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Understanding the Effect of Military Service on Support for Political Violence

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Abstract:	Why do some individuals with military experience support political violence? With US military veterans playing a central role in the January 6th assault on the US Capitol, this question is central to the growing scholarship on American political violence and scholars seeking to military support for anti-government militias, White power movements, and civil-military relations. To identify the effect of military service, we conduct the first nationally representative survey of insurrectionist sentiments among US military veterans under age 65 as well as a demographically matched sample of non-veterans. Using this data, our study combines descriptive analysis of the scope and predictors of insurrectionist sentiments among veterans with mediation analysis of causal pathways, evaluating the robustness of findings to omitted variable bias and bias caused by disengaged respondents. The results show that veterans are 78% more likely than comparable non-veterans to hold insurrectionist sentiments, that political conspiracy beliefs and racial resentment are leading predictors but do not fully account for the outcome. Military experience itself has a direct effect. These findings have important implications for future research on political violence and understanding the role of the military in American democracy.

Understanding the Effect of Military Service on Support for Political Violence

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Why do some individuals with military experience support political violence? This question is central to the growing literature seeking to explain support for political violence in the United States (Arceneaux and Truex 2022; Armaly and Enders 2022; Kalmoe and Mason 2022) as well as the long standing literature on military support for anti-government militias, White power movements, and civil-military relations (Belew 2018; Feaver 2023; Miller-Idriss 2022; Perliger 2020). Scholars have long recognized the critical role played by community support for violence (Frampton 2022; Petersen 2001), and support for violence in a community can facilitate actual violence. To date, however, we know relatively little about the causal effect of military experience itself on support for violence among individuals with a military background.

Understanding support for political violence among veterans is important. While most veterans never engage in political violence, any support for such violence in the veteran community is a concern. Veterans provide skills—based on weapons and tactical training—that can accelerate the organization, structure and discipline of violent operations – especially relevant given the role played by veterans in the attack on the US Capitol on January 6, 2021 to keep Donald Trump in office after he lost the 2020 election (Milton and Mines 2021) and in domestic extremism to overturn the government in Germany in 2022 (Hummel 2021; Koehler 2022).

In this article, we seek to understand why some individuals with prior US military service – specifically, US military veterans -- support political violence. Unlike previous research that focuses on general support for violence in politics in the broad population, we focus on support for political violence among a specific sub-population and in a specific political context: support among veterans for restoring Donald Trump to the presidency by force, i.e., insurrectionist sentiments. Why would some who once served in the armed forces and swore an oath to defend the US Constitution attack the peaceful transfer of power? Does the explanation lie with specific military and veteran experiences? Or is veteran participation in and support for anti-government violence a reflection of broader societal trends? Our overall goal is to understand theoretically and empirically the scope and dynamics of the specific sets of issues relevant to the stability of American democracy today, and so contribute to the broader literatures on political violence and extremism in the military.

To identify the importance of military service, we conduct the first nationally representative survey of insurrectionist sentiments among US military veterans, fielded by [survey firm] from December 2021 to January 2022. Specifically, our survey has a sample of 843 veterans ages 18-64 -- demographically representative of the overall veteran population under age 65 on a range of stratifications for age, gender, education, race, service branch and rank —as well as a sample of 820 non-veterans who are matched to the demographics of our veteran sample. This allows for statistically valid comparisons within the veteran population and between veteran and non-veteran populations, as well as extrapolation of our findings to the general population of the 10 million veterans under age 65 with a margin of error of 4.86%.

Using this data, our study combines descriptive analysis of the scope and predictors of insurrectionist sentiments among veterans with mediation analysis of causal pathways, evaluating the robustness of findings to omitted variable bias and bias caused by disengaged respondents. We identify the prevalence of insurrectionist sentiments among US veterans, the relative magnitude of these

sentiments compared to a demographically matched sample of non-veteran adults from the US general population, and the importance of common explanations related to political beliefs, pre/during/post military service experiences, and economic and religious factors in the literature on domestic extremism in the military. Our central goal is to understand the conditions under which some individual with prior military service hold insurrectionist sentiments, while others do not, and whether there is an effect of veterancy separate from societal factors that may also push in the same direction.

Our main findings are:

Veterans are more prone to insurrectionist sentiments than demographically matched civilians. We find 16% of US veterans under age 65 hold insurrectionist sentiments, agreeing that Biden is an illegitimate president, that the use of force to restore Donald Trump to the presidency is justified, and that they would be willing to personally use force to do so. They are 78% more likely than demographically comparable non-veterans to hold these sentiments.

The most prominent factor associated with insurrectionist sentiments among veterans is holding extreme political beliefs. Other than extreme support for Trump, believing in right-wing conspiracy theories such as the "great replacement" and ideas associated with QAnon is associated with a 19% increase in insurrectionist sentiments. Other general societal factors, like economic insecurity and childhood trouble with the law, add between 3% and 15%. Factors associated with military service and veterancy, including combat experience, reported PTSD, and disillusionment with military service, are less predictive, adding between 4% and 8%. There is little evidence that experience in Afghanistan or the global war on terrorism in general is driving the outcome.

Causal analysis finds evidence that the average treatment effect of veterancy itself on support for insurrectionist sentiments over non-veterans is 5%, even when controlling for demographics, party

identification, and other theoretically relevant confounding factors. This finding is robust to omitted confounders and disengaged respondents.

Finally, mediation analysis shows that that veterans are not more likely to have insurrectionists sentiments simply because they are more likely to have extreme political beliefs associated with support for insurrection. The effect of veterancy remains even after accounting for the causal pathway running through conspiracy beliefs and racial resentment – the societal factors found as most important in the descriptive statistical analysis. Sensitivity analysis also confirms these findings as robust. This finding is evidence that military experience has a direct effect on insurrectionist sentiments separate from societal factors that may also push in the same direction.

This study thus provides credible evidence that insurrectionist sentiments are greater among US military veterans than their civilian, non-veteran counterparts, and that the veteran experience during and after military service has a causal effect on the outcome. There is something about having military service itself – over and above holding extreme beliefs – that is causing veterans to hold insurrectionist sentiments. Future research should endeavor to clarify these findings more precisely. Overall, both society and military experience matter, not just either alone.

The article proceeds as follows. In section two, we unpack the concept of insurrectionist sentiments, the relationship to political violence, and present the mechanisms from the literature on radicalization and political violence to explain them. Section three presents the survey and operationalization of the variables used in the analysis, and section four presents the descriptive and causal results including robustness analyses. In the conclusion we discuss the implications of our results for policy and scholarship, as well as limitations and recommendations for future research.

2.0 INSURRECTIONIST SENTIMENTS AND RISK OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE

2.1 Insurrectionist Sentiments and Why they Matter

Explaining what factors explain support for insurrection among US veterans is of central importance today. In the past, military veterans have featured prominently in some of the most famous campaigns of rebellion and anti-government resistance, from the founding of the KKK after the US Civil War (Parsons 2016) to the rise the US right-wing militia movement after Vietnam (Belew 2018) and the Oklahoma City Bombing in 1996 (Wright 2007). More recently, individuals with prior US military experience with racial and anti-government motives have committed a growing fraction of domestic terrorist attacks since 2018 (Jones 2021, 6). On January 6, 2021, one in seven of those assaulting the US Capitol were US military veterans, 30% of whom did so as members of violent domestic extremist organizations, while 70% acted without a prior affiliation with violent groups.

No one explanation is likely to account for all forms of extremism among those with military experience. Hence, our study focuses on "Insurrectionist Sentiments," support for restoring former President Donald Trump to the presidency, a movement with significant supporters inside and outside the veteran community.

We define insurrection as "an organized attempt by a group of people to defeat their government or ruler and take control of the country, usually by violence."[1] The January 6, 2021 assault on the US Capitol meets this definition according to its three main elements: 1) the assault aimed to prevent the transfer of power to a duly elected government and, effectively, seize control of its powers by maintaining an unelected government in office; 2) the assault was violent, involving the intentional use of force to

[1] Cambridge Dictionary (2020). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

physically prevent the transfer of power by breaking through barriers (windows, doors, etc.) as well as physically fighting police in order to penetrate control a specific government functioning space; and 3) the assault involved a group of people who, at least on the day, formed a loosely organized movement unified by a common purpose.

Insurrectionist sentiments were on display among the rioters at the Capitol on January 6, 2021 as thousands stormed the Capitol to overturn the 2020 election results and maintain Donald Trump in power. In the present context, two years into the Biden administration, holding insurrectionist sentiments reflects support within a community for using force to overthrow the Biden administration to restore Trump to the presidency. Holding such insurrectionist sentiments indicates potential for future violent, insurrectionary activities by a population increasingly skeptical of American democracy.

The spread and extent of insurrectionist sentiments increases the risk of political violence for four reasons. First, higher levels of community support can "promote rebellion by producing accessible information, reducing communication costs, and facilitating recruitment." (Petersen 2001, 15–16). Second, community support increases the legitimacy of violent actors, encouraging violence by providing a popular mandate – without which violent actors would be merely criminals. Third, community support can increase confidence that violent actors will receive financial support for criminal defense funds and other social services, "allowing movements and groups to survive against active suppression efforts by the state" (Jordan 2019, 36). Finally, community support can increase risk-taking by creating the perception of "safety in numbers" (Lichbach 1994, 15–16). The impact of these dynamics are born out empirically: scholars have found that community support has played a crucial role in the trajectories of terrorist campaigns in Western democracies, for example by the IRA in Northern Ireland (Hayes and McAllister 2001), the Red Army Faction in West Germany (Moghadam 2012), and ETA in Spain (Criado 2011).

2.2 Explaining Insurrectionist Sentiments Among Veterans Today

Scholars have long contributed to a robust literature on extremism in the military. For decades, studies have raised concerns about a growing "gap" in attitudes and values between people in the military and civilian society as military identification with the Republican Party has increased since the coming of the All-Volunteer force in 1974 (Feaver and Kohn 2001). Other scholars have found that military service is associated with higher incidences of domestic violence, although the effect become ambiguous when societal factors are considered (Bradley 2007). Still other studies have found associations between exposure to combat (e.g., deployment to Iraq and Afghanistan) and antisocial behavior, including arrests and convictions for violence (Booth-Kewley et al. 2010). Although some scholars emphasize factors in civilian society and others military experience, to date there is no study that has clarified whether military service itself plays a causal versus correlative role either in support for generalized political violence or in a specific political context.

While scholars have studied the veterans charged in the January 6th attack on the Capitol (Jensen, Yates, and Kane 2022; e.g, , Milton and Mines 2021), there is as yet no literature on the scope and causes of violent support for Trump specific to US military veterans as a population. Nevertheless, the established literature on extremism in the military – especially, the general divide between causes related to society versus military experience itself – provides a useful theoretical framework for empirical investigation. Accordingly, our study assesses ideological, demographic, and biographic characteristics of known perpetrators of political violence among veteran perpetrators specifically (Simi, Bubolz, and Hardman 2013), contrasts veteran and non-veteran perpetrators (Haugstvedt and Koehler 2021), and assesses the importance of four bundles of explanations.

The first bundle is political beliefs – ideological commitment to specific ideas about politics and society. A known common risk factor for radicalization to political violence is extreme ideological or conspiracy beliefs in which society and/or the government is cast as evil (Uscinski and Parent 2014). In

the case of January 6, this includes the belief that expanding rights of non-Whites and the spread of "liberal" values are threats to society, and the belief that the government is corrupt and evil and actively subverting American democracy (a central tenet of the QAnon conspiracy theory). These are likely to go hand-in-hand because the government is perceived as the enemy to white supremacist objectives (Belew 2018, 7). Belief in extremist ideologies may precede military service, and there is evidence that individuals with extremist views are attracted to the military for the promise of training in combat techniques and weapons to help them pursue their ideological goals (Haugstvedt and Koehler 2021; Simi, Bubolz, and Hardman 2013). Veterans who hold anti-government conspiracy beliefs, including support for QAnon, new world order and related conspiracies, are more likely to have stronger insurrectionist sentiments than those who do not hold these beliefs. QAnon has become increasingly common in the last few years but is not a wholly new idea: it taps into general anti-government resentment that became very prevalent during the 1990s (Bloom and Moskalenko 2021).

The second and third bundles are military and post-service experiences – trauma and other experiences unique to people who served in the military. There is extensive social science research on aspects of the military experience that affect the likelihood of aggression. These include effects of Post-Traumatic Stress (PTSD) and other mission stress, military deployment on strained family relations, and difficulties soldiers face upon homecoming, e.g. reintegration and re-establishing social bonds (e.g., Morland et al. 2012).

A fourth bundle is other factors in civilian society, commonly mentioned in the literature as potential drivers of support for political extremism and violence, specifically (1) history of economic difficulty (Broz, Frieden, and Weymouth 2021); (2) religiosity (Juergensmeyer 2008); (3) authoritarian personality (Armaly and Enders 2022); and (4) childhood trauma and other troubles prior to joining the US military (Picciolini (2020).

Either individually or in combination, these factors associated with radicalization may be accentuated in the context of military service. Studies have specifically found evidence that both pre-service and post-service life experiences impact increase the risk of veteran radicalization (Haugstvedt and Koehler 2021, 6) and might therefore also create affinities for insurrectionist sentiments. However, the literature lacks consensus on the relative importance of these factors and how independent they are from each other.

3.0 SURVEY AND MEASUREMENT OF VARIABLES

3.1 Veteran Survey

We conducted a nationally representative survey of U.S. military veterans ages 18 to 64 and a sample of demographically matched American adults who have never served. Veterans under the age of 65 comprise half of all veterans in 2022. We focus on the 10 million veterans under age 65 since these are the most viable for participation in violence.[2] The survey was fielded by [SURVEY FIRM] from December 16, 2021 through January 20, 2022. In total [SURVEY FIRM] collected 1,663 interviews by web mode: 843 veterans and 820 non-veterans.[3]

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[2] According to the Bureau of Veterans Affairs, veterans between 18 and 64 in 2022 make up approximately 10 million (55%) of the 19 million veterans estimated for 2022. National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics, https://www.va.gov/vetdata/veteran_population.asp.

[3] To ensure sufficient Veteran participants, [SURVEY FIRM] applied a hybrid data collection model supplementing respondents randomly sampled from its national probability panel with respondents with

The survey asked questions covering support for violence to restore Trump to the presidency, political beliefs, military background, personality, and trauma – potential risk factors for insurrectionist sentiments. The study was approved by the University and Department of Defense Institutional Review Boards.[4] Given the sensitive nature of combat and personal trauma questions, subjects were informed of sensitive questions in the consent, advised they could skip questions without penalty, and presented with links to mental health resources in the case of distress.

3.2 The Veteran Sample

We designed the sampling strategy so that the sample of veterans would reflect the demographics of veterans under 65. To allow us to extrapolate from the veteran sample to the population of veterans, [SURVEY FIRM] also provided survey weights aligning the veteran sample to the veteran population based on age, sex, education, and race as well as representativeness of the five service branches and the distribution of officers and enlisted ranks.

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respondents from a nonprobability online opt-in panel. Probability and non-probability samples were combined by calibration based on small area estimation methods that explicitly accounts for potential bias associated with the nonprobability sample (Ganesh et al. 2017, 2019). After calibration, the combination of probability and nonprobability samples for veterans yields approximately unbiased estimates and allows for standard methods for approximating margins of error and statistical significance. Details on sampling and weighting are reported in the online supplement.

[4] Anonymized IRB.

However, even without weighting, the veteran sample closely reflects the veteran population on the selected demographic and military factors. Table 1 below compares veteran population demographic and military service benchmarks to the weighted and unweighted veteran sample for our survey.

Table 1. Comparison of Population Estimates and Observed Veteran Characteristics

A. Demographics

Factor	Value	Pop Estimate	Sample Proportions	
			Unweighted	Weighted
Age[a]	*18-29*	8%	8%	8%
	40-44	31%	27%	27%
	45-59	43%	45%	46%
	60-64	18%	20%	19%
Sex[a]	*Men*	84%	81%	85%
Education[b]	*< Bachelor's Degree*	71%	66%	66%
Race[b]	*White*	69%	70%	68%
	Black	17%	14%	17%
	Hispanic	11%	9%	10%
	Other	3%	5%	5%

B. Service Factors

Factor	Value	Pop Estimate	Sample Proportions	
			Unweighted	Weighted
Service Branch[c]	*Army*	46%	48%	47%
	Navy	22%	23%	22%
	Marines	12%	12%	12%
	Air Force	18%	16%	17%
	Coast Guard	1%	1%	1%
Rank[c]	*Officer*	7%	6%	6%
	Enlisted	93%	94%	94%

[a] *Predicted values for 2022, veterans under 65. National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics. Population Tables based on VetPop2020. US Dept. Of Veterans Affairs (2022). https://www.va.gov/vetdata/veteran_population.asp.*
[b] *Predicted values for 2019, veterans under age 62 to account for 3 year difference in measurement year. Steven Ruggles, Sarah Flood, Ronald Goeken, Josiah Grover, Erin Meyer, Jose Pacas and Matthew Sobek. IPUMS USA: Version 10.0 [dataset]. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS, 2020. https://doi.org/10.18128/D010.V10.0.*
[c] *Predicted values for 2022, all veterans. National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics. Population Tables based on VetPop2020. US Dept. Of Veterans Affairs (2022).*

In nearly all cases, the differences between population estimates and the unweighted sample proportions are either identical or differ by a few percentage points. Nevertheless, survey weighting corrects for the effects of the survey design to make more accurate descriptive inferences from our sample to the larger veteran population. We therefore use survey weights for descriptive analysis of the veteran sample, and clearly indicate when data is weighted.

Based on our survey, 68% of veterans under 65 identify as Christian. 11% report being special forces qualified. They served on average 7 years, with a minimum of less than one year and a maximum of forty years. 47% served during the Global War on Terror (GWOT).[5] 47% deployed to a combat area. 39% went on a combat mission. 30% saw an ally killed or wounded. 17% report being involuntarily discharged from the military.

Following Miratrix et al (2018), we do not use weights in our regression analyses for three reasons. First, regression analysis focuses on identifying statistical relationships within our veteran sample and between the veteran and demographically matched non-veteran sample, not on descriptive inference to the population. As weights reduce statistical power, including them can obscure such relationships. Second, as both the veteran and non-veteran samples already closely match the population on key characteristics, we expect the analytic clarity from excluding weights to outweigh the cost in efficiency from including them.

3.3 The Dependent Variable: Insurrectionist Sentiments

By "insurrectionist sentiments," we mean willingness to support violent efforts to overturn the results of an election in favor of another, unelected political leader. Here we focus on the specific context of pro-Trump insurrectionist sentiments on display after the 2020 election and on January 6, 2021: support for the use of violence to restore Donald Trump—the loser of the 2020 election—to the presidency, which would require the removal of current president Biden—the winner of the 2020 election—from office. Our primary dependent variable is the insurrectionist sentiments index that

[5] Served during the GWOT is defined as having left the military in 2001 or later.

comprises the following three specific items from our survey measuring different aspects of violent support for pro-Trump.

Stolen measures the strength of respondents' agreement with the statement, "The 2020 election is stolen, and Joe Biden is an illegitimate president." Believing the government to be illegitimate is often thought to be a necessary (even if insufficient) condition for insurrectionist violence against that government. [6]

Force Justified measures the strength of respondents' agreement with the statement, "The use of force is justified to retore Donald Trump to the presidency." This question captures the idea that there is a popular mandate not just to protest the election, but to use violence to overturn the results of the election and have in power a specific alternative candidate. Believing force justified provides a specific set of sufficient conditions to use violence against the illegitimate government.

Personal Force measures the strength of respondents' agreement with the statement, "I would personally use force to restore Donald Trump to the presidency." This question goes beyond whether there are necessary and sufficient conditions for "the people" to act violently against the illegitimate government and captures the idea that the respondent believes not only that force is justified but that they are personally willing to use force to replace the current leader with their preferred, unelected choice.

Importantly, our measures of these variables rely on 5-point Likert scales with neutral midpoints, which circumvents certain problems identified by Westwood et al (2022) that amplify measured support for political violence (e.g. response scales with no midpoint), particularly among inattentive respondents (Peyton, Huber and Coppock 2020). We also investigate for potential random responses using response

[6] Scholars have long seen a popular consensus about the legitimacy of government as a perquisite for the stability of democracy and political violence. See, for example Lipset (1959)and Apter (Apter 1997).

consistency and potential respondent satisficing using duration as a measure of attention below and in the supplement.

The *Insurrectionist Sentiments Index* is the unweighted average of all three factors. The three items are highly correlated, Cronbach alpha a = .87. The index thus captures the strength of the three components on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 capturing those who strongly disagreed and 5 those who strongly agreed with all three component sentiments. This index will be our primary dependent variable for the purposes of analysis for the remainder of the paper.

3.4 Explanatory Variables

As described above, we identified four bundles of factors identified as relevant to explaining radicalization that are plausible drivers of Insurrectionist Sentiments, i.e., support for restoring Trump through violence. These are operationalized below.

Current Political Beliefs

Far-Right Political Conspiracies is an index of three items measuring the degree to which respondent's report believing in conspiracy theories identifying "liberals" or "the deep state" as posing a dire threat to the United States. Our index combines respondent's support for three separate but correlated conspiracy beliefs: (1) the belief, associated with the QAnon movement, that the US government is controlled by a secret cabal of Satan-worshiping pedophiles; (2) the belief, associated with "Great Replacement" ideology, that Democrats are deliberately replacing the current electorate in the United States with more obedience voters from the Third World; and (3) the belief, associated with far-right militia movement, that the US government is intending to declare martial law and jail patriotic dissidents. The three items are highly correlated, with Cronbach alpha a = .81. The index ranges from 1 (strong rejection of all three conspiracies) to 5 (strong belief in all three).

The variable *Affective Polarization* captures the extremity of respondents' partisan feelings toward the Democratic and Republican Parties (Druckman and Levendusky 2019). Our construct focuses specifically on feelings toward Trump versus Biden, clarifying the specific candidates at issue. We construct this variable by subtracting respondents' reported favorability toward current president Biden from their reported favorability toward Donald Trump, resulting in a nine-point scale ranging from strong democratic partisan (-4) to strong republican partisan (4) with non-partisan in the middle (0).

Racial Resentment is a question taken from Kinder and Sanders (Kinder and Sanders 1996) racial resentment scale that measures whether respondent's believe Blacks are unfairly benefiting from "special favors."

In-Service Factors

To capture veteran experience with combat, we create an index variable *Combat Experience* as the average of five binary response items: whether respondent went on combat missions, experienced personal danger, and witnessing the deaths of comrades, enemies, and civilians. The five items are highly correlated, with Cronbach alpha a = .87. We also include the respondent's reported status as commissioned officer (*Officer*), number of years served in the military (*Service Years*), and whether the respondent served during the Global War on Terrorism (*Served during GWOT*), i.e., any time during and after 2001.

Post-Service Factors

We use four separate measures to capture different negative experiences related to military service veterans may have experienced after separation: respondent's reported difficulty re-integrating into civilian life (*Reintegration Trouble*); belief that the sacrifice of service was not worth it (*Disillusioned with Sacrifice*); belief that society does not appreciate the sacrifice made by service members (*Sacrifice Unappreciated*); and being negatively affected by the experience of repeated and

disturbing memories stemming from respondent's time in the military (*PTSD*). Finally, we include a measure of pride in service (*Proud to have Served*). Each variable ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) with the respective sentiment.

General Societal Factors

We include measures for several important factors commonly associated with support for populist leaders like Donald Trump. The variable *Income Insecurity* captures respondents' reported short-term personal economic anxiety, while *Recent Economic Hardship* measures reported extreme financial difficulty in the previous five years. To capture the prominence of religious practice and spirituality in the life of respondents, we created an index (*Religiosity*) comprising the average of responses to three items from the Duke University Religion Index (Koenig and Büssing 2010). The items are correlated with each other, Cronbach alpha a = 0.75. We also include a variable *Childhood Legal Trouble* using respondent's reported experience of "trouble with the law" during childhood to capture the range of factors associated with youth conflict with authority and anti-social, aggressive personality. Finally, *Authoritarianism* comprises the average of responses to a three item measure (Cronbach alpha a = 0.60) used by Oliver and Wood (2014, 959, fn17).

Controls for Confounding Factors

Finally, we include the demographic controls for age, race, gender, education. These four factors were used by [SURVEY FIRM] in the selection of both veteran and non-veteran subjects. After controlling for these selection factors is necessary for inference to the veteran population beyond the survey. We also include a control for party identification to account for the likelihood that support for pro-Trump political violence is more likely among Republicans than Democrats or Independents.

The variables and descriptive statistics for our veteran sample are listed in Table 2.

Table 2. Unweighted Summary Statistics

A. Dependent Variables

		Veteran		Non-Veteran	
Factor	**Range**	**Obs**	**Mean (SD)**	**Obs**	**Mean (SD)**
Election Stolen	[1-5]	841	2.54 (0.05)	815	2.18 (0.05)
Force for Trump Justified	[1-5]	841	1.89 (0.04)	813	1.61 (0.03)
Would Personally Use Force	[1-5]	840	1.82 (0.04)	816	1.49 (0.03)
Insurrection Index	[1-5]	839	2.08 (0.04)	808	1.76 (0.04)

B. Current Political Beliefs

		Veteran		Non-Veteran	
Factor	**Range**	**Obs**	**Mean (SD)**	**Obs**	**Mean (SD)**
Far-Right Conspiracies Index	[1-5]	835	2.58 (0.04)	813	2.55 (0.04)
Affective Polarization	[-4-4]	836	0.39 (0.10)	808	-0.25 (0.10)
Racial Resentment	[1-5]	841	3.43 (0.05)	818	3.10 (0.05)

C. Military Service and Post-Service Variables

		Veteran		Non-Veteran	
Factor	**Range**	**Obs**	**Mean (SD)**	**Obs**	**Mean (SD)**
Served during GWOT	[0, 1]	843	0.44 (0.02)	--	-- (--)
Officer	[0, 1]	830	0.06 (0.01)	--	-- (--)
Combat Experience Index	[1- 2]	831	1.34 (0.01)	--	-- (--)
Number of Years in Service	[1 - 40]	834	7.44 (0.24)	--	-- (--)
Proud to have Served	[1-5]	838	4.60 (0.03)	--	-- (--)
Reintegration Trouble	[1-5]	838	2.64 (0.05)	--	-- (--)
Disillusioned with Sacrifice	[1-5]	839	2.14 (0.04)	--	-- (--)
Sacrificed Unappreciated	[1-5]	840	3.78 (004)	--	-- (--)
PTSD	[1-5]	840	2.35 (0.05)	--	-- (--)

D. General Social Factors

		Veteran		Non-Veteran	
Factor	**Range**	***Obs***	**Mean (SD)**	**Obs**	**Mean (SD)**
Recent Economic Difficulty	[0, 1]	843	0.14 (0.01)	818	0.10 (0.01)
Income Insecurity	[1-5]	842	2.68 (0.05)	818	2.48 (0.05)
Religiosity	[1-6.7]	843	3.08 (0.05)	820	2.97 (0.06)
Childhood Legal Trouble	[1-5]	841	1.97 (0.05)	816	1.72 (0.04)
Authoritarianism	[1-2]	835	1.61 (0.01)	816	1.56 (0.01)

E. Controls for Confounding Factors

		Veteran		Non-Veteran	
Factor	**Range**	***Obs***	**Mean (SD)**	**Obs**	**Mean (SD)**
Age	[19-64]	843	48.96 (0.40)	820	47.29 (0.40)
Race/Ethnicity = White	[0, 1]	843	0.70	820	0.67
Race/Ethnicity = Black	[0, 1]	843	0.14	820	0.13
Race/Ethnicity = Hispanic	[0, 1]	843	0.09	820	0.11
Race/Ethnicity = Other	[0, 1]	843	0.06	820	0.09
Education < BA	[0, 1]	843	0.66	820	0.66
Gender =Male	[0, 1]	843	0.80	820	0.81
Party ID = Democratic	[0, 1]	843	0.35	820	0.45
Party ID = Independent	[0, 1]	843	0.16	820	0.17
Party ID = Republican	[0, 1]	843	0.49	820	0.38

4.0 RESULTS

In this section we present the results of our analyses. We begin by describing the prevalence of pro-Trump insurrectionist sentiments among Veterans, followed by a series of tests of factors that explain that prevalence. Finally, we evaluate whether insurrectionist sentiments and associated factors differ between veterans and demographically matched non-veterans.

4.1 Insurrectionist Sentiments Among Veterans

What does our sample tell us about the distribution of insurrectionist sentiments in the broader population of veterans under 65? We assess the distribution of veteran agreements with Stolen, Force Justified, and Personal Force, as well as the Insurrection Sentiments Index, using survey weights that allow for inference from the sample of veterans to the veteran population.

As Table 3 below shows, 11% of the sample – extrapolating to an estimated 1.1 million veterans under 65—agree that force is justified to restore Donald Trump to the presidency. Even the most extreme measure —expressing a personal willingness to use force to restore Trump—elicits 9% agreement among U.S. veterans, and the belief that the 2020 election was stolen and the current president illegitimate elicits a remarkable 33% agreement. 16% -- translating into 1.6 million veterans -- scored high on the Insurrectionist Sentiments Index, our summary measure that averages agreement on Stolen, Force, and Personal Force. The proportion of veterans *ambivalent* about their agreement with these measures of insurrectionist sentiments to include personal willingness to use force is sizable: between 17 to 20% of the sample – the equivalent of an estimated nearly 1.7 to 2 million veterans.

Table 3. Distribution of Insurrectionist Sentiments among Veterans (Weighted)

Question	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree
2020 Election Stolen/Biden Illegitimate	33%	17%	50%
Force Justified to Restore Trump	11%	20%	69%
I would use Force to Restore Trump	9%	19%	72%
Insurrectionist Sentiments Index	16%	18%	68%

Note: The Insurrectionist Sentiments Index is an index of all three insurrectionist sentiments variables. To present the scale in this table, we round to the nearest whole number: Agree is values of 4 or 5, Neither Agree or Disagree is 3, and Disagree is values of 1 or 2.

As Table 4 below shows, the prevalence of insurrectionist sentiments among veterans is not significantly affected by service branch, rank, service before and during the "global war on terror" (to capture issues related to Iraq and Afghanistan), and the number of years spent in the military.

Table 4. Percent Veterans with High Insurrectionist Sentiments by Category (Weighted)

Factor	Value	Percent with High Insurrectionist Sentiments
Service Branch	*Army*	16%
	Navy	13%
	Marines	21%
	Air Force	17%
	Coast Guard	7%
Rank	*Enlisted*	17%
	Officer	8%
Service Period	*Served before 2001*	14%
	Served 2001 or After	18%
Years in Service	*Less than 4 years*	18%
	4-8 years	13%
	9-12 years	28%
	13-20 years	15%
	More than 20 years	14%
Overall	*Veterans*	16%
	Matched Non-Veterans	9%

Note: To present the Insurrectionist Index in this table, we round the index to the nearest whole number. "High" insurrectionist sentiments is defined as being 4 or higher on the rounded index.

Even with the survey's margin of error (4.86%), the estimated proportion of veterans with strong Insurrectionist Sentiments based on the Index could be as low as 12% but also as high as 22%. That means anywhere from 1.2 to 2.2 million veterans under 65 at least somewhat agree that the 2020 election was stolen from Trump, that force is justified to restore Trump to the presidency, and that they would personally use force to do so. This is disturbing number. It indicates significant support in today's

veteran community for insurrectionist violence of the kind displayed in the attack on the US Capitol on January 6th.

4.2 What Factors Predict Insurrectionist Sentiments Among Veterans?

Our survey questions allow us to measure the relative weight of different potential explanations drawn from the literature on extremism in the military and political extremism in general. For this assessment, we conduct separate regression analyses for each explanatory variable, controlling for the same set of demographic and partisanship factors and comparing the relative magnitudes of the effects of different explanatory variables on change in insurrectionist sentiments. We do not combine all the variables into one model to avoid bias associated with conditioning on post-treatment variables (Acharya, Blackwell, and Sen 2016, 512; Westreich and Greenland 2013). All continuous predictors are standardized using veteran means and centered at mean = 0 to facilitate comparison. This approach allows us to draw descriptive inferences about the relative importance of each explanatory factor (the average treatment effect or ATE) and identify overall patterns in the types of factors that have more relative weight than others. The results are presented in Table 5 below.

Table 5. Factors Associated with Insurrectionist Sentiments

Current Political Beliefs	B	SE	Sig	B as % of DV Range
Conspiracy Index	0.75	(0.03)	***	19%
Affective Polarization	0.88	(0.05)	***	22%
Racial Resentment	0.39	(0.04)	***	10%
Military Service and Post-Service Variables	B	SE	Sig	
Officer = 1	-0.02	(0.16)		0%
Served During GWoT = 1	-0.01	(0.11)		0%
Combat Experience Index	0.15	(0.04)	***	4%
Years Served	-0.07	(0.04)	+	-2%
Proud to have Served	-0.06	(0.04)		-2%
Reintegration Trouble	0.22	(0.04)	***	6%
Disillusioned with Sacrifice	0.30	(0.04)	***	7%
Sacrifice Unappreciated	0.21	(0.04)	***	5%
PTSD	0.25	(0.04)	***	6%
General Social Factors	B	SE	Sig	
Recent Economic Difficulty = 1	0.58	(0.11)	***	15%
Income Insecurity	0.26	(0.04)	***	7%
Religiosity	0.15	(0.04)	***	4%
Childhood Trouble with the Law	0.25	(0.04)	***	6%
Authoritarianism	0.11	(0.04)	**	3%

Note: Results from separate OLS regressions (unweighted) of each factor on the Insurrectionist Sentiments Index. Continuous covariates standardized using veteran means and centered at mean=0. Standardized variables are interpreted as the Average Treatment Effect of a one standard deviation change in the covariate on Insurrection Sentiments Index. All models control for age, sex, education, race, and party identification.

The results show that variables associated with current political beliefs are the strongest individual correlates with insurrectionist sentiments among veterans. For every standard deviation increase in believing in right-wing conspiracies, Insurrectionist Sentiments increases by 0.75 points (19%). For high affective polarization favoring Trump, the increase is 0.88 points (22%) and for racial resentment toward blacks and minorities 0.39 points (10%).

Of the military experiences included in the analysis, only the combat experience index, which captures exposure to combat and combat-related fatalities, has a statistically significant effect on Insurrectionist Sentiments, by 0.15 points (4%) for every standard deviation. The effect of serving as an officer and serving more years in the military is statistically indistinguishable from zero.

Post-service factors, including reported PTSD and negative attitudes by veterans regarding their military service, however, are significant. A one standard deviation increase in the belief that society does

not appreciate their sacrifice increases Insurrectionist Sentiments by an average of 0.21 points (5%), while believing their sacrifices served no good purpose increases it 0.22 points (6%). Trouble reintegrating increases Insurrectionist Sentiments on average 0.30 points (8%), and PTSD an average of 0.25 points (6%).

Finally, the five general social factors examined are all statistically associated with increasing Insurrectionist Sentiments. Reporting having experienced financial difficulty in the past five years increases Insurrectionist Sentiments by 0.58 points (15%), a one standard deviation increases in economic concern increases it by 0.26 points (7%), religiosity by 0.15 points (4%), childhood trouble with the law 0.24 points (6%), and authoritarianism by 0.11 points (3%).

While there are thus many factors that increase the strength of insurrectionist sentiments among veterans, current political beliefs have the strongest effect on increasing Insurrectionist Sentiments by between 10% and 22%. The only other factor that comes close is experience of economic hardship (15%). Factors related to military service and post-service attitudes toward military and service among veterans also contribute to higher levels of insurrectionist sentiments, but less so.

These findings reinforce other recent studies of political violence. For example, Armaly and Enders, investigating support for political violence in the general population and using different measures and research design, also find conspiracy beliefs, religiosity, racial resentment, and authoritarianism to be positively associated with support for political violence (Armaly and Enders 2022, 8, fig. 3). Future researchers should continue to explore the importance of these variables and their association to political violence.

4.3 Are Insurrectionist Sentiments More Prevalent among Veterans than among Matched Civilians?

Our survey includes a sample of non-veteran adults matched to our veteran sample on the four demographic factors of age, gender, education, and race. This allows us to draw comparisons to clarify the relative degree of insurrectionist sentiments among veterans under age 65 to those in society at large.

Descriptive Statistics

The comparison in the distribution of responses is striking. The prevalence of insurrectionist sentiments is significantly higher – about 78% higher – among US military veterans under age 65 than demographically comparable civilian adults without military service experience.

Figure 1 below compares veterans and demographically matched non-veterans on the strength of insurrectionist sentiments index (with individual scores rounded to the nearest whole number).[7] The distribution shows that veterans are more likely to express agreement (and especially strong agreement) than matched non-veterans, more likely to express ambivalence, and less likely to express strong disagreement:

[7] A closer comparison of the distributions of responses on the insurrectionist sentiments suggests that veterans being more likely to hold insurrectionist index holds even within demographic subgroups, including age, education, race, and party cohorts; see Appendix.

Figure 1. Comparing Veterans and Non-Veterans on the Insurrection Index
Fractional scores rounded to the nearest whole number. 1 indicates strong disagreement; 3 indicates neither agreement nor disagreement, 5 indicates strong agreement. Proportions based on survey weights.

While 16% of veterans express high insurrectionist sentiments—defined as a 4 or a 5 on the Insurrectionist Index, this is true of only 9% of non-veterans. This means veterans are 78% more likely than demographically matched non-veterans to express these sentiments.

Estimating the Effect of Veterancy

The goal of this analysis is to assess whether prior U.S. military experience (veterancy) increases the risk of insurrectionist sentiments. We know from above that veterans are more likely to possess insurrectionist sentiments, but this may be a consequence of demographic factors, especially partisanship: in our sample veterans are more Republican than non-veterans (49% to 38%, see Table 2).

To isolate the effect of veterancy, we use unweighted OLS regression to compare violent support for Trump between our veteran and demographically matched non-veteran samples. Our model seeks to estimate the average effect of veterancy on Insurrectionist Sentiments while controlling for demographics,

party identification and childhood trouble with the law that might obscure the effect of veterancy because they explain joining the military, insurrectionist sentiments, or both.

The results, presented in Table **6** below, the average treatment effect (ATE) of veterancy on the insurrectionist sentiments index is positive and statistically significant (B=0.20, p<.001), even when controlling for important confounders like party identification and childhood trouble with the law.

Table 6. Effect of Veteran on Insurrectionist Sentiments Index

		B	SE	Sig
	Veteran	**0.20**	**(0.05)**	*******
Party ID	Independent (using Democrat as baseline)	0.49	(0.07)	***
Party ID	Republican	1.09	(0.07)	***
Race	Black, non-Hispanic (using non-Hispanic White as baseline)	-0.03	(0.07)	
Race	Other, non-Hispanic	0.05	(0.15)	
Race	Hispanic	0.04	(0.08)	
Race	2+, non-Hispanic	-0.12	(0.13)	
Race	Asian, non-Hispanic	0.07	(0.16)	
Gender	Male	-0.05	(0.06)	
Age	30-44 (using Age 18-29 as baseline)	-0.23	(0.11)	*
Age	45-59	-0.35	(0.11)	**
Age	60+	-0.44	(0.11)	***
Education	< BA	0.37	(0.06)	***
Potholes	Childhood Law Trouble	0.17	(0.02)	***
	Constant	1.72	(0.13)	***
	N	1641		
	R^2	0.291		

Note: Unweighted OLS with robust standard errors. Standard errors in parentheses. Variables not standardized.
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

How robust are our findings? The most important challenge to our conclusions is the potential for omitted unobserved variables that explain both veterancy and violent support for Trump such that, if included in the model, they would reduce the veterancy effect to zero.

We use sensitivity analysis approach developed by Cinelli and Hazlett (2020) to estimate how strong a confounder would have to be to reduce the effect of veterancy to statistical unimportance and places bounds on such a potential confounder using as a benchmark factors we do observe and are already included in the model. The approach does not tell us whether such a confounder exists, let alone what it

might be. It does tell us how strong such a confounder would have to be in relation to variables whose impact on the treatment we *do* know as a baseline for assessment.

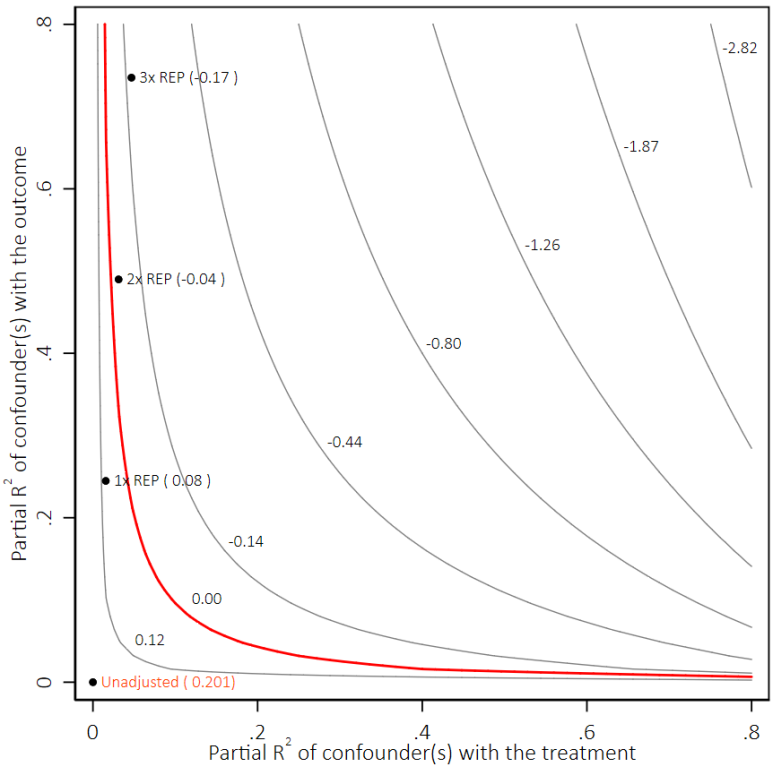

Figure 2. Comparison of Strongest Known Confounders to Nullification of Results Plot shows effect estimates for veteran on insurrectionist sentiments at varying degrees of hypothetical confounding using multiples of observed covariates as benchmarks. Red line indicates boundary beyond which confounding reduces effect of veteran to zero.

Figure 2 above presents the result of the sensitivity analysis. The plot shows the unadjusted coefficient for veteran (bottom left corner), the boundary at which the effect of veteran is reduced to zero (red line), and the estimated coefficient for veteran in the presence of a hypothetical confounder between one and three times the size of the observed confounder of being Republican vs. Democrat included in each model.

An unobserved confounder with twice the effect of Republican on pro-Trump insurrectionist sentiments nullifies the result – but is also very difficult to imagine. To be clear, such a powerful confounder would need to outperform Republican by two times in predicting both being a veteran and holding pro-Trump insurrectionist sentiments. This is hard to imagine for two reasons: (1) We know that that the odds of being a Democrat and holding insurrectionist sentiments is extremely low, which we can see in the graphic since Republican is traveling up the left-hand side; and (2) "Republican" already stands in for a host of factors and so the imagined more powerful unobserved confounder would need to be independent of those factors as well.

Hence, our sensitivity analysis gives us strong grounds to claim that the observed effect of veterancy on violent support for Trump is most likely real and requires explanation. Nevertheless, the important role of identifying as Republican bares further scrutiny. We address this question in the subsequent section.

Is the Relationship between Veterancy and Insurrectionist Sentiments limited to Republicans?

Our analysis finds evidence that (1) that veterancy influences insurrectionist sentiments, even when accounting for party identification, and that (2) being a Republican is a strong predictor of insurrectionist sentiments among both veterans and non-veterans. In other words, is the positive coefficient on veterancy being driven largely by Republican veterans? Is the greater prevalence of insurrectionist sentiments among veterans versus non-veterans because veterans are more likely to be Republican?

To test this, we repeat the previous analysis but now interacting veterancy and whether or not the subject identified as Republican versus non-Republicans. If veterancy uniquely affected insurrectionist sentiments for Republicans, we would see a positive and statistically significant coefficient on the interaction term for Veteran and Republican. The analysis, however, finds a negative coefficient that is

not statistically significant (B= -0.09, *p*=.345).[8] The effect of veterancy does not appear to be due to Republican veterans.

Figure 3 below visualizes the effect of the interaction on predicted insurrectionist sentiments and shows that veterancy intensifies insurrectionist sentiments regardless of party and may, in fact, have a stronger effect on non-Republicans.

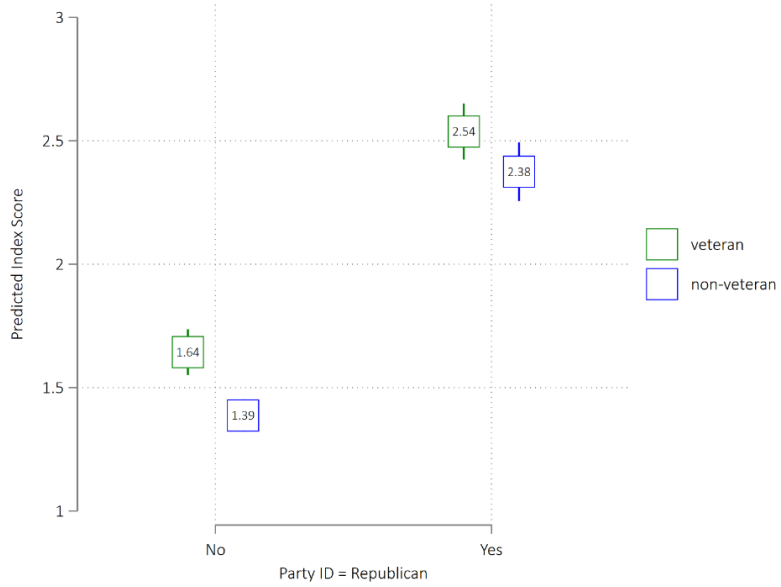

Figure 3. Average Predicted Insurrectionist Sentiments Score for Veterans and Non-Veterans by Republican Party ID with 95% Confidence Intervals. Results from OLS regressions with veteran * Republican interaction and controlling for age, sex, education, race, and childhood trouble with the law.

4.4 Why Are Veterans More Prone to Insurrectionist Sentiments?

Our analysis has thus far shown two things: (1) that veterans are substantially more likely than comparable non-veterans to hold insurrectionist sentiments, and (2) that veterans who possess certain characteristics, including certain political beliefs, are more likely than veterans who do not possess those

[8] Full regression results are in the supplement, Table S3.

characteristics to hold insurrectionist sentiments. One possible explanation for why veterans are more likely to hold insurrectionist sentiments, then, is that veterans are more likely to possess those political beliefs, and possessing those beliefs is what leads to higher insurrectionist sentiments.

Two of our examined political beliefs stand out as candidates:

First is *right-wing conspiracy beliefs.* The prevalence of conspiracy theories among veterans has received attention in recent years, with numerous articles detailing how veterans have become susceptible to conspiracies like QAnon (Thompson 2020). This has led the U.S. Congress Committee on Veterans' Affairs to address the problem of susceptibility of veterans to online conspiracies (US Congress, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs 2020). One hypothesis, then, for why veterans are more susceptible to insurrectionist sentiments is that veterans are more susceptible to right-wing conspiracy thinking, and it is those conspiracy beliefs that cause higher insurrectionist sentiments in the veteran population.

Second is *racial resentment.* Nteta and Tarsi examine whether military service predicts racial resentment and find that "white veterans express more negative views of blacks relative to white civilians and that white veterans in the [all-volunteer force] generation exhibit the most negative views of blacks" (Nteta and Tarsi 2016, 362). Thus, a second hypothesis for why veterans are more susceptible to insurrectionist sentiments is that veterans are more likely to be racially resentful, and that racial resentment causes insurrectionist sentiments.

Both propositions are supported in the data. Veterans report greater conspiracy beliefs and racial resentment on average than non-veterans (See Table 2, p. 17).

Can either of these hypotheses fully account for why veterans are more likely than non-veterans to possess insurrectionist sentiments? If so, then these societal factors rather than military experience itself are the main source of insurrectionist sentiments.

This is a mediation question. The goal of this analysis is to establish whether there exists a direct casual effect for veterancy on insurrectionist sentiments that is not completely mediated by racial resentment or right-wing conspiracy beliefs. In other words, we are asking if the effect of veterancy on insurrectionist sentiments can be completely explained by racial resentment or right-wing conspiracy beliefs; if this were the case, then an effective strategy for eliminating insurrectionist sentiments in the veteran population would be to target the mediator. Figure 4 below shows causal diagram guiding the mediation analysis.

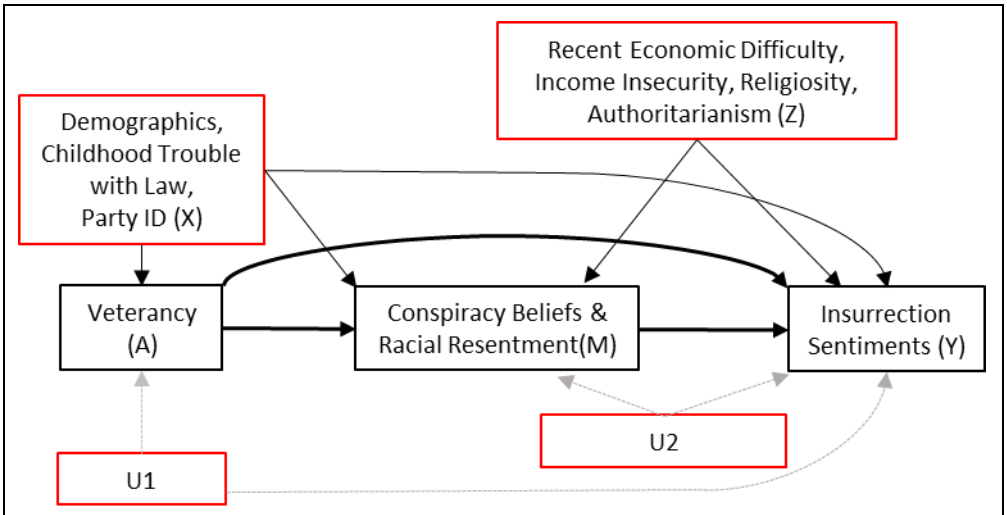

Figure 4. Causal Diagram for Mediation Analysis Red outlines indicate possible confounders. U1 and U2 are possible unobserved confounders. Dotted lines indicate unobserved effects.

To estimate the effect of the mediator (conspiracy beliefs and racial resentment) on the total effect of the treatment (veterancy), we use the "controlled direct effect" approach, which sets the value of the mediator to a constant level while varying the treatment and estimating the effect of this variation on the outcome and use the sequential-g estimation approach developed by Acharya et al (2016). This tells not the precise degree of mediation, but whether the total effect is completely mediated or not. If not totally mediated, this means that the treatment (veterancy) retains an effect not accounted for by the mediated pathway. The Average Controlled Direct Effect (ACDE) is across all the observations, not just

one individual, and closely corresponds to a ceteris paribus definition of a direct effect, in this case the effect of veterancy on insurrection sentiments controlling for racial resentment or right-wing conspiracy theories.

We assess the direct effect of veterancy holding constant racial resentment, conspiracy theories, and both combined. In addition to the previously included controls, we also include two measures of economic insecurity, religiosity, and authoritarianism as confounding intermediate variables.[9] Figure 5 below plots the ACDE of veterancy with our different mediators, along with the Total Effect of veterancy for reference.

[9] For this analysis, all variables must be categorized as either pre- or post-treatment. Because religiosity and authoritarianism are asked about in the present tense, and because both variables may be affected by military experience, we believe these variables are best categorized as post-treatment. The supplemental includes an alternate specification where they are treated instead as pre-treatment.

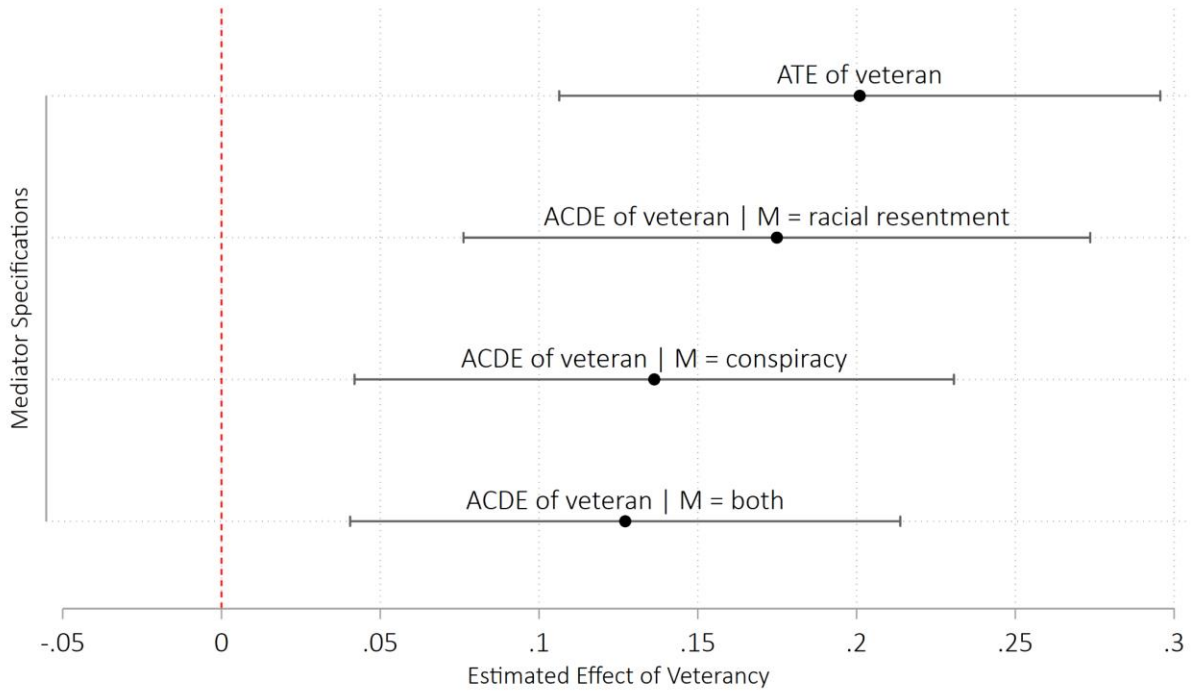

Figure 5. Average Controlled Direct Effect of Veteran by Mediator. *Note*: Total Effect is the total effect of veterancy. ACDE is the direct effect of veterancy, not mediated by Racial Resentment, Conspiracy, or Both, depending on the row. If confidence intervals overlapped with zero, we would not be able to reject the null hypothesis that the effect of veterancy is entirely mediated by the mediator tested; this is not the case in any of these tests, so we can conclude that veterancy has a direct effect that is unmediated by these specifications of the mediator.

First, veteran always has a direct effect across all three specifications of the mediating causal pathway. This means that there is something about veterancy, holding conspiracy beliefs, racial resentment, or the combination of the two constant, that still encourages people to hold insurrectionist beliefs. We stress test this finding with our subsequent sensitivity analysis of these results.

Second, even accounting for both mediators, most of the effect of veterancy remains (roughly 65%). However, even though the direct effect of veterancy declines when a mediator is incorporated into the model, the confidence intervals always overlap the total effect of veterancy, suggesting that conspiracy beliefs and racial resentment may not mediate the effect of veterancy on insurrectionist sentiments at all. Hence, even if we accept the plausible logic that veterancy has attributes that may encourage far right political conspiracy beliefs and racial resentment, the evidence shows that these casual

pathways do not comprise the total effect of prior military service on insurrectionist sentiments. In other words, even reducing racial resentment and conspiracy beliefs to zero would not eliminate the causal effect of veterancy on insurrectionist sentiments.

Sensitivity Analysis on Whether Veterancy is Fully Mediated

We also confirm the robustness of our finding that veterancy is not fully mediated by conspiracy or racial resentment through sensitivity analysis, which tells us how our estimated ACDE would change under the violation of required assumptions for mediation analysis (the assumption of sequential ignorability). The results are presented in Figure 6 below.

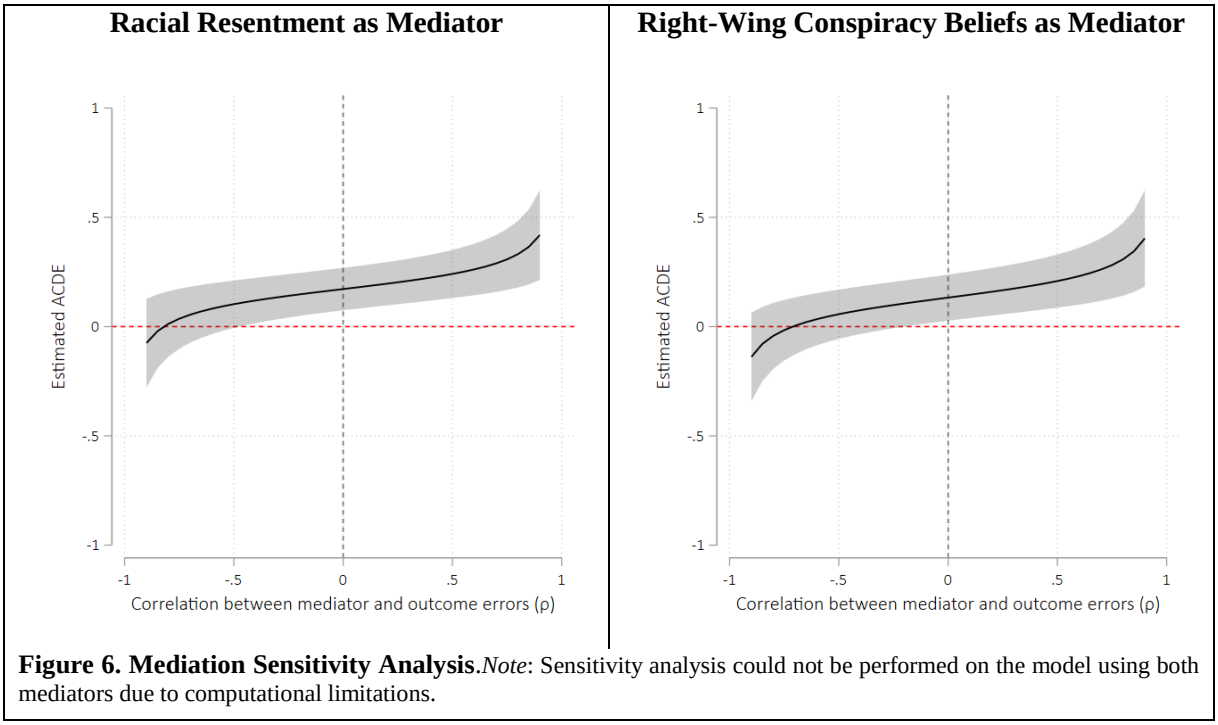

Figure 6. Mediation Sensitivity Analysis.*Note*: Sensitivity analysis could not be performed on the model using both mediators due to computational limitations.

Overall, sensitivity analysis shows that a hypothetical confounder is unlikely to nullify these results. In Figure 7 above, the black line shows how the estimated ACDE would be at various levels of correlation between the mediator and outcome errors (i.e., the variation the model does not explain), while the gray bands show the 95% confidence intervals. Since our results are nullified only when the

confidence interval touches "zero," we can see that this would happen only when the correlation is negative. In other words, our results would be nullified only when a hypothetical unobserved confounder would be inversely related to the mediator and outcome variables. Such a confounder is implausible in our case because this would mean that the hypothetical confounder variable would predict more conspiracy belief but less insurrectionist sentiments or vice versa. The Figure 7 also shows that when the conspiracy beliefs and insurrectionist sentiments are positively correlated, the unobserved confounded would intensify the ACDE of veteran.

Having established our findings as robust, we conclude that the effect of veterancy on insurrectionist sentiments is not entirely a function of racial resentment or right-wing conspiracy beliefs within the veteran population. There is something else about being a veteran, independent of these two factors, which increases the veteran population's propensity for pro-Trump insurrection. Thus, while we cannot completely rule out the possibility that our results are vulnerable to confounding, we have strong reasons to assess our findings as robust. This suggests more needs to be done to understand the impact of military service and veteran experience on support for political violence.

4.5 Robustness to Disengaged Responders

Westwood et al (2022) challenge survey research on political violence, arguing that problems question design and inattentive respondents introduce an upward bias that exaggerates estimates of support substantially. The two problems are interrelated: if item scales are designed with only increasing levels of support, answering at random would inflate support. Because all of our violence-related questions use balanced Likert scales with a neutral midpoint as recommended by Westwood et al (2022, 5), our study avoids bias due to question design. Moreover, [SURVEY FIRM], who fielded our survey, applied data cleaning rules based on other commonly used measures of problematic responders (e.g., Curran 2016), excluding respondents who provided responses indicative of speeding through the survey,

skipping survey questions, and/or straight-lining responses to grid questions ([SURVEY FIRM]'s overall methodology is described in detail in the supplement). Nevertheless, disengaged responders could still introduce bias through random responses.

To test for the potential for bias due to disengaged responders, we take advantage of two questions asked in sequence, both of which asked respondents whether they believed the 2020 election had been stolen using different wording and reversed scales. We treat inconsistent responders -- people who answered that the election was stolen in the first question but agreed it had not been stolen in the second question -- as a proxy for disengagement. In the supplement, we additionally test for disengagement based on duration of survey response times.

Table 7 below examines insurrectionist sentiments among the engaged and disengaged subpopulations.

Table 7. Effect of Disengagement on Insurrectionist Sentiments

	Veterans			**Non-Veterans**		
	Obs	Mean	% High	*Obs*	Mean	% High
Full Sample	843	2.08	15%	820	1.76	8%
Inconsistent Respondents	61	2.70	34%	45	2.08	13%
Full Sample without Inconsistent Respondents	782	2.04	14%	775	1.74	8%

Of the 1,663 subjects in our survey, approximately 6% (7% of veterans and 5.5% of non-veterans) qualified as inattentive. Consistent with Westwood et al's (2022) concern, the results show that the "disengaged" population reports greater support for insurrectionist sentiments than the full sample, which may be because they are answering randomly and are more likely to select aggressive responses by chance. Nevertheless, the 6% we observe is a far smaller proportion than Westwood et al (2022, 4) report for their survey studies (they ranged between 19 to 31% of samples). Excluding these populations from our sample does not significantly alter the distribution of insurrectionist sentiments for either veterans or

non-veterans. In the supplement, we show that excluding the disengaged population also does not affect the substantive results.

5. CONCLUSION

Overall, this study provides credible evidence that insurrectionist sentiments are greater among US military veterans than their civilian, non-veteran counterparts and that the veteran experience during and after military service has a causal effect on the outcome.

Our study shows that remarkable numbers of US veterans under age 65 likely hold high levels of pro-Trump insurrectionist sentiments, both in absolute terms and relative to their civilian counterparts. Results also find a clear hierarchy among the 3 bundles of explanations commonly thought to account for extremism in the military. Specifically, the primary predictors are related to political beliefs rather than experiences related to combat trauma and pre/post service troubles. While the other bundles have some specific factors that are associated with high levels of insurrectionist sentiments, particularly childhood trouble with the law and economic distress, political beliefs are the strongest, most reliable predictors. There is little evidence that experience in Afghanistan and the global war on terrorism in general is a driving factor. However, although societal factors drive insurrectionist sentiments and those societal factors are more common among veterans, these factors do not wholly account for the greater prevalence of insurrectionist sentiments among veterans. The evidence points to both society and military experience, rather than either alone.

Hence, our survey makes substantial contributions to knowledge about extremism in the military and understanding the potential for political violence among US veterans. Nonetheless, it is important to note the study's limitations. First, our study is observational and not an experimental design. Hence, we cannot control for unobserved factors through random assignment which limits our ability to assign exact

causal weights. Second, the causal pathways are highly complex and occur over long periods of time, making it difficult to isolate the effects of causal sequences from childhood, through military service, and reintegration into society. Qualitative and ethnographic approaches may be useful complements to survey research on this topic. Third, our study heavily focuses on far-right grievances that may produce support for political violence. Future research should vary the political contexts to identify commonalities and differences among casual mechanisms.

Our findings also have broader implications. The greater existence of insurrectionist sentiments among veterans than civilians highlight the long-standing concerns about the gap between the military and society. Since the coming of the All-Volunteer Force in the 1970s, the military has become less representative of the American political landscape. Our study shows that these changing political dynamics may be having unintended consequences for the role of the military in American democracy.

Indeed, Arceneaux and Truex (2022, 7–10) found greater support for political violence among Democrats than Republicans, though their measure captures general support independent of a specific political context such as restoring Trump to the presidency via force and so it is not surprising that our findings are reversed. The clear implication is that context matters, but also that grievances on the left of the political spectrum also have the potential to engender support for political violence among Democratic veterans. Democrats are clearly in the minority among veterans but would pose no less a threat if radicalized.

Most critically, our results speak to the importance of further research to understand the evolving relationship between military service and violent political sentiments. The twentieth century has seen political uprisings where individuals with prior military service have played significant roles. Knowing more about the relevant conditions and mechanisms of the involvement by individuals with military service in contentious and violent politics would help better understand the relationship between the military and society and so improve our security while maintaining the foundations of democracy. Even

as more research is needed to better understand the complex interactions at work, policy makers should consider the implications for military recruitment and post-service policies.

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Understanding the Effect of Military Service on Support for Political Violence

Supplemental Information

Last Updated: December 16, 2022

1. SURVEY DESIGN, DATA PROCESSING AND WEIGHTING PROCEDURE

The Veteran Survey was conducted by [a survey firm] on behalf of the authors. The following section details the survey design, data processing, and weighting procedures used in fielding the survey and preparing the data.

Sampling

Two independent samples were selected from [the survey firm's] nation panel for this study:

- A national sample of veterans ages 18-64
- A national sample of non-veterans 18-64 whose key demographic measures (age, race/Hispanic ethnicity, education, and gender) were distributed the same as the veteran sample

The two samples were selected from the national panel using sampling strata based on race/ethnicity, age, education, gender (48 sampling strata in total). The 48 sampling strata are constructed by Race/Ethnicity (NH Whites plus Other and 2+ Races/NH Blacks/Hispanic) x Age (18-34/35-44/45-54/55-64) x Education (Less than Some College/ Bachelors+) x Gender (M/F).

The Veteran and Nonveteran samples use the same 48 sampling strata and CPS Veteran benchmark. The size of the selected sample per sampling stratum is determined by the population distribution for each stratum. In addition, sample selection takes into account expected differential survey completion rates by demographic groups so that the set of panel members with a completed interview for a study is a representative sample of the target population. If panel household has one more than one active adult panel member, only one adult in the household is eligible for selection (random within-household sampling).

For veterans, the national panel sample was supplemented with respondents from a nonprobability online opt-in panel. To help to reduce potential bias in the nonprobability sample, Lucid attempted to balance the nonprobability respondent sample by age, race and ethnicity, gender, and education.

Field

In total [the survey firm] collected 1,663 interviews by web mode: veterans from December 16 through January 4 and non-veterans from December 16 to January 20.

Response Rate Reporting for National Panel Veteran Sample

- Weighted AAPOR RR3 Recruitment rate: 19.1%
- Weighted Household retention rate: 75.0%
- Survey completion rate: 23.3%
- Weighted AAPOR RR3 cumulative response rate: 3.3%

Response Rate Reporting for National Panel Non-Veteran Sample

- Weighted AAPOR RR3 Recruitment rate: 19.1%
- Weighted Household retention rate: 75.0%
- Survey completion rate: 26.6%
- Weighted AAPOR RR3 cumulative response rate: 3.8%

Gaining Cooperation of National Panelists for the Study

To encourage study cooperation, [the survey firm] sent email reminders to sampled web-mode panelists. Panelists were offered the cash equivalent of $3 for completing the survey.

Data processing

[The survey firm] delivered a fully labeled data file of respondent survey data and demographic data for the research team.

[The survey firm] applied cleaning rules to the survey data for quality control by removing survey responses in the main study interview questions from non-eligible respondents. These respondents provided responses indicative of speeding through the survey, skipping survey questions, and/or straight-lining responses to grid questions.

- Respondents were considered speeders if the web respondent completed the interview in less than one-third the median duration.
- Respondents were considered skippers if the web-respondent skipped more than 50% of questions asked.
- A respondent was considered a straight-liner if the web-respondent straight-lined responses on every grid question the respondent was shown.

These respondents flagged for any of speeding, skipping, or straight-lining, were not counted toward the total number of interviews (i.e., they were excluded from the sample).

Statistical Weighting

Using a different approach for each, [the survey firm] produced weights for the two set of samples in this study:

1. Non-veterans age 18-64, weighted to look like CPS vets age 18-64 (n=820 national panelist completes)
2. Veterans age 18-64, weighted to look like CPS vets age 18-64 (n=319 national panelist completes; n=524 non-probability completes)

Statistical Weighting for the Probability National Panelists

Among the probability cases in this study, statistical weights for the study respondents were calculated using *panel base sampling weights* to start.

Panel base sampling weights for all sampled housing units are computed as the inverse of probability of selection from the National Panel Frame or address-based sample. The sample design and recruitment protocol for the National Panel involves subsampling of initial non-respondent housing units. These subsampled non-respondent housing units are selected for an in-person follow-up. The subsample of housing units that are selected for the nonresponse follow-up (NRFU) have their panel base sampling weights inflated by the inverse of the subsampling rate. The base sampling weights are further adjusted to account for unknown eligibility and nonresponse among eligible housing units. The household-level nonresponse adjusted weights are then post-stratified to external counts for number of households obtained from the Current Population Survey. Then, these household-level post-stratified weights are assigned to each eligible adult in every recruited household. Furthermore, a person-level nonresponse adjustment accounts for nonresponding adults within a recruited household.

Finally, panel weights are raked to external population totals associated with age, sex, education, race/Hispanic ethnicity, housing tenure, telephone status, and Census Division. The external population totals are obtained from the Current Population Survey. The weights adjusted to the external population totals are the *final panel weights*.

Panel Weighting Variables & the Variable Categories

- **Age:** 18-24, 25-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-64, and 65+
- **Gender:** Male and Female
- **Census Division:** New England, Middle Atlantic, East North Central, West North Central, South Atlantic, East South Central, West South Central, Mountain, and Pacific
- **Race/Ethnicity:** Non-Hispanic White, Non-Hispanic Black, Hispanic, and Non-Hispanic Other
- **Education:** Less than High School, High School/GED, Some College, and BA and Above
- **Housing Tenure:** Home Owner and Other
- **Household phone status:** Cell Phone-only, Dual User, and Landline-only/Phoneless
- **Age x Gender:** 18-34 Male, 18-34 Female, 35-49 Male, 35-49 Female, 50-64 Male, 50-64 Female, 65+ Male, and 65+ Female
- **Age x Race/Ethnicity:** 18-34 Non-Hispanic White, 18-34 All Other, 35-49 Non-Hispanic White, 35-49 All Other, 50-64 All Other, 50-64 All Other, 65+ Non-Hispanic White, and 65+ All Other

Again, for the probability cases in this study, *study-specific base sampling weights* developed to adjust for unequal selection probabilities from the National Panel, differential nonresponse across subpopulations, and frame coverage limitations. All these weighting adjustments are applied to the final panel weights described above.

The probability sample for this study is selected from the National Panel using sampling strata (see the description of the sampling strata for this study earlier in this report). Sample selection takes into account the expected differential survey completion rates across these strata based on average completion rates in previous surveys. This sample selection based on expected nonresponse ensures a more representative final sample of completed interviews. However, the net result of the sampling design is an unequal selection probability that varies depending on the strata a respondent represents. Study-specific base weights are computed as the product of the final panel weights and the inverse of the probabilities of selection under the study sample design.

The final stage of weighting occurs after data is collected, and it is here where we have separate approach for the sample of *18-64 non-veterans*, which is made up of all probability-based sample, *18-64 veterans*, which is made up both probability and non-probability interviews. The latter involves a proprietary statistical calibration approach.

Final Study-Specific Weights for 18-64 Non-Veterans/Veteran Sample

Finally, *Study Specific Final Weights* for the 18-64 Non-Veterans and the 18-64 Veterans sourced from National Panel are created by first adjusting the base weights for survey nonresponse through a weighting class method, where the weighting classes are defined by age, race/ethnicity, gender, and education. After that, a raking ratio adjustment is applied to the nonresponse adjusted base weights to align the sample with known population benchmarks made up of the topline socio-demographic characteristics of the following:

Variables & the Variable Categories for Study-Specific Survey Non-Response Raking

- **Age:** 18-24, 25-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, and 60-64

- **Gender:** Male and Female
- **Census Division:** New England, Middle Atlantic, East North Central, West North Central, South Atlantic, East South Central, West South Central, Mountain, and Pacific
- **Race/Ethnicity:** Non-Hispanic White, Non-Hispanic Black, Hispanic, and Non-Hispanic Other
- **Education:** Less than High School, High School/GED, Some College, and BA and Above
- **Age x Gender:** 18-34 Male, 18-34 Female, 35-44 Male, 35-44 Female, 45-54 Male, 45-54 Female, 55-64 Male, and 55-64 Female
- **Age x Race/Ethnicity:** 18-34 Non-Hispanic White, 18-34 All Other, 35-44 Non-Hispanic White, 35-44 All Other, 45-54 All Other, 45-54 All Other, 55-64 Non-Hispanic White, and 55-64 All Other
- **Race/Ethnicity x Gender:** Non-Hispanic White Male, Non-Hispanic White Female, All Other Male, and All Other Female

These sociodemographic characteristics are weighted to benchmarks from the Current Population Survey.

Raking and re-raking is done during the weighting process such that the weighted demographic distribution of the survey completes resemble the demographic distribution in the target population. The assumption is that the key survey items are related to the demographics. Therefore, by aligning the survey respondent demographics with the target population, the key survey items should also be in closer alignment with the target population.

At the final stage of the weighting process, any extreme weights are trimmed based on a criterion of minimizing the mean squared error associated with key survey estimates. Weights after trimming are re-raked to the same population totals to produce the final study weights.

Combined Study-Specific Weights for 18-64 Veterans: Weighting for the Mixed Probability and Non-probability Sample

First, we describe the calculation of the weights for the National Panel sample, and then describe the statistical corrections made to the non-probability sample via the proprietary calibration weighting method.

National Panel Sample

Generally speaking, the steps for calculating the weights for the National Panel completed survey interviews involves the following sequential steps: adjusting the base weights by incorporating nonresponse adjustments and he by a raking ratio adjustments to population benchmarks. [The survey firm] followed the same procedure for weighting the veteran interviews sourced from the National Panel, as was done for weighting the non-veteran interviews (described above).

Calibration for Nonprobability Sample

In order to incorporate the nonprobability sample, [the survey firm] used an innovative hybrid calibration approach [developed by the survey firm] based on small area estimation methods in order to explicitly account for potential bias associated with the nonprobability sample[23]. The purpose of calibration is to adjust the weights for the nonprobability sample so as to bring weighted distributions of the nonprobability sample in line with the population distribution for characteristics correlated with the survey variables. Such calibration adjustments help to reduce potential bias, yielding more accurate population estimates.

The first step is to create non-probability sample weights. As there is no known "design" to nonprobability samples, units in the nonprobability sample are simply given a design weight of one. The nonprobability sample is then calibrated to the same known distributions of the population as described above for the probability sample. Therefore, the nonprobability sample weights, prior to calibration modelling are simple calibration weights.

At the core of the calibration method, small area modeling is conducted in the following steps:

- First, we identify a set of 7 key response variables from the survey using a machine learning approach called gradient boosted tree modelling. Ideally, the key response variables are associated with the largest bias in the nonprobability sample and also are highly correlated with other response variables.
- Second, we define a set of 24 domains in the data, where each domain is a specific, relevant subgroup for data analysis and reporting.
- Third, we fit domain-level small area models for each of the response variables identified earlier using weighted probability sample and nonprobability sample domain-level estimates as input. The model included covariates, domain-level random effects, and sampling errors. The covariates were external data available from ACS.
- Fourth, the fitted small area models generate predicted values for each domain and for each response variable.

The final combined probability and nonprobability sample weights were derived such that for the combined samples, the weighted estimate reproduced the usual demographic benchmarks as well as small domain estimates (derived using the small area model) for key survey variables.

Design Effect and Sampling Margin of Error Calculations

Veteran Sample

- Study design effect: 1.66
- Study margin of error: +/- 4.68%

Non-Veteran Sample

- Study design effect: 1.92
- Study margin of error: +/- 4.74%

Under the calibration method, combined probability and nonprobability sample yields approximately unbiased estimates. The margins of error reported here reflect the sampling variation of the probability sample as well as the model-assisted calibration procedures that generate the combined sample weights. As such, it is reasonable for analysts using this data to employ standard methods for approximating margins of error and statistical significance, although there is no statistically agreed upon approach to doing this when utilizing nonprobability samples.

2. SURVEY QUESTIONS

Political Beliefs

Far-right Conspiracy Beliefs

qanon: A secret group of Satan-worshiping pedophiles is ruling the US government. 5-point Likert, Strongly disagree (1) to Strongly agree (5).

jailpatriots: The federal government is intending to declare martial law and jail patriotic dissidents. 5-point Likert, Strongly disagree (1) to Strongly agree (5).

demreplacement: The Democratic Party is trying to replace the current electorate — the voters now casting ballots — with new people, more obedient voters from the Third World. 5-point Likert, Strongly disagree (1) to Strongly agree (5).

Affective Polarization

favortrump: How favorable is your impression of each of the following people, or haven't you heard of them? Donald Trump

favorbiden: How favorable is your impression of each of the following people, or haven't you heard of them? Joe Biden

Race Resentment

raceresent: Irish, Italian, Jewish, and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without any special favors. 5-point Likert, Strongly disagree (1) to Strongly agree (5).

In-Service Factors [Veterans Only]

Combat Experience

The statements below are about your combat experiences during your time in the military. As used in these statements, the term "unit" refers to those you lived and worked with on a daily basis during deployment. Please select ‘Yes’ if you experienced any of these, ‘No’ if you did not.

During my time in the military…

combat: I went on combat patrols or missions. Yes/No

mortalfear: I experienced situations in which I feared I might be seriously injured or killed. Yes/No

sawfriendkilled: I personally witnessed someone from my unit or an ally unit being seriously wounded or killed. Yes/No

sawenemykilled: I personally witnessed enemy combatants being seriously wounded or killed. Yes/No

sawcivskilled: I personally witnessed civilians (for example, women and children) being seriously wounded or killed. Yes/No

Officer

paygrade: What was your highest paygrade?

Service Years

year_joined: What year did you join the US armed forces?

service_years: How many years of military service did you complete?

Service Branch

branch: What branch of the military did you serve in?

Post Service Factors [Veterans Only]

Disillusioned with Sacrifice

disillusioned: There was no good purpose for the sacrifice made by me, my unit, or my family. [Looking back to your time serving in the US Military, please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements:] 5-point Likert, Strongly disagree (1) to Strongly agree (5).

PTSD

ptsd: I am bothered by repeated, disturbing memories of my military experience. [Looking back to your time serving in the US Military, please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements:] 5-point Likert, Strongly disagree (1) to Strongly agree (5).

Reintegration Trouble

reintegration: After leaving the military, I had a difficult time adjusting to civilian life. [Looking back to your time serving in the US Military, please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements:] 5-point Likert, Strongly disagree (1) to Strongly agree (5).

Sacrifice Unappreciated

sacrificeunapp: Society does not appreciate the sacrifices soldiers make. 5-point Likert, Strongly disagree (1) to Strongly agree (5).

General Societal Factors

Income Insecurity

econfear: Personally, how concerned are you about losing your primary source of income in the next 12 months? (1) Not at all concerned; (2) Slightly concerned; (3) Somewhat concerned; (4) Moderately concerned; (5) Extremely concerned.

Economic Hardship

econhardship: In the past five years, did you experience extreme financial difficulty, such as declaring bankruptcy or losing your home to foreclosure? Yes/No.

Religiosity

pray: How often do you spend time in private religious activities, such as prayer, meditation or Bible study? (1) Rarely or never; (2) A few times a month; (3) Once a week; (4) Two or more times/week; (5) Daily; (6) More than once a day.

attendservices: How often do you attend religious services? (1) Never; (2) Less than once per year; (3) About once or twice a year; (4) Several times a year; (5) About once a month; (6) 2-3 times a month; (7) Nearly every week; (8) Every week; (9) Several times a week.

religious: My religious beliefs are what really lie behind my whole approach to life. (1) Definitely not true; (2) Tends not to be true; (3) Unsure; (4) Tends to be true; (5) Definitely true of me.

Childhood Legal Trouble

childlaw: Growing up I had trouble with the law. 5-point Likert, Strongly disagree (1) to Strongly agree (5).

Authoritarianism

Listed below are pairs of desirable qualities. For each pair, please mark which one you think is more important for a child to have:

value_elders: (1) Independence versus (2) Respect of Elders

value_obedience: (1) Obedience versus (2) Self-Reliance [Reverse scored]

value_manners: (1) Curiosity versus (2) Good Manners

3. CALCULATED VARIABLES

Political Conspiracy Index

Stata Code

```
alpha qanon jailpatriots demreplacement, gen(conspiracy) casewise
```

Interitem Correlations

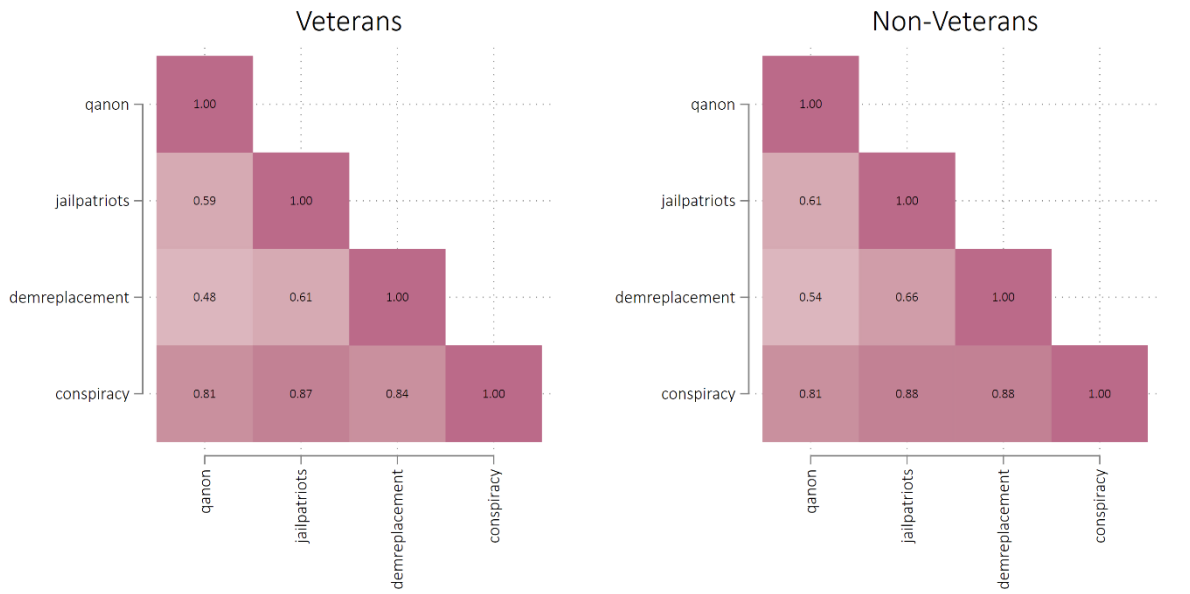


Figure S1. Correlation matrix for Political Conspiracy Index and components (unweighted)

Distribution

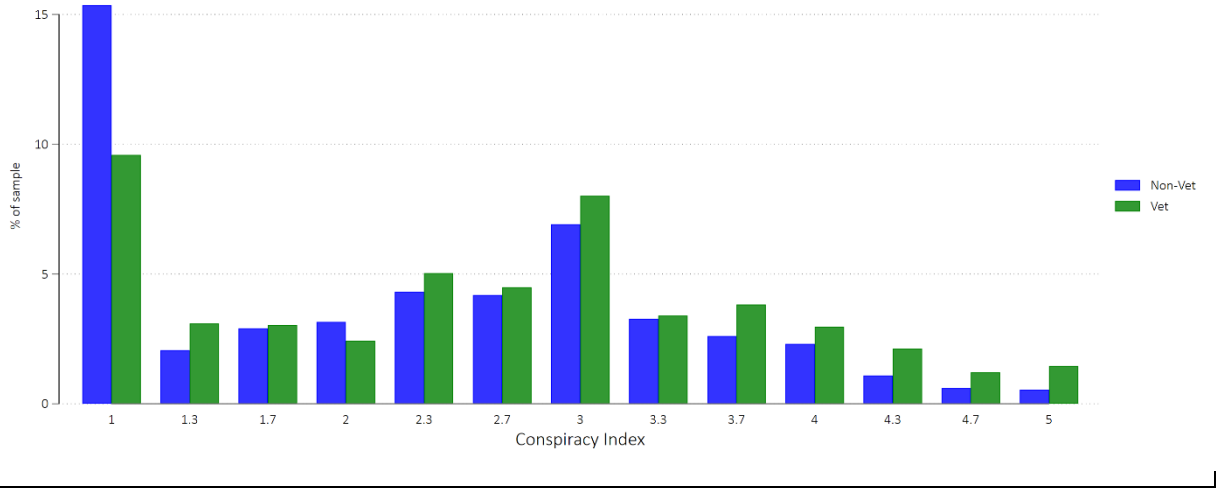


Figure S2. Unweighted distribution of Political Conspiracy Index (veteran vs non-veteran samples)

Affective Polarization

Stata Code

```
replace favorbiden = . if favorbiden == 1 // drop if 1 (Never heard of him)
replace favorbiden = favorbiden - 1 // rescale 1 to 4
replace favortrump = . if favortrump == 1 // drop if 1 (Never heard of him)
replace favortrump = favortrump - 1 // rescale 1 to 4
gen affpol = favortrump - favorbiden
label define plabel -4 "Strong D Partisan" 0 "Non-Partisan" 4 "Strong R Partisan"
label values affpol plabel
```

Distribution

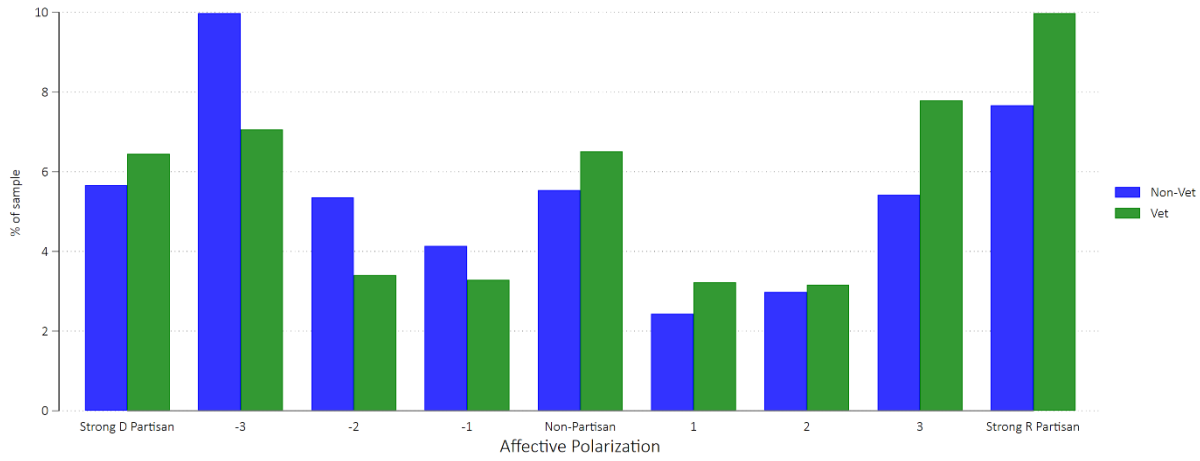


Figure S3. Unweighted distribution of Affective Polarization (veteran vs non-veteran samples)

Combat Experience

Stata Code

```
alpha combat mortalfear sawfriendkilled sawenemykilled sawcivskilled, ///
gen(combatexp) casewise
```

Interitem Correlations

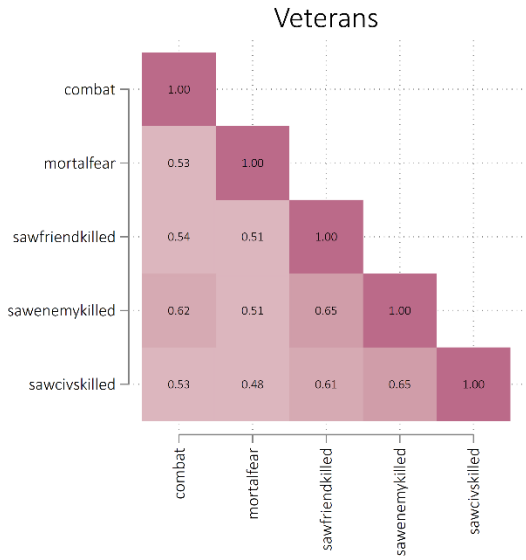


Figure S4. Correlation matrix for Combat Experience and components for veteran and non-veteran samples (unweighted)

Distribution

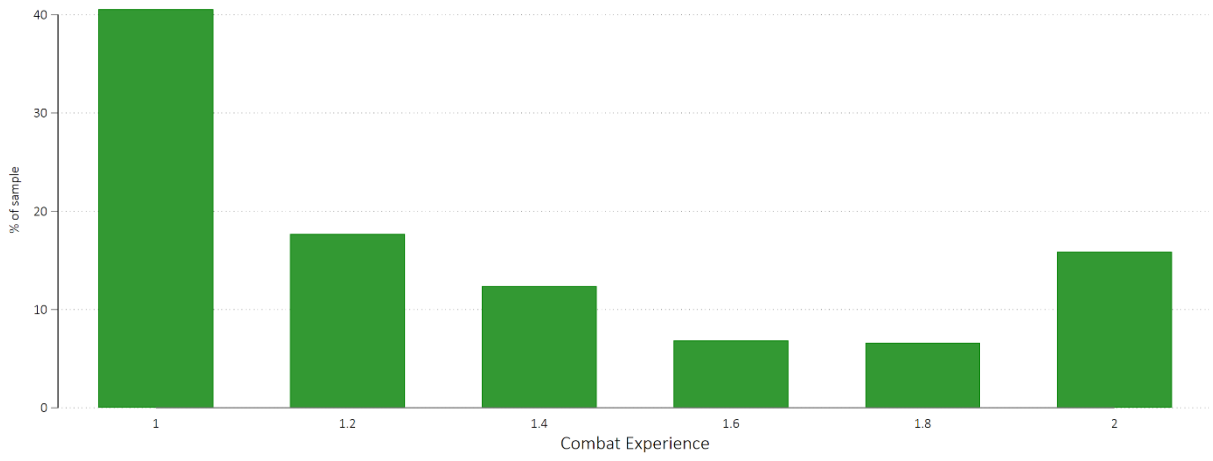


Figure S5. Unweighted distribution of Combat Experience (veteran sample only)

Authoritarianism

Stata Code

```
alpha value_elders value_obedience value_manners, ///
gen(authoritarianism) casewise
```

Interitem Correlations

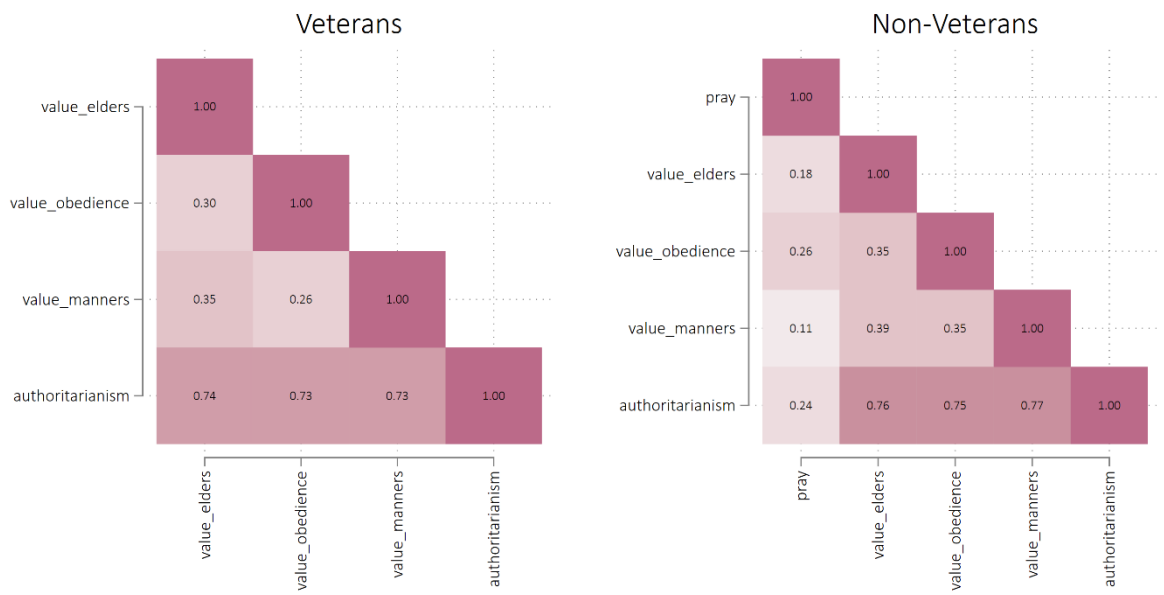


Figure S6. Correlation matrix for Authoritarianism and components for veteran and non-veteran samples (unweighted)

Distribution

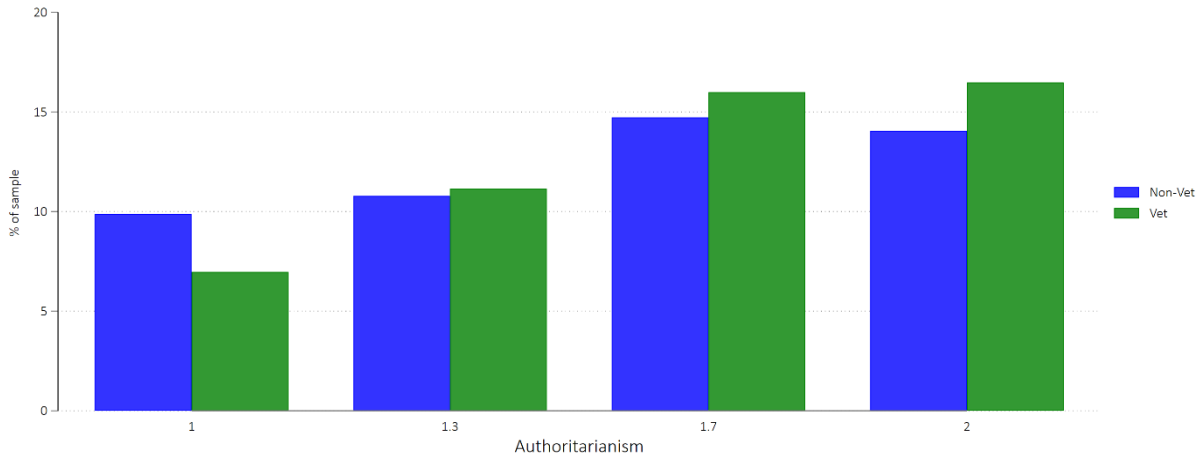


Figure S7. Unweighted distribution of Authoritarianism (veteran vs non-veteran samples)

Served in Global War on Terror (GWoT)

Stata Code

```
gen served_gwot = .
replace served_gwot = 0 if veteran == 1
replace served_gwot = 1 if year_joined >= 2001 & !missing(year_joined)
replace served_gwot = 1 if year_left >= 2001 & !missing(year_left)
replace served_gwot = . if missing(year_joined)
```

Distribution

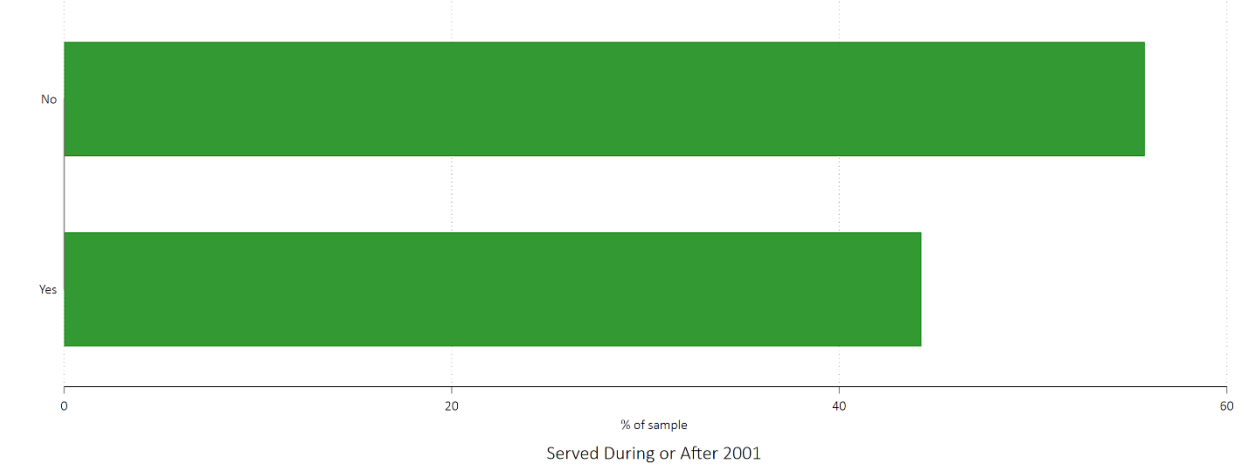


Figure S8. Unweighted Distribution of Served During GWoT (veteran sample only)

Religiosity

Stata Code

```
alpha pray attendservices religious, gen(religiosity) casewise
```

Item Correlation

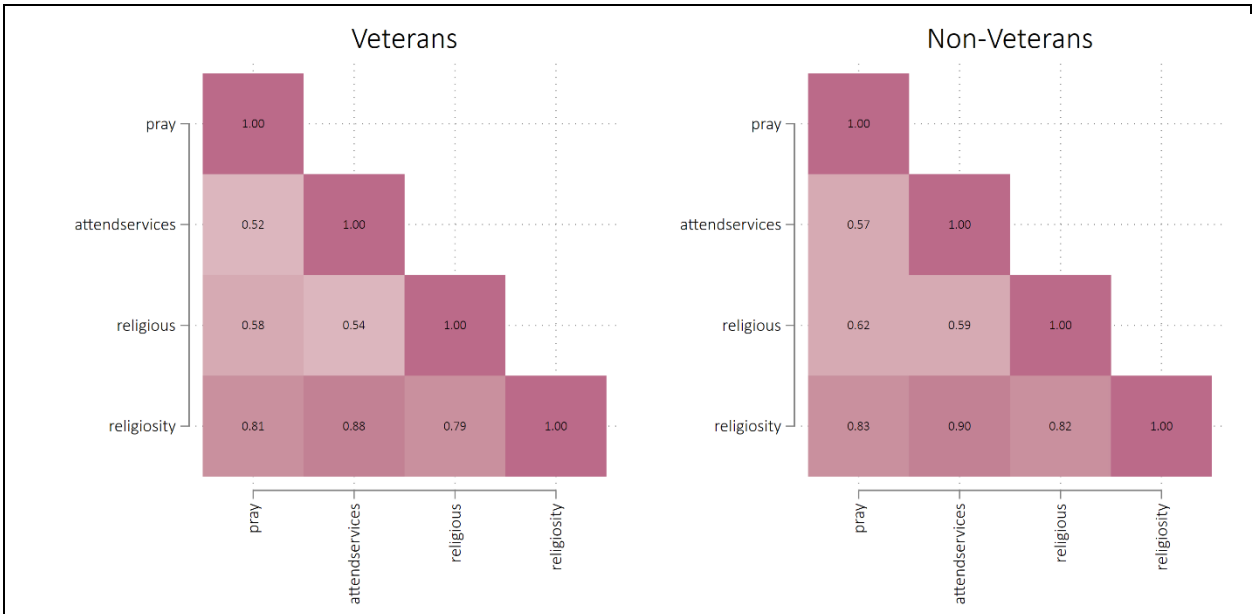


Figure S9. Correlation matrix for Religiosity and components for veteran and non-veteran samples (unweighted)

Distribution

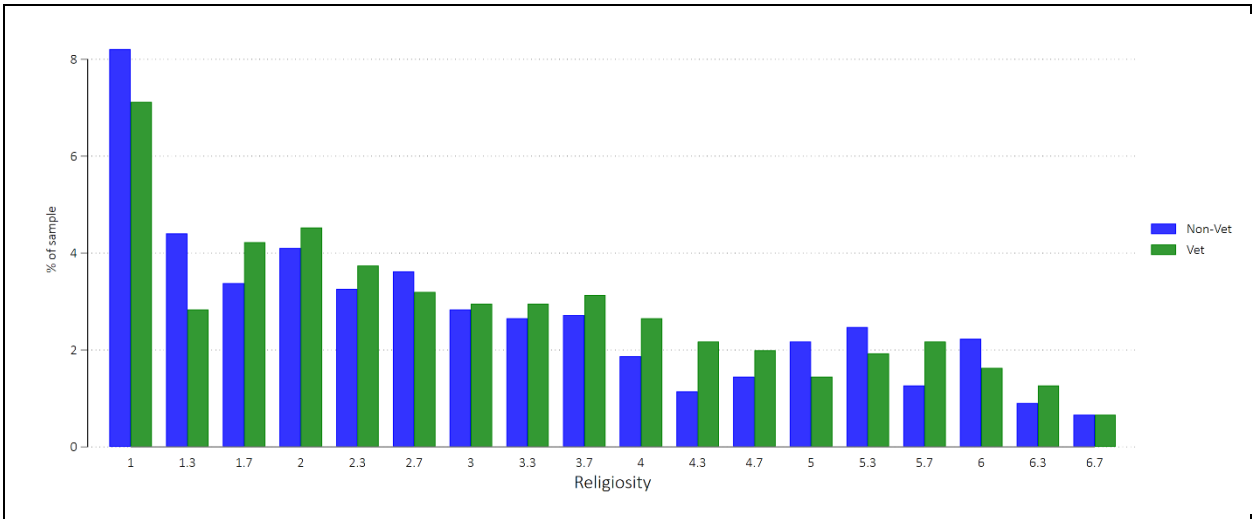


Figure S10. Unweighted distribution of Religiosity (veteran vs non-veteran samples)

4. SUPPLEMENTAL ANALYSES

Alternative Specifications for Insurrectionist Sentiments

Predicting Insurrectionist Sentiments Among Veterans

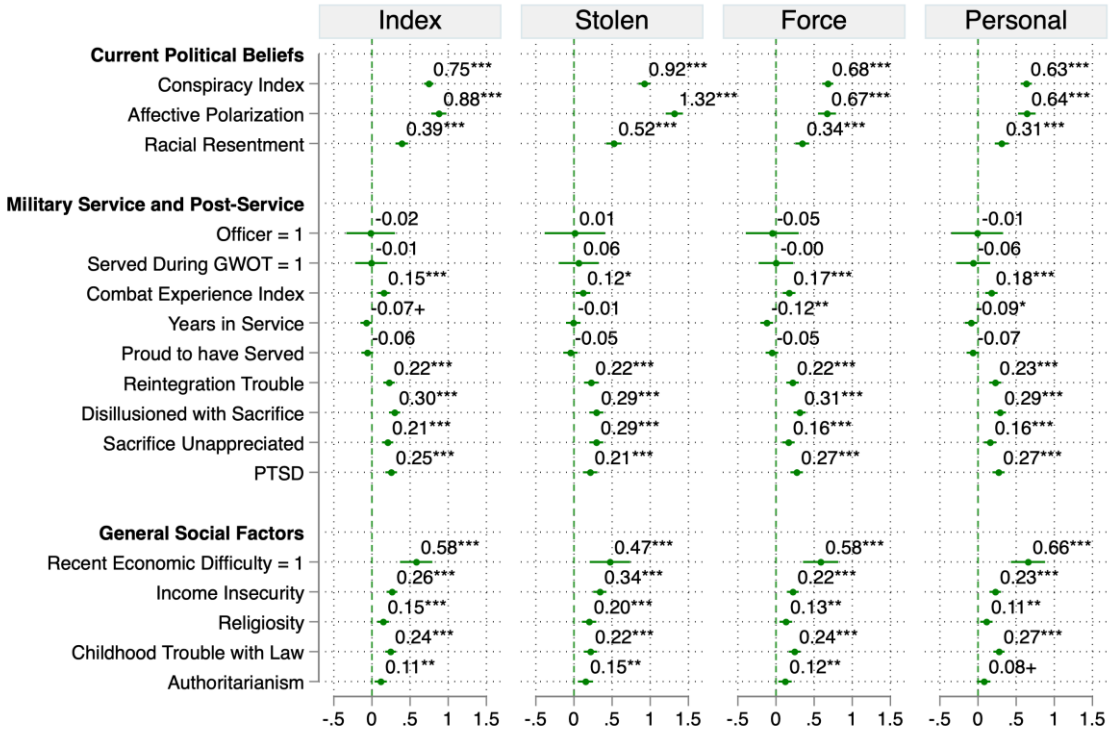


Figure S11. Factors Associated with Insurrectionist Sentiments by Subcomponents Results from separate OLS regressions (unweighted) of each factor on the Insurrectionist Sentiments Index. Non-binary variables have been standardized and are interpreted as the Average Treatment Effect of a one standard deviation change on Insurrection Sentiments Index. All models control for age, sex, education, race, and party identification.

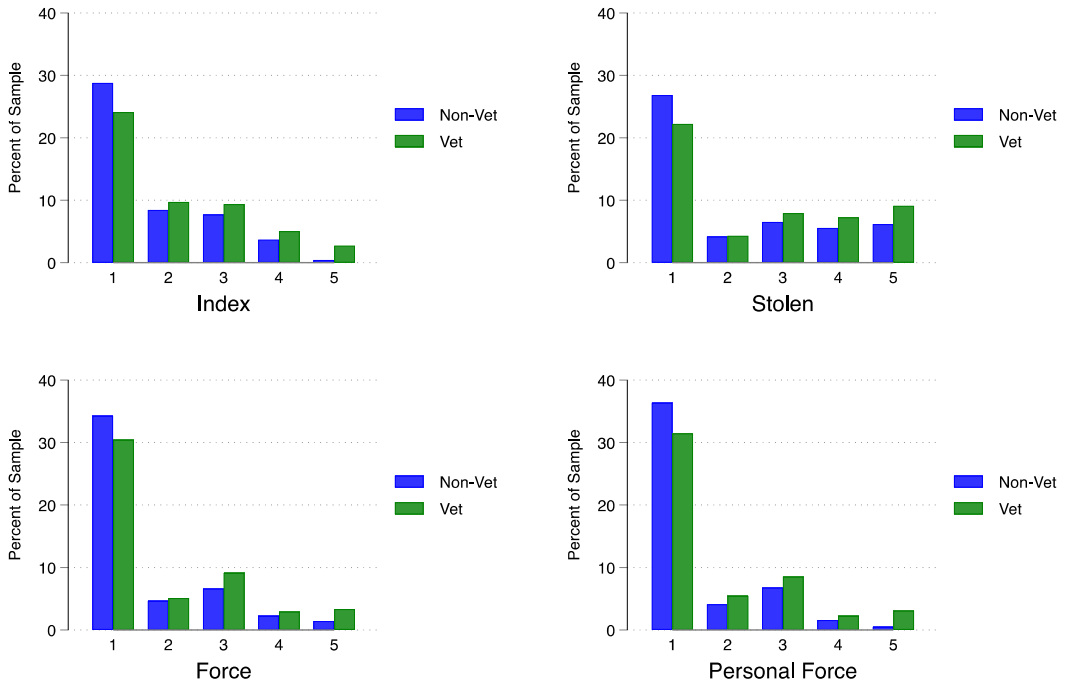


Figure S12. Unweighted distribution the Insurrectionist Sentiments Index and three components (veteran vs non-veteran samples).Insurrection Index is rounded to the nearest whole number for display. For all four variables, 1 indicates strong disagreement; 3 indicates neither agreement nor disagreement, and 5 indicates strong agreement.

Breaking Down the Dependent Variable

In Table S1, we replicate Table 5 showing the impact of veterancy on the three subcomponents of the insurrection sentiments index. Model 1 is identical to Tabel 5.

Table S1. Veterans vs Non-Veterans by Stolen, Force, and Personal Force

	(1) Index	(2) Stolen	(3) Force	(4) Personal
Veteran=1	0.20***	0.15*	0.19***	0.24***
	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Party: Independent=1	0.49***	0.87***	0.37***	0.23***
	(0.07)	(0.09)	(0.07)	(0.07)
Party: Republican=1	1.09***	1.83***	0.80***	0.66***
	(0.05)	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.05)
Race: Black, non-Hispanic=1	-0.03	-0.09	0.03	-0.01
	(0.07)	(0.09)	(0.07)	(0.07)
Race: Other, non-Hispanic=1	0.05	0.12	-0.08	0.05
	(0.15)	(0.20)	(0.17)	(0.16)
Race: Hispanic=1	0.04	0.07	0.08	-0.03
	(0.08)	(0.11)	(0.10)	(0.08)
Race: 2+, non-Hispanic=1	-0.12	-0.04	-0.23	-0.10
	(0.13)	(0.17)	(0.13)	(0.13)
Race: Asian, non-Hispanic=1	0.07	-0.11	0.29	0.04
	(0.16)	(0.18)	(0.21)	(0.15)
Gender: Male=1	-0.05	-0.12	-0.05	-0.02
	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.06)
Age:30-44=1	-0.23*	-0.03	-0.33**	-0.39***
	(0.11)	(0.14)	(0.12)	(0.12)
Age:45-59=1	-0.35**	-0.04	-0.49***	-0.54***
	(0.11)	(0.13)	(0.12)	(0.11)
Age:60+=1	-0.44***	-0.15	-0.60***	-0.62***
	(0.11)	(0.14)	(0.12)	(0.12)
No College=1	0.37***	0.55***	0.26***	0.27***
	(0.06)	(0.08)	(0.07)	(0.07)
Childhood Law Trouble	0.17***	0.17***	0.16***	0.18***
	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Constant	1.72***	1.96***	1.73***	1.54***
	(0.13)	(0.16)	(0.14)	(0.14)
N	1641	1650	1648	1650
R^2	0.291	0.363	0.173	0.184
AIC	4521.36	5401.20	4916.84	4659.97
BIC	4602.40	5482.32	4997.95	4741.09

Note: Unweighted OLS with robust standard errors. Standard errors in parentheses. For race, base is White. For party, base is Democrat. For age, base is 18-29.
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Assessing Impact of Survey Weights

Impact of Survey Weights on Predicting Insurrectionist Sentiments Among Veterans

How does incorporating survey weights into our analysis alter the results? Below we rerun the regressions from Figure 2 including survey weights for veterans. Recall that veterans are weighted to demographic and service benchmarks for the veteran population under 65. The results, in Figure S13 below, show that the direction and magnitude of the effects are consistent between the weighted and unweighted samples.

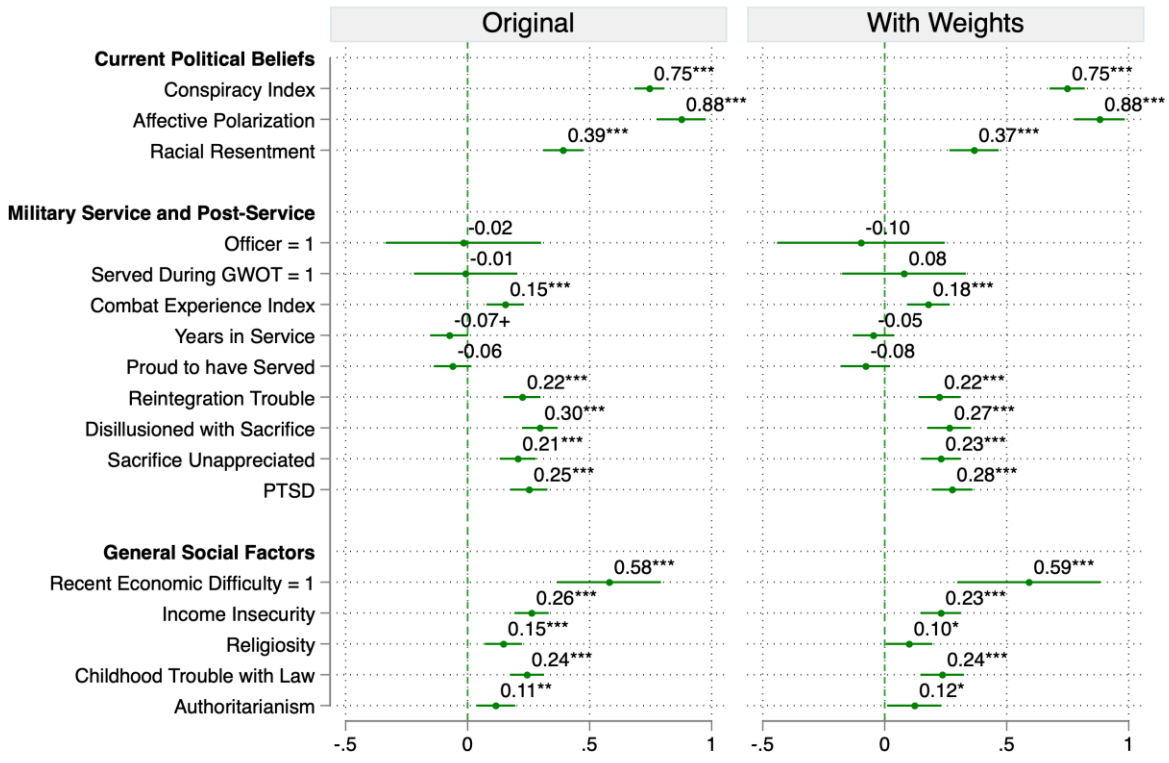


Figure S13. Comparing Results Between Weighted and non-Weighted models Results from separate OLS regressions (unweighted on left, weighted on right) of each factor on the Insurrectionist Sentiments Index. Continuous variables have been standardized, units are standard deviations. Coefficients are interpreted as the Average Treatment Effect (ATE) of a one unit change on Insurrection Sentiments Index. All models control for age, sex, education, race, and party identification.

Impact of Survey Weights on Causal Effect of Veteran vs. Non-Veteran

Does incorporating survey weights change our results for the correlation between veterancy and insurrectionist sentiments, controlling for key pretreatment variables? Recall that veteran and non-veteran samples are weighted to demographic and service benchmarks for the veteran population under 65. As the results in Table S2 show, veterancy retains both substantive and statistical significance, even with the added inefficiency introduced by the use of survey weights.

Table S2. Weighted vs Unweighted OLS Results for Veteran

	(1) Original	(2) Weighted
Veteran =1	**0.20*** **	**0.13***
	(0.05)	**(0.07)**
Party: Independent = 1	0.49***	0.47***
	(0.07)	(0.07)
Party: Republican = 1	1.09***	1.23***
	(0.05)	(0.07)
Race: Black, non-Hispanic = 1	-0.03	0.02
	(0.07)	(0.07)
Race: Other, non-Hispanic = 1	0.05	0.15
	(0.15)	(0.19)
Race: Hispanic = 1	0.04	0.02
	(0.08)	(0.12)
Race: 2+, non-Hispanic = 1	-0.12	0.10
	(0.13)	(0.20)
Race: Asian, non-Hispanic = 1	0.07	0.21
	(0.16)	(0.31)
Gender: Male = 1	-0.05	-0.06
	(0.06)	(0.07)
Age: 30-44 = 1	-0.23*	-0.11
	(0.11)	(0.13)
Age: 45-59 =1	-0.35**	-0.27*
	(0.11)	(0.14)
Age: 60+ =1	-0.44***	-0.35*
	(0.11)	(0.14)
No College = 1	0.37***	0.40***
	(0.06)	(0.06)
Childhood Law Trouble	0.17***	0.16***
	(0.02)	(0.03)
Constant	1.72***	1.60***
	(0.13)	(0.15)
N	1641	1641
R^2	0.291	0.320

Note: OLS (robust standard errors in Original). Standard errors in parentheses. For race, base is White. For party, base is Democrat. For age, base is 18-29.
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Impact of Survey Weights on Mediating Effect of Conspiracy and Racial Resentment

Figure S14 presents the mediation analysis using survey weighted regression. The increased inefficiency due to weighting is clearly visible in the much larger confidence bounds on all estimates. Nevertheless, the overall substantive finding – that the ACDE of veteran is not totally mediated by conspiracy or racial resentment – remains.

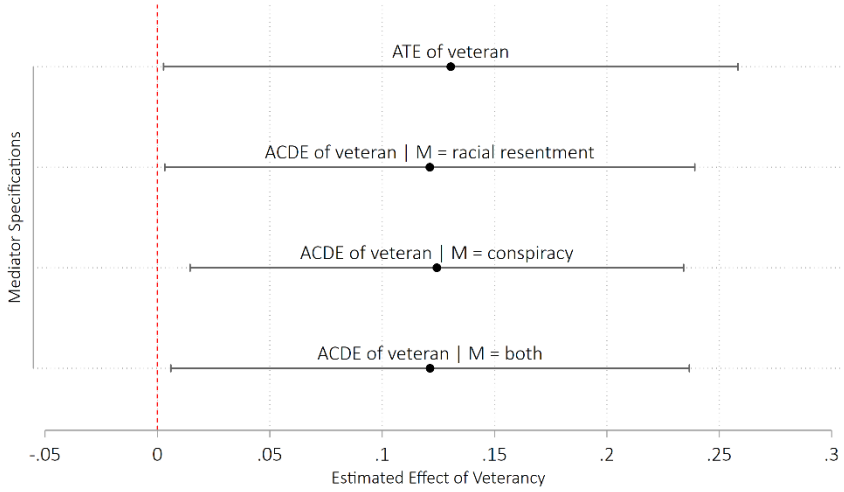


Figure S14 Average Controlled Direct Effect of Veteran on Insurrectionist Sentiments by Mediator, Survey Weighted Results *Note: The ATE is the total effect of veterancy controlling for pre-treatment confounders. The ACDE of veteran is the average effect of veterancy holding the mediator constant and controlling for post-treatment and intermediate confounding. Confidence intervals overlapping with zero indicate we cannot reject the null hypothesis that the effect of veterancy is entirely mediated by the mediator tested.*

Assessing Impact of Disengagement

Impact on Predicting Insurrectionist Sentiments Among Veterans?

Speeders. We treat respondents who completed the survey more than one standard deviation quicker than the mean as a proxy for disengaged. We identify speeders separately for each sample, as veterans answered additional military-service-specific questions and therefore had a longer mean completion time (23 vs 20 minutes for non-veterans). Empirically, 17 veterans and 26 non-veterans were then treated as if disengaged. The distribution of speeders across the population, and their association with insurrectionist sentiments, are in Figure S16 below.

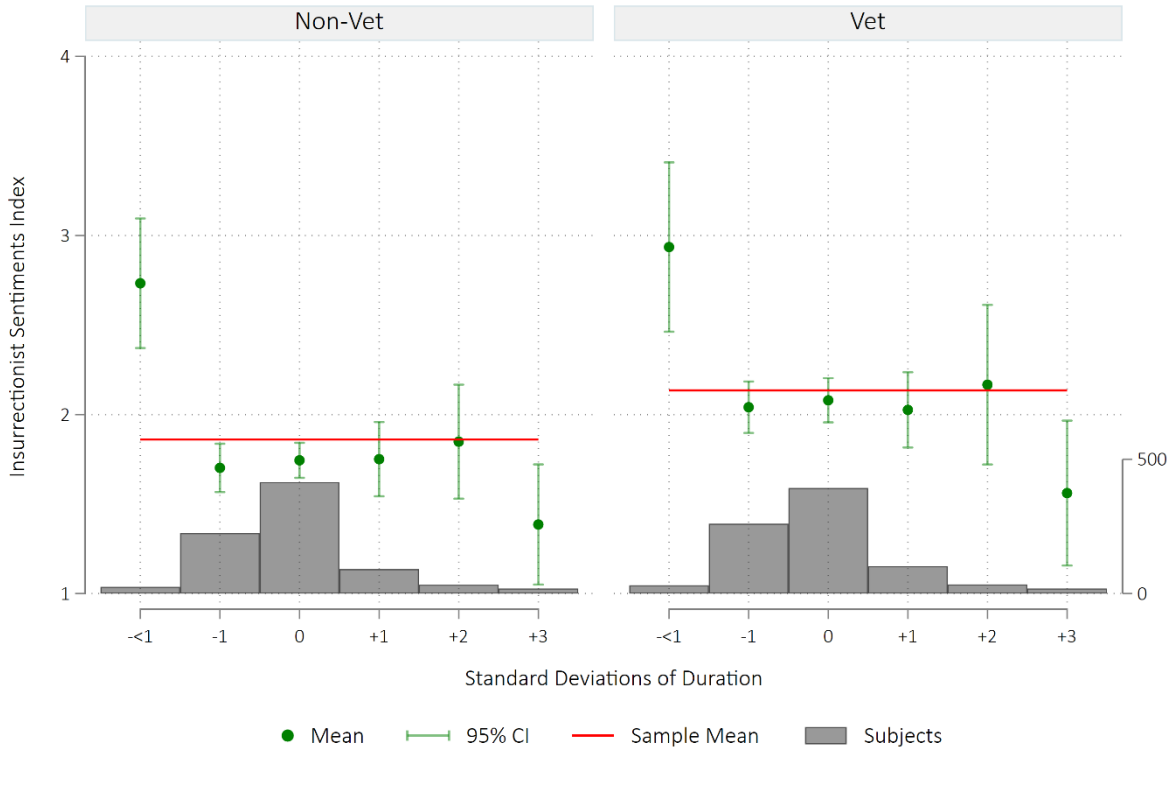


Figure S15. Distribution of Insurrectionist Sentiments by Survey Duration.

Inconsistents: This specification for disengagement was described in the paper. Two questions were asked in succession, both about whether or not the 2022 election was stolen, with inverse scales. Respondents were categorized as "inconsistent" if they answered the election was stolen for the first and then it wasn't stolen for the second, or vice versa.

How does removing the disengaged from the data affect the relationship between military and societal factors and insurrectionist sentiments? Below we limit our analyses to the attentive population. The results, in Figure S16 below, show no meaningful difference in the direction or significance of coefficients between the total and the attentive-only sample.

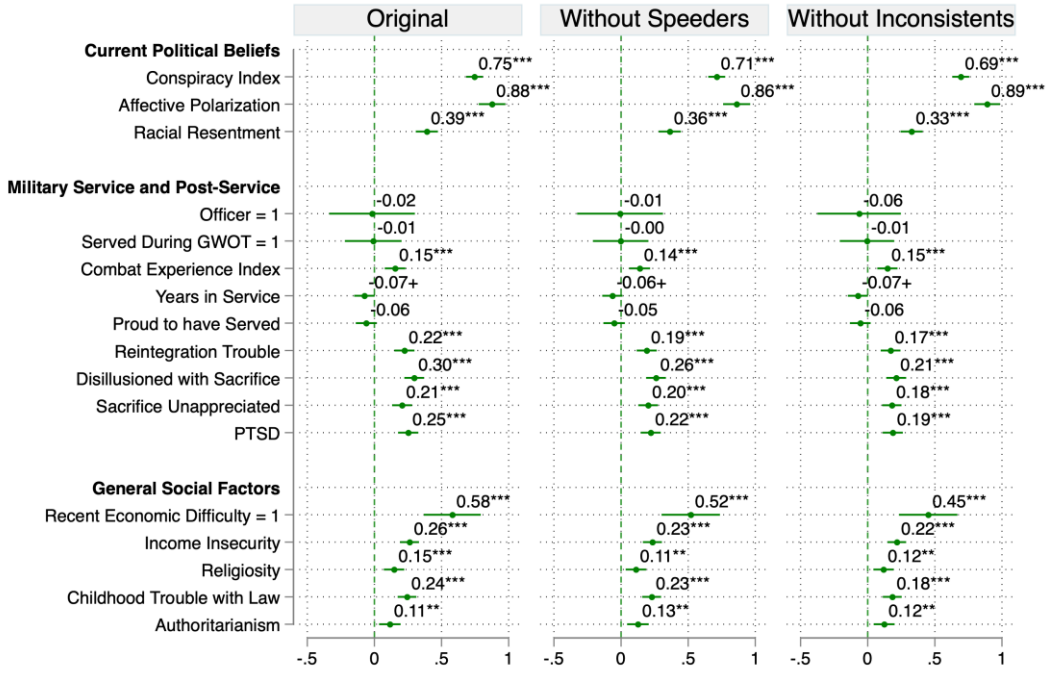


Figure S16. Comparing Total and Attentive-only Sample on Predicting Insurrectionist Sentiments Among Veterans Results from separate OLS regressions (unweighted) of each factor on the Insurrectionist Sentiments Index. Continuous variables have been standardized, units are standard deviations. Coefficients are interpreted as the Average Treatment Effect (ATE) of a one unit change on Insurrection Sentiments Index. All models control for age, sex, education, race, and party identification.

Impact on Causal Effect of Veteran vs. Non-Veteran

To assess whether disengagement affects our findings regarding the effect of veterancy on insurrectionist sentiments, we reran the regression from Table 6 but dropping quick finishers from both the veteran and non-veteran samples. As Table S3 below shows, there is no meaningful difference in the direction or significance of coefficients between the total and the attentive-only sample.

Table S3. Comparing Total and Attentive-only Sample on Effect of Veterancy

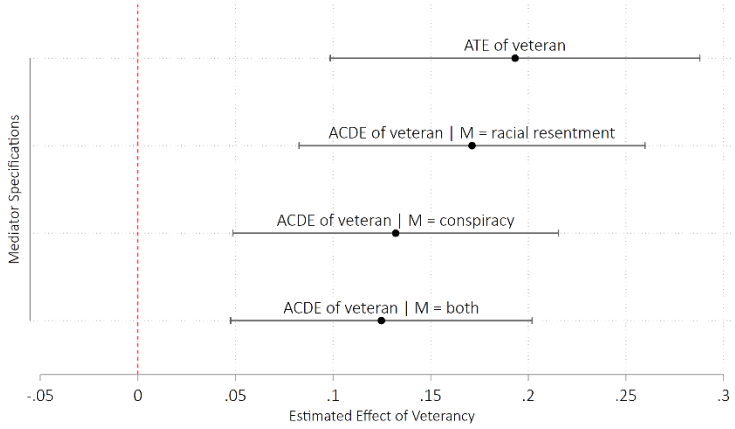
	(1) Original	(2) Dropping Speeders	(3) Dropping Inconsistents
Veteran	**0.20*** **	**0.18*** **	**0.15** **
	(0.05)	**(0.05)**	**(0.05)**
Party: Independent=1	0.49***	0.52***	0.64***
	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)
Party: Republican=1	1.09***	1.13***	1.12***
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Race: Black, non-Hispanic=1	-0.03	-0.07	-0.05
	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.06)
Race: Other, non-Hispanic=1	0.05	0.05	0.03
	(0.15)	(0.14)	(0.14)
Race: Hispanic=1	0.04	0.01	0.05
	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.08)
Race: 2+, non-Hispanic=1	-0.12	-0.15	-0.14
	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.13)
Race: Asian, non-Hispanic=1	0.07	0.07	-0.11
	(0.16)	(0.16)	(0.13)
Gender: Male=1	-0.05	-0.07	-0.10
	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)
Age:30-44=1	-0.23*	-0.21	-0.22*
	(0.11)	(0.12)	(0.11)
Age:45-59=1	-0.35**	-0.29**	-0.29**
	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.11)
Age:60+=1	-0.44***	-0.39***	-0.35**
	(0.11)	(0.12)	(0.11)
No College=1	0.37***	0.34***	0.35***
	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)
Childhood Law Trouble	0.17***	0.15***	0.14***
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Constant	1.72***	1.73***	1.85***
	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.13)
N	1641	1585	1536
R^2	0.291	0.305	0.341
AIC	4521.36	4300.66	4066.48
BIC	4602.40	4381.19	4146.53

Note: Unweighted OLS with robust standard errors. Standard errors in parentheses. For race, base is White. For party, base is Democrat. For age, base is 18-29.
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Impact on Assessing Why Veterans are More Prone to Insurrectionist Sentiments

We replicate the analysis from Figure 6 in the main paper only dropping subjects identified as disengaged using two measures of disengagement: inattentiveness and speeding. Note: The ATE is the total effect of veterancy controlling for pre-treatment confounders. The ACDE of veteran is the average effect of veterancy holding the mediator constant and controlling for post-treatment and intermediate confounding. Confidence intervals overlapping with zero indicate we cannot reject the null hypothesis that the effect of veterancy is entirely mediated by the mediator tested. As Figure S17 below shows, this is not the case in any of these tests, so we can conclude that veterancy has a direct effect that is unmediated by these specifications of the mediator.

A. Dropping Speeders



B. Dropping Inconsistents

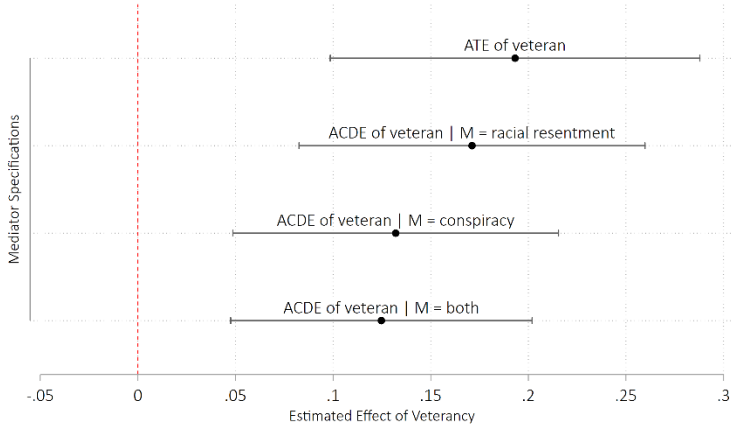


Figure S17. Average Controlled Direct Effect of Veteran on Insurrectionist Sentiments by Mediator After Dropping Disengaged Note: The ATE is the average total effect of veterancy controlling for pre-treatment confounders. The ACDE of veteran is the average effect of veterancy holding the mediator constant and controlling for post-treatment and intermediate confounding. Confidence intervals overlapping with zero indicate we cannot reject the null hypothesis that the effect of veterancy is entirely mediated by the mediator tested.

Assessing Impact of Treating Authoritarianism and Religiosity as Pretreatment

Impact on Predicting Insurrectionist Sentiments Among Veterans?

Table S4. Including Authoritarianism and Religiosity in Pretreatment Effects Model

	(1)	(2) With Authoritarianism	(3) With Religiosity	(4) With Both
Veteran	**0.20*** **	**0.19*** **	**0.20*** **	**0.19*** **
	(0.05)	**(0.05)**	**(0.05)**	**(0.05)**
Authoritarianism		**0.40*** **		**0.36*** **
		(0.07)		**(0.07)**
Religiosity			**0.06*** **	**0.05** **
			(0.02)	**(0.02)**
Party: Independent=1	0.49***	0.46***	0.47***	0.45***
	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)
Party: Republican=1	1.09***	1.01***	1.05***	0.99***
	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)
Race: Black, non-Hispanic=1	-0.03	-0.12	-0.09	-0.16*
	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)
Race: Other, non-Hispanic=1	0.05	0.03	0.03	0.02
	(0.15)	(0.14)	(0.15)	(0.15)
Race: Hispanic=1	0.04	-0.01	0.03	-0.01
	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.08)
Race: 2+, non-Hispanic=1	-0.12	-0.13	-0.13	-0.14
	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.14)
Race: Asian, non-Hispanic=1	0.07	0.06	0.07	0.06
	(0.16)	(0.15)	(0.15)	(0.15)
Gender: Male=1	-0.05	-0.05	-0.02	-0.03
	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)
Age:30-44=1	-0.23*	-0.28*	-0.22*	-0.27*
	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.11)
Age:45-59=1	-0.35**	-0.42***	-0.35***	-0.42***
	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.11)
Age:60+=1	-0.44***	-0.52***	-0.47***	-0.53***
	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.11)
No College=1	0.37***	0.31***	0.38***	0.33***
	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.07)
Childhood Law Trouble	0.17***	0.18***	0.17***	0.18***
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Constant	1.72***	1.18***	1.52***	1.08***
	(0.13)	(0.16)	(0.14)	(0.16)
N	1641	1629	1636	1625
R^2	0.291	0.305	0.299	0.310
AIC	4521.36	4462.04	4492.60	4442.88
BIC	4602.40	4548.37	4579.00	4534.56

Note: OLS with robust standard errors. Standard errors in parentheses. Variables not standardized. For race, base is White. For party, base is Democrat. For age, base is 18-29.

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Impact on Assessing Why Veterans are More Prone to Insurrectionist Sentiments

Below we present the mediation analysis, treating authoritarianism and religiosity as pre-treatment (meaning it comes *before* veterancy, and is something that may affect whether a person chooses to join the military) variables.

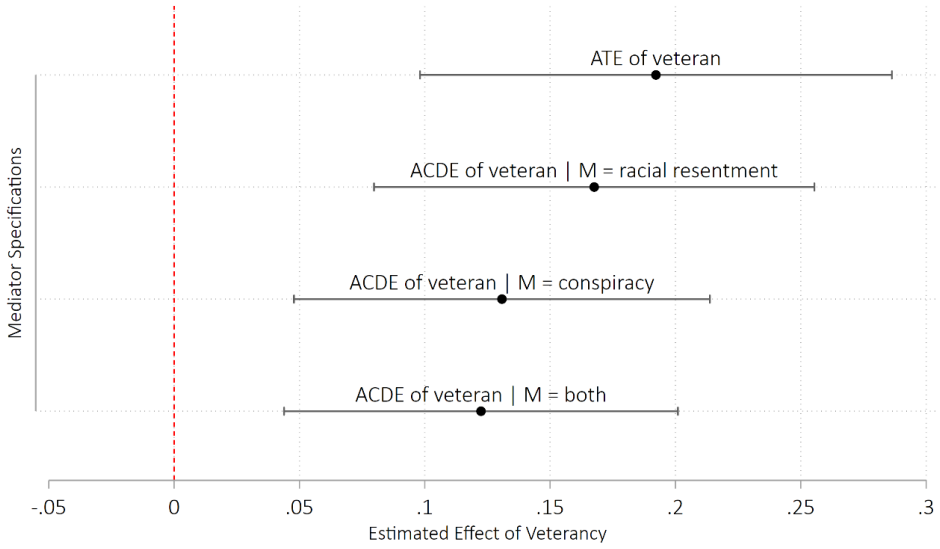


Figure S18. Average Controlled Direct Effect of Veteran on Insurrectionist Sentiments by Mediator, including Authoritarianism and Religiosity as Pre-Treatment Variables The ATE is the average total effect of veterancy controlling for pre-treatment confounders. The ACDE of veteran is the average effect of veterancy holding the mediator constant and controlling for post-treatment and intermediate confounding. Confidence intervals overlapping with zero indicate we cannot reject the null hypothesis that the effect of veterancy is entirely mediated by the mediator tested.