that have no support among lawmakers (zero cosponsors) into bills that receive some support (one cosponsor). In reality, such distinction is important.

Table 3 Summary of Statistics (1)

Level	Variable	Min	Mean	Max	St. Dev.
Bill-level	**Sponsor-related factors**				
	Majority party member	0	0.564	1	0.496
	Majority party leader	0	0.064	1	0.245
	First Committee member	0	0.427	1	0.495
	Content-related factors				
	Appropriations / Reautho-rization	0	0.031	1	0.173
	Bill length	0	1.970	6.828	1.009
	#Committees	1	1.690	14	1.262
	#Cosponsors	0	2.540	6.628	1.651
	Bipartisan consensus	0	0.396	1	0.489
	Time-related factor				
	Months since the beginning of Congress	1	10.150	24	7.118
Congress-level	Int'l Affairs salience	1.870	3.321	5.730	1.377
	Congressional productivity	2.840	3.834	5.040	0.669

2.6 Results

The regression results are presented in Table 4. The most noteworthy finding is the positive coefficient of *Divided government*. Figure 5 plots the distribution of 4,000 simulated coefficients of *Divided Government* based on the Bayesian model. Most of the coefficients are concentrated on the right side of 0, specifically in the range between 0.5 and 1. This distribution provides strong evidence that the variable has a positive effect on the dependent variable, indicating that international affairs bills are more likely to receive House floor consideration under divided government. Notably, this effect persists even after controlling for all other relevant factors that have been identified in previous literature as having an impact on the legislative process.

Table 4 Multilevel Logistic Analysis of International Affairs Bills Consideration in the U.S. House of Representatives, 2003-2022

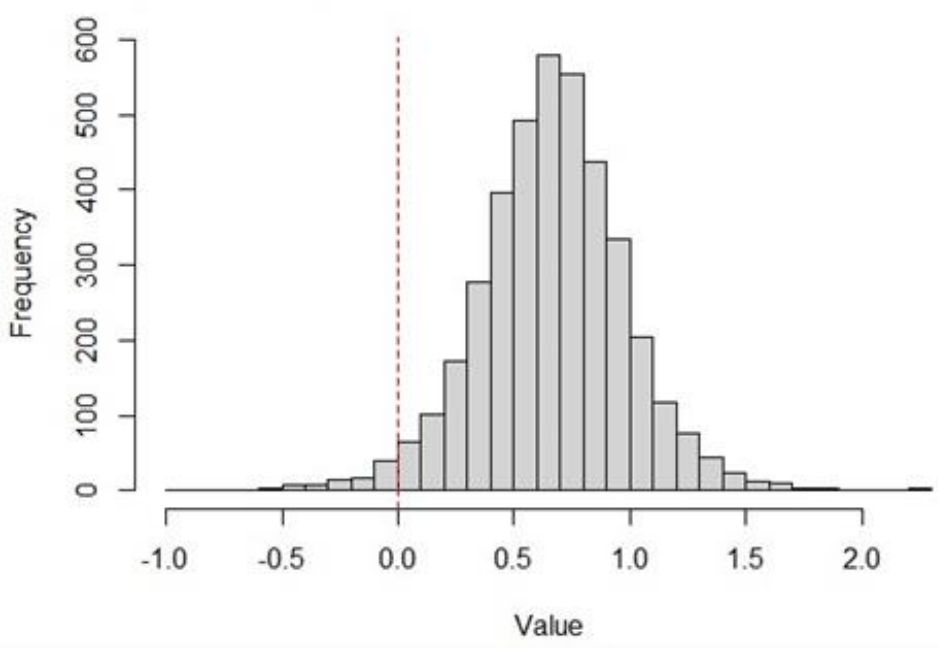
Level	Variable	Estimate	Sd. error	95% Credible Interval
	Divided government	0.668	0.320	(0.016, 1.308)
Bill-level	**Sponsor-related factors**			
	Majority party member	0.475	0.140	(0.198, 0.753)
	Majority party leader	2.228	0.228	(1.781, 2.663)
	First Committee member	0.872	0.138	(0.607, 1.148)
	Content-related factors			
	Appropriations / Reauthorization	1.662	0.262	(1.153, 2.163)
	Bill length	0.011	0.068	(−0.124, 0.140)
	#Committees	−0.180	0.059	(−0.298, −0.064)
	#Cosponsors	0.285	0.066	(0.154, 0.414)
	Bipartisan consensus	0.925	0.304	(0.331, 1.517)
	#Cosponsors×Bipartisan consensus	0.231	0.088	(0.056, 0.404)
	Time-related factor			
	Months since the beginning of Congress	−0.034	0.010	(−0.053, −0.015)
Congress-level	Int'l Affairs salience	0.256	0.112	(0.036, 0.494)
	Congressional productivity	0.537	0.223	(0.104, 0.994)

Note: Multilevel logistic models with random intercepts estimated for Congresses. Bills refer to H.R. and H.J.Res.

The control variables in the analysis align with expectations. Lawmakers belonging to the majority party, serving as party leaders, or sitting on the first committee to which the bill was referred, have a higher chance of advancing their proposals in the legislative process. In addition, the content of the bills plays a crucial role. Bills dealing with appropriations or reauthorizations, and having more cosponsors (especially bipartisan ones), are more likely to progress. However, if a bill is referred to multiple committees, it can slow down the legislative process, as indicated by the negative coefficient. Interestingly, the length of the bill does not seem to affect its chances of success. Furthermore, in terms of timing, bills introduced later in a session are less likely to be considered by the House. This is not a surprising finding, as the end of a congressional term may

find lawmakers occupied with election-related tasks, and legislative work could be temporarily halted.

Figure 5 Posterior Distribution of Coefficient of Divided Government

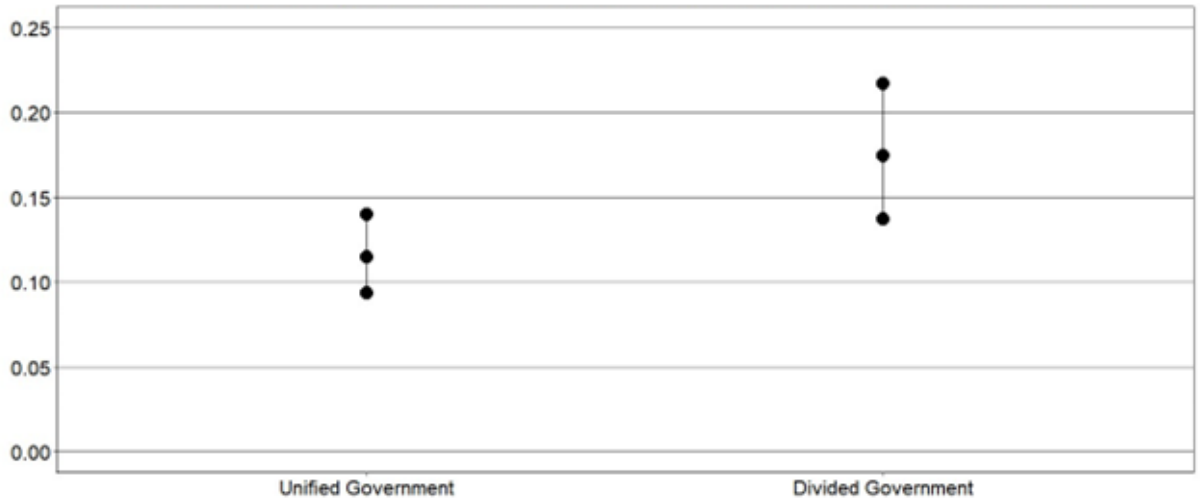


Finally, the two congress-level control variables are consistent with expectations. Specifically, when foreign policy issues are salient in a Congress and when the overall productivity of Congress is high, these conditions are favorable for greater attention to foreign policy bills.

Figure 6 reports the substantive significance of *Divided government* based on Table 4. Here I used the observed-value approach (Hanmer and Kalkan 2013). Specifically, I held *Divided government* at 1 and the rest of control variables at their observed values in each observation (i.e., each bill). I drew 4,000 sets of simulated coefficients. For each set of the coefficients, I calculated the predicted probability for each bill with their random intercepts being considered and took their average. Therefore, I obtained 4,000 predicted probabilities when *Divided government* takes 1 and

presented 95% credible interval around the median. Next, I repeated the process by holding *Divided Government* at 0 and repeating the process. [16]

Figure 6 Statistical Simulation Results for Predicted Probabilities of An International Affairs Bill Receiving House Floor Consideration with 95% Credible Intervals

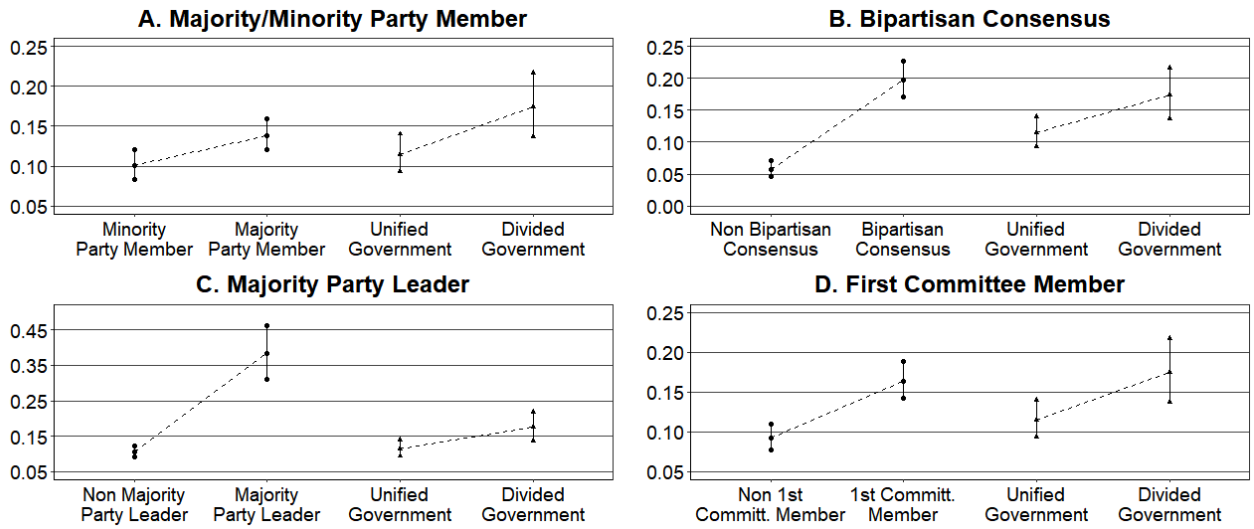


When a foreign policy bill is introduced in the House under unified government, it has an 11% chance of being considered on the floor, with a 95% credible interval ranging from 9% to 14%. In contrast, when introduced under divided government, the probability of receiving floor attention increases to 17%, with a 95% credible interval ranging from 14% to 22%. While a 6% increase may appear modest, it is worth noting that from the 108th to 117th House, only 11% of introduced House bills were brought to the chamber floor for consideration. Therefore, the impact of Divided government should not be underestimated -- it represents an increase of 50%. Furthermore, even after controlling for all the factors that previous research has identified as affecting the legislative process, divided government still exerts a significant influence on the likelihood that the House

[16] Here the substantive significance of the variable is examined based on the entire dataset, rather than a single isolated case. Scholars commonly explore the substantive significance of a variable by arbitrarily assigning a value to control variables, such as their mean value. However, this approach may present a challenge as such a case might never exist in reality, and the derived effect might not be generalizable across the whole population (Hanmer and Ozan Kalkan 2013). The observed value approach, on the other hand, enables us to discern the effect of a variable for the entire population, offering a more comprehensive understanding. In the following text, I will also examine two specific cases, which complements the observed value approach.

will consider foreign policy legislation.

Figure 7 Relations between Control Variables and Predicted Probabilities of International Affairs Bills Receiving House Floor Action with 95% Credible Intervals

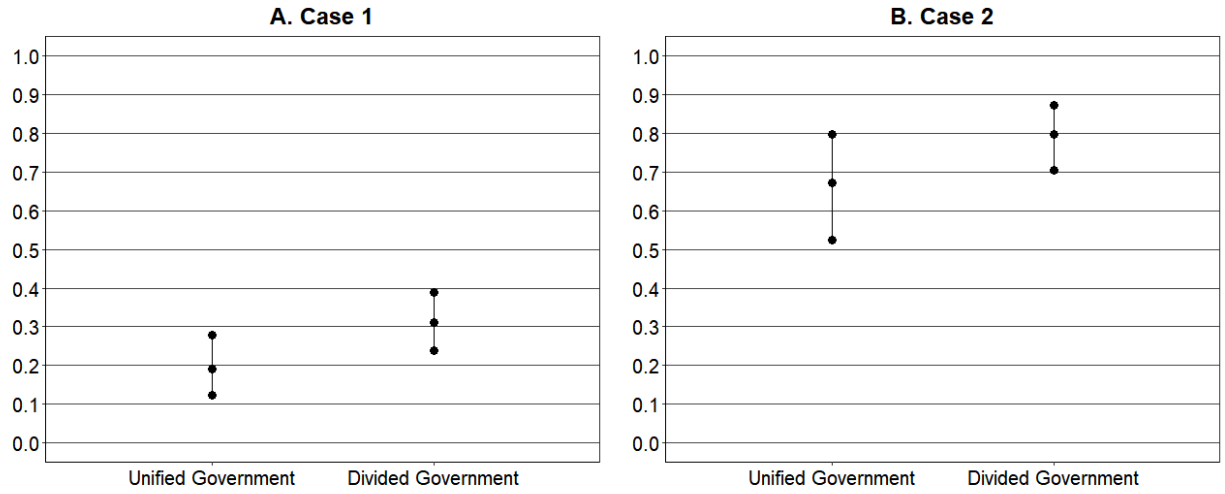


Upon comparing divided government with control variables, it is clear that its influence should not be overlooked. Figure 7 presents the relations between certain control variables and the dependent variable, employing the same method previously described. When introduced by House majority party leaders, the likelihood of a foreign policy bill receiving floor attention jumps from 10% to 38% (Figure 7C). Similarly, if introduced by a member who sits on the first committee to which the bill was referred to, the probability of the bill receiving floor consideration increases from 9% to 16% (Figure 7D). Attaining bipartisan consensus boosts the chance of a foreign policy bill being considered on the floor from 6% to 20% (Figure 7B). Finally, introduction by a House majority party member raises the likelihood from 10% to 14% (Figure 7A). In other words, when examining the probability of a foreign policy bill receiving House floor action, the effect of being introduced under divided government is more significant than being introduced by a majority party member and is almost as impactful as the effect of being introduced by a member who sits on the

first committee that the bill was referred to.

Figure 8 illustrates the influence of divided government on the floor consideration of a foreign policy bill in two scenarios. In Figure 8A, the bill is introduced by a House majority party member who also serves on the first committee to which the bill was referred, is neither an appropriation nor a reauthorization measure and has bipartisan support. Other control variables are set to their median values. Under unified government, the likelihood of the House considering this bill stands at 19%, while the probability rises to 31% under divided government. Figure 8B depicts a different scenario, where the bill's sponsor is the House majority party leader. In this case, the chance of the bill receiving floor consideration is 67% under unified government. However, if the bill is introduced under divided government framework, the probability of consideration escalates to 80%. Being introduced under divided government facilitates the progress of a foreign policy bill through the legislative process, even when the sponsor holds significant power in the legislative process.

Figure 8 The Effect of Divided Government in Two Special Cases



Note: Figure 8A represents a foreign policy bill introduced by a House majority party member and 8B represents a bill introduced by a House majority party leader. In both cases the sponsor sits on the first committee where the bill was referred to. The bill received bipartisan support and is not an appropriations nor a reauthorization bill. The rest of the control variables take the median value.

2.7 Discussion and Conclusion

In this paper, I proposed a theory of why Congress gives less attention to foreign policy issues under unified government than under divided government. I argue that the combined effect of three key realities of the modern Congress leads to less attention to foreign policy under unified government. First, the attention span of lawmakers, as well as the agenda space of Congress, are limited. Therefore, politicians cannot address all issues simultaneously. Second, since constituents are more concerned with domestic matters in most cases, lawmakers will prioritize those issues while postponing foreign policy issues. Third, unified government is a precious opportunity for the majority party. Party members thus will take this chance to focus on issues that will help them win the next election, and those issues, in general, are domestic-oriented. My empirical results reveal that divided government increases the likelihood of an international affairs bill being considered by the House. In doing so, this study shifts the focus from policy *effectiveness* to the policy-making *process*, taking into account the varying impacts of divided and unified government across domestic and foreign policy areas, and the interplay between them.

The decision-making process of Congress, regarding the timing and selection of issues to address, carries substantial implications in light of the myriad of issues requiring attention and the inherent limitations imposed by lawmakers' attention span and Congress's agenda capacity. As Congress grapples with a wide range of issues vying for action, effectively prioritizing and allocating resources becomes a formidable challenge. Ultimately, these decisions shape the policy agenda and chart the course of legislative action. Although there is continuing worry that divided government leads to gridlock and dysfunction, my findings show that Congress allocates more attention to foreign policy under divided government. When negotiation on domestic issues is unlikely to progress, foreign policy is given more agenda space. In turn, unified government

provides the majority party with an edge on pushing forward their domestic agenda, but such domestic momentum probably makes foreign policy left behind. Admittedly, a larger amount of attention paid to foreign policy issues under divided government does not guarantee the achievement of foreign policy goals. Sometimes it does not even guarantee making good policies. But it gives politicians a chance to put foreign policy on the agenda and have government engage with these issues.

In this paper, I exerted considerable effort to alleviate confounding bias. Nonetheless, future research should explore other research designs to establish a causal relationship between the key independent and dependent variables. In addition, the present study opens up several avenues for further inquiry. First, is the impact of unified versus divided government on foreign policy bills the same in both the House and Senate? There are many differences between the House and Senate, particularly in its legislative process and electoral dynamics (Lazarus and Steigerwalt 2009), and this should be considered when analyzing foreign policy bills in the Senate (for a preliminary analysis, see Appendix 4). Second, Congress does not only make laws, it also passes resolutions (i.e., H.Con.Res. and H.Res.). If the majority party, under unified government, is too busy with domestic issues to make foreign policy bills, will it at least pass resolutions to deal with international affairs? Although resolutions may be limited in effect to Congress or even just one of its chambers, they convey the sense of the legislative branch and may to some extent be interpreted by foreign governments as an official stance. Such documents may affect U.S. foreign relations implicitly. Finally, does the executive branch function the same way as Congress does? Perhaps the White House, too, prioritizes foreign policy under divided government. If so, foreign adversaries should not underestimate a divided U.S. government, as it may well channel more attention and agenda space into foreign affairs. Despite partisan divides, it appears that when it

comes to foreign policy, United, We Stand; Divided, We Stand More Focused.

Chapter 3: The Influence of Domestic Politics in Formulating Sanctions Strategies

Why does the U.S. government sometimes opt for sanctions through the United Nations, while at other times it seeks alternative methods of sanctioning, such as unilateral sanctions or coordinating sanctions with allies? In this paper, I argue that whether the U.S. government is unified government or divided influences this choice. Under unified government, the majority party would like to take this hard-won but fleeting opportunity to focus on issues they believe will enhance their prospects in the next election. In most instances, these issues are domestic issues. Due to the limitation of politicians' attention span and institutional agenda space, the U.S. is less likely to engage in negotiations of sanctions in the UN, which are typically preferred but require significant diplomatic efforts. Under divided government, when negotiations on domestic issues stall, foreign policy issues are given more agenda space and receive more attention from politicians. As a result, the U.S. is more likely to engage in sanctions negotiations within the UN. Empirically, I analyzed all the sanctions that U.S. has participated from 2003 to 2022 using an original dataset. The results reveal that U.S. is more likely to engage in UN sanctions under divided than under unified government. The findings suggest that domestic politics plays a crucial role in influencing the selection of foreign policy tools.

3.1. Introduction

Why does the U.S. government sometimes opt for sanctions through the United Nations, while at other times it seeks alternative methods of sanctioning, such as unilateral sanctions or coordinating sanctions with allies? Existing literature on sanctions mainly focuses on their effectiveness, with limited research on the choice between different types of sanctions. I argue that the U.S. selection of different types of sanctions is influenced by domestic politics. Specifically, when the U.S. government is divided, meaning the Presidency and two chambers of Congress are controlled by different parties, it is more likely to pursue sanctions through the United Nations against the target. On the other hand, when the U.S. government is unified, namely the Presidency and Congress are controlled by the same party, it is more likely to impose unilateral sanctions on the target or formulate sanctions with its allies.

My theory is rooted in politicians' electoral incentives and institutional capacity. I argue that, generally, unified U.S. government gives less attention to foreign policy than divided government because, under unified government, the majority party would like to take this hard-won victory as well as fleeting opportunity to enact policies that they think are going to help them in the next election. Such policies, in most cases, concern domestic issues. Due to the constraints on legislators' attention span and political institutions' agenda space, foreign policy issues often experience delays. Consequently, the U.S. is less inclined to participate in negotiations with other countries at the UN, as such endeavors demand significant diplomatic efforts and time, including the participation of the President in many cases. However, bilateral sanctions or sanctions with allies are a more attractive policy because they are faster and relatively easier to establish, which means they take less time away from the majority party's domestic agenda. On the contrary, under divided government, when negotiations on domestic issues face obstacles, foreign policy issues

are granted greater agenda space. This grants politicians, including the President, more time and reduces the opportunity costs associated with pursuing UN sanctions, which are typically regarded as preferable. Such circumstances create a conducive environment for the U.S. to partake in negotiating multilateral sanctions through the UN.

To test my hypothesis, I investigate whether the U.S. is more likely to impose sanctions on a target through the United Nations under divided government compared to unified government. I gather data on all sanctions that the U.S. has participated in from 2003 to 2022, encompassing both unilateral sanctions, sanctions collaborated with allies, and sanctions imposed through the UN. I also consider a host of factors that may affect the choice between different types of sanctions, such as U.S. influence on the target and U.S. relations with Russian and China, two permanent members of the UN Security Council. The empirical findings indicate that divided government enhances the likelihood of imposing sanctions through the UN.

This paper makes the following major contributions to literature. First, the current literature has extensively examined the *effectiveness* of sanctions (Eaton and Engers 1992; Pape 1997; Drezner 1999; Mueller and Mueller 1999; Miers and Morgan 2002; Bapat and Morgan 2009; Peterson 2013; Biersteker, Eckert, and Tourinho 2016; Weber and Schneider 2020), yet there remains a notable research gap concerning the *process* of sanction formulation. Specifically, the insufficient focus on how the U.S., as the most frequent user of sanctions worldwide, navigates the decision-making between choosing different types of sanctions warrants attention. This paper aims to address this gap in research.

Second, although the literature has thoroughly investigated the impact of unified and divided government (Mayhew 1991; Kelly 1993; Edwards, Barrett, and Peake 1997; Binder 1999; 2004; Howell et al. 2000; Rogers 2005; Fiorina 2019), most discussions predominantly center on the

repercussions of divided government on domestic affairs. Yet, there is a notable scarcity of research exploring the influence divided government might have on U.S. foreign policy, as well as whether its effects vary between domestic and international contexts. This article addresses this gap by uncovering that unified and divided governments exert distinct influences on domestic and foreign policy. While divided government may lead to dysfunction in domestic issues, they provide more agenda space for foreign policy, enabling the U.S. to engage in intricate negotiations with other countries at the United Nations regarding sanctions. In addition, this paper's findings add to knowledge about how domestic politics influences foreign policy (Putnam 1988; Milner and Tingley 2016), particularly in the context of deciding between different types of diplomatic tools. Domestic and foreign policy issues contend for agenda space and politicians' attention. When politicians prioritize domestic matters, their attention towards foreign policy diminishes, consequently impacting foreign policy decisions.

The rest of the paper proceeds as follows. The following section provides an overview of the literature on sanctions. The third section presents my theory explaining how domestic factors influence the choice between imposing sanctions through UN or other approaches. The fourth and fifth section detail the research design and present the results. The final section discusses and concludes.

3.2. Sanctions Overview

A leader typically employs three instruments of statecraft: diplomacy, sanctions, and military force (Baldwin 1985). Among these, sanctions often serve as an intermediary option. On one hand, they are less costly than engaging in warfare. On the other hand, sanctions are less prone to be perceived as "weak" compared to diplomatic measures. As Pape (1997) points out, traditionally, military tools have been perceived as the sole effective means of accomplishing ambitious foreign

policy objectives such as territorial acquisition or defense, influencing a state's military conduct, and modifying its regime or internal political framework. However, since World War I, sanctions have emerged as a recognized non-military approach, often considered the liberal alternative to armed conflict.

There are many studies delving into sanctions' effectiveness. Scholars usually explore the question by categorizing sanctions into different types, such as unilateral versus multilateral sanctions (Kaempfer and Lowenberg 1999; Miers and Morgan 2002; Bapat and Morgan 2009), systematic versus targeted sanctions (Tostensen and Bull 2002; Cortright and Lopez 2002; Drezner 2011), and imposed sanctions versus the threat of imposing sanctions (Whang 2011; Peterson 2013; Afesorgbor 2019).

Debates surrounding the effectiveness of economic sanctions have persisted throughout the existence of this tool in its modern form. This lack of consensus can sometimes be attributed to the selective utilization of different case studies by proponents and opponents, aiming to strengthen their respective viewpoints (Drezner 2022). Additionally, policymakers occasionally choose sanctions despite acknowledging their limited impact, as they perceive them to possess a more favorable cost-benefit ratio in comparison to other available policy alternatives (Baldwin 1999). Moreover, sanctions serve not only to alter the behavior of the target country but can also be employed to deter a country from undertaking certain actions in the first place. However, this covert nature introduces a selection bias that compounds the challenge of studying the effectiveness of sanctions (Miller 2014).[17] Furthermore, scholars appear to have divergent views and a lack of consensus on numerous concepts associated with sanctions, sometimes even on what

[17] For instance, when the target perceives the looming threat of sanctions, it may proactively adjust its behavior, effectively prompting the intended effects of the sanctions even before their formal implementation. Instances where sanctions are eventually implemented typically involve challenging scenarios where the target exhibits inherent resistance to change.

constitutes “sanctions” (Brzoska 2015). Scholars often define sanctions in a variety of ways, sometimes narrowly referring only to economic sanctions, while at other times, encompassing political, military, and technological sanctions in a broader sense. Moreover, determining the criteria for defining “success” or “effectiveness” can be subjective. As David Baldwin put it: “scholars are talking past one another because they ask different questions, use different concepts, and set the discussion in different analytical contexts. In short, they are talking about different things” (Baldwin 1999, 80).

The centrality of the U.S. financial system in the global economy, as well as the dollar’s status as the world’s dominant reserve, make sanctions attractive policy tools for U.S. policymakers (Gilsinan 2019). Currently, the U.S. is at the forefront of employing economic and financial sanctions (Masters 2019). As of October 2021, according to the U.S. Department of the Treasury, sanctions are imposed by the U.S. on over 9,400 individuals and entities, marking a surge of over 900% since 2000. These sanctions are linked to more than 20 countries (Collins-Chase 2022).

The prevailing view among scholars is that the U.S. president wields considerable power in formulating sanctions. However, there is an ongoing debate regarding the extent of Congress’ influence in this matter. Some argue that the Congress plays a relatively weak role (Whang 2011; Milner and Tingley 2016), while others assert that its influence should not be underestimated (Tama 2020).

In formulating sanctions strategies, the President can act as a sole decisionmaker by identifying a situation poses an “unusual and extraordinary threat…to the national security, foreign policy, or economy of the United States.” This process involves declaring a national emergency under the provisions of the National Emergencies Act, Trading With the Enemy Act, and the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, notifying Congress of this declaration, and publishing it in the

Federal Register for public record without additional congressional action. The implementation and administration of sanctions within the executive branch are primarily the responsibility of several agencies and departments, most notably the Departments of State, the Treasury, and Commerce (Collins-Chase and Nelson 2023).

While emergency powers grant the President the authority to enforce economic sanctions without requiring additional action from Congress, Congress frequently passes laws mandating the President to implement such sanctions concerning particular foreign policy goals, geopolitical circumstances, or bilateral ties. Moreover, Congress can fulfill its role in shaping and enforcing sanctions by leveraging its constitutional authority to allocate (or withhold) funds for agencies responsible for sanction administration, conducting oversight on sanction implementation, or altering or nullifying legislation that delegates executive authority over international commerce and trade (Collins-Chase 2022).

The U.S. enacts sanctions through various approaches. Some sanctions are imposed independently, while others are implemented jointly with allies or through the United Nations. Martin (2000, 83) points out that states, including powerful ones like the U.S., typically prefer multilateral sanctions. This is because multilateral sanctions are more effective, can send a stronger signal to the target country, and are likely to garner support from domestic constituents who are affected by the sanctions. Moreover, sanctions imposed through the United Nations carry the stamp of legitimacy, as most states regard UN Security Council resolutions as reflecting the collective will of the international community and as being based on international law (Lyon 2016).

Some scholars have explored why the U.S. sometimes seeks to achieve its foreign policy goals through international organizations and other times opts for alternative means, such as unilateral action. For example, Kersting and Kilby (2021) argue that in the realm of foreign aid, if the

presidential administration is unable to garner the cooperation of Congress needed for bilateral action—indicating a divided U.S. government—the president might bypass Congress by utilizing influence within multilateral organizations such as the World Bank to attain the objectives. Dreher et al. (2022) point out in scenarios where bilateral aid could incite domestic opposition, the U.S. tends to favor multilateral avenues to obfuscate such actions. Milner and Tingley (2013) argue that the decision-making process of the U.S. concerning engagement with multilateral institutions versus unilateral action in foreign aid is shaped by the preferences of political elites and the public regarding the balance between control and burden sharing.

Lindsay (1994) points out that policies like foreign aid are intricately tied to "the power of the purse" wielded by Congress, wherein congressional influence peaks while presidential influence wanes. Consequently, this mirrors decision-making processes for domestic distributive policies. Thus, disagreements between Congress and the President are more prone to arise, particularly when they come from different parties. However, sanctions and foreign aid diverge significantly. While foreign aid necessitates financial outlay by the U.S., sanctions indicate that the target is acting against American interests, whether in security, economic, or strategic realms. The motives driving these actions are distinct. In contrast to the former, Congress and the President are more likely to find common ground when formulating sanction strategies, with the President encountering comparatively less domestic opposition than with foreign aid.

While there is a prevailing perception that Republicans lean towards unilateral diplomatic approaches compared to Democrats, this may not necessarily apply to their stance on sanctions. Many Republican politicians have expressed their skepticism towards unilateral sanctions and have shown support for multilateral sanctions. For instance, former Republican Vice President Richard Cheney asserted that unilateral sanctions ‘‘almost never work’’ (Weiss 1999). Likewise,

former U.S. Ambassador to the UN, John Bolton, highlighted in his memoir his extensive efforts during the Bush administration in 2006 to push for Security Council sanctions against North Korea's nuclear testing. Surprisingly, the UN sanctions were seen as the preferred method by this hawkish Republican politician to address the North Korean issue: "For the first time in my six years in the Bush Administration, I had the opportunity and the policy leeway to go after the DPRK the way I wished I had been able to do from the start (Bolton 2008, 291)." Moreover, he regarded non-UN measures as an alternative in cases where UN sanctions were infeasible: "If either [China or Russia] were to veto, that would demonstrate that the Security Council had not been up to the job, freeing us to do what we chose to do outside the UN (Bolton 2008, 294)." Similarly, on Iran, former officials noted that the Bush administration made the decision to pursue an international sanctions approach against the regime, firmly believing that taking action at the UN level was a crucial element for the success of any sanctioning effort (Nephew 2017).

However, sanctions imposed by the UN usually involve intense diplomatic negotiations. Like any negotiation, this process consists in arguing, persuasion, and often also side-payments (Wolford 2015) because the U.S. and other countries usually demonstrate an "asymmetrical pattern of interests" on international security issues (Martin 1992) and dealing with these differences takes time and resources. As Drezner (2000) points out, multilateral sanctions present two distinct bargaining challenges: one between the main sender and the target country, and another between the main sender and other potential senders. The process of securing international cooperation in these sanctions may hinder the main sender's ability to negotiate with the target country directly. Agreeing on multilateral sanctions requires coordination among various equilibrium strategies, including determining the specific demands, the extent of sanctions, and methods to assess target compliance. Without consensus on the desired outcome, cooperation becomes unattainable.

A successful UN-initiated sanction requires the approval (or at least the abstention) of P5 (i.e., U.S., China, Russia, U.K., and France). Each of these five states has veto rights over adoption of Council resolutions on substantive issues. The Clinton administration spent more than a year trying to convince the UN Security Council to sanction North Korea prior to the Agreed Framework between the two countries in 1994 (Drezner 2000). The Bush administration devoted extensive diplomatic resources and forgave large economic debts to obtain and enforce the UN sanctions against Iraq. The negotiation process with China and Russia can be particularly challenging as these Beijing and Moscow usually have conflicting strategic interests with Washington. During the Obama administration, the President "sought to enhance the persuasive power of U.S. policy [by] making key compromises on issues at stake with Russia to draw Moscow into a more cooperative relationship on Iran and investing in a protracted negotiation of the latest UN resolution on Iran, Security Council Resolution 1929" (Maloney 2011).

Furthermore, it is common for the U.S. President to personally engage in sanction negotiations with other countries to secure their cooperation. In his memoir, Bolton revealed that during the process of formulating United Nations sanctions against North Korea, President Bush personally reached out to Chinese President Hu and Russian President Putin to persuade them to join in imposing sanctions on North Korea (Bolton 2008). Former U.S. ambassador Susan Rice also wrote in her memoir that President Obama pressed Chinese President Hu to approve tough sanctions on Iran during their bilateral meeting. Obama also used his tie with Medvedev to encourage Russia to accept more expansive penalties on Iran (Rice 2019, 267). The president's involvement turned out to be indispensable to the agreement among P5.

In comparison, conducting sanctions outside of UN is much less time-consuming as the U.S. would not need to seek consensus among multiple countries with veto powers. In fact, Rice wrote

that when she was negotiating with UN security council members on sanctions against Iran, Congress was "chomping at the bit to impose unilateral U.S. sanctions" as members of Congress are "frustrated at the slow pace of the negotiation in New York". To keep Congress onside, the ambassador had to repeatedly urge: "Please, please, give us more time (Rice 2019, 268)." Even when discussing sanctions with allies, the difficulty is much smaller than negotiating at the United Nations. The strategic interests of the U.S. and its allies are likely to be similar or alike (which is why they formed alliances in the first place), so much less effort is required when discussing sanctions against a country. This was demonstrated clearly by the rapid imposition of sanctions on Russia by the U.S. and its allies in 2022 following its invasion of Ukraine (The White House 2022).

Moreover, deciding whether to sanction a target is just the first step (perhaps the simplest step), followed by discussions on *how* to sanction the target. Cohen and Goldman (2019) point that the effective implementation of sanction programs necessitates a sophisticated and well-resourced governmental infrastructure. The comprehensive stages of the sanctioning process encompass "program design, target identification, designation decisions, assessment of efficacy, detection of evasion, sanctions enforcement, and adjudicating challenges to sanctions designations" (149). Presently, and perhaps indefinitely, these frameworks are exclusive to the state level, making replication at the United Nations challenging, if not unfeasible. Consequently, when negotiating sanctions on a target with other nations through the United Nations, the U.S. must allocate significant effort to strategizing the implementation of these sanctions. In contrast, sanctions outside of UN may appear more efficient and attractive.

Surprisingly, despite the U.S. frequently employs sanctions in its foreign policy, there is a lack of literature examining the choice of selecting specific type of sanctions. Specifically, why does the U.S. government sometimes opt for sanctions through the United Nations, while at other times

it seeks alternative methods of sanctioning, such as unilateral sanctions or coordinating sanctions with allies? The rest of the paper delves into the impact of domestic factors within the U.S., examining how sanctions may vary depending on whether the U.S. government is divided or unified. The next section proposes a theoretical framework based on politicians' attention span and electoral incentives.

3.3. Theoretical Framework and Hypothesis

3.3.1 Politicians' limited attention span

It is well-known that the White House and Congress are overwhelmed. Demands on the U.S. government have increased markedly as the scope of government has expanded. Government has been taking new responsibilities by moving into many issues previously left to civil society and state or local government, a phenomenon called "the Great Broadening" by Jones, Theriault, and Whyman (2019). In addition, new issues keep emerging. For instance, the development of social media requires the government to take action to protect personal data, and the rising sea level makes combating climate change an unavoidable topic. Furthermore, the volatile nature of international relations is very likely to give U.S. officials headaches from time to time. Even Republicans who advocate a limited government must face the fact that more and more complex issues need the government's attention, such as anti-terrorism during the Bush administration and trade deficit during the Trump administration.

However, U.S. Presidents, similar to the general public, are individuals bound by the usual human constraints of time and attention. This limitation in the President's time is a well-recognized concern among practitioners, as emphasized by Ann Lewis, who served as Counselor to the President during the Clinton administration. In an interview, she succinctly stated, "the most valuable resource we have is the president's time and we'll never have enough of it" (Kumar and

Sullivan 2003). Light (1998) also points out that the president's actual time devoted to policymaking is significantly less than one term in office. "[T]here are an awful lot of perfunctory, ceremonial things that have to be done. They take up about 15% to 20% of a President's time" (18). In addition, "you should subtract one year for the reelection campaign, another six months for the midterms, six months for the start-up, six months for the closing, and another month or two for an occasional vacation. That leaves you with a two-year presidential term" (17).

The extensive workload is not exclusive to the President alone; their cabinet members also grapple with countless issues daily. Former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates vividly describes his days in Pentagon as "filled with mind-boggling variety", and he needed to deal with "one damn thing after another" (Gates 2015, 250, 257). Similarly, Hillary Clinton stated that while serving as the Secretary of State, she was tasked with the role of the country's chief diplomat, the President's principal advisor on foreign policy, and the CEO of a sprawling Department. Her responsibilities ranged from handling national security threats to navigating the impact of social media, like Twitter (Clinton 2014). As a result, the constraints of time are very likely to influence the actions and decisions of politicians.

Lawmakers face such constraints, too. They must "spend time dialing for dollars, assessing program performance, investigating market failures, uncovering social problems, or studying the issues of the day that they were elected to solve (LaPira, Drutman, and Kosar 2020, 2)." According to a 2013 study, members of Congress work an average of seventy hours a week when Congress is in session and fifty-nine hours when they are home in the district (Congressional Management Foundation and Society for Human Resource Management 2013). Although some lawmakers (e.g., committee chairs) have additional staff, none can engage in all the activities needed to make maximum progress toward all the objectives they and their constituents care about (Hall and

Deardorff 2006). Furthermore, it takes a lot of work to advance a major piece of legislation through even one chamber of Congress, especially on issues with little bipartisan consensus. Compromise between two parties or within one party can take days, weeks, or even months, making the maximum number of policies that can be enacted far below what is proposed.

The consequence of the infinite demand for government service and limited time supply is that issues have to compete for agenda space and politicians' attention. As a result, some issues will be prioritized while other issues have to be postponed or even canceled. As Jones and Baumgartner point out: "Focus on one issue, and you become inattentive to others (2005, 20)." Previous research have shown that during election campaigns and fundraising activities, presidents tend to curtail the time devoted to addressing other critical matters, including foreign policy (Lindsey and Hobbs 2015; Doherty 2012).

3.3.2 Politician's electoral incentives

Given the limitations of the issue-processing capacity of officials and political institutions, it is reasonable to believe that at any point, politicians would select some issues to address first (from a large pool of all the issues that need to be addressed). Other issues have to be postponed (or set aside all together). People and organizations alike use heuristic shortcuts to handle the overabundance of issues that need to be addressed. One important shortcut is to pay attention to certain indicators rather than others (Jones and Baumgartner 2005; Gelman 2020; Miler 2010).

I argue that the most critical indicator for officials is how the policy would boost officials' odds of winning the next election. In his seminal book *Congress: The Electoral Connection*, Mayhew offers a simple assumption: members of Congress are "single-minded seekers of reelection" (Mayhew 1974). Although successive generations of scholars have raised the

limitations of Mayhew's work, they agree that Mayhew's thought experiment about members acting as "single-minded seekers of reelection" "explains a large amount of congressional behavior" (Carson and Roberts 2011, 143)[18].

Presidents are also concerned about their re-elections (Doherty 2012; Light 1998). Being re-elected allows a president to have more time to implement their plans and policies. Throughout the history since World War Two, only two presidents, Truman and Johnson, chose not to seek re-election. However, this decision was not due to a lack of desire, but rather a consequence of their low approval ratings (Gans 2022). As Jack Valenti, one of President Johnson's top aides, said: "the reelection caravan is provisioned every day. Anybody who tells differently tells you wrong" (Valenti 1980).[19]

Which type of policy is more likely to help politicians in their next elections? I argue that a successful policy addressing domestic issues is more likely to be rewarded in elections than a policy addressing foreign policy. What Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock (1993) call 'minimalism'—the view that the public lacks both political knowledge and meaningful political attitudes—was for decades the received wisdom about public opinion on foreign policy (Isernia, Juhász, and Rattinger 2002; Brewer et al. 2004). Polls indicating that voters rank the importance of foreign policy issues behind domestic issues are abundant (Drezner 2019).[20] Previous research also finds that during economic recessions, even dramatic international crises may not divert the public's attention away from the economy (Heffington, Park, and Williams 2019). Furthermore, politicians' success in foreign policy alone does not seem very helpful when seeking reelection. For instance, Peterson (1994) notes that despite President George H.W. Bush's tremendous success

[18] Others point out the additional goals of legislators, such as crafting good public policy and gaining political power and prestige. See Fenno and Hibbing (2002).
[19] Light (1998) points out two other goals of the President: historical achievement and good policy.
[20] For example, see Figure 2 in Chapter 2.

in foreign policy, including having brought the Cold War to an end, he was defeated by Clinton, who was advised that the issue was "The Economy, Stupid!"

In addition to displaying less interest in foreign policy issues when compared to domestic matters, the public's attitudes on foreign policy are often influenced by political elites (Baum and Potter 2015; 2019; Guisinger and Saunders 2017; Kriner 2018). The point here is not that politicians prioritizing domestic issues always win elections, nor that the public or politicians do not care about foreign policy at all. Rather, time and resource constraints combine with the electoral imperative to encourage politicians to conduct their work in ways that help their electoral chances (Lindsay 1994). Given that most constituents are directly affected by the consequences of domestic policies and have limited interactions with events happening thousands of miles away in other countries, politicians attach more importance to domestic issues than foreign policy issues.[21]

3.3.3 Unified government: a fleeting opportunity

The discussion above suggests that presidents and legislators always must decide how to allocate their attention to various issues. Under unified government, the majority party has an excellent opportunity to shape domestic policies, pass legislation and claim credit. What makes the majority party more likely to do so is the fact that holding unified government is a fleeting opportunity. Indeed, one of the most mysterious rules in American politics is that the president's party loses ground in midterm elections (Bafumi, Erikson, and Wlezien 2010). Lee (2016) points out that the 1980 election marks the beginning of a long period of political parity in the fight for control of American national institutions. After the persistent Democratic majorities in the House

[21] When a foreign policy issue becomes salient, it not only captures more attention of the public and elites, but public opinion may also wield influence over the elites (Tama 2023).

came to an end in 1994, switches in party control of Congress occurred with greater frequency, and "neither party sees itself as a permanent majority or a permanent minority" (4).

In addition, political parties in the U.S. have grown increasingly distinct from each other (Lee 2015) and divided on all the major policy dimensions (Layman, Carsey, and Horowitz 2006). Given the difficulty of reaching bipartisan cooperation, the majority party members see a much smaller chance for their policy proposal to be enacted once they become the minority party. As a result, when they are in control, they spare no effort to push for their own agenda.

Given the timing of elections, the party structure of the government faces a shuffle every two years. Political opponents implement the strategy of replacing the majority party from day one after the election. As Representative John Boehner famously said in a letter to House Republican colleagues: "What is the job of Republican leader in the minority? It's to hold the job for as short a time as possible" (Hulse 2006).

3.3.4 Sanctions under unified versus divided government

Following the logic of the previous key facts about American politics, I argue that the amount of attention that foreign policy receives differs under divided and unified government. The choice between proposing sanctions through the United Nations and conducting sanctions through other approaches is affected accordingly.

Under unified government, the President and majority party lawmakers prioritize domestic issues. First, the agenda space is limited. Facing countless issues that need to be addressed, politicians have to select some that need to be dealt with first. Second, knowing that most Americans may not pay enough attention or care enough about foreign affairs to reward politicians, but they may punish elected officials for failed domestic policy, the President and majority party

lawmakers will prioritize domestic issues. Finally, unified government is only temporary. A short two-year window makes the President and his party members focus on issues that can help them the most in the next election. Consequently, politicians allocate less attention to foreign policy issues, resulting in a diminished agenda space for such matters. In this context, politicians may still address foreign policy, but when they do so, it should be done swiftly and efficiently to avoid detracting from the domestic agenda. Therefore, the U.S. is less likely to resort to sanctions through the United Nations under unified government, as they require complicated and time-consuming negotiations with other actors that possess veto power.

In contrast, when the government is divided, the negotiation process for domestic issues is usually more complicated. Polarization among voters can add to the pressure for politicians to hold out for their preferred policy and decrease the chances of compromise and agreement (Anderson, Butler, and Harbridge-Yong 2020). In such circumstances, politicians tend to allocate more attention to foreign policy issues, leading to an increased agenda space for these issues. With more space for foreign policy, politicians, including the President, may be more willing to engage in the more time-consuming but arguably preferable policy of sanctions negotiations with other countries in the United Nations. Therefore, the U.S. is more likely to engage in sanctions through the United Nations under divided government.

Another important reason of why foreign policy issues are allocated more attention and given more agenda space under divided government, unlike domestic issues, is that partisanship and political polarization are generally weaker and less distinct in foreign affairs than in domestic politics among the public and politicians (Kertzer, Brooks, and Brooks 2021; Bryan and Tama 2021; Lapinski 2008). Even politicians who are usually at odds with each other on domestic issues often cooperate on foreign policy issues. For instance, former State Secretary Hillary Clinton

(2014) writes that although she and the Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell "rarely saw eye to eye on anything" (94), the latter, who is a "passionate champion of the pro-democracy movement in Burma" (94) as she is, supported her Burma policy. Similarly, after the 2022 midterm election, Democrats lost control of unified government. Senator Van Hollen (D-MD) acknowledged that domestic issues are likely to face fierce partisan competition, but he also sees an opportunity for bipartisan cooperation on sanctions against North Korea and China (*The Sadat Forum: A Conversation with Senator Chris Van Hollen* 2022).

Scholars have offered various explanations for the higher prevalence of bipartisanship in foreign affairs compared to domestic issues. One key factor is that many foreign policy topics lack clear liberal or conservative positions, making it less likely for debates to fall along a simple left-right spectrum. Moreover, advocacy groups in the realm of foreign policy tend to be less active than their counterparts in domestic issues. Additionally, these foreign policy advocacy groups often maintain connections with both political parties, allowing for a more collaborative and bipartisan approach to addressing international challenges (Tama 2023). To clarify, the preceding discussion does not imply that foreign affairs issues are always bipartisan. Instead, it highlights that compared to domestic issues, foreign affairs matters are generally more conducive to bipartisan cooperation. Consequently, the impact of divided versus unified government on the consideration of foreign policy issues is relatively less significant.

Some may argue that since domestic issues bring more electoral payoffs than foreign policy issues, the majority party should always focus on the former, no matter if the government is divided or unified. However, rational politicians take into account not only the benefits but also the costs of their actions. Under divided government, concentrating solely on domestic issues could incur significant time costs with minimal expected outcomes. Such an approach risks portraying the

government as inactive and unproductive, potentially leading voters to perceive it as ineffectual or dysfunctional. Therefore, politicians would allocate some (but not all) of their energy to address foreign policy issues.

To summarize, under unified government, the majority party prioritizes its domestic agenda, leading to limited agenda space for foreign policy issues, including sanctions. On the other hand, under divided government, the stalemate on domestic issues allows foreign policy issues, such as sanctions, to receive more attention and agenda space. This creates a conducive environment for the U.S. to engage in intricated sanctions negotiations at the UN. Therefore,

Hypothesis: The U.S. government is more likely to impose sanctions through the United Nations under divided government than under unified government.

3.4. Research Design

3.4.1 Data and unit of analysis

To compile an extensive dataset encompassing all U.S. participation in sanctions between 2003 and 2022, three categories were considered: unilateral sanctions imposed solely by the U.S., sanctions imposed jointly by the U.S. and its allies, and United Nations (UN) sanctions.[22]

Regarding UN sanctions, it is crucial to highlight two key aspects. Firstly, the UN Security Council holds the exclusive authority to impose sanctions. Secondly, each sanction is enacted through a resolution. To gather the necessary information, I carefully examined the UN Security Council sanctions website, encompassing a thorough review of countries subjected to sanctions and the corresponding UN resolutions.[23] Since 1966, the Security Council has established sanctions regimes on the following targets: Southern Rhodesia, South Africa, the Former

[22] For reasons that I focused on 2003-2022, see Chapter 2.
[23] United Nations Security Council, https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/sanctions/information

Yugoslavia, Haiti, Angola, Liberia, Eritrea/Ethiopia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire, Iran, Somalia/Eritrea, ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida, Iraq, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan, Lebanon, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Libya, the Taliban, Guinea-Bissau, Central African Republic, Yemen, South Sudan and Mali. In some instances, multiple sanctions have been imposed on the same target.[24]

The UN website mentioned earlier provides a comprehensive list of all relevant resolutions pertaining to sanctions imposed by the UN. Considering the extensive number of resolutions involved, it is important to distinguish between resolutions specifically related to sanction imposition and those addressing logistical matters. To identify the resolutions that impose sanctions, I carefully read all sanctions-related resolutions' abstracts. Only resolutions that contained certain keywords such as "impose", "imposition", "expand"[25], "prohibit", "ban", "establish", and "designate" were selected. These keywords indicate the implementation of new sanctions by the UN on a target. Resolutions containing words such as "extend"[26], "renew", "reaffirm", or "reiterate" were excluded as they pertain to existing sanctions. The underlying assumption is that the negotiation process for new sanctions is considerably more challenging than the expansion of existing sanctions.

For U.S. unilateral sanctions and sanctions imposed with its allies, I turned to the Global Sanctions Database (GSDB).[27] The GSDB encompasses over 1,000 publicly traceable sanction cases spanning the time period from 1950 to 2022. Each sanction program recorded in this dataset

[24] For instance, in response to nuclear tests and launches involving ballistic missile technology conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), the United Nations Security Council enacted a series of measures. Specifically, ten resolutions (1718 in 2006, 1874 in 2009, 2087 in 2013, 2094 in 2013, 2270 in 2016, 2321 in 2016, 2356 in 2017, 2371 in 2017, 2375 in 2017, and 2397 in 2017) were adopted to impose and/or strengthen various sanctions on the DPRK. See "Subsidiary Organs of the United Nations Security Council" (2023).
[25] "Expand" typically entails adding new sanction measures on top of existing ones.
[26] "Extend" typically denotes the continuation or prolongation of existing sanction measures.
[27] The Global Sanctions Database, http://globalsanctionsdatabase.com/

includes information about the sanctioning state involved. For the purposes of this study, I focused on selecting sanctions imposed by the U.S. independently, sanctions imposed jointly by the U.S. and other countries, as well as sanctions imposed by organizations of which the U.S. is a member.[28]

Then, I reorganized all of the data by "Country-Year" format.[29] Specifically, if a country faced sanctions in a particular year (regardless of whether it was sanctioned by the U.S., by the U.S. and its allies, or by UN), it was treated as an individual observation. If a country experienced multiple sanctions within the same year, it was treated as a single observation to avoid duplication. As a result, the data is organized with entries such as "Guinea-Bissau-2012", "Haiti-2022", and so forth, reflecting the instances when the U.S. intended to implement sanctions against these countries during the respective years. Next, I examined each observation to determine whether there were any UN sanctions. I created a new variable called "UN_sanction", which was coded as 1 if there were UN sanctions for that observation and 0 if there were no UN sanctions. For example, if country A received three sanctions in 2022, and none of them were imposed by the UN, then the observation is coded as 0. If at least one of them is from the UN, then it is coded as 1.

When the U.S. aims to enforce sanctions against a target through the United Nations, if the target is a permanent member of the Security Council with veto power, such endeavors are impossible to be presented to the UN Security Council by the U.S., as they are anticipated to be unsuccessful. Therefore, my dataset excludes sanctions aimed at China (including Hong Kong) and Russia. Comparing when the U.S. is more likely to advocate for sanctions against these two countries at the United Nations under unified versus under divided government lacks significance, as Washington is highly likely to impose sanctions on them through alternative methods (such as

[28] According to the GSDB, the U.S. collaborated with other countries to impose sanctions on Honduras in 2009, Saudi Arabia in 2018, Guatemala in 2021, and Russia in 2022.
[29] This includes targets such as ISIL and Al-Qaeda.

unilateral sanctions or collaboration with allies). For example, following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the U.S. could only impose sanctions on Russia in conjunction with its allies. The U.S. could not bring these sanctions to the United Nations for discussion due to Russia's status as a permanent member of the Security Council.

3.4.2 Dependent and independent variable

The dependent variable is aforementioned "UN-sanction". Between 2003 and 2022, out of the total of 256 countries that the U.S. imposed sanctions on, 40 (16%) of them were subjected to sanctions through the United Nations. The independent variable is whether the U.S. government was divided or unified in the year when the UN sanction was imposed. This variable is coded as 0 when the House, the Senate, and the Presidency were controlled by the same party, and as 1 otherwise.

Some may argue that sanctions imposed by the U.S. and its allies or through international organizations other than the UN also require diplomatic efforts. However, these negotiations are comparatively less challenging than those in the UN. In the negotiations within the United Nations Security Council, the most formidable challenges often arise from China and Russia. These two countries not only hold veto power, but their interests also frequently diverge from those of the U.S. and its allies. This divergence is evident in Figures 9 and 10, which illustrate the degree of voting alignment within the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) among China, Russia, and the other G7 countries in relation to the U.S. ("The Report to the Congress on Voting Practices in the United Nations," n.d.). A comparison of these figures reveals a substantially lower voting coincidence between China and Russia and the U.S., relative to other G7 nations. This clearly indicates that the stances of China and Russia on numerous issues often contrast significantly with

those of the U.S. Certain countries, deemed deserving of sanctions by the U.S., are often regarded as strategically important by China and Russia (e.g., North Korea to China and Syria to Russia). This differing perspective often results in a reluctance from China and Russia to collaborate with the United States.

Figure 9 Voting Coincidence (%) with U.S. on All Contested Votes at UNGA

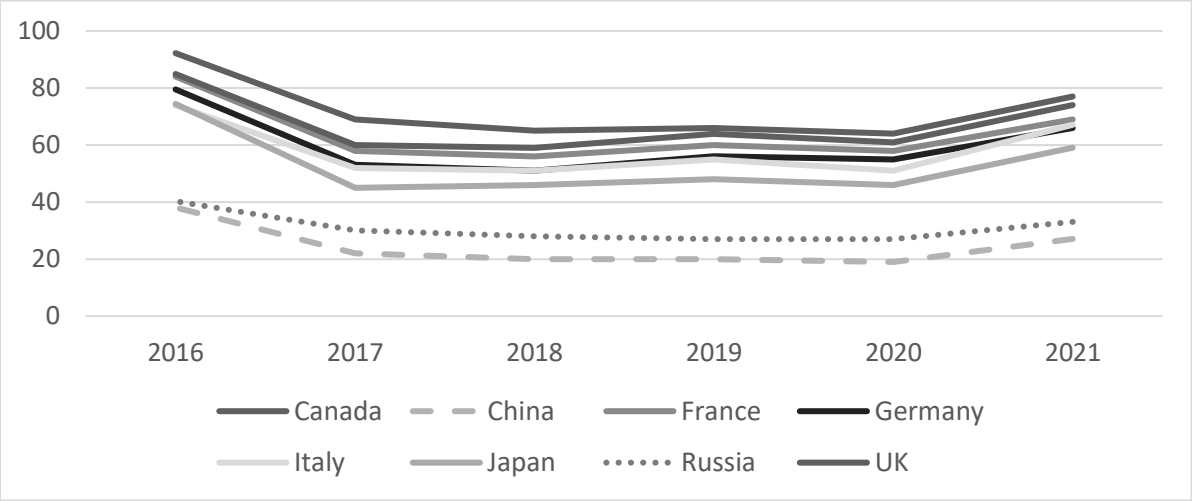
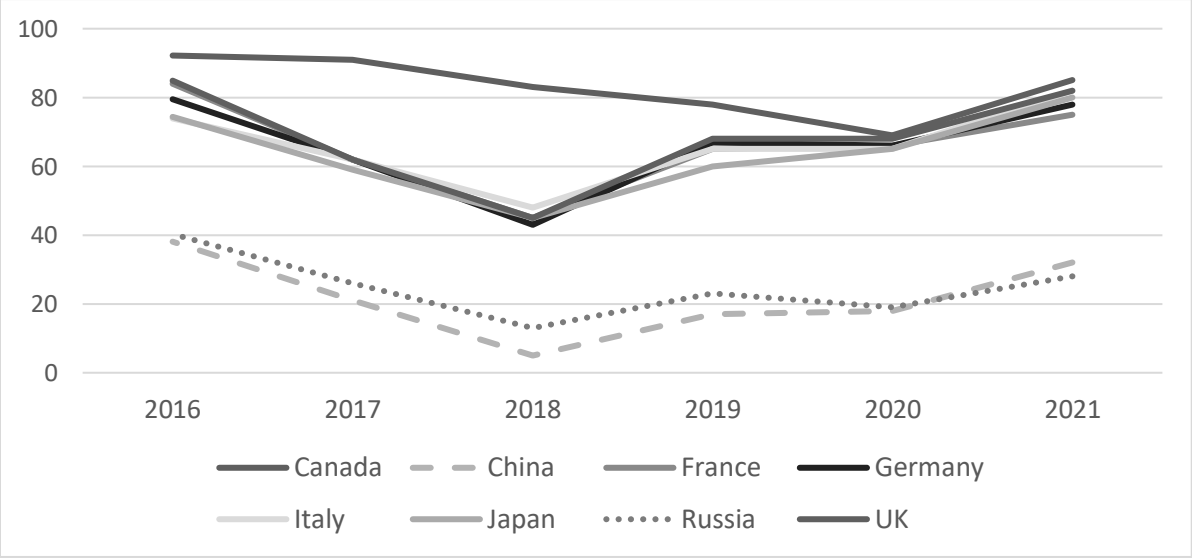


Figure 10 Voting Coincidence (%) with U.S. on All Important Votes at UNGA



3.4.3 Control variables

To address confounding bias, I considered several control variables. Table 5 presents the names of the control variables along with their expected impact on the dependent variable. Table 6 presents the summary of statistics. The mathematical representation of the model can be formulated as follows:

$Pr(y_i=1)=logit^{-1}(\beta_0+\beta_1X_1+\ldots+\beta_pX_p)$. β_0 is the intercept term. $\beta_{1,\ldots,}$ β_p are the coefficients associated with independent variables $X_1,\ldots, X_p$.

Table 5 Control Variables and Expectations (2)

Variable		**Coding**	**Expected sign**	**Explanation**
Presidential election		Coded as 1 if a sanction is imposed during a presidential election year and as 0 if otherwise	−	Presidential elections often lead to a heightened focus on domestic affairs within the United States, resulting in the allocation of increased resources and attention to domestic matters.
objective	End war	The GSDB assigns at least one of the following objectives to each sanction program: ending war, resolving territorial conflicts, combating terrorism, promoting democracy, protecting human rights, inducing policy change, preventing war, destabilizing regimes, and other objectives. The three variables are coded as 1 if the sanction(s) imposed on a particular country aim(s) to achieve the respective objective. For the UN sanctions that I collected, I examined	+	Sanctions imposed for reasons such as war, conflict, and terrorism are more likely to garner international consensus due to the severe consequences associated with these events.
	Territorial conflict		+	
	Terrorism		+	

		each corresponding UN resolution and attributed the same set of objectives to them.		
U.S. influence		The Formal Bilateral Influence Capacity (FBIC) Score (Moyer et al. 2023)[30]	−	As the influence of the U.S. over a country increases, so does the likelihood of the U.S. imposing unilateral sanctions on that country.
Chinese influence		The Formal Bilateral Influence Capacity (FBIC) Score (Moyer et al. 2023)	−	As the influence of China over a country increases, the likelihood of the U.S. proposing sanctions on that country in UN decreases.
Russian influence		The Formal Bilateral Influence Capacity (FBIC) Score (Moyer et al. 2023)	−	As the influence of Russia over a country increases, the likelihood of the U.S. proposing sanctions on that country in UN decreases.
U.S.-China relations		The proportion of respondents who answered "very favorable" and "mostly favorable" to the Gallup poll question: "What is your overall opinion of China"? [31] [32]	+	When the relationship between the U.S. and China, as one of the permanent members of the UN Security Council, is strained, the likelihood of the U.S. proposing sanctions at the UN Security Council decreases.
U.S.-Russia relations		The proportion of respondents who answered "very favorable" and "mostly favorable" to the Gallup	+	When the relationship between the U.S. and Russia, as one of the permanent members of the UN Security Council, is strained, the

[30] The Foreign Bilateral Influence Capacity (FBIC) Index is built upon the idea that two main factors affect the ability of states to exert influence in the international system. First, the extent of interaction across economic, political, and security dimensions creates opportunities for states to influence each other. Second, the relative dependence of one state on another for crucial aspects of economic prosperity or security creates opportunities for the more dominant state to cause the more dependent state to make decisions that they would not have otherwise made. These two subindices are called Bandwidth and Dependence. FBIC is measured from 0 to 1, where 0 indicates no influence from Country A on Country B, and 1 indicates the most influence ever measured. Given the absence of data in the database regarding the influence of the U.S., China, and Russia on ISIL, Al-Qaida, and the Taliban, I assigned 0 to indicate no discernible influence from the U.S., China, and Russia on these three entities. When a sanction targets multiple countries, the variable representing influence takes into account the average of the U.S., China, or Russia's influence on each of the target countries.

[31] Gallup poll, https://news.gallup.com/poll/1627/china.aspx

[32] Quantifying U.S.-China and U.S.-Russia relations are difficult. In this study, I utilize the favorability ratings given by the American public towards another country as an indicator of bilateral relations. Previous research has indicated that public opinion serves as a reflection of the overall bilateral relationships (Suettinger 2003; Lampton 2019). Appendix 2 presents the Gallup poll results. In the last two decades, the favorability ratings of the American public towards China and Russia have witnessed a persistent decline, reflecting the deteriorating relationships between the U.S. and these two countries. By 2022, these ratings had reached their lowest point.

	poll question: "What is your overall opinion of Russia"? [33] [34]		likelihood of the U.S. proposing sanctions at the UN Security Council decreases.
Chinese influence × U.S.-China relations			The influence of Chinese influence on the target is conditional on U.S.-China relations. When U.S.-China relations are good, it becomes comparatively easier for the U.S. to push for sanctions through the United Nations against countries heavily influenced by China.
Russian influence × U.S.-Russia relations			The influence of Russian influence on the target is conditional on U.S.-Russia relations. When U.S.-Russia relations are good, it becomes comparatively easier for the U.S. to push for sanctions through the United Nations against countries heavily influenced by Russia.

Table 6 Summary of Statistics (2)

Statistic	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Presidential election	0.199	0.400	0	1
End war	0.152	0.360	0	1
Territorial conflict	0.016	0.124	0	1
Terrorism	0.199	0.400	0	1
U.S. influence on the target	0.146	0.144	0.000	0.722
Chinese influence on the target	0.118	0.101	0.000	0.453
Russian influence on the target	0.069	0.124	0.000	1.011
U.S.-China relations	0.381	0.113	0.200	0.530
U.S.-Russia relations	0.349	0.154	0.150	0.630

[33] Gallup poll, https://news.gallup.com/poll/1642/russia.aspx

[34] Another commonly used approach to measure bilateral relations is the GDELT dataset. This database records events that occur between two countries. Each event is assigned a score to capture its impact on the respective country. However, the dataset is currently undergoing maintenance, and despite multiple emails, I have not received a response to my data request.

3.5. Findings

I utilize binary logit analysis to estimate the impact of divided versus unified government on the decision between opting for UN sanctions or other approaches. The findings are displayed in Table 7. Model (1) in Table 7 only takes into account U.S. influence on the target. Model (2) includes China's and Russia's influence on the target, and Model (3) includes the public's perception of U.S. relations with the two UN Security Council permanent members as well as their interaction terms with China's and Russia's influence on the target. Regardless of the model specification, the coefficient of "Divided Government" consistently demonstrates a positive sign, indicating that the use of UN sanctions increases under divided government. Although the p-value in model (3) slightly exceeds the conventional threshold for statistical significance (p=0.142), it may still serve as suggestive evidence supporting the underlying hypothesis.

Table 7 Logistic Analyses of Imposing Sanctions through the United Nations

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Divided government	0.757*	0.757*	0.669
	(0.078)	(0.089)	(0.142)
Presidential election	−0.756	−0.856	−0.538
	(0.153)	(0.118)	(0.351)
End war	1.487***	1.430***	1.723***
	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.0005)
Territorial conflict	−0.907	−0.297	−1.328
	(0.487)	(0.824)	(0.335)
Terrorism	−0.076	−0.201	−0.083
	(0.875)	(0.692)	(0.880)
U.S. influence on the target	−12.779***	−14.030***	−12.928***
	(0.0004)	(0.0003)	(0.001)
Chinese influence on the target		−4.840*	−6.239
		(0.057)	(0.713)
Russian influence on the target		−2.871	−10.114
		(0.242)	(0.375)
U.S.-China relations			8.236
			(0.150)
U.S.-Russia relations			0.605
			(0.732)
Chinese influence ×U.S.-China relations			6.841
			(0.853)
Russian influence ×U.S.-Russia relations			15.418
			(0.462)
Constant	−1.079***	−0.235	−4.231
	(0.004)	(0.617)	(0.116)
Observations	256	256	256
AIC	189.431	184.589	178.300
McFadden's pseudo R^2	0.209	0.249	0.314

Note: P-values are reported in parentheses. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01.

Regarding the control variables, the variable "presidential election" demonstrates a negative sign, and the coefficient is approaching statistical significance in model (1) and (2). This finding offers some evidence that during the year of a presidential election, the likelihood of the U.S. bringing the sanction case to the UN decreases as

politicians may be preoccupied with domestic elections. Consistent with my expectation, "End war" is positively correlated with the dependent variable, suggesting that sanctions aimed at ending war are more likely to originate from the United Nations. Objectives such as resolving territorial conflicts or combating terrorism do not exhibit a similar influence on sanction origin. A potential explanation is that the U.S., Russia, and China often hold divergent definitions concerning territorial disputes and terrorism. Consequently, such events are less likely to prompt actions from the United Nations. The influence of the U.S. on the target remains a robust predictor of whether sanctions will be imposed by the United Nations. When Washington wields significant influence over a country, it can impose substantial costs on the target through unilateral action. Model (2) suggests that as a target becomes more susceptible to Chinese influence, the probability of it being subjected to United Nations sanctions decreases. However, the influence of Russia on a target does not demonstrate this effect.[35]

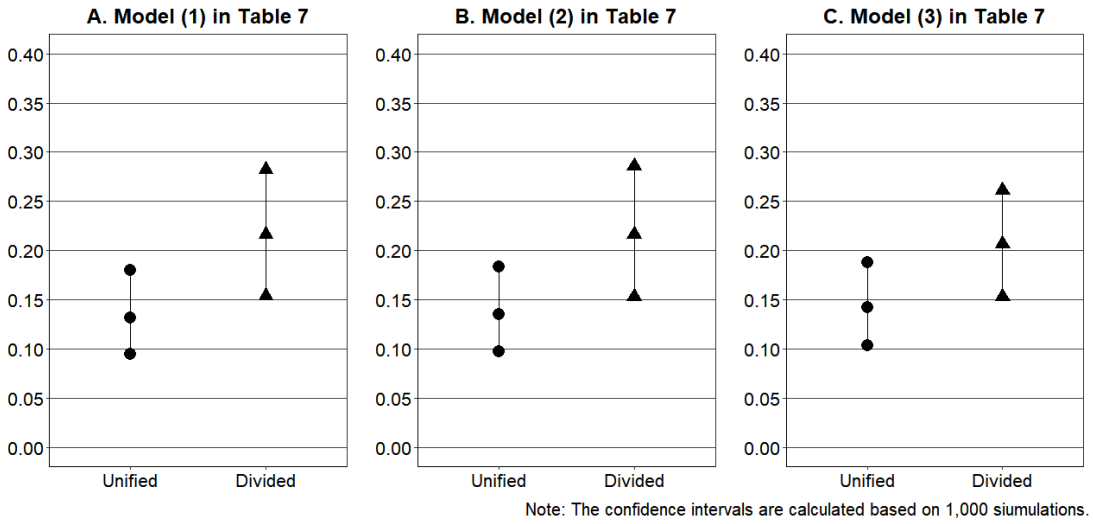
Figure 11A, 11B, and 11C reports the substantive significance of the independent variable based on model (1), model (2), and model (3), respectively, using the observed-value approach (Hanmer and Ozan Kalkan 2013). Specifically, I held "Divided government" at 1 and the rest of control variables at their observed values in each observation. I drew 1,000 sets of simulated coefficients. For each set of the coefficients, I calculated the predicted probability for each observation and took the average. Therefore, I obtained 1,000 predicted probabilities when "Divided

[35] Model 3 also indicates that when U.S.-China relations are good (for instance, when this variable takes its maximum value of 0.53 according to Table 6), the coefficient for Chinese influence on the target is -2.613. Conversely, when U.S.-China relations are poor (for example, when this variable takes its minimum value of 0.2 according to Table 6), the coefficient for Chinese influence on the target is -4.871. This suggests that the magnitude of the impact of Chinese influence on the target is greater when U.S.-China relations are poor. The relationship between the United States and Russia demonstrates a similar pattern.

government" takes 1 and presented 90% confidence interval around the mean. Next, I repeated the process by holding "Divided government" at 0 and repeating the process.

The substantive effect remains similar across the models. For example, as shown in Figure 11A, when a sanction is imposed under unified government, there is a 13% probability of it being imposed by the UN, with a 90% confidence interval ranging from 9% to 18%. In contrast, when imposed under divided government, the probability of the sanction being imposed by the UN increases to 22%, with a 90% confidence interval ranging from 15% to 28%. The substantive effect of "Divided government" is significant. In Figure 11B, the predicted probability of a sanction being imposed by the UN increases from 14% under unified government to 22% under divided government. In Figure 11C, such predicted probability of a sanction being imposed by the UN increases from 14% to 21% when the government transitions from unified to divided.

Figure 11 Statistical Simulation Results for Predicted Probabilities of A Sanction Being Imposed by the UN and 90% Confidence Intervals



In sum, under divided government, the U.S. is more inclined to dedicate time and resources to negotiate sanctions within the UN than it would under unified government. This tendency remains evident even after accounting for international factors, such as the U.S.'s influence on the target or the influence that China and Russia may exert on the target. While the effect of a divided government becomes less significant after controlling for U.S. relations with both China and Russia, it still approaches the threshold of significance, indicating that the influence of divided government on foreign policy decisions should not be overlooked.

3.6. Discussion and Conclusion

In this paper, I proposed a theory of how domestic politics influences the U.S. decision to impose sanctions through the United Nations or through other approaches. My focus is on the distinction between divided and unified government and how each impacts the choice of imposing sanctions through various approaches. I argue that three key realities of American politics combine to lead to reduced attention to foreign policy, including sanctions, under unified government. First, the attention span of politicians and the agenda space of political institutions are inherently limited under unified government. Consequently, politicians cannot simultaneously address all issues, forcing them to prioritize certain issues. Second, given that constituents are often more concerned about domestic issues, politicians naturally align their focus with these issues to cater to their electorates' primary interests. Finally, a unified government presents a valuable but fleeting opportunity for the majority party. Both the President and members of Congress are likely to seize this chance to concentrate on domestic issues that may bolster their prospects in the forthcoming election. As a

result, foreign policy issues, generally considered less electorally salient, receive less attention.

Given these dynamics, the U.S. demonstrates a reduced inclination to impose sanctions through the UN under unified government. Engaging in negotiations with the permanent members of the UN Security Council (P5), particularly China and Russia, necessitates extensive investment in time, resources, and diplomatic efforts. These multifaceted negotiations sometimes even demand personal involvement from the President. The process is labor-intensive and can be viewed as a distraction from the more immediate domestic agenda that typically characterizes unified government priorities. Consequently, under such circumstances, the pursuit of sanctions through the UN becomes a less appealing avenue for a government focused on domestic achievements, and other types of sanctions might be favored instead. When the government is divided, negotiations between the two main parties on domestic issues tend to become more intricate and drawn-out, frequently reaching an impasse without clear avenues for progress. This stagnation in domestic policy can lead to a shift in focus toward foreign affairs, creating more room on the political agenda and attracting heightened attention from policymakers. As a result, the U.S. may become more inclined to engage in detailed negotiations with P5 over sanctions in UN. Future research should aim to systematically address additional potential confounding biases, thereby enhancing the assurance of a causal relationship between the key independent and dependent variables.

For countries potentially facing U.S. sanctions, a divided U.S. government may seem preoccupied with its internal disagreements. Yet, such a U.S. government may

become more inclined to engage in foreign policy issues, thereby increasing the chances of implementing sanctions through the UN. This represents a worrying situation for the target. While this paper does not delve into the comparative severity of UN multilateral versus U.S. unilateral sanctions, the involvement of all UN members in the sanctions undoubtedly makes the target isolated in the international community. In contrast, a unified U.S. government, while appearing more efficient in enacting policies, may shift its focus to domestic issues. Such a shift in focus may be frustrating for countries that rely on U.S. leadership in international affairs. Future studies examining sanctions, as well as U.S. foreign policy broadly, should take into account domestic factors, especially whether the government is unified or divided, recognizing the profound influence these elements may exert on international relations.

Chapter 4: U.S. Domestic Politics and Its Influence on Policies Towards China

This paper examines how the U.S. policies towards China are affected by whether the government is unified or divided. I argue that when the U.S. government is unified, its main focus is on domestic issues, aiming to cater to voters' expectations to enhance electoral prospects for the next election. Additionally, due to the limited attention span of politicians and the constrained agenda space of institutions, there is relatively little change in policy towards China compared to before. Conversely, under divided government, with negotiations between the two parties stalling on domestic issues, policies towards China are given more agenda space and attention. I analyze key junctures of change in U.S. policy towards China over the past two decades (2001-2024) under four successive presidents, revealing the differences in U.S. policy towards China under unified versus divided government.

In previous research, I have proposed a theoretical explanation of how U.S. foreign policy differs under divided versus unified government. Specifically, I argue that U.S. foreign policy garners less attention from politicians and is accorded less agenda space under unified government compared to divided government. Under unified government, the majority party often seizes this opportunity to focus on issues that will bolster their prospects in the next election. Typically, these issues are domestic in nature. Given the limited attention span of politicians and the constraints of institutional agenda, the consideration of foreign policy issues tends to be postponed. By contrast, under divided government, domestic issues negotiations frequently face gridlock. Foreign policy issues, which are more likely to see bipartisan consensus (Tama 2023), receive more attention and greater agenda space.

Empirically, Chapter 2 shows there is a notable trend where foreign policy bills are more likely to be considered on the House floor under divided government compared to unified government. Furthermore, Chapter 3 provides evidence that more time-consuming types of foreign policy tend to be addressed during periods of divided government. Given these observations, it stands to reason that the dynamics of U.S. foreign policy towards pivotal countries are also influenced by whether the government is unified or divided. Bilateral foreign policy encompasses a spectrum of policy choices, spanning from significant to minor, challenging to straightforward, and contentious to widely agreed upon. It involves decisions ranging from maintaining existing policies to implementing gradual adjustments or even initiating entirely new approaches. The selection of foreign policy strategies and priorities evolves over time, influenced by various factors, one of which is the domestic political landscape in the U.S, notably

whether there is unified or divided party control.

In this paper, I will examine the effect of partisan control of the U.S. government on the most complex and important bilateral relations of the 21st century, the U.S.-China relations.

4.1. Making Policies Towards China: A Complex and Time-consuming Task

Dealing with U.S.-China relations is a complex task, and making good China policies takes time. First, the bilateral relationship covers a wide range of issues, including the economy, security, human rights, climate change, technology, and perhaps most importantly, Taiwan, and each issue contains multiple sub-issues. Depending on the specific issue, Washington and Beijing enjoy varying degree of cooperation, competition, or confrontation.[36] In addition, given the complexity of the relationship with Beijing, copying the China policy in one area and applying it to another is practically impossible. As former State Secretary Clinton described: "This isn't a relationship that fits neatly into categories like friend or rival, and it may never. We are sailing in uncharted waters" (Clinton 2014, 60).

Second, U.S.-China relations involve many interest groups, which usually advocate different or even contradictory policies towards China. For example, following the 1989 Chinese crackdown on Tiananmen Square, a key question in Washington was whether to extend China's Most Favored Nation (MFN) trade designation. The MFN discussion was joined by two wide coalitions of interest organizations, which had an impact on the early stages of the policy process. On the

[36] The research articles and reports on U.S.-China relations in various areas are abundant. See Lawrence et al. (2019), Lawrence (2013), Sutter (2017), and Hass (2021) for examples.

one hand, the Chinese students in the United States, various human rights organizations, labor unions, and religious groups maintained that MFN should be cancelled or made conditional on future Chinese behavior. On the other hand, business and agriculture organizations pushed for MFN to be renewed indefinitely (Dietrich 1999). Likewise, during the U.S.-China trade war under Trump's presidency, over 150 business associations joined in opposition to tariffs, and lobbying on trade skyrocketed since 2018 (Zhang 2022). Finally, in 2022 when Congress proposed a bill aimed at increasing U.S. competitiveness with China, business interests lobbied lawmakers to remove provisions that could undermine American corporations, whereas labor unions favored those terms (Evers-Hillstrom 2022). Previous academic research also has shown that U.S. foreign policy is influenced by organized interest groups, especially internationally oriented business leaders (Jacobs and Page 2005).

Third, when making policy towards China, Washington needs to take Beijing's potential reaction into account. On the one hand, a soft policy may be perceived as weak and not able to protect U.S. national interests. On the other hand, a policy that is too harsh may trigger China's retaliation, which may hurt U.S. interests. For example, a spokesperson for the American Farm Bureau stated that Trump's trade war with China caused American farmers to lose the vast majority of what was once a $24 billion market in China due to Chinese retaliatory actions (Lane and Gangitano 2019).

Fourth, the U.S. and Chinese economies are so intertwined that a cursory policy may backfire and hurt Washington instead. Observers point out that the phase one trade agreement between China and the United States in 2020[37] — and the trade war that

[37] On January 15, 2020, the United States and China entered into a groundbreaking and binding Phase One trade agreement. This deal mandates structural reforms and various modifications to China's economic and trade policies.

preceded it — have harmed the American economy severely without resolving the fundamental economic issues that the trade war was supposed to address (Hass and Denmark 2020). As described by Heather Long of the Washington Post, "U.S. economic growth slowed, business investment froze, and companies didn't hire as many people. Across the nation, a lot of farmers went bankrupt, and the manufacturing and freight transportation sectors have hit lows not seen since the last recession" (Long 2020). Collectively, these factors underscore the importance of the U.S. approaching its policies towards China with caution and careful consideration.

4.2. Making Policies Towards China Under Unified Versus Divided Government

Therefore, making policies towards China takes time, especially for an effective one. When the government prioritizes other issues, for instance when domestic issues take up a chunk of the agenda under a unified government, the overall China policy is more likely to follow the existing way. In addition, the new policies, if any, are more likely to be restricted to a limited number of areas. In comparison, under a divided government when politicians have more time for foreign affairs, they are more likely to undertake the more difficult, but important task of making new China policies, which tend to be comprehensive, covering a wide range of issues. In the remainder of the paper, I will examine how unified versus divided government influences U.S. policies towards China during the administrations of Joe Biden (2021-2024), Donald Trump (2017-2020), Barack Obama (2009-2016), and George W. Bush (2001-2008). Table 8 shows the party control of the House of Representatives, the Senate, and the White

For more details, see https://ustr.gov/phase-one

House since the George W. Bush administration. Each president experienced both unified and divided government, providing an opportunity to analyze shifts in policies towards China within a single administration. In other words, I do not aim to compare policies towards China across various administrations. Instead, I examine how these policies differ within the same administration, depending on whether the government is unified or divided. This approach is beneficial as it eliminates the need to account for variables that differ between administrations, such as the president's general hawkishness, shifts in the international landscape, and so forth.

Table 8 Party Government (2001-2024)

Congress	Presidency	House Majority	Senate Majority	Party Government
107th (2001-2002)	Republican (Bush)	Republicans	Republicans/Democrats	**Unified**/Divided [38]
108th (2003-2004)	Republican (Bush)	Republicans	Republicans	**Unified**
109th (2005-2006)	Republican (Bush)	Republicans	Republicans	**Unified**
110th (2007-2008)	Republican (Bush)	Democrats	Democrats	Divided
111th (2009-2010)	Democrat (Obama)	Democrats	Democrats	**Unified**
112th (2011-2012)	Democrat (Obama)	Republicans	Democrats	Divided
113th (2013-2014)	Democrat (Obama)	Republicans	Democrats	Divided
114th (2015-2016)	Democrat (Obama)	Republicans	Republicans	Divided
115th (2017-2018)	Republican (Trump)	Republicans	Republicans	**Unified**
116th (2019-2020)	Republican (Trump)	Democrats	Republicans	Divided
117th (2021-2022)	Democrat (Biden)	Democrats	Democrats	**Unified**
118th (2023-2024)	Democrat (Biden)	Republicans	Democrats	Divided

[38] The control of the U.S. Senate changed multiple times during the 107th Congress (2001-2002) between Democrats and Republicaans. As a result, the U.S. experienced shifts between unified and divided government throughout those two years.

4.2.1 Policies towards China under the George W. Bush administration (2001-2008)

In the 2000 presidential election, Republican candidate George W. Bush secured his victory by winning a narrow majority of electoral college votes, despite losing the popular vote. From January 20th, 2001 to June 2001, the Republicans held unified control of the government for the first time since 1955. Scholars noted that during the early months of the Bush administration, no new initiatives were undertaken in foreign policy, and governance was primarily inward-looking (Daalder and Lindsay 2005; Roberts 2014). For instance, Bush initially declined to increase the defense budget and did not use his first months in office to withdraw from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty despite calls from many conservatives to do so (Daalder and Lindsay 2005).

In terms of policies towards China, Bush vehemently criticized former president Clinton's concept of a "strategic partnership" with China and instead proposed that the bilateral relationship should be viewed as that of "strategic competitors" during the presidential campaign (R. Baum 2001). Upon assuming office in January 2001, President Bush received a briefing from the Director of Central Intelligence outlining the foremost security concerns for the U.S.: terrorism, weapons proliferation, and China (Tenet and Harlow 2007). However, in February 2001, in his first address before a joint session of the Congress on the goals of the new administration, China was not even mentioned at all (Bush 2001).[39] Even after the collision between a Chinese fighter jet

[39] Starting from Reagan, recent presidents have delivered speeches to a joint session of Congress shortly after their inaugurations. While these speeches are not technically labeled as "State of the Union" addresses, for research purposes, it is acceptable to classify them as such. The influence of such a speech on public, media, and congressional perceptions of presidential leadership and authority should be comparable to that of an official State of the Union address. See Peters, Gerhard, and John T. Woolley. "The State of the Union, Background and Reference Table." In The American Presidency Project, edited by John T. Woolley and Gerhard Peters. Santa Barbara, CA: University of California, 1999-2024. https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/324107/.

and a U.S. EP-3 reconnaissance aircraft on April 1, 2001, which occurred 50 miles southeast of China's Hainan Island and resulted in the death of a Chinese pilot, Bush "at first took reports of the collision in stride. He and his advisers expected that the Chinese would treat the incident as an accident and send the crew on its way" (Daalder and Lindsay 2005, 68). Instead of escalating the confrontation, the administration engaged in quiet negotiations with Beijing (Daalder and Lindsay 2003).

Some may reference an interview with Bush in April 2001 to argue that there was a noteworthy alteration in U.S. policy toward China and Taiwan during this period of unified government. When asked on ABC's "Good Morning America" if the U.S. had an obligation to defend the Taiwanese in the event of attack by China, Bush said: "Yes, we do ... and the Chinese must understand that. Yes, I would." When asked whether Washington would use "the full force of the American military," Bush responded, "Whatever it took to help Taiwan defend herself". This remark aroused concerns about whether the U.S. had altered its longstanding policy of strategic ambiguity towards Taiwan. However, in a CNN interview conducted a few hours after the ABC broadcast, Bush moderated his remarks by reaffirming U.S. support for the "one China" policy and opposing any declaration of independence by Taiwan (Wallace 2001). The Spokesperson of the State Department also clarified: "our policy hasn't changed today, it didn't change yesterday, and it didn't change last year, it hasn't changed in terms of what we have followed since 1979 with the passage of the TRA (Taiwan Relations Act)" (Sanger 2001). Moreover, in late April, the administration announced its authorization of the sale of eight diesel submarines to Taiwan. However, in what administration officials acknowledged as a clear acknowledgment of Beijing's

concerns, the White House opted not to sell Taipei destroyers equipped with the advanced Aegis radar defense system (Daalder and Lindsay 2003). One month later, Bush extended China's normal trade relations status for another year. These examples seem to indicate that the Bush administration's early-stage policies towards China did not follow the tough stance of the campaign period, and the new administration did not devote much effort to changing U.S. policy towards China.

Alternatively, the primary focus of the Bush administration during the period when the Republican party controlled Congress as well as the White House was on tax cuts. Bush's tax reform proposal in the Senate was initially introduced on January 22, 2001, which was Bush's first full day of work as president. Throughout March, Bush was busy with traveling nationwide, advocating for public backing of his plan (Burke 2004). In June 2001, the Economic Growth and Tax Relief Reconciliation Act was enacted into law. This tax cut, the largest approved by Congress in two decades, reduced federal government revenue by a total of $1.35 trillion and was a contributing factor in Vermont Senator James M. Jeffords's choice to leave the Republican Party and caucus with the Democrats as an independent, thereby ending the GOP's unified control of the government in June 2001 (Kessler and Eilperin 2001). Education reform was another early priority for the Bush administration. On January 24, 2001, the White House revealed its plan which included increasing federal funding for schools and mandatory testing of students. On May 23, 2001, the House passed its education bill, titled "No Child Left Behind". The Senate followed suit by approving its modified bill on June 14.

Now in a period of divided government, the 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001

significantly changed the Bush administration's foreign policy trajectory. As Lindsay (2011) points out: "Fighting terrorism became not just *a* priority, but *the* priority" (766). Burke (2004) also notes that no previous U.S. presidency prior to George W. Bush's had faced an event or series of events during its first year that would so fundamentally distinguish it from what had come before. Consequently, the importance of China in U.S. foreign policy diminished. As a result, following 9/11, the relationship between the U.S. and China during the rest of the Bush administration remained notably smoother than at any point since the Tiananmen Square crackdown in 1989 (Dumbaugh 2005; 2006; 2009).

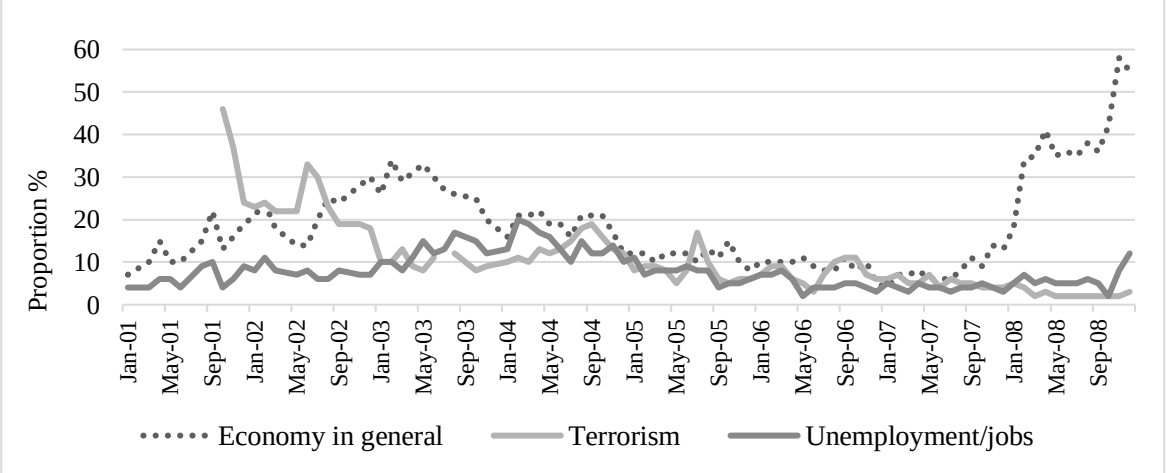
However, the relative stability of the U.S.-China relationship during this period is not necessarily solely attributed to the bilateral cooperation on counterterrorism, as some have suggested. Washington and Beijing have never reached a consensus on what constitutes "terrorism". For example, the U.S. diverges from China on the Chinese policies in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region under the guise of counterterrorism, believing that China is suppressing dissents under the pretext of combating terrorism. Moreover, at a Senate hearing in 2002, CIA director Tenet said: "September 11 changed the context of China's approach to us, but it did not change the fundamentals...And although Beijing joined the coalition against terrorism, it remains skeptical of U.S. intentions in Central and South Asia" ("Current and Projected National Security Threats to the United States: Hearing Before The Select Committee on Intelligence of the United States Senate" 2002). In January 2005, a report conducted by Congressional Research Service (CRS) pointed out that on fighting against terrorism, the Bush Administration is willing to take unilateral action so "it is not clear

to what extent U.S. anti-terrorism goals may have affected the Administration's PRC policy" (Dumbaugh 2005, 4). In 2010, another CRS report which reviewed the bilateral cooperation on counterterrorism since the Bush Administration concluded that "[t]he extent of U.S.-China counterterrorism cooperation has been limited" (Kan 2010, 1). China's military, the People's Liberation Army (PLA), had not fought in the U.S.-led counterterrorism operations. In addition, since the summer of 2007, there has been an increase in concern among U.S. officials regarding arms of Chinese origin discovered in conflicts involving U.S. forces in Afghanistan.

While the broader aspects of U.S. policy towards China remained relatively stable post 9/11, there still exhibited some subtle differences under unified versus divided government. In the 2002 midterm elections, the Republican Party secured majorities in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. Following the 2004 presidential election, Bush was re-elected, and Republicans continued to control both chambers of Congress. As a result, after 18 months of divided government, the Republican Party governed with unified control over the government from 2003 to 2006, which gave the Republicans an advantage to push forward on domestic issues. After the 2002 election, Bush made clear that he planned to pursue an ambitious domestic policy agenda, which included "a market-oriented prescription drug plan for seniors, renewal of the 1996 Welfare Reform Act, tort reform to limit damages in medical malpractice lawsuits, an energy plan that would open parts of ANWR to drilling, and a ban on partial-birth abortions. Bush also proposed a new $726 billion tax cut" (Nelson 2004, 155). Bush's approach seemed to align with the expectations of the public. Figure 12 presents the monthly data derived from Gallup's survey question "What do you think is the most

important problem facing this country today?" "Terrorism" first emerged as an option in October 2001. While 46% of the respondents viewed terrorism as the most important problem facing the U.S. that month, this sentiment quickly declined. By August 2002, the proportion of individuals prioritizing the economy (excluding unemployment/jobs) over terrorism had surpassed. In January 2003 when Republicans resumed unified control of government, the proportion of those regarding terrorism as the most important problem had plummeted to 10% and the economy was the clear top priority for the public. The Bush Administration was happy to focus on advancing its domestic policies and reap the political and electoral reward. Throughout the final two years of the Bush administration's first term, the economy consistently garnered greater attention from the populace.

Figure 12 Gallup Poll: What do you think is the most important problem facing this country today? (monthly data)



In 2004, boosted by Bush's reelection, Republicans consolidated their control over both chambers of Congress, described by Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist as a "monumental" achievement (Knowlton 2004). Shortly afterwards, President Bush

indicated his willingness to utilize the political capital he gained to advance an ambitious domestic agenda. In addition to the war on terror, Bush would also spend the political capital on social Security, tax reform, moving this economy forward, and education (Branigin 2004). Republican lawmakers also showed a strong sense of confidence in what Republicans could achieve on domestic issues in the 109th Congress (2005-2006). House majority leader Tom DeLay said: "[2005 and 2006 are] going to probably be the most productive two years of our Republican majority…It's not just Social Security and tax reform, it's tort reform, regulatory reform, restraining spending, redesigning the House, redesigning the government". Senate majority leader Bill Frist also indicated that he intended to use the Republicans' increased majority to focus on cutting off Democratic filibusters of the president's judicial nominees (Hulse 2005). Notably, all of these Republican priorities are domestic issues and not a single foreign policy is mentioned.

During the 2006 midterm elections, Democrats took control of both the House of Representatives and the Senate for the first time since 1995, leading to a divided U.S. government. As expected, progress on the Bush administration's domestic agenda slowed as the Democratic controlled Congress was not interested in advancing the president's policies. The policy of the Bush administration toward China experienced some nuanced changes between 2007 and 2008. China appeared to be regarded as more important than in previous years. For instance, senior U.S. defense officials appointed during these two years had all pledged to prioritize the enhancement of ties with the Chinese military (Dumbaugh 2009). In November 2007, U.S. and China agreed to open a direct military hotline, the first of its kind between China and any country at defense

ministry level. On economic issues, in March 2007, the U.S. Department of Commerce announced a preliminary decision to apply U.S. anti-subsidy law to imports from China. This marks the first instance of imposing countervailing duties on imports from a non-market economy (U.S. Department of Commerce 2007). Moreover, due to the long-term dissatisfaction with China's failure to adhere to its World Trade Organization (WTO) commitments concerning the protection of intellectual property rights (IPR), the U.S. filed two IPR cases against China in the WTO for the first time in 2007. On concerns about China's global influence, Congress appeared to have finally taken an interest in China's global reach. During the 110th Congress (2007-2008), the Senate requested the Congressional Research Service to prepare a comprehensive study on China's activities in South America, Asia, and Africa, along with Beijing's motivations and their impact on U.S. global influence ("China's Foreign Policy and 'Soft Power' in South America, Asia, and Africa" 2008).

In summary, when the Bush administration initially took office with a unified government, it did not change its China policy as drastically as suggested during the campaign but rather prioritized tax cuts and education reform. After 9/11, the administration's foreign policy focus shifted towards counterterrorism and then towards domestic policy priorities from 2003 to 2006 under unified Republican control. Nevertheless, during the last two years of Bush's presidency, when the government became divided, the administration took a number of measures that differed from the past.

4.2.2 Policies towards China under the Obama administration (2009-2016)

Upon taking office as the U.S. President in 2009, Barack Obama faced a nation in the midst of the most severe economic crisis since the Great Depression. In the spring of 2009, the U.S. economy was in a steep decline, with GDP plummeting and the loss of employment occurring at a staggering rate of 700,000 jobs per month. The global financial sector teetered on the brink of collapse, not only within the U.S. but also worldwide (Baily 2010). House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said to Obama: "I think the American people are pretty clear that you inherited a terrible mess. Just terrible" (Obama 2020, 248).

During the first two years of Obama's presidency, both the White House and Congress were under Democratic Party control. This allowed Democrats to address their priorities, which were largely focused on the economy and domestic policies. In fact, even as Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, John Kerry wrote in his memoir that under Democrats' unified control, he was concerned with more than just foreign policy issues: " 'Everyone may expect us to carry the load on foreign policy, but … I care about a whole lot more than that and I've waited for a moment like this a long time, with a Democratic president and a Democratic Congress and a chance to get a lot done, and we're going to do more than foreign policy' " (Kerry 2018, 352).[40] In February 2009, Democrats used their control of Congress and the White House to sign into law an 800 billion-dollar economic stimulus package without the backing of a single Republican representative and the support of only three Republican senators. During the 111th Congress (2009-2010), a key focus for the Democrats was to pass a

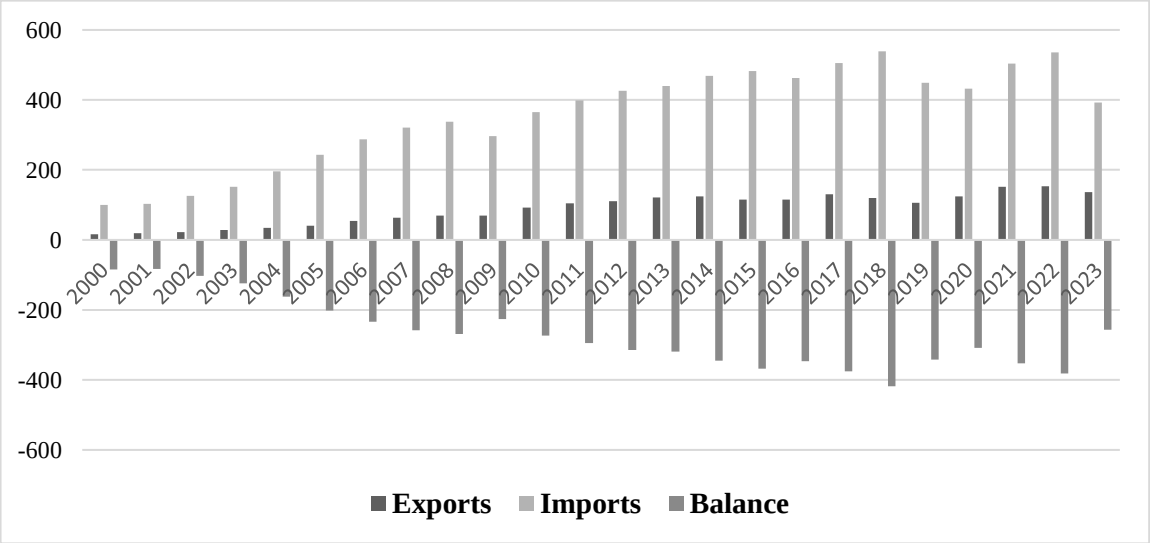
[40] Kerry's memoir highlights an interesting aspect: the chapter delving into the Senator's foreign policy initiatives was preceded by a chapter detailing his efforts on health care and climate change at home during the first two years of the Obama's presidency.

universal healthcare bill, which was the most substantial unfulfilled Democratic domestic priority since the Clinton administration. Obama's advisers were acutely aware that the Democrats' unified control of the government would not last too long. David Axelrod, the top political strategist for Obama, says "if we wanted to accomplish anything meaningful, it would have to come in the first two years, when we had large majorities in both chambers. It's why President Obama moved the Affordable Care Act when he did" (Brownstein 2022). In addition to the passage of the Affordable Care Act on March 23, 2010, Obama conducted a financial reform, implementing new regulations on the banking industry to safeguard consumers. In the realm of education, he committed to investing 4 billion dollars to garner bipartisan and grassroots backing for the reauthorization of federal education laws, aiming to enhance standards and foster competition (Halper 2011).

In contrast to his domestic agenda, the signature elements of the first two years of Obama's foreign policy reflected continuity with George W. Bush's, rather than a fundamental change (Singh 2011). During this period, U.S. foreign policy was significantly influenced by the financial crisis. For instance, Sutter (2009) points out that due to the economic crisis and the situation in the Middle East, the whole Asia-Pacific region was regarded by the U.S. as secondary. As later developments would show, this contrasted sharply with the U.S. policy toward the region two years later when the government became divided. For U.S.-China relations during this period, Sutter (2017) suggests that neither Beijing nor Washington sought trouble with each other, as "[b]oth were preoccupied with other issues" (69). In addition, during those two years, Obama's policy towards China seemed to gear towards advancing domestic

goals. For instance, giving precedence to addressing the economic crisis had an impact on how Obama managed policies towards Beijing. Since China's accession to the World Trade Organization in 2001, the U.S. trade deficit with China has been on the rise (see Figure 13). Although Obama wanted to hold China accountable for "evading, bending, or breaking just about every agreed-about rule of international commerce", "[t]o pull ourselves and the rest of the world out of the recession, we needed China's economy growing, not contracting".[41] Obama himself indicated that China's role in global economic recovery "hamstrung" his ability to tackle the trade imbalance (Zhou and Bermingham 2020).

Figure 13 U.S. Trade in Goods with China (In Billions of U.S. Dollars)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau https://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/balance/c5700.html

[41] In 2012, toward the end of President Obama's first term, the U.S., the European Union, and Japan jointly initiated a "request for consultations" with China at the World Trade Organization concerning its limitations on the export of rare earth metals.

During the 2010 midterm elections, Republicans gained control of the House, securing sixty-three seats, which marked the most substantial midterm election victory for the opposition party since 1938. While remaining the majority party in the Senate, the Democrats' seats reduced from 59 to 53. Subsequently, Obama faced challenges with an increasingly radicalized Republican Party (Kamarck 2018) and spent much of 2011 and 2012 on the defensive. Under divided government, the productivity of Congress saw a significant decline. The 112th Congress (2011-2012), in particular, stands out for enacting the fewest number of laws in modern history, with a total count of fewer than 250, and approximately 40 of these laws were of minor consequence, such as the naming of post offices or the issuance of commemorative resolutions (Mann and Ornstein 2013).

In contrast to this gridlock on domestic issues under divided government, U.S. foreign policy, especially regarding the Asia-Pacific region and China, underwent significant changes. In the fall of 2011 and early 2012, the Obama administration delivered a series of noteworthy foreign policy addresses. In October 2011, State Secretary Hillary Clinton articulated in a prominent article published in *Foreign Policy* that one of the foremost priorities of American statecraft in the coming decade would be to "lock in a substantially increased investment in the Asia-Pacific region" (Clinton 2011). One month later, President Obama delivered a speech at the Australian Parliament House, declaring that "after a decade in which we fought two wars that cost us dearly… the United States is turning our attention to the vast potential of the Asia Pacific region" (Obama 2011).[42] According to Obama's National Security Advisor

[42] According to Manyin et al. (2012), the geographical focus of the Administration's pivot encompasses East Asia, Southeast Asia, Australasia, and the coastal regions of South Asia.

Tom Donilon, the ultimate goals of the strategic shift is to ensure that "international law and norms be respected, that commerce and freedom of navigation are not impeded, that emerging powers build trust with their neighbors, and that disagreements are resolved peacefully without threats or coercion" (Donilon 2011). Specifically, the U.S. increased its military presence in the Asia-Pacific region, joined the East Asia Summit (EAS), and advanced negotiations towards the establishment of the Trans-Pacific Strategic Economic Partnership (TPP).[43] In particular, the multilateral negotiation for the TPP was a difficult, time-consuming process and met with opposition from China.

Although the heightened attention to the Asia-Pacific from the U.S. government predates the Obama administration (Manyin et al. 2012; Silove 2016; Ross 2012; Swaine 2012), the "pivot to Asia" under the Obama's presidency had new and significant implications, not only for U.S. policy towards Asia-Pacific but also for U.S. foreign policy as a whole. This is because the Obama administration is "the first administration ever to explicitly elevate Asia to the primary global regional strategic priority" (Shambaugh 2013, 10). Even during the peak of the Vietnam War and the Cold War strategy of containing China, the primary focus of Washington remained on the western front, which was the Cold War confrontation with the Soviet Union in Europe (Shambaugh 2013). The most prominent new initiatives during the priod of divided government in the Obama Administration were focused on security issues, such as troop deployments in Australia, the stationing of combat ships in Singapore, and discussions regarding new military cooperation options with the Philippines (Manyin et al. 2012).

[43] For details, see Manyin et al. (2012).

The pivot to Asia had a significant impact on the relationship between the U.S. and China. For instance, unlike previous administrations, the U.S. directly inserted itself into the legally complex territorial disputes in the South China Sea, increased its military presence in South Korea, and strengthened strategic ties with Vietnam. Beijing viewed all these measures as departures from past U.S. policy, seeing them as "gratuitous, expansionist, and threatening" (Ross 2012, 79). In response, China exhibited increased determination in territorial disputes in the East China Sea and South China Sea, while also turning its strategic orientation to the west and steadily advancing its Belt and Road Initiative policy (Zhang 2016). Ross (2012) argues that the irony of "pivot to Asia" lies in the fact that while this strategy was intended to curb the rise of China, it has actually provoked its assertiveness and eroded its confidence in cooperation.

Some may question whether Obama's initiation of the "pivot to Asia" was primarily driven by the U.S. giving more attention to foreign policy under divided government, or if it was, in fact, a response to China's growing assertiveness in its foreign policy since the global financial crisis. However, there are doubts regarding whether Chinese foreign policy had genuinely become more assertive following the financial crisis. Bader (2013) points out that many of the reports and analyses regarding China's increasing assertiveness are "overdramatized" and as someone who has "decades of experience with China", he could not "recall ever seeing [China] quietly roll over in the face of foreign demands" (80). Holding a similar point, Johnston (2013) argues that the notion of China's increasing assertiveness underestimates the level of assertive behavior China exhibited in the past and exaggerates the extent of change in

China's diplomacy from 2010 onwards.[44] Therefore, the U.S. strategy of reengaging with the Asia-Pacific region cannot be solely interpreted as a reaction to Chinese foreign policy assertiveness.

In November 2012, Obama was re-elected as the U.S. President. In the next four years, Obama grappled with a divided government. Democrats held the Senate from 2013 to 2014, while Republicans retained control of the House. Following the 2014 midterm elections, Republicans seized control of both chambers of Congress. The lack of congressional cooperation compelled Obama to lean heavily on executive actions to enact his domestic policies throughout his second term (Holland 2014).

The most significant event in U.S.-China relations during President Obama's second term was the issuance of a joint statement on climate change at the 2014 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit by Washington and Beijing, the world's top two carbon-emitting nations. During the 2008 presidential campaign, Obama made it clear that environmental protection would be an important priority once he took office. He also mentioned that clean energy development "must be a central focus in our relationships with major countries in Europe and Asia" (Obama 2007, 13), especially China, which was poised to soon surpass the U.S. as the world's largest emitter of greenhouse gases. Climate experts and advocates point out that during the first two years of the Obama administration when Democrats had unified control of the government, the President had an excellent opportunity to reshape how the U.S. deals with climate change. Nevertheless, this opportunity was "lost to the pull of other

[44] Comments about China's growing assertiveness in foreign policy also emerged during the initial period of President George W. Bush's administration. For example, Baum (2001) noted that during the transition from the Clinton to the Bush administrations, there was a near-consensus among top officials in the new administration that China's conduct on the international stage had grown increasingly hostile and assertive. Consequently, the United States needed to be ready to react with increased determination and resolve.

priorities" (Landler 2014).

The historic agreement between Washington and Beijing was reached after "nine months of intensive diplomacy" (Goldenberg 2014). Based on the agreement, China committed to achieve peak carbon emissions by approximately 2030 and promised to produce 20 percent of its forthcoming electricity from non-carbon sources. Meanwhile, the U.S. pledged to reduce its overall greenhouse gas emissions by 26 percent by 2025 compared to the levels recorded in 2005. According to Christensen (2015), obtaining any measurable commitment from China is a significant challenge for U.S. negotiators and stands as a noteworthy achievement for U.S. foreign policy. After all, in the 2009 Copenhagen Climate Change Conference, China successfully mobilized emerging economies and developing nations to oppose such restrictions. Given the size of its economy, China's reluctance to fully engage would jeopardize any global agreement.

To summarize, during the initial two years of Obama's presidency, amidst a unified government controlled by Democrats, the administration prioritized domestic issues, particularly economic recovery and healthcare. It was after the Obama team lost control of the unified government and progress on domestic issues became nearly impossible that policies toward China became more prominent.

4.2.3 Policies towards China under the Trump administration (2017-2020)

In 2016, Republican candidate Donald Trump won the presidency, while his fellow Republicans retained control of Congress. This marked the first and most recent time Republicans won or held unified control of the presidency and Congress since 2004. Compared to his predecessors, U.S. foreign policy during the Trump era exhibited

significant differences, and there have been numerous analysis and research articles on this topic.[45] Regarding U.S. policy towards China, scholars point out that the Trump administration "had departed from the past approach in fundamental ways" (Hass 2020, 7).

One of the most significant events during the Trump era in U.S.-China relations was undoubtedly the trade war. In 2018, the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR), under a unified government, concluded that China was involved in forced technology transfer, cyber-enabled theft of American intellectual property and trade secrets, and discriminatory and nonmarket-related licensing practices. Additionally, China was found to engage in state-funded strategic acquisitions of U.S. assets. As a response, the USTR enforced tariffs on approximately $370 billion worth of imports from China into the U.S. (Akhtar, Cimino-Isaacs, and Sutter 2023) Some may argue that if my theory holds, significant foreign policy decisions as such should not be made in such a scenario. However, trade policy does not easily fit into the category of traditional foreign policy, given the implications it has both internationally and domestically. U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai once said that trade policy "sits at the intersection of domestic and foreign policy" (Tai 2021). Alan Wm. Wolff, former deputy director-general of the World Trade Organization, described the relationship between trade and the foreign policy as they "have been intertwined throughout history, with foreign policy often tailored to promote trade interests" (Wolff 2018). Some scholars even partially attribute the U.S.' trade deficit with China to domestic factors within the U.S. As Lampton (2019, 55) points out: "[T]he trade deficit is more a function of high

[45] For example, see the "*US Foreign Policy in the Age of Trump Symposium* 2019" in *The Journal of Politics*.

domestic consumption in the United States, comparatively low domestic consumption in China, a low savings rate in the United States, and high domestic savings in the PRC. American politicians do not like to tell their voters to 'save more, spend less'".

Considering that "protecting American workers" was one of the three major goals of Trump's 100-day action plan to Make America Great Again during his 2016 election campaign (A. Kelly and Sprunt 2016), and the significant role trade played in his strategy to achieve this goal, it remains unclear whether Trump's trade policy was driven by the consideration of U.S. national interests or his personal political interests. In other words, it is uncertain whether the calculus about the trade war was based on the perception that China is an economic challenger to the U.S., or if its primary objective was to convey to Trump's supporters that he was advocating for their interests. In addition to the fact that Trump has frequently described Chinese leader Xi Jinping as his close friend, former U.S. National Security Advisor John Bolton's memoir also seems to make the first conjecture less credible, pointing out that Trump once told Xi that he hoped China could help him win the re-election by increasing purchases of American agricultural products (Bolton 2020).

In October 2018, 21 months after Trump's inauguration, and with the widespread expectation that Democrats would gain the majority in the House in the upcoming election, Vice President Mike Pence delivered a speech that represents the most explicit expression to date of the Trump administration's stance on China and a substantial toughening of the U.S.' stance. After the mid-term election, the Democrats gained control of the House of Representatives, bringing an end to the Republicans' unified government. In the following two years, the U.S. policy towards China underwent some

changes in areas beyond trade. On economic issues, in August 2019, the Treasury Department designated China as a currency manipulator.[46] Surprisingly, consistent with expectations that foreign policy would be deferred under unified Republican control during the first two years of the Trump Administration, this decision came rather belatedly, considering Trump's campaign pledge in 2016 to officially designate China as a currency manipulator on his inaugural day (Palmer and White 2019). On human rights issues, both the U.S. executive and legislative branches took measures in response to concerns about the potential impact of the "Hong Kong National Security Law" passed by the Chinese National People's Congress in 2020 on the autonomy of Hong Kong. Congress passed the Hong Kong Autonomy Act to sanction individuals that violate Hong Kong's autonomy and President Trump signed an executive order that would revoke the special trade privileges the U.S. has maintained since 1992 toward Hong Kong. In addition, on the last day of Trump's presidency, State Secretary Mike Pompeo declared that China is engaged in genocide against the Uyghurs, a predominantly Muslim ethnic group located in northwestern China. On national security and technology, in July 2020, the U.S. directed China to shut down its consulate in Houston, Texas, claiming that it served as a center for espionage and the theft of intellectual property. Beijing referred to this move as an "unprecedented escalation" (Cadell and Brunnstrom 2020). In a relatively less-publicized 2020 program known as the "Clean Network Initiative", the State Department undertook international outreach efforts with the goal of persuading other nations to reject Chinese 5G technology to protect the personal data of their citizens. As of December 2020, 27

[46] The designation was later dropped in January 2020.

out of the 30 NATO members and 31 out of the 37 OECD members had joined the Initiative (Akan 2020). In the territorial disputes of the South China Sea, in 2019, U.S. Secretary of State Pompeo committed Washington to aiding the Philippines in the event of an "armed attack" on its vessels or aircraft in the disputed area. Pompeo became the first U.S. official to openly affirm Washington's military commitment to defending Philippine sovereignty over the South China Sea (Fonbuena and Kuo 2019). In 2020, the Trump administration explicitly took a position on the maritime disputes over water and seabed rights, stating, "We are making it clear: Beijing's claims to offshore resources across most of the South China Sea are completely unlawful, as is its campaign of bullying to control them", a departure from previous administrations (Poling 2020). In the meantime, President Trump also enacted several additional policies before the conclusion of his term to underscore his firm stance on China.[47]

It is important to acknowledge that the COVID-19 pandemic broke out worldwide in 2020. This unparalleled global health crisis, along with its repercussions on the U.S. and the debates concerning the pandemic's origins, could have prompted the Trump administration to enact more tough measures against China. Nevertheless, during the first two years of Trump's presidency when the government was unified, the administration's policy towards China primarily revolved around trade, with a probable emphasis on domestic politics rather than foreign policy considerations. During the last two years of Trump's presidency when the U.S. transitioned to a divided government, policy towards China underwent changes in a broader range of areas. In particular, in July 2020, U.S. State Secretary Mike Pompeo delivered a speech on China in which he

[47] For details, see "Timeline: U.S.-China Relations", Council on Foreign Relations. https://www.cfr.org/timeline/us-china-relations (Accessed 01/30/2024)

declared that the era of engagement with the Chinese Communist Party had come to an end, marking a significant shift in U.S. policy towards Beijing (Pompeo 2020).

4.2.4 Policies towards China under the Biden administration (2021-2024)

On January 20, 2021, Joe Biden was inaugurated as the 46th President of the United States. At the same time, his fellow Democrats gained control of both chambers of Congress, resulting in a unified U.S. government. The Biden Administration set about advancing key domestic priorities. At the one-year mark of President Biden's inauguration, Jeffrey A. Bader, senior director for East Asian affairs on the National Security Council in the Obama Administration, noted that "The Biden administration has prided itself on breaking with the policies and practices of its predecessor, which did untold damage to U.S. foreign policy and domestic tranquility. But curiously, when it comes to the greatest foreign policy challenge facing the United States — how to deal with the rise of China — Biden's team have continued and mimicked Trump's destructive approach" (Bader 2022). Indeed, the Biden administration's policies toward China in the first two years maintained the tariffs designed to penalize China for its unfair trading practices and did not make efforts to revive the person-to-person and academic programs that were terminated during the Trump administration (Johnson 2022). Rather than devote attention and political capital to U.S.-China relations, the Biden Administration chose to let existing policies continue while it pursued change on domestic issues such as student debt programs, domestic manufacturing, and Covid-19 pandemic relief.

Some may argue that foreign policy often enjoys higher level of bipartisan

consensus than domestic issues (Tama 2023), particularly when it comes to issues related to China (Sarlin and Kapur 2021). Therefore, it is not surprising that Biden has chosen to continue the China policy established during the Trump era. However, Bader further noted that in no other instance, such as policies toward Iran, Ukraine, Russia, NATO, and the EU, has the administration attempted to replicate Trump's policies. [48][49] In addition, polls indicate that the two parties are not entirely aligned in their views on how to approach China (Silver, Devlin, and Huang 2020).

Rather than attributing the continuity in the policies towards China to "intellectual laziness," as Bader suggests, I argue that the Biden administration and Democrats in Congress prioritized domestic issues during the first two years of the president's term instead of China. For example, the Biden administration's first public speech outlining their approach to China was delivered by State Secretary Antony Blinken after sixteen months following Biden's inauguration. Observers describe this speech as "a year late" (Johnson 2022) and "long-awaited" (Kine, Toosi, and Bade 2022). Furthermore, the content of this speech lacked a significant degree of innovation as well. For example, although Blinken highlighted potential areas for bilateral cooperation, these areas largely revolved around familiar issues that have made limited progress. What stood out even more was the complete absence of discussion on tariffs (Johnson 2022). Another example is the Innovation and Competition Act of 2021, which passed the

[48] It could be contended that these foreign policy initiatives undertaken by the Biden administration illustrate the government's ability to effectively manage international relations even with a unified government, thus challenging my theoretical framework. However, it is crucial to clarify two points: first, my theory does not suggest that the U.S. government would completely neglect foreign affairs in situations of unified governance; and second, as outlined in section 4.1, the task of navigating relations with China presents inherently greater complexities and difficulties, necessitating a more substantial governmental attention and resource allocation.

[49] Nevertheless, there are critics of Biden's insufficient rollout of policy on Iran. For instance, Danielle Pletka highlighted in her 2024 article that a survey encompassing congressional Democrats and Republicans, administration officials, foreign diplomats, and Iran observers has validated the evident: The Biden administration currently lacks a discernible policy on Iran and its nuclear program. See Pletka (2024).

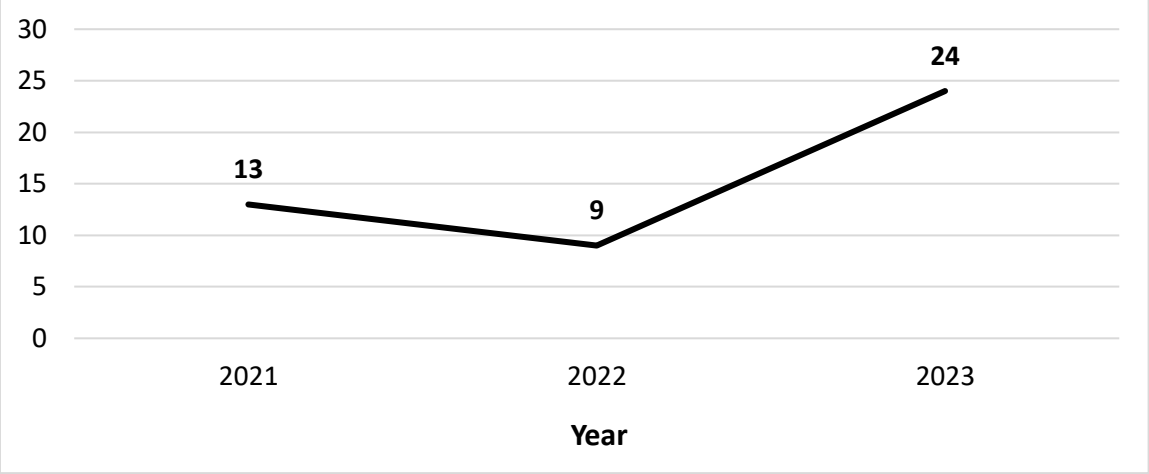
Senate in 2021. Aiming to counter China's growing economic and military assertiveness, the bill commits billions of dollars in federal funds across a wide array of research areas. The bill also imposes sanctions on China for its human rights violations. However, when the bill was presented to the House, it was quickly stopped by infighting among Democrats over President Biden's domestic agenda, such as the social spending bill and infrastructure plan. Senator Todd Young (R-IN) expressed disappointment over his House colleagues: "They are going too slowly, candidly…The plate has been incredibly full in terms of all the legislative priorities that Democratic leadership has…[I]n the near term, I expect that will continue to crowd out consideration of the bill" (Flatley 2021). Even though the House proposed a counterproposal, The America COMPETES Act, in July 2021, it took another seven months before the bill was voted on in the House floor and did not emerge as a priority until the negotiations over President Biden's social and climate spending bill collapsed (Evers-Hillstrom 2022).

In the 2022 mid-term elections, the Republicans won a majority of seats in the House of Representatives, leading to a shift from a unified to a divided U.S. government. Since then, there has been a notable increase in high-level interactions between the U.S. and Chinese governments. Figure 14 shows the number of high-level meetings between China and the U.S. After the U.S. government shifted from unified to divided in January 2023, there was a noticeable increase in the frequency of meetings, with the total for the year 2023 surpassing the combined total for 2021 and 2022.[50] In addition, some meetings in 2023 have important meaning for the bilateral

[50] Source: China Briefing, 2024. "US-China Relations in the Biden Ear: A Timeline". https://www.china-briefing.com/news/us-china-relations-in-the-biden-era-a-timeline/ (Accessed January 27th, 2024)

relationship. For example, President Xi met with U.S. Congressional delegation led by the Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer in Beijing in October 2023, the first such meeting since 2019 (Inskeep and Ruwitch 2023). In November 2023, the U.S. Department of Agriculture led a delegation comprising officials and exhibitors to the China International Import Expo (CIIE). Notably, the delegation includes several U.S. government officials, which is a departure from historical practice and adds to the significance of their participation (U.S. Embassy and Consulates in China 2023). In the same month, U.S. and Chinese officials met for discussions on nuclear arms control and non-proliferation, the first meeting of its nature between the two nuclear powers since 2019 (Lau 2023). Appendix 3 provides additional details regarding those meetings. With the growing frequency of exchanges between the two nations, Biden seems to hold an optimistic outlook on U.S.-China relations in 2023: "Everything changed in terms of talking to one another. I think you're gonna see [U.S.-China relations] begin to thaw very shortly" (Sevastopulo 2023).

Figure 14 Number of U.S.-China High-Level Meetings in the Biden Era



The dynamics of the U.S.-China relationship shifted following the 2022 mid-term elections, especially reflected in official interactions. Although the long-term impacts of these interactions remain to be seen, they have, at a minimum, offered both sides the chance to exchange perspectives on issues that were not previously on the active agenda.

4.3. Conclusion

The impact of divided or unified government on U.S. foreign policy is not a clear-cut dichotomy. To clarify, I do not argue that foreign policy is completely disregarded under unified government, or that it undergoes drastic transformations under divided government. Rather, the distinction lies in the extent of focus and the nature of the policies passed. Under unified government, politicians tend to prioritize domestic issues, whereas under divided government, foreign policy is given more attention and agenda space. This variation in focus, although subtle, plays a crucial role in shaping the U.S. foreign policy, including the use of a variety of foreign policy tools and the frequency as well as the scope of policy changes.

While many attribute the recent deterioration in U.S.-China relations to realist explanations—specifically, the inherent clash between China as a rising power and the U.S. as the status quo power—realism falls short in explaining why policies towards Beijing can undergo changes within a single presidential term lasting just eight or four years. Crafting effective policy towards China is complex; when the U.S. is preoccupied with domestic issues under unified government, it is less inclined to develop new policies towards China. Conversely, under divided government, the U.S. government is more likely to formulate new policy towards China, with greater

attention and agenda space available to engage on new and more challenging issues.

Expanding on this perspective, future research can delve into how China's domestic politics influences its approach to formulating policies concerning the U.S., and whether there are similar dynamics. While some studies have already explored how China's internal politics shape its foreign policy (e.g., Weiss 2013), there is room to examine Beijing's policies towards Washington. Even though the unified versus divided government framework does not directly apply to China, Chinese leaders encounter similar challenges as their American counterparts, such as limited attention span and agenda space. Additionally, with Chinese citizens placing greater emphasis on economic issues over foreign policy (particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic), future research can still apply the theoretical framework outlined in this paper. In addition, this paper takes into account all facets of the U.S.-China relationship as a whole. Subsequent research can delve into a specific area, e.g., territorial disputes, human rights issues, trade imbalance, to investigate whether U.S. policy varies depending on whether the government is unified or divided.

Indeed, U.S. policy towards China cannot be analyzed in isolation from Chinese foreign policy, as sometimes the former is a reaction to the latter. While I have already elaborated in this paper that some U.S. policies towards China are in part driven by U.S. domestic considerations, future research should consider how U.S.-China relations are jointly influenced by domestic politics in both countries. Specifically, scholars can explore four scenarios: when both countries are preoccupied with domestic issues and pay less attention to foreign policy; when both prioritize foreign policy; when one prioritizes foreign policy while the other focuses internally; and the

corresponding implications worldwide.

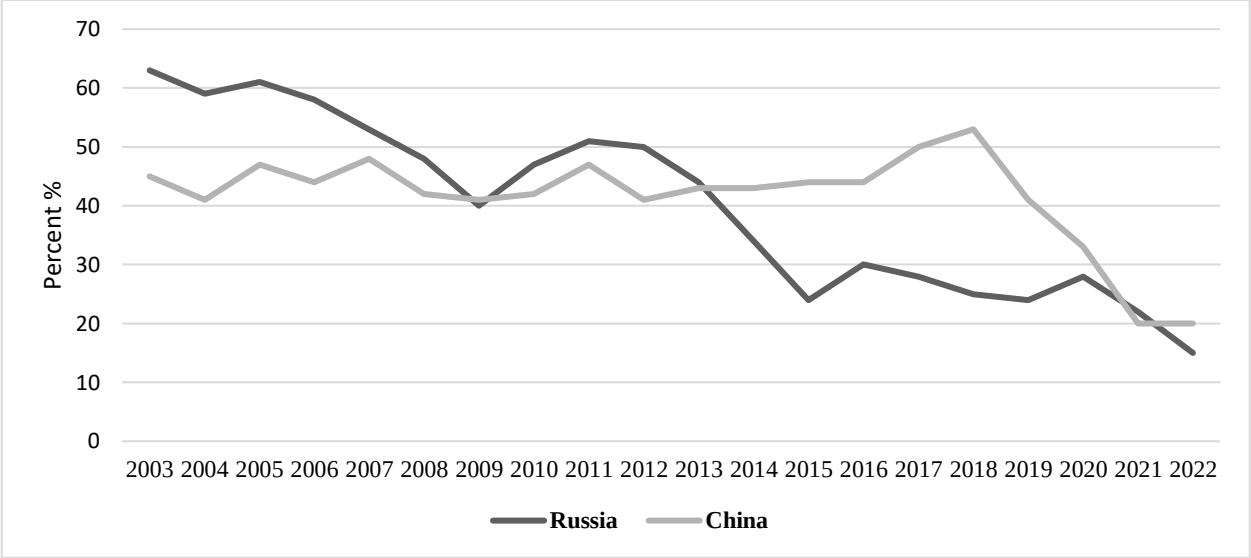
Appendices

Appendix 1 Number of Bills Considered by U.S. House of Representatives

	110th Congress (2007-2008) Divided Government	**111th Congress (2009-2010) Unified Government**
1	Public Lands and Natural Resources (103)	Government Operations and Politics (145)
2	Armed Forces and National Security (66)	Public Lands and Natural Resources (89)
3	Government Operations and Politics (55)	Armed Forces and National Security (61)
4	Water Resources Development (49)	Health (38)
5	Health (48)	Transportation and Public Lands (36)
6	Crime and Law Enforcement (46)	Finance and Financial Sector (35)
7	International Affairs (45)	Crime and Law Enforcement (34)
8	Commerce (38)	Commerce (30)
9	Finance and Financial Sector (31)	Economics and Public Finance (24)
10	Transportation and Public Works (30)	Education (21)
11	Housing and Community Development (29)	Emergency Management (21)
12	Taxation (27)	Science, Technology, Communications (21)
13	Education (24)	Water Resources Development (20)
14	Native Americans (21)	Congress (17)
15	Economics and Public Finance (20)	Energy (17)
16	Emergency Management (20)	Taxation (17)
17	Congress (19)	International Affairs (15)

Notes: (1) Data are from Congress.gov; (2) Bills refer to H.R. and H.J.Res.; (3) The number of bills for each category is reported in parentheses.

Appendix 2 The proportion of respondents who answered "very favorable" and "mostly favorable" to the Gallup poll question: "What is your overall opinion of Russia/China"?



Appendix 3 Timeline for U.S.-China High-Level Bilateral Meetings in the Biden Era

Duration in days since President Biden's inauguration	Date	Event
17	2/5/2021	The US Secretary of State Antony Blinken spoke with China's top foreign policy official, Yang Jiechi, in their first high-level conversation since President Joe Biden took office.
22	2/10/2021	President Xi Jinping and Joe Biden break the ice with phone call
58	3/18/2021	US and China hold the first high-level meeting in Alaska. Secretary of the US Antony Blinken and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan and China's top foreign affairs official Yang Jiechi and Foreign Minister Wang Yi attended.
87	4/16/2021	US Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry and China Special Envoy for Climate Change Xie Zhenhua met in Shanghai and announced a joint statement.
126	5/26/2021	Chinese Vice Premier Liu He spoke by phone with US Trade Representative Katherine Tai, making it the first such conversation on trade between the two sides since President Joe Biden took office.
132	6/1/2021	Chinese Vice Premier Liu He and US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen held a video meeting over economic ties, the second between senior officials from both sides in the past week.
141	6/10/2021	China's Minister of Commerce Wang Wentao spoke with US Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo over the phone.
142	6/11/2021	China's top diplomat, Yang Jiechi, held a phone call with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken.
182	7/21/2021	Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman traveled to China for meetings with State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi and other PRC officials from July 25-26.
232	9/9/2021	President Biden spoke with President Xi
259	10/6/2021	The US and China have agreed in principle that President Joe Biden and President Xi Jinping will hold a virtual meeting by the end of 2021. The meeting was brokered by US national security adviser Jake Sullivan and China's top foreign policy official Yang Jiechi.

278	10/26/2021	China’s Vice Premier Liu He and US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen talked via video call and discussed the economic situation and US-China relations.
299	11/15/2021	US President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping had their first virtual meeting.
422	3/18/2022	President Xi and President Biden spoke on a conference call, the first direct communication between the two leaders since their virtual summit in November 2021 and the first talk since the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war.
456	4/21/2022	US Defense Secretary Lloyd J. Austin III spoke to Chinese Minister of National Defense General Wei Fenghe for the first time under the Biden Administration.
483	5/18/2022	US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan and top Chinese diplomat Yang Jiechi held a phone conversation.
490	5/25/2022	Chinese climate envoy Xie Zhenhua met with US counterpart John Kerry at the 2022 World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos to discuss cooperation on tackling climate change.
509	6/13/2022	US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan and top Chinese diplomat Yang Jiechi met in Luxembourg.
554	7/28/2022	President Biden and President Xi hold two-hour call.
611	9/23/2022	China’s Foreign Minister Wang Yi met with US counterpart Secretary of State Antony Blinken at the 77th UN General Assembly in New York.
664	11/15/2022	President Biden and President Xi held their first face-to-face meeting since Biden took office in early 2021
664	11/15/2022	U.S. climate envoy John Kerry met his Chinese counterpart Xie Zhenhua on Thursday at the COP27 summit in Egypt
718	1/8/2023	China's chief climate negotiator Xie Zhenhua met his U.S. counterpart
759	2/18/2023	Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Wang Yi Holds Informal Meeting with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken
839	5/8/2023	Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang met with the US Ambassador to China Nicholas Burns in Beijing, in the foreign minister’s first meeting with a US official since taking office.
841	5/10/2023	Top Chinese Diplomat Wang Yi Met with US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan in Vienna.
856	5/25/2023	The Minister of the Chinese Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM) Wang Wentao met his US counterpart,

		the Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo at the sidelines of the APEC Trade Ministers' Meeting in Washington D.C.
867	6/5/2023	Senior US State Department official Daniel Kritenbrink and White House National Security Council's senior director for China affairs Sarah Beran visited Beijing, where they met with Director-General of the Department of North American and Oceanian Affairs of China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs Yang Tao and Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Ma Zhaoxu. US Ambassador to the PRC Nicholas Burns also attended the meetings.
876	6/14/2023	US Secretary of State Blinken had a conversation over the phone with China's Foreign Minister Qin Gang.
880	6/18/2023	US Secretary of State Antony Blinken Meets with President Xi Jinping and Foreign Minister Qin Gang in Beijing.
898	7/6/2023	The US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen visited Beijing, the latest of a series of high-level visits by US officials to Beijing. During her four-day visit, Yellen met several top Chinese officials, including Premier Li Qiang, Vice Premier He Lifeng, Minister of Finance Liu Kun, and the Deputy Governor of the People's Bank of China Pan Gongsheng.
907	7/16/2023	The US Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry started his four-day trip to Beijing.
945	8/22/2023	The US Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo met with the Chinese Ambassador to the US Xie Feng ahead of her upcoming visit to China.
950	8/27/2023	US Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo met with her Chinese counterpart, Minister of Commerce Wang Wentao.
964	9/10/2023	President Biden Meets with Premier Li Qiang at the G20 Summit in India.
970	9/16/2023	US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan met with the Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Malta.
972	9/18/2023	The US Secretary of State Antony Blinken met with Chinese Vice President Han Zheng at the sidelines of the 78th UN General Assembly in New York City
991	10/7/2023	Xi Jinping Meets with US Congressional Delegation in Beijing During China Visit. The delegation had met separately with Wang Yi earlier in the day.
1009	10/25/2023	President Xi Jinping held a meeting with Governor of California Gavin Newsom, during the latter's trip to China, the first by a US governor in four years. During his trip, the Governor also met with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Vice President Han

		Zheng, and signed a climate-focused Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Chairman of the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) Zheng Shanjie.
1011	10/27/2023	Foreign Minister Wang Yi Meets Joe Biden and Top US Officials in Washington Visit, Laying Groundwork for Xi-Biden Meeting. Wang also met with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan.
1020	11/5/2023	The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) led a delegation of officials and 17 exhibitors to this year's China International Import Expo (CIIE) as part of the largest-ever delegation of US representatives since the event's inauguration in 2018. Joining the delegation are several US officials, including acting deputy under-secretary for trade and foreign agricultural affairs at the USDA Jason Hafemeister and senior adviser for North Asia at the USDA Wade Sheppard. The US has historically not sent government officials to the CIIE, making their attendance this year all the more significant.
1021	11/6/2023	Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of Arms Control, Verification, and Compliance (AVC) Mallory Stewart and Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) Director-General of Arms Control Sun Xiaobo met for discussions on nuclear arms control and non-proliferation. It is the first meeting of its nature between the two nuclear powers since 2019.
1019	11/4/2023	China Climate Envoy Xie Zhenhua met with US Counterpart John Kerry during US Trip.
1025	11/10/2023	Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng met with US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen ahead of Xi-Biden meeting.
1030	11/15/2023	President Xi and President Biden met in San Francisco.
1066	12/21/2023	Chinese General Liu Zhenli held a video call with US General CQ Brown, the first senior military communication between Washington and Beijing since they were suspended in August 2022.
1084	1/8/2024	Senior US and Chinese defense officials met for the 2024 US-PRC Defense Policy Coordination Talks.
1095	1/19/2024	Senior US and Chinese officials met in Beijing for the third Financial Working Group (FWG) meeting from January 18 to 19, the first of these meetings to be held in China. During their visit to Beijing, the Treasury delegation also met with Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng.

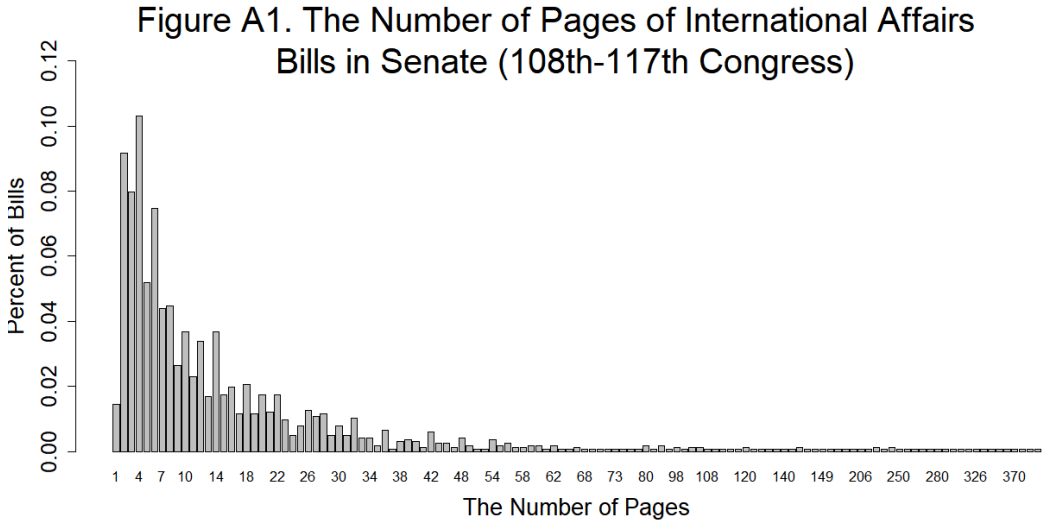
Appendix 4 Foreign Policy Bills and Resolutions Consideration in the U.S. Senate

In both the House and Senate, divided government should boost a foreign affairs bill's likelihood of being considered by the chamber relative to a domestic policy. However, the House and Senate differ on one important aspect in terms of the legislative procedure. In the House, the debate nearly always takes place under some form of time restriction. Individual Representatives have difficulty getting debate time on the floor due to time constraints and rarely get more than two to five minutes to discuss throughout their allotted time. By contrast, the Senate rules of debate and legislative procedure are more egalitarian (Davidson et al. 2017; Sinclair 1986; Smith and Gamm 2001). Individual Senators have the right to unlimited debate, and may use their right to extend debate, a tactic known as a "filibuster". In the House, the structure of debate and the agenda are strictly controlled by the Rules Committee and the majority party leaders; in the Senate, the agenda is much more responsive to the influence of all members (Lazarus and Steigerwalt 2009).

How does the Senate's rule on debate affect the likelihood of a foreign policy bill being considered? I argue that it makes the positive effect of divided government conditional on the bill's scope and complexity. First, as a foreign policy bill's scope gets larger and gets more complex, it is more likely to have some domestic implications and thus be more likely to attract Senators' attention and trigger inter-party disagreements. In addition, such bills are more likely to be reported by media and be high-profile. Therefore, the constituents would pay more attention to their lawmakers' stances on the issue. The two reasons combined, when facing complex foreign policy bills, Senators are more likely to express their individual stances.

From the Senate majority party leader's perspective, although he is the only one who is able to successfully propose what bills the Senate should consider, he is concerned to use that time with reasonable efficiency (Heitshusen 2019). Anticipating the reaction from Senators to the complex foreign policy bills, the majority party leader may not bring such bills to the floor in the first place.

One measure of a bill's scope and complexity is the number of pages. Figure A1 plots the distribution of the number of pages of all international affairs bills in the Senate from the 108th to 117th Congress. As can be seen, bills vary significantly in their scope and complexity. While some only contain a few pages, others have more than a hundred, indicating a wide range of issue areas those bills cover.



To sum up, given that the majority party pushes for its domestic agenda, foreign policy issues are postponed under unified government. Under divided government, however, due to the stalemate on negotiating domestic issues, foreign policy issues can get more agenda space. But such influence in the Senate is conditional on the bill's complexity.

To test the hypothesis above, I collected all Congressional bills that deal with foreign policy issues from the 108th to 117th Senate (S. and S.J.Res), i.e., bills assigned "International Affairs" as the policy area by Congressional Research Service. I do not consider House bills that received Senate attention or vice versa. This is because the other chamber may propose its own version of the legislation on the same issue. I include an interaction term *Divided government* × *Bill length* for Senate bills. Bill length is measured by the log value of the number of pages of the bill. The remainder of the research design mirrors the methodology employed for analyzing House bills in Chapter 2. Table A1 presents the summary of statistics. Table A2 presents the regression results.

Table A1: Summary Statistics for Senate International Affairs Bills (2003-2022

Level	Variable	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Bill-level	**Sponsor-related factors**				
	Majority party member	0.565	0.496	0	1
	Majority party leader	0.152	0.359	0	1
	First Committee member	0.455	0.498	0	1
	Content-related factors				
	Appropriations / Reauthorization	0.044	0.205	0	1
	Bill length	2.939	1.075	0.881	7.270
	#Committees	0.970	0.197	0	2
	#Cosponsors	1.855	1.347	0	5.193
	Bipartisan consensus	0.493	0.500	0	1
	Time-related factor				
	Months since the beginning of Congress	11.192	7.002	1	24
Congress-level	Int'l Affairs salience	2.104	1.040	0.870	3.620
	Congressional productivity	3.825	0.642	2.840	5.040

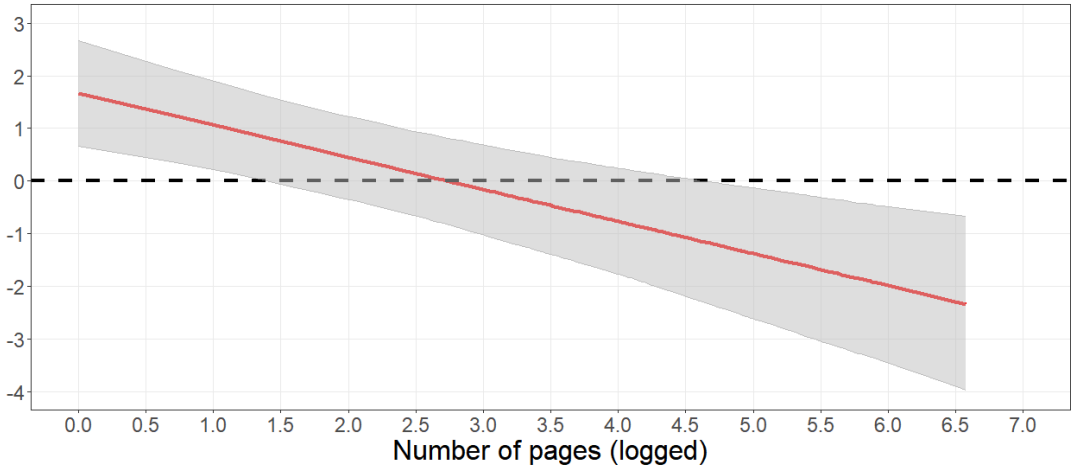
Table A2: Multilevel Logistic Analysis of International Affairs Bills Consideration in U.S. Senate, 2003-2022

Level	Variable	Estimate	Sd. error	90% Credible Interval
	Divided government	1.669	0.626	(0.668, 2.670)
	Divided government×Bill length	−0.610	0.191	(−0.926, −0.295)
Bill-level	**Sponsor-related factors**			
	Majority party member	−0.540	0.227	(−0.913, −0.164)
	Majority party leader	2.506	0.314	(1.993, 3.026)
	First Committee member	0.870	0.264	(0.437, 1.310)
	Content-related factors			
	Appropriations / Reauthorization	1.024	0.377	(0.393, 1.624)
	Bill length	−0.490	0.132	(−0.711, −0.279)
	#Committees	−3.262	0.391	(−3.910, −2.615)
	#Cosponsors	0.015	0.0132	(−0.199, 0.233)
	Bipartisan consensus	0.218	0.397	(−0.435, 0.886)
	#Cosponsors×Bipartisan consensus	0.687	0.165	(0.417, 0.957)
	Time-related factor			
	Months since the beginning of Congress	−0.043	0.015	(−0.068, −0.018)
Congress-level	Int'l Affairs salience	−0.178	0.220	(−0.539, 0.179)
	Congressional productivity	0.200	0.350	(−0.357, 0.781)

Note: Multilevel logistic models with random intercepts estimated for congresses. Bills refer to S. and S.J.Res. N=1,658.

Figure A2 plots the coefficient of *Divided Government* by the number of pages (logged) and the 90% confidence interval. Consistent with the hypothesis, the coefficient of *Divided Government* diminishes as the number of pages of the bill increases. Since the 1st quartile of *Bill length* is 1.386, the coefficient is positive and significant for about 25% of the Senate bills that have a relatively small scope. However, when the bills gets too complex, the coefficient of Divided government turns to negative, suggesting that those bills are more likely to be considered under unified government.

Figure A2. Estimate Coefficient of Divided Government by the Number of Pages with 90% Confidence Intervals in Senate



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