

NEW ENEMIES, OLD STRATEGIES: BARACK OBAMA'S FOREIGN POLICY BASED ON THE TWO PRESIDENCIES THESIS

José Francelino Galdino Neto¹
Marcos Aurélio Guedes de Oliveira²

Introduction

In 2008, Barack Obama was elected president of the United States of America (USA) with ambitious and revolutionary promises, such as ending the Invasion of Iraq and closing the Guantanamo Bay Prison. Contrary to expectations, the logic of “fighting terrorism” remained, which encouraged drastic foreign policy decisions while at the same time looming like a ghost in the American political imagination, just as the fight against communism had for decades. Obama's mission was difficult: to reinvent the USA in the international system while dealing with the biggest economic crisis since 1929. However, to execute this foreign policy agenda that focused on defense and security, cooperation between the President and Congress was necessary, as the branches constitutionally share the responsibilities in the decision-making process. To do so, Republicans and Democrats need to vote together (known as bipartisanship), especially in the Senate, which historically is more related to international relations.

How has the relationship between the President and the Congress impacted the foreign policy of the Barack Obama administration (2009-2017)? The main objective of this research is to analyze the foreign policy of the Barack Obama administration based on the relationship between the President and the Congress. Two events have been used to analyze the period: the Afghanistan War (2001-2014) and the Invasion of Iraq (2003-2011). Legacy of the Republican George W. Bush, these were the biggest challenges for the

¹ Departamento de Relações Internacionais, Universidade Federal de Pernambuco. Recife, Brasil. E-mail: ngaldino5@gmail.com

² Departamento de Ciência Política, Universidade Federal de Pernambuco. Recife, Brasil. E-mail: marcosaurelioguedes@gmail.com

Obama administration in foreign policy and certainly the most politicized and conflictive issues.

As from the Two Presidencies Thesis by Aaron Wildavsky (1966), the central argument is that the United States has one President, but two distinct presidencies, one linked to foreign policy, in which the President would find it easier to enforce his preferences, and the other concerning domestic policy, in which Congress would have more impact on the decision-making process. Thus, what influences cooperation between President and Congress is the type of policy in question. A descriptive analysis of all votes taken in the US Senate during the eight years of the Obama administration was performed in order to observe whether there is more cooperation between the parties on foreign policy issues as compared to the domestic policy. From the analysis of the votes, it can be observed that the Democratic President was able to materialize his preferences in foreign policy during his administration, counting on the support of the Republicans, while on domestic policy issues there was less cooperation between the parties. In this sense, the type of policy can explain how US Senators vote.

The relationship between the president and the Congress: a brief historical background

What is the role of Congress in the formulation and execution of US foreign policy? In constitutional terms, the power to decide on US foreign policy is divided between the President and the Congress, mainly in three key areas. Firstly, in matters of defense and national security, the President is the commander-in-chief of the armed forces, but only Congress can declare war. Secondly, the President has the institutional capacity to make international treaties, but they need to be approved internally by Congress by qualified majority voting. Finally, in diplomacy, the President has the power to appoint ambassadors to represent US interests around the world, but Congress must approve all appointments. In short, even though the President is seen internationally as a national leader, much of his power is shared with Congress (Wildavsky 1966).

The literature understands that there is a cyclical pattern of leadership alternation in foreign policy between the President and the Congress throughout US history. Depending on the period analyzed, it is possible to understand changes in the power relations between the Executive and the Legislative government branches. (McCormick 2009). After World War II, Presidents began to exert greater influence in the decision-making process.

Congress itself understood, at that moment, that it was fundamental for national interests to show greater internal cohesion in the post-War international system. The scenario would only begin to change after the failure of the Vietnam War (1955-1975). The human and economic costs were high regarding public opinion. Part of the responsibility was attributed to the excessive freedom that presidents had to decide the course of the war, with the support or omission of the Legislative branch (McCormick and Wittkopf 1990).

Congress has the institutional means to limit the President's freedom in foreign policy, such as the "two-thirds rule". In basic terms, any international treaty signed by the President can only be ratified with the approval of at least 2/3 of Congress (Waltz 1967). In this context, the most effective way to ensure the President's will in foreign policy is through bipartisanship. This action mechanism allows the Legislative branch to act cooperatively with the President in foreign policy, participating in the decision-making process regardless of which party has control of the White House (McCormick and Wittkopf 1990). Bipartisanship is necessary to pass themes for which a qualified majority is required.

Two distinct historical periods can be defined in the relationship between the President and the Congress. The first one was between 1945 and 1975, when the President had primacy in foreign policy, counting on the support of Congress, materialized in the practice of bipartisanship. The second period, beginning in 1975, saw an ideological rupture between the parties, specifically in foreign policy.

It is in the first period that Wildavsky (1966) proposes the Two Presidencies Thesis, a moment in which the USA consolidates itself as a world power. The author explains the case of the USA due to two fundamental factors. The first one was that foreign policy was a priority issue and the responsibility of the President in case there was an eventual catastrophe in the national territory (for example, a nuclear attack). Secondly, institutionally, the President has greater freedom of decision in international relations because there are prerogatives that facilitate the Executive's action, such as executive agreements which do not necessarily need to go through validation by Congress, as in case of an international treaty (Canes-Wrone; Howell and Lewis 2008). Moreover, in this period, Congress, interest groups, and the military were divided and did not represent much of an opposition force to the President, reflecting the public's lack of knowledge or interest in foreign policy (Wildavsky 1966).

Thus, by analyzing all the votes cast in the US Congress between 1946 and 1964, Wildavsky (1966) concludes that in domestic policy the

President would struggle with Congress for power, especially if his party did not control the House of Representatives or the Senate. Furthermore, for any key government strategy, an opposition scenario would be present. By comparison, in foreign policy the scenario would be more favorable to the President and, regardless of whether or not he had a majority in Congress, the Executive's international strategies would be accepted with less resistance through the practice of bipartisanship.

Foreign policy cooperation between President and Congress began to encounter obstacles in the mid-1960s, after the bipolarity of the international system weakened. From that moment on, presidents found it difficult to maintain bipartisanship as the increasing ideological differences between Republicans and Democrats did irreparable damage to the consensus that existed previously. The shared values that supported bipartisanship gradually deteriorated during the 1970s, mainly because of three historical events: 1) the failure of the Vietnam War, 2) the outbreak of the Watergate Scandal, and 3) the passage of "The War Powers Act" (Leloup and Shull 1979; Sigleman 1979).

The growing ideological polarization caused by these factors fueled the emergence of two political groups that divided Congress in a decisive way: the Liberal Internationalists, essentially from the Democratic Party, who supported cooperative initiatives - arms control, economic aid, strengthening the United Nations system of organizations - but placed less emphasis on the armed struggle against communism or other nations. On the other side were the Conservative Internationalists, mostly members of the Republican Party, who support the defense of American interests and values through, above all, military action. Despite the ideological cleavage on matters of defense and security, cooperation was still widely used between Democrats and Republicans (Oldfield and Wildavsky 1989).

In the face of changes in US foreign policy with the end of the Cold War, how would the Thesis hold up? The communist threat, which explained the delegation of foreign policy to the President, no longer existed. Studies then began to argue for the resurgence of the US Congress as a central foreign policy actor and a direct competitor in the decision-making process. However, the terrorist attacks of 2001 changed the relationship between the President and the Congress in foreign policy again and would usher in a long period of US war strategy: the War on Terror.

The War on Terror united the USA around a common enemy. In this context, bipartisanship returned to Congress and the President found support from opposition congressmen and senators to approve his strategy to combat the new threat. This conjuncture reinforces Wildavsky's (1966) thesis, in

which the relationship between the President and the Congress is influenced by systemic factors, moments of crisis, and clear threats to the American way of life.

The Afghanistan War (2001 - 2014) found broad support from public opinion and from both parties. The Invasion of Iraq (2003-2011), initially, also found broad population support, while securing the reelection of George W. Bush. At that point, the explanatory capacity of the Two Presidencies Thesis seemed to have regained strength within the political and academic debate.

Canes-Wrone, Howell and Lewis (2008) have conducted a systematic literature review on the topic and come to some important conclusions about the debate surrounding the Thesis in the 21st century. The authors reinforce the idea that Congress has material incentives to delegate foreign policy to the President, especially in defense and security matters. The incentives would be: 1) the status of the President as a diplomatic representative and commander-in-chief of the armed forces; 2) the greater access to information that the Executive branch has in comparison to the other branches of the republic; and 3) in electoral grounds, the actor who gains (or loses) the most votes with foreign policy is the President. Therefore, it would be costly in electoral terms for congressmen to oppose the War on Terror, for example, since any dissent or apathy at that time on the part of Congress could be interpreted as an omission in the face of a threat to the country.

On the whole, the terrorist attacks of 9/11 served as a pressure force to unite the parties again, Republican and Democrat, on ideological grounds, especially regarding foreign policy. At that time, there was a national consensus around the need to fight terrorism at any cost in the international system. Internally, this scenario produces a new moment in the historical relationship between President and Congress. Bipartisanship will again be the rule, especially in all votes on defense and security (Lindsay 2003). However, the next parts of the paper will show that the excess of power in the hands of the President does not always produce good results for the Executive leader's own party.

Case study as a data analysis strategy

The case study provides the researcher with the possibility of drawing from an emblematic case to elaborate on other cases through the proposed theory. It provides a valid alternative to test a theory or explanatory thesis (Gerring 2017). The main goal of our research is to test the explanatory capacity of the Two Presidencies Thesis for the Obama administration's

foreign policy. Still, why does this case matter? Firstly, Barack Obama was the first and only African American President in US history. In a country where racial prejudice is one of the main national political problems, Obama took office with serious internal and external problems. In domestic policy, the USA was facing the worst economic crisis in its history since 1929. In foreign policy, besides the international consequences of the economic crisis, the USA had to solve two major wars in the Middle East: Afghanistan and Iraq. At that historical moment, there was great antipathy toward the country, which was increasingly challenged by the rise of China in the international system.

Obama's presidency began with an expectation of change. Many believed that the Democrat would be able to change this negative perception towards the USA and restore the US image in international relations. Moreover, in theoretical terms, the Presidencies Thesis has always stressed that Democratic politicians were more likely to cooperate with Republican presidents than the other way around. In this case, the Obama administration would also serve to test this supposed specificity, as, during his second term, the Democrat had to negotiate with a Republican-majority Senate.

Gerring (2017) points out that the case study does not imply a loss of transparency, rigor, or replicability for the research; neither is it exclusively quantitative or qualitative. In our framework, thousands of observations were made, providing robustness to our findings. Our proposal is to present an observational framework that descriptively analyzes all 2341 votes cast in the US Senate over Obama's two terms in office. Each phase of the research is explained below.

We first collected all votes through the GovTrack platform, one of the most important US agencies on legislative transparency, which produces different types of databases. In our research, only the replication of the official data is used. The votes are presented didactically, without modifying the information or prior treatment. The qualitative data analysis was performed by us manually and individually.

Our independent variable is the voting policy type, i.e., whether the vote can be classified as domestic policy or foreign policy, following the classic pattern of Wildavsky (1966). However, after the end of the Cold War, the literature came to the consensus that the US foreign policy had shifted to a diverse agenda of issues, such as the environment and drug trafficking, among other new issues. Therefore, it would be necessary to divide foreign policy into two major categories, the first one with all votes on themes related to defense and national security, and the second category with all votes on the other international policy issues. As a result, in our research framework, each vote was analyzed by using several criteria for classification into the

three possible categories: a) domestic policy; b) foreign policy on defense and security; c) foreign policy on other themes. The classification was made by reading the voting proposal, analyzing its content and the committees related to the project. The committee type usually served as a strong indicator, enabling the classification between domestic or foreign policy.

Our dependent variable was whether or not bipartisanship, cooperation between the parties, occurred. Each vote cast was then analyzed, ranking the patterns of vote distribution between Republicans and Democrats to determine whether bipartisanship did, or did not, occur on that vote. Our dependent variable is dichotomous, taking on only two categories. On the basis of our methodological choices, we managed to test whether bipartisanship occurs more in foreign policy than in domestic policy. Thus, following the Two Presidencies Thesis proposed by Wildavsky (1966), we can contribute to the debate by testing his explanatory hypothesis in the Obama case.

The challenges of the Barack Obama administration (2009-2017) in foreign policy and the role of the relationship between the president and the congress in the decision-making process

When Barack Obama was elected President, the USA was at a time when domestic and foreign policies needed to be reinvented. The Democrat represented the union of youth and wisdom, especially in foreign policy, as he had been one of the biggest opponents of the 2003 Invasion of Iraq. However, the Afghanistan War (2001 - 2014) and the Iraq Invasion (2003 - 2011) presented different challenges for President Obama. Nevertheless, there was one clear objective: to end both conflicts. The US image was negative for both domestic and international public opinion (Krieg 2016), and it was necessary to balance expenditure between domestic and foreign policy, given the economic crisis scenario since 2008.

In the case of Afghanistan, the primary objective was to modify the strategy; instead of focusing on Afghan territory, it would be necessary to delineate a new strategic combat region comprising the territory of Afghanistan and Pakistan (AfPak). The battle against terrorism could not be limited to national borders. In the case of Iraq, the challenge was to withdraw troops as quickly as possible, in a planned manner, to avoid unnecessary human and economic costs (Krieg 2016).

The weaknesses of the government that the USA helped put in power in Iraq showed that the initial objectives of the invasion had not been achieved,

as no chemical weapons had been found and the removal of Saddam Hussein did not guarantee an improvement in the lives of the Iraqi population. President Obama, with support from Congress, began the withdrawal of troops from Iraq as early as mid-2009. By August 31, 2011, the White House was already celebrating the end of the operation in Iraq.

The rapid US exit from Iraq has led the literature to believe that this may have favored the rise of the Islamic State terrorist group in the country. The Islamic State's expansion into Syrian territories has reignited the strategic importance of the region to the Obama administration's foreign policy. In 2014 President Obama resumed bombing in the region without UN consultation or authorization. In domestic policy, the White House sought support from Congress to declare war on the extremist group and for the systemic use of military force against the new enemy. Yet, the discussion was stuck in Congress, with many blaming Obama's strategy as the cause of the rise of the Islamic State (Pecequillo e Forner 2017).

Conflicts were the main challenges faced by President Obama. It is within this context that the cooperation between the Executive and Legislative branches will be analyzed. Bipartisanship throughout Obama's term in the White House between 2009 and 2017 will be analyzed as of the voting in the Senate. The choice for this house is justified by the Senate's historical proximity to foreign policy. The framework used has a descriptive nature, in line with the analysis models used by other similar studies such as Prins and Marshall (2001) and CanesWrone, Howell and Lewis (2008). The voting was divided into three categories: a) domestic policy; b) defense and security; and c) general foreign policy.

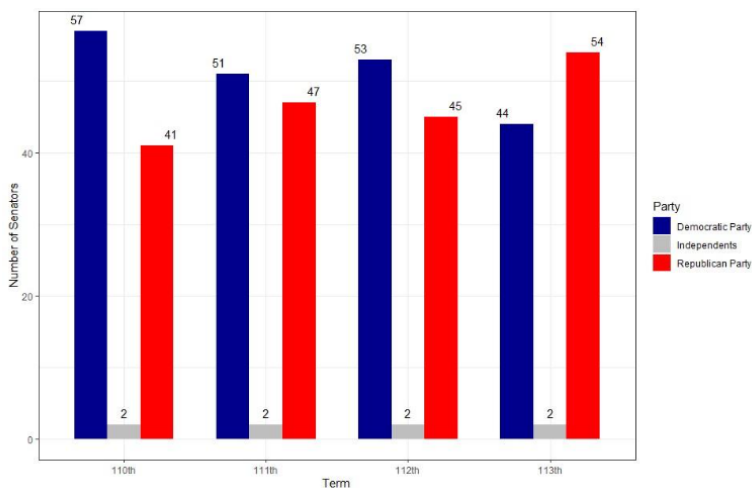
From the database construction, the level of cooperation between the parties in the three types of voting was compared. The goal was to measure whether the type of policy influences the level of bipartisanship in the US Senate. The occurrence of bipartisanship means that regardless of the President's party, Senators cooperate to approve or reject voting, acting as a single party. The following criteria were used to classify an outcome with the occurrence of bipartisanship: 1) voting with approval or rejection by 75% of the votes; 2) occurrence of critical votes, for example when a party does not have a simple majority to approve a proposal but gets support from enough opposition senators to approve a measure.

Before looking at the votes, it is necessary to introduce how the US Senate is composed. In the USA, Congress changes its composition every two years. During the Obama administration, there were four elections, which consequently formed four different compositions of the Senate: 1) 110th (2009 – 2011); 2) 111th (2011 – 2013); 3) 112th (2013 – 2015); 4) 113th (2015 –

2017). In the first three compositions, the majority belonged to the Democrats; it was only in the 113th Senate that the majority went to the Republicans. The number of independents remained the same throughout the period (2). Historically, those who are independent usually vote with the Democrats.

In Graph 1, the composition is shown in the course of time. President Obama can be seen to have never had 75% control of the Senate seats. Thus, any voting that required a qualified majority would only pass with bipartisanship. Foreign policy depends mostly on qualified majority voting, so much of President Obama's action depended on the support of Republican Senators, especially in voting that was classified as security and defense. In the USA's internal political system, the President cannot directly put any matter to a vote, but he can indirectly express his preferences through the Vice President, who by law is the President of the Senate, or through his other party colleagues.

Graph 1. Composition of the Senate by party during the Obama administration

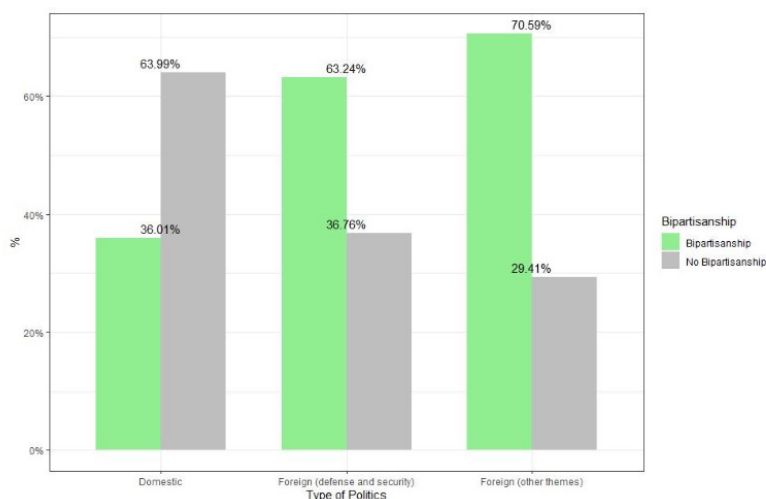


Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Graph 2 presents the occurrence of bipartisanship by type of policy in the 110th Senate. The levels of cooperation are noted to be similar to the data found by Wildavsky (1966). Between 2009 and 2011, President Obama encountered little resistance from Congress to carry out his foreign policy as a whole. Some factors help us understand the context. Firstly, at that time there was an internal unity over the need to restore the international image of the

USA, mainly through the reformulation of the strategy in the War on Terror. The economic crisis itself encouraged the need for unity in foreign policy. The data corroborate Hybel's (2014) and Krieg's (2016) perception that Obama's biggest rival in defense and security foreign policy was the Pentagon during his first term.

Graph 2. Level of bipartisanship by policy type in the 110th Senate

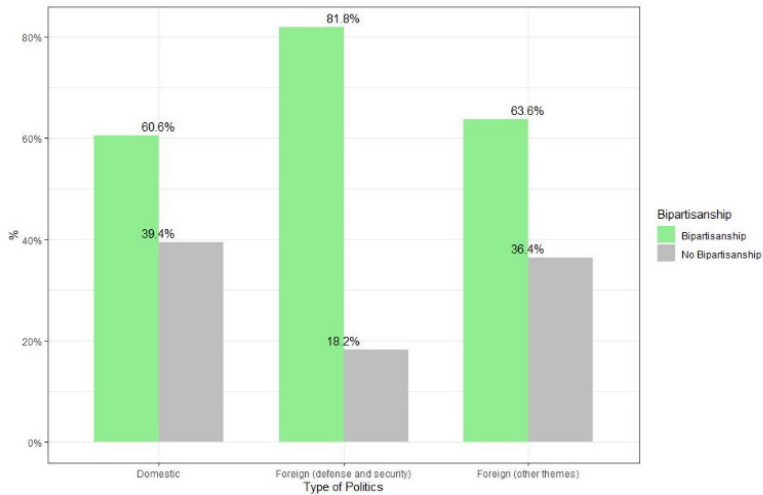


Source: Elaborated by the authors.

In turn, the low level of cooperation in domestic policy (36%) can be justified by two factors. Firstly, if the 2008 financial crisis helped internal cohesion in foreign policy, this unity is not seen in domestic policy. One of the biggest differences between Republicans and Democrats lies in how they see the economic development alternatives for the State, especially what role the State should play in this process. In other words, President Obama did not have the Republican support to implement his economic policies domestically. Secondly, most domestic policy voting required a simple majority (51); since the Democratic Party had 57 senators and the support of the Independents (2), bipartisanship was not necessary. However, analysis of the votes shows that the Republicans blocked decisions with other institutional mechanisms, such as inserting amendments and revising proposals. The proposed amendments were rejected by the Democrats, which contributed to the fall of bipartisanship. The combination of these two factors contributed to the scenario depicted in the graphs.

In 2010, the composition of the Senate underwent changes in the proportion between the parties. The 111th US Congress remained with the Senate under Democratic control; however, the Republican share increased, with the difference between the parties being then by 4 senators (51 to 47). Graph 3 shows the level of bipartisanship in those two years.

Graph 3. Level of bipartisanship by policy type in the 111th Senate



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

It can be seen from the graphs that the domestic policy situation underwent a reversal from bipartisanship. Cooperation between Republicans and Democrats occurred in 61% of domestic policy voting, representing a significant 25% increase over the 110th Senate. Once again, two factors can be presented to explain this change of scenery. Firstly, the most radical economic reform strategies were proposed at the beginning of the Obama administration, with a balance concerning which proposals would be accepted or not by the opposition in the second biennium. At that point, it was necessary to invest in cooperation. Along with this, there is a second factor with the increase in Republican seats showing a slight but important change in the electorate, who had been dissatisfied with the first two years of the Obama administration. This thermometer made the Democrats adjust and move closer to the Republicans.

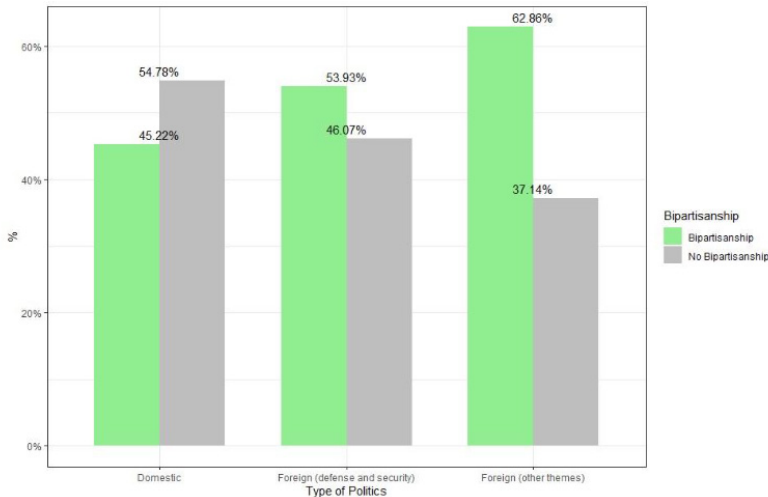
The bipartisan stance of the Senate was felt in domestic policy and especially in the foreign policy of defense and security, which reached the level of 82%. However, in the other foreign policy themes there was a 9% decrease in the level of cooperation. The period from 2011 to 2013 was crucial for the consolidation of the Obama administration's foreign policy strategy. During that period, President Obama withdrew American troops from Iraq and managed to execute Osama Bin Laden in 2011. These two actions favored Obama's approval with senators regardless of party, consolidating bipartisanship in the 111th Senate.

The success in foreign policy, with emphasis on the War on Terror, coupled with improvements in economic figures, favored the re-election of President Obama to his second term in 2012. The Democratic Party is also strengthened and remains in control of the Senate. The 112th US Congress (2013-2015), shows a Democratic majority of 53 senators against 45 Republicans. During that period, President Obama ended the Afghanistan War in 2014. However, it was also the time of the rise of the Islamic State, which put the Iraq region back as a priority within Obama's foreign policy. Graph 4 presents the levels of bipartisanship in the 112th Senate.

Graph 4 shows a significant decrease in bipartisanship in domestic policy as well as in foreign defense and security policy. The only type of policy that maintains the same level of bipartisanship is foreign policy focused on other themes. The decrease in cooperation between the parties can be understood according to some factors.

The use of drones in the fight against terrorism as an action strategy in the War on Terror initially represented an important reduction in human and financial costs for the USA, yet it started to be questioned internally by civil society as time went by, with organized groups questioning the many deaths of innocent civilians in those attacks (DOYLE, 2013). In addition, the expansion of the Islamic State in Iraqi territory is pointed as a result of the power vacuum left by the USA after the end of the Invasion of Iraq in 2011. According to Pecequillo and Forner (2017), the Iraqi government left in charge of the country by the USA did not have enough power or organization to fight the extremist rebels. President Obama's desire to end the occupation of Iraq as soon as possible may have been costly to the American strategy in the Middle East. Many analysts believe that the removal of Saddam Hussein and his execution along with the strategy of executing rebel leaders through drone attacks were determining factors for the rise of the Islamic State precisely on Iraqi territory.

Graph 4. Level of bipartisanship by policy type in the 112nd Senate

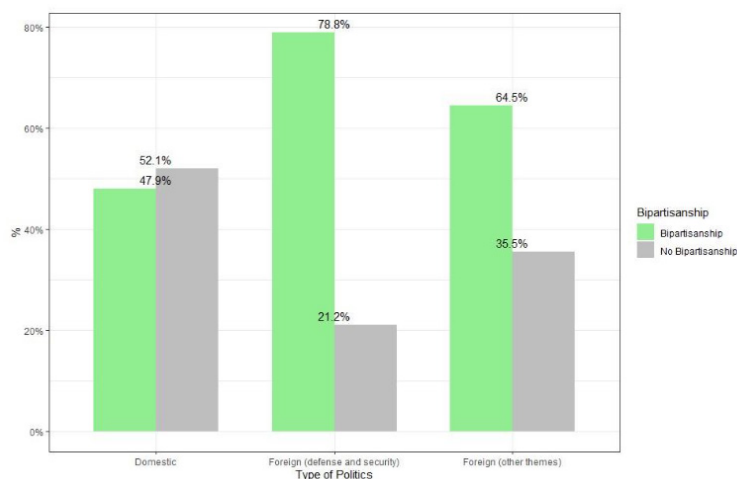


Source: Elaborated by the authors.

President Obama's strategic error was serious and had negative repercussions within the USA and the international system. The history of American foreign policy shows that in the Gulf War (1991), Republican President George H.W. Bush had chosen not to remove Hussein from power precisely because he feared the rise of extremist groups within the fragmented Iraqi State. Thus, the narrative that the Iraq Invasion would be "Obama's Vietnam" has emerged in the literature, thus drawing parallels with the situation of President Nixon, who, like Obama, did not start the Vietnam War but was responsible for ending it and for choosing the wrong strategy (Pecequillo e Forner 2017).

This political conjuncture generated important changes in the elections and consequently in the formation of the 113th Senate, sworn in in 2015. For the first time in six years in office, President Obama would have a Senate controlled by the opposition. The Republican Party had 10 more senators than the Democratic Party. From that moment on, all voting of interest to the White House in the Senate depended on bipartisanship, no matter whether it was by a simple or a qualified majority. Bipartisanship would have to be lifted or President Obama's strategy for domestic or foreign policy would fail to materialize. Graph 5 shows the levels of cooperation between Republicans and Democrats.

Graph 5. Level of bipartisanship by policy type in the 113th Senate



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

As can be seen, the control of the Senate by the Republicans caused changes in bipartisanship in that period. After four years, cooperation between the parties did not exceed 50% in voting on domestic policy. The strategy of economic recovery adopted by President Obama began to be blocked. To some extent, the Republican's lack of cooperation can be understood as a reflection of important changes in public opinion, with the growing dissatisfaction culminating in the election of Republican President Donald Trump.

However, the Two Presidencies Thesis appears to have been resilient in that period. Even with a Republican Senate, bipartisanship in foreign policy is not affected as it is in domestic policy; on the contrary, there is a positive effect - especially on defense and security issues (79%). The Senate chose to use its strength more in domestic than in foreign policy. Hence, it can be understood that most Republican senators approved of President Obama's leadership role in foreign policy. In other words, the senators delegated foreign policy to Obama and exercised their opposition in terms of domestic policy, as predicted by Wildavsky (1966).

All in all, the graphs reinforce the argument of the Two Presidencies Thesis. The comparative approach between the three types of policy adopted here follows the classical model of Wildavsky (1966), relying on the separation of foreign policy proposed by authors such as Lindsay (2003). In the post-Cold War period, American foreign policy became more complex and diffuse.

There is no single enemy and therefore it is necessary to separate defense and security, which were the basis of foreign policy during the Cold War, from the other themes to maintain the logic of the Thesis. The majority in the Senate impacted bipartisanship in domestic policy, but not in both types of foreign policy. The classic 70% to 30% ratio for foreign policy happened in almost every year of the Obama administration, showing the resilience of the explanatory power of Wildavsky's thinking (1966).

Conclusion

Throughout the article, we understand the importance of cooperation between the President and the Congress in foreign policy through the concept of bipartisanship, which is key to Wildavsky's (1966) argument. The cooperation between Democrats and Republicans during the Cold War and later during the War on Terror shows how foreign and domestic settings engage in dialogue. The international context influences cooperation between political actors due to the existence of a threat to national survival. At the same time, in times of peace, foreign policy becomes more diversified, and interests become more diffuse, resulting in increased competition between the parties. The President's alternative in these moments is to use all the power of his institution to enforce his international preferences, thus showing yet another element that ends up diminishing the incentives of Congress to compete in this arena.

In summary, this paper aims to analyze Obama's foreign policy by using an American classic policy thesis. While using the Senate voting data, we tested Wildavsky's (1966) thesis and discussed the relationship between the President and the Congress on the basis of domestic and international factors. The major finding of this research is that in fact there were two presidencies during the Obama administration; following Wildavsky's (1966) logic, the terrorist threat is understood as a key factor in explaining the success of Obama's agenda supported by bipartisanship.

Analyzing the Obama administration's foreign policy presented us with some lessons. Firstly, as Wildavsky (1966) argues, the Presidency as an institution has more legitimacy, resources, and electoral incentives to prioritize foreign policy over Congress. Secondly, the War on Terror, as well as Communism, eased this process by providing a common enemy, one that was easily recognized by public opinion. The voting analyzed in this article shows levels of bipartisanship that are similar to those found by Wildavsky (1966) at the peak of the Cold War. Even when the President had the minority in the Senate, his proposals on foreign policy were approved more than on domestic

policy. Thirdly, excessive power generates electoral costs for the party in the medium or long term. The Presidency is perceived as responsible for foreign policy, so any mistakes are pinned on the President's account. The rise of the Islamic State, combined with other strategic errors and broken promises, left a bitter taste in the electorate, playing a major role in the election of Republican Trump.

REFERENCES

- ASHLEY, Richard K. The poverty of neorealism. *International organization*, v. 38, n. 2, p. 225-286, 1984.
- BAUMGARTNER, Frank R.; LEECH, Beth L. Interest niches and policy bandwagons: Patterns of interest group involvement in national politics. *Journal of Politics*, v. 63, n. 4, p. 1191-1213, 2001.
- BECKMANN, Matthew N.; KUMAR, Vimal. Opportunism in Polarization: Presidential Success in Senate Key Votes, 1953-2008. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, v. 41, n. 3, p. 488-503, 2011.
- BENTLEY, Michelle; HOLLAND, Jack (Ed.). *Obama's Foreign Policy: Ending the War on Terror*. Routledge, 2013.
- BRANDS, H. W. George Bush and the Gulf War of 1991. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, v. 34, n. 1, p. 113-131, 2004.
- BRZEZINSKI, Zbigniew. The three requirements for a bipartisan foreign policy. *The Washington Quarterly White Paper*, p. 14-19, 1984.
- BURKE, John P. Lessons from past presidential transitions: Organization, management, and decision making. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, v. 31, n. 1, p. 5-24, 2001.
- BURKE, John P. The Neutral/Honest Broker Role in Foreign Policy Decision Making: A Reassessment. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, v. 35, n. 2, p. 229-258, 2005.
- BURNS, James MacGregor. *The deadlock of democracy: four-party politics in America*. 1963.
- CANES-WRONE, Brandice; HOWELL, William G.; LEWIS, David E. Toward a broader understanding of presidential power: A reevaluation of the two presidencies thesis. *The Journal of Politics*, v. 70, n. 1, p. 1-16, 2008.
- CLEMENTS, Kendrick A. Woodrow Wilson and World War I. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, v. 34, n. 1, p. 62-82, 2004.
- CONLEY, Richard S. *The Harbinger of the Unitary Executive? An Analysis of*

- Presidential Signing Statements from Truman to Carter. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, v. 41, n. 3, p. 546-569, 2011.
- COOPER, Phillip J. George W. Bush, Edgar Allan Poe, and the use and abuse of presidential signing statements. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, v. 35, n. 3, p. 515-532, 2005.
- CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES. Library of Congress. Available at: <<https://www.congress.gov/content/conan/pdf/GPO-CONAN-REV-2016.pdf>>. Accessed on 10/15/2017.
- CROCKETT, David A. The President as Opposition Leader. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, v. 30, n. 2, p. 245-274, 2000.
- DAHL, Robert A. Congress and foreign policy. Greenwood: Revised Edition, 1983.
- DOYLE, Michael J. The costs and consequences of drone warfare. *International Affairs* 89: 1, p. 1-29, 2013.
- EDWARDS, George C. Building coalitions. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, v. 30, n. 1, p. 47-78, 2000.
- EDWARDS, Jason A. Sanctioning Foreign Policy: The Rhetorical Use of President Harry Truman. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, v. 39, n. 3, p. 454-472, 2009.
- ESHBAUGHASOHA, Matthew. The importance of policy scope to presidential success in Congress. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, v. 40, n. 4, p. 708-724, 2010.
- FITZGERALD, David; RYAN, David. Obama and Iraq: The 'Dumb' War. In: Obama, US Foreign Policy and the Dilemmas of Intervention. Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2014. p. 25-51.
- FLEISHER, Richard; BOND, Jon R. Are there two presidencies? Yes, but only for Republicans. *The Journal of Politics*, v. 50, n. 3, p. 747-767, 1988.
- FLEISHER, Richard et al. The demise of the two presidencies. *American Politics Quarterly*, v. 28, n. 1, p. 3-25, 2000.
- FRIEDMAN, Rebecca R. Crisis Management at the Dead Center: The 1960-1961 Presidential Transition and the Bay of Pigs Fiasco. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, v. 41, n. 2, p. 307-333, 2011.
- GERRING, John. Case study research: Principles and practices. Cambridge university press, 2017.
- GILDERHUS, Mark T. The Monroe doctrine: meanings and implications. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, v. 36, n. 1, p. 5-16, 2006.
- GOOGLE ACADÊMICO. Available at: <<https://scholar.google.com.br/>> .

Accessed on: October 20th, 2017.

GOVTRACK.US. Available at: <<https://www.govtrack.us/>>. Accessed on: February 10th, 2017.

GREGORIAN, Hrach. Assessing Congressional Involvement in Foreign Policy: Lessons of the Post-Vietnam Period. *The Review of Politics*, v. 46, n. 1, p. 91-112, 1984.

HAHN, Peter L. Securing the Middle East: The Eisenhower Doctrine of 1957. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, v. 36, n. 1, p. 38-47, 2006.

HARGROVE, Erwin C. Presidential power and political science. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, v. 31, n. 2, p. 245-261, 2001.

HYBEL, Alex. *US Foreign Policy Decision-making from Kennedy to Obama: Responses to International Challenges*. Springer, 2014.

IVIE, Robert L.; GINER, Oscar. Hunting the devil: Democracy's rhetorical impulse to war. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, v. 37, n. 4, p. 580-598, 2007.

JACOBSON, Gary C. George W. Bush, the Iraq War, and the Election of Barack Obama. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, v. 40, n. 2, p. 207-224, 2010.

KAPUR, Nick. William McKinley's Values and the Origins of the Spanish American War: A Reinterpretation. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, v. 41, n. 1, p. 18-38, 2011.

KASSOP, Nancy. The war power and its limits. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, v. 33, n. 3, p. 509-529, 2003.

KESSEL, John H. The presidency and the political environment. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, v. 31, n. 1, p. 25-43, 2001.

KIMBALL, Jeffrey. The Nixon Doctrine: A Saga of Misunderstanding. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, v. 36, n. 1, p. 59-74, 2006.

KISSINGER, Henry. *Diplomacy*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994.

KRIEG, Andreas. Externalizing the burden of war: the Obama Doctrine and US foreign policy in the Middle East. *International Affairs*, v. 92, n. 1, p. 97-113, 2016.

KRUTZ, Glen S.; PEAKE, Jeffrey S. The changing nature of presidential policy making on international agreements. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, v. 36, n. 3, p. 391-409, 2006.

LAKE, David A. Legitimizing power: The domestic politics of US international hierarchy. *International Security*, v. 38, n. 2, p. 74-111, 2013.

LANDMAN, Todd; CARVALHO, Edzia. *Issues and methods in comparative politics: an introduction*. Taylor & Francis, 2016.

- LEE, Frances E. Presidents and Party Teams: The Politics of Debt Limits and Executive Oversight, 2001A2013. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, v. 43, n. 4, p. 775-791, 2013.
- LELOUP, Lance T.; SHULL, Steven A. Congress versus the executive: The "two presidencies" reconsidered. *Social Science Quarterly*, v. 59, n. 4, p. 704-719, 1979.
- LINDSAY, James M. Deference and Defiance: The Shifting Rhythms of ExecutiveA Legislative Relations in Foreign Policy. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, v. 33, n. 3, p. 530- 546, 2003.
- LOBELL, Steven E.; RIPSAN, Norrin M.; TALIAFERRO, Jeffrey W. (Ed.). *Neoclassical realism, the state, and foreign policy*. Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- LOGEVALL, Fredrik. Lyndon Johnson and Vietnam. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, v. 34, n. 1, p. 100-112, 2004.
- MACK, W. R.; DEROUEN, Karl; LANOUE, David. Foreign Policy Votes and Presidential Support in Congress. *Foreign Policy Analysis*, v. 9, n. 1, p. 79-102, 2013.
- MARSHALL, Bryan W.; PRINS, Brandon C. Power or Posturing? Policy Availability and Congressional Influence on US Presidential Decisions to Use Force. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, v. 41, n. 3, p. 521-545, 2011.
- MARTIN, Lisa L. The president and international commitments: Treaties as signaling devices. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, v. 35, n. 3, p. 440-465, 2005.
- MCCORMICK, James M. *American Foreign Policy and Process*. Wadsworth Publishing; 5th edition, 2009.
- MCCORMICK, James M.; WITTKOPF, Eugene R. Bipartisanship, partisanship, and ideology in congressional-executive foreign policy relations, 1947-1988. *The Journal of Politics*, v. 52, n. 4, p. 1077-1100, 1990
- MEARSHEIMER, John J.; WALT, Stephen M. The Israel lobby and US foreign policy. *Middle East Policy*, v. 13, n. 3, p. 29-87, 2006.
- MERRILL, Dennis. The Truman Doctrine: Containing Communism and Modernity. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, v. 36, n. 1, p. 27-37, 2006.
- MITCHELL, David. Does Context Matter? Advisory Systems and the Management of the Foreign Policy DecisionAMaking Process. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, v. 40, n. 4, p. 631659, 2010.

- NEWMANN, William W. The structures of national security decision making: Leadership, institutions, and politics in the Carter, Reagan, and GHW Bush Years. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, v. 34, n. 2, p. 272-306, 2004.
- OLDFIELD, Duane M.; WILDAVSKY, Aaron. Reconsidering the two presidencies. *Society*, v. 26, n. 5, p. 54-59, 1989.
- PANGLE, Thomas L. The spirit of modern republicanism: The moral vision of the American founders and the philosophy of Locke. University of Chicago Press, 1990.
- PECEQUILO, Cristina Soreanu. A política externa dos Estados Unidos: continuidade ou mudança. Porto Alegre: UFRGS Publisher, 3rd edition, 2011.
- PECEQUILO, Cristina Soreanu; FORNER, Clarissa Nascimento. Barack Obama e o Oriente Médio: Um Panorama Crítico (2009/2017). *Carta Internacional*, v. 12, n. 2, p. 101-125, 2017.
- PETERSON, Paul E. The president's dominance in foreign policy making. *Political Science Quarterly*, v. 109, n. 2, p. 215-234, 1994.
- PORTAL PERIODICOS CAPES. Available at: <<http://www.periodicos.capes.gov.br/>>. Accessed on: October 13th, 2016.
- OLSON, Kathryn M. Democratic Enlargement's Value Hierarchy and Rhetorical Forms: An Analysis of Clinton's Use of a PostACold War Symbolic Frame to Justify Military Interventions. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, v. 34, n. 2, p. 307-340, 2004.
- PACH, Chester. The Reagan Doctrine: Principle, Pragmatism, and Policy. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, v. 36, n. 1, p. 75-88, 2006.
- PEAKE, Jeffrey S. Presidential agenda setting in foreign policy. *Political Research Quarterly*, v. 54, n. 1, p. 69-86, 2001.
- PIOUS, Richard M. Inherent war and executive powers and prerogative politics. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, v. 37, n. 1, p. 66-84, 2007.
- PIOUS, Richard M. Prerogative power in the Obama administration: Continuity and change in the war on terrorism. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, v. 41, n. 2, p. 263-290, 2011.
- PRINS, Brandon C.; MARSHALL, Bryan W. Congressional support of the president: A comparison of foreign, defense, and domestic policy decision making during and after the Cold War. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, v. 31, n. 4, p. 660-678, 2001.
- PUTNAM, Robert D. Diplomacy and domestic politics: the logic of two-level games. *International organization*, v. 42, n. 3, p. 427-460, 1988.

- RABE, Stephen G. The Johnson Doctrine. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, v. 36, n. 1, p. 48-58, 2006.
- RELYEA, Harold C. Organizing for homeland security. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, p. 602-624, 2003.
- REX, Justin. The President's War Agenda: A Rhetorical View. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, v. 41, n. 1, p. 93-118, 2011.
- RHODES, Jesse H. The Evolution of Roosevelt's Rhetorical Legacy: Presidential Rhetoric about Rights in Domestic and Foreign Affairs, 1933-2011. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, v. 43, n. 3, p. 562-591, 2013.
- RHODES, Jesse H. Party polarization and the ascendance of bipartisan posturing as a dominant strategy in presidential rhetoric. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, v. 44, n. 1, p. 120-142, 2014.
- RICE, Laurie L. Statements of power: Presidential use of statements of administration policy and signing statements in the legislative process. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, v. 40, n. 4, p. 686-707, 2010.
- ROCKMAN, Bert A. Reinventing What for Whom? President and Congress in the Making of Foreign Policy. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, v. 30, n. 1, p. 133-154, 2000.
- ROSE, Gideon. Neoclassical realism and theories of foreign policy. *World politics*, v. 51, n. 1, p. 144-172, 1998.
- RUSSELL, Greg. Theodore Roosevelt's Diplomacy and the Quest for Great Power Equilibrium in Asia. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, v. 38, n. 3, p. 433-455, 2008.
- SCHRAUFNAGEL, Scot; SHELLMAN, Stephen M. The Two Presidencies, 1984-1998: A Replication and Extension. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, v. 31, n. 4, p. 699-707, 2001.
- SIGELMAN, Lee. A reassessment of the two presidencies thesis. *The Journal of Politics*, v. 41, n. 4, p. 1195-1205, 1979.
- SOFAER, Abraham D. Presidential Power and National Security. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, v. 37, n. 1, p. 101-123, 2007.
- TAYLOR, Bryan C. "The Means to Match Their Hatred": Nuclear Weapons, Rhetorical Democracy, and Presidential Discourse. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, v. 37, n. 4, p. 667-692, 2007.
- VILLALOBOS, José D.; VAUGHN, Justin S.; AZARI, Julia R. Politics or Policy? How Rhetoric Matters to Presidential Leadership of Congress. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, v. 42, n. 3, p. 549-576, 2012.
- WALCOTT, Charles E.; HULT, Karen M. White House structure and decision making: Elaborating the standard model. *Presidential Studies*

Quarterly, v. 35, n. 2, p. 303-318, 2005.

WALTZ, Kenneth N. Foreign policy and democratic politics: The American and British experience. Little, Brown and Company, 1967.

WALTZ, Kenneth N. Theory of international politics. Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1979.

WHEELER, Darren A. Checking Presidential Detention Power in the War on Terror: What Should We Expect from the Judiciary?. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, v. 39, n. 4, p. 677-700, 2009.

WILDAVSKY, Aaron. The Two Presidencies. *Society*, v. 4, n. 2, p. 7-14, 1966.

YOUNG, Laura. Unilateral presidential policy making and the impact of crises. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, v. 43, n. 2, p. 328-352, 2013.

ABSTRACT

How has the relationship between President and Congress impacted the foreign policy of the Barack Obama administration (2009-2017)? The main objectives of this research are to analyze the foreign policy of the Barack Obama administration based on the relationship between President and Congress, testing whether the type of policy, either domestic or foreign, can explain the occurrence of bipartisanship in voting within Congress. The research framework combines the analysis and classification of all 2341 votes cast in the US Senate during the eight years of the Obama administration with a thorough theoretical and historical case study analysis. The findings confirm our expectations. In brief, during the Obama administration, bipartisanship between Republicans and Democrats was greater in foreign policy than in domestic policy.

KEYWORDS

President. Congress. Two Presidencies Thesis.

Received on August 16, 2023

Approved on December 16, 2023

Translated by Igor Estima Sardo