Congressional Veterans and the Foreign Policy Power

by

Ben Nellans

An Honors Thesis

Submitted to fulfill the
Requirements for Graduation with Honors in Political Science

at

Indiana University Bloomington

Student’s Graduation Date (05/12)

Advisors:

Thesis Advisor
Date 5/12/12
Russell Hanson

Reader
Date 5/12/12
Michael Faber

Director of Honors Program
Date
Gerald C. Wright
The United States is currently involved in the last stages of a war in Iraq as well as a Global War on Terror. Furthermore, according to CBS news, Mitt Romney, Newt Gingrich, and Rick Santorum, the top three candidates in the Republican Presidential Primary, all stated their willingness to go to war with Iran to prevent it from acquiring nuclear weapons (Montopoli 2011). These instances demonstrate that the stakes of United States foreign policy are extremely important. In the next several years the government will have to make crucial decisions with regard to North Korea, Iran, and the Global War on Terror. Thus it is important to understand how these decisions will be made and what role Congress will have in that process. This article seeks to explain circumstances that may influence Congress’ willingness to challenge the Executive in matters of foreign policy.

The theory that the Executive Branch, and the President in particular, dominate foreign policy making in the United States has persisted in the political science community for decades. The idea was popularized in 1966 when Aaron Wildavsky proposed the theory of the dual presidency. He suggested that the President had a high level of dominance in matters of foreign policy. Thus he claimed that there were two Presidencies: one on domestic issues where the President dealt with an active and opinionated public and Congress, and one on foreign policy where the people and Congress were disinterested (Lee 1980, 620). In 1974, in the height of Vietnam War, Les Aspin addressed the issue with great concern, as though the President’s dominance over Congress was a foregone conclusion.
When looking at current events it is not hard to see why these ideas originated. By the end of George W Bush's Presidency support for the Iraq War all but disappeared. In 2005, with three years remaining in Bush's Presidency a CBS poll reported that 59 percent of Americans believed the war was not worth the cost and 52 percent of Americans believed the United States should pull out as soon as possible (Roberts 2009). The American people and the President seemed to be on different wavelengths with regard to the conflict. Despite the lack of public support Congress continued to vote in favor of funding the war. Current Vice President Joe Biden defended his decision to vote in favor of continuing to fund the War in Iraq, saying, "I will not cut funding for the troops that denies them the equipment they need to be safe." It seemed that the political repercussions of appearing to not support the troops were too great for Congress to challenge the President.

One of the most important moments in this power struggle came in 1976 with Congress' passage of the War Powers Resolution over President Nixon's veto. The resolution requires that when possible the President will consult Congress before the beginning of hostilities and that 48 hours after armed forces enter hostilities the President will submit a written report to both branches of Congress. Most importantly it states that the President can leave troops deployed for no longer than sixty days without Congressional approval or a declaration of war (Burgin 1992).

The resolution was passed with the intention of limiting the President's foreign policy powers by creating a system of accountability. This resolution has remained controversial and its constitutionality has been questioned. Nonetheless
its application has largely increased the Executive's war making powers. As Eileen Burgin writes: "But to date no President has fully accepted the spirit of the legislation. Moreover, Congress has never demanded a faithful execution of the law; it has been unable to generate the requisite will to do so" (Burgin 1992, 217). Since the law allows the President to deploy troops for sixty days without congressional approval there is a strong presumption that the Executive can initiate international conflicts at will. As a result Presidents have begun using the law to their advantage by initiating conflicts and then testing Congress' willingness to enforce the withdrawal period. The combination of concern for the troops and party loyalty has made it difficult for Congress to do so.

However, while the Executive may seem to have a stranglehold over foreign policy making, history demonstrates this is clearly an oversimplification. In 1972 the Senate voted to stop funding the United States' military operations in the war in Southeast Asia (Aspin 70). While military action continued in countries such as Vietnam until 1975, this challenge was nonetheless notable. In voting to end the conflict the Senate placed political pressure on the President.

More recently in 2011 President Obama launched missile strikes to assist the rebels in Libya. The House of Representative promptly passed a bill declaring that the President shall not send United States troops to Libya. In this case the results are debated, because the United States never sent combat troops to Libya, although the United States assisted in securing important economic locations with the United Nations after the conflict had ended. The bill itself is still a significant challenge to Executive authority, because it instructed the President to not take a particular
course of military action and to an extent the President abided by not sending United States ground troops into a conflict.

Actions such as these demonstrate that Congress is not simply a rubber stamp for the President’s foreign policy agenda. In contrast, it suggests that there are issues and circumstances where Congress is willing to challenge the Executive. Examples such as these are the cause of an ongoing debate among political scientists about what Congress’ role in foreign policy is and what compels it to act.

At one extreme many scholars continue to support Aaron Wildavsky theory. These thinkers generally contend that Congress either is totally inactive or acts in futility, failing to generate any results. Arthur Schlesinger was extremely vocal in criticizing the American government for allowing the separation of powers to erode. He went so far as to claim that “by the early 1970’s the American President has become on issues of war the most absolute monarch (with the possible exception of Mao Tse-Tung of China) among the great powers of the world” (Howell and Pevehouse 2005 211). The comparison to Mao is extreme and was most likely used to sensationalize the balance of power issue. Nonetheless, there was real concern among those who subscribed to this theory that the people’s voices went unheard in matters of foreign policy.

Several modern scholars countered this theory by adding nuance to the argument. Ralph Carter revisited the Congress’ foreign policy actions, evaluating whether Wildavsky’s theory was valid. He began with analysis of Spiegelman’s collection of congressional box scores from 1957-1972. This set of legislation was selected as a criticism of Wildavsky, who included many trivial and non-
controversial foreign policy votes in his studies. In examining major policy requests, he found that there was only a one percent difference in congressional support of domestic issues versus foreign issues (Carter 1986, 330). Since it is largely accepted that the President does not monopolize domestic policy making powers, this negligible difference clearly demonstrates that the Executive does not completely dominate foreign policy. Carter explained every congressional act in his study through situational and historic factors rather than attempting to develop a general theory for Congressional foreign policy behavior. Thus it does not provide the political science community with any real means of tracking or predicting Congress' level of activeness over these issues. It simply provides an effective tool for retrospective analysis. Given a critical distance from a major policy issue this theory allows analysts to understand why Congressmen did or did not challenge the President.

On the other hand, Howell and Pevehouse start from the premise that Congressmen act in the interest of their own reelection, suggesting that Congressmen are only likely to be active on issues that are of concern to constituents. This theory of congressional behavior is commonly applied to domestic issues. Wildavsky previously discounted it in regard to foreign policy, because he observed that the public was largely unconcerned with those policy decisions. Yet Howell and Pevehouse demonstrate that it is a grand generalization to suggest that the public does not care about any foreign issues. In their article they explain,

"While Congress does not appear to constrain the President's
capacity to initiate low-level military maneuvers, sizable effects are observed for major military ventures – the very events that can have electoral consequences for Presidents and members of Congress" (Howell and Pevehouse 2005, 224).

Howell and Pevehouse’s work illustrates that Congress does become active in military issues of greater significance. They explain this behavior by claiming that these issues are important enough to voters to affect the electability of a Congressman. However the pair does not present this as the central explanation for Congress’ foreign policy behavior. Rather they are content to use it as evidence that Congress is active beyond the domestic sphere. As they conclude,

"The proper question should no longer concern whether domestic political institutions matter. Rather, the challenge is to specify when they matter, exactly how their constraining influence manifests, and what that entails for the conduct of U.S foreign relations" (Howell Pevehouse 2005, 229).

The article ends with a call for scholars to continue to explain this balance of powers struggle.

Even with Waldavsky’s position largely discounted questions still linger regarding the operation of United States foreign policy. My research will help to explain this phenomenon. I believe a central factor in a Congressman’s foreign policy decision-making is his or her previous military experience. On votes related to use of force, it is logical that veterans will consider these issues from a different point of view. It is easily conceivable that their experiences in the military would allow them to empathize with current United States military personnel and
therefore be less likely to vote in favor of policies that would put troops in harm's way. Naturally each individual's military experiences will be different and thus have a slightly different effect on their opinions. However, there is an observable civilian military gap in U.S. politics. This is a term that refers to the tendency for military minded leaders to be cautious in using the military for limited engagements of force or nation building efforts. Military leaders are generally more cautious about the circumstances necessary to place U.S. troops in harms way (Gelpi 2002, 779). It is therefore feasible that either because of their experiences in combat or their general military training, that veteran legislators will be more hesitant to vote in favor of the use of force. This effect should be most clear when circumstances arise that would amplify the civilian military gap.

This group of congressmen is particularly interesting because the number of veterans in Congress has declined steeply since the end of conscription in the 1970's. In 1971 there were 316 representatives, 72.6 percent of the House of Representatives, with some military experience. The current Congress has less than a third of that with merely 21.1 percent of the House having served. For purposes of this study I have defined a veteran as any representative that has served in a branch of the United States Armed Forces. This is not limited the three main branches, The Army, Navy, and Air Force, but also includes branches such as the Coast Guard and National Guard. While it is possible that combat experiences are an important factor in why veteran legislators may vote more against force more frequently than non-veterans, the biographical research necessary to determine which veterans had served in actual combat was too extensive for this study.
As Figure 1 demonstrates the decline in veterans has slowed significantly in recent years. In spite of this, the number of veterans still fell nearly 9 percent in the last 10 years. This trend suggests that a study of the voting behavior of veterans over time could yield interesting results. This could not only provide some clarity with regard to Congress’ use of its foreign policy powers, but also help predict how Congress will behave in the future if the number of veteran representatives continues to decline, or begins to increase.
Since the decrease in military experience has been happening for nearly forty years it has not gone unnoticed in the political science community. Several scholars have been concerned with how a Congress with limited military experience might behave and what the country might be losing with the disappearance of these veterans. In fact two such scholars, William Bianco and Christopher Gelpi, have conducted studies addressing the relationship between military experience and foreign policy voting.

Gelpi begins with a discussion of the civilian military gap, and how the two have contradictory ideas over how the United States should use its military. Civilian leaders tend to believe that the United State's large army is a resource that must be used, whereas military leaders tend to approach the use of force with a sense of caution (Gelpi 2002, 779). This leads him to the reasonable hypothesis that this observation may be prevalent within Congress as well. While Gelpi's study tracks veterans in both Congress and the cabinet, Congress is his primary focus. The study examines initiations of force by the United States to see if the government is less likely to enter into a military conflict when there is a higher percentage of veterans in government. After looking at every year from 1816 to 1992 he found that when there were more veterans in Congress and the cabinet, the United States was less likely to initiate a military conflict. In fact he reports that, "The negative coefficient for elite veterans is statistically significant, indicating that the more veterans there were in the political elite, the less likely the United States was to initiate the use of force" (Gelpi 2002, 786).
This study does not deal directly with any policy-making tools and simply looks at the final result, however Gelpi’s results are simply based on whether or not a dispute was initiated. However, because he examined nearly 180 years of United States history and found that there was a correlation between the presence of veterans and the relative absence of initiations of force, Gelpi’s work provides a foundation for a closer examination of the actual behavior of veterans in Congress.

Gelpi’s study adds an extremely interesting finding to the study of veterans and military elites. In his article he comments, “Once the decision to use force has been made, the nature of the military’s advice to civilian elites will reverse. Regardless of whether the mission is realpolitik or interventionist, the military always prefers the large scale use of force to the limited use of force,” (Gelpi 2002, 781). This means that once the U.S. government has committed U.S. forces to a mission, the military supports the maximum amount of force necessary to complete the mission. Rather than seeing a limited number of troops enter a conflict, fight for a short time, and then pull out, military leaders prefer a sizeable deployment to stay until the mission is accomplished. This is likely because military leaders do not want to risk the lives of their troops by being under equipped for a mission that they will not see completed.

William Bianco conducted a study concerning veterans’ foreign policy views in the early 1990’s that focused on actual votes in the House of Representatives. Bianco enters his study with optimism that there is a relationship. “The notion that military experience might shape a legislator’s behavior in the defense sphere and elsewhere is reasonably plausible considering what we know about legislators’
motives and decision making” (Bianco 2005, 87). He goes on to suggest that in spite of constituent demands many factors, including but not limited to party affiliation, affect a congressmen’s voting. After examining several foreign policy votes from the 91st, 92nd, and 102nd-104th houses he found little or no relationship. “Military experience has a nonzero but not decisive impact on vote decisions,” (Bianco 2005, 92).

The fact that these two significant articles draw opposite conclusions regarding the impact of military experience suggests that further examination is necessary. My study will attempt to synthesize the work of these two scholars, in order to update Bianco’s findings. Gelpi did not look at Congressional votes, thus his results only demonstrate a negative correlation between military experience and initiations of force. They cannot indicate if legislators are more or less likely to vote in favor of force. Bianco’s results on the other hand deal directly with Congressmen and therefore say a lot about the behavior of legislators with military experience. However, his study covers any type of foreign policy vote, including votes on foreign aid, military funding, and nuclear testing. While it is possible that veterans care about these issues, one of the fundamental ideas behind the theory that veterans behave differently in the sphere of foreign policy is that their military experience influences how they feel about the troops.

In fact Bianco even comments that, “these results do not eliminate the possibility that military experience matters on other kinds of votes, such as those that are of interest only to veterans” (Bianco 2005, 98). This distinction could explain why Gelpi found a correlation and Bianco found an insignificant
relationship. Gelpi’s research dealt only with initiations of force, rather than a broad spectrum of foreign policy issues. My study stays close to this tenet of the theory and thus will focus on votes related to the use of force. Moreover, Bianco’s data extends only to 1999. Since his study was conducted the percentage of veterans in the House has fallen an additional 10 percent. By examining congressional votes related to force through 2011 I am able to assess the validity of Gelpi’s correlation, and at the same time refine Bianco’s research.

Following Bianco, the focus of my study begins with the declining military experience of Congress. With this in mind I selected three Congresses to research based on the trend in members of the House of Representatives with military experience. I first selected the 92nd House, because this marks the peak in percentage of veterans at 79.6 percent. Bianco was kind enough to share some of his data from this Congress, as it was a part of his research as well. Then I chose the 112th House, which is also the most recent House, since this was the lowest percentage of veterans at 21.1 percent. Finally I selected the 100th House as it marked the median percentage of veterans in the years between the 92nd and 112th Congress, at 49.4 percent. Selecting my Congresses in this manner allows for more depth in my analysis of the aggregate effect of military experience on vote results.

In addition to examining the relationship between military experience and military policy voting, I will also detect any trend in military policy voting that mirrors the decline in veterans. The latter could demonstrate that even if there is not a direct relationship between veterans and votes on legislation, the overall composition of the House could alter the outcomes of the foreign policy legislation.
It could reflect a plateau effect where once the number of veterans drops below a certain level it suddenly alters the behavior of the congressional body as a whole.

I categorize the members of each of these Congresses by their military experiences. I collected the names, states, and district numbers of each member, which allowed me to easily locate additional information about them. I accessed the Biographical Directory of The United States Congress, which stores a short biography on every Congressman who has served since 1774. Each of these biographies contained information about the military experience of the legislator, which I recorded in binary system, 1 for veterans and 0 for nonveterans. I also noted their party and gender in the same system. These were essential variables to control, as they are dominant influences over general legislative behavior.

Bianco states that the influence of party was far greater than that of military experience (Bianco 2005, 92). It is understandable that party would have a significant impact on voting of foreign policy issues. The party of a congressman is often the strongest indicator for how that legislator is going to vote on particular issues. Also, many of the smaller foreign policy votes, which have less of a "rally around the flag" effect, deal with executive authority and decisions; thus there will be party pressure to either vote with or against the President, depending on his party.

Gender generally is not viewed as having a strong impact of foreign policy decisions. I chose to include it nonetheless, because it is conceivable that females and males have different views on war and the use of force. Even women who serve in the military are rarely permitted into combat roles; this may alter their level of
empathy compared to their male counterparts. I believe these two variables will provide essential standards of comparison for military experience.

As I explained earlier the bills were limited to votes concerning the use of force, specifically related to troops. This not only strives at the key difference between Gelpi and Bianco's studies, but also incorporates the work of Howell and Pevehouse. They distinguished between minor and major military efforts. All conflicts that involve actual combat or place U.S. troops in harms way are considered major military efforts. I selected four pieces of legislation in each House, for a total of 12 bills, in order to balance the results for a time series. With the limited range of topics it was fairly simple to choose 12 similar pieces of legislation. I was able to access GovTrack, which is a website that allows the public to track and research congressional records in order to promote transparency in government. GovTrack has a record of every congressional vote. I researched House votes for each year that the three Congresses were in session until I found four acceptable votes pertaining to the use of force.

Unfortunately, because the Congresses were selected based on trends in military experience and not the events of the time period the number of available votes was limited. This may negatively affect the study, as a larger case pool addressing a greater number of scenarios would have been more telling and would have lent itself to a more complex analysis.

My hypothesis addresses the relationship between military experience and foreign policy votes dealing with the use of force. I hypothesize that if a representative is a veteran, then he or she is more likely to vote against the use of
force than a nonveteran. I believe that a veteran's military experience will make him or her less inclined to put troops in harms way, than a nonveteran who does not fully understand the costs of war.

If the relationship between veterans and foreign policy is strong enough, then it is conceivable that their decline would begin to affect the outcome of foreign policy votes. It is additionally possible that the impact of the decline in military experience in Congress is felt in other forms such as speeches, committee membership, or simply personal relationships with other Congressmen. In this way there could be a plateau affect, where once the number of veterans in Congress has declined far enough the Congress as a whole begins to favor force more frequently. In either case, my study is not set up to conduct this form of aggregate analysis. However, it will be important to keep in mind when examining the outcomes of the 12 pieces of legislation included, as it has serious implications for Congress' activeness in foreign policy. Any observation made in this area could create a starting point for further research.

If correct, my hypothesis will allow me to draw important conclusions related to the executive dominance in foreign policy. In this case I will interpret the outcomes of the bills in the study as indicators of legislative foreign policy power. These votes are the policy tools that Congress has at its disposal, as a legislative body. Therefore, if Congress is consistently voting to withdraw troops or forbid the President from sending troops, then they are strongly using their foreign policy powers. If veterans are more likely to oppose the use of force, then a Congress with fewer veterans will be less likely to use its foreign policy powers. This would expose
a key problem posed by a veteran-less Congress. Simply put, when Congress is unwilling to challenge the President's use of the military, the executive has dominance in the most important foreign policy arena. However, even with the predicted results this will only open up the issue to further research. There are many more complex foreign policy powers including actions by committees. Areas such as this will obviously need further examination to see if veterans really do cause a more active Congress.

As I noted earlier there are circumstances in which the civilian military gap is more prevalent. Thus there should be circumstances in voting on the use of force where the impact of veterans is more significant. I have created two sub categories, which may clarify or strengthen the impact of military experience. The first categorization is based on whether a bill favors or opposes the use of force. Of the 12 bills, 5 are in favor of using force. This means that their intention is either to leave troops in a conflict or send troops to a conflict. The other 7 are anti force, meaning they oppose the use of force either by calling for troops to leave a conflict or barring them from entering one. In addition to evaluating if the relationship between military experience and voting is stronger among one of these subgroups, this binary will help assess the directionality of the overall relationship. This is because while my hypothesis is that veterans will be more likely to oppose the use of force, it is possible they are only more likely to oppose bills favoring force or support bills opposing the use force.

The next sub category addresses the situation of the troops before the bill came to a vote. It divides the bills into those addressing a conflict yet to begin and
those dealing with a conflict that is already in progress. Several pieces of legislation aimed either to withdraw troops or leave them in conflicts; the others either gave the President the decision to send troops to a conflict or forbid the President from sending troops to a conflict. This distinction was inspired by Gelpi’s argument that military minded leaders are more likely to support a conflict to its conclusion once it has begun. With the civilian military gap, the military leaders have the perception that early or quick withdrawal plans make certain troops vulnerable and leaves the mission unaccomplished. This suggests that the mindset of military leaders changes once a mission has begun. If this were true among veterans then it could explain a disparity in voting on conflicts already in progress and those yet to begin.

These two sub categories were the two most useful to for the legislation selected in my study. They produced a fairly clear and even divide among the bills. There are additional factors that could play a role in increasing or decreasing the impact of military experience on foreign policy voting which I was unable to account for. These would include whether or not there is a clear threat to the United States and whether there is a clear purpose in engaging in the conflict. The former would assure military minded leaders that the troops sacrifices is necessary and the latter assures them that there is an achievable goal.

Initial Findings

Figures 2-4 report the percent differences in the voting of veterans and non-veterans, that is the difference in the percentage of veterans that voted yea on a bill
and the percentage of non-veterans that voted yea, for all twelve bills. Each figure addresses an individual House with the 92nd represented in Figure 2, the 100th in Figure 3, and the 112th in Figure 4. For the sake of clarity these differentials do not include missing votes or abstentions.

Figure 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voting Differential of Veterans for the 92nd House</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR16029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR11731</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR16593</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR6531</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Numbers above columns represent the number of non-veterans that voted yea followed by the number of veterans that voted yea.*

There were 316 veterans in the 92nd House and 119 non-veterans, thus there were many more votes cast by veterans in this House than any other. The average difference between veterans voting yea and non-veterans voting yea was 75.75 votes. However examining the deviation in raw numbers can overstate the differences between veterans and non-veterans. As Figure 2 illustrates all four bills from the 92nd House saw less than a 5 percent differential. On bills HR6531 and
HR16029, which both favored leaving troops in Indo-China, veterans were slightly more likely to vote nay. In the other two bills, which called for the removal of troops veterans were slightly more likely to vote yea. Overall the consistency of these low percentages suggests that there was little to no difference in the voting of veterans and non-veterans in this particular House.

Figure 3

Voting Differential of Veterans for the 100th House

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percent difference between veterans and non veterans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HJRES444</td>
<td>96-115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR4264</td>
<td>147-128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR1748</td>
<td>36-28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR1580</td>
<td>80-90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Numbers above columns represent the number of non-veterans that voted yea followed by the number of veterans that voted yea

In the 100th Congress the number of veterans fell to 200. The difference in veterans voting yea and non-veterans voting yea dropped significantly in this House. Yet while the difference in actual votes fell, Figure 3 shows a considerable increase in the percent differential for veterans from the 92nd to the 100th House. The average difference jumps to 8.025 percent, and in none of the votes were veterans within 5
percent of non-veterans. Oddly, on two of the four bills, HJRES444 and HR1580 veterans were more likely to vote in favor of force than non-veterans. These bills were to send military aid to the Contras and to send troops to South Africa, respectively. In the case of sending troops to South Africa, HR1580, a majority both veterans and non-veterans voted against the bill. Thus veterans are still opposing the use of force. However, curiously, on the vote to send military aid to the Contras, HJRES444, a majority of veterans voted yea, while a majority of non-veterans voted nay. This could be because, while military aid, in this case, would have required sending troops into the region, it was not perceived that they would be in a great amount of danger. Yet this result still runs counter to my hypothesis. Despite the increase in difference between veterans and non-veterans in this Congress, veterans were not consistent in their support or opposition to the use of force.
In the 112th House there were only 92 veterans; once again the percentages represented in Figure 4 reflect fewer actual votes. Overall the votes from the 112th House demonstrate numbers similar to the 100th Congress with the average difference increasing slightly to 8.433 percent. Due to the combination of the decline in the veterans in the House and the increase in the percent differential, the average difference in veterans voting yea and non-veterans voting yea increase to 89.75. Additionally, there was more consistency in terms of opposition to force, as veterans were more likely to vote against the use of force on three of the four bills. Despite the increase from the 92nd House all three figures demonstrate very little deviation between the two groups. In only two bills, HJRES444 and HR292, was there a divergence of greater than 10 percent. Furthermore, with almost no change in either
the maximum or the average differential between the 100th and 112th Houses it is
impossible to conclude, based on this data, that the impact of veterans on voting has
increased since Bianco's study.

**Statistical Evaluation**

However, even an eight percent difference in voting could change the
outcome of a close vote. Additionally, in the 112th House, when the number of
veterans in the House was at its lowest and the percent differential between
veterans and non-veterans was at its highest, the difference in raw votes was at its
maximum. The average difference between veterans voting yea and non-veterans
voting yea was 89.75 votes. While this difference, did not effect the outcome of any
of the bills it is important to understand how much of the deviation is actually
attributable to military experience. Thus it was necessary to examine these numbers
by controlling for party. Figures 5-7 are structurally identical to the last three
figures except that they control for party. Each figure shows the differential between
veterans and nonveterans, once the legislators had been divided based on party.
The effect of party varied from bill to bill. Figure 5 displayed the most unique results. It illustrates that controlling for party strengthened the relationship between veterans and voting for every bill in the 92nd House. The differential grew in both the Democratic and Republican parties. The consistency of the deviation compared to that among the more recent Congresses reflects the increased importance of party in congressional voting over time. Since party was less of a factor for this Congress, the percent impact was magnified because separating Democrats and Republicans reduced the amount of Congressmen. Additionally, the growth in differential was higher among Republicans than among Democrats. In three cases the differential skyrocketed to over 15 percent.
Voting Differential of Veterans for the 100th House Controled for Party

Voting Differential of Veterans for the 112th House Controled for Party

*Numbers above columns represent the number of non-veterans that voted yea followed by the number of veterans that voted yea

However in almost every case in the 100th and 112th Congresses the change in differential was greater among Democrats than among Republicans. The fact that
in two Congresses Democratic veterans were more likely to vote differently than non-veterans and in one Congress Republican veterans were more likely to do so, is not explained by which party controlled the House. In the 100\textsuperscript{th} House the Democrats had the majority and Democratic veterans had greater differentiation, whereas in the 92\textsuperscript{nd} the Democrats controlled the House and the Republican veterans had a higher differential. Then in the 112\textsuperscript{th} the Republicans controlled the House, but Democratic veterans had a higher differential. The inconsistency is more likely due to historical factors that caused one party to have a stronger consensus than the other.

Examining the 100\textsuperscript{th} and 112\textsuperscript{th} Congresses revealed that when party was controlled the impact of military experience drastically shrunk for 4 of the 8 bills. In one case, HJRES444, the differential grew for both parties. This was very much an anomaly among these two Congresses as for the other three bills the difference grew among Democrats and shrank among Republicans. While party accounted for a large portion of the impact of military experience, the fact that several bills had their differential expand in one or both parties suggests that some of its effect is independent of party.

When looking at gender, the results were even weaker than those of veterans. In most cases the differentials were so low they could not be displayed in figures. In 9 of the 12 cases the differences between male and female representatives was less than 5 percent and in 5 of those cases it was less than 2 percent. While 3 bills had differentials were over 10 percent all of those bills were in the 112\textsuperscript{th}. It is possible that the impact of gender is has expanded over time, but
my study does not demonstrate that. Yet given the little number of female veterans in Congress and these low numbers it is reasonable to conclude that gender did not affect the impact of military experience on voting outcome in this study.

Once I controlled for party I conducted statistical significance and strength evaluations for the bills. Evaluating these statistical measures, while still controlling for party, will provide a strong test for the relationship between military experience and foreign policy voting. Table 1 reports the statistical significance and strength scores for military experience. Each bill is listed with a brief description of what the piece of legislation does in terms of the use of U.S. troops. The significance values are recorded in the p-value column and strength measurements are shown in the partial gamma column. If a bill had a relationship that was statistically significant, then the p-value is bolded. Similarly, if a bill had a strength value above .2, then it was bolded. Additionally, Table 1 shows the percent of all voting representatives who voted in favor of each piece of legislation, the percent of veterans who voted yes, and the percentage of non-veterans that voted yes.
Table 1

The Statistical Impact of Military Experience on Foreign Policy Voting Controlled For Party

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BILL NUMBER</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>P-VALUE</th>
<th>PARTIAL GAMMA</th>
<th>ACTUAL % YES</th>
<th>VET % YES</th>
<th>NON VET % YES</th>
<th>DIFFERENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HR6531</td>
<td>Leave Troops in IndoChina</td>
<td>0.403</td>
<td>0.0908</td>
<td>56.31</td>
<td>57.72</td>
<td>53.23</td>
<td>4.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR16593</td>
<td>Remove Troops from IndoChina</td>
<td>0.946</td>
<td>-0.0078</td>
<td>43.6</td>
<td>43.48</td>
<td>43.86</td>
<td>-0.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR16029</td>
<td>Leave Troops in IndoChina</td>
<td>0.298</td>
<td>0.1091</td>
<td>52.98</td>
<td>54.7</td>
<td>49.24</td>
<td>5.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR11731</td>
<td>Remove Troops from IndoChina</td>
<td>0.658</td>
<td>-0.0488</td>
<td>40.5</td>
<td>39.78</td>
<td>42.15</td>
<td>-2.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HJRES444</td>
<td>Send Military Aid to the Contras</td>
<td>0.016</td>
<td>0.2287</td>
<td>49.07</td>
<td>55.02</td>
<td>43.44</td>
<td>11.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR4264</td>
<td>Forbid Troops from Nicaragua</td>
<td>0.305</td>
<td>-0.1224</td>
<td>74.73</td>
<td>72.32</td>
<td>76.96</td>
<td>-4.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR1748</td>
<td>Remove Troops from Korea</td>
<td>0.362</td>
<td>-0.125</td>
<td>17.11</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>18.85</td>
<td>-3.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR1580</td>
<td>Send Troops to South Africa</td>
<td>0.114</td>
<td>0.1616</td>
<td>44.5</td>
<td>48.65</td>
<td>40.61</td>
<td>8.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCONRES28</td>
<td>Remove Troops from Afghanistan</td>
<td>0.257</td>
<td>-0.1749</td>
<td>22.46</td>
<td>17.86</td>
<td>23.64</td>
<td>-5.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCONRES51</td>
<td>Remove Troops from Lybia</td>
<td>0.036</td>
<td>0.2541</td>
<td>35.92</td>
<td>45.78</td>
<td>33.43</td>
<td>12.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR292</td>
<td>Forbid Deploy Troops to Lybia</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>0.3949</td>
<td>64.89</td>
<td>78.57</td>
<td>61.4</td>
<td>17.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HJRES68</td>
<td>Send Troops to Lybia</td>
<td>0.078</td>
<td>0.2493</td>
<td>29.58</td>
<td>21.69</td>
<td>31.55</td>
<td>-9.86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The average p-value for these 12 pieces of legislation was 0.29, far from the .05 necessary for statistical significance. The average partial gamma value was equally unimpressive at +/- .166. These averages were not the result of outliers, as 9
bills showed statistically insignificant relationships and eight had weak relationships. On an aggregate level, these numbers reflect that there is almost no relationship. While veterans voted differently than non-veterans on almost every bill, the majority of these differences were small, statistically weak, and statistically insignificant.

However, a bill-to-bill examination reveals some more promising numbers. Of the three pieces of legislation that had significant relationships all of them had partial gamma values above a .22. These bills (HR292, HJRES44, and HCONRES51) also had the three highest voting differentials at 12.22 percent, 11.58 percent, and 8.63 percent, respectively. The combination of these factors indicates that it is premature to conclude that military experience and foreign policy voting are unrelated.

Categorical Analysis

Since three pieces of legislation, amounting to a fourth of the dataset, displayed some statistical correlation it is important to turn to the categorical approach. Examining the two sub categories, one separating pro- and anti-force bills, and the other separating bills addressing potential conflicts and bills dealing with ongoing conflicts, would potentially demonstrate why they behaved differently than the rest of the bills.

The first category divides the five pro-force bills and the seven anti-force bills. This binary is difficult to assess, as the average strength and significance values
are not especially telling. The separation drops the pro-force group's average p-value to .1818 and raises the anti-force group's to .3667. While, the correlation clearly grows stronger for bills favoring force and weaker for those opposed, neither category approaches a p-value even close to statistical significance. Furthermore of the three cases addressed earlier, one supports the use of force and two oppose it. To compound the lack of a relationship demonstrated by this binary, of the five pro force votes a majority of veterans voted yea on three of the bills and nay on the other two. Thus not only are the statistical measures weak, but there is no consistency in the direction of the correlation. My conclusion based on this first categorization is that it reiterates that the data reveals no relationship between military experience and foreign policy voting.

I next evaluated the bills that dealt with troops that were already in combat versus those that addressed troops that were not yet in combat. The splits according to these categories are captured in Table 2, with the significance and strength values for each piece of legislation. Bills addressing ongoing conflicts are recorded in the column labeled Group A and the bills addressing potential conflicts are reported in column B.
Table 2

The Statistical Impact of Military Experience on Pre Conflict and Ongoing Conflict Voting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP A</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>P-VALUE</th>
<th>PARTIAL GAMMA</th>
<th>GROUP B</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>P-VALUE</th>
<th>PARTIAL GAMMA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HR6531</td>
<td>Leave Troops in IndoChina</td>
<td>0.403</td>
<td>0.0908</td>
<td>HJRES444</td>
<td>Send Military Aid to the</td>
<td>0.016</td>
<td>0.2287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Contras</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR16593</td>
<td>Remove Troops from IndoChina</td>
<td>0.946</td>
<td>-0.0078</td>
<td>HR4264</td>
<td>Forbid Troops from Nicaragua</td>
<td>0.305</td>
<td>-0.1224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR16029</td>
<td>Leave Troops in IndoChina</td>
<td>0.298</td>
<td>0.1091</td>
<td>HR1580</td>
<td>Send Troops to South Africa</td>
<td>0.114</td>
<td>0.1616</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR11731</td>
<td>Remove Troops from IndoChina</td>
<td>0.658</td>
<td>-0.0488</td>
<td>HJRES68</td>
<td>Send Troops to Lybia</td>
<td>0.078</td>
<td>-0.2493</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR1748</td>
<td>Remove Troops from Korea</td>
<td>0.362</td>
<td>-0.125</td>
<td>HR292</td>
<td>Forbid Deploy Troops to</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>0.3949</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lybia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCONRES28</td>
<td>Remove Troops from Afghanistan</td>
<td>0.257</td>
<td>-0.1749</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCONRES51</td>
<td>Remove Troops from Lybia</td>
<td>0.036</td>
<td>0.2541</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The separation reveals that there are several distinct differences between the two categories. First, the shifts in significance and strength are more drastic than those observed in first binary. The average p-value for the bills in Group A jumped to .4229 and those in group B fell to 0.1032. Similarly, the strength values for Group A fell to .116 and the strength values for Group B grew to .231. As Gelpi suggests, veterans were more likely to support the continuation of an ongoing
conflict in all seven bills in Group A. However, the significance and strength scores for this group were even worse than those of the original set. Thus despite the consistency of the correlation it does not indicate a causal relation. In Group B, there was significant improvement in both statistical evaluations. While the group as a whole was still not statistically significant, two of the five cases were and one was just outside of the range at .078. These numbers suggest that to a large degree military experience has a greater impact concerning potential conflicts rather than on ones already in progress.

The potential relationship between veterans and pre-conflict voting is even more promising than these numbers suggest. According to my classification system HCONRES51 falls under the category of addressing a conflict already in progress. This is because the letter of the bill states that it is “directing the President, pursuant to the War Powers Resolution, to remove United States Armed Forces from Libya.” In a general understanding of the War Powers Resolution this would have meant President Obama had sent U.S. troops in to aid the Libyan rebels more than sixty days prior. Yet, as the media firestorm surrounding the issue suggests it is not that simple.

Rumors have circulated since the death of Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi about the degree to which the U.S. has been involved in defending the oil reserves in Libya. However, regardless of what role the U.S. or its troops had in these recent events, HCONRES51 came to a vote in the 112th House on June 3rd after being introduced by Dennis Kucinich on May 23rd. At this time there were no U.S. forces in Libya. On June 15th the New York Times reported on the status of U.S involvement in
Libya. They quote President Obama as saying, "U.S. operations do not involve sustained fighting or active exchanges of fire with hostile forces, nor do they involve U.S. ground troops" (Savage 2011, 1). Indeed there is still a substantial debate as to whether or not Obama’s explanation is satisfactory as a defense against accusations of violating the War Powers Resolution. Yet this point is irrelevant to the context of this legislation’s categorization. What is important is that there were no U.S. troops in actual combat.

This places HCONRES51 in a grey area in terms of whether or not it was a pre or post conflict bill. If passed it could have ended the missile strikes and prevented U.S. ground forces from entering Libya. It is entirely plausible that veterans in the house interpreted this vote as preventing a ground conflict, rather than ending early forms of hostilities.

In terms of the results in this dataset reinterpreting this HCONRES51 has significant implication on the results. First it would place all three pieces of legislation with the highest differential, highest partial gamma values, and the only three significant p-values in Group B. Its inclusion in the potential conflict subset drops the average p-value below .1 and would make three of the six bills statistically significant with a fourth just outside of the range. The average strength value also improved but only slightly.

Conclusions

My hypothesis predicted that if a representative were a veteran, then he or she would be more likely to vote against the use of force than a nonveteran. Through
most levels of data there is very little evidence to support this hypothesis. This is because there is no consistency in directionality on votes of any statistical promise. The three strongest statistical cases were split two and one between voting against force and voting for force respectively. Even in the breakdowns based on pro and anti-force bills or potential conflicts and ongoing conflicts, there is no combination of bills that would suggest veterans are more likely oppose force than nonveterans. This is because while veterans voted differently than non-veterans consistently and with statistical significance on potential conflicts, veterans did not consistently oppose the use of force.

Despite this, the data in this study does not nullify the possibility of a relationship between military experience and foreign policy voting. After moving through three levels of analysis there is not a lot to demonstrate a strong relationship. Yet in each categorical breakdown the impact of military experience strengthened. Unfortunately as I broke my data down into categories the number of available cases, and thus information, shrunk considerably. In the case of pro-force and anti-force there were five bills favoring force and seven opposing it. While this is a fairly even breakdown, without more data it is difficult to draw any serious conclusions. The problem was similar when I split the bills based on their addressing potential conflicts or ongoing conflicts. Depending on the classification of HCONRES51, there was either an even six to six division or a seven to five division.

The classification based on the stage of the conflict shows by far the most promise for a relationship. In this breakdown the statistically weak cases tended
towards the ongoing conflicts, while the statistically strongest ones tended towards the potential conflicts. This fact matches well with the foundation of my hypothesis that veterans would vote to protect the troops. The act of entering or not entering a conflict begins with a zero initial risk factor for the troops, meaning if a conflict never occurs no troops are placed in harms way. Thus a President or legislator would have to really convince a veteran that the conflict is worth fighting.

I also observed the results of the bills to provide some observations for a potential aggregate study of veterans in Congress. The failure of my hypothesis is not a promising result for an aggregate impact. Since military experience did not significantly cause representatives to oppose the use of force, their presence in Congress did not influence the outcome in any of the bills. Despite this lack of correlation on the individual level it was still possible for an aggregate relationship to be present. I did acknowledge the possibility that while their actual votes may not change the House’s propensity to use the military, perhaps their scarcity might affect the decision making of the other representatives.

In order to provide some level of promise for this potential theory there would have to be a trend in the bills that passed and failed over time. The number of bills that passed favoring the use of force should have increased, and the number of bills that passed opposing the use of force should have decreased. Yet this was not the case. In the 92nd House, which had the highest percentage of veterans, the House voted in favor of force on every bill. In the 100th House they voted in favor force on only one of the four bills and in the 112th House they voted in favor force on two of the four bills. There is no discernible trend from these three Congresses, and
certainly not one that would suggest that as the aggregate number of veterans in the
House declines, Congress would vote in favor of force at a greater rate. Any variation
from Congress to Congress appears incidental and certainly does not suggest an
inverse relationship between the number of veterans in the House and the House's
support of the use of force.

This strongly disproves my original inference. I hoped to demonstrate that if
veteran were consistently voting to withdraw troops or forbid force, than they were
a factor in challenging executive foreign policy authority. Even with the weak
correlations, veterans consistently voted against withdrawing troops. There were
only two bills that called to forbid the use of force, so again there is a small sample
size. In both votes veterans strongly supported forbidding force. However, in one
vote they were less likely than nonveterans to do so. Additionally, both bill were
landslides. Thus veterans did not influence the outcomes to any degree. The
relationship between military experience and voting would have to be extremely
strong to suggest that veterans influenced congress’ willingness to challenge the
President. In these cases the relationship fell well short of that standard.

There are several factors that affected the outcome of results that I
recommend future scholars take note of when planning similar studies. First I was
concerned with the decline of veterans and how this would affect the outcomes of
similar bills over time. In doing so I selected one congress from the peak of veterans
in Congress, one at the midpoint, and one the lowest point. This limited my pool of
legislation to those voted on in those six years. This complicated my results in depth
and variety. It was important that there was even distribution of bills between
Congresses. This meant that the maximum number of force related bills in one Congress had to be the amount of bills for each Congress in the study and in this case that was only four. Having even two more bills per congress would have increased my dataset by a half.

Military votes on force are tied to current events, perhaps more than any other type of legislation. If there is no international conflict that concerns the United States then there will not be a vote. This is troubling when examining at two year House sessions, because to have a true variety of legislation there must be multiple conflicts. In the 100th House there were four different conflicts voted upon, but in the 92nd there was only one. The four votes from the 92nd House all pertained to the U.S. involvement in Indo-China. These four votes also displayed the four worst statistical relationships. It is possible that veterans and nonveterans generally agreed with the handling of the situation in Asia. Thus, a vote related to that conflict might not be representative of the relationship between military experience and foreign policy voting. With a third of my data unfortunately tied to this one conflict, it could have easily skewed my results.

Secondly, I would have examined more categories that could have amplified or weakened the relationship. Once it became clear that the relationship between military experience and voting was on the weaker side and was likely more specific in nature, it was apparent that a more thorough examination was necessary. The factors I was unable to consider easily could have been even more significant that the pre- and post-conflict distinction. If there was a clear threat to national security posed by a conflict than this would likely outweigh a veteran's hypothesized
uneasiness with risking the lives on U.S. troops. Also if there is no clear mission, and thus no clear way for Congressmen to assess when the conflict is over, veterans might be even more hesitant to send troops into conflict.

Yet this study in no way closes the door in research for either topic. In fact this dataset provides an excellent starting point for future work related to the impact of military experience on voting. My findings are extremely consistent with those of Bianco. In both studies there was a non-zero, but weak and generally insignificant relationship. The similarity suggests that despite the continued decline in veterans there has not been a change in the relationship. Also by focusing on votes on force instead of all foreign policy votes more possibilities presented themselves. A future study focusing on bills related to potential uses of force could yield some interesting results. With the variety of directionality on these types of votes, such a study could provide some intriguing results especially veterans proved more likely to support the use of force.

With regard to the Congress' foreign policy voting, the field is still wide open. The work of Carter and other prominent scholars holds that Congress is not simply a rubber stamp for the President's foreign policy agenda. If Congress is active in this regard there must be conflict with the Executive branch over some issues and/or in some circumstances. While military experience is not one of them, I still believe military issues are a strong place to focus. Military issues tend to receive more media attention than more diplomatic or simply aid related foreign policy issues. As the controversy over Obama's handling of Libya suggests the nation and Congress are not unconcerned with how the commander and chief uses the armed forces. The
War Powers resolution was one of the most prominent and controversial balance of power issues in recent politics. In my data set it was invoked twice by the 112th Congress in regards to Afghanistan and Libya. While both efforts failed by a considerable margin some Congressmen are still clearly preoccupied with the perception that they take a back seat in foreign policy. These issues are still at the forefront of American politics and should be studied as thoroughly as possible.
References


Montopoli, Brian. 12 Nov. 2011. "Romney, Gingrich at GOP debate: We'd go to war to keep Iran from getting nuclear weapons." *CBS*
