

**Elite Opinion and Institutional Policy Conflict in the United States:
The Case of Foreign Aid**

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Abstract

American elected officials differ over some policies according to their institutional positions in ways not attributable to partisanship or constituency factors. This is a puzzle. I argue that power induces officials to give more weight to their actual preferences over policy outcomes as opposed to mere position-taking. However, this incentive produces systematic differences between politicians in different offices only when politicians generally privately agree on policy. When elite surveys reveal a dominant view on an issue, we can infer that politicians personally share this opinion. Thus Presidents and Congressional leaders should be closer to elite opinion than ordinary Members of Congress (MCs), and senators should be closer to it than representatives.

I develop this argument with a focus on the case of foreign aid. Consistent with this theory, Presidents –the incumbent importantly excepted- have been more supportive of foreign aid –which elite opinion favors- than Congresses. A pooled analysis of roll call votes on foreign aid appropriations conference reports finds that senators are more supportive of it than representatives. Congressional leaders and members of key committees have also especially supportive of aid, as are Presidential co-partisans, and MCs with greater educational attainment, especially those who have attended elite universities.

Policy conflict between a President and a Congress controlled by the other party is expected. The same can be said of inter-cameral disputes when one party controls the House and the other predominates in the Senate. Finding constituency characteristics reflected in MCs' votes is no surprise either. Dispute over institutional prerogatives such as executive privilege is also predictable

Yet persistent policy disagreement between politicians in different offices not rooted in party or institutional prerogative requires more explanation. Presidents of both parties have been at odds with Congress for long periods on many foreign and domestic policy issues (Karol 2000, 2013). Similar gaps have existed to a lesser extent on such issues between the House and Senate (Karol 2007), and between congressional leaders and backbenchers.

These differences matter. If senators' preferences on an issue chronically diverge from those of representatives, and presidents' from Congress's then changes in party fortunes or even the abolition of the filibuster may not alter policy. They also mean that delegating authority to the President will have predictable results. For example, liberalization of U.S. trade policy since FDR's day stemmed from Congress delegating authority to the President (Destler 2005). Grants of authority lasted several years, covering more than one administration. Yet since Presidents were more free-trading than Congresses (Rogowski 1987, Bailey, Goldstein and Weingast 1997, Karol 2000) trade advocates knew that regardless of who won the White House, the authority would be used in similar ways. This assumption -not violated until 2017- meant that much conflict over trade policy took the form of conflict over delegation of authority.

Foreign aid has been such an issue since its inception in the 1940s. Historically, the policy has won more support in the White House than in Congress, in the Senate than in the House and among leading lawmakers as compared to backbenchers. (As in the case of trade policy, the only exception is the current administration.) Congress has favored aid for countries that have strong domestic support in the U.S. from co-ethnics and others, e.g. Israel, Greece and Armenia, but overall has appropriated less than presidents requested. Understanding this alignment and developing an explanation for such longstanding institutional differences across policy areas is my focus.

The many structural differences between Congress and the Presidency and the House vs. the Senate offer multiple candidate explanations, as do the positions MCs occupy within the Congressional hierarchy. Scholars have long noted that the President's constituency is larger and more diverse than those of MCs, as are those of most senators vis-à-vis representatives. Another difference is term length and limits. The fact that the President is –at least in principle- the ultimate 'decider' of the executive branch, while Congressional authority is fragmented means legislators face collective action problems and greater temptation to view their actions as “position-taking” than policy-making and please lobbies (Mayhew 1974, Edwards 1978).

Often such differences are discussed in terms of “the public interest” or “national interest”, even though such terms typically reflect unexamined normative preferences and causal understandings and are seldom defined with any precision. Advocates of this perspective often exalt the Presidency and disparage the Congress, sometimes calling for a strengthened Executive (Howell and Moe 2016).

I take a different tack, focusing on the power of individual elected officials and the distribution of elite opinion. My argument has a few key premises. First, in taking stands officials will give more weight to their personal policy preferences to the extent they believe they may be pivotal actors. Secondly, those in more influential positions are more likely to see themselves potentially affecting outcomes. Thirdly, elected officials' personal preferences will generally reflect elite opinion as to what constitutes good policy. When elite opinion is divided, elected officials' personal views will be as well, so the office politicians fill will not be predictive of the stand they take. Yet when a dominant view exists in elite opinion we can infer that most politicians share it.

In such cases politicians in more important offices will be especially likely to take the stand deemed correct and "responsible" by elite opinion. Presidents will be more supportive of it than MCs as a class, with congressional leaders, senators and key committee members being relatively more supportive than their colleagues. Importantly, this pattern should exist independent of the differences in constituency and the electoral calendar which officials in various offices face. If an issue binds a group to a party coalition, this factor may override elected officials private preferences and the imperatives of coalition maintenance become dominant (Karol 2009), however.

I use this argument to explain a durable pattern; Presidents have been more supportive of foreign aid than Congresses. The Senate is more supportive of foreign aid than the House. Congressional leaders are more supportive of aid than rank and file legislators. MCs from the President's party are more supportive than legislators from the other side of the aisle.

Two frequently cited explanations for these gaps, constituency factors and term length differences, do *not* fully account for them. By contrast, elite opinion's interaction with a key structural factor, the differing number of elected officials in the two Houses and Congress vs. the Presidency, *can* help explain it. I also find, consistent with this theory, that more influential legislators, Congressional leaders and members of relevant committees, are especially supportive of foreign aid.

Citing the President's greater role in foreign as opposed to domestic policy also does not explain this pattern. The President is also Commander-in-Chief and has great authority to act unilaterally in using force. However, Presidents have *not* consistently supported higher levels of defense spending than Congress. Nor are vague claims that the President is more concerned about some undefined "national interest" helpful. Even if this is the case, it does not explain why so many Presidents of both parties have viewed that interest similarly when it comes foreign aid, while they differed on many other policy questions, foreign and domestic.

Elite Opinion and Elected Officials' Policy Preferences

Elite opinion plays a key role in my argument. By elite opinion, I mean the opinions of individuals who are professionally active in politics and policy-making and those in prominent, "opinion leader" positions; most of these are not elected officials. Included among the non-officeholding elite are journalists, interest group leaders, political intellectuals, senior civil servants and policy experts. The opinion of credentialed or academic experts alone is not elite opinion by this definition unless it has diffused beyond the expert class.

The claim that “ideas matter” is hardly new for students of U.S. foreign policy (Goldstein 1993) or international relations more generally (Goldstein and Keohane 1993). However, works in this vein, whether liberal, rationalist or constructivist, are typically focused on the national or international levels, seeking to show that policies are not solely a reflection of power distributions in the global system, or reducible to material interests. Importantly, these studies are generally not designed to explain differences among actors or institutions within a political system.

Students of American politics have long held that politicians care about policy as well as electoral success and amassing influence (Fenno, 1978). Nonetheless, MCs often engage in “position-taking” (Mayhew 1974). Since an individual legislator’s yea or nay is unlikely to affect policy outcomes, he can typically cast votes with a focus on his electoral image rather than his policy concerns.

Yet politicians are aware that their votes and public stands may affect policy and weigh concerns over political position and policy outcomes in their decisions. One factor affecting an elected official’s weighing of these concerns is his perception of how influential his action will be. As one legislator told Mansbridge (1986,162)

what good is it for me to sit there and vote what I feel would be my principle... and I voted against my constituency,... and then still when they took the tally, I was still on the losing side? ...When you are really in a position where you can make it happen, *then* it would be rewarding enough to say, "I'll see you guys later; beat me in an election!" I don't care whatever it is, *that* is what makes it worthwhile.

While elected officials give more weight to positions they think may actually be decisive, this concern will be greater for some than others. Those in more powerful positions are aware that their stands are especially likely to affect outcomes. Derthick and Quirk (1985,103) assert that leading legislators on an issue, being more “consequential”

and “widely observed”, “will be more prone to act on their conceptions of the public interest.” These authors focused on domestic regulatory policy. Yet their logic can be extended to foreign policy, and can help explain differences between Presidents and Congresses, senators and representatives, and leading and backbench MCs.

When elite opinion is divided however the most plausible inference is that politicians’ personal or private policy preferences will mirror those of activists in their own party, a class from which they usually emerged. When politicians sincerely differ as to the best policy on an issue those in positions of greater influence will not systematically gravitate toward one side of the debate. So there will not be a consistent divide between Congress and President or House and Senate.

Yet in other instances there is a dominant view on a topic in elite opinion. In such cases the private convictions of most elected officials will reflect this prevailing elite view. The case of foreign aid is an especially useful one to examine in this context since, as I show, it is marked by a large and persistent gap between public and elite opinion.

Why would politicians act in accord with elite opinion? There are a few reasons. Some officials might not share the prevailing view, yet still want to be well thought of, winning peer approval or even a place in history. As Derthick and Quirk note, these considerations would loom larger for especially prominent officials, who are more visible. In this scenario elite opinion is an external factor of which the policy-maker is aware.

Officials might also support a policy elite opinion favors because it is their own policy preference. Politicians are part of the elite and have been socialized in it, internalizing prevalent views within this milieu. Even among those who have internalized the prevalent view, motivation can be divided into two further categories; normative and

instrumental. An official may simply believe the policy is the right thing to do, and pursue it for that reason. Yet she may also be instrumental and self-interested, thinking that the policy would produce good outcomes that will prove politically beneficial, even if the policy itself is unpopular. Stated differently, the idea may reflect “principled” as well as “causal” beliefs (Goldstein and Keohane 1993, 8). While theoretically distinct, these mechanisms are not mutually exclusive. Both motivations would impel officials in more influential positions to reflect elite opinion more closely. To the extent that there is some political price for pursuing the policy favored by elite opinion, be it from the general public or an interest group, those who can more plausibly hope to affect policy should be more willing to pay it.

However, the hypothesis that politicians’ support for policies favored by elite is instrumental does yield a distinctive prediction. The public holds the President’s party responsible for prevailing conditions. When there is peace and prosperity the President and his congressional co-partisans benefit electorally. Conversely, when conditions are poor candidates from the party in the White House suffer at the ballot box. Thus MCs from the President’s party have a special political interest in good policy outcomes that opposition party MCs lack. So to the extent that officials internalize a dominant elite view, but act on it for self-interested reasons, presidential co-partisans in Congress will be closer to elite opinion in their voting behavior, if not necessarily in their beliefs, than MCs of the other party.

While we would expect elected officials to be better informed about public policy than the voters and to be aware of, and mostly share in, any elite view, this is not equally true for all of them. An official’s position in the political system may play a role

not only in shaping his incentives, but in affecting the information he receives. Those in leadership roles, or on key committees will receive more exposure to the conventional wisdom in a policy area. Similarly, personal background may play a role. For example, MCs with higher levels of educational attainment and those who have attended elite universities might be more exposed to such views, both in formal educational settings and via their social networks, and more likely to promote certain policies for that reason.

The Case of Foreign Aid

Since the end of World War Two the U.S. has provided bilateral military and economic assistance to many countries.¹ While occasioning periodic controversy, this program is small in relative terms, often comprising less than 1% of the federal budget.

Several correlates of support for foreign aid among MCs have been identified. Democrats and liberals traditionally favor larger appropriations than conservatives and Republicans, especially for economic aid. “Co-partisanship” also matters; MCs have been more supportive of foreign aid requests put forward by Presidents of their party (Rieselbach 1964, Kesselman 1966, Tidmarch and Sabatt 1972).

Scholars have also long noted “sectional” differences in foreign policy voting (Grassmuck 1951, Rieselbach 1964, Truman 1962, Trubowitz 1998, Fordham 1998) with the Mountain West and, later, the South being the most “isolationist” and the Northeast the most “internationalist” regions. Within regions MCs representing urban districts and constituents with higher socio-economic status (Rieselbach 1964, Milner and Tingley

¹ The U.S. also indirectly provides aid to other countries through international organizations. These processes however are beyond the scope of this study.

2010,2015) have been more pro-aid. These regional differences are variously attributed to cultural factors or economic interests (Fordham 1998,2008).

More interestingly, the office held by elected officials is notably associated with their preferences on foreign aid spending. The politics of foreign aid are an example of the phenomenon that “where you stand depends on where you sit.” Presidents routinely seek larger foreign aid appropriations than Congress will support.² A less widely-discussed gap is evident between the chambers on the issue as well; Senators are more supportive of foreign aid than Representatives.

Truman (1962) found an inter-cameral gap on foreign aid. He cited the greater role of committees in the House, noting, “the key men on the Appropriations Committee and the crucial subcommittee have been consistently hostile to foreign aid” (p.65) However, the men Truman describes are long gone, yet inter-cameral differences on foreign aid persists. Kernell (1973) found that the Senate was more liberal than the House and more “acquiescent” toward Presidential requests on foreign policy.

Despite its persistence, the inter-cameral gap on foreign aid has drawn little recent scholarly attention. Milner and Tingley (2010,2015) do not address it in their recent prominent studies of the politics of foreign aid. Meernik and Oldmixon (2004) find senators remain more supportive of Presidents than representatives on foreign affairs

² I focus on appropriations rather than authorizations for two reasons. The latter are never the final word and more importantly, the foreign aid program has not been reauthorized since 1985 (Epstein and Weed 2009), allowing appropriators to dominate the process (White 1993, Lancaster 2000).

generally and more “internationalist.” They posit that senators’ longer terms and greater powers in foreign affairs distance them from voters and dispose them to be more supportive of Presidents on foreign policy than representatives. Souva and Rohde (2007) find that on foreign policy issues that polarize elite opinion along party lines, voting was more partisan in the House than the Senate. They attribute this difference to representatives’ more homogenous constituencies, shorter terms and the stronger role of party leaders in the House.

These inferences are not implausible. Yet, none of these authors test claims about term length’s effect. In addition, even if senators are more removed from voter concerns than Representatives these authors do not explain *why* senators would be more “internationalist” than the public, i.e. why they would use their alleged leeway to favor a particular policy stand.

Hypotheses

H1 The President will support higher levels of foreign aid spending than either House of Congress.

H2 The Senate will appropriate greater sums for foreign aid spending than the House of Representatives.

H3 Individual senators will be more likely to vote for foreign aid appropriations bills than representatives

H4 Congressional party and committee leaders will be more likely to vote for foreign aid than ordinary MCs.

H5 MCs serving on committees or subcommittees focused on foreign policy will be more likely to vote for foreign aid than their colleagues.

H6 MCs of the president’s party will be more likely to vote for foreign aid than those from the other party.

H7 MCs with higher levels of educational attainment will be more supportive of aid.

H8 MCs who have attended elite universities will be more supportive of aid.³

Data and Measurement

The preferences of the House, Senate and President on foreign aid can be compared in multiple ways. One possibility is to compare the funding levels voted by the Senate and the House with Presidential requests. Another method is to compare voting patterns across chambers when both representatives and senators consider the same bill. Unlike an examination of spending proposed in bills, this method allows for comparisons among MCs including leaders vs. rank and file and assessments of constituency variables as a possible explanation of inter-chameral differences. Both measures have merit.

Figure 1 charts Senate and House appropriations for foreign aid as a share of Presidential requests from 1948 through 2017.⁴ It reveals that both chambers typically voted less aid than Presidents sought, -although the gaps varied in size- but the House voted even less than the Senate. The mean House appropriation was 84.3% of the President's request. The equivalent Senate figure was 89.3%. While means can be

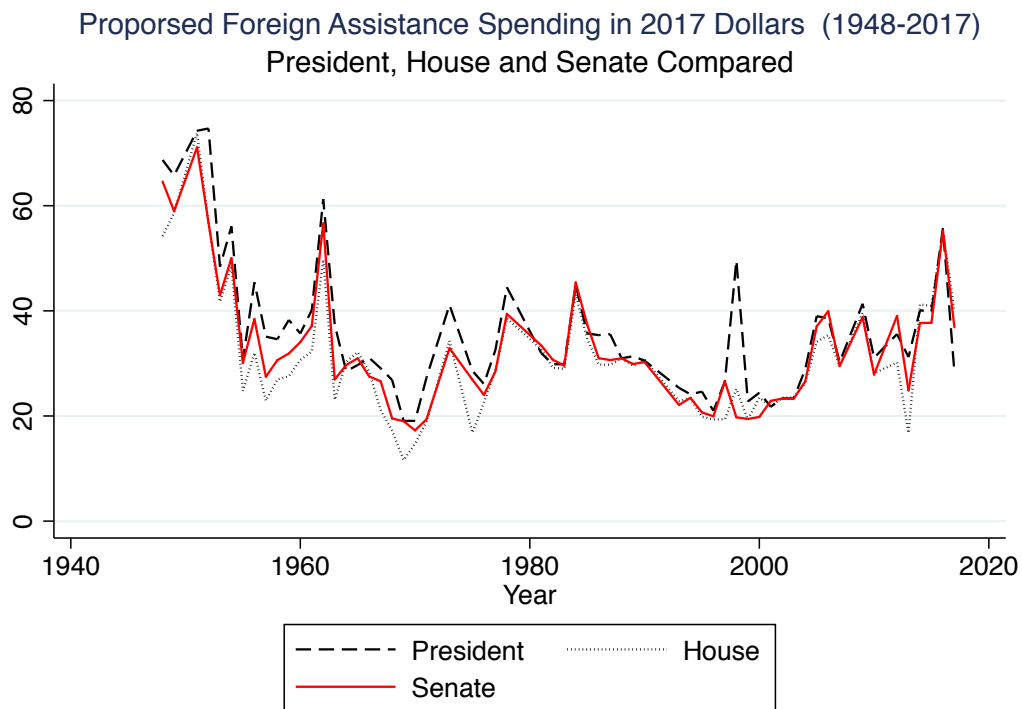
³ An indicator variable is coded as one if an MC attended an elite college or university at the undergraduate or graduate level (whether or not they received a degree there), and zero otherwise. I coded as elite all Ivy League universities, MIT, Duke, The University of Chicago, Northwestern University, the University of Michigan, UC-Berkeley, Stanford, CalTech and several liberal arts colleges. I also count the University of Virginia and New York University law schools as elite, but not their undergraduate or graduate programs.

⁴ I exclude a handful of years when only one House passed a foreign aid appropriation bill. In these cases (1974, 1979, 1980, 1991, 2002, 2006 and 2008) foreign aid appropriations were often included in an omnibus or continuing resolution. In some cases a floor vote was taken in only one House, in others even this did not occur.

sensitive to outliers, the medians for each chamber, 85.9% for the House and 90.5% for the Senate, tell the same tale.

Figure 1

**House and Senate Foreign Aid Appropriations and Presidential Requests
(1948-2017)**



It is a relatively simple matter to compare sums budgeted since in most years both Houses appropriated funds. Comparing voting patterns across chambers is more challenging, however. We can infer little from comparing the vote margins in the two chambers when they vote, as they often did, on appropriations providing different funding levels for the foreign aid program. In order to meaningfully compare individual senators' preferences with those of representatives we need to examine their behavior when presented with the *same bill*.

Conference reports, written to reconcile the different provisions in related House and Senate bills, offer a potential solution to this problem. Each chamber must vote on the same text for a bill to become law, permitting a good test of the preferences of senators and representatives on foreign aid. Unfortunately, often at least one chamber avoided a recorded vote on the conference report for foreign aid appropriations and this has become the norm in recent years due to the collapse of the “regular order” in the budget process.⁵ Typically the Senate approved the conference report by voice vote, even though considerable opposition was recorded in a House vote. One might interpret these cases as further evidence that resistance to aid was greater in the House than in the Senate.

A more conservative approach, which I employ here, is to focus on the cases in which recorded votes on foreign aid appropriations conference reports occurred in both Houses. There are seventeen such cases since the foreign aid program began in the late 1940s. These are listed in the appendix. Unfortunately, none are from

Mayhew (2011) holds that constituency and term length differences do not yield House-Senate divergence on most issues. Yet senators’ and representatives’ constituencies differ in many ways that can affect their policy preferences. Farmers are over-represented in the Senate (Thies 1998) while African-Americans and Latinos are under-represented there (Griffin 2006.) Similarly, their varying patterns of dispersion let

⁵ In more recent years foreign aid and other appropriations have also been bundled into omnibus measures combining funding for many different agencies and domestic programs (Hanson 2014). In such cases it is impossible to analyze the votes of MCs on foreign aid. The chambers’ different funding levels can be observed even in such cases, however, even if these are part of a larger bill.

some industries wield more influence in the House, while others have a greater voice in the Senate (Schiller 1999.) Small states benefit disproportionately from federal “pork” due to their overrepresentation in the upper house (Lee and Oppenheimer, 1999.)

A gap between the House and the Senate on foreign aid could stem from such constituency differences. In the multivariate analyses I include several measures of constituency available for both states and Congressional districts including the share of foreign-born, urban and blue-collar residents, as well as regional indicator variables.

Another difference in institutional design that has been posited as an explanation of differing policy preferences is the length of elected officials terms of office. Those further removed from electoral pressures might be seen as more likely to stray from the expressed wishes of the public. Meernik and Oldmixon (2004) suggest that the staggered and longer terms of senators help account for their generally greater support for foreign aid. In order to account for this possibility.

Elite Opinion on Foreign Aid

To understand the inter-branch and inter-cameral differences evident on foreign aid we must consider the role of elite opinion. Foreign aid is a policy area in which large gaps have long been evident between the preferences expressed by masses and elites. Elite respondents are far more supportive of aid, especially economic aid, than the public. One possible source of this gap is misinformation at the mass level; Kull and Destler (1999) and Gilens (2001) note that survey respondents overestimate the share of the budget devoted to foreign aid by more than an order of magnitude! While respondents consistently say that aid levels are too high, their preference as to the share of the budget

that should be allocated to foreign aid is actually greater than the true level of spending.⁶ Nevertheless, regardless of its sources, voters' hostility to foreign aid, as they understand it, has been remarkably durable and is a factor politicians have to take into account.

We can gain a sense of the gap between mass and elite from a series of surveys carried out by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations (now the Chicago Council on Global Affairs). The CCFR produced quadrennial surveys of the public and "leaders" on foreign policy questions from 1978 to 2002. The leaders category includes journalists, clergy, corporate executives, labor leaders, government officials and academics.⁷

In Table 1 the "net support" for foreign aid expenditures in the public and elite samples is reported. Net support is the share of respondents saying funding levels should increase minus the share saying they should decrease. For the years in which responses are available for both elites and masses (1990-2002) a large attitudinal gulf is apparent, with the elites much more pro-aid.

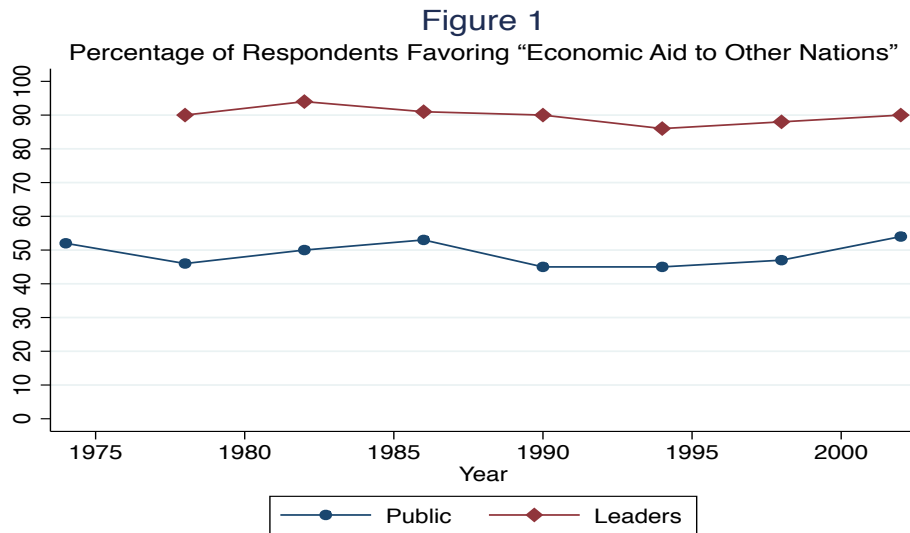
Table 1
Net Support for Economic Assistance to Other Nations among Public and Leaders
(% of respondents for expanded aid - % of respondents favoring cuts in aid)

	Public	Leaders
1974	-45%	n.a
1978	-39%	n.a
1982	-46%	n.a
1986	-37%	n.a
1990	-54%	22%
1994	-49%	-11%
1998	-35%	21%
2002	-34%	44%

⁶ Williamson (2018) contends that some of this gap reflects respondents defining "foreign aid" more broadly than elites to include America's military presence in other countries.

⁷ On other issues for which elite surveys are not available, I use a stratified sample of newspaper editorials that includes regional and partisan diversity (Karol 2013).

Similarly, Figure 2, which reports the percentage of elite and mass-level respondents saying they generally favor a foreign aid program, without specifying funding levels, reveals that such support was nearly universal in the elite sample, but only about half of the public would typically endorse even this mild statement.



A large attitudinal gulf is apparent, with the elites much more pro-aid than the public. Other surveys show a similar result (Holsti 2006, 250). The figure reports the percentage of respondents saying they generally favor a foreign aid program, Support is nearly universal in the elite sample, but only about half of the public will typically endorse even this mild statement. In more recent years, the CGOA has changed question wording, but surveys in 2004 and 2014 revealed similar gaps, with the public far less supportive than elite respondents of foreign aid.⁸

The data presented on appropriations levels and the multivariate roll call analyses extend back to the early postwar years when the program began. Yet the CCFR/CGOA

⁸ Global Views, 2004, American Public Opinion and Foreign Policy, (Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, 2004), United on Goals, Divided on Means p.17 (Chicago Council on Global Affairs, 2015)

survey data do not extend as far back in time. Should we then be concerned that the elite-mass gap on aid emerged only in the 1970s, calling its explanatory power into question regarding a relationship evident since the 1940s?

This is a reasonable concern, but earlier studies reveal elite-mass disagreement on this issue already in the 1950s. Rosenau (1962, 1963) contrasts attitudes toward foreign aid in an elite sample of “opinion leaders” with contemporaneous surveys of the general public in 1957-1958. He found that 82.3% of the sample of “opinion leaders” favored maintaining or increasing foreign aid. By contrast, only 52% of the public favored maintaining or increasing aid, and only 28% did so in the case of economic aid.

Thus the greater enthusiasm for foreign aid in elite as opposed to public opinion dates long precedes the CCFR’s surveys. These data demonstrate longstanding and overwhelming elite backing for foreign aid. They support the inference that most elected officials personally favor foreign aid, even if they do not always vote for it.

Roll-Call Evidence

Beyond observing differences in the funding levels proposed by the President, the Senate and the House, it is important to examine the behavior of individual elected officials. It is useful to know whether the differences in funding levels voted by each chamber are a straightforward reflection of preferences, or perhaps the result of varying rules and procedures in each House of Congress.

Analyzing roll-call data also allows for pooling of observations across chambers and time. This approach makes possible the assessment of several variables that could not be explored by looking at recorded votes in a single chamber and session. It is possible to

control for factors said to explain differences between the House and Senate such as term length and constituency. The staggered nature of senators' terms means that at any given time some are up for re-election as soon as representatives are, while others are nearly six years away from this status. Foreign aid roll calls have also occurred at different times in particular Congresses, some late in election years, and some further away from election day. In a pooled sample some representatives serving when foreign aid is voted on early in a year will be further from than election than some senators serving in years when a bill came up later in a session. Pooling votes across chambers and years allows for a test of the claim that insulation from voters via longer terms as well as constituency factors explains inter-chameral differences on foreign aid.

It is also possible, by pooling observations over many years, to distinguish between the roles played by party affiliation and co-partisanship with the President. In any given year these two variables are not distinguishable, but over time both Democratic and Republican MCs both serve with Presidents of their party allowing for the inclusion of variables measuring co-partisanship and party affiliation in the same model.

Table 2 reports a series of logistic regression models based on the pooling of the sixteen cases since the inception of foreign aid in which there were recorded votes on foreign assistance appropriations conference reports. These votes all occurred between 1952 and 2005. In many other years one or both chambers did not hold a recorded vote on the conference report, either passing it via voice vote or, especially in more recent years, bundling it with many appropriations for many other programs and agencies, so that there is no clear vote on foreign aid. Happily, the years for which there are recorded votes in both chambers are spread across the decades and include cases of Democratic

and Republican unified government, as well as cases of divided government with Democratic and Republican Presidents. Since many long-serving MCs recur in this data set several times, the standard errors reflect clustering by MC.

The models reported in Table 2 show that in many different ways MCs' institutional position is associated with their votes on foreign aid appropriations. Senators are significantly more supportive than representatives, as are committee and floor leaders, members of key committees, presidential co-partisans and alumni of elite universities. (The coefficient for educational attainment falls short of statistical significance in specifications that also include elite university attendance.)

The final model includes all of the above variables along with a large number of controls that may influence MCs' votes and help account for institutional differences between House and Senate. Due to the prominence of Israel in foreign aid budgets in recent decades, I also include an indicator variable registering whether the MC was Jewish.⁹ The final model reveals that the findings in the previous models are robust to the inclusion of many control variables measuring various constituency factors. The difference between House and Senate is also evident even when a variable measuring the time between the vote on foreign and the MC's next election, a period that is usually greater for senators than representatives.

⁹ The number of cases in the multivariate model is slightly smaller than in the earlier tests since the presidential vote is not available for all Congressional districts in 1952.

Table 2
Congressional Votes on Foreign Aid Appropriations Conference Reports: 1952-2005
 Logistic Regression Models- Robust Standard Errors Clustered on MCs in Parentheses
 *=p-value <.05 (Year fixed effects not shown)

	Party	Congressional Role	Personal Characteristics	Combined Model
Democrat	1.08(.08)*			1.07(.11)*
Senator		.34(.10)*		.60(.15)*
Congressional Leader		.57(.23)*		1.09(.31)*
Appropriations Member		.41(.17)*		.38(.19)*
Foreign Affairs Member		.85(.14)*		.65(.16)*
Presidential Co-Partisan		1.07(.05)*		.87(.06)*
Age				-.007(.004)
Time Before Election				.07(.04)
Jewish				.63(.35)
Educational Attainment			.06(.3)	.05(.03)
Elite University Alumnus			.70(.09)*	.51(.11)*
Foreign-Born Pct				.65(.16)*
Urban				.84(.29)*
African-Americans Pct				-.06(.04)
Blue Collar Pct				.43(2.07)
Manufacturing Pct				1.23(1.92)
Farming Pct				-.13(.05)*
Unions Pct				.04(.007)*
Dem Presidential Vote				2.84(.46)*
Northeast				.91(.17)*
South				.001(.18)
Midwest				.05(.16)
Mountain West				-.15(.21)
Constant	.55(.08)*	.40(.08)*	.66(.12)*	-1.2(.83)
Log-Likelihood	-5053.4	-4978.5	-5202.73	-3556.6
N	8560	8558	8559	7950

Simply noting the sign on logit coefficients and whether they reach conventional levels of statistical significance does not tell us very much about the substantive impact of the relationship reported. For this reason, I report results in Table 3 that show the impact of varying the institutional position of MCs. The table reports the change in the probability that MCs vote in favor of the foreign aid appropriations depending on

whether they fall into one of the categories (senator, leader, key committee member, presidential co-partisan, elite university alumnus) with all other variables are held to their means or modes if dichotomous.

Table 3
Predicted Probability of Support for Foreign Aid Conference Report
(all other variables at their means or modes)

	All MCs	MC is Senator	MC is Committee or Floor Leader	MC is on Foreign Affairs Committee	MC is on Foreign Operations Appropriations Subcommittee*	MC is Member of President's Party	MC attended an elite university
Predicted Probability of Voting for Foreign Aid	.651	.875	.807	.793	.741	.816	.87
Reduction in probability of voting no	N.A.	37.2%	58%	44.2%	27.1%	53.5%	34.7%

The status that made the greatest difference was leadership. These prominent MCs, party floor leaders, committee chairs and ranking minority members who are closely watched and give formal and informal cues to their colleagues were more likely to vote for the foreign aid conference report than others, with all other variables held to their means or modes. This leadership effect is nearly a 60% reduction in the likelihood of opposing the bill, a very large difference.

The smallest effect was found for membership of the Appropriations subcommittees on foreign operations (and in earlier years, before the subcommittee's

creation, the full Appropriations committees). This membership is associated with a 27% reduction in the probability of opposing aid from the baseline expectation.

The effect of the other variables, (membership on the Foreign Affairs Committee, committee leadership, presidential co-partisanship, being a senator, attending an elite university), all have effects that fall somewhere between these two extremes in magnitude.

In some cases one can argue that self-selection is driving these associations: MCs who are more supportive of foreign aid may self-select onto the concerned committees. One might also object that the foreign aid appropriations bills are especially likely to reflect the preferences of these members, especially the committee leaders. Yet a few points are important to note. Foreign Affairs Committee members do not write Appropriations bills, even if they are possibly more supportive of foreign aid.

More importantly, the endogeneity/self-selection critique has little purchase regarding differences between senators and representatives, floor leaders vs. rank and file MCs, members of the president's party vs. the opposition and alumni of elite universities. MCs do *not* self-select into these positions or categories based on their foreign aid policy preferences.

In this light, the gap evident between the House and the Senate on foreign aid, like that between the Congress and the President and that between Congressional leaders and other legislators, becomes understandable. The more influential politicians are the more weight they give to their own policy preferences in taking stands.

Conversely, for elected officials who have less influence over outcomes, i.e. individual Representatives vis-à-vis Senators, rank-and-file MCs vis-à-vis the leadership

and MCs in both chambers vis-à-vis the President, the longstanding unpopularity of foreign aid is more salient and the temptation to “grandstand” or “position-take” is greater. This explanation can account for the inter-cameral (and inter-branch) gaps on foreign aid in a way that constituency factors discussed in previous studies cannot.

Trump: The Exception that Proves the Rule?

The striking exception to the pattern shown in this paper is the current President. In both 2017 and 2018 Donald Trump proposed massive reductions in foreign aid and the State Department budget. This led to a role-reversal with both the House and Senate insisting that these cuts were excessive.¹⁰ While Democrats retain leverage in the appropriations process due to the filibuster and the Freedom Caucus’s reluctance to vote “yes”, even Congressional Republicans in key roles differed with Trump on foreign aid. In early 2017 Senate Appropriations State Department and Foreign Operations subcommittee chair, Lindsey Graham (R.-S.C.) stated, “This budget is not going to go anywhere”.¹¹ In fact, Congress appropriated more foreign assistance funding than Trump asked for in both 2017 and 2018.¹²

How are to we understand this outlier case? I suggest that Trump’s outlier status in this –as in many other- respects is actually consistent with the theory advanced here. The structural features of the Presidency- the large constituency, the comparative absence of a collective action problem, the term length and limits have not changed. Yet the

¹⁰ “Senate Panel Rejects Trump Plan for Cutting Foreign Assistance.”

WWW.Foreignpolicy.com, September 7,2017

¹¹ “Republicans Push Back Against Trump Plan to Cut Foreign Aid” *Reuters.com* May 23,2017

¹²

occupant of the office has, and that makes all the difference. Uniquely among Presidents, Trump had no prior experience in government and this was also true of his first Secretary of State and –at least initially- of most of his senior White House aides, including Bannon, Kushner, Cohen, Priebus, Conway, and Ivanka Trump.

Some individuals who have not served in government still are highly conversant with the details of public policy, even if their views are more unorthodox. Yet reports from officials in both parties, foreign leaders and journalists, as well as many of his public statements, converge on an account of a remarkably ill-informed Chief Executive. That is not to say Trump has no real views. His party affiliation and his positions on many issues have changed, and he lacks knowledge of many matters. Yet he has sounded nationalist notes as far back as the 1980s¹³ and there is no reason to believe that they are not sincere.

Other Presidential candidates, including Carter, Reagan and Obama, had used anti-Washington rhetoric, only to construct a team of policy veterans and govern in a conventional matter. Yet Trump won the nomination to the displeasure of his party's elite to an unprecedented extent in modern times (Cohen et al 2016). He broke with the bipartisan legacy of Presidents on several related issues including trade and immigration, as well as foreign aid.¹⁴ His campaign statements alarmed many GOP foreign policy experts, leading to widely reported “Never Trump” letter after the Republican Convention in which many former officials pledged never to work in a Trump

¹³ He shared these viewers with Oprah Winfrey in 1988:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SEPs17_AkTI

¹⁴ Trump's transfer of the U.S. Embassy in Israel to Jerusalem is another example of his break from conventional wisdom.

Administration.¹⁵ Some of these individuals –few of whom could have imagined Trump would actually win, have reconsidered, only to find their way into the administration blocked.

In short, Trump, who was 70 when he became president, spent his much of his life in the public sphere, but not really engaged in politics. During that time, he developed views that are widely-shared among voters, if not political elites. Thus there is little reason to believe Trump has internalized the traditionally dominant elite view that foreign aid is necessary and serves American interests.

Given that Congress has a history of cutting Presidential foreign aid appropriations requests, we might have expected the appearance of Trump to result in massive reductions in foreign aid. Yet while there have been cuts that probably would have not happened under a different President, they have been limited.

The fact that the Congress, so used to appropriating less than Presidents' foreign aid requests, did not do so in this case suggests that many MCs privately believed in the need for foreign assistance that surveys of elite opinion reveal. Faced with a President who would no longer play the traditional role of producing a budget they could cut while still insuring significant funding, Congress stepped up and behaved in what elite opinion saw as the “responsible” role the current Chief Executive had abdicated.

¹⁵ “50 G.O.P. Officials Warn Donald Trump Would Put Nation’s Security ‘at Risk” *New York Times*, August 8,2016. “Pompeo Faces a Hiring Obstacle Course” *Politico* May 4,2018

Discussion

Explaining elected officials' policy stands is an important task for students of political institutions and the policy process. A focus on elite opinion can help explain systematic differences among elected officials that transcend party divides and demographic and socio-economic constituency factors. Elected officials in positions of greater responsibility will tend to be more supportive of the policy position broadly supported by elite opinion- if a dominant view exists. Stated differently, those with greater responsibility tend to behave more "responsibly" from the standpoint of elite opinion. This accounts for the durable division between Congress and the President on foreign aid, and within Congress between senators and representatives, leaders and rank-and-file legislators.

No one factor can account for all differences, but greater closeness to elite opinion among more influential elected officials is an underappreciated one. It helps explain systematic differences in elected officials' policy positions that constituency factors and term length do not explain. Several other policy areas besides foreign assistance may be illuminated by an exploration of the differential closeness of Presidents, Senators and Representatives to elite opinion including trade policy and immigration, veterans affairs and other subjects.

Appendix

The votes listed below are the universe of foreign aid appropriations votes in which recorded votes occurred in both Houses. They are all votes on passage of conference reports. Frequently one chamber, usually the Senate, approved the Conference Report by voice vote.

1. (1952) H.R. 7005 Amendment to Mutual Security Act of 1951 (Conference Report), House Vote June 5, 1952 (ICPSR Var. # 163), Senate Vote June 9, 1952 (ICPSR Var. # 278)
2. (1957) S. 2130 Mutual Security Act of 1957 (Conference Report). House Vote August 14, 1957 (ICPSR Var. # 89), Senate Vote August 29, 1957 (ICPSR Var. # 116)
3. (1961) S. 1983 Foreign Assistance Act (Conference Report). House Vote August 31, 1961 (ICPSR Var. #97), Senate Vote August 31, 1961 (ICPSR Var. #177)
4. (1962) S. 2996 Foreign Assistance Act (Conference Report) House Vote July 24, 1962 (ICPSR Var. #191), Senate Vote July 20, 1962 (ICPSR Var. # 309)
5. (1965) H.R. 10781 Foreign Assistance Appropriations (Conference Report) House Vote October 5, 1965 (ICPSR Var.# 193), Senate Vote October 5, 1965 (ICPSR Var. #255)
6. (1967) H.R. 13893 Foreign Assistance and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill (Conference Report) House Vote December 15, 1967 (ICPSR Var. #252), Senate Vote December 15, 1967 (ICPSR Var. #323)
7. (1972) H.R. 12067 Foreign Aid Appropriations (Conference Report), House Vote February 24, 1972 (ICPSR Var. #360), Senate Vote March 2, 1972 (ICPSR Var. #510)
8. (1977) H.R. 7797 Foreign Assistance and Related Programs Appropriations Act (Conference Report), House Vote October 18, 1977 (ICPSR Var. # 675), Senate Vote October 19, 1977 (ICPSR Var. # 581)
9. (1978) H.R. 12931 Foreign Aid Appropriations (Conference Report), House Vote, October 12, 1978 (ICPSR Var. # 1516), Senate Vote October 13, 1978 (ICPSR Var. # 1136)
10. (1981) H.R. 4559 Foreign Assistance and Related Appropriations (Conference Report) House Vote December 16, 1981 (ICPSR Var. #358), Senate Vote December 16, 1981 (ICPSR Var. #507)
11. (1993) H.R. 2295 Foreign Operations Appropriations (Conference Report) House Vote September 29, 1993 (ICPSR Var. #477), Senate Vote September 30, 1993 (ICPSR Var. # 307)

12. (1994) H.R. 4426 Foreign Operations Appropriations (Conference Report) House Vote, August 4, 1994 (ICPSR Var. # 1001) Senate Vote August 10, 1994 (ICPSR Var. #676)
13. (1995) H.R. 1868 Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 1996, House Vote, October 31, 1995, Senate Vote, November 1, 1995
14. (1999) H.R. 2606 Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 1999 House Vote No. 480 October 5, 1999, Senate Vote No. 312 October 6, 1999
15. (2000) H.R. 4811, Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2001. (Conference Report). House Vote 546 October 25, 2000, Senate Vote 280, October 25, 2000.
16. (2005) H.R. 3057 Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act. (Conference Report). House Vote 569, November 4, 2005, Senate Vote 320, November 10, 2005.

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