

# Discourse Processes

## Political Party Differences in Foreign Policy Discourse

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<b>Abstract:</b>	<p>Abstract</p> <p>Political action has the potential to impact many citizens across the globe, and one potential avenue to predict behavior is by examining political discourse. The availability of large amounts of text data from the U.S. Government Publishing Office creates a unique opportunity to understand the relationship between linguistic constructs, such as complex thinking and psychological distancing, and behavior, as measured through voting records for military action. Over 2000 speeches were examined from the House, Senate, Foreign Affairs Committees, and Presidential Statements using linguistic word count measures to elucidate the differences in language use within party affiliation and foreign policy decisions. As seen in previous research, this study found differences in linguistic processing between Republicans and Democrats, as well as an interaction with the presence of approval for military action. This study offers a new view into understanding foreign policy by examining political discourse from a psycholinguistic perspective.</p> <p>Keywords: language, politics, foreign policy, political parties</p>

December 30, 2014

Michael F. Schober  
Editor  
New School for Social Research  
New York, NY

Dear Dr. Schober:

I am enclosing a submission to the *Discourse Processes* entitled “Political Party Differences in Foreign Policy Discourse.” This original manuscript has not been previously published and is not under review for publication by any other journal. The study used archival data available to the general public; therefore, IRB approval was not sought.

In this manuscript, we explore the impact of political party affiliation and foreign policy decisions on psychological processes as evidenced by language use. Using speeches and statements from members of the U.S. Congress as well as the U.S. President, we found political party and policy decisions interacted to influence cognitive processing and complex thinking. Furthermore, psychological distancing and categorical thinking varied depending on foreign policy decision. This paper should be of interest to any researcher of politics and/or language including psychologists, political scientists, linguists, and other social scientists. Thank you for your time

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**Abstract**

Political action has the potential to impact many citizens across the globe, and one potential avenue to predict behavior is by examining political discourse. The availability of large amounts of text data from the U.S. Government Publishing Office creates a unique opportunity to understand the relationship between linguistic constructs, such as complex thinking and psychological distancing, and behavior, as measured through voting records for military action. Over 2000 speeches were examined from the House, Senate, Foreign Affairs Committees, and Presidential Statements using linguistic word count measures to elucidate the differences in language use within party affiliation and foreign policy decisions. As seen in previous research, this study found differences in linguistic processing between Republicans and Democrats, as well as an interaction with the presence of approval for military action. This study offers a new view into understanding foreign policy by examining political discourse from a psycholinguistic perspective.

*Keywords:* language, politics, foreign policy, political parties

### Political Party Differences in Foreign Policy Discourse

The arena of foreign affairs has changed drastically in the last century, including how nations handle conflict and conduct war. World War II (WWII) marked the end of wars that measured success as territorial gains between traditional armies. After WWII, the Cold War was fought between superpowers in developing countries by way of proxy wars where success was measured by influence and technological developments. Then with the fall of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R.), the foreign arena shifted dramatically with the U.S. emerging as a sole superpower and with a new focus on controlling rogue states and eliminating terrorist groups. This new War on Terror redefined conflict as warring ideologies rather than warring nations (Matthews, 2014). These changes in the foreign arena necessitate new scholarship to understand how political actors perceive and make decisions, which affect not only citizens in their own nation, but also people abroad.

Many scholars have examined how the public reacts to and perceives foreign conflicts (Cohrs & Moschner, 2002; Friese, Fishman, Beatson, Sauerwein, & Rip, 2009; McCleary, Nalls, & Williams, 2009; Sahar, 2008) and how politicians shape foreign policy (Djupe & Calfano, 2013; Froese & Mencken, 2009; Gelpi, Reifler, & Feaver, 2007). The role of executives and foreign ministers in foreign policy decisions have also been explored (Crichlow, 2005; Dyson, 2008; Dyson & Preston, 2006; Keller & Foster, 2012; Leudar, Marsland, & Nekvapil, 2004). However, few studies have examined how legislative bodies approach foreign policy discussion and decisions (Kriner & Shen, 2014). While the U.S. Congress does not exercise the power it once did in the arena of foreign policy, the influence it retains is outlined in the War Powers Act. Congress has the power to limit military action taken by the President, demand consultation sixty days after the onset of military actions, and control military expenditures. These powers ensure

Congress retains a measure of influence in foreign affairs (Phelps & Boylan, 2002). In addition, Ansolabehere and Jones (2010) found that the public has a generally accurate perception of congressional voting. Furthermore, the public's approval of their members of Congress depends on how well their voting record represents their constituency. For these reasons, the present study will focus on discourse in the U.S. Congress to further the understanding of the attitudes and decision making of legislative actors in the realm of foreign policy.

### **Foreign Policy**

Although foreign policy does not usually affect the day-to-day life of the average citizen, it has the potential to impact millions, especially in times of war and conflict. Since the end of the Cold War, peacekeeping and peacebuilding have become commonplace in the realm of foreign relations, wherein the United Nations (U.N.) and other international bodies have intervened in the civil wars of other nations (Balas, Owsiak, & Diehl, 2012). Can the likelihood of conflict between nations be predicted from characteristics of those nations? Executives whose political party has a majority in the legislature are more likely to use force than executives whose party is in the legislative minority (Clark & Nordstrom, 2005). Nations with legislatures who have control over foreign policy, namely the power to ratify treaties, are less likely to use force than other nations. Legislatures in democracies serve as constraints to executives' power, thereby making war less likely (Choi, 2010). Despite the importance of the legislature to foreign policy, only one study has empirically examined the legislature's role. Kriner and Shen (2014) studied voting and rhetoric about the Iraq War in the House of Representatives. They found as the number of American casualties increased, specifically casualties from the congressmen and women's home districts, so did anti-war rhetoric and anti-war voting among Democrats but not

Republicans. They also found that antiwar rhetoric among congressmen and women positively correlated with antiwar attitudes among their constituencies.

Although there is a dearth of legislative research, several studies have examined the role of the executive in foreign policy decisions. Keller and Foster (2012) studied U.S. presidents' use of force and found that a president's locus of control mediated the relationship between diversionary tactics and use of force abroad. Crichlow (2005) investigated U.S. foreign ministers and their preference for cooperative or conflictual foreign policy. He found conflictual policy preference to be correlated with distrust and belief in chance, while cooperative policy preference was correlated with belief in cooperativeness of the political realm, belief in future stability, and feeling in control.

In terms of executive language, Leudar et al. (2004) found an "us versus them" dichotomy in the speeches of Bush, Blair, and bin Laden following 9-11. Further, Bush and Blair based their speech in moral, political, and social distinction while bin Laden based his speech in religious distinctions. Dyson and Preston (2006) examined the foreign policy statements of Harry Truman, Dwight Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, and Lyndon Johnson to determine how they used historical analogies in shaping foreign policy. Eisenhower and Kennedy, who were found to exhibit more complexity in their language, were more likely to use sophisticated historical analogies as well as analogies from over time periods than Truman and Johnson, who were found to exhibit less linguistic complexity.

### **Political Discourse**

Political discourse includes everything from campaign advertisements, debates, state of the union addresses, congressional speeches, to any utterance by a politician. Several studies have examined these varied types of discourse to discover how political parties use language

differently. Hart and Lind (2014) and Hart, Lind, and Childers (2012) studied measures of Democratic and Republican tone based on Weaver (1953) and Lakoff's (2002) theories of political orientation. These theories view differences between Republicans and Democrats as a series of dichotomies: Restoration versus Reform, Values versus Utility, Independence versus Community, and Nationalism versus Populism (Republicans versus Democrats, respectively for each dichotomy). Using DICTION (Hart, 1997), an automatic text analysis program based on word frequencies, linguistic dictionaries were matched to these dichotomies. For example, *cooperation*, *collectives*, *rapport*, and *voter* references were included in the Democratic Tone calculation while *tenacity*, *religious* terms, *patriotic* terms, and *liberation* were included in the Republican Tone calculation. Hart and Lind (2014) and Hart et al. (2012) found that party affiliation accounted for 3-4% of the variance in these language constructs in two samples of presidential campaign speeches.

Jarvis (2004) also studied presidential campaign speeches using similar dictionaries and analyses and found that party affiliation accounted for 1% of the variance in the use of words present in the dictionary. Ohl, Pfister, Nader, and Griffin (2013) explored campaign advertisements using Lakoff's (2002) moral theory of political orientation. Lakoff theorized that conservatives embody a Strict Father metaphor while liberals embody a Nurturant Parent metaphor. Ohl et al. hand-coded political advertisements for these two types of metaphors. An example of the Strict Father metaphor was *terrorists are on the rise*, and an example of the Nurturant Parent metaphor was *we are all in this together*. They found that Republicans used more Strict Father metaphors and more overall moral language (albeit the difference was rather small), but no differences emerged in the Nurturant Parent metaphors.



In addition to the *use* of words and concepts, *how* words and concepts are used is informative. Doerfel and Connaughton (2009) explored political language through semantic network analysis. Semantic network analysis creates a matrix of semantic space based on how words co-occur in a text, which highlights the themes and relationships in discourse. Doerfel and Connaughton applied this analysis to presidential debates and found that candidates whose speech was more centrally located in the semantic network were more likely to win the election. Weinberg (2010) used word score methods to analyze U.S. governors' speeches. Word score methods examine an underlying language dimension based on word frequencies in reference texts, and in Weinberg's study, a word score of 0 indicated more Republican speech while a word score of 100 indicated more Democratic speech. Weinberg found an average difference of 6.7 points between Democratic and Republican governors. Furthermore, of the thirty speeches identified as the most partisan, only four would have been classified as the wrong party. Thus, word score measures can be used to predict political party through naturally occurring linguistic differences exhibited by these parties.

Yu, Kaufmann, and Diermeier (2008) used a text classification method, wherein a model was trained on reference texts and then applied to new texts to determine if the model could correctly classify the party affiliation of the speaker. Yu and colleagues trained a model on speeches from the 2005 House of Representatives then applied the model to the speeches to the 2005 Senate. The model was able to correctly classify the party affiliation of 50-88% of the Senate speeches. Although the party differences found in these many of these studies (Hart & Lind, 2014; Hart et al., 2012; Jarvis, 2004; Ohl et al., 2013) of word use were small, studies using these other methods (Doerfel & Connaughton, 2009; Weinberg, 2010; Yu et al., 2008)

have done better. Therefore, perhaps understanding political language is a matter of identifying the best methods and constructs that are most pertinent to the political process.

### **Language**

Language is one of the prevalent observable behaviors of politicians, which makes for a large, rich dataset to explore with the methods described above, as well as others. The Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) is a word frequency program based on a dictionary of over 4,500 words (Pennebaker, Booth, & Francis, 2007). These concepts are divided into 82 word categories such as first person pronouns, present tense verbs, and cognitive mechanisms. Tausczik and Pennebaker (2009) reviewed over 100 studies that used the LIWC as a means of discourse analysis. The reviewed studies found pronouns and verb tense to be related to attentional focus, pronouns and social words to be related to group cohesion, and prepositions and cognitive mechanisms to be related to complexity. Tausczik, Faasse, Pennebaker, and Petrie (2012) found a spike in the use of anxiety, death, and health words in blogs and online news articles in the two weeks following an outbreak of swine flu along with a decrease in positive emotion words.

Pennebaker, Slatcher, and Chung (2005) studied the Democratic presidential candidates in the 2004 election compared to the Democratic nominee, Al Gore, in the 2000 election. They found John Kerry used more negative emotion words, articles, and prepositions than Al Gore, and John Edwards used more first person pronouns and insight words than Al Gore. Fernandez and Pennebaker (2009) examined language use after terrorist attacks. They found American participants after 9-11 used more first person pronouns, and Spanish participants after the 2004 Madrid training bombings used more third person pronouns and social and cognitive processes. These studies have indicated how word frequencies can be used to understand psychological

processes, and how the interaction between these categories might explain other phenomenon. Pennebaker and King (1999) conducted a factor analysis on student writing samples and found that four factors emerged from the categories analyzed by the LIWC. The first factor represented immediacy or a personal, experiential focus; the second factor: making distinctions or complex thinking; the third factor: the social past; the fourth factor: rationalization or an organized thought process. Immediacy was related to lower openness, lower need for cognition, and higher neuroticism and agreeableness. Making distinctions was correlated with lower extraversion, conscientiousness, and positive affect. No important correlations were found for social past or rationalization. Of these factors, immediacy, making distinctions, and rationalization were examined in other studies.

Cohn, Mehl, and Pennebaker (2004) used the constructs of immediacy and rationalization in an examination of blogs following 9-11. Low immediacy was conceived of as psychological distancing, which reflected an impersonal, abstract communication style. Cognitive processing was a similar construct to rationalization, which represented organization and comprehension in communication. Compared to a baseline measurement of discourse before 9-11, bloggers used more psychological distancing and cognitive processing in the two weeks following 9-11, and distancing persisted for all six weeks of the study. In a similar vein, Pennebaker (2011) studied making distinctions (i.e. complex thinking) as well as a construct termed categorical thinking in the communications of violent and nonviolent terrorist groups. Categorical thinking reflected a dispassionate and abstract discourse versus communicating with focus on details or specific topics. Violent terrorist groups used less complex thinking and less categorical thinking than nonviolent terrorist groups.

### **Purpose and Hypotheses**

As evidenced from the research described above, both word frequencies and their corresponding linguistic constructs can be used to elucidate differences in subpopulations, as well as reflect changes due to defining events. Disparities in discourse between political parties have been explored briefly by classifying political parties or by examining presidential speeches. This study will combine multiple areas of linguistic and political research by investigating linguistic differences between political parties in foreign policy discourse pertaining to U.S. relationship with “rogue states”, namely those with which the U.S. has had conflictual relations or tense relations. The current study used congressional speeches, speeches made in the congressional foreign affairs committee hearings, and presidential statements to examine four language constructs: cognitive processing, categorical thinking, complex thinking, and psychological distancing.

Hypothesis 1: Based on Cohn et al. (2004), cognitive processing and psychological distancing will be greater when the U.S did not take military action, including a possible interaction with party affiliation. In their study, cognitive processing and psychological distancing were increased following a traumatic event. Given that the current study focuses on the language leading up to an event, namely military action authorized against another nation, we expect to see the opposite of Cohn et al.’s findings; cognitive processing and psychological distancing will decrease when military action is taken.

Hypothesis 2: Pennebaker (2011) found that the violent terrorist groups used less categorical and complex thinking, as compared to groups with less violent actions. Therefore, categorical thinking and complex thinking will be lower when the U.S. took military action, and this difference will be greater for Democrats. Foreign policy is typically considered a Republican owned issue (Benoit, 2004; Jarvis, 2004) meaning that Republicans tend to focus on foreign

policy issues. This focus should lead to less change in their language because foreign policy is of key concern to them, while Democrat's language should show an increased change as they are unaccustomed to focusing on foreign policy debate.

## **Method**

### **Samples and Data Processing**

**Congress.** Congressional speeches were obtained from the Congressional Record published by the U.S. Government Printing Office, which is an online archive of all motions and speeches in both houses of Congress since 1994. The current study included speeches from January 1998 to August 2013. The Record for that time period was searched for speeches pertaining to U.S. foreign relations with the following countries: Iraq, Kosovo, Iran, North Korea, Sudan, Libya, Russia, Afghanistan, and Syria. These countries were chosen for their histories of strained and/or combative relationship necessitating a cogent foreign policy as well as having mostly stable governments allowing for cogent foreign policy. For Iraq, Kosovo, and Afghanistan, only speeches that were made before congressional approval for the use of military force in those nations were included. A total of 1500 speeches were gathered from these sources: 457 from the Senate and 1043 from the House of Representatives.

**Foreign Affairs Committees.** The records of foreign affairs committee hearings were searched and were separated from the overall Congressional Record. The records of these hearings are available from the Printing Office as well and include records of all committee hearings since 1985. Hearings from both the House and Senate committees were included. Records were searched for hearings pertaining to U.S. relations with the aforementioned countries from 1998-2013. Once again, for Iraq, Kosovo, and Afghanistan, only hearings before the authorization of military force in those nations by Congress were included. From the House

Foreign Affairs Committee, 384 speeches were collected; from the Senate committee, 311 speeches were collected.

**Presidential Statements.** The final source of language samples consisted of presidential statements acquired from the Government Publishing Office. The record contained all official White House publications released by the White House press secretary since 1993. A total of 63 presidential statements were gathered. All documents from these samples were then downloaded and processed. Speeches were separated such that each document only contained one speaker from each day for a given region. Extraneous information including page numbers, titles, and quotes were deleted. Our final sample included 553 unique speakers. Party affiliation broke down into 1076 Republican and 1182 Democratic speeches; 1365 speeches pertained to regions where no military action was taken and 893 speeches pertained to regions where military action was taken.

### **Language Constructs**

Dependent language variables were computed from individual language categories from the LIWC output. Categories were converted to z scores. Construct scores were then calculated for complex thinking, categorical thinking, psychological distancing, and cognitive processing. See Table 1 for the formulas used.

### **Predictors**

Party affiliation was coded for the speaker of each document. Because party affiliation was not included in the Congressional Record, this information was gathered from the Senate and House of Representatives websites. Only one congressman in the data set identified as Independent, so his speeches were excluded from the analysis.

Information about the region each speech focused on was available in the title of each speech as part of search parameters. Action information was then recoded dividing the regions based on the action taken by the U.S.: nations in which the U.S. undertook military operations that were approved by Congress (Iraq, Afghanistan, and Kosovo) and nations which the U.S. enacted sanctions but did not act against militarily (Libya, Iran, North Korea, Sudan, Russia, Syria).

## Results

### Data Analytic Plan

Given that speakers would have multiple speeches in the data set, multilevel modeling (MLM) was used to analyze the data. MLM was also used to control for the different sources of data, namely the different venues of the House, the Senate, Foreign Committee Hearings, and Presidential Addresses. MLM is advantageous to use with nested data to control for multiple sources from the same participant or source, as well as the ability to control for hierarchical structure of a dataset (Hox, 2012). Each model was nested to control for demographic variables (speaker, venue) present in our dataset. Four separate models were used to test main effects and interactions between political parties (Republican versus Democrat) and action (Action versus No Action) in the four language constructs (complex thinking, categorical thinking, psychological distancing, cognitive processing). These models were programmed in *R* using the *lme4* package (Bates, Maechler, Bolker, & Walker, 2014).

### Hypothesis 1.

**Cognitive Processing.** The first construct examined was cognitive processing using political party and action taken as independent variables. Party affiliation, action taken, and their interaction were added into the model as predictors, which significantly improved the model over

the null nested model, ( $\Delta\text{logLikelihood} = 68.56$ ,  $\Delta\text{df} = 3$ , critical  $\chi^2 = 7.81$ ). The predictors taken together accounted for 5% of the variance in cognitive processing ( $R^2 = .05$ ). Of the individual predictors, the interaction was significant,  $b = 0.33$ ,  $\text{SE} = 0.13$ ,  $t(1893) = 2.53$ ,  $p = .01$ ,  $r^2 = .04$ . The main effect for action taken was significant,  $b = 0.63$ ,  $\text{SE} = 0.10$ ,  $t(1879.70) = 6.26$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $r^2 = .05$ , but the main effect for party affiliation was not significant,  $b = -0.02$ ,  $\text{SE} = 0.10$ ,  $t(388.50) = -0.21$ ,  $p = .84$ ,  $r^2 < .01$ . Post hoc tests were conducted in order to interpret the interaction by using a simple slopes analysis and splitting on action taken. When no military action was taken, there were no differences in cognitive processing between Republicans and Democrats,  $b = 0.04$ ,  $\text{SE} = 0.11$ ,  $t(150.43) = -0.34$ ,  $p = .74$ . However, when military was taken, Democrats used more cognitive processing than Republicans,  $b = 0.31$ ,  $\text{SE} = 0.11$ ,  $t(278.19) = 2.72$ ,  $p < .01$ . See Figure 1 for graph of interaction.

**Psychological Distancing.** The next model examined psychological distancing as an outcome, again with nesting by senator and venue, and party affiliation and action taken as predictors. The model with predictors was significant over the null nested model ( $\Delta\text{logLikelihood} = 16.49$ ,  $\Delta\text{df} = 3$ , critical  $\chi^2 = 7.81$ ,  $R^2 = .02$ ). The interaction effect was not significant,  $b = -0.12$ ,  $\text{SE} = 0.24$ ,  $t(2229.90) = -0.50$ ,  $p = .62$ ,  $r^2 = .01$ . The main effect for party affiliation was not significant,  $b = 0.34$ ,  $\text{SE} = 0.22$ ,  $t(642.20) = 1.52$ ,  $p = .13$ ,  $r^2 < .01$ . However, the main effect for action taken was significant,  $b = -0.63$ ,  $\text{SE} = 0.18$ ,  $t(2208) = -3.41$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $r^2 = .02$ . Less psychological distancing was used when action was taken than when action was not taken. See Figure 2 for graph of main effect. Due to unequal sample sizes across venues and nesting, the graph is broken down by venue in order to show that while the values vary widely across venues the decreasing trend stays the same. The values for these predictors are overall



quite low, indicating less psychological distancing (i.e. more concrete, attached language) than average for the Congressional Record.

## **Hypothesis 2.**

**Categorical Thinking.** Party affiliation, action taken, and their interaction were added as predictors to the null model nested by speaker and venue predicting categorical thinking. This addition significantly improved the model ( $\Delta\text{logLikelihood} = 25.01$ ,  $\Delta\text{df} = 3$ , critical  $\chi^2 = 7.81$ ). The predictors taken together accounted for 2% of the variance in categorical thinking ( $R^2 = .02$ ). The interaction effect was not significant,  $b = -0.04$ ,  $\text{SE} = 0.20$ ,  $t(2227.80) = -0.18$ ,  $p = .86$ ,  $r^2 = .01$ ; however, both the main effects for action taken,  $b = -0.67$ ,  $\text{SE} = 0.15$ ,  $t(2205.40) = -4.36$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $r^2 = .02$ , and party affiliation,  $b = 0.43$ ,  $\text{SE} = 0.18$ ,  $t(634.60) = 2.34$ ,  $p = .02$ ,  $r^2 < .01$ , were significant. These effects indicated that less categorical thinking (i.e. less dichotomous language) was used when discussing regions in which military action was taken, and Democrats typically used more categorical thinking, albeit with a small effect. See Figure 3 for graph of main effects. Once again, the graph is broken down by venue to account for sample size differences and nesting.

**Complex Thinking.** The final model used complex thinking as an outcome with the same nested variables as described previously. The model with predictors of party affiliation, action taken, and their interaction was significantly better than null nested model ( $\Delta\text{logLikelihood} = 34.47$ ,  $\Delta\text{df} = 3$ , critical  $\chi^2 = 7.81$ ,  $R^2 = .03$ ). The interaction between party affiliation and action taken was significant predictor of complex thinking,  $b = 0.65$ ,  $\text{SE} = 0.27$ ,  $t(2016.80) = 2.45$ ,  $p = .01$ ,  $r^2 = .02$ . The main effect for action taken was also significant,  $b = 0.76$ ,  $\text{SE} = 0.20$ ,  $t(1992.80) = 3.70$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $r^2 = .03$ , but the main effect for party affiliation was not,  $b = -0.04$ ,  $\text{SE} = 0.22$ ,  $t(455.60) = -.19$ ,  $p = .85$ ,  $r^2 < .01$ . Post hoc testing was conducted to

parse out the interaction effect using a simple slopes analysis splitting by action taken. When no action was taken, no difference in complex thinking existed between parties,  $b = -0.23$ ,  $SE = 0.25$ ,  $t(173.25) = -0.94$ ,  $p = .35$ ,  $r^2 = .01$ . When military action was taken, Democrats used more complex thinking than Republicans,  $b = 0.80$ ,  $SE = 0.23$ ,  $t(316.70) = 3.51$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $r^2 = .04$ . See Figure 4 for graph of interaction.

### Discussion

Despite changes to the political realm, Congress remains an important factor in foreign policymaking. Results seemed to indicate that not only do Republicans and Democrats approach foreign policy differently, at least from a linguistic standpoint; they react differently to depending on the situation. Hypothesis 1 was partially supported. Party affiliation and action taken did interact to influence cognitive processing, however, the trends were not quite what were expected. When military action was taken, Democrats demonstrated more cognitive processing than Republicans; when no action was taken, no party differences emerged. In terms of issue ownership, this interaction could provide further evidence that foreign policy is a Republican owned issue (Benoit, 2004; Jarvis, 2004), such that Democrats may not be as familiar with the issues involved in foreign policy. Hence when military action is being seriously considered, Democrats may exhibit more cognitive processing in their discourse to compensate for foreign policy not being a typical focus of the Democratic parties' political agenda.

What was not expected was the direction of the main effect for action taken. We hypothesized that cognitive processing would be lower when military action was taken because Cohn et al. (2004) found that cognitive processing increased following a traumatic event. Therefore, we speculated that leading up to an event cognitive processing would show the opposite effect and decrease. We actually found support for Cohn et al., however; cognitive

processing was higher when action was taken. It is possible that politicians were reacting to the events that made military action a possibility. Yet, the main effect for psychological distancing was as predicted. When action was taken, both Republicans and Democrats demonstrated less psychological distancing. It is possible that politicians react to the events leading to the approval of military action increasing cognitive processing and psychological distancing as Cohn et al. (2004) found. However, the necessity of having to elucidate the realities of the situation required politicians to use less psychological distancing.

In regards to Hypothesis 2, our predictions were comparably partially correct. Based on Pennebaker (2011), we expected categorical thinking to decrease when action was taken and to possibly interact with party affiliation because Republicans are typically characterized as being more aggressive. We were supported in terms of action taken; however, no interaction with party emerged. This finding supports Pennebaker's (2011) earlier results of a decrease in categorical thinking being linked to aggression. In regards to complex thinking, we found when no military action was taken, no party differences emerged. However, when action was taken, Democrats displayed more complex thinking than Republicans. Pennebaker (2011) found lower complex thinking to be linked to aggression in terrorist groups, and perhaps, in line with many political stereotypes, Republican are slightly more aggressive in military decisions and Democrats less aggressive (thus, more complex thinking). Contrary to expectations, the main effect for action taken was such that complex thinking increased when military action was taken. This result could be an artifact of the number of politicians opposing military action, and further research would be necessary to fully understand this effect.

**Limitations.** While the language constructs examined in the current study have the potential to be useful tools, their interpretation is somewhat difficult as no normed information

exists for these constructs. We know how the language samples used in the current studies compare to each other, but we do not know how they compare to political blogs or news articles for example. Without normed information about these constructs, it is challenging to determine how to interpret the results of the current study in light of how language is used in other contexts, although the use of z-scoring provides an avenue to begin comparisons across samples and experiments. Furthermore, while prior researchers have created and shown how these constructs can be used in research, the validity of these constructs is a potential avenue for additional exploration. Further research is necessary to determine exactly what these language constructs are measuring.

**Future Research.** Future research should examine whether these language differences have any practical impact on political behavior or decision-making. For example, does complex thinking influence how a member of Congress votes on a war measure? Given the limitations of the current research, validation and normative studies on the language constructs should also be undertaken in the future. The application of methods such as text classification and semantic analysis cited earlier could be cross-referenced with this type of linguistic construct analysis to add to the knowledge in this area. Our study offers a first exploration into the combination of party affiliation from multiple unexplored venues, military action, and linguistic constructs; thus, providing an important contribution to the exploration and understanding of these areas.

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Political Party Differences in Foreign Policy Discourse

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Table 1

*Metalinguistic Construct Formulas*

Construct	Formula	Reference	Example words
Categorical thinking	articles + prepositions + big words – verbs	Pennebaker (2011)	Big words: word with 6+ letters
Complex thinking	exclusive + conjunctions + words/sentence + negations + insight + causation-inclusive	Pennebaker (2011)	Exclusive: but, without Negations: no, not, never Inclusive: with, include
Cognitive processing	insight + causation	Cohn, Mehl, and Pennebaker (2004)	Insight: think, know Causation: because, effect
Psychological distancing	articles + big words - I-words – discrepancy – present tense verbs	Cohn et al. (2004)	Discrepancy: should, would

*Note.* The formulas listed are based on the z scores of the LIWC categories percentage of the document.

Figure 1

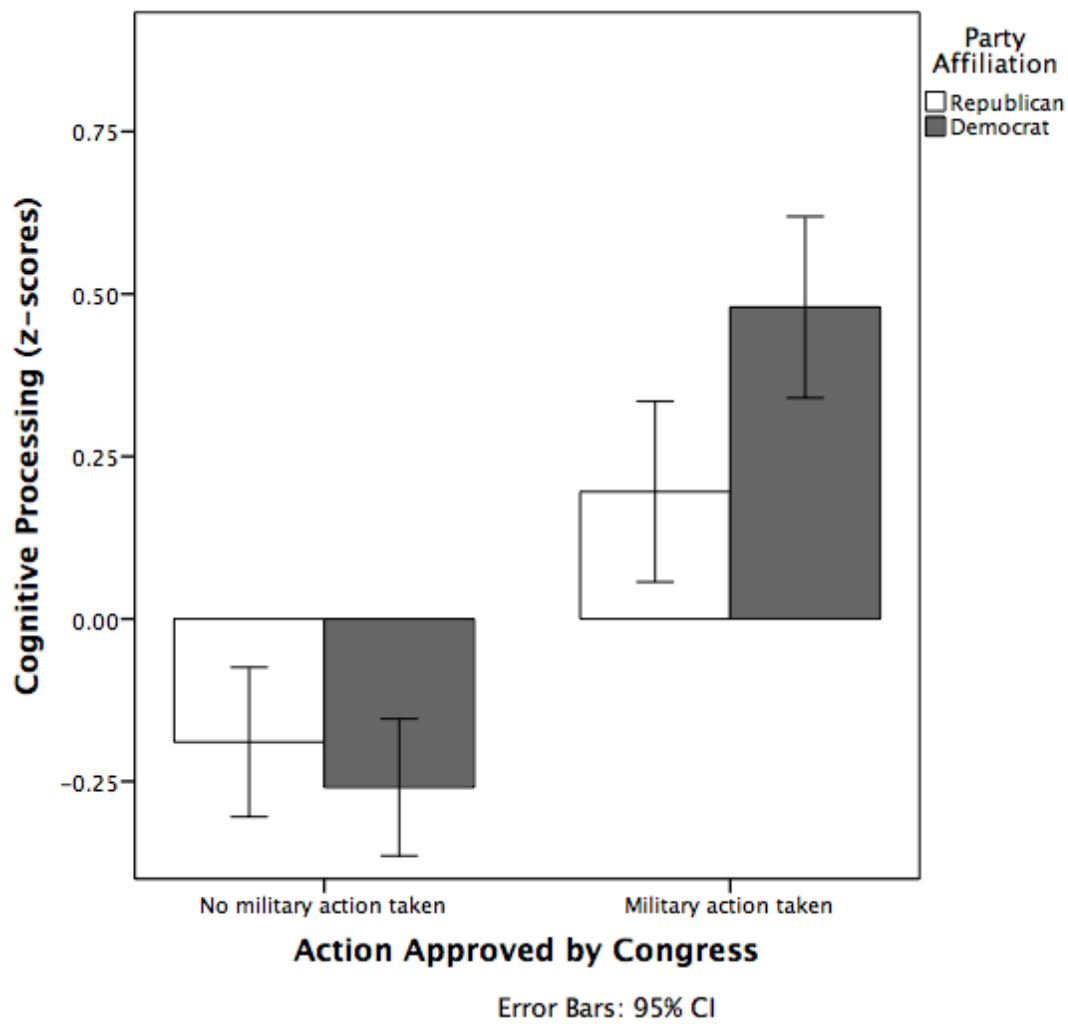


Figure 1. Interaction between party affiliation and action taken examining cognitive processing for hypothesis 1.

Figure 2

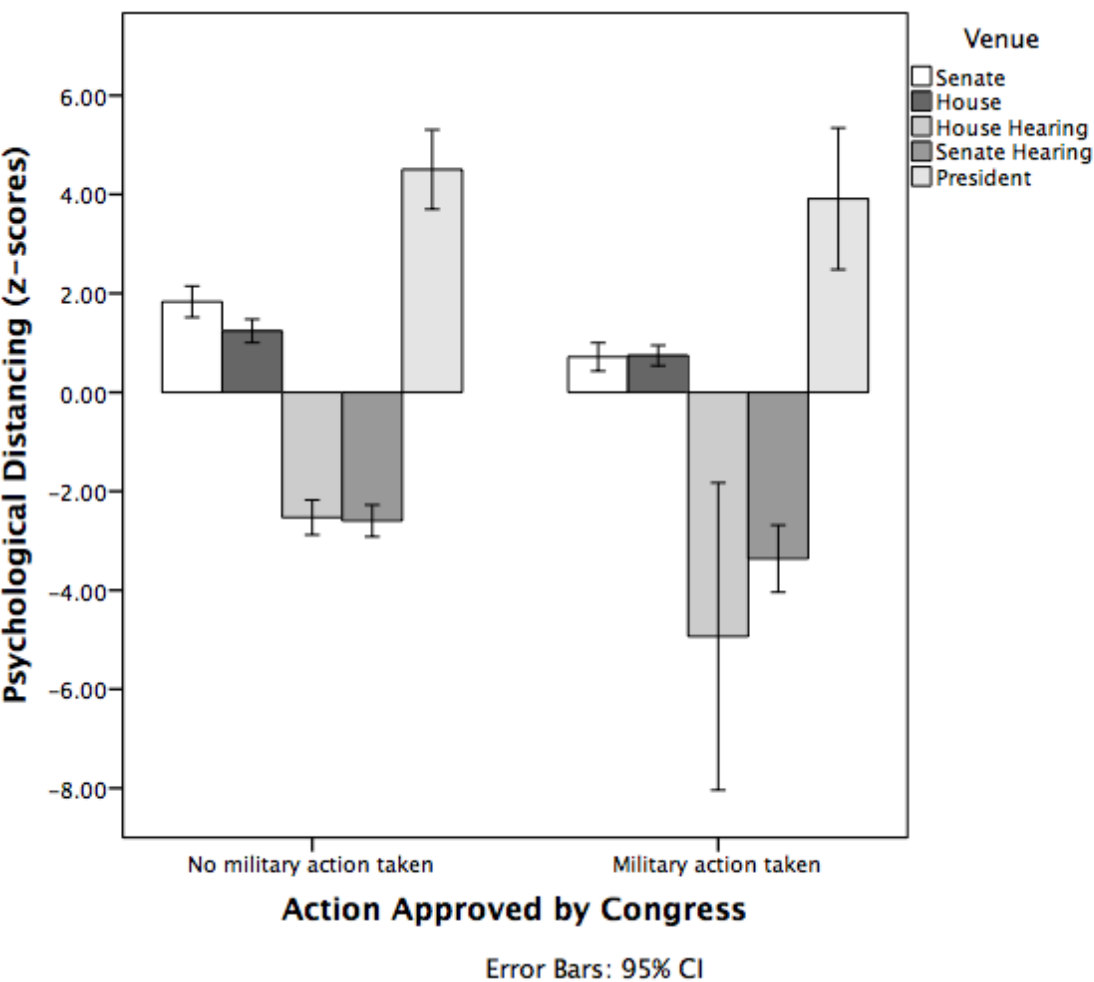


Figure 2. Main effect of action taken shown by venue for psychological distancing for hypothesis 1. House and Senate hearings are from specific Foreign Affairs subcommittees of each venue.

Figure 3

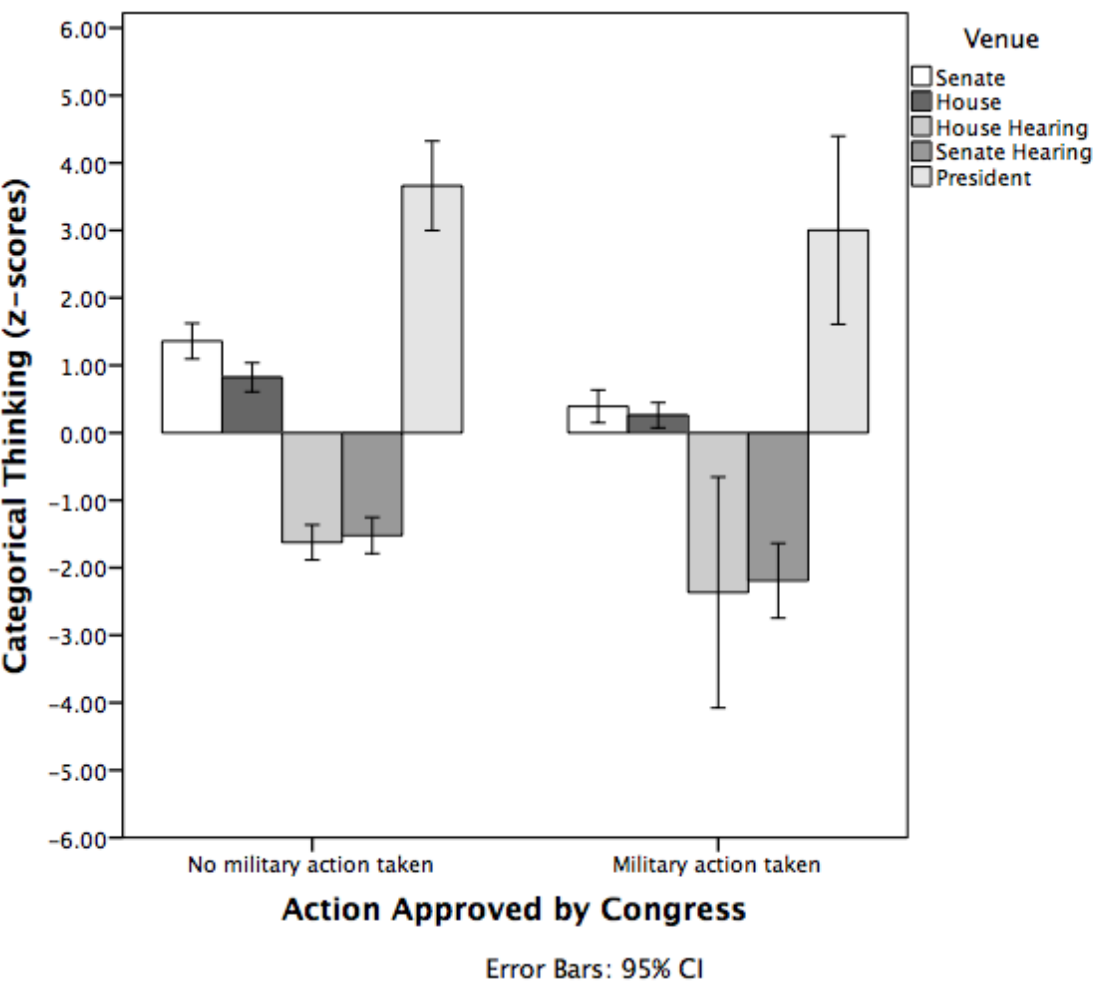


Figure 3. Main effect for action taking shown by venue for categorical thinking for Hypothesis 2. House and Senate hearings are from specific Foreign Affairs subcommittees of each venue.

Figure 4

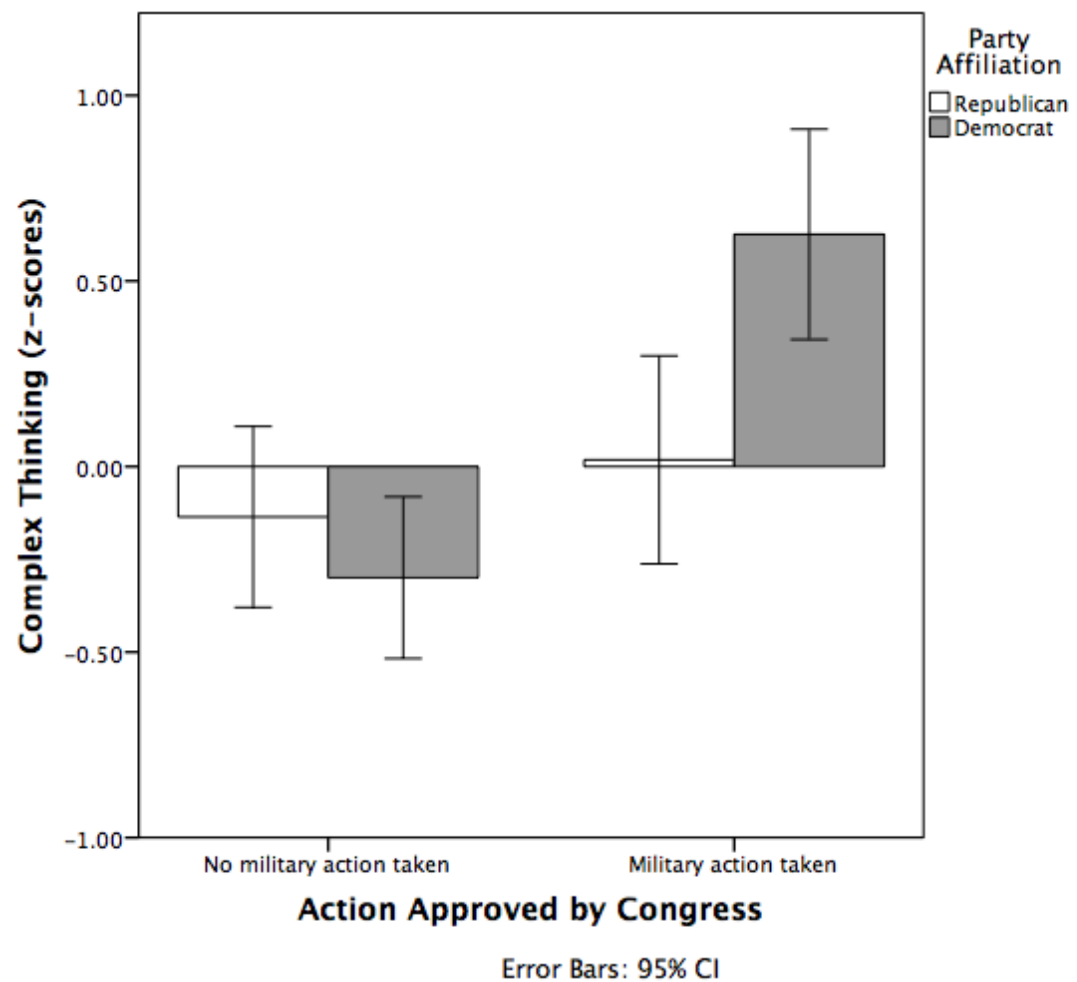


Figure 4. Interaction between party affiliation and action taken examining complex thinking for hypothesis 2.