

ELITE MILITARY SUPPORT AND THE USE OF FORCE¹

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How do elites influence Americans' foreign policy views? We find that the military is a powerful shaper of Americans' support for use of force abroad. Through a series of large, nationally representative survey experiments, we establish that military leaders' influence on the public is largest when it opposes (rather than supports) interventions abroad. This study advances our understanding of how individuals form opinions about complex subjects where they have little substantive knowledge, how voters use elite signals and how the military influences politics and policy in a democracy.

Americans pay limited attention to international news and are generally uninformed on foreign policy matters [Holsti, 2004]; yet, public opinion can alter elite’s foreign policy decisions [Powlick and Katz, 1998]. We study how elites, in this case senior military leaders, influence Americans’ views on foreign policy matters.

By statute and tradition, the U.S. military identifies itself as an apolitical body. Yet, senior military officers often are involved in public debates, either intentionally or inadvertently, about how and when to use military force.³ In 2007, for example, General David Petraeus warned against a rapid drawdown of troops in Iraq in Congressional testimony [Cloud and Shanker 2007].

We administer large, national survey experiments that prime respondents to think about the military’s views when considering whether to support or oppose military action abroad. Our use of force scenarios examine U.S. involvement in Iran and Syria, along with responses to a humanitarian crisis and a failed terrorist attack.

We use an experimental design because elites may tend to make public statements opposing unpopular policies or supporting popular policies. There is limited research on the impact of elite signals on foreign policy views [see Baum and Groeling, 2009, Grieco et al., 2011], and no research to date has examined whether public disclosure of military views influences public opinion.

Overall, we find that military opposition exerts a sizable seven point negative effect on public support for use of force abroad, while military support increases overall public support by three percentage points, a statistically significant increase. These elite cues are most influential among Republican respondents.

Our research contributes to and integrates a series of important scholarly literatures.

³Political campaigns from both parties cite evidence of military support to bolster their electoral prospects or gain support for proposed policies [Golby et al., 2012]. The Bush administration, for example, had Gen. David Petraeus make its case during Congressional testimony in 2007: “The Bush administration let the popular and respected military commander make the case for maintaining troop levels, forcing opponents to tiptoe around the general’s rows of medals and gleaming four stars” (Stanley, 9/11/2007).

Earlier this year, for example, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Martin Dempsey’s comments that American or Israeli military strikes were not prudent and would not prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon took center stage during a Republican primary debate. Similar, and perhaps even more overt, cases of military attempts to influence the policy process have occurred over the last two decades including General Colin Powell’s comments regarding air strikes in Bosnia, General Wesley Clark’s support for air strikes in the Balkans, General Eric Shinseki’s testimony for larger troop numbers prior to the Iraq War, General David Petraeus’s advocacy for a surge of troops in Iraq and General Stanley McChrystal’s calls for a more aggressive counterinsurgency campaign in Afghanistan.

First, this research has relevance for literatures concerning attitude formation and the effects of trusted and costly signals across the fields of communications, economics, political science and psychology. We examine how individuals form opinions about complex subjects in which they have limited substantive information. We find that elite signals are more influential when respondents trust the institution and when there is ideological congruence between voters and the source.

Second, this study has clear relevance for the study of civil-military relations and democratic accountability. It advances our understanding of how the military may influence politics and policy in a democracy and informs normative debates regarding the appropriate behavior of military officers and political leaders.

Theory and Hypotheses

Public opinion can influence foreign policy decisions. According to former President Bill Clinton, “One...consideration regards the central role the American people rightfully play in how the United States wields its power abroad: the United States cannot long sustain a commitment without the support of the public” [?].

Yet, Americans pay minimal attention to, and are minimally informed about, politics and public affairs [Almond, 1950, Bennett and Paletz, 1994, Holsti, 2004, Kriesberg, 1949].⁴ They pay even less attention to foreign policy matters, and previous research indicates that Americans know less about foreign policy than domestic matters [Edwards, 1983, Sobel, 1993, Canes-Wrone, 2005]. For example, it is more difficult for politically motivated Americans to evaluate leaders’ claims about foreign policy matters compared with domestic policy, as intelligence and details of complex military operations are classified [Grieco et al., 2011, p. 580-81].

As a result, there are large informational asymmetries between citizens and foreign policy elites such as the President, Congressional leaders, international organizations and the military [Chapman and Reiter, 2004, Chapman, 2007, 2009, Fang, 2008, Thompson, 2009]. Military leaders, for instance, spend long careers developing expert knowledge regarding military strategy and have direct access to classified information concerning the military capabilities of American forces and potential threats.

⁴While 55 percent of Americans say they follow national news “most of the time,” just 39 percent say the same about international news. (August 2008 Pew Poll. <http://www.people-press.org/2008/08/17/key-news-audiences-now-blend-online-and-traditional-sources/>)

When Americans have low levels of knowledge, they make decisions based on informational short cuts and heuristics [Popkin, 1994, Sniderman et al., 1993]. Previous research suggests that messages are accepted or rejected based on the supposed credibility of the source [Druckman, 2001, Howell and Kriner, 2008, Kuklinski and Hurley, 1994, Sniderman et al., 1993], and the military is the most respected public-institution in America, with an 81 percent confidence rating.⁵

Finally, the scholarly literature on military influence presupposes that the advice of senior military officers will, in fact, influence public opinion and public policy outcomes [Kohn, 1994, Brooks, 2009, Weigley, 1993]. Popular discourse reinforces this view, with the media frequently reporting senior military leaders' views regarding important policy decisions and political campaigns from both parties citing military leaders' views to bolster their electoral prospects [Golby et al., 2012].⁶

Cumulatively, Americans' relative lack of interest in foreign affairs, the complex nature of foreign policy subjects, the information asymmetries between citizens and military leaders, and widespread respect for the military suggests Americans' views on the use of force abroad are susceptible to elite influence. This leads to the first hypothesis:

H1: Elite military support or opposition for use of force abroad will influence Americans' foreign policy views.

Moving beyond the average effect of military views, scholars have argued that the impact of endorsements differs across individuals.

Despite high confidence ratings in the military nationally, there are significant differences across political parties – 92 percent of Republicans have confidence in the mil-

⁵Gallup Poll. More broadly, previous research finds that voting decisions and political attitudes are substantially influenced by the endorsements of candidates by political groups [Arceneaux and Kolodny, 2009, Lau and Redlawsk, 2001, Lupia, 1994], media groups [Chiang and Knight, 2011, DellaVigna and Kaplan, 2007, Dropp and Warshaw, 2012, Ladd and Lenz, 2009], celebrities [Nownes, 2011, Pease and Brewer, 2008] and international organizations [Grieco et al., 2011]. Grieco et al. [2011], for example, find that “cues from IOs [international organizations] regarding the use of force in a particular mission are generally likely to influence aggregate public support for that mission” [Grieco et al., 2011, p. 580]

⁶This especially is true when views of military leaders are at odds with those of civilian leaders, such as when General Colin Powell opposed air strikes in Bosnia [Gordon, 1992, Schmitt, 1993], when General Eric Shinseki raised concerns about the Bush Administration's Iraq War policy [Schmitt, 2003] or when General Stanley McChrystal disagreed with President Barack Obama's Afghanistan policy [Hastings, 2010]. In other cases, however, political leaders emphasize that senior military officers do support their decisions.

itary, compared with 64 percent of Democrats [Golby, 2011]. Senior military officers overwhelmingly identify as Republicans and conservatives [Holsti, 1998, Feaver and Kohn, 2001, Urben, 2010, Dempsey, 2009] and evidence suggests that the mass public still views the military primarily as conservative and Republican.⁷ For example, four times as many Americans said that most members of the military are Republicans than said that most members are Democrats (39 percent to 9 percent).⁸

Partisanship serves as “perceptual screen through which the individual tends to see what is favorable to his partisan orientation” (Campbell 1960, p. 133). A substantial literature has confirmed that partisan bias shapes the way individuals translate information into their political attitudes and opinions [Bartels, 2002, Taber and Lodge, 2006, Gaines et al., 2007, but see Gerber and Green, 1999] and that Republicans and Democrats perceive foreign policy issues in vastly different ways [Nie and Andersen, 1974, Wittkopf, 1990, Gaines et al., 2007, Berinsky, 2007, Howell and Kriner, 2008, Golby, 2011]. Finally, evidence suggests that Americans rely on cues from party leaders in matters of war [Zaller, 1992, Larson, 1996, Berinsky, 2007].

Although many Americans believe that politics should stop at the waters’ edge, the politics of foreign policy often is partisan politics. We argue that the impact of the message depends on who receives it.

H2a: Senior military leaders’ views will be more influential among Republican than Democrats.

Recent research has challenged traditional characterizations such as ‘hawk’ and ‘dove.’ Support for military operations varies drastically based on the type of mission. Conservatives and Republicans are more likely to support missions involving ‘militant internationalist’ or ‘realpolitik’ goals, but less likely to support ‘cooperative internationalist’ or ‘humanitarian goals’; in contrast, liberals and Democrats are likely to support interventions with ‘cooperative internationalist’ and ‘humanitarian’ goals [Wittkopf, 1990, Feaver and Gelpi, 2005, Golby, 2011].

Previous research suggests that surprising or unexpected signals should be particularly informative and influential, especially when the preferences of the person receiving a message differ from those of the individual sending the signal [Crawford

⁷Recent research, however, has demonstrated that the enlisted ranks of the military are significantly more diverse and representative of the American public than the officer corps [Dempsey, 2009]

⁸According to our post-test questionnaire item including 5,500 respondents. Overall, 53 percent said that the military has about equal numbers of Republicans and Democrats, 39 percent said most members are Republicans and nine percent said most members are Democrats.

and Sobel, 1982]. Since the mass public generally perceives senior members of the military to be conservative and Republican, an elite military signal supporting intervention in a humanitarian crisis will be more surprising and informative than one supporting intervention for a realpolitik mission, especially among Democrats. Similarly, an elite military signal opposing intervention in a humanitarian crisis will be less informative than one opposing intervention for realpolitik goals.

H2c: Support for humanitarian interventions (Syria, Humanitarian crisis) by senior military leaders will be more influential among Democrats than support by military leaders for realpolitik missions (Iran, Terrorist Attack).

H2d: Opposition for humanitarian interventions (Syria, humanitarian crisis) by senior military leaders will be less influential among Democrats than opposition by military leaders for realpolitik missions (Iran, Terrorist Attack).

We also study how the content of the endorsement message influences individuals. Psychological research has shown that consensus leads to conformity and that individuals associate consensus with correctness [Asch, 1956, Chaiken and Eagly, 1989].⁹ Further, previous research has shown that the public's support for conflict abroad is higher when there is elite consensus (rather than division) [Brody, 1991, Larson, 2000, Grieco et al., 2011]. We vary whether the decision to support military action is a consensus or divided view among military leaders for approximately 1,400 individuals.

H3a: Elite endorsements signaling consensus will be more influential than messages indicating division.

We propose that elite actors will exercise more power when they oppose an action abroad compared with when they support military action. We expect to find asymmetric treatment effects because military actions abroad have much clearer, more direct costs than the long-term, diffuse costs of not taking action. Second, Americans view the military as hawkish on foreign policy and likely to support use of force

⁹Asch [1956] asked participants – one subject and a few confederates hired by the researcher – whether three lines were the same length. When each of the confederates answered incorrectly (“the lines are the same length”), the subject conformed and also answered incorrectly; however, when the confederates were divided, the subject provided the correct answer. Similarly, Chaiken [1980] have studied the impact of source cues and argue that individuals may be more likely to agree “with messages that most other persons appear to endorse, and so on, without having absorbed the semantic content of persuasive argumentation” [Chaiken, 1980, p. 214].

abroad. Although some research has concluded that members of the military are reluctant warriors [Betts, 1991], popular culture often reinforces the view that senior military officers are aggressive and hawkish on foreign policy. Signals contradicting this view, such as opposition prompts, may be both more powerful and credible to Americans. Third, modest treatment effects in support conditions are consistent with the military’s role in American democracy. The military usually does not set the agenda for military policies and foreign interventions; rather, senior officers typically provide ‘expert’ advice regarding the costs and risks associated with policies in response to civilian proposals. This prediction has implications for research on persuasion in domestic policy contexts and suggests that elites’ efforts to stop a proposed bill or engender opposition to a policy may be more successful than efforts to build a coalition of support.

H3b: Elite actors will exercise more power when they oppose an action abroad compared with when they support military action.

Data and Research Design

We conducted a controlled, randomized survey experiment of a nationally representative sample of 5,500 adult Americans during the summer of 2012.¹⁰ We asked respondents a range of questions designed to draw out their views on politics and public affairs and, in particular, to test whether statements by elite military leaders have any discernible effect on public policy views. Specifically, respondents saw a series of vignettes describing proposed military actions, and treatment groups viewed an additional sentence indicating that the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the regional combatant commander either supported or opposed use of force abroad.

¹⁰We previously fielded two surveys from February 15-21, 2012, on Amazon’s Mechanical Turk online platform with 928 and 890 respondents, respectively. We found that perceived military support or opposition for use of force abroad affects the level of public support for military operations in four out of six survey experiments. Pooling across all scenarios, we found that Republicans were 16 percent more likely to support the use of force when they received the military support treatment condition than under the baseline condition. Among Democrats and Independents, however, we found no effects for military support. By contrast, the data suggest that all partisans respond to military opposition in a similar way. Respondents who received the military opposition treatment were 7 percent less likely to support a military opposition than if they had received the baseline condition.

Treatment Groups:

Respondents were assigned to one of the three groups for a series of four proposed military actions regarding Iran, Syria, a humanitarian crisis, and a failed terrorist attack. Our experiment utilizes both a between-subjects and within-subjects design.

The control group ($n \sim 1800$) viewed a vignette describing a use of force scenario and then agreed or disagreed with the proposed action.¹¹ The control group in the Iran scenario, for example, saw the following prompt:

“As you may know, U.S. officials have considered initiating military action to destroy Iran’s ability to make nuclear weapons if Iran continues with its nuclear research and is close to developing a nuclear weapon. The U.S. should initiate military action against Iran.”

The first treatment group ($n \sim 1800$) received an additional prompt where senior military leaders support the proposed action:

“As you may know, U.S. officials have considered initiating military action to destroy Iran’s ability to make nuclear weapons if Iran continues with its nuclear research and is close to developing a nuclear weapon. *According to recent reports, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the regional combatant commander support military action against Iran.* The U.S. should initiate military action against Iran.”

The second treatment group ($n \sim 1800$) saw a signal where military leaders opposed the proposed action:

“As you may know, U.S. officials have considered initiating military action to destroy Iran’s ability to make nuclear weapons if Iran continues with its nuclear research and is close to developing a nuclear weapon. *According to recent reports, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the regional combatant commander oppose military action against Iran.* The U.S. should initiate military action against Iran.”

We repeat the same arrangement for use of force scenarios involving military action in Syria, a hypothetical terrorist attack and a humanitarian crisis.

The control group in the Syria scenario viewed the following prompt:

¹¹Response options were strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree and strongly disagree.

“As you may know, there has been civil unrest in Syria, where anti-government groups have been fighting to overthrow the current regime led by President Bashar al-Assad. The U.S. and its allies are considering bombing Syrian military forces to protect anti-government groups. The United States and its allies should bomb Syrian military forces to protect anti-government groups.”¹²

The control group in the hypothetical failed terrorist attack scenario viewed this prompt:

“Consider the following hypothetical situation. The U.S. government has identified and stopped a major terrorist attack on the mainland. A foreign government that had not previously supported terrorism helped to plan this operation. The U.S. is considering initiating sustained military operations against this foreign government to prevent future attacks. The United States should initiate sustained military operations against this foreign government to prevent future attacks.”¹³

The control group in the hypothetical humanitarian crisis viewed the following prompt:

“Consider a country whose citizens have begun to protest against the ruling dictator who has committed large-scale atrocities against his own people. The country’s military is weak, and the U.S. could intervene to prevent further humanitarian atrocities without suffering many casualties. The U.S. military should intervene to prevent further humanitarian atrocities.”¹⁴

In summary, we primed respondents to think about the views of senior military leaders when considering a potential use of force scenario by randomly assigning

¹²The first and second treatment groups saw an additional sentence: “According to recent reports, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and the regional combatant commander support/oppose military action against the Syrian government.”

¹³The first and second treatment groups saw an additional sentence: “According to recent reports, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and the regional combatant commander support/oppose this military operation.”

¹⁴The first and second treatment groups saw an additional sentence: “According to recent reports, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and the regional combatant commander support/oppose military action against the Syrian government.” This scenario contained a third treatment group designed to gauge the influence of consensus verses divided treatments: “According to recent reports, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and the regional combatant commander support this military operation. In a recent statement, however, one of the other members of the Joint Chiefs opposed this operation.”

participants to see a one sentence prompt describing the military’s stance.

Experimental Design Considerations:

The experimental manipulation prompted respondents with a simple prompt indicating military support or opposition. More complex treatments could examine the impact of military leaders’ opinion contingent on their justification for action or inaction. For example, future studies could say that the military supports an operation because “it will save lives” or “it is protecting our national interest,” whereas opposition prompts could say “it will lead to too many casualties” or “it is not furthering our national security interests.”

Recent research also has challenged traditional characterizations such as ‘hawk’ and ‘dove.’ Depending on the type of mission, support for military operations varies, sometimes drastically. Conservatives and Republicans are much more likely to support missions involving ‘realpolitik’ goals but less likely to support ‘humanitarian goals;’ in contrast, liberals and Democrats are likely to support ‘cooperative internationalist’ and ‘humanitarian’ goals [Wittkopf, 1990, Feaver and Gelpi, 2005, Golby, 2011]. We present respondents with a range of scenarios that tap into the underlying militant internationalism and cooperative internationalist scales [Wittkopf, 1990].

We administer both a between-subjects and within-subjects design. We randomize the order in which respondents see the vignettes and ask respondents a series of questions between treatments to reduce the potential for experimental decay or biased treatment estimates.

Finally, two of our scenarios, Iran and Syria, contain deception. We vary whether the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and a regional combatant commander support or oppose use of force abroad, regardless of the military leaders’ actual stance on the interventions. We do not explicitly say that these leaders support or oppose military action – we reference “recent reports” indicating their views.

Regression models:

We study whether military support or opposition influences foreign policy views using a series of models. Since our main dependent variable is ordered, our primary specifications utilize proportional-odds logistic regressions [Greene, 2003]. These models

extend logistic regressions by allowing for more than two values in the response variable.¹⁵ Our baseline model is as follows:

$$(1) \text{ Agree}_i = A_0 + B_1 * \text{Group}_i + B_2 * \text{Controls}_i + u_i$$

where Agree_i is the response variable with values ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Strongly agree is recorded as 5 and strongly disagree is coded as 1. Group_i is the treatment group assignment (Control, Support, Oppose, Divided), Controls_i are a series of background variables that may impact overall support for using force abroad including age, gender, educational attainment, party affiliation and political ideology, and u_i is error unexplained by the model. In the baseline specification, B_1 gauges the main effect of elite opinion for each treatment group. For example, a positive value of B_1 in the Oppose condition indicates that relative to the control condition senior military opinion decreases support for use of force abroad.

Our interaction models include an additional term capturing the interaction between treatment group assignment and an independent variable of interest such as party affiliation or attention to foreign policy news. This specification is as follows:

$$(2) \text{ Agree}_i = A_0 + B_1 * \text{Group}_i + B_2 * \text{VarInt}_i + B_3 * (\text{Group}_i * \text{VarInt}_i) + B_4 * \text{Controls}_i + u_i$$

where VarInt_i is the independent variable of interest – such as party affiliation or attention paid to foreign policy news. B_3 gauges the effect of the elite military signal contingent on an individual’s characteristics. For example, a positive value of B_3 in the oppose condition for Republicans means that opposition military signals increase the chance that Republicans will disagree with an intervention abroad; a negative value of B_3 in the support condition for Republicans means that support military signals increase the chance that Republicans support use of force abroad.

Results

This section describes our primary findings across the four use of force scenarios. Table 1 (below) presents the main results for each use of force scenario. The fifth column documents the effects pooled across the four scenarios. Since all 5,500 re-

¹⁵We separately run logistic regressions with a dichotomous support dependent variable and a dichotomous oppose dependent variables. The results obtained from these models are very similar to results from the proportional-odds logistic regressions.

spondents viewed the series of use of force scenarios, our point estimates are very precise.

Military opposition exerts a large, seven point negative effect on support for interventions abroad, a highly significant finding. In the failed terrorist attack scenario, for example, 38 percent of respondents in the opposition group support a bombing campaign, compared with 46 percent in the control condition, an eight point effect. Opposition prompts exert a statistically significant and negative effect across all four use of force scenarios.

Table 1: % of respondents who agree or strongly agree with proposed use of force

	Iran	Syria	Terror	Humanitarian	All 4
Control	41	24	46	39	37
Support	41	27	51	44	40
Oppose	33	17	38	33	30
Divided	n/a	n/a	n/a	40	n/a

Military support for using force abroad increases overall support by three percentage points compared with the control group, and the difference between the support treatment group and control group is significant in three out of four use of force scenarios.

The treatment effects reported above are both substantial and extremely precise. Each use of force scenario was administered to 5,500 respondents, so treatment groups include approximately 2,000 respondents. The results also suggest that respondents' opinions are slightly more malleable for hypothetical scenarios (Terror, Humanitarian) compared with real-world foreign policy scenarios (Syria, Iran). In fact, the smallest treatment effects are exhibited in the best known foreign policy scenario, Iran. Since debate about the potential for a military strike to disrupt Iran's nuclear weapons program has been in the news for years, these smaller effects are unsurprising. Nevertheless, even in this salient scenario, we find evidence that military opposition to attacks in Iran leads to an eight-point decrease in public support for military action.

Figure 1 presents these main results in graphical form. It captures differences in overall support across the use of force scenarios and main treatment effects. The Terror scenario proposing a response to a failed attack on the homeland draws the broadest support, followed by the hypothetical humanitarian crisis and the Iran scenario proposing military action. The vignette proposing military action in Syria

garners the least support. The plots contain point estimates and 95% confidence intervals for each treatment group. Given the large sample sizes, even small shifts in opinions are statistically meaningful.

Figure 1: Main Effects by Scenario and Treatment Assignment

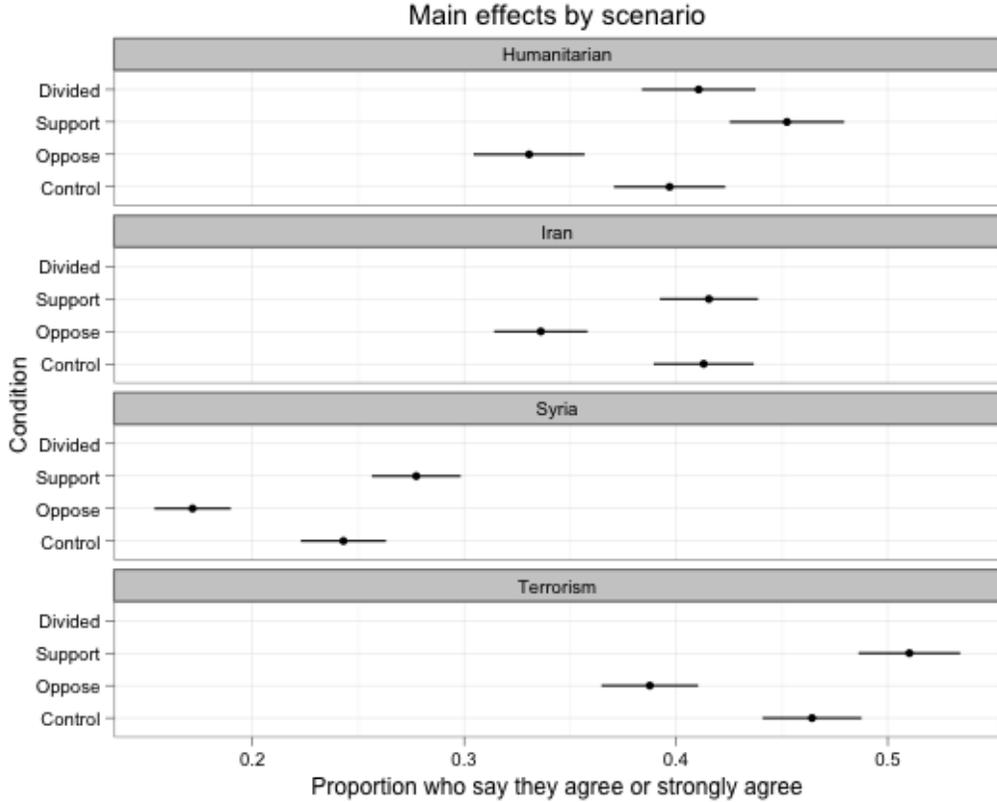


Table 2 displays a measure of net support, the proportion of respondents who agree minus the proportion who disagree. We establish that the military exerts the most influence when it offers a negative signal about a proposed intervention. On average, a negative signal depresses net support by 15 points, while a military support signal increases net support by about four points.

Compared with the control group, net support for respondents in the opposition treatment group declines 17 percentage points in the Syria scenario, 16 points in the failed terrorist attack prompt, 15 percentage points in the humanitarian crisis scenario and 14 points in the Iran vignette.

Table 2: Net support for use of force (% Agree - % Disagree)

	Iran	Syria	Terror	Humanitarian	All 4
Control	+9	-17	+22	+12	+6
Support	+8	-11	+29	+18	+10
Oppose	-5	-34	+6	-3	-9
Divided	n/a	n/a	n/a	+12	n/a

Unity versus Division

Consistent with our expectations, the divided prompt, where some senior officers support action abroad and another general opposes it, does not have a persuasive effect statistically different from zero. In Table 1, 40 percent of respondents in divided prompt support use of force abroad, compared to 39 percent in the baseline condition. Further, in Table 2, net support is +12 percentage points for both groups. The unity of a signal does appear to be a critical factor determining whether or not a cue will be influential. However, since we only included this treatment on the Humanitarian crisis scenario, future research could attempt to replicate this result for other military scenarios.

Party Identification as a Filter

Table 3 on Page 16 displays the percent who agree or strongly agree with proposed use of force by party identification. We divide groups into pure independents, Republicans (including leaners) and Democrats (including leaners).

Overall, elite cues from senior military leaders exert the largest impact on Republican respondents. Column 5, which pools the findings from the four use of force scenarios, demonstrates that the support condition increases support by four points among Republicans and the opposition prompt reduces their support for use of force abroad by 10 percentage points, a 14-point swing overall. Among Democrats, the support prompt increases support by 3 points and the opposition signal reduces support by about five points, an 8-point swing overall. Finally, independents are no more likely to support interventions abroad in the support condition; however, the opposition prompt reduces their support by six percentage points for a 6-point swing overall.

In general, Republicans are more supportive of military action across all four sce-

narios than are either Democrats or Independents. Consistent with our expectations that Republicans would be especially supportive of ‘realpolitik’ missions, they support operations in Iran and military responses to a failed terrorist attack at high rates; clear majorities of Republicans support operations in Iran and in the terrorism scenario in all groups except the oppose condition.

Republican respondents are less likely to support military action for operations in Syria and in response to the hypothetical humanitarian crisis, though they are not less likely to support action than are Democratic respondents. In fact, Democrats and Republicans support these operations at very similar rates. Independent respondents appear to have moderate views on the realpolitik questions with responses between those of Democrats and Republicans, but they have rather dovish views on the questions involving Syria and the humanitarian response.

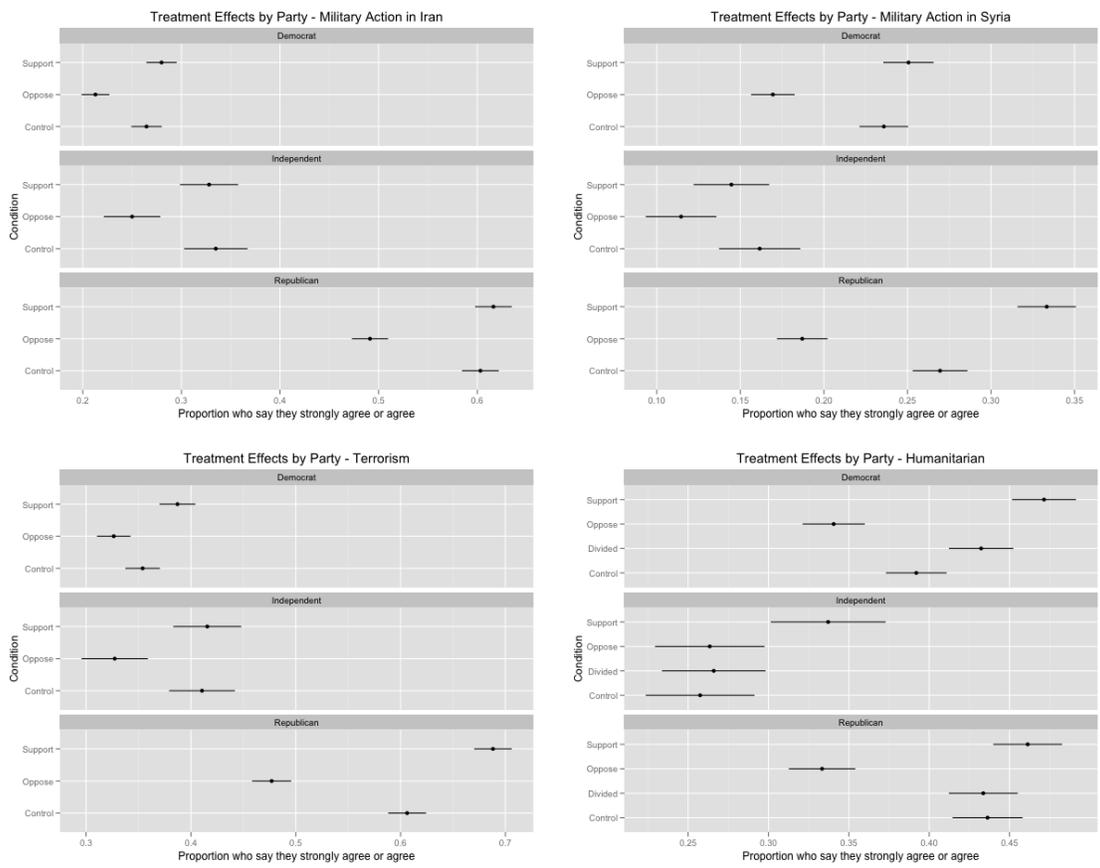
Table 3: % Support by Party Identification

	Iran	Syria	Terror	Humanitarian	Overall
Democrats					
Control	26	24	35	39	31
Support	28	25	39	47	34
Oppose	21	17	33	34	26
Republicans					
Control	60	27	61	44	48
Support	62	33	69	46	52
Oppose	49	19	48	33	38
Independents					
Control	33	16	41	26	30
Support	33	14	42	34	30
Oppose	25	11	33	27	24

Figure 2 below displays plots for each use of force scenario by party identification of the respondent. Consistent with our expectations, signals from military elites generally are more influential with Republican respondents than they are with Independent and Democratic respondents. An opposition signal from military leaders causes statistically significant decreases in support when compared to the baseline among Republican respondents in all four cases. These shifts are approximately 10 percent on average, compared to less than 5 percent for Republicans and 6 percent for

Independents. Across all four scenarios, however, pooled effects are statistically significant for each group. In two of the four scenarios, Republicans also are significantly more likely to support the use of force when they observe the support treatment as compared with the support condition. Somewhat surprisingly, the support treatment does lead to a 4 point increase in support compared to the baseline condition among Democrats. Nevertheless, this bump is half the size of the eight point shift among Republicans. Overall, the effect sizes in each case, positive or negative, tend to be smaller for Democrats and Independents than for Republicans.

Figure 2: Treatment effects by Party Identification for Iran (top left), Syria (top right), Terrorist attack (bottom left) and Humanitarian Crisis (bottom right)



Consistent with our expectations, however, military support for the hypothetical humanitarian intervention does lead to statistically significant increases in support

among both Independents and Democrats. Both groups see an 8 percent increase in support under the support condition as compared to the baseline. This increase is consistent with the idea that respondents would see military support for a humanitarian intervention as surprising, and thus particularly informative. For some reason, support among Republican respondents does not increase in a similar fashion.

Partisan differences do appear to play a critical role in shaping the circumstances under which a respondent will respond to an elite military cue. Republicans are especially likely to listen to senior military officers on use of force decisions, especially on matters related to terrorism and national defense. It also is clear that Democrats and Independents listen to the advice of military leaders when they oppose the use of force, but that these signals are less influential than they are among Republicans. Nevertheless, surprising military advice that supports a humanitarian operation may be particularly influential.

The results suggest, though, that factors beyond party identification are important in determining the size and direction of the treatment effects. First, the saliency of an issue is negatively related to the size of the treatment effects. The influence of military leaders on Iran, a prominent foreign policy case, is smaller than the influence of opinion on Syria, a developing crisis. Treatment effects for the support condition in the Iran scenario are close to 0. We see much more movement on the hypothetical scenarios, where, by virtue of being hypothetical, respondents do not have fixed views.

Second, the ideological bent of the proposed use of force scenario affects the size and direction of treatment results. In the humanitarian scenario, which may appeal more to Democrats or cooperative internationalists, Democrats are moved significantly by the support condition while Republicans exhibit no effect. Consistent with our expectations, military support for the Iran and terrorism scenarios did not influence Democrats. However, military support for the Syria scenario did not lead to a statistically significant increase in support among Democrats like we expected it would. There are several reasons why these results are not consistent with our expectations. First, Democrats' views already may be somewhat crystallized on this topic. Second, although Syria clearly involves many serious humanitarian issues, there also are other strategic and economic interests at stake in the region. Perhaps respondents think of this crisis primarily in terms unrelated to the humanitarian issues at stake. Third, our choice of the phrase 'anti-government groups' may prime respondents not to think of this situation in purely humanitarian terms. Finally, it may be that recent operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have colored respondents' views of operations in this region of the world in particular.

The military’s influence also is strongest when it opposes rather than supports interventions abroad. On average, military opposition reduces support for an intervention by about 10 percentage points, compared with the baseline condition, while military support increases support by about five percentage points.

Table 4: Proportional Odds Logistics Regressions of Support for Use of Force on Party Identification and Treatment Assignment

	Iran	Syria	Terror	Human.	Pooled
Control	0.159 (0.116)	0.346* (0.115)	0.159 (0.115)	0.135 (0.132)	0.229* (0.059)
Support	0.253* (0.115)	0.361* (0.116)	0.251* (0.117)	0.325* (0.135)	0.301* (0.060)
Party ID (7-pt)	0.270* (0.019)	0.0147 (0.019)	0.157* (0.019)	-0.014 (0.022)	0.120* (0.010)
Control *	0.050* (0.026)	0.012 (0.026)	0.061* (0.026)	0.040 (0.031)	0.031* (0.014)
Party ID					
Support *	0.022 (0.026)	0.042* (0.027)	0.085* (0.027)	0.030 (0.031)	0.035* (0.014)
Party ID					
N	5342	5342	5342	4004	20030
Resid. Dev.	16034	15681	15643	11932	60848
AIC	16062	15709	15671	11960	60876

All Models control for age, race, education and gender

Party ID (7-pt): 1 = Strong Dem, 7= Strong Rep

Coefficients are with respect to a respondent in the oppose group.

The dependent variable is 5 if the respondent strongly agrees with using force abroad and 1 if the respondent strongly disagrees.

POLR Thresholds available upon request

* significant at the $p < .1$ level

Table 4 presents results from a proportional-odds logistic regression, where the dependent variable is support for use of force abroad and treatment assignment is interacted with party affiliation. The coefficients are displayed with respect to a respondent in the opposition treatment group. The positive and significant coefficients on the Support variable indicate that public opinion for using force abroad is

highest in the Support treatment group. The positive and significant coefficients on the Party ID variable in the Iran and Terror scenarios correspond with the bivariate results where Party ID influences in support in these ‘realpolitik’ scenarios.

Finally, the interaction between Party ID and Support is significant in three out of the five models. This indicates that Republicans in the support group are significantly more likely to support use of force abroad, compared with Independents or Democrats.

Veteran Status

Table 5 displays the percentage of respondents who agree or strongly agree with each proposed use of force as compared to the control group by veteran status. In other words, it displays the treatment effects for each scenario with groups divided into veterans and non-veterans.

Table 5: % of respondents who agree or strongly agree with proposed use of force by veteran status as compared with the baseline group

	Iran		Syria		Terror		Humanitarian	
	Sup.	Opp.	Sup.	Opp.	Sup.	Opp.	Sup.	Opp.
Veterans	0	-9	+3	-11	+5	-14	+7	-7
Non-veterans	0	-7	+4	-6	+4	-7	+5	-7

In general, we find only limited evidence that veterans are more likely to respond to elite military cues. Veterans are not statistically more likely than non-veterans to respond to support cues in any of the four scenarios. When they receive opposition cues, however, there is some evidence that veterans are slightly more likely to downgrade their support for the use of force than are non-veterans. Across all four scenarios, veterans who receive an opposition prompt are 10 points less likely to support the use of force when compared to the baseline condition. In contrast, the corresponding change for non-veterans is 7 points. Nevertheless, the difference between veterans and non-veterans only is significant for the Syria and Terrorism scenarios. The treatment effect for veterans is -11 percent for Syria and -14 percent for the Terrorism scenario, compared with -6 percent and -7 percent, respectively, for non-veterans. These limited treatment effects among veterans as compared to non-veterans are consistent with the argument that one’s partisan identification, and not one’s veteran status, is the most important factor in shaping an individual’s foreign policy beliefs (Golby 2011).

Although not reported to conserve space, we also examined differences between veterans and non-veterans within partisan groups. Among Republicans, we did not find any statistically significant differences in the sizes of treatment effects for veterans compared to non-veterans, either when pooling all scenarios or when examining each individual scenario.

Among Democrats, however, a clear pattern emerged in the data. Democratic veterans were much more likely to respond to opposition treatments than were Democratic non-veterans. The average opposition treatment effect for Democratic veterans was -11 percent compared to only -3 percent for Democratic non-veterans. These opposition effects were especially large for the Syria, Terrorism, and Humanitarian scenarios with shifts of -13, -15, and -11 points on these scenarios, respectively, for Democratic non-veterans compared to moves of -5, -1, and -4 percent for non-veteran Democrats. We observed similar effects for the opposition treatment among veterans who identified themselves as Independents on the Syria and Terrorism scenarios, but not on the Humanitarian scenario.

In general, support treatments did not lead to statistically significant differences between veteran and non-veteran partisans, with one exception. Democratic veterans who received the support treatment in the Humanitarian scenario were 21 percent more likely to support the humanitarian intervention than were Democratic veterans in the baseline condition. In contrast, Democratic non-veterans saw a still sizeable, but much smaller, 8 percent shift. One possible explanation for this large bump among Democratic veterans is that these respondents might see such a cue by military leaders as both surprising and trustworthy. Democratic veterans tend to be more moderate than Democratic non-veterans (Golby 2011); under most circumstances, they self-selected into the military despite widespread beliefs that the military is a conservative institution. However, they also might be particularly attuned to the real challenges that military organizations face when asked to conduct a humanitarian intervention. Consequently, a cue from senior military leaders in support of such an operation might be particularly informative.

Conclusion

Americans' relative lack of interest in foreign affairs, the information asymmetries between citizens and military leaders, and the complex nature of foreign policy subjects suggest that Americans' views on the use of force abroad are susceptible to elite influence. We conduct a series of large-scale survey experiments and find that elites

are powerful shapers of Americans' support for the use of force abroad. We establish that military leaders influence individuals who pay limited attention to foreign policy news and whose beliefs are ideologically congruent with the endorsing source. Furthermore, we find that the military's influence on public opinion is greatest when it opposes (rather than supports) interventions abroad. This study dovetails a series of important research literatures and advances our understanding of how individuals form opinions about complex subjects in which they have little substantive knowledge, how voters use elite signals and how the military may influence politics and policy in a democracy.

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