United Nation
Bipartisanship as Signaling in the Fight for International Institutions

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United Nation
Bipartisanship as Signaling in the Fight for International Institutions

The president is trapped on the horns of a dilemma. He must demonstrate credibility to both domestic and international actors—who theoretically have competing interests—to get both to approve his model for an international institution. He can resolve this paradox by “going bipartisan.” Bipartisanship signals trustworthiness and competence to senators and it signals resolve to the leaders of other nations. I develop this argument with two cases studies: President Wilson and the League of Nations and Presidents Roosevelt and Truman and the United Nations. Wilson decided to go partisan and the League failed to gain Senate approval. Roosevelt and Truman, however, reached out to members of the Republican Party and the United Nations endures today. They won the “two-level game” of negotiation and ratification through the effective use of bipartisanship. In short, Roosevelt and Truman successfully united the nation. From this, I conclude that bipartisanship remains a useful strategic tool in the president’s arsenal.
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Enjoy!
INTRODUCTION

“The word bipartisan usually means some larger-than-usual deception is being carried out.”

George Carlin

Presidents are trapped on the horns of a dilemma. When conducting foreign policy, they have two constituencies they must seek to appease: the American public as well as the court of global opinion. Their support is essential to the construction of effective international institutions. Presidents who appear credible are more likely to persuade both. In this sense, politics does not “stop at the water’s edge.” This paper is concerned with how presidents can reconcile these competing audiences, and specifically, how Presidents Wilson, Roosevelt and Truman attempted to do so. My central question is this: How can the president signal credibility to both domestic and international actors when attempting to gain American acceptance of an international institution? The answer is bipartisanship.

International institutions are perhaps humanity’s best hope for avoiding another century of conflict. In fact, one opinion holds that Wilson’s failure to join the League of Nations precipitated its weakness in the face of German, Italian, and Japanese expansionism, leading to the Second World War. Whether or not this claim is true, it was taken seriously by policy-makers in the aftermath of that war, and so speaks to one larger purpose of international institutions: to ensure collective security and peace. Yet Wilson may have had to surrender the commitment to collective security embodied in Article X of the League of Nations Charter to attract the support of the Republican faction known as the “mild reservationists.”2 This historical view confirms that scholars cannot ignore the central puzzle of presidential credibility, for it speaks to the

1 George Carlin, Brain Droppings (New York: Hyperion, 1997), 82.
president's ability to shape these institutions and gain support for them. Future presidents will continue to focus on international institutions as an instrument or an objective of foreign policy. However, the literature has not yet provided a solution to this dilemma.

I argue that the president does have one strategy available to him that can potentially satisfy both audiences. He has the option of seeking a bipartisan congressional coalition behind American acceptance of the international institution in question—of “going bipartisan.”

Domestically, bipartisanship signals that the president will be able to defend American interests within the institution; that he lacks extreme ideological or partisan motivations for committing to the institution; that the United States stands to benefit from participation; and that the institution is likely to succeed. To international audiences, bipartisanship is a signal that American involvement will survive a change in the party controlling government; that there could be significant political costs to the president if the institution fails; and that the American people as a whole resolve to make the institution a success. Bipartisanship can successfully signal credibility to both audiences at once, winning their support for the institution the president has proposed.

I develop this argument with two case studies of presidential foreign policymaking with respect to international institutions. I consider President Wilson's push for the League of Nations, as well as Presidents Roosevelt and Truman's advocacy for the United Nations. This comparison is directly relevant given that Roosevelt is often cited as learning a lesson from Wilson's failures—most importantly, his intransigence with respect to reaching out to the other party. Each of these presidents faced this central conflict between signaling credibility to domestic and international audiences, yet only Roosevelt and Truman succeeded. I pay special attention to the nature of the debates surrounding these institutions, for they reveal the degree

\[3\] See Peter Trubowitz and Nicole Mellow, "Going Bipartisan: Politics by Other Means," Political Science Quarterly 120.3 (2005): 433-53 for a detailed description of bipartisanship as a political strategy.
to which senators and other leaders were persuaded by the president's strategy. In short, I find that Roosevelt and Truman won the United Nations through the strategic use of bipartisanship, implying that it is a potentially successful option.

This paper is composed of the following sections. Chapter One explains that the president's fight for an international institution is an example of Putnam's model of the "two-level game"\(^4\), and develops the concepts of credibility and signaling within this context. Chapter Two lays out my argument for the success of bipartisanship. Chapter Three analyzes Wilson's strategy in the League of Nations debate, finding that his eschewal of bipartisanship doomed the Treaty of Versailles in the Senate. Chapter Four discusses how Roosevelt and Truman learned from Wilson's failures and made bipartisanship an integral part of the creation of the United Nations. I conclude by summarizing the future potential for research on the subject of bipartisanship as a strategy. Indeed, while some may be disappointed by my somewhat cynical view of bipartisanship—as strategic political maneuvering—they should nonetheless be comforted by the fact that my research finds that bipartisanship remains useful to this day.

CHAPTER ONE
THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

In this first chapter, I aim to explain why crafting successful treaties that can pass domestic and international scrutiny is supremely difficult for the president by reviewing the relevant literature. I begin by stating the theoretical basis for my argument, which draws on Putnam’s model of two-level games. I then move to a discussion of the concept of presidential credibility. Winning at both games forces the president to prove his credibility to domestic and international audiences, yet such a task is apparently paradoxical given their competing interests. Finally, I turn to the literature on signaling to explain how presidents can demonstrate their credibility to other actors. Presidents must find ways to signal their credibility to others, but all reliable signals require that the president assume certain costs. In other words, this chapter is devoted to scaring prospective presidential candidates away from the Oval Office with an analysis of the problem.

The Two-Level Game

The first step in this paper is to open the “black box” that is political decision-making and reject the assumption that the state is a unitary actor.¹ The state is a complex web of relationships, games, and rules. At the center of this web rests the president. He is constrained by domestic politics yet acts as the representative of the United States in the global arena—he is both a domestic and an international actor. As such, determining the precise relationship between domestic politics and international relations has caused theorists a great deal of

¹ See John J. Mearsheimer, The Tragedy of Great Power Politics, (New York: Norton, 2001) 11 for an argument about why we should treat states as “black boxes”. I take as assumption in this paper that states are not the unified strategic actors that realism treats them as.
difficulty. Some have argued that the foreign policy of a state is determined by different actors wrestling for political advantage, others have referenced the influence of particular economic factions, and still others have used interest groups to describe why the state acts as it does. In response, realists have flipped the relationship, arguing that the structure of the international system determines the nature of domestic politics. None of these explanations is entirely compelling, and none capture the true essence of domestic politics in an international context.

Still others have tried to gain the best of both worlds by creating frameworks that treat the state as both a strategic player in international relations and a collection of domestic actors. The most robust of these has proven to be Putnam's model of the two-level game for international negotiations, which uses game theory to predict how states will act. Leaders face the prospect of having to win a “domestic game” by building support among their constituents. They must also win an “international game” by seeking policy outcomes in their dealings with other states that maintain that support. As Putnam puts it, “Neither of the two games can be ignored by central decision-makers, so long as their countries remain interdependent, yet sovereign.” His analysis has been applied to studies of conflict as well as cooperation, as well as multiple institutional arrangements, levels of information, and domestic political alignments.

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3 Putnam, 434.

Putnam’s model has proven to be both useful and durable with respect to studying the complex relationship between domestic and international politics.

For the purposes of this paper, I will use Putnam's two-level games model to understand the difficult process of treaty negotiation and ratification. Such a move is appropriate for three reasons. First, crafting a treaty forces the president to go through a process that is perfectly representative of a two-level game. He must first negotiate the treaty with other nations and then seek ratification in the Senate. Such a provision is constitutionally mandated for reasons given by Alexander Hamilton in *Federalist Paper #75*: treaties “plead strongly for the participation of the whole or a portion of the legislative body in the office of making them.” Second, in some sense, the president always plays a two-level game. The president “is the chief architect of American foreign policy, and he is a world figure as well,” and he must prove adept at both games. Third, the process of treaty ratification is laden with strategic gamesmanship, the calculation of interests, and the attempt to find a workable compromise. As such, game theory provides an appropriate framework for analysis.

A game theoretic approach to treaty negotiation that also focuses on domestic politics has a number of implications. First, it underscores the difficulty of crafting a successful treaty. It is harder to win at two games than it is to win at one. It then becomes all the more important that theoreticians analyze the tools that the president has at his disposal to win at both games. Second, it means that each game can affect the other. Such a proposition was first formulated by Schelling, and others have thus referred to it as the “Schelling Conjecture.” He argues that “the power of a negotiator often rests on a manifest inability to make concessions and to meet

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5 Barbara Kellerman and Ryan J. Barilleaux, *The President as World Leader* (New York: St. Martin's, 1991), 16.

6 Milner, 68.
demands. In other words, the President can use the prospect of a difficult fight for ratification stemming from a strong opposition party to avoid budging from his position during treaty negotiations. This goes against the prevailing wisdom that constraints make negotiations more difficult by preventing flexibility. In any case, a study of treaty negotiations must seek to develop strategies that allow the president to win at both games simultaneously.

The Presidential Credibility Dilemma

A successful strategy should focus on the concept of presidential credibility. The most cohesive account of credibility has been advanced by Posner and Vermeule. I concur that credibility is best defined as a reflection of the president's capabilities as seen by an audience, international or domestic, and whether or not he intends to construct policies designed to meet the objectives of those audiences. His international audience refers to the leaders of other nations, whom he must reach an agreement with during negotiations over a prospective treaty. His domestic audience is the Senate, which must ratify a prospective treaty by a two-thirds vote. Credibility is crucial to presidents—the impressions they form condition how others treat them and influence the deference they receive to create policy. In fact, "the risk that the public will fail to trust a well-motivated president is just as serious as the risk that it will trust an ill-motivated one." In short, the president must generate credibility.

The president's domestic credibility problem is a classic instance of the principal-agent problem. As Posner and Vermeule write,

"The president is the agent and the public is the principal (sometimes we will think of the legislature as the principal, bracketing questions of agency slack between voters and legislators). The public cares about national security but also cares about civil liberties

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8 Eric. A. Posner and Adrian Vermeule, "The Credible Executive," *The University of Chicago Law Review* 74.3 (2007): 878. Posner and Vermeule also discuss the use of cross-party appointments to the executive branch as a means of generating credibility, which is similar to a form of bipartisanship I will advocate later.
and the well-being of potential targets of the war on terror; its optimal policy trades off these factors. However, the public cannot directly choose the policy; instead, it delegates that power to the government and, in particular, the president.°

However, like any agent, the president has interests of his own. He may construct policy to maximize electoral gains for himself or his party, he may seek personal enrichment, or like Posner and Vermeule suggest he may simply have another perspective on the best policy for the United States. The people (and their representatives in Congress) thus form impressions of the president's performance and intentions and act accordingly. Presidents they view as incapable agents are more likely to face future electoral repercussions, and in the short term the policies he advances will tend to be less successful at gaining support.

In the realm of foreign policy, asymmetric information and the structural advantages of the Presidency magnify the principal-agent problem. The president negotiates with foreign leaders, receives briefings from executive agencies tasked with national security and defense, and is continually involved in collecting information and assessments of foreign affairs from his advisors.° The president thus tends to have more information than either Congress or the public about the challenges faced by the nation abroad—information that is often kept secret for reasons of security. So too does the deliberative, slow nature of congressional decision making make it difficult for Congress to act quickly in a crisis, or to negotiate effectively with foreign leaders. For these reasons, Congress has traditionally deferred to the president as the agent in charge of foreign policy.°

However, these same structural advantages can induce Congress to limit his authority. If the public believes that the president is failing to advance their interests, they can try to control him by putting pressure on Congress or by threatening his defeat in the next election. Congress can hinder presidential decision-making by means including rejecting treaties, halting funding for

° Ibid., 876.
10 Kellerman and Barilleaux, 41-45 provide a thorough account of these advantages.
11 David Brady and Craig Volden, "Congress, The President, and the Making of Foreign Policy," Hoover Digest 3 (2006): 1-3, suggest that the lack of information and the aversion of members to taking risks encourage congressional deference to the executive.
the use of military force, or refusing to approve the president's agenda. Whether or not Congress and the public attempt to reign in the president is a function of how they perceive the president's behavior. However, asymmetric information invites error; faulty or misleading information could cause the public to limit the powers of a capable executive or expand the powers of an incapable one. Additionally, the ability of the president to act quickly and authoritatively, unlike Congress, can give the impression that his actions lack checks to ensure quality decision-making. For these reasons, the president's authority can be restrained by the very factors that encourage deference to the executive in the first place.

Yet the president also has another audience when it comes to establishing foreign policy: other states. This is especially salient with regard to establishing international institutions, which require other states to contribute to their construction and to acquiesce to their legitimacy. In the cases of the League of Nations and the United Nations, Britain and France played pivotal roles, and their cooperation was essential to American objectives. The support of other nations means that the United States does not have to bear the costs of institution-building alone. Additionally, the support of other actors can help to burnish the reputation of the United States as a multilateral actor with ambitions beyond pure national self-interest. To construct durable international institutions, the president requires the support of other states.

International actors have the choice to support or oppose American policy, and even in the case of allies, support is not a foregone conclusion. Other states also require a demonstration of the president's credibility, or an indication of whether or not the president will pursue a policy from which they stand to benefit. This relationship strongly resembles that of a

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12 James Meernik, "Presidential Support in Congress: Conflict and Consensus on Foreign and Defense Policy," The Journal of Politics 55.3 (1993): 576 finds that the Congress is particularly willing and able to interfere with the president on issues of international economic policy and that members of Congress consider their own political incentives when dealing with the president.

13 Matthew A. Baum, "Going Private: Public Opinion, Presidential Rhetoric, and the Domestic Politics of Audience Costs in U.S. Foreign Policy Crises," The Journal of Conflict Resolution 48.5 (2004): 607-610 argues that presidents in fact have more to lose than to gain in foreign policy—a success fits with the preconception that the president is best at foreign policy, whereas a failure challenges that notion and leads to repercussions.
principal and an agent. Other states delegate authority to the United States with the expectation that it will design institutions that work to the benefit of all. However, here too the principal suffers from a lack of information. Other states have empirically proven to be “pretty terrible” at analyzing a state's domestic politics or intentions.\textsuperscript{14} Nor are they equal negotiating partners. The United States emerged from both World Wars in a commanding position, and was thought to be the only nation that could bring peace to Europe. The president, as the representative of the United States, must demonstrate credibility to these actors as well.

Other states fear two phenomena with regards to American institution-building: abandonment and domination.\textsuperscript{15} First, the American people could decide that the costs of an institution outweighed the benefits and decide to exit the institution. The thought that the United States would retreat back into isolationism after the two World Wars plagued European policymakers. Another way of phrasing this concern is to say that other states want credible demonstrations of American resolve: that American foreign policy will remain relatively constant over the years.\textsuperscript{16} Second, the United States could become disillusioned with the policies chosen by the institution, and choose to exert its authority over decision-making procedures. Other states require a demonstration of restraint, wherein the United States agrees to bind its power by rules and accept its status as an equal partner. The United States has to give expectations of hegemony with restraints, namely, of a “liberal hegemonic order.”\textsuperscript{17} The president's credibility is contingent upon the degree to which he sets and fulfills those expectations.

Herein lies the dilemma: the president must demonstrate his credibility to both domestic

\textsuperscript{14} Glenn H. Snyder and Paul Diesing, \textit{Conflict among Nations: Bargaining, Decision Making, and System Structure in International Crises} (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton UP, 1977) 516. Their argument is based on extensive historical case studies, including several during the twentieth century, suggesting that policymakers have not gotten any better.

\textsuperscript{15} John Ikenberry, \textit{After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars}, Princeton: Princeton UP, 2001, finds this to be a factor in both of the cases I study in this paper: the League of Nations fight and the United Nations fight.


and international audiences at once. To say that the president is an agent with two principals is but another way of putting the fact that he must play a two-level game. He must convince his domestic audience that international institutions will work to their benefit to win ratification. This may require rules which allow the United States to dominate the institution or refrain from committing to its decisions. In other words, convincing domestic audiences of his credibility may require the president to verify the worst fears of other states and jeopardize negotiations. However, one need only think of how John Kerry drew criticism in the 2004 presidential election for arguing that American foreign policy needed to pass a “global test” to demonstrate that presidents are expected to put American interests first.\(^{18}\) This is why the president faces a credibility dilemma—building credibility with one audience hurts his credibility with another. A successful signal of credibility would need to demonstrate that the president intends to construct an international institution that will benefit both the American people and other states.

### Signaling Dynamics

I define a “signal” as an action taken that provides a source of information about the intentions and capabilities of the actor that other actors can rely upon as accurate. Going to the grocery store is a signal that demonstrates my need to purchase food and other necessities; other actors can reasonably infer that the action is indicative of this need. Leaders of states send signals as well. In a crisis, a leader might choose to mobilize forces as a signal of his willingness to use military force to achieve an objective, with the hope of forcing the other state to back down.\(^{19}\) Or that leader might release sealed records to demonstrate to a domestic audience that he has nothing to hide as a means of resolving a political scandal. The key


\(^{19}\) James D. Fearon, “Domestic Political Audiences and the Escalation of International Disputes,” *The American Political Science Review* 88.3 (1994): 579-581, although he notes that leaders are cautious not to seem too resolved, given that it could back their enemy into a corner.

[11]
component of a signal is that it provides an indication of the actor’s “type”: are they a capable, well-intentioned executive or not? It is to a leader’s advantage to send signals that will increase their credibility with a given audience, and accordingly, the flexibility they have to construct policy. The ideas of credibility and signaling are thus inextricable.

Informative signals carry costs. Signals that a leader could issue without incurring any disadvantages would be what the literature on signaling refers to as “cheap talk”—even a poor leader could send them freely. For example, taking the physical costs of mobilizing forces to war speaks far louder than simply declaring a willingness to use force. Costs come in several flavors. One way of thinking about costs is in terms of physical and “audience” costs. Physical costs refer to the actual material costs of taking an action, such that a leader would only take the action if it were worth those costs. Audience costs refer to the domestic political consequences that accrue to sending a false signal. A president who backs down in an international crisis after bluffing loses face with his domestic public, and thus has an incentive not to bluff. Another way of viewing costs is in terms of when those costs are paid. Costs could be incurred at the time of sending the signal, or later if the actor goes against the impression sent by the signal. The costs necessary to make a signal believable depend upon context, but all successful signals involve costs.

The relevant literature on signaling primarily deals with the behavior of leaders during a crisis, and is significant because it demonstrates that signals do affect the impressions formed by other states. James Fearon’s work on international crises demonstrates this relationship.

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21 Ibid., 623-628. Smith also argues that audience costs impinge on credibility because leaders that back down are seen as incompetent. Ergo, the need to demonstrate credibility to domestic audiences can make signals of resolve believable.
He argues that traditional forms of diplomacy are not sufficient as a means of communicating information about a given state's intentions—after all, states have strong incentives to lie in order to boost their bargaining position. So too do states make preparations for conflict to induce other states to pursue a non-violent resolution. However, democratically-elected leaders have less flexibility to bluff, given that backing down injures the “national honor” and their own political futures; when they do bluff, they find their bluffs to be more credible.23 The point here is that the best signals paradoxically incur the highest costs. This demonstrates the efficacy of signals, yet also raises questions of whether the costs make signaling “worth it” overall.

Other strands in the literature reveal that the behavior of opposition parties and their relationship with the president can also be a source of signals. Schultz finds that the decision of an opposition party to support the president's foreign policy reflects a belief that the president's policy will succeed, and that he is capable of following through on it.24 Ramsay also finds that opposition parties make judgments of presidential competence that inform their decision to support or oppose his policies.25 These analyses are relevant because the president can convince an opposition party to support his policies by various means, implying that a president can signal intentions to other leaders by reaching out to members of the other party. Martin finds that presidents have often been aware of this fact, and that their decision to seek a treaty or an executive agreement on an issue with another state is primarily determined by the importance of the issue.26 Presidents will seek to arrange a treaty when they want to signal their resolve—their intention to follow through on the terms of the agreement—to other nations because treaties require more effort to get the support of the necessary two-thirds of the Senate. How the

25 Ramsay, 459-86. It is worth noting that while Ramsay and Schultz agree that opposition party behavior sends signals to other states, they disagree on the source of that ability to signal.
president treats congressional opposition provides a source of effective signals.

Yet some argue that the president should not concern himself with issues of reputation. The most developed of these arguments is given by Mercer, who uses behavioral psychology to argue that states cannot predict the reputation that their actions will give them.\(^{27}\) He makes three main points. First, that behavior will not always be interpreted to reflect on character; second, that not all actors will interpret behavior in the same way; and third, that other states will not take that behavior as predictive of future expected behavior. However, Mercer's arguments are perplexing, given that he concludes that allies can gain reputations for irresolution and adversaries can gain reputations for resolution. This would seem to imply that reputations still represent a valid concern for policymakers. It is also unclear how his argument would apply to the field of international cooperation rather than conflict, which is what he focuses on. But most importantly, the use of behavioral psychology is questionable, given that the need to make the very best decisions on rational grounds would overwhelm the more instinctive, irrational, emotional predispositions that he identifies. In any case, the argument against a concern with credibility signaling has not been sufficiently developed.

We need to ask a few questions when determining if a signal is worth sending. First, does it incur sufficient costs to make the signal credible? If the signal costs nothing to send, then it is unlikely that it will push other actors to re-evaluate their impressions of the agent. Second, does it send the right message, and can that message be controlled? One of the critical weaknesses in the literature regarding signaling is that it does little to demonstrate that signals have actually had an effect on other actors. It is possible that a given signal is merely a small tidbit of information that plays a minor role in the actual decision-making process of the actor. Third, is it worth the cost? Sending a credible signal is a poor choice when the costs of sending that signal outweigh the benefits that accrue to the reputation produced by the signal. This final

question is likely to be dependent on context. Sometimes it will be worth it to send the signal, and in other cases not. Answering these questions provides a balanced appraisal of the relative utility of a signal.

This chapter has provided an overview of three concepts: the two-level game, credibility, and signaling. The president must send reliable signals of credibility to win at both levels of the game I have displayed. Signaling does not necessarily make him a good president, but it makes other actors treat him as such. States analyze his behavior hoping to gleam insights into his capabilities and intentions. The president signals to international actors that he is capable of building a coalition behind a treaty they can support; he signals to domestic actors that the treaty will serve American interests. The signals he sends must advance both purposes. Convincing one actor at the expense of the other leaves him even worse off. So too must these signals involve costs or they fail to be convincing at all. If he succeeds in sending the right signals, domestic and international actors will be more willing to accept the treaty that he proposes, and it will pass both negotiation and ratification. The topic of how these signals can be sent forms the premise of my next chapter.
Thus far the president seems to be at the mercy of an intractable dilemma. However, there is hope yet. This next chapter will demonstrate how the president can assert his authority, take control of the two levels of treaty negotiation and ratification, and create lasting commitments to international organizations. Perhaps paradoxically, these objectives are only obtainable if he accepts limitations on his power. I first clarify the variant of Putnam's model that my argument is based upon. I then explain the existing literature on bipartisanship before making the case for bipartisanship as a means of generating signals of credibility. To deepen my argument, I will focus on one particular form of bipartisanship—the appointment of members of the other party to the American delegation for treaty negotiations—that is both theoretically potent as well as an issue in the two case studies I have selected. Finally, I will make specific predictions regarding what we should expect to see if the president acts in a bipartisan fashion and what we should expect to see if he does not.

Let me briefly lay out my model of two-level treaty negotiation and ratification. While it might apply to other forms of international cooperation, here I use it only to illuminate cases involving an international institution that places binding obligations on members. The first level ("negotiation") involves negotiations between the representatives of the United States and those of other nations that generate a proposed charter for the institution. The second level ("ratification") involves Senate debate and voting on the charter. The game has three players: the president, "median ruler", and "swing vote". For simplicity's sake, I use median ruler as a proxy for the set of international leaders that the president negotiates with, and he figuratively represents the center of opinion on the issue. I use swing vote to refer to the senator on the cusp of a two-thirds vote in the Senate, such that if he votes for the charter it passes ratification.
Each of these players has a different conception of the ideal institution, and none have perfect information on the preferences of the other players.

The model I have established solidifies the importance of credibility signaling. Median ruler does not know that the United States plans to abide by the terms of the treaty in the future, or that the president can even get it ratified in the first place. Swing vote does not know if the president has negotiated the best deal possible from their perspective with median ruler. The president must convince both of his credibility, and given that he must win at both levels of the game, must convince both simultaneously. He must broker a deal between the two; he must in some sense sell each on the other player. He can do this by going bipartisan.

The existing literature has failed to provide a comprehensive definition of bipartisanship. In fact, politicians themselves seem split over the meaning of bipartisanship. A study published for the Congressional Research Service provides a loose definition of bipartisan foreign policy: “a policy on which a national consensus can be considered to exist because it has the support of both the President and Congress and both political parties.” However, the same study admits that the term has been used for both “policy and process”, and carries “different meanings from time to time.” Additionall'y, the use of bipartisanship as a political tool only worsens the search for a coherent, objective definition of bipartisanship.

For these reasons, I define bipartisanship in the broadest possible terms. Bipartisanship refers to cooperation between members of both parties on matters of policy. This covers both procedural bipartisanship, such as including members of the other party in policy discussions, and substantive bipartisanship, such as making revisions to a legislative proposal that incorporate the views of members of the other party. It also refers to bipartisanship as an existing political condition—there is cooperation between the two parties—and an active choice

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1 Ellen C. Collier, Bipartisanship and the Making of Foreign Policy: a Historical Survey (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1991) 5. While Collier does not develop a strong definition of bipartisanship, her overview of the practices we commonly call bipartisan is excellent.
made by politicians to “go bipartisan” by reaching across the aisle to consult with members of the other party. Given that I am concerned with the signaling effect of the president's choice to go bipartisan, I focus on this last aspect of bipartisanship. Of course, political strategies can be more or less bipartisan to the degree that they involve engagement with the other party. As I will explain later, the normative significance attached by some to going bipartisan underscores the usefulness of a general definition of bipartisanship, and helps to isolate exactly what my study is most concerned with: the political value of the appearance of going bipartisan.

Historically, levels of partisanship and bipartisanship are perplexing and defy simple explanation. The literature tends to identify the periods following the First World War, the Vietnam War, and the Iraq War as particularly partisan, yet labels the Second World War as the beginning of a foreign policy consensus lasting decades. More recently, the congresses of the Bush and Clinton administrations were both thought to be partisan despite occurring during divided and united government, respectively. As one might expect, much of the debate in the literature consists in determining why some periods were more partisan than others. Explanations of partisanship range from regional affiliations, economic factors, party cohesion in the electorate and realignment, to the presence of international threats. Bipartisanship has clearly proven difficult for scholars to understand, despite playing a role in the generation of foreign policy.

Bipartisanship has always maintained a privileged status in American politics, regardless of confusion over its origins and definition. Nancy Rosenblum's study of “anti-partisanship” in American history is excellent on this point. She begins with an analysis of the skepticism

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towards partisanship found in the views of the founding fathers, then turns to detailing the history of “antiparty movements” in the nineteenth century and “post-party depression” in the twentieth. While she and others have tried to restore respectability to party politics, they acknowledge that the stigmas of dogmatism and bias persist today. One only has to pick up a newspaper to see editorials decrying the demise of bipartisanship in American politics. This paper does not set out to provide a normative account of bipartisanship. Nevertheless, the “moral” character of bipartisanship indicates that presidents seen as acting bipartisan are generally seen as more credible.

My analysis of the literature yields two conclusions. First, none of these studies rule out the importance of presidential leadership with respect to creating bipartisanship—the president acts as the de facto leader of his party and as a co-equal branch of government. Second, the morass of theories on the origins of partisanship makes it clear that no one account dominates the literature and has complete explanatory power. The president at the very least has control over one aspect of bipartisanship: the strategies he chooses and the actions he takes. Only he can decide whether or not he goes bipartisan. The rest of my argument makes it clear that this power is neither insignificant nor arbitrary. The president is capable of controlling the level of bipartisanship within the political system. If anything, our political discourse indicates that he is treated as such, and that his credibility is at stake.

The first test in determining whether or not bipartisanship can act as a signal of credibility involves whether or not it imposes costs on the president. Going bipartisan does so in several respects. First, bipartisanship involves trade-offs. The president must often make revisions to the content of his proposals. He may have to make concessions to particular

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6 However, Meernik, “Presidential Support in Congress,” 585-6 does conclude that presidential popularity is not a factor in bipartisan Congressional support. He suggests that more research is needed to determine whether or not presidential strategy plays a role in “big votes” in Congress, and this paper aims to provide exactly that.
leaders on other issues and expend political capital. Additionally, he can hurt his standing with his base by failing to enact more extreme proposals. Second, bipartisanship imposes costs for future changes of course. It commits the president to working with members of the other party and ensures further political costs if he later chooses to revert to partisanship. Third, bipartisanship gives members of the other party the power to repudiate his advances or criticize them as insufficient. They thus act as third parties making a determination of presidential credibility. For these reasons, bipartisanship imposes costs on the president and can act as an informative signal.

The second test involves whether or not bipartisanship communicates information about the president's type. My arguments on this point will distinguish between how senators (“swing vote”) and international actors (“median ruler”) interpret the president's behavior. But for now, let me say that bipartisanship provides three sorts of information about the president. First, it communicates his intentions. By virtue of its costs it demonstrates how seriously he takes the proposed institution. Second, it communicates his capabilities. His ability to reach out to the other party is a sign of his strength as a political actor. Third, it bolsters the interpretation he is trying to “sell” of his political context. It makes his assessments of domestic politics and international relations more compelling to both parties, which is critical given that all parties have limited information. The advantages of bipartisanship stem from these three considerations.

For swing vote, bipartisanship improves confidence in the president's decision-making and exhibits transparency. The president comes to members of the other party with a willingness to listen to their ideas and implement them in policy. The proposal formulated by the two actors then forms the basis for the American negotiating position when the resident discusses the treaty with other nations. From the perspective of swing vote, the resulting treaty
is more likely to represent the best policy option.\textsuperscript{7} In other words, they have increased confidence in the ability of the president to negotiate an arrangement that is in America's best interests. Going bipartisan is also a public sign that the president has nothing to hide and reduces the uncertainty members have over his motivations. Finally, bringing members of the other party to the table increases their information regarding the preferences of median ruler, giving the president flexibility in negotiating a compromise. Going bipartisan boosts the president's credibility by solving swing vote's information problem.

Bipartisanship also allows the president to use members of the other party as liaisons to the party as a whole. Going bipartisan will obviously involve selecting members of the other party to do business with—usually, more influential or centrist members. These members then sell the treaty to others on their side of the aisle. More importantly, it forces them. As joint creators of the treaty, they share an equal stake in its political success. If the treaty fails, they will be held responsible. Thus, they have a direct incentive to increase support for the bill. Even if swing vote still harbors uncertainty regarding the desirability of the treaty, the presence of endorsements by party leaders partially absolves them of responsibility. If the treaty yields a bad outcome, they can claim that they were simply following bipartisan leadership, and that any electoral costs should not fall on them. In other words, going bipartisan uses members of the other party as third parties who can vouch for the president's credibility.

For international actors, bipartisanship demonstrates that the president is capable of ratifying the treaty in the current political conditions. Median ruler needs a signal that the treaty being considered could feasibly pass the Senate. The presence of discussions between the president and members of the other party increases their confidence that the president's negotiating position represents a ratifiable treaty, which makes cooperation worthwhile. Moreover, it increases the likelihood that the treaty will not have to be returned for further

\textsuperscript{7} David Epstein, "Legislating from Both Sides of the Aisle: Information and the Value of Bipartisan Consensus," \textit{Public Choice} 101.1/2 (1999): 1-22 writes that this is precisely because bipartisan consensus is "informative".
negotiations. It has already been mentioned that the president cannot renege on a bipartisan consensus without incurring domestic costs. Median ruler views this as a sign that the president has a strong incentive to fight for the treaty. For these reasons, bipartisanship increases the president's current credibility with international actors.

Bipartisanship also creates an impression of American resolve. The critical concern for international actors is that the United States will eventually withdraw from its treaty obligations or seek to abuse its position within the institution. It is less likely that a political coalition can be created in the United States around exit, given that members of both parties have a stake in the organization. The institution will survive the next electoral cycle. The willingness of the president to engage the concerns of the other party also reduces the risk that those concerns could metastasize and eventually cause American discontent with the organization. In other words, neither party will demand revisions designed to increase American influence in the future, lest they go against their own public statements. The president is attempting to sell median ruler on the reliability of the American people. This task is made easier when he can claim to represent both parties.

The information that bipartisanship provides increases the number of possible treaty arrangements acceptable to each party and improves the chances of a successful deal. As mentioned earlier, the president's task is to create an agreement acceptable to both parties. In a context of limited information, his credibility is linked to whether or not they will decide that the agreement is acceptable. The more credible the president, the more agreements both parties will be willing to accept. This increases the chance that the set of agreements acceptable to both parties will overlap, yielding a treaty that can pass both negotiation and ratification. In theory, we have resolved the president's credibility problem. Going bipartisan provides reliable information to both domestic and international actors regarding his credibility, and this increase in credibility makes an agreement possible.
This leaves open the question of what form of bipartisanship he should use. Consultation is critical to any interpretation of bipartisanship, and so the logic of my argument holds that any form of bipartisanship will increase the president's credibility and the likelihood of a successful agreement. However, different forms of bipartisanship involve different trade-offs and so could be more or less desirable. It also remains to be seen how the more general arguments I make about bipartisanship apply to specific forms of bipartisanship. Thus, I now turn to a particular form of bipartisanship that has proven to be particularly useful in generating credibility and accomplishing treaty ratification.

One mechanism by which the president can go bipartisan involves appointing members of the other party to the American delegation for treaty negotiations. When negotiating treaties, the president may select dignitaries to act in his stead or to collaborate with him if he chooses to play a role in treaty negotiations himself. The president is able to make appointments at his own discretion. Historically, these figures have included members of the cabinet, members of Congress from both parties, ambassadors, and luminaries on the subject of foreign policy. Negotiators are part of the bargaining process and may interact directly with representatives from other nations. This tactic qualifies as bipartisan because it includes members of the other party in negotiations, and it is also entirely within the president’s control. Appointments thus provide a means of going bipartisan with a long history despite a somewhat undeveloped literature base.

The presence of appointments of members of the other party to treaty delegations also fits nicely with the cases I have selected. In other words, it serves as an appropriate independent variable. Specifically, President Wilson was criticized for failing to take Republicans with him to the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, except for the venerable Harry White, who was neither an elected official nor viewed as particularly partisan. In contrast, Presidents Roosevelt

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and Truman made Senator Arthur Vandenburg of Michigan an integral part of negotiations over
the United Nations. Thus, the three presidents differed in the decision to appoint members of the
other party, as did the prospects for their respective treaties. Decisions regarding appointments
were reflective of each president's overall stance towards bipartisanship, and these cases allow
me to test the importance of bipartisanship as a whole.

Appointments are a version of what some authors call an “endorser”. An endorser is a
third party that provides information about a prospective arrangement to each of the parties in a
negotiation.\(^9\) This may even include taking a stance on the issue. For example, interest groups
provide information to individual legislators about bills and often advocate for or against a given
bill. Traditional game theory acknowledges an actor’s use of third parties to generate credibility
by providing external verification of the actor’s situation.\(^{10}\) In a situation of asymmetric
information, the presence of an endorser can assist an actor in deciding how to act. The
literature on partisanship confirms that individual senators often look to senatorial leadership
when determining how to vote.\(^{11}\) In general, endorsers provide a potent means of credibility
generation.

Appointments function as endorsers with respect to both domestic and international
actors—swing vote and median ruler. Assume that the president takes even one influential
member of the other party currently serving in the Senate with him when he travels to negotiate
a treaty. At the negotiations, that member can make credible claims as to the position of his
party and how they will react to the proposed treaty. Later, during the ratification stage, that
same member can make credible claims as to the nature of the negotiations, the positions of

\(^9\) Milner, 22 as well as 33-144. She notes that the presence of even one “informed signaler” can make cooperation
more likely and may even be necessary.

\(^{10}\) Schelling, 25. He argues that irrevocable commitments to a third party can often be the best mechanism for
demonstrating resolve.

\(^{11}\) Jon R. Bond, and Richard Fleisher, “Congress and the President in a Partisan Era.” Polariszed Politics: Congress
describe the rise of party-line votes and the role played by Republican leadership in the 1990s.
other states, and the behavior of the president. The appointed member, as an actor with a distinct set of incentives, offers an independent assessment of the situation domestically, then internationally. He improves the quality of information for both domestic and international actors.

In addition to acting as a third party, an endorser also acts as a source of credibility by binding the president to a particular course of action. An endorser does not have to approve of the president's policy. While the president can be selective in which members of the other party he chooses to work with, he will be more constrained than if there were no endorser at all. He will have to make concessions desired by the endorser or face the prospect of a judgment that could leave him even worse off with respect to all players. This behavior-modifying effect is known to both domestic and international actors. Their belief in his credibility is bolstered by the presence of powerful incentives against bad behavior. In short, appointing members of the other party to negotiations allows the president to strengthen himself through restraints.

The presence of an endorser resolves the information problem for members of the Senate that is at the heart of the president's credibility problem. Remember that members of the Senate are unsure whether or not the president is being truthful when he claims that a given treaty was the best deal he could get from international actors. The presence of a member of their party at the table for international negotiations improves their confidence that the deal represents the optimum policy outcome from their perspective. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, it allows the endorser to act as a liaison to members of the other party, or minimally, as a scapegoat in the event the treaty goes wrong. The specific advantage of using an appointment as an endorser lies in his proximity to the negotiations themselves. When the president is trying to sell his account of the negotiations, the presence of an endorser makes him more credible, and more likely to obtain the necessary votes in the Senate.

The presence of an endorser demonstrates the difficult domestic situation faced by the president to international actors. Given that a strong negotiator will make claims regarding his
inability to make concessions, international actors are rightfully skeptical that he really does face these sorts of constraints. The presence of a member of the other party at the negotiations can confirm the president’s difficult domestic situation by relating information about the position of the other party, prevailing mood in the Senate and the American public, and the likelihood of ratification. The specific advantage of an endorser is again his proximity to the negotiations. His presence provides a stronger signal that the president is committed to and capable of creating a present and future coalition around treaty success.

In fact, the presence of an endorser can strengthen the president’s hand with respect to negotiations and improve a deal from his perspective. As the representative of a veto institution further from median ruler than the president, he provides a visible reminder of what will happen if negotiations break down. International actors might next find themselves negotiating with the more extreme members of the other party. In other words, the presence of an endorser captures the benefits of the Schelling Conjecture mentioned earlier. He encourages median ruler to expand the set of agreements he will accept. This expanded set is likely to include agreements that are more acceptable to the president than the set that would result were there no endorser at all. In general, the presence of an endorser from the other party can help move both actors towards an equilibrium—one closer to the position of the president than otherwise.

Thus, the president has a specific means at his disposal by which to go bipartisan that can significantly improve the prospects of a deal. The use of an endorser helps to solve the two-level game by sending signals of the president's credibility that make both actors, swing vote and median ruler, more likely to sign off on a particular agreement. It is also entirely within his authority as president to select the right negotiators for the occasion. The particular example of appointments now makes my more general arguments about the usefulness of bipartisanship clear. Bipartisanship helps to resolve the information problem faced by both domestic and international actors by sending reliable signals of the president's credibility.
However, going bipartisan involves the cession of some of the president's authority. He allows members of the other party to gain control over policy outcomes, which limits his flexibility in structuring that treaty, negotiating that treaty with other nations, and revising that treaty later. This could yield a treaty unacceptable to other leaders. For those who believe foreign policymaking should be centered in the executive branch, transferring power to the legislature may represent an abdication of presidential responsibility. Additionally, it allows members of the other party to claim partial credit for a successful treaty, and could elevate ambitious members of the other party to national prominence. For a president seeking to use a foreign policy success to boost his poll numbers, going bipartisan could cut against his political incentives. In short, going bipartisan takes a certain amount of influence away from the president.

Additionally, going bipartisan may require the president to make substantive changes to the nature of the institution. As I will argue shortly, the strength of the League of Nations was one of President Wilson's prime concerns in the fight over treaty ratification. While going bipartisan might yield a successful treaty, the organization it establishes might be watered down to the point of uselessness in order to meet the demands of multiple actors. Such a bill might also fail to convince other nations of America's future resolve. Additionally, meeting a single demand could embolden members of the other party to make further demands and collapse the prospects of a treaty. If the president and members of the other party are sufficiently far apart, then collaboration could yield a treaty too contradictory or inconsistent to accomplish anything. Thus, the president should consider the ramifications of bipartisanship on policy outcomes.\textsuperscript{12}

My argument is that bipartisanship is a tool in the presidential toolbox, and that ultimately he must make the determination of when to employ it. The salience of these objections—authority and substance—will obviously depend on context and the president's preferred form of bipartisanship. Each president may choose to rank particular concerns differently as well.

\textsuperscript{12} In fact, Muirhead 718-724 puts this in more abstract terms: the clash between parties is necessary to generate substantive political debate and strong policy.
However, these objections represent potential trade-offs for the president when he considers whether or not to go bipartisan, and some may be unavoidable given the nature of signaling. While this yields a mixed picture of the strategy of bipartisanship, such a picture is hopefully more realistic. Going bipartisan may or may not be the right decision in any given case, as might appointing members of the other party to treaty delegations.

Here is what we should expect to see in the case studies if my arguments about bipartisanship are correct. The cases of President Wilson and Presidents Roosevelt and Truman are examples of the model described earlier, wherein a treaty establishing an international institution must pass both negotiation and ratification in a context of disagreement and limited information. Presidents Roosevelt and Truman preferred bipartisanship and cross-party appointments while President Wilson did not.

First, we should expect to see higher degrees of support for the United Nations at both levels of the game. In the negotiation stage, representatives of other nations should be more willing to make concessions to the United States and sign off on a prospective treaty. In the ratification stage, members of the Senate should demand fewer changes to the treaty and vote in greater numbers for ratification. While bipartisanship may not necessarily make a successful treaty a slam dunk, it should increase the prospects of a deal.

Second, we should see the consequences of low information in the case of President Wilson. Lacking endorsers or even simply reliable signals of credibility, members of the other party and the representatives of other nations should express greater levels of uncertainty regarding his capabilities and motivations.

Third, Presidents Roosevelt and Truman should reap the benefits of improved information. If bipartisanship does provide signals of credibility, then they should face less senatorial and international uncertainty. Moreover, the Republicans they chose to work with should act as liaisons to other members of the Republican Party and play strong roles in the
debate over the United Nations.

Given these predictions, I place primary emphasis on historical analysis of these two case studies. Clearly, President Wilson rejected bipartisanship and failed, while Presidents Roosevelt and Truman preferred bipartisanship and succeeded. However, only a close study of the negotiation and ratification stages can confirm the causal mechanisms that I isolate. In other words, merely studying the voting records in the Senate for each treaty would beg the larger question that I pose of “how?” I will focus on the arguments that were made in the debates over each treaty to gleam insights into how each president’s signals were received. Where possible, I will use the scholarship on each president to characterize their own views on the usefulness of bipartisanship as a strategy. This should also help to answer a related historical question that has plagued the scholarship over these presidents: did President Roosevelt truly learn a lesson from President Wilson’s failure? Only the historical record will tell.
CHAPTER THREE
PRESIDENT WILSON AND THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

“Is it true that the invalid in the White House really strangled the treaty to death with his own enfeebled hands?”
Thomas A. Bailey

Such has often been the question for those that have studied President Woodrow Wilson's behavior in the fight for the Treaty of Versailles and the Covenant of the League of Nations. Wilson's behavior did cause the demise of the League in the Senate, but not because he was politically weak and incapacitated. It was instead the result of his influence as president as he guided the Democratic Party through a debate that became increasingly polarized and partisan as it proceeded. As such, President Wilson’s failed attempt to establish the League is an appropriate case for testing the theory I have developed. It involves the fight for an international institution at two levels—the Paris Peace Conference and the ratification process in the Senate—where the central issue became the strength of the collective security commitment embodied in Article X. As I will demonstrate, Wilson decided to go partisan and eschew compromise. This strategic choice boded ill for the prospects of the League.

Explanations involving systemic and individual factors have been offered for the failure of the United States to join the League, but none are entirely persuasive. Some have focused on the composition of the Senate and the interests of the Republican and Democratic parties, as well as the influence of political figures like Wilson and Henry Cabot Lodge within their parties.

Wilson's personality and his physical condition have drawn particular interest as factors that explain his decision-making and failure to compromise. Others have focused on the nature of the agreement itself, arguing that the notion of collective security had not been fully developed yet or that Wilson's ideas were simply too far ahead of the American public. It is generally agreed by historians that Wilson's role in the fight should not be overlooked. My analysis will incorporate pieces of each of these approaches, as they illuminate dynamics of the treaty fight and Wilson's decision-making but do not resolve the question on their own.

I argue that Wilson's strategic choices precipitated the failure of the League in the Senate. He chose to hold fast to his ideals and reject potential compromises, rather than engage in extensive consultation with members of the Republican Party. In a context of limited information regarding the nature of the League covenant, this decision alienated the "mild reservationist" Republicans and allowed Lodge to shape opinion within the Republican Party. Wilson came to be seen as a partisan political figure working with international powers to betray American interests. In that light, it is understandable that Republican senators would work to constrain his foreign policy. Additionally, had Wilson worked with Republicans, his claims about the strength of American commitments would have been more credible to British, French, and other policymakers, increasing his flexibility at the negotiating table. In short, Wilson failed to solve his credibility problem, win both stages of the game, and accomplish treaty ratification.


Setting the Stage

After the elections of 1918, Wilson found himself beset by domestic political opposition from an emboldened Republican Party. In the Senate, Republicans maintained a 49-47 majority, which gave them organizational control; they installed Lodge as unofficial majority leader and Chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. Given the two-thirds requirement for treaty ratification, this ensured that some Republicans would need to vote for the Treaty of Versailles for it to be ratified. Yet the League seemed to be an idea on which both parties could agree. Indeed, one of the puzzles for scholarship on the League has been how an enormously popular institution could fail.\(^5\) In 1915, influential Republicans led by former President Taft founded the League to Enforce Peace, which continually advocated for an institution like that championed by Wilson.\(^6\) Wilson took this as a sign that political alignments in the Senate did not reflect popular will on the League question, and that the Senate would bend to his will if he pushed hard enough.\(^7\)

Wilson’s weakness with respect to the Senate was contrasted by America’s international strength. American economic and military power only grew as the nations of Europe fought during the First World War. Britain and France began to view the United States as a potential “offshore balancer”—a powerful third party that could act to resolve European disputes.\(^8\) Of course, the twin perils of abandonment and domination worried European policymakers. Would the United States use its strength to meddle in European affairs for its own gain? Or would it instead reject the entanglements decried by Washington and retreat into isolationism? In any

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5 Cooper, 424-5.
8 Ikenberry, *After Victory*, 118.
case, the time seemed right for a more authoritative American role in global affairs. The nature of this role formed the central issue in debates over the League of Nations on both sides of the Atlantic.

Wilson's views on the subject of international relations and presidential powers with respect to foreign policy have been the subject of much scholarship. The common theme is that Wilson was an idealist who sought to use American power to resolve the conflicts of the Old World. His earliest writings on the League in 1914 reveal a hope for “an association of the nations, all bound together for the protection of the integrity of each, so that any one nation breaking from this bond will bring upon herself war; that is to say, punishment, automatically”.9 On the subject of Washington's writings on entanglements, Wilson argued in 1916 that Washington did not mean “that we are to avoid the entanglements of the world,” for “nothing that concerns the whole world can be indifferent to us.”10 His first speech to the Paris Peace Conference developed this theme further by stating that the United States needed to advance the cause of peace without becoming embroiled in the affairs of Europe.11 Yet he also argued in his *Congressional Government* that the president need listen to the opinions of the Senate and both parties when constructing his foreign policy.12 In short, Wilson saw the president as the representative of the whole country—a country that needed to exert its influence on a global scale for the global good embodied in the Fourteen Points.

However, the domestic and international political context made pressing for these ideals difficult. Sentiment in the Republican Party favored restrictions on America's role as a global peacemaker, although not all Republican senators were isolationists. Republican senators

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12 Hogan, 21. Incidentally, one of the interesting contrasts for scholars has involved Wilson’s views as a professor of political science and his views as President. Once he reached the Oval Office, it appears that he took a much stronger view of the powers of the Presidency.
clearly thought public opinion was on their side.\textsuperscript{13} The sorts of commitments that international powers wanted to extract from the United States were at odds with the Republican insistence that the New World not become the pawn of the Old. It is also important to note that Wilson was considerably more idealistic than other international leaders. In fact, the British and the French saw the League as a means of crafting an American security commitment to Europe. Given these factors, “Wilson was caught in a dilemma: he needed to give the league some teeth in order to make it matter as the organizer of the postwar order, but not too many teeth, because it would lose the support of the allies and the American senate.”\textsuperscript{14}

In response to these conditions, Wilson chose a particular strategy: to hold to his ideals, double-down on partisanship, and in the end, refer the question of the League to the American people in the elections of 1920. Nor was he afraid to admit it. During a meeting of the Democratic National Conference in 1919, Wilson labeled himself an “uncompromising partisan”.\textsuperscript{15} Wilson eschewed compromise at three specific points in the League fight. First, he did not discuss the League with Republicans before traveling to Paris, nor did he take any influential Republicans with him as delegates. Second, he refused to consider substantive changes to the Treaty of Versailles in the form of either amendments or reservations, beyond those suggested by Taft and Root in 1919. Third, he rejected the compromise resolution of ratification incorporating the Lodge reservations, which represented the final chance for the League in the Senate. Wilson rejected the strategy that I have posed in this paper.

Wilson’s strategy was shaped by his assessment of his domestic conditions and his particular ideological leanings. Wilson believed he had a public mandate, and he said so in his speeches. For example, at an address at the New York Metropolitan Opera House in 1919, Wilson declared that “the first thing I am going to tell the people on the other side of the water is

\textsuperscript{13} Taft wrote a letter to the President remarking that “Republican Senators will certainly defeat ratification of the treaty [without reservations] because public opinion will sustain them.” Letter quoted in Taft, 300.

\textsuperscript{14} Ikenberry, After Victory, 146.

that an overwhelming majority of the American people is in favor of the League of Nations." He was confident that if ratification failed in 1919, the American people would turn out the stubborn Republicans and he would gain a second chance. Moreover, Wilson saw himself as an uncommonly gifted speaker who could make the case for the League. So too did Wilson believe that he was right on the issue. In his view, the horrors of the First World War mandated an institution that could stop future wars, and he would accept no compromises with respect to its character. In other words, Wilson was a strategic actor. He had a firm conception of America's global role, and he believed that the best chance for implementing it in policy did not require making concessions.

Additionally, Wilson's strategy was mandated by what he thought necessary for the Treaty of Versailles to receive international support. He had two concerns in addition to those rooted in his ideals: that bending to the Republicans would be internationally embarrassing, and that any compromises would only invite further Republican objections. During a bedside meeting with minority leader Gilbert Hitchcock on November 17, 1919, Wilson argued that weakening Article X “cuts the heart out of the Treaty; I could not stand for those changes because it would humiliate the United States before all of the allied countries.” Even worse, those countries might reject the new arrangement entirely. Additionally, he had no guarantee that Republicans would accept the Treaty if he approved the reservations they desired. The multitude of proposed reservations and the behavior of the “irreconcilables” opposed to any agreement made their support seem unlikely. In short, Wilson thought that compromising would ruin all he had sought to achieve at the Paris Peace Conference.

16 Ibid., 97.
17 Hogan, 19.
18 Cooper, 260.
The First Level: The Paris Peace Conference

The Paris Peace Conference opened on January 18, 1919, and Wilson outlined his model for the League at the plenary session of the conference on January 25. He declared the League to be “the keystone of the whole program” and an essential element in both the resolution of the current war and the prevention of future global conflicts.\textsuperscript{20} Afterwards, Prime Minister Lloyd George of Britain and the French statesman Léon Bourgeois (later to become President of the League Council) issued enthusiastic statements of support. In reality, President Wilson had been meeting with British and French representatives for weeks to hammer out the details of a proposed covenant to be presented at the Conference. During the following month, the allies continued to draft a covenant and Wilson presented the result personally at the session on February 14. Continued negotiations in March and April following the president’s return to the United States yielded a completed Treaty of Versailles, signed on June 28 by most of the relevant states. This timeline is meant to highlight that Wilson spent most of his time arranging a covenant with the other great Allied powers. He did so at great difficulty and expenditure of time. However, he won the first stage of the treaty fight with a successful negotiation session.

Winning required convincing British and French politicians that the League represented the beginning of an American security commitment to Europe. British politicians were interested in an international organization akin to the Concert of Europe that would serve to maintain stability and Anglo-American cooperation.\textsuperscript{21} In fact, the British had begun formalizing the prospect of a League long before Wilson, with the generation of a “peace league” scheme by

\textsuperscript{20} Ambrosius, 67.

Lord Cecil in 1916 that was circulated through the British government and eventually brought to Lloyd George in 1917. This plan formed the basis for the more concrete proposal presented in the Phillimore Committee report on March 20, 1918. Wilson’s reluctance to discuss the League during the war was meant to prevent it from being seen as an alliance of the great powers, but it left the British hesitant to adopt a sweeping idea of “collective security”.

Disagreements between American and British statesmen were responsible for the vagueness of the collective security commitment in Article X. The British voiced concerns echoed later by Senate Republicans regarding the likelihood that such an obligation would infringe on national sovereignty and run counter to British strategy.\(^22\) Lord Balfour’s statements in 1916 characterize the British perspective on the league: “To trust in collective international agreements to resist aggression would lull the nation into a false sense of security and court ultimate disaster...[but] if the United States associated themselves with such a venture the project took on a much more promising prospect.”\(^23\) The League was seen as a means, not an end. Persistent doubts about the resolve of the United States led the British to accept the only means possible of guaranteeing an American commitment: the obligation codified in Article X.

French politicians wanted a guarantee of military assistance in the event of another German attack, as well as recognition of borders favorable to France.\(^24\) Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau worried that increased Anglo-American cooperation could isolate France on the continent.\(^25\) For that reason, the French were hoping for a more ironclad security commitment than the British or even the Americans, proposing an international military force as well as a separate defense pact between the United States and France. Wilson rejected the former, arguing that “no nation will consent to control”, and he planned to negotiate the latter after

\(^{22}\) Egerton, “The Lloyd George Government,” 419-44.
\(^{23}\) Ibid., 424
\(^{25}\) Ambrosius, 71-76. In fact, Wilson appealed personally to the French to try to convince them of American resolve.
securing the League in the Senate.26 The result of these negotiations is put best by John Ikenberry: “the guarantees were too vague and uncertain to satisfy French concerns about its security, but also too ambitious and entangling to reassure American politicians that their country’s own independence and sovereignty were not threatened.”27 The need to convince the French of American resolve yielded an arrangement that the Senate could not accept.

Other states, including a defeated Germany, were merely hoping for a seat at the table. France and Britain had clear interests in restricting German participation in the League, and Wilson vacillated on the question of whether Germany needed to become fully democratic and disarmed to join the League.28 Italy and Japan were hoping for recognition of their territorial claims in Fiume and Shantung respectively, as well as pieces of former German possessions; Japan also hoped for incorporation of a racial equality clause. Smaller states agitated for greater representation on the League council against the “Big Four” powers.29 Wilson sought to mollify the claims of smaller states for a League that could redress unjust borders without weakening the League’s support among the great powers, which complicated the nature and purpose of intervention as structured in Articles X and XI of the Covenant.30 Progressive Senator Robert La Follette darkly observed that “a 'secret conclave' at the peace conference had taken all the decisions, then created a 'league of nations to stand guard over the swag.'”31

This section has hopefully made three points clear. First, the result of the Paris Peace Conference was a treaty forced to accommodate the interests of both great powers and smaller states, and which was thus laden with confusion. Did Article X mean that state borders were

26 Cooper, 52, quoted at a plenary session of the Paris Peace Conference.  
27 Ikenberry, _After Victory_, 144.  
28 Schwabe, 3-22. His changes in policy have been attributed to the strong influence of his advisors.  
permanently locked in, even if a group had a legitimate claim to self-determination? Did it require states to intervene, and which states controlled the League's decision to take action? Moreover, Wilson was reluctant to change the agreement he had spent so long negotiating. Second, concerns over the credibility of American commitments shaped the nature of the League's most important provisions. Wilson might have been able to get concessions on other issues if he had been able to demonstrate American resolve. Third, the closed and distant nature of negotiations in Paris fueled insidious rumors of American submission to the whims of Europe and about Wilson's weakness as an executive. Wilson won the first stage of the game but limped into the second stage.

The Second Level: Senate Debate on the Treaty of Versailles

Wilson was not as successful during the Senate debate. He personally submitted the Treaty of Versailles to the Senate on July 10, 1919, and over the course of a year it was debated at length by the Senate. The Senate voted on the treaty without reservations once on November 19 and with the Lodge reservations twice, on November 19 as well as on March 20 of the following year. As puzzling as it is that such a popular League could go down to defeat, it is equally puzzling that after such a contentious Senate fight it could come so close to succeeding. The final vote on the treaty with the Lodge reservations was 57-39, seven votes short of ratification, after Democrats deserted Wilson en masse in a last ditch effort to approve some form of the treaty. Party divisions had hardened during Senate consideration as a result of Wilson's strategy of partisanship, except at the very end. The final voting record reveals that the Treaty of Versailles could have succeeded had Wilson seen fit to compromise on the issue of

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reservations.

The Republican Party, led by Lodge, managed to unify against Wilson’s interpretation of America’s collective security obligations and exploit his perceived partisanship. Before the President even submitted the treaty to the Senate, Lodge and Senate Republicans were working furiously to oppose his efforts. On March 3, Lodge obtained the signatures of thirty-seven Republican senators for a “Round-Robin” resolution holding that the United States ought to reach a peace settlement before considering the League. It is curious that Lodge moved from his position in 1915, when he called for a “united nations determined to uphold [peace] and prevent war”, to his position of opposition during the Senate debate.33 Historians generally agree that Lodge shifted in his views for three reasons: a desire to prevent Wilson from being seen as “the maker of peace”, the need to unify the Republican Party, and an honest ideological conviction regarding the inadvisability of collective security.34

The Republican Party split into three factions on the subject of the League: the mild reservationists, the strong reservationists (of which Lodge was one), and the irreconcilables. The mild reservationists looked favorably on the League, and wanted to make only minor revisions in the form of reservations if any.35 The strong reservationists were similar, except that they preferred amendments that codified the objections of the United States in the treaty. The irreconcilables led by senators like William Borah and Hiram Johnson—who once referred to the president as “naive and self-deluded”—played the strongest role in Lodge’s thinking by threatening to desert the Republican Party over the League.36 In one particularly telling incident,

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34 See Ralph A. Stone, The Irreconcilables; the Fight against the League of Nations (Lexington: University of Kentucky, 1970) as well as Mervin, 204-211. Additionally, I find that Lodge’s own papers help to clarify his outlook, and they can be found in Henry Cabot Lodge, The Senate and the League of Nations, (New York: C. Scribner’s Sons, 1925).
35 Margulies, 1-46 provides the best description of the origins of “reservationism” in the Senate.
the irreconcilables pulled Lodge out of a compromise meeting late in the League fight to berate him for considering an agreement with Democrats. In any case, Lodge’s success at unifying the Republican Party was a result of Wilson’s refusal to compromise, as it left no room for Republican moderates at the table.

The Democratic Party followed the lead of the president, generally eschewing compromise until late in the Senate debate. Wilson’s representative in the Senate was Hitchcock, who followed Wilson’s lead and refused to contemplate anything more than interpretive reservations to the treaty. So too did Senate Democrats feel tremendous pressure to toe the party line, although many of them would have approved a reasonable slate of reservations. Democrats represented a loyal source of votes for Wilson until his stroke left him incapacitated and unable to direct opinion within the Democratic Party.

Wilson’s strategy hardened party lines and rendered ratification unlikely. In fact, the mild reservationists behaved exactly as my theory predicts. They deferred to the influence of Lodge and the Republican Party orthodoxy because they lacked credible Republican endorsements for the president’s proposals. Their doubts regarding the president’s willingness to compromise forced them to desert their party with little prospect of a deal. The closeness of the final vote in the Senate reflects how sizable the mild reservationists were, and their early attempts to reach a compromise demonstrate their earnest willingness to seek approval of the treaty. As Margulies argues, “They did more to accomplish ratification than did President Wilson.” However, Wilson’s strategy of partisanship caused others to view the treaty fight in strikingly partisan terms.

The international community paid attention to the League fight in the Senate, and statements by officials indicate that they preferred a compromise to losing the treaty. One overlooked factor in scholarship on the Treaty of Versailles is the degree to which domestic

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37 Helbich, 591.
38 Margulies, xiii.
actors other than the president and international actors attempted to send signals to each other. In December 1918, Taft sent a letter to Lloyd George and Clemenceau arguing that “America should act not as an umpire between our allies and our enemies”, and other Republicans also contacted British and French policymakers.³⁹ Towards the end of the League fight in the Senate, the former British Foreign Secretary Viscount Grey sent a letter arguing that the British would accept reservations in exchange for ratification, hoping to force Wilson's hand.⁴⁰ In fact, the British and French were aware that Wilson faced a contentious domestic political situation and strove to avoid taking sides between the president and the Senate during the Conference, “lest they incur the wrath of one branch or the other.”⁴¹ These statements reflect the tenuous status of Wilson's credibility. Neither domestic nor international actors viewed him as capable of negotiating an acceptable agreement.

In the end, the treaty failed in the Senate, and Wilson was politically as well as physically incapacitated. His attempt to pressure the Senate into accepting the treaty via a public speaking tour failed. The stress of the tour is thought to have precipitated the stroke that left him bedridden for the remainder of his term.⁴² Whether he would have accepted a compromise or pressed even harder for his ideals if he had been physically capable is a debatable point, but in any case, his attempt to refer the League question to the people in 1920 was disastrous. Wilson's partisanship caused moderate Republicans and even Democrats to have serious doubts about his credibility, and led international actors to try to circumvent his obstinacy. As a result, Wilson's league was doomed.

Where Did Wilson Go Wrong?

³⁹ Cooper, 38.
⁴⁰ Ambrosius, 233.
⁴¹ Kurt Wimer, "Woodrow Wilson's Plans to Enter the League of Nations through an Executive Agreement," The Western Political Quarterly 11.4 (1958): 810. Additionally, Wimer makes an argument much like that made by Lisa Martin on the subject of executive agreements. Wilson decided to pursue a treaty to communicate resolve and strength to European leaders.
⁴² Hogan, 138-163 argues that Wilson was exhausted in the aftermath of his Pueblo speech.

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Wilson's strategy failed to yield a ratified Treaty of Versailles. His decision rested on two false assumptions that ensured its failure. First, he wrongly thought that the American people would turn against the Republican Party and give him a second chance. While polling on the subject of the League is virtually non-existent, most historians now think that the American people would have accepted a League with reservations. Moreover, it is unclear that they perceived the 1920 elections as a referendum on the League. Second, Wilson erroneously predicted that other states would refuse the treaty with reservations proposed by the Senate. As the analysis above reveals, Britain and France would have accepted reservations if they still provided some semblance of an American commitment to Europe. Wilson was a rational actor, but he reasoned incorrectly.

Yet he also failed to grasp that opposition to the League was the result of an information problem that his partisanship only exacerbated. As I have stated earlier, this information problem is at the root of the president’s credibility dilemma because limited information can yield adverse judgments of his credibility. Wilson did not go bipartisan and his credibility suffered as my theory predicts. Somehow, he managed to be viewed as a bully by other states and a patsy by the Senate. Other states accepted a collective security arrangement that the Senate would not accept in hopes of guaranteeing an American security commitment. Republican senators that could have supported the League saw Wilson as a partisan ideologue at best and a pawn of the Old World at worst. At the core of the failure of the Treaty of Versailles rests Wilson's inability to demonstrate credibility to multiple actors at once.

Domestic objections to the league ranged from the bizarre to the legitimate, but all had at their root an information problem. Multiple scholars have acknowledged that doubts and

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43 Hogan, 171. He cites the fact that the attendance at Wilson’s rallies was likely inflated by people who merely wished to see the president. Additionally, major newspapers claimed that the American people were supportive of passing the treaty with reservations.

44 Ambrosius, 123. During the Paris Peace Conference, Lloyd George remarked to the president that there was a widespread feeling that “Europe was being bullied by the United States of America”. [43]
questions about the nature of the League persisted despite Wilson's attempts to “educate” the public. Wilson's obfuscating regarding moral versus legal obligations failed to resolve the confusion, and many Americans were unsure regarding exactly what the United States was getting into. This allowed Republicans to paint the treaty as a submission to the “temptations” of the Old World and even a conspiracy by the banking sector. In short, Wilson's claims about the nature of the League were not credible. Questions about the nature of collective security and intervention were left unanswered, and the novelty of these ideas only exacerbated the lack of clarity. In a context of limited information, Wilson was not seen as a credible negotiator.

Limited information shaped the negotiations in Paris as well. Both Britain and France worried about the prospects for future American involvement in Europe and the repercussions that would have for the stability of the continent. For that reason, they saw the League as a means of locking in American involvement in a form that they could control. As the fight dragged on in the Senate, they doubted Wilson's ability to accomplish ratification and build a coalition behind the League and international involvement. These concerns limited Wilson's influence in the crafting of the League Covenant and weakened his standing as the Senate considered the treaty. In short, Wilson failed to send credible signals of resolve.

Is there another strategy that Wilson could have taken? He could have gone bipartisan. If he had, the prospects for the League would have been much brighter. Such an argument is risky because it involves venturing into the realm of historical counterfactuals that are always susceptible to unknown factors. Nevertheless, the historical record indicates that such a move could have succeeded. At the very least, the statements and actions of actors at the time reveal a preference for bipartisanship inasmuch as they rejected the strategy of partisanship. For example, had Wilson consulted with Republicans on the subject of the League prior to traveling

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46 Stone, 165; Ambrosius, 148. Ambrosius writes that the irreconcilables were convinced of the likelihood of a banker conspiracy.
to Paris, it might have dramatically changed the nature of the fight. His claims to represent the entire United States at the conference would have been more credible to international actors, improving their confidence that he could broker a commitment. During Senate ratification, it would have been harder for the opposition to paint Wilson as a rogue politician, and influential Republicans would have had a vested interest in the success of the League. If Wilson had gone bipartisan from the outset, the United States might have joined the League of Nations.

Legitimate consultation and bipartisan outreach after the Paris Peace Conference would have also increased the chances of ratification. Wilson did engage in meetings with Republican senators after his presentation of the treaty to the Senate, but these meetings failed to change opinions because Wilson refused to compromise on the subject of reservations. In short, he did not incur costs. He did not agree to adjust his behavior, and the decision to meet was relatively low risk to begin with. He did not yield any of his authority with respect to treaty negotiations, and in fact claimed that the president's authority was paramount, counter to his earlier positions on the separation of powers. As a result, the Republican-led Senate sought to limit his authority by forcing him to agree to reservations. To be sure, Wilson could not have gotten everything he wished for in the League that would have emerged, but the best chance of obtaining an acceptable policy involved bipartisanship.

However, Wilson's central mistake was his failure to include credible Republicans in the American delegation to the Paris Peace Conference. First, the delegates he did bring—Lansing, Bliss, House, and even White, despite his erstwhile status as a Republican—were widely seen as in his pocket and neither they nor the Democratic supporters of the League could serve as credible endorsers to Republicans considering how to vote. White's selection is interesting because it suggests sensitivity to bipartisanship, yet White was attacked as a patsy who would

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47 Cooper, 121-123.
48 Hogan, 26-60. Hogan devotes an entire chapter to refuting the idea that Wilson was a demagogue, and claims that Wilson saw the President as the representative of the entire nation who ought to use his rhetorical skills to shape public debate.
not oppose Wilson on behalf of the Republican Party.\textsuperscript{49} Wilson surrendered an early opportunity to resolve the information problem faced by senators. Second, the failure to include Republican senators encouraged Republicans to cast the treaty fight as an issue of senatorial prerogative; Lodge himself was reportedly infuriated and made the issue a talking point.\textsuperscript{50} In other words, not taking Republican senators hurt Wilson's credibility. As a second-term president, he did not need to worry about elevating a potential Republican presidential candidate to national prominence. Cross-party appointments were an opportunity for Wilson to burnish his credibility, but in some sense they were a necessity.

Wilson had several options among influential Republicans that could have played the role of a credible, yet manageable, endorser. Outside of the Senate, Elihu Root was a Nobel Peace Prize-winning former Republican Secretary of State who had spoken highly of efforts to resolve conflicts with international law. In fact, late in the treaty fight he had attempted to broker a compromise between Democrats and Republicans, but was repelled by Wilson's partisanship and retracted his proposal.\textsuperscript{51} Had Wilson sought his counsel, it might have driven other Republicans to follow Root's lead. In terms of senators, Wilson was perhaps rightfully concerned that not selecting Lodge would be a slap in the face to the Republican Party.\textsuperscript{52} However, he would have been able to manage Lodge in Paris, or had Lodge refused the offer, selected other senators of his choosing. Any of the mild reservationist senators could have acted as outreach to the rest of the faction and added substantial credibility to Wilson's efforts. Wilson did not lack for possible endorsers.

Bipartisanship in delegation appointments would have led to a drastically different League fight in Paris and in the Senate. It would have bolstered Wilson's ability to claim that he

\textsuperscript{49} Stone, 34-35.
\textsuperscript{50} Holt, 27-35 and Haynes, 12-18 argue that this contributed to the partisan heat of the treaty debate; Mervin, 213 and Lodge, 166 confirm Lodge's personal feelings on the subject. In fact, Lodge remarks in his account that "Mr. Wilson was devoured by the desire for power" (212).
\textsuperscript{52} Cooper, 34-35.
represented the United States, increasing British and French confidence in American commitments and reducing Senate doubts regarding his trustworthiness. The presence of Republicans at the Conference would have given Wilson credit for the multitude of times that he resisted the demands of the Old World and defended American interests. In turn, the treaty that emerged from the Paris Peace Conference would have been clearer and closer to what the Senate would accept and the range of acceptable proposals itself would have been larger. Elevating Republican figures other than Lodge would have ruined his attempts to unify the Republican Party against Wilson and put Lodge's own partisanship in stark contrast. Appointing credible Republicans to the conference delegation would have been no small alteration.

In other words, the failure of the League of Nations was the result of President Wilson's strategic choices. Wilson had viable options that he did not pursue because of his idealism and overconfidence in his political and oratorical skills. He selected the course of action that he thought best for achieving his ideological goals, but he incorrectly analyzed his domestic political situation. Going partisan killed the League.

The Aftermath

Suffice to say that the President Harding-led Republican Party did not consider the Treaty of Versailles after their victories in 1920. Harding declared the election of 1920 a "referendum for isolation" and confirmed the worst fears of British and French policymakers.\(^{53}\) He signed the Knox-Porter Act on July 21, 1921, crafting a separate peace with the Central Powers. The United States shifted to isolationism for the remainder of the twenties and much of the thirties, until President Franklin Delano Roosevelt used the looming specter of war abroad to push for Lend-Lease and "short-of-war" policies. Nevertheless, the United States only became

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\(^{53}\) Cooper, 396.
directly involved in the Second World War when it was attacked by Japan on December 7, 1941. The failure of the League of Nations was the beginning of America’s isolationist foreign policy.

The failures of the League in the twenties and thirties led many to wonder, “what if?” It was powerless to prevent the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931, and the ineffectual resolution it did manage to pass precipitated the Japanese withdrawal from the League. Nor could the League stop the imperialist ambitions of Germany and Italy. These events lend credence to Wilson’s statements on the League, especially his claim that “I can predict with absolute certainty that within another generation there will be another world war if the nations of the world do not concert the method by which to prevent it.”54 The lack of American involvement certainly contributed to the weakness of the League and tarnished its legacy. However, the enduring legacy of the League proved to be the lessons that it left for Presidents Roosevelt and Truman when they turned to the fight for the United Nations.

54 Wilson, 201.
CHAPTER FOUR

PRESIDENTS ROOSEVELT AND TRUMAN AND THE UNITED NATIONS

“[Roosevelt] dreamed of going down in history as the President who had succeeded where Woodrow Wilson failed in making the United States the great bastion...while the forge of war was still hot enough to fuse nations together.”

Anne O'Hare McCormick

“Jesus Christ and General Jackson.”

Harry S. Truman, an hour after Roosevelt's death

The fight for the United Nations consumed the final years of Roosevelt's presidency and the first year of Truman's, much like Wilson found himself embroiled in controversy over the League of Nations towards the end of his own. However, Roosevelt and Truman succeeded where Wilson had failed. For better or for worse, the United Nations Headquarters still sits on the East River in Manhattan today. The battle for the United Nations Charter provides an appropriate case for demonstrating the theory I have set out. It involved a formal conference in San Francisco followed by Senate ratification, and the issues that emerged at both stages mirror those of the League fight. In short, the success of the United Nations hinged on whether or not it could gain the support of the Great Powers necessary to ensure security in the post-war order. For that reason, Presidents Roosevelt and Truman chose to go bipartisan to demonstrate their credibility to both domestic and international actors and gain American acceptance.

I find that the scholarship on the creation of the United Nations has been “doomed by success.” The failure of the League led to a proliferation of theories for its demise, yet from reading the literature one would think that the success of the United Nations was inevitable. Two sorts of explanations have been provided. The first and most common treats the United Nations

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2 Ibid., 2.
as a necessary response to the horrors of the Second World War, produced by the political circumstances that emerge “when [leaders] still have freshly in mind the consequences of such a conflict.”

However, the First World War was nearly as destructive as the second, and the League of Nations still failed to gain American membership. The second makes reference to the extraordinary political skill of Roosevelt, Truman, and their advisors. While this explanation is slightly more compelling, it does not pay close attention to why they succeeded. In other words, neither explanation distills lessons that could apply outside of the particular case of the United Nations.

My account diverges both in terms of history and theory. First, I argue that the success of the United Nations was not a foregone conclusion. As Roosevelt himself claimed, “Anybody who thinks that isolationism is dead in this country is crazy. As soon as this war is over, it may well be stronger than ever.” The fight for the United Nations was, quite literally, a fight. Second, Roosevelt and Truman succeeded by reaching out to members of the Republican Party, and relied on bipartisan consultation as well as appointments. However, they staked their credibility on Republicans like Senator Arthur Vandenberg, who claimed at the end of the fight that “Everybody now seems to agree that I could have beaten the United Nations Charter if I had taken the opposition tack.” Whether or not increased credibility justified the sacrifices that had to be made to win Republican support is a debatable point.

The structure of this chapter is unique, given that the United Nations fight involved two Presidents rather than one. As such, I devote a section to “what went right” in the United Nations fight, rather than “what went wrong”: the substantial bipartisan groundwork laid by

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4 This is the argument made by Townsend Hoopes and Douglas Brinkley, *FDR and the Creation of the U.N.* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1997) as well as Schlesinger, *Act of Creation.* While the argument itself is less than compelling, the historical accounts provided by both authors are irreplaceable and I have relied upon them for background information for much of this chapter.


President Roosevelt prior to his death that enabled President Truman to win at the two formal stages of the game. In some sense, the form of this chapter mirrors the larger point I hope to make. Attention to bipartisanship from the very beginning of the fight for an international organization makes lengthy analysis of “what went wrong” unnecessary.

Setting the Stage

The fight for the United Nations differed in several respects from the fight for the League of Nations, as did the two organizations themselves. This time, proponents of an organization drew on stronger ties between the United States and the democracies of Europe. Within this relationship, the relative economic and military strength of the United States allowed it to dominate. For that reason, the organization that emerged took the form of an “open and plural western order”, tied to a set of economic institutions meant to guarantee free trade and stability in the post-war environment.\(^7\) The nature of liberal hegemony entailed that the United States commit to an institution with rules, and these rules had been refined by the experience of the League fight. In fact, some scholars believe that the United Nations Charter embodied some of the Lodge reservations from the Senate debate over the League.\(^8\) In any case, the United Nations and League fights were similar in one crucial respect: they both attempted to create an organization that could meet the task of providing for collective security.

Historians generally agree that the lessons Roosevelt and Truman took from the fall of Wilson “decisively influenced” their particular strategy.\(^9\) As the Democratic vice presidential candidate in 1920, Roosevelt had already experienced the heat of a treaty fight in the Senate.

\(^7\) Ikenberry, *After Victory*, 168 and 201.
\(^9\) Hoopes and Brinkley, 207.
Roosevelt delivered hundreds of speeches in defense of the League during his candidacy, yet he harbored doubts over the wisdom of Wilson's approach and the structure of the League. His rhetoric cast League membership as a “practical necessity” to guarantee world peace and American security, and privately he approved of the compromises that would have been necessary to guarantee ratification. At the same time, the weakness of the League and its inability to act left Roosevelt unsatisfied.\[10\] Given that the fight for the United Nations involved similar concerns regarding American abandonment, Roosevelt committed to constructing an institution that could command full American respect.\[11\]

Roosevelt saw himself amidst political conditions similar to those faced by Wilson, and those conditions only gradually improved over the course of the United Nations fight. In fact, Roosevelt repudiated the League of Nations to win the support of the newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst while running for his first presidential term.\[12\] In the years prior to the Second World War, Roosevelt was forced by Congressional opposition to approve a series of Neutrality Acts, and could only slowly redirect American opinion towards internationalism; Lend-Lease became his method of compromise.\[13\] The elections of 1940 gave the Republicans forty-four new seats in the House and nine in the Senate, many of whom were staunchly isolationist. As a “savvy domestic politician”, Roosevelt knew he could not press too strongly, too quickly, and these conditions largely persisted until the elections of 1944.\[14\] In short, Roosevelt was plagued by the possibility that he could be defeated by the same forces that had cowed Wilson.

However, Roosevelt based his conception of international order on balance-of-power ideas that were nominally at odds with Wilsonian idealism. Roosevelt has rightfully been cast as

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\[10\] Ibid., 9-11.
\[11\] Ikenberry, *After Victory*, 165.
\[13\] Hoopes and Brinkley, 18-25.
\[14\] John Allpin Moore and Jerry Pubantz, *To Create a New World? American Presidents and the United Nations* (New York [etc.]: Peter Lang, 1999) 29, argue that Roosevelt first demonstrated his savvy during the period of neutrality.
the “architect”\textsuperscript{15} of the United Nations, and his conception of the “Four Freedoms” provided the ideological foundation for his plans.\textsuperscript{16} However, the schema of the “Four Policemen” provided the blueprint. Roosevelt knew that the active contribution of Britain, the Soviet Union, and China, especially within their respective regions, was the key to an effective institution. So too was he aware that an enforceable model of collective security required strong American involvement.\textsuperscript{17} In short, a feasible Charter would lay the framework for cooperation between hegemons. Roosevelt vacillated between idealism and practicality on particular issues. For example, his distaste at Yalta for an absolute veto for members of the Security Council—advanced by the Soviet Union—was balanced by his desire to induce the Soviets to participate. Roosevelt had ideals, but remained pragmatic about the possibility of implementing them in policy.

The pressure of taking the reins from the late president of over twelve years caused Truman to pursue a similar strategy of pragmatism and bipartisanship during his administration. When Truman learned that Roosevelt had died, he rushed to the White House and immediately asked Eleanor Roosevelt if there was anything he could do for her. “Is there anything we can do for you?” she replied, “For you are the one in trouble now.”\textsuperscript{18} Her response captures the fragile set of circumstances inherited by the new president, whom Roosevelt had left in the dark on matters of international organization and military strategy, including the existence of the Manhattan Project. The need to remain continuity of government during wartime as well as the low level of public confidence in his administration led Truman to pursue similar policies to Roosevelt. As I will argue later, Truman had little reason to deviate, given the success of bipartisanship thus far.

Yet Truman also had his own ideas about the nature of international organization. In a

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{15} Ibid., 27.
\bibitem{16} Hoopes and Brinkley, 27.
\bibitem{18} Schlesinger, \textit{Act of Creation}, 2.
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speech at the University of Kansas on June 28, 1945, he summarized those views succinctly: “My opinion is that this great Republic ought to carry out those ideals of Woodrow Wilson and Franklin D. Roosevelt.” In 1943, Truman played a role in the drafting of the Ball resolution in support of an international institution, and he spent the rest of the year speaking on issues of post-war organization—an organization he hoped would be stronger than that of the League. Truman believed that the United States had a responsibility to advance the cause of freedom, of which the United Nations was an expression, and in fact his views had many of the same spiritual roots as Wilsonianism. Yet Truman, like Roosevelt, understood the need for compromise in the name of Wilsonian ideals. In short, Truman combined Wilson's idealism with Roosevelt's realism.

Roosevelt and Truman's strategy of bipartisanship grew naturally out of their ideological preferences and political situations. For both, constructing a lasting American commitment to the United Nations was crucial to ensure security. That commitment had to be believable to other states to encourage the same sort of commitments on their behalf. However, the American public and especially the Senate would not accept an open-ended collective security obligation that inhibited American flexibility. In short, the two presidents faced the very problem that I have discussed at length: how to demonstrate credibility to both domestic and international actors. Unlike Wilson, yet under similar circumstances, Roosevelt and Truman decided to use bipartisanship to construct an agreement acceptable to all parties. In fact, they conceived of bipartisanship in the terms that I have described: as a signaling device. Only by reaching out to the Republican Party could they induce the United States to reach out to the world.

Roosevelt's strategy—the strategy that Truman inherited—was composed of three essential elements. First, Roosevelt insisted that the early stages of planning for the United

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19 Pierce, 127.
20 Moore and Pubantz, 49.
21 Pierce, 124-166. Truman, like Wilson, was devoutly Christian. Although, perhaps having to assume the Presidency in the fashion Truman did would make one quite devout.
Nations remain secret. Given that Wilson decided to go public, such a move provides a striking contrast. Roosevelt decided that calling for an international organization too soon would strike Americans as premature during wartime and might unnecessarily inflame isolationists. Second, he engaged in consultation with members of the Republican Party once his plans became public knowledge. His cooperation with Arthur Vandenberg especially contributed to the non-partisan tone of the fight for the United Nations. Third, he insisted on negotiating an agreement that both sides could accept, and Republicans were there at almost every stage. As Vandenberg later remarked, true bipartisanship requires “being in on the take-off as well as the landing.” However, neither Roosevelt, Truman, nor the Republicans knew fully where American diplomacy would land in the aftermath of the United Nations fight.

Changing the Game: Where Roosevelt Went Right

The United Nations began off the coast of Newfoundland in 1941. From August 9-12, Roosevelt and the British Prime Minister Winston Churchill discussed strategic planning and post-war aims, culminating in the drafting of the Atlantic Charter, which was in reality a joint statement regarding the outcome of their negotiations rather than a binding treaty. The Americans and British disagreed on a number of particular points, but most importantly on the language of the fifth article, which called for “effective international organization”. Roosevelt personally replaced those words with “the establishment of a wider and permanent system of general security”, in hopes that the vague language would assuage the fears of domestic isolationists. On January 1, 1942, the United States, Britain, the Soviet Union, and China, along with twenty-two other nations, issued the “Declaration by United Nations”, pledging to unite against Germany and its allies and abide by the provisions of the Atlantic Charter. The

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23 Hoopes and Brinkley, 32.
United Nations thus began as a wartime alliance enshrining cooperation between the four great powers of the time.

American planning for the United Nations eventually consolidated around Roosevelt's idea of the "Four Policemen". Many of these early efforts were headed by the Undersecretary of State, Sumner Welles, and were somewhat disorganized. On December 27, 1939, Welles formed an “Advisory Committee on Problems of Foreign Relations” that laid dormant for much of 1940 and 1941. On February 12, 1942, Welles directed a new planning group composed of State Department officials and other luminaries that conceived of a “Security Commission” composed of the four great powers. This represents the first concrete discussion regarding the structure of the United Nations, and by December 1943, the State Department led by Secretary Hull produced an outline plan that was fairly consistent with the yet-to-be-produced United Nations Charter. Roosevelt signed off on a nearly-complete draft in April 1944 composed of a Security Council, General Assembly, International Court of Justice, and a Secretariat. The plan that had emerged was distinct from the League Charter in terms of the unique role it afforded to the four most powerful nations, who would shoulder most of the burden in ensuring security.24

Once again, the British hoped for an organization that would bind the United States to the fate of European security and guarantee Britain's global position. Early American proposals for an integrated Europe or "third force" that could fend off the Soviet Union were rejected by Churchill. He instead proposed a set of regional councils that could defend peace in the Americas, Europe, and Asia respectively.25 In each of these councils, the United States would receive representation in recognition of its unique role as a global power. In other words, the British wanted an American security commitment, as did the French.26 Yet Churchill was most

24 Ibid., 44-111.
25 See Evan Luard, A History of the United Nations (New York: St. Martin's, 1982), 1-16 as well as Ikenberry, After Victory, 192-208 and Hoopes and Brinkley, 69 for detailed explanations of this concept.
26 Ikenberry, 208.
interested in laying the foundation for Anglo-American cooperation and “common measures.”

As such, he yielded on the issue of regional councils when Roosevelt argued that the Senate could not support them. In other cases, like the voting formula conceived at Dumbarton Oaks, Churchill gave the Americans support when reminded of the possibility of Senate rejection. In short, the primary British goal involved American acceptance of an organization at nearly any cost.

The Soviet Union hoped for recognition of their sphere of influence as well as a system that could be used to combat future German aggression. They were brought to the table by two plans advanced by the State Department in 1943: a “Four Powers Declaration” as well as a “Staff Charter”. Each plan was meant to tighten military bonds during war and lay the groundwork for an interim international organization that could be strengthened later. The Soviet Premier, Josef Stalin, was skeptical given the Anglo-American roots of planning. He also questioned whether or not the United Nations would restrict Soviet ambitions in Eastern Europe. Nevertheless, he agreed to consider an international organization in hopes that it could prevent a German resurgence, and he found Roosevelt's idea of the Four Policemen compelling. In short, the Soviets were also hoping to enlist the United States as a partner in producing security.

Roosevelt was reluctant to publicly discuss models of international organization during the war until a number of Congressional resolutions forced his hand. These resolutions were sparked by intense public interest in the United Nations. The first of these was the “B2H2”

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29 Ibid., 192.
30 Hoopes and Brinkley, 75-82. Of course, the Soviet sphere of influence in Eastern Europe continued to be a sticking point in the negotiations for the next two years.
31 Ostrower, 18.
32 Hoopes and Brinkley, 55-57.
resolution on March 15, 1943, named for Rep. Joseph Ball (a Republican) and its other sponsors. It called for a post-war international organization and police force, which Gallup polling had at 74% support. Roosevelt worried that the resolution would spark an isolationist backlash and quietly gave word that it should be suppressed in Congress. Nevertheless, other representatives stepped up to the plate. On September 21, Rep. J. William Fulbright managed to pass a resolution calling for an international organization on a 360-29 vote. The president quickly directed the Democratic chair of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Thomas Connally, to pass a similar resolution. Roosevelt believed that the two resolutions would signal American resolve in the wake of the Moscow Declaration. Given that the Connally resolution passed on an 85-5 vote, they certainly demonstrated “overwhelming Congressional sentiment” in favor.  

These results were encouraging for Roosevelt, but he still believed that nascent support for an organization in the Senate was fragile. In 1944, Roosevelt made significant moves in the direction of bipartisanship at the encouragement of Secretary Hull by directing Connally to form a “Council of Eight” to discuss post-war international organization. In February, Ball authored an article in the Saturday Evening Post titled “Your Move, Mr. President” warning the President to take Congress seriously in post-war planning. Hull responded with a radio address hailed as a “revolutionary change in American diplomatic practice” announcing the formation of the council.  

It was composed of three Democrats, three Republicans, Connally and the Progressive isolationist Robert La Follette. The Council was seen as an independent planning committee and it was not bound to endorse the plans of the administration. Hull regularly met with the Council to discuss proposals and incorporated their ideas in policy. For that reason, as well as its composition, it represented a credible attempt at bipartisanship.

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33 Philip A. Grant, "Roosevelt, the Congress, and the United Nations," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 13.2 (1983): 279. Grant notes that the resolutions were purely advisory in nature, but that does not necessarily nullify their value as signals of Congressional resolve.

34 Hoopes and Brinkley, 124.
The Council of Eight elevated a particular Republican—Arthur Vandenberg—who dominated the United Nations fight. Vandenberg staunchly opposed the League of Nations in 1919 as a newspaper editor, and as a senator he was a proponent of neutrality in the late 1930s. In short, he was the “quintessential America firster.” Yet the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the reality of the Second World War led him to seek a new foreign policy paradigm—one that incorporated elements of internationalism. In 1943, he met with other influential Republicans to draft the Mackinac Resolution calling for “post-war cooperative organization.” From that point on, he became a strong voice in favor of the United Nations, made all the more compelling by his past isolationism. He appeared to other Republicans as a credible endorser who would challenge the Roosevelt administration, but he was also sufficiently reliable for Roosevelt to work with.

Roosevelt’s next bipartisan success dramatically changed the nature of the fight for the United Nations. Roosevelt decided that he needed a fourth term to complete the war effort and ensure the establishment of the United Nations, and he selected Truman to facilitate his election. He directed Secretary Hull to meet with John Foster Dulles, Thomas Dewey’s foreign policy advisor, to seek an agreement that the United Nations would not be a political issue in the campaign. Dewey agreed, eschewing the “abyss of partisan politics”, and creating what Dulles saw as “something unique in American politics.” Roosevelt then received the endorsement of Ball for his answers to a questionnaire on international organization, receiving valuable credibility in the eyes of Republicans. The result was that the Democrats won big in 1944, replacing isolationists with internationalists and clearing the door for the United Nations Charter.

35 Ostrower, 16.
36 James A. Gazell, "Arthur H. Vandenberg, Internationalism, and the United Nations," Political Science Quarterly 88.3 (1973): 375-94. In constructing his foreign policy, Vandenberg sought to develop a centrist alternative to isolationism and internationalism with ideas from both parties. In this sense, he also deserves some credit for crafting the bipartisan foreign policy consensus that emerged from the Second World War.
37 Hoopes and Brinkley, 86. The Mackinac Resolution was taken as an official Republican position on the subject of international organization, but the party still had several vocal isolationists.
38 Ibid., 159.
39 Ibid., 162.

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in the Senate.

This allowed the 1944 Dumbarton Oaks Conference to proceed without political interference. Roosevelt initially tried to disguise the conference as a set of “conversations” to avoid partisan politics, but the press soon took notice.\(^40\) While it reached agreement on minor points, the conference foundered on four issues: the scope of the United Nations, the establishment of an international air force, the requirements for membership, and arrangements on voting. Nevertheless, the failures of the conference did not become partisan talking points, and “the American people adopted a positive, if somewhat wait and see, response.”\(^41\) Roosevelt entered the conference at Yalta in 1945 with strong public support. In discussions on the veto, he insisted that the Senate could not accept the Soviet formula, and he cited the need for ratification as a reason why the United States ought to receive two more votes in the General Assembly if the Soviet Union won membership for Ukraine and White Russia.\(^42\) His performance at the conference led Newsweek to declare that no citizen “could complain that his country had been sold down the river,” and the conference concluded with plans for a formal conference at San Francisco.\(^43\)

One of Roosevelt’s last acts of bipartisanship was the appointment of delegates to the San Francisco Conference in 1945. The new Secretary of State, Edward Stettinius, convinced Roosevelt that Vandenberg was the most influential Republican in the Senate on foreign policy and had to be appointed despite Roosevelt’s personal dislike for him. Other Republicans on the delegation included Rep. Charles Eaton and a former naval reserve officer named Harold Stassen. Dulles was included as a non-partisan advisor. In making these selections, Roosevelt directly recalled Wilson’s failure to appoint Republicans to the Paris Peace Conference.\(^44\) Of

\(^{40}\) Ibid., 130. At this point, Roosevelt remained somewhat averse to beginning the debate on international institutions in the United States.

\(^{41}\) Ibid., 157.

\(^{42}\) Schlesinger, Act of Creation, 59.

\(^{43}\) Hoopes and Brinkley, 177.

\(^{44}\) Ostrower, 27.
course, the price of appointing Vandenberg was satisfying his demand to act as an “independent agent”. Stettinius even invited representatives of forty-two organizations to serve as consultants among the delegation. The message was clear, to both senators and international actors: Roosevelt intended to build a broad base of support for the United Nations.\footnote{Schlesinger, Act of Creation 62-68. However, these consultants had little to no official power.}

However, Roosevelt died only thirteen days before the conference, leaving Truman to pick up the pieces. It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of Roosevelt's efforts at bipartisanship. Over the preceding four years, he built a durable coalition behind the United Nations in the Senate by working with influential Republicans. So too did he use the threat of that coalition eroding to induce cooperation from the Soviet Union and Britain. His efforts led Churchill and Stalin to believe that America resolved to live up to its commitments. In general, his use of bipartisanship communicated to Americans that this was an institution that they could accept, and demonstrated to the people of the world that this was an institution that Americans would accept. As such, Truman's first policy decision, announced shortly after Roosevelt's death, was that the San Francisco Conference would proceed as planned. It fell to him to put the finishing touches on the United Nations.

The First Level: The San Francisco Conference

Despite Roosevelt's untimely death, the United States entered the San Francisco Conference with a number of advantages. The United Nations Conference on International Organization opened on April 25 with 282 delegates from forty-six nations in attendance. Even an American representative wrote that “we are in an atmosphere of dazzling splendor”, reflecting the degree to which the United States sought to impress delegates from across the
world—especially war-ravaged states—with American primacy and wealth. Of course, meeting in San Francisco gave the Americans “home-field advantage” in planning and strategizing for the conference. Moreover, it made it possible for the Army Signal Security Agency to engage in extraordinary methods of espionage involving wiretapping and interception that gave the American delegation advance information on the plans of other states—information that Stettinius labeled as “of the greatest value.” The United States resolved to leave nothing to chance at the conference.

The American delegation was led by Secretary Stettinius and at times faced intense internal wrangling over policy. Before the conference, Truman told Stettinius “on every move to get full agreement” to avoid a “tragedy” in the Senate, and the two met on multiple occasions to air disagreements within the delegation. Before the delegation departed for San Francisco, Truman reminded them of the example of Wilson and the necessity of approving a Charter that the Senate could accept. In some cases, like the eight innocuous amendments offered by Vandenberg, compromise was simple. In others, like the issue of the Security Council veto, Vandenberg and other members of the delegation threatened desertion over any deviation from the American position. In one potentially disastrous case, Vandenberg forced Stettinius to reopen debate on the issue of a Latin American regional security bloc, prolonging the conference for days. The point here is to emphasize that bipartisanship came at a price—authentic efforts at compromise—but that Truman and Stettinius remained committed to the strategy.

The conference threatened to dissolve without an agreement at numerous points. Evan Luard provides the best summary of these conflicts, and they involved issues of the conference

46 Ibid., 116. For that reason, American planners maintained stocks of various liquors as well as other commodities that had vanished during the war for the visiting delegations.
47 Ibid., 93. However, American operatives did not collect information on the British and Soviet delegations.
48 Ibid., 75.
49 Ibid., 161-163. The bulk of these amendments involved provisions like inserting the phrase “international justice” in the Charter, and posed only minor conflicts with other delegations.
presidency, who would be invited to participate, the nature of the collective security system including provisions on voting and regional arrangements, the power and scope of the General Assembly, the system of trusteeship, and the “universality” of the United Nations, including provisions on withdrawal and expulsion.\textsuperscript{50} Occasionally, these disputes were resolved in ways that had far-ranging and unforeseen implications for the future of the United Nations. For example, the issue of a Latin American regional security system yielded the self-defense provision in Article 51.\textsuperscript{51} The agreements at Dumbarton Oaks and Yalta, while helpful, had not laid a sufficient basis for cooperation in San Francisco, and the United Nations Charter was still in jeopardy.

In addition to potentially derailing the United Nations, the failure of the conference threatened to shatter post-war cooperation within the Four Policemen. In addition to drafting a charter, “one purpose of the conference clearly was to establish a firmer basis for co-operation”, given that German surrender was imminent and war still raged in the Pacific.\textsuperscript{52} On several points, such as the issue of four conference presidents, the question of Poland and the Lublin government, and voting rights for White Russia and Ukraine, US-Soviet relations were dangerously imperiled. In fact, the issue of the veto seemed intractable until Harry Hopkins traveled to Moscow at Truman’s behest to discuss it, along with the Polish question.\textsuperscript{53} Stalin agreed to the American formula on a veto only in cases of substantive, not procedural matters, likely saving the conference. However, at the close of the conference, “wartime cooperation seemed to be at an end.”\textsuperscript{54}

In this context, the usefulness of bipartisanship becomes clear. The presence of Vandenberg as well as the history of consultation bolstered Stettinius’s claim to represent

\textsuperscript{50} Luard, 37-68.
\textsuperscript{51} Hoopes and Brinkley, 192-196 argue that the compromise essentially resulted from leaving the question of regional blocs open—they could be justified in terms of the charter as exercises of self-defense.
\textsuperscript{52} Goodrich, 240.
\textsuperscript{53} Hoopes and Brinkley, 186-201.
\textsuperscript{54} Moore and Pubantz, 50.
American resolve. On the question of Latin American security, Vandenberg claimed that the Senate would approve a reservation applying the self-defense provisions of Article 51 to the Act of Chapultepec, placating the fears of Latin American delegates.\(^5^5\) On the issue of the veto, Vandenberg and Connally claimed that the Senate would not vote for any modification of the American formula, winning the support of Britain and China.\(^5^6\) In fact, Truman used the threat of a Senate suspension of economic aid to induce Molotov to participate in the conference in the first place. For his actions, he won the admiration of Vandenberg, who claimed that “FDR's appeasement of Russia is over.”\(^5^7\) Going bipartisan gave Truman and the delegation the ability to credibly represent senatorial opinion, and they used it to force agreements at critical points in the conference.

Vandenberg also reached out to Republicans in Washington during the conference, paradoxically increasing American flexibility in negotiations. At a minimum, he provided information on opinion in the Senate, such as when he told the delegation that the Senate would not support a “compulsory jurisdiction” provision in the proposed International Court of Justice.\(^5^8\) He also covered for Stettinius at points when American compromises could have sent the wrong message to the Senate. Specifically, Vandenberg was infuriated when the delegation contemplated bending to the Soviets on an absolute veto, until Stettinius released details regarding the Hopkins mission to Moscow.\(^5^9\) For that reason, he agreed to placate the fears of senators for the time being. On the question of Argentine membership, he sent letters to Senators Hatch and Ball encouraging them to avoid controversy and support the American position.\(^6^0\) The presence of Vandenberg—who claimed that Stettinius did a “magnificent job”—

\(^{55}\) Ostrower, 32-34. This reservation was never considered, but it helped to convince the Latin American delegations that the United States would stand by them.


\(^{57}\) Ibid., 91.

\(^{58}\) Ostrower, 38. This was especially important given that the Senate would have raised concerns about American national sovereignty eerily reminiscent of arguments from the League fight.

\(^{59}\) Hoopes and Brinkley, 201.

\(^{60}\) Schlesinger, 191.
gave the delegation much-needed legitimacy in the eyes of the Senate and prevented domestic backlash.\textsuperscript{61}

The conference ended with a United Nations Charter, and bipartisanship should receive some credit. I have argued that the status of an agreement and the ties between the United States and the Soviet Union were in jeopardy at several points. At each of those points, the presence of Republicans on the delegation and the existence of prior consultation ensured the acceptability of compromises to the Senate and made that same fact clear to other states as well. In fact, Stettinius would often sit with Vandenberg and Connally on either side as a visible sign of American commitment. The world could not doubt American resolve on the issue of international organization. After the conference, Truman and the United Nations Charter received the anticipated endorsements of Republicans on the delegation: Dulles hailed the charter as a “greater Magna Carta” and Vandenberg argued that it was necessary to stop “World War III.” Yet Vandenberg also argued that “we remain the captains of our own souls,” mindful of the battle that lay ahead.\textsuperscript{62}

The Second Level: Senate Debate on the United Nations Charter

President Truman personally delivered the United Nations Charter to the Senate on July 2, and observers predicted a lengthy fight for ratification. The \textit{New York Times} on June 22 ran an article titled “Charter Ratification is Unlikely Before the Fall, Officials Think”, and it argued that the Republicans would try to force a summer recess to delay a vote.\textsuperscript{63} Truman would have none of that. He argued that the Senate needed to ratify the charter before the Potsdam Conference for “the choice is between this Charter and no charter at all.” He thought a speedy

\textsuperscript{61} Ostrower, 28.
\textsuperscript{62} Schlesinger, \textit{Act of Creation}, 260 and 266. Remember that as members of the delegation, Vandenberg and Dulles now had a vested interest in the success of the Charter in the Senate.
\textsuperscript{63} Ibid., 263.
ratification would signal resolve and “strengthen the American hand at the international council table.”

However, an Associated Press poll taken before the opening of Senate debate found that fifty-two Senators already supported the charter. Connally and Vandenberg entered the Senate chamber arm-in-arm to the raucous cheering of their colleagues—further evidence that bipartisanship had done its job.

During the Committee on Foreign Relations hearings, Vandenberg and Connally played strong roles as endorsers, driving support and refuting arguments against the charter. The committee considered the charter from July 9-13 and did not voice any serious objections. Vandenberg and Connally did not testify, but they participated actively in discussions, giving the impression of a unified front behind the charter. Dulles closed the conference with a speech on the merits of the charter to emphasize bipartisanship, and the committee quickly voted 20-1 in favor—the lone holdout was the stalwart isolationist from the League fight, Hiram Johnson. The committee report stressed that the charter reflected “careful consideration” of American security and national sovereignty, mindful of the objections that had been raised against the League. Bipartisanship had eased the fears of the Senate.

Additionally, the speeches Vandenberg and Connally gave during the open Senate debate demonstrate the success of bipartisanship. Senate debate lasted from July 23-28, and involved only one potentially dangerous controversy. Senator Eugene Millikin raised the question of whether or not the American representative to the Security Council, and by extension the executive, could unilaterally commit American troops to missions ordered by the United Nations. Connally and Vandenberg quickly spoke in support of the charter, arguing that it was consistent with the “spirit of the Constitution” to allow the president flexibility in the use of the military. Yet Truman also worried about “mental reservations” and wanted the Senate to

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65 Ibid., 939.
commit to the charter whole-heartedly.\textsuperscript{66} For that reason, the speeches Connally and Vandenberg gave at the end of the Senate debate were prime examples of oratorical excess. Vandenberg argued that “here is our chance to stop this disaster before it starts”, while Connally passionately invoked the memory of the death of the Treaty of Versailles, asking “Can you not see the blood on the floor?”\textsuperscript{67} Truman and the charter received bipartisan endorsements in the strongest possible terms.

The final vote was 89-2, a resounding victory for the charter that many viewed as historic in nature. Towards the end of the debate, senators spoke merely to get on the record as having supported the United Nations and arguments against the charter were sparse.\textsuperscript{68} In fact, two senators who had rejected the Treaty of Versailles voted in favor of the United Nations Charter: David Walsh and Arthur Capper. The United States was not the first to ratify the charter, but it was the first to deposit the instrument of ratification on August 8. Roosevelt and Truman succeeded where Wilson had failed.

It is clear that had President Roosevelt and Truman chosen to eschew bipartisanship, the charter would have gone down to defeat, or at least would not have sent the strong signal of resolve that they hoped for. A weaker margin of victory “would have cast doubt among U.S. allies about the degree and duration of American interest in the U.N. and the world at large, especially if a Republican administration came to power.”\textsuperscript{69} If Vandenberg had chosen to oppose the charter, he could have unified the Republican Party in opposition with potentially disastrous results. However, going bipartisan built a strong coalition in favor of the United Nations. It sent signals of Roosevelt and Truman's individual credibility, encouraging domestic and international actors to approve the charter at both stages of the game. Their strategy was shaped by the memory of Wilson's failure and it helped to avert their own.

\textsuperscript{66} Ibid., 943-945. \\
\textsuperscript{67} Schlesinger, \textit{Act of Creation}, 273. \\
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid., 273. \\
\textsuperscript{69} Gazell, 394. As a fledgling institution, there was a very real risk that the United Nations could dissolve.
In fact, the success of bipartisanship has led some to wonder if it worked too well. Fulbright wished for "a little more spirited debate", and the quick ratification of the charter in the Senate may have not sorted out many of the crucial issues regarding international organization, collective security, and American participation. Nevertheless, as Truman remarked, "Our starting point...has been and remains the United Nations." While his victory laid a framework for international institutions, an article in the Nation at the conclusion of the San Francisco Conference responding to the concerns of internationalists said it best: "the battle for effective world organization has not been lost; it is only beginning."

The Aftermath

Going bipartisan yielded success. The United Nations Charter managed to pass both stages of the game. In fact, the presence of full American support yielded an institution deeply shaped by American power. American influences are reflected throughout the United Nations charter—the language of its preamble, its executive-legislative-judicial structure and division of powers—and even in the name that Roosevelt conceived in 1942. The charter was structured to assuage American concerns regarding just what they were getting into, keeping in mind the insidious rumors and fear-mongering that had destroyed the League. As a result, "when the Organization emerged from the San Francisco Conference in 1945, it was largely a creation of the Western world." While a full description of the failures and successes of the United Nations

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71 Moore and Pubantz, 79.
72 Hoopes and Brinkley, 204.
73 Moore and Pubantz, 24. Incidentally, Churchill was staying at the White House when Roosevelt settled on the name. Roosevelt was so excited that he burst into the room where Churchill was taking a bath and immediately encouraged him to assent to the name.
is beyond the scope of this paper, it is clear that it has had an enduring role in shaping international politics and global society.

However, the other lasting result of Roosevelt and Truman’s strategy was the creation of a bipartisan consensus on foreign policy that endured until the Vietnam War. Indeed, Truman had few strategic options other than bipartisanship, given that the Republicans took control of the House and Senate in the elections of 1946. He again turned to extensive consultation with Republicans in his advocacy of the Marshall Plan. But he was not alone, and “between the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 and the Tet Offensive in South Vietnam in 1968, members of Congress reached across the aisle nearly three out of every four times they voted on foreign policy legislation.” Roosevelt and Truman had not only produced the United Nations. At the end of the fight, America had emerged a united nation.

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72 Bonds, 1-2.
CONCLUSION

I return now to a discussion of the theoretical question that I posed at the beginning of this paper. How can the president signal credibility to both domestic and international actors when attempting to gain American acceptance of an international institution? Wilson answered by going public and by going partisan. Roosevelt and Truman answered by going bipartisan. Each strategy had its roots in a calculation regarding how to achieve the strongest possible international institution that could command both American and international support. Each president faced the same challenge of convincing domestic and international actors—in other words, of signaling credibility. As I have argued, believable signals incur costs. Roosevelt and Truman were forced to make sacrifices on key points to win the support of Republicans, but these sacrifices changed the nature of the institution and inhibited presidential flexibility in policymaking. Wilson was unwilling to make these sacrifices. The question of when to go bipartisan is a choice that each president will have to make in his own particular circumstances.

Do these lessons apply to the modern presidency? I argue that they do. My specific findings are as follows.

First, going bipartisan sends believable information regarding a president's type to both domestic and international actors. It communicates American resolve to international actors and trustworthiness to domestic actors. In other words, it sends a signal of presidential credibility.

Second, the president controls whether or not he goes partisan or bipartisan. Each president I have discussed shaped the nature of their respective treaty fight by their choices. In fact, the president has to exert his influence over a treaty fight. Only he can broker a workable arrangement between the international community and the American people.

Third, going bipartisan is no small choice. It has a significant effect on the likelihood of success. In fact, it made the difference between the cases of the League of Nations and the
United Nations. Bipartisanship shapes the salience of party ideology, particular institutional arrangements, executive-legislative relations, individual actions and other relevant factors. It “determines” the outcome of a treaty fight.

However, the highly partisan nature of American politics at the beginning of the twenty-first century might lead some to ask if bipartisanship is even possible. Liz Halloran, writing for National Public Radio, argues that the rancor in Congress today is “historic.”¹ Most recently, President Barack Obama’s attempts to garner Republican support for the health care and financial reform bills have been repudiated by virtually the entire Republican Party. The presence of gerrymandered districts, interest groups, strong party apparatuses and a media which feeds on dramatic party conflict has only exacerbated partisan divisions. E.J. Dionne recently argued in the Washington Post that these divisions speak to fundamental ideological disagreements between the two parties, and as such should be aired openly in political debate.²

In any case, partisanship is likely to remain endemic in the short-term, and the president must learn to adapt to these new political conditions. He may find the other party unwilling to accept his bipartisan overtures.

Bipartisanship is not only still possible, but perhaps made even more valuable by rampant partisanship. In Chapter One, I argued that true signals incur costs. If bipartisanship is more difficult to achieve today, then a president who manages to pull it off surely receives more credit from observers. At the very least, his credibility benefits from the act of “going bipartisan” itself, and it is all the better if he succeeds. Thomas Friedman in a recent New York Times op-ed drew a direct connection between President Obama’s health-care victory and Russian acquiescence to a new arms control agreement. As he argues, “winning passage of the health

care bill demonstrated to the Russians that Obama could get something hard passed.\textsuperscript{3} While the health care bill was no victory for bipartisanship, this demonstrates that strong presidents at home are strong presidents abroad. Moreover, the media revolution has improved the quality of information about American domestic politics for foreign observers, and the media demonstrates a clear preference for bipartisanship. If the president is able to create a bipartisan coalition behind an international institution, foreign leaders will take notice.

Yet perhaps the nature of global politics has changed as well. Some have argued that American power is on the decline and that we should expect the “rise of the rest”\textsuperscript{4} in the coming years. Additionally, it is unlikely that President Obama or other presidents in the near future will seek to create an international institution along the lines of the United Nations or the League of Nations. Instead, the challenge for these presidents may be reinvesting the United Nations with significance or seeking international agreements on specific issues like climate change and nuclear disarmament. While my argument in this paper has been limited to international institutions, there is no reason why the same dynamics should not apply to other forms of international agreement, inasmuch as other actors look for the same signals of resolve and credibility. However, the era of American dominance could be coming to a close. If presidents want to use American power to reshape the global order, then they may want to act quickly. Bipartisanship should remain a useful, perhaps even necessary, tool.

Of course, that raises the question of what would happen if presidents routinely “went bipartisan.” Would the president eventually face diminishing returns on his strategy? I believe not. First, partisanship could then come to be viewed as a deviation from the norm, in which case partisan presidents would surely face criticism and political repercussions. Second, if the president were able to repeatedly build bipartisan political coalitions and incur the associated


costs, then actors would have little reason to doubt his mastery of the political system. Bipartisanship becomes no worse a strategy if it is used repeatedly. Of course, since it is a strategy, then there should be a “counter-strategy” for members of the other party opposed to the president’s policies. They can choose to reach back across the aisle or they can refuse to give the president an inch. A thorough analysis would need to look at the homogeneity and cohesiveness of the party out of power, what it hopes to gain during the fight, and the popularity of the institution in question. The right counter-strategy for the other party would likely depend on a complex web of political conditions.

These points should raise new areas of research in the already robust literature on signaling. One potential area is to extend my argument to other countries and types of agreements to see to what extent it can be generalized. I expect that close empirical study should yield similar observations about the role of bipartisanship in credibility signaling. Another area would make room for multiple potential signalers. The opposition party has an incentive to send signals of their credibility and the president’s weakness. This would also seem to be true for politicians from other states and other interested parties. Finally, an attempt could be made to explicitly model my argument in terms of game theory as others have done regarding signaling mechanics. Instead of working from the “top down”, scholars could also work from the “bottom up”, and conduct a study drawing from primary historical sources aimed at clarifying how actors perceive the signals that they receive. In any case, research on bipartisanship should move away from abstract discussions of ethics and approach these questions with theoretical and empirical rigor. For better or worse, bipartisanship will remain a strategy in the president’s arsenal.

If anything, we should dispense with the idea that politics stops at the water’s edge. In fact, presidents who are skilled at functioning within the currents of domestic politics may have more success at negotiating international agreements. While this paper has primarily focused
on a president's limits, it has simultaneously discussed his strengths in the conduct of international negotiations. He carries tremendous responsibility when he crosses the ocean to advocate for American interests. However, before he does so, he should consider crossing the aisle first.
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