AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY OPINION AND THE GENERATION GAP: A MEDIA PERSPECTIVE

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By

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ABSTRACT

A significant amount of research in the public opinion field has explored the American
people’s attitudes on American foreign policy and found the course of events, elite discourse,
and news media are important predictors of foreign policy opinion. Among these predictors,
many researchers agree on the point that media is perhaps the most vital predictor of foreign
policy opinion. However, the media industry has changed dramatically over the past few years,
especially as it influenced the Millennial generation. Moreover, the Chicago Council Survey on
Global Affairs in 2012 has also shown that there is a generation gap in foreign policy opinion
and that young people are less alarmed than older Americans about threats facing the U.S. and
less supportive of a military approach to foreign policy. Despite these findings, little research has
focused on explaining the relationship between the generation gap in media consumption and the
generation gap in foreign policy opinion. I hypothesized that the “virtual world” provides the
younger generation weaker social and political constraints; therefore further fostering political
tolerance and resulting in young people favoring non-military action over military action and
multilateralism over unilateralism. This thesis used probit regression to examine these two
relationships and found website or blog usage was not a useful predictor of the probability of
supporting military action for both millennials and non-millennials. However, it was a useful
predictor of the probability of favoring multilateralism over unilateralism, but only for
millennials.
The research and writing of this thesis is dedicated to my advisor Micah Jensen, for his patience and assistance, Jeff Mayer and Susan Hill, for their help with the writing process, and last, but by no means least, to my parents Hong Li and Yanyun Zhang, for loving and guiding me from day one.

Many thanks,

Xinyi Li
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INTRODUCTION

Sobered by a decade of War in Iraq and Afghanistan and recent economic troubles, the American people are recalibrating their views on international engagement and seeking to project positive U.S. influence abroad in a less costly way (The Chicago Council Survey on Global Affairs, 2012). Millennials\(^1\) are at the leading edge of these changing American attitudes. They are less alarmed about threats facing this country and prefer less military intervention than older Americans (The Chicago Council Survey on Global Affairs, 2012). At the same time, media consumption among Millennials has also changed dramatically, with an increasing usage of social networking services and decreasing interest in traditional media such as newspapers and TV (Pew Research Center, 2012). Moreover, studies have shown Millennials to be less interested in political news in general (Pew Research Center, 2012) and that they gave little thought to candidates in the 2012 presidential election when they were asked the question of “how much thought, if any, have you given to candidates who may be running for president in 2012” (Pew Research Center, 2011).

However, little research has examined whether changing media consumption among Millennials helps explain the generational gap in foreign policy opinion. In particular, does the increasing usage of blogs and social networking services affect Millennials’ foreign policy attitudes on military action and multilateralism?

This is a significant question to ask for three reasons. First, social networking services and blogs provide important testing grounds for understanding political deliberation among citizens with different viewpoints, therefore adding perspective in understanding the importance

\(^1\) Millennials are generally considered to be people born from the early 1980s to the early 2000s. Surveys mentioned in this thesis—the Chicago Council Survey and Pew Research—define millennials as adults aged 18-29.
of new media in political life. Second, studying new media consumption and foreign policy opinion among the Millennial generation may also help us get a better sense of the generation gap in public opinion in general and its impact on political behavior. Third, by focusing on foreign policy opinion in particular, this thesis may have implications for how modern administrations follow and influence public mood about war and peace through online and digital media and conversely, how citizens in democracies can hold their governments accountable by having their voice heard in this less costly way.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

To better understand my research question, I first identified the predictors of foreign policy opinion in general that are supported by past studies, and gave an in-depth discussion of past studies connecting foreign policy opinion and media. Because I’m interested in the generation gap in media consumption and foreign policy opinion, I further discussed more recent studies looking at the generation gap in media consumption and link these studies to foreign policy opinion through my own theoretical model.

**Predictors of American Public Opinion on Foreign Policy: Event, Elite and the Media**

Public opinion on foreign policy has always been an interesting yet challenging topic within political science study. The rise of scientific polling in the 1930s and 1940s and America’s historical involvement in World War II provided early scholars new tools to measure the public’s attitude on foreign policy. Following World War II, America’s international interventions in Korea and Vietnam, and military excursions in the Gulf War, the Afghanistan War and the Iraq War have also provided opportunities to examine mass opinion. Meanwhile the availability of sophisticated tools and data has made such study all the more rigorous.
Studies of foreign policy opinion have generally found three predictors to be important in shaping foreign policy attitudes, especially public’s support of war. These include the course of the events (Burk, 1999; Gelpi, Feaver, & Reifer, 2005-6; Mueller, 1971), elite discourse (Burk, 1999; Berinsky, 2009; Larson, 1996), and news media (Groeling & Baum, 2008; Gelpi et al., 2005-6). It is important to note that media is not only an important predictor, but also a necessary condition for the functioning of the other two influences on foreign policy opinion.

The first predictor, the course of event, is often associated with war casualties. For instance, Mueller (1971) used poll data available at the Survey Research Center and the Roper Public Opinion Research Center to see the trends in support by the American public for the Korea War and the Vietnam War. He compared the two wars with each other and with earlier wars such as World War II and found, by looking at the bivariate relation between number of war casualties and the support of war, there is an inverse relationship between log of casualties and the support of war.

Other scholars have tried to look beyond the effect of casualties to other events, such as a rational cost-benefit calculation based on how the public perceives stakes, objectives, and the probability of success. For instance, Larson (1996), by compiling and analyzing several public opinion datasets including American Institute for Public Opinion (AIPO), National Elections Studies (NES) and National Opinion Research Center (NORC), provided a historical review of the relationship between casualties and support for past U.S. military actions including World War II, the Korean, Vietnam, and Gulf Wars; Panama; and Somalia (Larson, 1996). He found the public’s aversion to U.S. casualties has “less to do with recent declining tolerance for casualties than with the debatable merits of the military operations themselves.” (Larson, 1996, p. 16). For
instance, the American public’s support of World War II was correlated with Americans’ strong belief that the war would come to a victory for the Allies and also promote freedom and democracy in Europe and the world (Larson, 1996). For recent case of Panama, Larson also found that the public was willing to accept a somewhat higher U.S. losses if U.S. interests and principles were at stake.

Yet some scholars have argued that the study of public opinion on foreign policy should not be divorced from the study of domestic politics (Groeling & Baum, 2008; Berinsky, 2009). In fact, looking at wartime opinion through the perspective of domestic politics provides some valuable insights. For instance, in contrast with past studies of the course of events, a new elite cue theory has received increasing attention due to its implication for domestic policymaking and political polarization.

As explained by Berinsky (2009) in his book In Time of War: Understanding American Public Opinion From World War II to Iraq, the elite cue theory focuses on partisan difference and elite cues on foreign issues and how the public formulate their attitudes based on their party elites’ perceptions. Because public opinion surveys during World War II used quota sampling instead of random sampling, Berinsky analyzed these data first by cleaning up and cell weighting the existing data. “Cell weighting is a simple way to bring the sample proportion in line with auxiliary information—namely, census estimates of the population proportion.” (Berinsky, 2009, p. 224) In his analysis, Berinsky weighted the data that can be matched to census data such as education levels, occupation, phone access, gender and religion. As he argued, cell weighting can offer more confidence that “our estimates are not attributable to problematic sample design” (Berinsky, 2009, p. 228).
Based on his analysis, there was a clear and consistent support for war held through the war to the end, which contradicted the traditional view that it is the attack on Pearl Harbor that mobilized strong war support and fundamentally ended American isolationist (Berinsky, 2009). To study public opinion on a more recent war, the Iraq War, Berinsky conducted an experimental survey (from July 23 to August 2, 2004)—the Iraq War Casualty Survey—to see the power of event-response theory versus the elite cue theory. In this experiment, a nationally representative sample of respondents was asked the question of “number of casualties in Iraq since the War first began at March 2003” “whether U.S. made the right decision in using military forces against Iraq” and “whether the War has been worth fighting”. He found that public perception of war deaths is not only associated with how much they consume political news, but also with their party identifications. For instance, strong democrats are more likely to overestimate the casualty while strong republicans are more likely to underestimate war casualty. Similarly, as party attachment moved from strong republican to strong democrat, both support on the “correct decision” and “worth fighting” were reduced by about 70 percent (Berinsky, 2009).

Based on his analysis of the existing survey data during World War II and the experimental data about people’s perception of casualties in the Iraq War, Berinsky argued that the public indeed has little information about casualties in war. Instead, he argued, it is the partisan division that animates citizens’ view about foreign policy, just as it functions in domestic politics. When political elites disagree, the public divides as well.

More importantly, for either the event response model or elite cue model to be a valid theory of explaining public’s awareness of foreign policy, one condition must be met: events or elites’ interaction with media. On one hand, media helps make foreign policy a salient issue to the
public, especially through reporting battlefield casualties (Aldrich, Gelpi, Feaver, Reifler, & Sharp, 2006). On the other hand, media reflects opinions of political elites that most Americans rely on in determining whether to support or oppose a conflict (Groeling & Baum, 2008). Because this thesis aims to look at news media and foreign policy opinion, I will focus the next part of my literature review on media and its role in shaping foreign policy opinion.

**American Public Opinion on Foreign Policy and the Media**

Studies with a focus on media and foreign policy opinion generally focus on two aspects of media: coverage and consumption. Although my study focuses on media consumption and its impact on public opinion, it is important to first understand how media covers foreign policy news in the first place. This helps us understand why some types of media coverage direct readers’ perceptions in a more interactive way while others do not.

When it comes to media coverage of foreign policy, there are studies held that media is passive and faithfully reflects the position of political elites, especially the most powerful elites (Groeling & Baum, 2008). But Groeling and Baum (2008) complicated this traditional view by adding an interaction among elites, the public and the press. They used Vanderbilt Television News Abstracts data to identify congressional appearance on the evening newscasts of ABC, CBS, and NBC and individual Gallup presidential approval polls appearing in the same time period, to track public opinion data (Groeling & Baum, 2008). By compiling these two datasets, Groeling and Baum found that media coverage of U.S. foreign policy are driven more by the course of events such as war deaths and democratic values than by elite discourse.

Given the importance of media in political life and its broad coverage of foreign policy, it is possible that readers who consume news pay more attention to foreign policy, which may also
affect their political behavior, especially voting. For instance, Gelpi, Reifler, and Feave (2005-6), studied the impact of the public’s tolerance of casualties in the Iraq war on the outcome of 2004 presidential campaign. In their research, they examined the effect of media coverage (measured by the number of minutes per week that ABC, CBS, and NBC nightly news covered the situation in Iraq) on public attitudes toward the Iraq War. They found that media coverage of the Iraq War in the context of 2004 presidential campaign not only helped the public get a coherent view of the war but also made foreign policy a salient issue accessible to voters (Gelpi et al., 2005-6).

It is important to note that the media industry has changed dramatically over the past few years. With more people now getting news through online and digital platforms and the rise of social networking websites, print newspapers and television news have become increasingly vulnerable (Pew Research Center, 2012). Moreover, changing news consumption can also change the way people process foreign policy news. On one hand, people have become less interested in political news and prefer news with no point of view (Pew Research Center, 2012). On the other hand, the competitive media environment allows people to select news media that reinforce their predisposition (Kull & Ramsey, 2003), especially with the help of search engines. Perhaps it is this contrast that makes the study of the media’s impact on foreign policy opinion more important in the age of information.

The Generation Gap in Media Consumption

To provide a better sense of the generation gap in foreign policy opinion, I first examined recent studies done by the Pew Research Center looking at the generation gap in media consumption since media is one of the most important predictors of foreign policy opinion.
Written in 2012 by Pew, the report, *In Changing News Landscape, Even Television is Vulnerable—Trends in News Consumption: 1991-2012*, provided an in-depth study of news consumption tendencies for the last 20 years. Over this period, media consumption surveys have been conducted via telephone interview among a national sample of over 3000 adults each year. Based on the Pew report, just a third of young adults (aged 18-29 in the survey) said they watched any TV news the day before. In terms of online news, social networking websites have become an increasingly important source, but this varied by age group. Among young people, 40% said they saw any news on social networking websites yesterday, while the number for the general public is about 20% (Pew Research Center, 2012).

There are also generation gaps in terms of interest in following different kinds of news. For news about national politics: Just 5% of young people followed them very closely, compared with 17% for the general public. However, when it comes to international news, the gap gets smaller: 10% of young adults followed international news very closely, compared with 14% of the public (Pew Research Center, 2012).

In another report, *The Generation Gap and the 2012 Election* done in 2011, Pew also found a wide generation gap in campaign interest from 2007 to 2011. In 2011, when asked the question of “how much thought have you given to the 2012 candidates”, just 13% (28% in 2007) of Millennials answered “a lot of”. Millennials are also less interested in election in general and only 17% (24% in 2007) of them followed election news very closely (Pew Research Center, 2011). In contrast, among Americans aged 65 and older, 42% of them responded that they had given a lot of thought to the candidates and 36% of them followed election news very closely (Pew Research Center, 2011).
American Foreign Policy Opinion and the Generation Gap: A Media Perspective

A number of past studies have examined new media platforms and the generation gap, but few have paid attention to their effects on foreign policy opinion. First, I need to link the generation gap in media consumption mentioned earlier with political deliberation in general. New media such as blogs and website facilitate communications. For instance, blog writers often include hyperlinks in their blogs, which potentially exposes their readers to more information and voices. However, Lawrence, Sides, and Farrell (2010) using the 2006 Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES), found that blog readers are more likely to read blogs that they agree with in the first place and seldom read blogs on both sides of the political spectrum (Lawrence et al., 2010).

However, the above study didn’t seem to consider blog readers who don’t have solid positions in the first place—whether they are on the liberal-conservative continuum, issue positions or party identifications. For instance, a lot of research in voting behavior found that young people who are susceptible to events and values are less strongly attached to political parties and more likely to call themselves Independents. They tend to show less interest in politics in general and a less stable attitude on policy (Campbell, Coverse, Miller & Stokes 1964; Lewis-Beck, Jacoby, Norpoth, & Weisberg 2008).

Consequently, it is important to consider whether the younger generation’s greater exposure to oppositional news changes their political deliberation and policy preferences. Mutz (2006) used a laboratory experiment in which 82 students attending classes in the political science department at Ohio State University were randomly assigned to a control group or to a treatment group in which political views of other group members either accorded with or contradicted their
own predispositions. Mutz found that exposure to competing points of view encouraged tolerance for opposing views. Although this experiment served only as an experimental confirmation of her previous study of more general national survey data, it is worth mentioning here since the experiment not only found a causal effect between cross-cutting exposure and political tolerance, but also supported the view that this effect does exist among the younger generation.

Building on these past studies on political deliberation and new social media, my core argument is that the absence of social, cultural and political constraints in the virtual world, such as blogs and social networking services, makes young people less shy or reserved about stating their opinions as they would do in real life. Compared with older generation, young people are more likely to interact and share their opinions with those with whom they strongly disagree, further fostering political tolerance among the younger generation.

What is the effect of this generation gap in media consumption on foreign policy attitudes? Pew Research Center (2011) has found that compared with younger generation, older generations are having more difficulty in adapting themselves to rapid changes in demographics and technology, especially with the rising of digital communication platforms that were unimaginable 50 years ago. This may also help explain why older Americans, despite their belief in American greatness, are less optimistic about the country’s future, compared with younger generation (Pew Research Center, 2011).

Yet the changing media landscape is not the only explanation for the generation gap in foreign policy opinion. Growing up in a rather peaceful yet ethnically diverse environment, Millennials can be very different from their parents and grandparents in terms of personal values
regarding the individuals’ priorities and concerns. These values constrain postures and beliefs about general governmental strategies that in turn, drive specific policy preferences (Peffley & Hurwitz, 1987).

In general, the literature I’ve described offers us a closer examination of the predictors of foreign policy opinion, the generation gap in media consumption and political deliberation among younger generation. However, little research has tried to explain how the generation gap in media consumption could lead to the generation gap in foreign policy opinion. To address this omission in previous studies, I tested six hypotheses as discussed in the next section.

**THEORETICAL MODEL AND HYPOTHESES**

My primary focus is the relationship between the use of internet services and foreign policy opinion and whether this relationship is different for the younger generation versus older generations. I argued that the increasing use of internet services, such as blogs and social networking services, provides young people more exposure to oppositional views. This may produce greater political tolerance. Specifically, in the domain of foreign policy, it may associate with younger generation’s favoring non-military action over military action and multilateralism over unilateralism. To test this, I estimated two separate models:

\[ \text{Support of military action} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{High network TV usage} + \beta_2 \text{High cable TV usage} + \beta_3 \text{High web-blog usage} + \beta_4 \text{Millennial} + \beta_5 \text{Millennial*High web-blog usage} + \beta_6 \text{Demographics} + u \]

\[ \text{Multilateralism} = \gamma_0 + \gamma_1 \text{High network TV usage} + \gamma_2 \text{High cable TV usage} + \gamma_3 \text{High web-blog usage} + \gamma_4 \text{Millennial} + \gamma_5 \text{Millennial*High web-blog usage} + \gamma_6 \text{Demographics} + u \]
These two models focus on predicting the effect of media consumption of blog and website, network TV and cable TV\(^2\), on support of military actions and preferences for multilateralism, and how this effect can be different for Millennial generation, controlling for demographics based on the preceding literature review (education, financial situation and party identification).

For model 1 (Support of military action), my first hypothesis is that people who are high website or blog users are less likely to support military action, all else equal.

\[ H_1: \text{There is a relationship between high website or blog usage and support of military action.} \]

\[ H_0: \text{There is no relationship between high website or blog usage and support of military action.} \]

Second, I also expected that millennials are less likely to support military action, all else equal.

\[ H_2: \text{There is a relationship between being a millennial and support of military action.} \]

\[ H_0: \text{There is no relationship between being a millennial and support of military action.} \]

Moreover, I expected to find that the effect of high website or blog usage on support of military action is different for millennials and non-millennials.

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\(^2\) Past studies of the relationship between media and foreign policy opinion generally used TV as a measure of media exposure (Groeling & Baum, 2008; Gelpi et al., 2005-6), therefore I decided to control both cable TV and network TV in my models.
$H_3$: The effect of high website or blog usage on support of military action is different for millennials and non-millennials.

$H_0$: The effect of high website or blog usage on support of military action is not different for millennials and non-millennials.

For model 2 (Multilateralism), my chief concern is the relationship between high website or blog usage and preference for multilateralism. I expected to find that frequent blog and website users prefer multilateralism over unilateralism.

$H_4$: There is a relationship between high website or blog usage and preference for multilateralism.

$H_0$: There is no relationship between high website or blog usage and preference for multilateralism.

In terms of the effect of being a millennial on multilateralism, I expected to find that young people tend to be more multilateralist.

$H_5$: There is a relationship between being a millennial and preference for multilateralism.

$H_0$: There is no relationship between being a millennial and preference for multilateralism.

Because I’m also interested in the interaction effect of high website or blog usage and millennial, I further tested the statistical significance of my interaction term. I expected to find that the effect of high website or blog usage on preference on multilateralism is different for millennials and non-millennials.
**H₀:** The effect of high website or blog usage on preference for multilateralism is different for millennials and non-millennials.

**H₀:** The effect of high website or blog usage on preference for multilateralism is not different for millennials and non-millennials.

To analyze these hypotheses, I relied on my regression results and F-test of joint significance of the variable of interest and the interaction term. Below is a detailed discussion of my method and results.

**DATA AND METHODS**

**Data and Variables**

I used Chicago Council Survey data collected between May 25 and June 8, 2012, by GfK Custom Research, LLC for The Chicago Council on Global Affairs. The unit of analysis of this data is the individual American adult. The total sample size is 1,877, with 1,790 nationally representative adult respondents, 175 of whom are Millennials (age 18-29). According to the final report and the release event presentation of this survey, sampling strategies included a randomly selected sample of GfK’s nationwide research panel, recruited using random digit dialing, and a survey administered over the internet.

In model 1, for my dependent variable, I used one question in the survey concerning the effectiveness of maintaining U.S. military superiority as an approach to achieving U.S. foreign policy goals (see Appendix). I further transformed this categorical variable to an indicator called Support of military action. It is 1 if the respondent considers military superiority as somewhat or very effective; 0 if not very effective or not effective at all. Of course, this single question cannot fully reflect public attitudes regarding military action. Believing in the effectiveness of U.S.
military superiority is not necessarily equivalent to preferring military action. For instance, someone who believes maintaining U.S. military superiority is very effective in terms of achieving foreign policy goals may also consider non-military or diplomatic strategy as equally or more effective. Therefore their preference for military action could be nuanced. Moreover, some literature has raised concerns over wording of survey questions directly asking respondents about their opinion of specific wars or military actions (Mueller, 1971). Sometimes these questions were put in positive forms such as “did we do the right thing?” as opposed to a more negative phrasing such as “did we make a mistake?” (Mueller, 1971) The wording of these questions could potentially boost or lower the expression of support based on how they were phrased.

Nevertheless, I believe the question I chose concerning military superiority is a satisfactory general measure for my study, particularly as it did not reference any given moments in any specific regions or connect to presidential popularity such as the incumbent President’s handling of the wars.

In model 2, for my dependent variable Multilateralim, I used one question in the survey about identifying the influences of 8 countries (U.S., Russia, China, South Korea, Japan, India, Brazil and the European Union) in the world in the next 10 years by using a 10 points scale (See Appendix). My theory concerns attitudes toward multilateralism versus unilateralism, so I first created a variable that equals the average score for all non-U.S. countries. Then I generated another variable to account for the difference between the average score of non-U.S. countries and score for the U.S. In this sample, most respondents gave non-U.S. countries influence scores that were smaller than the influence score of the U.S. Therefore the difference between the
average score for all non-U.S. countries and that of the U.S. will be in the same direction most of the time. For a person who is an extreme unilateralist (score for the U.S. is 10 and other countries 0), then this difference would be 0*7/7-10=-10. In contrast, for a person preferring extreme multilateralism (U.S. is as important as the rest of the world, that is each non-U.S. score is closed to U.S. score), the difference would be close to 0. However, if the difference is positive, then it suggests that this person believes U.S. is less important than non-U.S. countries. Because multilateralism emphasizes a general pattern of how the person views the world, I considered people with positive value as multilateralist. Finally, I collapsed this difference into an indicator \textit{Multilateralism} coded “1” if the person is a multilateralist and “0” otherwise.

It is also important to note that the way I generate my dependent variable \textit{Multilateralism} could be problematic. First, by simply adding the score of each non-U.S. country together, some countries that are on the far right of the scale could be counterbalanced by some countries on the far left of the scale, ending up with a point located somewhere in the middle. Second, when \textit{Multilateralism} equals zero, it doesn’t necessarily mean he/she is a unilateralist. For instance, a person might rate all non-U.S. countries as 9 and U.S. as 10, resulting in \textit{Multilateralism} equals -1. Theoretically, this person could still be considered as a multilateralist since multilateralism emphasizes more on the general pattern instead of specific countries. However, I can be more certain about this dependent variable when it takes the value of one, which is also my primary interest in this thesis.

In both models, the independent variables \textit{High web-blog usage}, \textit{High network TV usage}, and \textit{High cable TV usage} are coded as “1” if the media source is consumed at least once a week and “0” if consumed less than once a week or not at all. For instance, my primary interest
variable *High web-blog usage* equals 1 if the person uses blog almost every day or 2-3 times per week or about once a week; it equals 0 if the person uses blog less than once a week or never.

To capture the generation effect, I also included an indicator variable *Millennial*, coded as “1” if the respondent is Millennial (age 18-29) and 0 if otherwise. I also included an interaction term *Millennial*\(^*\)* *High web-blog usage* to see whether the effect of blog and internet usage differs for younger and older generations.

Below is a table explaining dependent variables and primary independent variables. In my sample, roughly 23% of respondents are high website or blog users and among them, 6% are millennials. For non-millennials, 16% of them are also high website or blog users while 60% of them are low website or blog users. Moreover, among high website or blog users, millennials are statistically different from non-millennials (T-test: t= -1.5195, d.f=1526, p-value=0.1).

< INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE>

**Methods**

Since my dependent variables are indicator variables, I used probit regression to estimate both models. Because I included interaction terms in both models, I also did F-tests to see if website or blog usage and being a millennial are useful predictors of my dependent variables.

I also analyzed a set of postestimation tests as well. I was primarily concerned with examining the effects of changes in my two main independent variables, holding other covariates at their means. For example, among millennials, what is the effect of being a high website or blog user on the probability of support of military action? Among high website or blog users, what is the effect of being a millennial on the probability of favoring multilateralism? To examine these questions, I estimated the predicted probabilities of supporting military action and
favoring multilateralism based on website or blog usage and age groups while holding other covariates at their means in the sample. A detailed discussion of my regression results is provided in the next section.

**RESULTS**

For model 1, after controlling demographic characters and variables concerning media exposure (*High network TV usage* and *High cable TV usage*), I found no significance for high website or blog usage. Therefore, I failed to reject the null hypothesis \( (H_1) \), finding there was no evidence suggesting consuming news through website or blog has an influence on support of military action, controlling for demographic characters\(^3\) (F-test of joint significance for website or blog usage: \(F=0.48\), d.f.=1518, p-value=0.7883)

For the effect of being a millennial on support of military action, I also failed to reject the null hypothesis \( (H_2) \), finding there is no relationship between being a millennial and support of military action (F-test of joint significance for millennial: \(F=1.07\), d.f.=1518, p-value=0.5848). Therefore the probability of supporting military action doesn’t seem to be correlated with age group.

The interaction term also lacks statistical significance. Therefore I failed to reject the null hypothesis \( (H_3) \) and the effect of high website or blog usage on support of military action is not

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\(^3\) This model may have the problem of multicollinearity since people who are frequent blog users might also chose to consume news through other platforms such as TV. Furthermore, media exposure is also correlated with my demographic controls such as education. It is possible that frequent blog users are highly educated and well paid in the first place; therefore they have more time to think about politics. This may further lead them to consume other media such as TV. Yet after doing two multicollinearity tests on media exposure variables and all my independent variables, I found no evidence of multicollinearity (variance inflation factors for both tests are less than 2, and conditional numbers are less than 17).
different for millennials and non-millennials. Among people who use website or blog as news sources, their opinions on supporting military action is not different across age groups.

Below is a table of my regression results for Model 1.

< INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE>

To further validate these results, I also conducted a postestimation test to see the predicted probability of supporting military action based on website or blog usage and generations, holding other covariates at their means. As indicated in Figure 1, for both high and low website or blog users, the predicted probability of supporting military action for a millennial is not statistically different from that for a non-millennial. Similarly, for both millennials and non-millennials, the predicted probability of supporting military action for a high website or blog user is not statistically different from that for a low website or blog user. This further indicated that a person’s age and his or her usage of website or blog are not correlated with his or her opinion on supporting military action.

< INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE>

Next, I analyzed Model 2 which adds controls for media exposure (High network TV usage and High cable TV usage), and demographic characteristics. In this case, I was able to reject the null hypothesis ($H_4$), finding there is a relationship between using website or blog and favoring multilateralism (F-test of joint significance for website or blog usage: $F=5.56$, d.f.=1518, p-value=0.062). It could be that using blog or website does influence views about the relative importance of U.S. and other countries in the world.

Turning to the effect of being a millennial, I also rejected the null hypothesis ($H_5$), finding a person’s age does seem to be correlated with how he or she views the importance of
several major countries in the world (F-test of joint significance for millenial: F=5.27, d.f=1518, p-value= 0.0718).

Finally, I can reject my last null hypothesis ($H_6$) since the interaction term is significant at above the 99% level. This suggests that the effect of high website or blog usage on favoring multilateralism is different for millennials and non-millennials. Among frequent website or blog users, their view of the world could be different depending on their how old they are. Below is a table of my regression results for Model 2.

< INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE>

How large is the effect of high website or blog usage and being a millennial on the probability of favoring multilateralism? To estimate the effect, I first calculated the difference in predicted probability of favoring multilateralism for millennials with the highest and lowest levels of usage of website and blogs, holding other variables at their means. For millennials, those who use website or blog the most have a predicted probability of favoring multilateralism about 9% lower than those who use website or blog the least. As indicated on the right side of Figure 2, this result is statistically significant. For non-millennials, however, those who use website or blog the most have a predicted probability of favoring multilateralism about 1.7% higher than those who use website or blog the least. However, this result is not statistically significant given the overlapping of the confidence intervals for the two non-millennials subgroups.

This indicates that for a millennial, his or her view of the world is correlated with his or her usage of website or blog. If this person frequently uses website or blog to get news, then he or she will be more likely to hold a unilateralist view of the world. In contrast, if this person has
a lower usage of website or blog, he or she will be more multilateralist. However, this relationship does not appear to exist among older Americans.

< INSERT FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE>

For my demographic controls, education is statistically significant and negatively correlated with support of military action and favoring multilateralism. However, this may have different implications. Although educated people are less likely to support military action, they are more likely to have a unilateralist view of the world. This raises the question of whether this is a response only applies to this country or more generally to people around the world. If it does have some implications for other countries, then would more education for people around the world lead to fewer conflicts? It is also worth mentioning the effect of party ID on foreign policy opinion. Being a Republican is statistically significant in both models while being a Democrat is not. Republicans are more likely to have a unilateralist view and support military action, although statistical significance is lower in the latter case.

Taken together, the result is not consistent with my hypothesis since I hypothesized that high website or blog usage would associate with a more multilateralism view of the world, especially for millennials. But the above calculations suggest high usage of website and blogs is more likely to provide a unilateralism view for millennials.

DISCUSSION

As I’ve discussed, website or blog usage does not appear to play a significant role in attitudes toward military action for either millennials or non-millennials. It may have an impact on one’s favoring multilateralism over unilateralism, but in the opposite direction from my
theory. This suggests some evidence of the relationship between the generation gap in media consumption and foreign policy, but without a clear theoretical reason.

However, by focusing only on website and blog usage, there doesn’t seem to be any significant impact in both models, which is counter to my hypotheses and also surprising considering the wide audience these two platforms could reach. The other media platforms (network TV and cable TV) both have relatively limited audiences such as regional and national residents. Therefore it is challenging for people living in country A to watch TV programs of country B except through internet. Yet this does not mean that people from country A will never know what happens in country B. In fact, many newspapers, TV and radio programs cover foreign policy news that is easy to consume. The question is if websites and blogs really contain rich information and are available to a global audience, why are they not significant in both of these two models?

One possible explanation could be the way I generated my two dependent variables, as addressed earlier. For my dependent variable in the first model, belief in the effectiveness of maintaining military superiority might not be the same as support of military action. In the second model, although influence score is a useful tool for generating my dependent variable, it could be problematic mathematically as discussed in early section.

In addition, although respondents mentioned website or blog as one of the news sources, it doesn’t necessarily mean that they would consume foreign policy news via website or blog. For foreign policy news, as previous studies suggest, it is still the traditional media platforms that matter the most, which can also be confirmed from my two models by looking at the statistical
significances for network TV and cable TV. Moreover, this further raises questions about the potential of online media to predict public mood about war and peace.

Even though I find reading blogs and being a millennial are jointly significant in explaining favoring multilateralism over unilateralism, the sign of the coefficient is not in my expected direction. High website or blog usage is less likely to provide a multilateralist view for millennials. This finding is counterintuitive to some degree. Younger generation, growing up in a world that is much more peaceful and globalized than their older generations is more likely to have a multilateralist view of the world. However, this generational effect can be taken away if younger people are also high website or blog users.

Does this suggest that blog readers only read blogs that they agree with in the first place and seldom consume oppositional information? Not necessarily. One possible explanation could be that blog readers, regardless of age, still consume news from different perspectives, but not necessarily in the domain of foreign policy news. For many people, foreign policy is still beyond “the water’s edge,” that is, remote from everyday experience and too complex to make sense of. It is also possible that even for blog readers who do consume foreign policy news with different viewpoints and have higher political tolerance, they may not necessarily take the writers’ perspectives and transform them into their opinions or positions. That is, oppositional information in foreign policy news might not seem to exert a great persuasive power to change people’s mind.

On the other hand, what if blog readers are really polarized and seldom read blog on the opposite side of the political spectrum? This further raises the question of the relationship between blog readership and polarization. As the study cited in my literature review (Lawrence
et al., 2010) has found, blog readers tend to be more polarized politically and my finding seems to suggest this phenomenon might also exist in the area of foreign policy opinion. Future work should be done to gain a better understanding of the nature of new media platforms and their influences on public opinion. It is also worth investigating whether the readership of website and blog is systematically different from that of traditional media such as newspaper, does the effect of using website or blog on public opinion vary in terms of different areas of foreign policy such as international trade versus military action, and how can the increasing popularity of new media shape the political behavior of younger generation.

My findings regarding how younger blog readers view the importance of major countries in the world, suggests that they could be more politically polarized. If this is true, then how will this affect politics as young people get older and become more engaged with politics? One prediction could be that we will expect to see more polarization in views about America’s role in the world. Dialogues between different perspectives and political tolerance of opposing views will likely diminish since people often have hardened opinions. Moreover, decreasing political tolerance may also constrain political deliberation, which could potentially endanger democracy.

So far, it seems like my findings are not optimistic about the future of American democracy. However, I would also argue that political polarization might have some positive effects in terms of foreign policy. For instance, if young blog or website users are less likely to consume oppositional news and are more politically polarized in foreign policy domain, then we may expect to see a greater potential of the public to constrain government’s ability to wage wars as young people become more important in national politics and policies. In general, polarization might also stimulate political participation such as voting and campaign activities. In polarized
politics, voters can easily perceive the difference between candidates and parties thus are more likely to believe their votes can change the outcome. This further encourages them to develop interest in politics and to be more engaged with politics such as following political news and participating in campaign activities (Abramowitz & Saunders, 2008).

At a more basic level, however, it would be challenging to argue that the above effects are working only through exposure to oppositional news or political tolerance. For instance, it is possible that people with political tolerance tend to favor multilateralism or non-military action in the first place, which further encourages them to get news from various platforms with different viewpoints. Yet the discussion of exposure to oppositional news can provide us a useful perspective in making sense of the regression results in context and more importantly, in understanding the mechanism for the underlying relationship among media, public opinion and democracy in American politics.

**CONCLUSION**

This study sought to explore the question of what factors lead to the generation gap in foreign policy opinion. After a thorough review of past literature, I hypothesized that the generation gap in media consumption, specifically, the increasing usage of website and blog among younger generation, would be associated with the generation gap in foreign policy opinion. To test this hypothesis, I first selected two questions in the Chicago Council Survey on Global Affairs in 2012 concerning foreign policy opinion in general: effectiveness of military strength to achieving the foreign policy goals and importance scores of several countries in the world. I further transformed these questions into two main dependent variables: support of military action and favoring multilateralism.
I used probit regression to analyze these two models and found being a high website or blog user and a millennial are not associated with one’s support of military action. However, they are useful predictors of one’s favoring multilateralism. The regression results indicate that the younger generation, with an increasing usage of website and blogs, has a less multilateral view of the world.

Among other findings, my results of the effect of TV programs on foreign policy opinion confirm past literature that TV programs help make foreign policy a salient issue by providing the public a vivid connection to events such as casualties of wars. Among my control variables, education is statistically and negatively correlated with support of military action and favoring multilateralism, meaning that educated people are less likely to support military action but more likely to have a unilateralist view. Republican is more likely to have a unilateralist view of the world and also more likely to support military action. Democrat is not statistically significant in my models.

Although my findings only suggest modest power of website or blog usage in explaining the generation gap in foreign policy opinion and is not in my expected direction, it does contribute to some degree to our understanding of the generation gap in media and that in foreign policy opinion. Future work investigating the relationship between media and foreign policy opinion could focus on new media platforms such as website, blogs, and other social network services such as Facebook and Twitter. One starting point could be designing experiment in which participants are exposed to website or blogs containing different positions on foreign policy and see if this treatment has any effects on their own positions.
### TABLES AND FIGURES

**Table 1: Descriptions of primary independent variables and dependent variables.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Values</th>
<th>Distribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support of military action</td>
<td>Support of military action</td>
<td>[0,1]</td>
<td>Center: mean=.8497807 Dispersion: .3573842 (standard deviation) Shape: mode=1; bell shape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multilateralism</td>
<td>Favor multilateralism over unilateralism</td>
<td>[0,1]</td>
<td>Center: mean= 0.1403 Dispersion: 0.3474 (standard deviation) Shape: mode=0 ; bell shape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High web-blog usage</td>
<td>Blogs and other websites as sources of news and opinions</td>
<td>[0,1]</td>
<td>Center: mean=0.2265 Dispersion: 0.42(standard deviation) Shape: mode=0 ; bell shape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High network TV usage</td>
<td>Network TV news broadcasts (For example: ABC, NBC, or CBS) as sources of news and opinions</td>
<td>[0,1]</td>
<td>Center: mean=0.6 Dispersion: 0.49(standard deviation) Shape: mode=1 ; bell shape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High cable TV usage</td>
<td>Cable TV news broadcasts (For example: CNN, MSNBC, or Fox News) as sources of news and opinions</td>
<td>[0,1]</td>
<td>Center: mean=0.443 Dispersion: 0.5(standard deviation) Shape: mode=0 ; bell shape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millennial$^3$</td>
<td>Respondent belongs to Millennial (millennial=1) or not (millennial=0)</td>
<td>[0,1]</td>
<td>Center: mean=0.24 Dispersion: 0.43(standard deviation) Shape: mode=0; bell shape</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Source from The Chicago Council Survey data (May 25 to June 8, 2012) and author’s calculations. Respondents who refuse to provide answers for either question were dropped. For demographics variables, see Appendix.
Table 2: The effect of media and age on the probability of supporting military action, controlling for demographics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Support of military action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>MEDIA EXPOSURE</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High network TV usage</td>
<td>0.391***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.089)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High cable TV usage</td>
<td>0.158**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High web-blog usage</td>
<td>0.074</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AGE</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millennial</td>
<td>-0.0506</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>INTERACTION TERM</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High web-blog usage times</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millennial</td>
<td>-0.128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.217)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DEMOGRAPHICS</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-0.0947**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.043)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Situation</td>
<td>-0.085**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.043)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>0.193*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.1083)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>-0.1161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0993)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>1.336***</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>1,528</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Source from The Chicago Council Survey data (May 25 to June 8, 2012). Respondents who refused to provide responses were dropped from the sample. Standard errors in parentheses. * = p-value < 0.1; ** = p-value < 0.05; *** = p-value < 0.01.
Table 3: The effect of media and age on the probability of favoring multilateralism over unilateralism, controlling for demographics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MEDIA EXPOSURE</th>
<th>Favor multilateralism over unilateralism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High networkTV usage</td>
<td>-0.227**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0921)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High cableTV usage</td>
<td>-0.153*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0916)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High web-blog usage</td>
<td>0.0842</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.1195)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millennial</td>
<td>0.1687</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTERACTION TERM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High web-blog usage times</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millennial</td>
<td>-0.586**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.246)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEMOGRAPHICS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-0.128***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0431)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Situation</td>
<td>0.056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.043)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>-0.367***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.1084)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>-0.1439</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-0.6332***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>1,528</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Source from The Chicago Council Survey data (May 25 to June 8, 2012). Respondents who refused to provide responses were dropped from the sample. Standard errors in parentheses. * = p-value < 0.1; ** = p-value < 0.05; *** = p-value < 0.01.
Figure 1: Predicted probability of supporting military action based on website or blog usage and age.

Notes: Source from The Chicago Council Survey data (May 25 to June 8, 2012). Respondents who refused to provide responses were dropped from the sample. Calculation is based on usage of website or blog and age, holding other covariates at their means (90% confidence level).
Figure 2: Predicted probability of favoring multilateralism based on website or blog usage and age.

Notes: Source from The Chicago Council Survey data (May 25 to June 8, 2012). Respondents who refused to provide responses were dropped from the sample. Calculation is based on usage of website or blog and age, holding other covariates at their means (90% confidence level).
APPENDIX: WORDING OF RELATED SURVEY QUESTIONS

Support of military action (question 8-2 in the survey). “How effective do you think each of the following approaches have been to achieving the foreign policy goals of the United States – very effective, somewhat effective, not very effective or not effective at all?” For “Maintaining U.S. military superiority”, coded -1 if the respondent is not sure or refuse to provide an answer, 1 if the respondent considers it very effective, 2 if the respondent considers it somewhat effective, 3 if the respondent considers it not very effective, 4 if the respondent considers it not effective at all.

Multilateralism (question 55 in the survey). “Using the same 10 point scale, please say how much influence you think each of the following countries will have in the world 10 years from now” Countries include U.S., Russia, China, South Korea, Japan, India, Brazil and European Union. For each country, a 0-10 scale is used, with 0 meaning they are not at all influential and 10 meaning they are extremely influential.

High web-blog usage, High network TV usage, High cable TV usage (question 2 in the survey). “Please select how often you get news and opinion from each of the following sources: Blogs and other websites, in print or online newspapers and news magazines, Network TV news broadcasts (For example: ABC, NBC, or CBS), Cable TV news broadcasts (For example: CNN, MSNBC, or Fox News), and Radio.” For each source, coded as -1 if the respondent is not sure or refuse to provide an answer, 1 if almost every day, 2 if about 2-3 times a week, 3 if about once a week, 4 if less than once a week, 5 if never.

Millennial (question 1050 in the survey). “How old are you?” In the dataset, answers are divided in two ways, one is a 7 category division: coded as -1 if the respondent is not sure or refuse to
provide an answer, 1 if 18-24, 2 if 25-34, 3 if 35-44, 4 if 45-54, 5 if 55-64, 6 if 65-74, 7 if 75+; the other is a 4 category division: coded as -1 if the respondent is not sure or refuse to provide an answer, 1 if 18-29, 2 if 30-44, 3 if 45-59, 4 if 60+. Because I’m interested in Millennial generation (aged 18-29), I will use the latter division and generate a dummy variable millennial = 1 if respondent is a millennial and 0 otherwise.

**Education** (question 1055) “What is the highest degree or level of education that you have completed?” Variable coded as 1 if Less than high school; 2 if High school; 3 if Some college; 4 if Bachelor’s degree or higher.

**Financial situation** (question 401) “How does the financial situation of your household compare with what it was twelve months ago?” Variable coded as 1 if Got a lot better; 2 if Got a little better; 3 if Stayed the same; 4 if Got a little worse; 5 if Got a lot worse.

**Party ID** (question 1010) “Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an independent, or what?” Variable is coded as 1 if Republican; 2 if Democrat; 3 if Independent; 4 if Other. I further generated two indicators Republican and Democrat in my regression models.
REFERENCES


