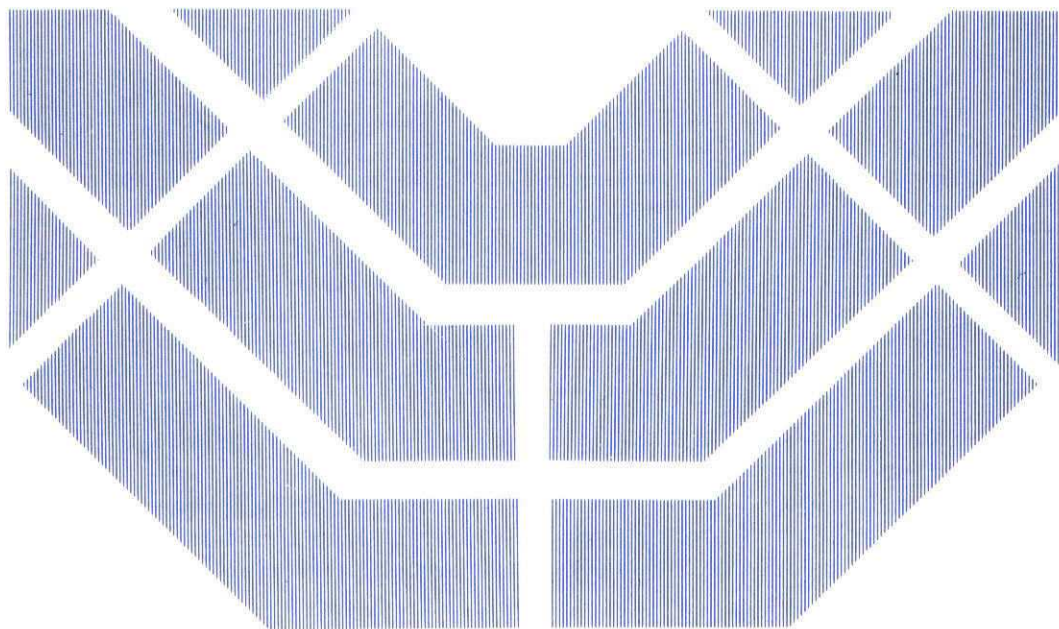


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WILLIAM M. LEOGRANDE  
PHILIP BRENNER  
*The American University*

## *The House Divided: Ideological Polarization Over Aid to the Nicaraguan "Contras"*

This study analyzes voting patterns in the House of Representatives on aid to the Nicaraguan contras during the 98th, 99th, and 100th Congresses, in order to examine three theoretical issues: the importance of ideology as a determinant of congressional voting behavior, the relative importance of conversion and member replacement in explaining congressional policy shifts, and the impact of changes in contextual factors on members' voting decisions. As in many recent studies of defense and foreign policy issues, the member's ideology proved to be the predominant factor in explaining contra aid votes. Party and region were also significant, but the constituency's ideology and the electoral vulnerability of members were not. Though membership replacement was a key factor in the shifting balance between the pro-contra and anti-contra blocs, replacement alone was not sufficient to explain changes in the House majority. Conversion was equally important and proved to be a function of President Reagan's standing in the polls and of events in central America that altered the political atmosphere of the debate. Public opinion on the contra aid issue and the content of aid proposals showed no effect.

The war in Vietnam shattered the bipartisan consensus that had supported U.S. foreign policy since World War II, inaugurating a period of renewed congressional activism (Franck and Weisband 1979; Holsti and Rosenau 1984; Crabb and Holt 1988). During Ronald Reagan's presidency, no issue better exemplified the tension between Congress and the executive than did policy toward Nicaragua. Convinced that vital U.S. security interests were at stake, President Reagan was determined to aid so-called contra rebels in their bid to overthrow the Sandinista government. Liberal Democrats, especially in the House of Representatives, were determined to stop the war. The debate over Nicaragua helped define a new balance of power between Congress and the executive branch in foreign policy.

Over seven years, neither side in that debate was able to win a definitive victory. To opponents of contra aid, it seemed that, no matter how many times they voted the program down, it always managed

to return. For Reagan, it was equally galling that Congress refused to fully fund the program over any sustained period. The administration became so exasperated that, when Congress cut off contra aid in 1984, some officials conspired to keep the aid flowing, as was later disclosed during the Iran-contra scandal.

This study examines voting patterns on aid to the Nicaraguan contras in the House of Representatives during the 98th, 99th, and 100th Congresses. Because the Nicaraguan debate extended over such a long period and was marked by some two dozen floor votes in the House, it provides an excellent opportunity to examine a number of theoretical issues in the field of congressional voting behavior. We focus on three such issues: the importance of ideology as a determinant of members' voting behavior, the relative importance of conversion and member replacement in explaining congressional policy shifts, and the impact of changes in contextual factors on members' voting decisions.

We use a logistic regression to examine the effects of ideology, party, region, and constituency influence on members' support for or opposition to contra aid. Next, we analyze whether the shifts in the House majority from one contra aid vote to another were the result of membership replacement between congresses or the conversion of continuing members. Finally, we use regression analysis to examine contextual factors that might account for member conversion, including presidential influence, public opinion, events in central America, and the content of the aid proposals.

### Determinants of Support and Opposition to Contra Aid

#### *Ideology*

Ideology has long been recognized as an important element in congressional voting behavior. Schneider (1979) argued that all of Clausen's (1973) policy domains could be collapsed into a single dimension of liberalism-conservatism and that conflict along this dimension was increasing. Poole and others (1981; Poole and Rosenthal 1984; Poole and Daniels 1985) reached a similar conclusion after finding a unidimensional structure underlying Senate voting records, and Kritzer (1978) obtained similar results in a study of the House. Using a spatial model of voting, Poole and Rosenthal (1991) concluded that a dominant underlying ideological dimension has characterized congressional voting since 1789.

Smith (1981) found increasing ideological consistency among Senate votes on Clausen's policy dimensions. He concluded that, although the scholars who detected low ideological consistency in the 1950s and 1960s were correct, ideological alignments had become more important in the 1970s. Even some theorists who had hypothesized that ideology was merely a residual category for otherwise unidentified constituent effects have now acknowledged that ideology is important (Kau and Rubin 1979; Kalt and Zupan 1984; Peltzman 1984).

A number of studies have found that, since the war in Vietnam, foreign policy issues have been just as ideologically divisive as domestic ones (Smith 1981; Sinclair 1985; Bernstein and Anthony 1974; Schneider 1979; but see Fleisher and Bond 1988, for a slightly different assessment). Russett (1970), looking at the Senate, and Moyer (1973), looking at the House, both found that voting on defense and foreign policy issues during the 90th and 91st Congresses was closely correlated with voting on domestic issues, leading them to conclude that ideology was the underlying explanatory factor.<sup>1</sup> Recent studies on specific national security issues—for example, on the ABM (Bernstein and Anthony 1974), the B-1 bomber (Fleisher 1985), the nuclear freeze (McCormick, 1985), Senate defense budgeting (Carter 1989), the Panama Canal treaties (McCormick and Black 1983), and human rights legislation (Avery and Forsythe 1979)—have found that ideology is by far the most powerful variable in explaining congressional voting.

The most frequently cited explanation for the ideological polarization of foreign policy is the breakdown of consensus after the war in Vietnam. Most of the studies cited above examine periods during the war or shortly after it, when the Congress and executive were struggling to redefine the institutional division of authority over foreign policy. One aim of this study is to examine whether the apparent dominance of ideology as an explanation of foreign policy voting persisted into the Reagan era, as some initial studies suggest (e.g., Bernstein 1989; Carter 1989), despite Reagan's efforts to reassert strong presidential leadership.

As a measure of ideology, we used the *National Journal's* foreign policy scale, which is designed to measure liberalism specifically on the foreign policy domain (unlike the ADA liberalism scale, which covers all policy domains, cf. Carter 1989).<sup>2</sup> Carson and Oppenheimer (1984) point out that measures like the *National Journal* and ADA ratings confound a member's ideology with partisan and constituent influences because the measures are themselves based on past voting.

But their solution of residualizing ideology scales has its own problems (Bernstein 1985; Morgan 1985; Sanders 1985; Shaffer 1989; VanDoren 1990). There is no simple solution to this difficulty, since factors such as a politician's party affiliation and the constituency he or she comes from are undoubtedly related to a member's ideology in a complex way no statistical technique can disentangle. We understand ideology to be the "personal views and values" of members (Carson and Oppenheimer 1984), which is one factor among many that determine their voting behavior. We are willing to argue, however, that long-term voting patterns are valid, if imperfect, indicators of ideology (for validity studies, see Smith, Herrera, and Herrera 1990; Shaffer 1989).

#### *Party and Region*

Party and region have long been important factors in explaining congressional voting behavior. Partisanship was weaker on foreign policy issues in the 1950s and 1960s (Clausen 1973), but it has risen recently to match the partisan divisions on domestic policy (Collie and Brady 1985). Sharp regional differences have been discernable on national security issues ever since Clausen and Van Horn (1977) first identified the emergence of this policy dimension during the late 1960s. From the outset, southerners tended to be more conservative than their northern colleagues (Sinclair 1985).

The House floor debates over contra aid were extremely partisan, and the leadership on both sides of the aisle exerted enormous pressure on members to adhere to the party position. Southern Democrats, whose party loyalty was presumed to conflict with the conservatism of their constituents, were lobbied with special zeal. But northern Republicans faced a parallel dilemma, though they were fewer in number. A preliminary examination of the floor votes on contra aid indicates that party and region were both salient factors (Table 1).<sup>3</sup> Since the regression analysis controls for the member's ideology in assessing the influence of region, our theoretical interpretation is that the effect of region represents a constituency influence, perhaps reflecting the more conservative ideological preferences of mass opinion in the South.

#### *Other Measures of Constituency Influence*

Conventional wisdom on Capitol Hill held that Ronald Reagan's show of political strength in his 1984 landslide had a sobering effect on congressional Democrats and made many of them hesi-

tate to oppose him on contra aid (Felton 1985; Johnson 1989). Indeed, there is a substantial body of literature (Martin 1976; Sinclair 1977a; Schwarz and Fenmore 1977; Edwards 1978; Pritchard 1986) indicating that presidential electoral success, especially a landslide (Harmon and Brauen 1979; Weinbaum and Judd 1970), tends to raise the level of congressional support for the president's programs.

To operationalize the attitudes of members' constituencies, we used Ronald Reagan's percentage of the district vote in 1984 (Flinn and Wolman 1966; Schwarz and Fenmore 1977; Johannes and McAdams 1981; Pritchard 1986; Langbein and Lotwis 1990). The use of the presidential vote as a surrogate indicator for constituency opinion has become a standard, albeit highly imperfect, solution to the absence of actual opinion data at the congressional district level. Obviously, the absolute level of the presidential vote is affected by a broad range of factors besides constituent attitudes (e.g., candidate image, party identification). Underlying the use of presidential vote as a surrogate indicator is the untested assumption that the relative level of the presidential vote in the districts is nevertheless correlated with constituent attitudes.

For our purposes, however, another and somewhat less problematic interpretation serves equally well. We can interpret Reagan's 1984 vote as a measure of a constituency's relative susceptibility to his appeal for support on the contra aid issue. Assuming members of Congress were cognizant of these constituent views even before the 1984 presidential vote, we can use the vote for Reagan as a surrogate measure of constituency attitudes in the Congress preceding the 1984 election.

Another problem that arises in measuring constituency attitudes is that members respond more to their "reelection constituency" than to their geographical constituency (Fenno 1977). Ideally, to assess the impact of constituents on member voting, we would need to identify each member's reelection constituency and measure its opinion—a formidable task indeed. We conducted a test, albeit crude, to assess whether our focus on formal constituency is masking effects of opinions held by reelection constituencies.

We also expected that a member's sense of electoral vulnerability would prove to be a significant factor in determining support for the president on the contra-aid issue. We used several different measures of vulnerability: electoral margin in the previous election, electoral margin compared to Reagan's margin in 1984, and seniority. We expected that the larger Reagan's 1984 margin was relative to the member's margin, the more likely the member would be to support

Reagan's position on contra aid. When this indicator demonstrated no significant effect, we examined the other two operationalizations.

Vulnerability is, of course, a subjective experience. As Mann (1978) points out, even members who seem to have little objective cause to worry about their prospects for reelection nevertheless run scared. We readily admit that objective measures of vulnerability such as the ones we use may underestimate members' concerns. Nevertheless, our use of objective indicators rests upon the reasonable assumptions that members who won their last election by a narrow margin will feel relatively more vulnerable than members who won handily and that members who are less senior (and therefore have had less experience fending off challengers) will feel more vulnerable than more senior members. We anticipated that the more vulnerable members would tend to vote in ways that could not be used against them in the next election—that is, vulnerable Democrats would be more likely to support contra aid than nonvulnerable ones, and vulnerable Republicans would be more likely to oppose aid.<sup>4</sup>

*Contra Aid Index*

To measure the degree of support for contra aid, we constructed an index based on 19 floor votes taken between 1983 and 1988. The index ranges from 0.0 to 1.0, and represents the proportion of votes cast on which a member opposed contra aid.<sup>5</sup> Although the actual content of the 19 proposals varied considerably, all the votes were portrayed by the White House and congressional leaders as tests of where members stood on the general issue of contra aid. Tests confirmed that the index measures a single dimension.<sup>6</sup> Separate indices were also constructed for each congress (98th, 99th, and 100th) according to the same procedure.<sup>7</sup>

**Data Analysis**

*Preliminary Analysis: Coalitional Patterns on Contra Aid*

Despite the repeated changes in House policy on contra aid, most members were strikingly consistent on the issue. Of the 535 House members who sat in the 98th, 99th, or 100th Congresses, 377 (70.5%) had perfect records either for or against contra aid over 19 floor votes (Table 1). The pro-contra and anti-contra blocs were evenly matched, with 192 members (35.9%) in favor of aid and 185 (34.6%)

TABLE 1  
Pro-Contra, Anti-Contra, and Swing Groups, by Party and Region

Voting Groups	Democrats			Republicans			Total	Mean Liberalism Rating <sup>a</sup>
	North	South	All	North	South	All		
98th Congress								
Pro-contra	6	36	42	103	39	142	184	20.8
Anti-contra	169	34	203	6	0	6	209	72.8
Swing <sup>b</sup>	6	17	23	20	1	21	44	51.0
All Members	181	87	268	129	40	169	437 <sup>c</sup>	48.4
99th Congress								
Pro-contra	3	24	27	89	46	135	162	16.5
Anti-contra	140	13	153	3	0	3	156	76.4
Swing <sup>b</sup>	31	43	74	43	1	44	118	50.4
All Members	174	80	254	135	47	182	436 <sup>c</sup>	47.4
100th Congress								
Pro-contra	5	18	23	110	45	155	178	20.8
Anti-contra	152	39	191	5	0	5	196	71.9
Swing <sup>b</sup>	19	26	45	19	0	19	64	50.1
All Members	176	83	259	134	45	179	438 <sup>c</sup>	47.9
98th through 100th Congresses								
Pro-contra	2	20	22	111	59	170	192	16.4
Anti-contra	160	23	183	2	0	2	185	75.7
Swing <sup>b</sup>	46	59	105	51	2	53	158	51.2
All Members	208	102	310	164	61	225	535	47.1

<sup>a</sup> Mean *National Journal* foreign policy liberalism rating.

<sup>b</sup> Members who voted at least once on both sides of the issue during the time period covered by the table.

<sup>c</sup> Totals more than 435 because some members were replaced during the congress.

opposed. Over six years, only 158 swing members (29.5%) changed sides at least once.<sup>8</sup>

This remarkable consistency tends to confirm the view that once a member's position on an issue is established, later votes follow as a matter of routine. The virtual parity between the pro-contra and anti-contra blocs also explains how the House majority could shift repeatedly despite the stability of most members' voting patterns. With only a handful of votes separating the two blocs, a few swing members always held the balance of power.

Over three congresses, the swing voters proved to be a fairly distinctive group. They were significantly more Democratic than the House as a whole (66.5% versus 57.9%; Pearson chi-square = 302.4,  $p = .001$ ), more likely to be from the South (38.6% versus 30.5%; Pearson chi-square = 43.6,  $p = .001$ ), and more moderate ideologically than either the pro-contra or anti-contra blocs (ANOVA,  $F = 735.0$ ,  $p = .001$ ).

Although the ideological distance between northern and southern Democrats has narrowed somewhat over the years (Bullock 1985; Shaffer 1987), the southerners are still the group to which a Republican president must look in order to build a majority in the Democratic-controlled House. The success of Ronald Reagan's legislative program was largely due to his ability to win the support of these conservative southern Democrats. They supported Reagan even more than would be expected from their ideological leanings (Fleisher and Bond 1983), especially in the realm of foreign policy (Sinclair 1985; Edwards 1986).

The crucial role played by southern Democrats in the contra aid debate is clear from Table 2. Republicans and northern Democrats consistently exhibited very high levels of unity on the issue. The mean unity score for northern Democrats across 19 contra aid votes was .941 against contra aid; for Republicans, it was .918 in favor of aid. Southern Democrats, however, were split down the middle (mean unity = .587), sometimes voting for aid and sometimes against, a split that accounts for the intensity with which they were wooed by both the Democratic leadership and the White House.

Yet, contrary to conventional wisdom, the southerners did not by themselves hold the key to victory. When the congressional majority shifted from a pro-contra to an anti-contra posture or back again, southern Democrats were not the only ones changing their votes. In fact, all three groups tended to shift at the same time and in the same policy direction. When the unity of northern Democrats increased, the unity of Republicans decreased and the southern Democrats were

TABLE 2  
Coalition Unity  
(mean unity scores; numbers in parentheses)

Congress	Northern Democrats	Southern Democrats	Republicans
98th Congress	.956 (181)	.535 (87)	.905 (169)
99th Congress	.933 (174)	.607 (80)	.920 (182)
100th Congress	.939 (176)	.604 (83)	.929 (179)
98th through 100th Congresses			
Mean Unity Overall (n=19)	.941	.587	.918
Mean Unity on Pro-Contra Wins (n=6)	.915	.565	.959
Mean Unity on Anti-Contra Wins (n=13)	.952	.635	.899

likely to side with their party leadership, then the anti-contra coalition prevailed. When the unity of Republicans increased, the unity of northern Democrats usually fell, and a majority of southern Democrats usually sided with the White House; then the pro-contra coalition prevailed. Whatever factors produced erosion or cohesion in one group had parallel effects in the others.

Interestingly, this coalitional pattern confirms informal rules that participants in the contra aid battles used to guide their efforts. On the Democratic side, strategists believed they needed to win 10 or more Republicans and keep their losses of Democrats to fewer than 40 in order to prevail. The "10 or more" rule proved right 17 out of 19 times; the "40 or fewer" rule, 18 out of 19 times.

#### *Regression Results for the Full House*

To analyze the combined effects of ideology, party, region, and constituency influence, we estimated a series of logistic regression models.<sup>9</sup> Separate models were estimated for the House in each congress, and a single model was estimated for the House over the three congresses taken together. The resulting models were all very similar, so we report detailed results only for the model covering the full six-year period (Table 3).

TABLE 3  
Influences on Contra-Aid Voting for All Members  
in the 98th, 99th, and 100th Congresses  
(logistic regression results)

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficient	Standard Error	Standardized Coefficient	T-Value	p <sup>a</sup>
Constant	-13.370	1.092	0.000	-12.247	0.000
Ideology	0.186	0.009	0.680	21.050	0.000
Party	4.785	0.436	0.304	10.984	0.000
Region	1.022	0.353	0.060	2.893	0.002
District Vote for Reagan in 1984	0.019	0.015	0.029	1.293	0.098
Multiple R = .919		Squared Multiple R = .844			
Adjusted Squared Multiple R = .843		Standard Error of Estimate = 3.088			

Note: The model is specified in the following equation:

$$\text{LOGINDEX} = b_0 + b_1(\text{ideology}) + b_2(\text{party}) + b_3(\text{region}) + b_4(\text{Reagan84}) + e$$

The total number of cases includes 519 members of the House who served in the 98th, 99th, or 100th Congresses; 16 cases were omitted because of missing data for the ideology variable.

<sup>a</sup> One-tailed test.

All the models had strong explanatory power, accounting for between 76% and 84% of the variance in the contra-aid index. In all the models, the relative weight of the independent variables was the same: ideology was by far the most important factor, followed by party and region, with Reagan's vote in 1984 being the least important. Ideology always had the highest beta coefficient and it was usually larger than the betas of all other variables combined. The only other consistently significant variable ( $p = .05$ ) was party. On the whole, these results indicate that the underlying complex of factors determining congressional voting on contra aid was highly stable throughout the six-year period under study.

Despite the powerful effects of ideology, we did not find it exerting an increasing effect over time, as did Bernstein and Anthony (1974) in their study of ABM votes in the Senate. We reestimated the logistic regression for each Congress, but including only members who served in all three congresses (to eliminate the effects of turnover). The influence of ideology was actually strongest in the 98th Congress and weakest in the 100th. The influence of party, on the other hand, grew stronger in each Congress, indicating that intraparty pressures on wayward members were effective.<sup>10</sup>

The negative findings of the regression analysis are also interesting. The two variables intended to tap constituency influences—region and the 1984 vote for Reagan—prove to have limited and inconsistent effects. Region is significant ( $p = .05$ ) in the overall model and for the 98th and 99th Congress. In every model its beta coefficients fall well below those for party. Nevertheless, the effect of region was in the expected direction; members from the South were more likely to support the contras than were members from outside the South. This result suggests that members from the South were responding to some constituency effect related to region, apart from their own ideological preferences. Reagan's 1984 vote never even approached significance.

To test whether the weak effects of these two constituency variables were due to their failure to distinguish between members' formal constituencies and their reelection constituencies, we reestimated the overall model and the model for the 99th Congress using a reelection constituency opinion variable in place of region and Reagan's 1984 vote. Although district-level opinion data is unavailable, a May 1985 CBS poll provided opinion data on contra aid at the regional level. We operationalized reelection constituency opinion as the opinion of party identifiers and independents leaning to the member's party in the same region as the member.<sup>11</sup>

A preliminary analysis of the polling data proved to be equivocal. In every region, Republican reelection constituencies were significantly more pro-contra than Democratic ones, and southerners were consistently more pro-contra than people in other regions. However, solid majorities of both Republican and Democratic constituents in every region opposed providing military aid to the contras or helping them overthrow the Nicaraguan government. Even in the South, where 23 Democratic members were consistently pro-contra and 59 were swing voters, Democratic reelection constituencies opposed military aid by a 3 to 1 margin. Moreover, 59 of the 61 Republican members from the South voted consistently for contra aid, even though a majority of Republican constituents also opposed it.<sup>12</sup>

Inclusion of the reelection constituency variable failed to improve the logistic regression models. Although it generally showed a significant effect, in no instance did it strengthen the model (raise  $R^2$ ) or reduce the weight (beta) of ideology. In short, the reelection constituency variable was no better than the formal constituency variables it replaced.<sup>13</sup>

Similarly, none of the measures of electoral vulnerability demonstrated a strong effect on members' support for contra aid. Electoral

margin relative to Reagan's 1984 margin was not significant, and seniority was significant ( $p = .05$ ) only for Democrats in the 98th Congress. Members' simple electoral margin over their most recent opponent performed better; it was significant, though again only for Democrats, in both of the overall models and in most of the models for individual congresses. Unfortunately, it also introduced a serious multicollinearity problem, especially with the party variable. Even when the electoral margin variable demonstrated significant effects, its introduction never raised the overall explanatory strength of a model ( $R^2$ ) by more than .005. Since the party variable was in every case a more powerful explanatory factor than electoral vulnerability, we decided to resolve the multicollinearity problem by dropping the vulnerability variable from the model.

A 1987 opinion poll (The Analysis Group 1987) taken in 10 moderately conservative congressional districts allows us to test more directly the relationship between member's votes and constituent opinion on contra aid. Although the sample is small and was not selected randomly (the pollster picked districts in which the representatives were potential swing voters), it is the only public opinion data available at the congressional-district level on the contra-aid issue. As such, it allows us to conduct a crude check on the validity of our surrogate indicator for constituency opinion (Reagan's 1984 district vote).<sup>14</sup>

In each of the 10 districts, 300 likely voters were asked three questions on contra aid: Would they be more or less likely to vote for a congressional candidate opposing Reagan's request for aid to overthrow the Communist government in Nicaragua? Would they be more or less likely to support a candidate opposing contra aid so that the money could be spent on domestic programs? Were they themselves in favor of or against aid while negotiations were underway to resolve the conflict? In every district, opinion on the first question was closely divided; overall 40% said they were more likely to vote for a contra aid opponent and 44% said they were less likely to vote for one. But when contra aid was put in the context of spending the money at home or withholding it during peace talks, public opposition to contra aid skyrocketed to 69% and 64% respectively. Overall, there was barely any correlation among answers to the three questions (average Pearson  $r = .234$ , none significant).

In these 10 districts, as in the aggregate study, members' ideology was strongly related to members' voting records ( $r = .734$ ,  $p = .02$ ). Reagan's district vote had no relationship at all to members' voting ( $r = .085$ ). Districts represented by Democrats were slightly more pro-contra in their attitudes on all three questions ( $t = -1.486$ ,  $p = .18$ ;

$t = -2.632$ ,  $p = .03$ ; and  $t = -2.530$ ,  $p = .04$  respectively), but Democratic representatives nevertheless had significantly more anti-contra voting records than their Republican colleagues ( $t = -4.87$ ,  $p = .001$ ).

The only significant correlation between constituent opinion on any of the three questions and the contra aid voting records of their representatives (as measured by our contra-aid index) was a negative correlation on the question about spending the funds at home (Pearson  $r = -.766$ ,  $p = .01$ ). That is, in districts where more people opposed contra aid because they preferred to spend the money at home, their representatives were more likely to have pro-contra voting records. This anomalous result is actually an artifact of the effects of partisanship noted above—that is, Republican districts tended to be somewhat less pro-contra in attitude than Democratic districts.

The first vote taken after the Analysis Group poll in October 1987 was the February 3, 1988, vote on Reagan's contra aid proposal, which failed 211–219. Of the 10 members whose districts were surveyed, 7 voted for contra aid and 3 voted against. The polling data show no clear relationship between district opinion and how members voted. On two of the three questions, opinion in districts whose members voted aye was indistinguishable from opinion in districts whose members voted nay. Only on the first question (would the respondent be more or less likely to vote for a contra-aid opponent) was there a relationship that approached significance ( $t = -1.724$ ,  $p = .12$ ). As expected, where opinion was more favorable toward the contras, members were somewhat more likely to have voted for aid. But a month later, when the House adopted the Democratic leadership's alternative instead of Reagan's contra aid proposal (215–210), party was the decisive factor, not district opinion. All six Republicans in the sample supported the president, and all four Democrats voted with their leadership.

The relative unimportance of constituency influence is not entirely surprising. Past studies (Miller and Stokes 1963; Clausen 1973; Bernstein and Anthony 1974; Edwards 1976; Bernstein 1989) have generally found that foreign policy issues are of relatively low salience to voters and that foreign policy votes in Congress are therefore less subject to constituency influence. But it is interesting to find that this pattern seems to hold even on an issue with such a high public profile.

In short, district level analysis confirms that voting decisions on contra aid, even among swing members, tended to reflect their own ideological leanings and partisan loyalties rather than their constituents' opinions. For most members, these influences were reinforcing

rather than cross-cutting, and therefore the vast majority maintained perfect voting records for or against contra aid over three congresses and 19 floor votes.

#### *Regression Results for Swing Voters*

The 158 members who did not vote consistently on contra aid held the balance of power in a Congress that was deeply, but narrowly, divided. Did these members vote inconsistently because they were caught in cross-pressures between their ideology and their party loyalty? Were constituent views more important for these members than for their colleagues? Or must we turn to other, contextual, factors to understand the votes of the swing group? To answer these questions, we first reestimated the regression models described above using just the population of swing members. Again, the results for each congress were similar, so we report detailed results only for the overall model (Table 4).

All the models were much weaker than those based on the full House membership; each of the independent variables was a poorer predictor, and together they accounted for significantly less of the variance ( $R^2$ ) of the dependent variable. Neither region nor Reagan's 1984 vote was significant in any of the models.<sup>15</sup> Party was significant in all but the 99th Congress. None of the specifications of electoral vulnerability achieved significance in any of the models.<sup>16</sup> Ideology was the only consistently significant factor for the swing voters, and in every model it was a much weaker predictor than in the models previously estimated for the entire membership of Congress.

To some extent, these weaker relationships are a necessary statistical result of the reduced variation in the dependent variable, since members at the extremes (with perfect pro-contra or anti-contra voting records) have been eliminated from the analysis. Nevertheless, the findings suggest some important conclusions. Swing members seemed no more motivated by constituent influences than their consistent colleagues, and partisanship was less important for them than for all House members, though it was still a significant influence. Finally, although ideology remained the primary factor in their decision making, it was a weaker factor for them than for other members.

One interpretation that accounts very well for these findings is Matthews and Stimson's (1975) conception of ideology as providing a simple and economical decision rule, especially on issues like contra aid that are seen as having a clear ideological content. Members with relatively strong ideological views have an unambiguous decision rule

TABLE 4  
Influences on Contra-Aid Voting for Swing Members  
in the 98th, 99th, and 100th Congresses  
(logistic regression results)

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficient	Standard Error	Standardized Coefficient	T-Value	$p^a$
Constant	-4.571	0.887	0.000	-5.156	0.000
Ideology	0.077	0.007	0.661	11.308	0.000
Party	1.324	0.255	0.319	5.190	0.000
Region	0.326	0.248	0.081	1.312	0.095
District Vote for Reagan in 1984	-0.007	0.011	-0.036	-0.645	0.260
Multiple R = .820		Squared Multiple R = .673			
Adjusted Squared Multiple R = .664		Standard Error of Estimate = 1.135			

Note: The model is specified in the following equation:

$$\text{LOGINDEX} = b_0 + b_1(\text{ideology}) + b_2(\text{party}) + b_3(\text{region}) + b_4(\text{Reagan84}) + e$$

The number of cases is 156 members of the House who served in the 98th, 99th, or 100th Congresses; the total number of members of the House during those congresses was 535.

<sup>a</sup> One-tailed test.

that produces a consistent voting record on contra aid and makes the voting decision immune to changes in such contextual factors as Reagan's popularity or events in central America. On the other hand, for those with weak ideological predilections, ideology offers an imperfect guide to voting. Kingdon (1989) makes essentially the same argument, pointing out that a person in the ideological center necessarily has a harder time choosing between proposals that may vary from his or her ideal preference in different directions along the policy continuum. We would therefore expect that among members with less extreme ideology scores, ideology would be a weaker predictor and that contextual factors would weigh more heavily. It is to these contextual factors that we now turn our attention.

#### Contextual Factors in the Changing Balance of Forces on Contra Aid

##### *Membership Replacement*

The repeated shifts in the House majority on the contra aid issue contradicted conventional wisdom about how Congress deals with major issues. Most scholars have argued that such policy shifts are

rare because members' issue positions tend to be highly stable over time (Clausen 1973; Kingdon 1989; Sinclair 1977b; Asher and Weisberg 1978; Brady and Sinclair 1984), especially after a member has established his or her position over a number of recorded votes (Asher and Weisberg 1978). Some analysts have argued that membership replacement is the main source of policy innovation in the House (Fiorina 1974; Clausen 1973; Brady and Lynn 1973). Others have held that the conversion of continuing members is also important (Matthews and Stimson 1975; Sinclair 1977b; Sinclair 1982; Asher and Weisberg 1978; Brady and Sinclair 1984).

A similar debate exists among analysts who have sought to explain the shifting House majority on contra aid. Johnson (1989) argues that President Reagan's success at restoring contra aid in 1984 was due primarily to Republican gains in the 1984 congressional elections. Arnson (1989), on the other hand, attributes the shift to what Asher and Weisberg refer to as "issue evolution"—changed circumstances that produced conversions among continuing members.

To determine whether the shifts in congressional support for contra aid proposals were due primarily to turnover or conversion, we compared the voting records of the outgoing members of the 98th and 99th Congress with the records of their successors. The 43 seats that changed hands in the 1984 election were evenly divided between pro-contra and anti-contra members during the 98th Congress: 19 were held by members with perfect pro-contra records, 20 by members with perfect anti-contra records, and 4 by swing voters (Table 5). On average, these outgoing members contributed a net 0.1 votes to the pro-contra aid coalition on each floor vote during the 98th Congress.

Their replacements, however, voted overwhelmingly in favor of contra aid, making an average net contribution to the pro-contra coalition of 18.6 votes on each contra-aid roll call during the 99th Congress. Of the 43 replacements, 25 had perfect pro-contra records, whereas only five had perfect anti-contra records; the other 13 were swing voters. Since the contra-aid index is the proportion of votes cast against contra aid, it can also be interpreted as the probability that a member will vote against a new contra-aid proposal, based on the member's past votes. By substituting the expected value of the votes cast by outgoing members of the 98th Congress for the actual votes their replacements cast during the 99th Congress, we can estimate whether the contra-aid floor votes during the 99th Congress would have come out differently if there had been no member replacement.

Even though the freshmen in the 99th Congress were more strongly pro-contra than the members they replaced, the new class pro-

TABLE 5  
Member Turnover and Support for Contra Aid  
between the 98th and 99th Congresses  
and the 99th and 100th Congresses

Outgoing Members	Replacements in the Next Congress			
	Pro-contra	Swing	Anti-contra	Total
98th Congress				
Pro-contra	12	6	1	19
Swing	3	1	0	4
Anti-contra	10	6	4	20
Total	25	13	5	43
99th Congress				
Pro-contra	14	5	8	27
Swing	3	3	4	10
Anti-contra	3	2	8	13
Total	20	10	20	50

vided the margin of victory for the White House on only one floor vote. Of the 10 votes cast on contra aid during the 99th Congress, opponents of contra aid lost 5. The margin of their defeat on four of these was far in excess of the freshmen's net contribution to the pro-contra coalition. Only the second vote for military aid in June 1986 (*CQ* vote no. 178), which the White House narrowly won, might have turned out differently if the members of the 98th Congress instead of the 99th had been voting on it. That vote was, however, an enormously important one. It restored military aid to the contras for the first time since 1984 and recommitted the United States to the war.

In the 1986 elections, 50 House seats changed hands. Among the outgoing members, 27 had perfect pro-contra records, 13 had perfect anti-contra records, and 10 were swing voters. On the average floor vote, they contributed a net 12.0 votes to the pro-contra coalition. Their replacements in the 100th Congress tended to be less favorable to contra aid. On the four contra-aid floor votes taken during the 100th Congress, the freshman class made an average net contribution to the pro-contra camp of just 1.0 vote. However, the two most critical votes on contra aid during the 100th Congress were both extremely close, with the anti-contra coalition prevailing by just eight votes in one case and five votes in the other (*CQ* votes no. 7 and 24). Had there been no member replacement between the 99th and 100th Congresses, the White House would probably have won both these votes, thereby

extending additional military aid to the contras. The defeat of these proposals marked the beginning of U.S. disengagement.

In summary, a comparison of the voting records of outgoing members and freshman members across the three congresses indicates that turnover did have a significant impact on the balance of forces between the pro-contra and anti-contra coalitions. The 1984 election added about 18 votes to the pro-contra coalition, giving it the margin necessary to eventually reverse the ban on military aid to the contras that Congress had imposed before the election. The 1986 election reduced the pro-contra coalition by 11 votes, allowing opponents of contra aid to narrowly defeat President Reagan's requests for additional military assistance.

Although new members provided the margin of victory on several key votes in both the 99th and 100th Congresses, member replacement alone is not sufficient to account for the shift in the House majority. There was significant movement among continuing members as well, and two of the most important votes on contra aid—the 1985 resumption of nonmilitary aid and the 1986 resumption of military aid—both came on proposals that had been defeated earlier in the same session.

### *Member Conversion*

Asher and Weisberg (1978) argue that member conversion is produced mainly by issue evolution—a change in conditions that renders established voting records less relevant. Journalistic accounts of the main contra-aid debates (e.g., Felton 1985; Felton 1986; Pressman 1987; Felton and Hook 1988) and our interviews with members suggest that several contextual factors played a role in changing members' votes. The factors most often mentioned were events in the region, the specific content of particular contra-aid proposals, and shifts in the president's standing in the polls.

However, we found very little evidence of members being converted in the traditional sense of gradually evolving a new position. Few members voted consistently on one side of the issue, then changed position and voted consistently on the other side. In fact, no one who served in more than a single congress strictly fits this pattern, and only about 20 members come close (fitting it except for one or two deviant votes). Most of those members fall into two identifiable groups: moderate Republicans who switched from an anti-contra position in the 98th Congress to a pro-contra position thereafter; and Democrats (plus a few Republicans) who switched from an anti-contra to a pro-

contra position in 1985 between the April and June votes on the Republican proposal to restore nonlethal aid.

In addition to these converted members, there was one other identifiable cluster—more than a dozen members, most of them moderately conservative Democrats, who followed the lead of Dave McCurdy (D.-OK) and hence came to be known as the McCurdy group. This was the only explicitly organized caucus of swing members, and it used its position for bargaining leverage with both the administration and the House leadership. Like the converted Democrats, members of the McCurdy group switched from an anti-contra to a pro-contra position between the April and June 1985 votes on nonlethal assistance. The McCurdy group, however, switched back again in 1986, voting against the president's requests for \$100 million in military aid and then maintaining a more or less consistent anti-contra aid position.

To assess the combined effect of the contextual factors acting on the swing voters, we conducted an OLS regression analysis in which the dependent variable was the margin of votes for or against contra aid, using the 19 floor votes as cases. We calculated the dependent variable by subtracting the number of pro-contra votes from anti-contra votes. The independent variables included the impact of regional events, public opinion toward President Reagan and toward his Nicaragua policy, and the contents of the aid proposals. We turn now to a closer examination of these variables.

*The impact of regional events.* Events in central America seemed to have a significant impact on several key contra aid votes (LeoGrande 1987b; Arnson 1989). The 1984 revelation that the CIA had mined Nicaragua's harbors contributed to the total prohibition on contra aid later that year. The tables were turned in 1985 when Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega travelled to Moscow, angering many House members and leading some to switch from an anti-aid to a pro-aid position. Finally, the 1986 revelation that the Reagan administration had illegally diverted funds to the contras from the Iranian arms sale profits was a key factor in reassembling an anti-contra aid majority in the House.

To assess the impact of key events, we used a three-point ordinal scale to represent votes that were taken shortly after a dramatic event that bolstered anti-aid sentiment (the mining of Nicaraguan harbors and the revelation of the Iran-contra scandal), votes taken in a relatively neutral atmosphere, and votes taken after an event that bolstered pro-aid sentiment (Ortega's Moscow trip).

*Public opinion.* A considerable literature indicates that presi-

dential influence in Congress is stronger when the president's standing in the polls is high (Neustadt 1980; Edwards 1976; Fleisher and Bond 1983; Bond and Fleisher 1980; Rivers and Rose 1985). President Reagan was an active advocate on behalf of the contra-aid program. He invited wavering members to meet with him at the White House, he lobbied them by phone, and he tried to mobilize public pressure on them by giving major television addresses on the eve of critical votes.

President Reagan did seem to have more success when the public's rating of his job performance was high as measured by the Gallup poll. During 1983-84, when his popularity was in the 40-50% range and still recovering from the 1982 recession, Reagan lost every contra-aid vote. When his popularity soared (into the 55-65% range) after his landslide reelection, he won the key votes that allowed him to restore aid to the contras. Then when Reagan's popularity plummeted back below 50% after the Iran-contra scandal broke, he lost every subsequent contra-aid vote. Reagan's ratings on the handling of foreign policy were generally lower than his overall ratings, but they rose and fell in close parallel with the ratings of his overall performance.

At the same time, however, the public consistently disapproved of the way President Reagan was handling the situation in Nicaragua and opposed giving support to the contras. When pollsters first began asking about aid to the contras in early 1983, they found that about 60% of the public opposed it and only about 25% favored it. These proportions remained unchanged over the succeeding years. In March and April 1986, 62% of respondents opposed aiding the contras and less than 30% were in favor, and polls taken in mid-1988 still showed 57% opposed and only 27% in favor (LeoGrande 1987a; Gallup 1988).

For the regression analysis, President Reagan's public support was operationalized in two ways: first, as the difference between the percentage of respondents approving his overall job performance and the percentage of those disapproving at the time of each vote; second, as the difference between the percentage of respondents approving his foreign policy performance and the percentage of those disapproving. Two different operationalizations of opinion on Reagan's Nicaragua policy were also used: the difference between the percentage of respondents approving Reagan's handling of the situation in Nicaragua and the percentage disapproving; and the difference between the percentage of respondents favoring aid to the contras and the percentage opposed.<sup>17</sup>

*Proposal content.* The content of the 19 proposals voted on over the three congresses varied enormously. They ranged from prohi-

bitions on all forms of contra aid to authorization of \$100 million in military aid and included nonlethal aid packages, humanitarian aid (food and medicine) packages, and bills limiting how the U.S. government could deliver the aid. We expected that, the larger the amount of aid requested and the less restrictive the conditions on it, the smaller the pro-aid coalition would be, and vice-versa.

This was certainly the working hypothesis of the members who wrote the various proposals. The pro-aid and anti-aid blocs were constantly conferring with the swing members to find out how much or how little aid they could tolerate and then crafting proposals for maximum appeal. Influential swing members like McCurdy were sometimes able to virtually dictate the details of proposals on both sides.

Various specifications of the content of proposals were tried in the regression analysis, including the dollar amount of aid provided in each proposal, a rank ordering of the proposals based on the amount of aid provided and the restrictions imposed on its use, and an ordinal categorization of proposals into four groups based on their similarity along a dimension from least supportive of the rebels to most supportive. The four groups of proposals were complete prohibitions on contra aid, highly restrictive humanitarian aid proposals, less restrictive nonlethal aid proposals, and military aid proposals.

*Results of the regression analysis of contextual factors.* The only significant explanatory factors identified by the regression analysis were presidential popularity and key events (Table 6). President Reagan's overall popularity and his approval rating on foreign policy were highly intercorrelated (Pearson  $r = .933$ ) so one of them had to be dropped from the model to prevent multicollinearity. Since opinion on Reagan's handling of foreign policy proved to be the slightly better predictor, it was included in the final model, but the results of an alternative model using Reagan's overall approval were not very different. Table 6 presents regression results for a full model including general opinion, issue specific opinion, proposal content, and events variables.<sup>18</sup> It also presents results for a reduced model that includes only the two significant variables, general opinion and events.

The impact of public opinion on members' voting decisions was not issue specific; attitudes on Reagan's policy toward Nicaragua had no significant effect on the vote margin. Members of the House did not look to the polls to see how their constituents wanted them to vote on contra aid; they looked to the polls to see how much support Ronald Reagan could command from the public. Surprisingly, none of the variables measuring the content of contra aid proposals demonstrated any significant effect; even the swing members seem to have

TABLE 6  
Contextual Factors Affecting Votes on Contra-Aid  
in the 98th, 99th, and 100th Congresses  
(logistic regression results)

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficient	Standard Error	Standardized Coefficient	T-Value	<i>p</i> <sup>a</sup>
<b>Full Model</b>					
Constant	25.676	38.085	0.000	0.674	0.255
President Reagan's Popularity	-1.168	1.161	-0.377	-1.005	0.163
Public Opinion toward Administration's Policy in Nicaragua	0.788	1.510	0.134	0.522	0.306
Amount of Aid Proposed	-0.056	0.306	-0.042	-0.182	0.429
Events in Central America	39.819	22.497	0.525	1.770	0.052
Number of Votes = 16					
Multiple R = .789					
Adjusted Squared Multiple R = .485					
Squared Multiple R = .622					
Standard Error of Estimate = 31.213					
<b>Reduced Model</b>					
Constant	13.787	6.865	0.000	2.008	0.031
President Reagan's Popularity	-0.970	0.508	-0.614	-1.908	0.037
Events in Central America	-61.174	18.666	-0.316	-3.277	0.003
Number of Votes = 19					
Multiple R = .766					
Adjusted Squared Multiple R = .534					
Squared Multiple R = .586					
Standard Error of Estimate = 27.341					

Note: The full model is specified in the following equation:

$$\text{MARGIN} = b_0 + b_1(\text{Reaganpop}) + b_2(\text{caopin}) + b_3(\text{amount}) + b_4(\text{event}) + e$$

The reduced model is specified in the following equation:

$$\text{MARGIN} = b_0 + b_1(\text{Reaganpop}) + b_2(\text{event}) + e$$

<sup>a</sup> One-tailed test.

regarded the various proposals as simply pro-contra or anti-contra, regardless of the details.

In the reduced model, opinion regarding Reagan's handling of foreign policy showed a stronger effect. With a coefficient of -.97, the

impact of Reagan's standing in the polls is quite straightforward: for every percentage point increase in public approval of his handling of foreign policy, or his overall job performance, he could expect to pick up one vote in favor of contra aid.

Key events also proved to be a significant factor. In particular, the votes held in the wake of Ortega's Moscow trip showed substantially greater pro-contra margins of support. It should be noted, however, that Ortega's Moscow trip was not the only important event that occurred between the April and June votes on nonlethal aid. The defeat of the Democratic leadership's alternative humanitarian aid package (the Barnes-Hamilton amendment) in April embittered a number of conservative Democrats, leading them to openly declare that they would support Reagan at the next opportunity. Since that vote occurred just 24 hours before Ortega's Moscow trip and since members cited both events as pivotal, it is impossible to disentangle their effects. Finally, the signing of the Central American Peace Accord in August 1987 had an important effect that does not show up in the voting data. The administration judged that the success of the diplomatic process had badly weakened the pro-contra aid coalition, so Reagan delayed his request for more military aid until 1988.

To control for the effects of member replacement, we reestimated the full and reduced model using as the dependent variable the vote margin only among members who served in all three congresses. In the reestimated models, public opinion showed less influence on vote margins and events showed more influence, but they remained the only two explanatory variables that even approached levels of significance.<sup>19</sup>

### Conclusion: Ideology and Atmospheric

Two major findings stand out from our analysis: first, ideology was the predominant factor accounting for voting decisions on contra aid; second, shifts in the congressional majority were produced by a combination of member replacement and conversion. Interestingly, the conversion of continuing members on the contra-aid issue did not follow a gradual or stable pattern; most members who changed sides did so more than once, swinging back and forth between the two stable blocs.

Ideology was by far the most powerful determinant of a member's voting record. Party was also important, but constituency influences had little effect. When ideology is combined with party and region, they account for about 80% of the variance in voting. It is not

surprising, therefore, that the vast majority of House members have perfectly consistent voting records on contra aid. However, the explanatory power of these factors declines considerably when we focus on the members who changed sides on the issue at least once. Ideology still remains far more important than the other factors, but together they account for only between one-half and two-thirds of the variance in voting. Neither constituent ideology nor electoral vulnerability improved as explanations. To understand why the House majority swung back and forth on contra aid, we had to look to contextual factors affecting different votes.

Both member replacement and conversion contributed to the House majority shifting between an anti-contra and a pro-contra position. Turnover in the 1984 and 1986 elections foreshadowed how the House would move. The pro-contra camp gained over a dozen votes in the 1984 election—not enough to assure victory but enough that shifts by a few continuing members would be decisive. Similarly, the anti-contra camp gained almost a dozen votes in the 1986 election, which proved equally important. Member conversion also played a crucial role, with conversion caused by shifts in the political wind—that is, changes in the president's standing in the polls and dramatic regional events.

Given the depth of the differences and the unshakable stance of most members, there seemed to be little basis for the reestablishment of true bipartisanship on contra aid or foreign policy generally. The division over contra aid was not a product of unique circumstances. Rather, it developed out of the deep ideological cleavage that characterizes the Congress, particularly the House of Representatives, and the contemporary habit of debating foreign policy with an intensity that used to be reserved for domestic issues. With Congress under Democratic control and a Republican president in the White House, policy differences rooted in ideology and partisanship inevitably take on an institutional dimension. Indeed, it is precisely this interaction that makes the achievement of a bipartisan foreign policy so difficult. If Congress and the executive are led by the same party, their ideological homogeneity could form the basis for cooperation across the institutional division of power. But if each party dominates one branch of government while the ideological gap between the parties widens, the stage is set for prolonged conflict.

*William M. LeoGrande is Professor of Government in the School of Public Affairs, The American University, Washington, DC 20016. Philip Brenner is Chair of the Department of International Poli-*

*tics and Foreign Policy in the School of International Service, The American University, Washington, DC 20016.*

## NOTES

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1. By contrast, studies examining votes before the war in Vietnam found that congressional voting on foreign policy issues was not closely related to voting on domestic issues and was not so polarized (MacRae 1958; Clausen 1973).

2. Because of the on-going debate between those who argue that members' voting patterns are specific to particular policy domains and those who argue that a single ideological dimension underlies all domains, our preliminary analysis employed two indicators of ideology: general liberalism, as measured by the annual ratings of the Americans for Democratic Action (ADA), and foreign policy liberalism, as measured by the *National Journal*.

The ADA scale is based on past votes in both the domestic and foreign policy areas. If one assumes that domestic issues are still somewhat more partisan than foreign policy issues, one might expect the ADA scale to confound ideology and partisanship more than the *National Journal* scale. In all our analyses, whether of the full House membership over three congresses or of the House in each congress, that expectation seemed to be borne out. Ideology as measured by the *National Journal* showed lower standardized regression coefficients than the ADA scale, but party showed stronger effects in each of those models. Since the *National Journal* scale appeared to be a more discriminating indicator of ideological influences as distinct from partisan concerns, we rely on the *National Journal* indicator as the more valid measure.

Smith, Herrera, and Herrera (1990) found that this scale was the only one of the *National Journal's* three policy-specific ideology scales that demonstrated discriminant validity; the other scales appeared to be measuring the same general ideological orientation.

The *National Journal* scale is empirically derived, following a long tradition of efforts to identify policy dimensions underlying congressional voting behavior (e.g., MacRae 1958; Clausen 1973; Brady and Sinclair 1984). The votes included in the scale are identified by principal components analysis and their weight in the index is determined by their factor loading (Cohen 1982). Members are then rank-ordered according to the liberalism of their voting record as measured by these weighted scores, and they are assigned a final score based on their percentile ranking.

The *National Journal* scales include some of the same contra-aid votes used in the contra aid index, but its method of scale construction makes it difficult to eliminate the dependent variable component. Consequently, in the analyses of the separate congresses, we have lagged the *National Journal* scale scores (McCormick 1985; Carson and Oppenheimer 1984), using the average scores from the previous congress as the independent variable. In the overall analysis of all three congresses, we have used the average *National Journal* scores for the entire time period, recognizing that the independent variable is slightly contaminated.

The *National Journal* scales exhibit adequate reliability. The mean Pearson product moment correlation coefficient among the annual scales was .88 and the lowest was .75 ( $p = .001$ ). A two-year average *National Journal* scale was computed for each congress, and these reliabilities were higher. The mean correlation coefficient among the

two-year scales was .91, and the coefficients between the scales for successive congresses were .91, .96, and .95 respectively ( $p = .001$ ). All statistical procedures used herein were accessed through SYSTAT 4.0 (Wilkinson 1988).

3. We use the *Congressional Quarterly's* definition of the South as including Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia. In our regression analyses, dummy variables were used for party (Democrats = 1, Republicans = 0) and region (non-South = 1, South = 0).

4. Since the expected effects differ by party, we entered these indicators into the regression model using interactive terms that combine dummy variables on party with the interval measures of vulnerability (Fleisher and Bond 1983):

$$b_i (\text{PARTY} * \text{VUL}) + b_j (\text{RPARTY} * \text{VUL})$$

Where *PARTY* is a dummy variable with Democrats coded 1 and Republicans 0; *RPARTY* is a dummy variable, with Republicans coded 1 and Democrats 0; and *VUL* is the measure of vulnerability, either electoral margin or years seniority.

5. A member's index score equals the number of votes cast against contra aid divided by the total number of votes cast on either side of the issue. This score is insensitive to how many of the 19 votes the member participated in. The index was constructed so that a perfect voting record against contra aid would score 1.0, thereby corresponding to the indices for the independent variable, ideology, on each of which a perfect liberalism score is 1.0. The votes included in the index are identified by *Congressional Quarterly* roll-call number: 1983, nos. 264, 265, 270, 377; 1984, no. 162; 1985, nos. 58, 60, 61, 140, 142, 143; 1985, nos. 58, 178, 179, 181; 1987, no. 30; 1988, nos. 7, 24, 157.

6. A principal components factor analysis of the matrix of interitem correlations (Anderson et al. 1966) found a single factor accounting for 82.7% of the total variance, with the lowest factor loading for any item at .80. The second best factor accounted for only 3.0% of the variance. The Pearson split-halves reliability was .97 (Bartlett chi-square = 1514.0,  $p = .001$ ), and all the interitem correlations were above .70 ( $p = .001$ ).

An alternative index was constructed using item factor loadings as weights, but the variation in the weights was so slight that the weighted index was virtually identical to the unweighted index (the Pearson correlation between them approached 1.0). We decided, therefore, to proceed with the unweighted index in order to remain as close to the original data as possible.

7. Correlations among the indices for each congress were .94, .95, and .91, all significant at  $p = .001$ . Principal components factor analyses of the matrices of interitem correlations for each index showed single underlying factors accounting for 90.8%, 83.1%, and 82.9% of the variance of each, respectively.

8. The degree of consistency was even higher in the 98th and 100th Congresses, where only 44 (10.0%) and 64 (14.6%) members were swing voters. Most of the shifts came during the 99th Congress, when 118 members (27.1%) changed position. The larger number of swing voters in the 99th Congress is probably a function of contextual factors, discussed in the last section of this article.

9. Logistic regression (based on the logistic transformation of the dependent variable— $\log[Y_i/(1-Y_i)]$ ) was used because the dependent variable has both an upper and a lower bound and data plots clearly indicated that the form of the function is non-linear (Aldrich and Nelson 1984).

10. The standard coefficient of ideology was .926 in the 98th Congress, .872 in the 99th, and .666 in the 100th. The standard coefficient for party increased from .025 to .088 to .244.

11. The aggregation of opinion data at the regional level obviously introduces considerable measurement error, since districts within regions may vary enormously. Nevertheless, the test is worth conducting, since public opinion on contra aid did differ significantly by region in the CBS poll. The opinion of the reelection constituency was calculated as the percentage of Democratic or Republican identifiers and leaners who opposed contra aid minus the percentage who supported it. The CBS poll asked three relevant questions: whether people supported U.S. efforts to oust the Nicaraguan government, whether they supported giving military aid to the contras, and whether they supported humanitarian aid. We used responses to the three questions as alternate specifications of the reelection constituency variable. The humanitarian aid question had no statistically significant effect. Responses to the other questions were so highly correlated (Pearson  $r = .984$ ,  $p = .000$ ) that they were essentially equivalent. Results are reported for the question on military aid.

12. On the issue of providing military aid to the contras, the distribution of opinion among party identifiers and leaners was as follows:

Region	Republicans	Democrats
Northeast		
Support aid	33.3%	14.9%
Oppose aid	66.7	85.1
Midwest		
Support aid	35.3	17.1
Oppose aid	64.7	82.9
South		
Support aid	43.9	25.1
Oppose aid	56.1	74.9
West		
Support aid	38.0	12.9
Oppose aid	62.0	87.1

13. For example, when reelection constituency opinion is substituted for region and Reagan's 1984 vote in the model in Table 3,  $R^2$  remains constant at .844, and the beta weight of ideology drops just slightly, from .680 to .661. In some of the models for specific congresses, the beta weight of ideology actually increases as a result of the substitution.

14. In our logistical regression, constituency opinion (as measured by the surrogate indicator) showed no effect on members' voting. Obviously, this result could be due to the invalidity of the indicator rather than to the absence of a real relationship. If even a small nonrandom sample of districts showed a positive relationship between actual constituency opinion and members' voting, the validity of the surrogate indicator would be thrown into doubt. The absence of such a relationship in the sample of key districts gives somewhat greater confidence about the surrogate indicator's validity.

15. When reelection constituency opinion was substituted for region and Reagan's 1984 vote in the model for swing voters, it was not statistically significant either.

16. The multicollinearity problem with the electoral vulnerability measures that we found in the full Congress were also present in the swing group, but since none of the measures of electoral vulnerability achieved significance, there was no need to keep any of them in the models.

17. The data on public support for aiding the contras were compiled from Gallup, ABC/*Washington Post* and CBS/*New York Times* polls. All the rest of the data were from Gallup.

18. The issue-specific opinion variable included in the model on Table 8 is Reagan's handling of the situation in Central America rather than support for contra aid, since the former yielded models that accounted for a significantly greater proportion of the variance in the dependent variable. The content variable included in the model is the amount of contra aid. Correlations among the three content variables (amount of aid, rank ordering of proposals based on amount and restrictiveness, and ordinal categories based on types of proposal) were very high. The amount variable was used since it is interval-level rather than ordinal.

19. In the reduced model, the regression coefficient for public opinion was  $-.41$  ( $t = .913$ ,  $p = .187$ , one-tailed test), and for events it was  $20.47$  ( $t = 2.174$ ,  $p = .023$  one-tailed test).

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*Edited by*  
MICHAEL L. MEZEY  
*DePaul University*

## *Legislative Research Reports*

The papers abstracted below were presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Chicago, September 1992.

### REPRESENTATION

*"Representation of the Oppressed in the United States Congress: Structural Limits on Capitalist Democracy." John Berg (Suffolk University).*

The cases of African Americans during both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and of organized labor during the Carter administration suggest that oppressed groups tend to enter Congress on the crest of a wave of mass protest. As the wave subsides, they turn from a strategy of protest to one of accommodation, characterized by their representatives' use of their institutional positions to further group ends. However, such groups generally discover that even though they are in Congress, they are still on the losing side of the structure of power and unable to use their institutional position effectively to institute change.

*"Sex and Representation: A Comparison of American and Australian State Legislators." Iva Deutchman (Hobart and William Smith Colleges).*

Claims about the sources of gender difference in the legislature are tested through a survey-and-interview comparison of six U.S. and eight Australian state and territorial legislatures. Women do not lag behind their male counterparts on tests of formal education or past employment history, but marital status and child-