Rutgers University Arts and Sciences

Party Politics “Beyond the Water’s Edge”: The Democratic Party and the Vietnam War

History Departmental Honors Thesis

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Chapter I
Introduction

When President Lyndon Baines Johnson launched the first major deployment of US troops to Southeast Asia in March of 1965, 10-12 US Senators and 35-40 Representatives were actively opposed to large scale action in Vietnam. By 1966 over half of the majority Democratic caucus members within Congress were openly raising concerns about future escalation.¹ As the decade progressed, so did opposition to the war. The Fulbright Hearings, Case-Church Amendments, Cooper-Church Amendment, the McGovern-Hatfield Amendment, and finally the Repeal of Tonkin Resolution were all Congressional attempts to curb or remove the American presence in Vietnam. These attempts were generally legislative failures. The Vietnam War was drawn down and the United States ultimately left Vietnam after Presidents Nixon and Ford withdrew troops and evacuated Saigon mostly due to public pressure, not legislative pressure. Congress never ordered them to do so.

Current and accepted scholarship proposes a variety of different reasons as to why Congress failed to end the Vietnam War. These include but are not limited to institutional, ideological, and political explanations as to why Congress was unable to harness a better policy. The truth is there were a multitude of factors that created the perfect storm of Vietnam. I will focus upon investigating an explanation that has been touched on by scholars but left uninvestigated and unproven: That the stark ideological division of the Democratic Party during the 1960s and 1970s was more important in

explaining why it was very difficult for anti-war and dissenting members of Congress to affect Vietnam policy than has been recognized by other scholars.

Vietnam historians often focus on how the Vietnam War divided the Democratic Party. This thesis will acknowledge that claim. It will also however seek to ascertain whether politics within the Democratic Party played a role in extending the Vietnam War. The Johnson Administration, party leaders, and most importantly pro-war Democratic members of Congress “ate their own” and sabotaged the efforts of anti-war Democrats. In nearly every context imaginable conservative pro-war Democrats restrained dissenting Democrats from affecting policy and potentially ending the war.

This research will extend the contemporary knowledge and explanations for why Congress failed in grabbing hold of its constitutional powers and did not influence Vietnam War policy. The enormous cost of the Vietnam War, in both American blood and treasure, for such a fruitless endeavor warrants such an investigation on its own. Moreover, a deeper understanding of how or if the American political system can enact appropriate change from within over foreign policy is essential. The key dissenters in this study were in the fight of their lives in trying to end an unpopular war through the American political system. They failed, and in their memory we must learn about the obstacles they could not climb over, and the resistance that halted their efforts. To not know or discover this would be a shame indeed.

I will begin this study by extensively covering many of the current explanations for congressional inaction during Vietnam. From there it will be important to discover the greater origins of the schism between Democrats over Vietnam both philosophically and historically. I will then cover the several ways in which dissenters within the Democratic
Party were prevented from ending the war by the Democratic Party itself, from 1965 until 1973. These chapters should, I hope, display my research and convince the reader that at least in part the divisions of the Democratic Party had a tremendous effect upon Congress’ inability to end the war in Vietnam.
Chapter II

Analysis of the Historiography Concerning Congress’ Role in Vietnam

Most scholarship contends that despite its constitutional powers to act, Congress did little legislatively to actually sway foreign policy concerning Vietnam. Author Robert David Johnson writes that legislative inaction began early and that by not opposing the Formosa Resolution under President Eisenhower Congress set a precedent to forfeit its role in international affairs. Congress could do little but offer “limited dissent” and modify resolutions. While the Senate was more active, neither branch was aggressive in confronting the war.

Senators George McGovern and Mark O. Hatfield attempted to display how war powers had historically and constitutionally been vested in Congress, but could not themselves garner the votes to enact and engage in that responsibility. That power had been lost because Congress had not utilized it. Ultimately, the failure of the McGovern-Hatfield Amendment was the “culmination of years of frustration on the part of many members of Congress.” Senators like Ernest Gruening who spent a great deal of time attempting to end the Vietnam War failed in their aim to affect Cold War policy and did little but “rouse the ire” of Presidents Johnson and Nixon. Congress failed to act and, “never stood up to LBJ, never dissented in an effective way against the war.” Congress failed (legislatively at least) to curb Presidential foreign policy power that was detrimental to the country.

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3 Johnson, Congress 161
5 Woods, Political Tradition 112
6 Woods, Political Tradition 39 and 59
7 Stevenson, Warriors 61
Some historians, however, argue that despite failing legislatively, Congress indeed did apply some pressure to the executive to withdraw by exposing the public to debate about the war. The level of success Congress achieved through these actions however is in dispute. One theory argues that Congress sometimes successfully affected Cold War policy through different and unique means. Frustration over policy in Vietnam resulted in foreign aid battles throughout the 1960s and 1970s, which were major headaches for the executive.\(^8\) The Fulbright Hearings and discussion of Vietnam empowered the Senate to act, question policy, and also empowered and legitimized dissent against the war in the US.\(^9\) At the very least, the sour course of the war in Vietnam emboldened the Senate in the late 1960s and early 1970s to reverse their previous weak position in international affairs and would “set the stage for the first wholehearted congressional challenge to executive authority” since the 1950s and would give Congress power that they had not had since before World War II.\(^{10}\) The idea holds that the failure of Vietnam policy by the executive would allow Congress to assume power that it never had before by challenging President Nixon’s war policy. Congress’s most talented members including Senators Fulbright, McGovern, Church and others, affected the war’s policy by other means than legislation. The widely accepted perception that Congress did little to nothing during the war, this theory argues, is false.

While some in Congress indeed may have been effective in shaping policy, the institution as a whole did nothing to effectually defeat or sway policy. The institution itself has the right to approve or reject military funding and appropriations but failed to do so during the period. I understand that policy may have been affected but concrete

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\(^8\) Johnson, *Congress* 94  
\(^9\) Johnson, *Congress* 123  
\(^{10}\) Johnson, *Congress* 142
action was never taken until 1973 under the Case-Church Amendment, after the signing of the Paris Peace accords. Action could have been taken. For example US aid to Angola was cut off through the Clark Amendment in 1976 and in 1993 the US Congress set a deadline for military actions in Somalia.\textsuperscript{11} Congress had the ability to end the war earlier, but it did not. Why?

The most accepted and discussed interpretation of why Congress was weak in acting against the war is that the legislature is naturally deferent to the executive in foreign affairs. Many believe that essentially Congress’s role in military and international affairs is resigned to “investigating or embarrassing the services or the executive” and it fails to actually control policy or strategy.\textsuperscript{12} Arthur Schlesinger wrote in \textit{The Imperial Presidency}, that the Presidency had evolved and developed to a certain point in the 1960s and 1970s where the President was given too much control over waging war, and that this resulted in Vietnam and future similar conflicts.

Authors also argue that this deference to the executive may have been specific in the extreme to President Johnson, due to his personality and political prowess. He was effective in silencing most critics especially during the beginning of the war.\textsuperscript{13} Robert Johnson highlights his attempt to prevent CBS from covering the Fulbright Hearings, and his later investigations conducted by FBI Director Hoover to investigate Congress for communist influences.\textsuperscript{14}

The legacy of the “Loss of China” is enumerated in several books and primarily attempts to explain why the Democratic Party was slow in criticizing the policy in

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{11} Grimmett, Robert F. “Foreign Policy Roles of President and Congress” Congressional Research Service Report June 1999, \url{http://fpc.state.gov/6172.htm}
\item \textsuperscript{12} Stevenson, \textit{Warriors} 211
\item \textsuperscript{13} Johnson, \textit{Congress} 117
\item \textsuperscript{14} Johnson, \textit{Congress} 121
\end{itemize}
Vietnam and why President Johnson refused to give up on Vietnam. President Johnson and the Democratic Party in general were haunted by China’s conversion to communism under President Truman which resulted in an electoral disaster for the Democrats.\footnote{Halberstam, David, \textit{The Best and the Brightest} New York: Random House: 1972} The legacy of China deterred Democrats from opposing aggressive Cold War policy.\footnote{G. Calvin Mackenzie and Robert Weisbrot, \textit{The Liberal Hour: Washington and the Politics of Change in the 1960s} Penguin Press: New York, 2008. Pgs 299-301}

Other theories also focus on the difficulties of opposition to war in general in US history. It is often difficult to organize dissent legislatively and this was reflective in the inability of dissenters in Vietnam. Without an effective dissent, antiwar legislation faced an uphill battle. The coalition of opposition was unstable because it derived from various beliefs and philosophies and was difficult to maintain. Anti-imperialism itself is generally divorced from power and the system itself was not open or amenable to the presence of anti-war figures. Strong leaders of opposition such as Senators Ernest Gruening and Wayne Morse were written off as radicals very early and had no legitimate voice in the Senate.\footnote{Randall B. Woods, \textit{Vietnam and the American Political Tradition: The Politics of Dissent} Cambridge University Press: New York, 2003.}

Explanations for the failure of Congress to act during the war are far and wide. For example, The \textit{Imperial Brotherhood} describes the continuation and failure of the Vietnam War as a result of the fact that the control of the government rested in the hands of masculine “Prep Boys” who were establishment figures that feared being portrayed as weak and feminine if they were not stark anti-communist or pro-war in general. Thus these men in Congress would be much more hesitant to come out against policy and to oppose the war.\footnote{Dean, Robert D. \textit{Imperial Brotherhood: Gender and the Making of Cold War Foreign Policy} Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001.}
A number of institutional, political, and even cultural factors hurt Congress’s ability to affect Vietnam War policy. Although all of these ideas were certainly a part of the decision making and gave reasons for lawmakers to be hesitant in shaping Cold War foreign policy, I think many are related to a greater problem that affected the opposition. The opposition’s core consisted of Democrats. When opposition to the war in Congress began to percolate, many of the leaders and more elite of the Democratic Party supported the war while less powerful liberal Democrats opposed it. These leaders included the administration, the leaders of the labor movement and AFL-CIO head George Meany, the leaders of the Democratic National Committee John Moran Bailey and Larry O’Brien, Speaker of the House John McCormack and Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield, and other prominent Democrats around the country such as Chicago Mayor Richard Daley. While all of these leaders supported the war effort, many in the party opposed it. A division within the party existed in ideology and in practice in foreign policy, and the strength of pro-war Democrats halted or affected legislative efforts that would have ended the war or shaped the war’s policy.

A brief study of the Republican Party and its reaction to war dissent will help further understand the political obstacles dissenters of any kind faced in the war. Politically the Republican Party would react to division over Vietnam policy much differently than the Democrats. Instead of bringing the party down, debate over the war would ultimately result in the weeding out of liberals within the party.

The ability of Republicans to capitalize on foreign policy especially in regards to their image of how they handled the policy would enable more conservative presidents such as Nixon and Reagan to be elected, something that likely could not have occurred
without the Vietnam issue.\textsuperscript{19} “The GOP’s long term reputation as the party of strength on national security has helped it rather than hurt it politically” especially with white voters.\textsuperscript{20} The success of the more conservative foreign policy views within the party ultimately made it more popular in both the short and long terms. Despite this, the political maneuvering that the party used to establish this foothold ultimately contributed to the failure of Vietnam policy.

Bipartisanship in policy and a cold war consensus between the majorities of both the Republican and Democratic Parties would have a dangerous effect on Vietnam War policy. Without a major party that was focused in opposition to Vietnam, dissent was limited to courageous politicians in both parties who took significant risks to oppose the war. Senator Mark Hatfield and others anti-war Republicans were cast out as extreme in their view of Vietnam and faced potential dangers to their own domestic political concerns as well as re-election efforts.

By speaking out in Congress during the war and remaining an outspoken critic of the war, Senator Hatfield lost his chance to become Vice President in 1968 and faced possible isolation from his own party. Ultimately, his view would be vindicated and he would remain in the Senate until 1996. Other outspoken Senators would not be so lucky. The status quo that existed in terms of foreign policy however would do irreparable harm to the nation. The minority party failed in its job of “loyal opposition” by completely supporting the policy, and torn Democrats were forced to choose between

\textsuperscript{19} Johns, Andrew L. Vietnam's Second Front: Domestic Politics, The Republican Party and the War, University Press of Kentucky: USA 2010. pg 332
party loyalties and their own principles. This difficult situation would delay and slow dissent and action to affect policy in Vietnam.
Chapter III

“Two Quite Different Liberalisms”: Cold War Internationalists and Activist Anti-Imperialists

Carl Oglesby, President of the Students for a Democratic Society, described what he believed to be the composition of two competing philosophies present in the Democratic Party. “Maybe, we have here two quite different liberalisms, one authentically humanist; the other not so human at all.”

One very intellectual and anti-interventionist segment of the party opposed the Vietnam War, while in support of the war there was a “blending of two strains of conservative and liberal internationalism [that] came together to produce activism committed to fighting communism on every front.”

The formation of these two competing ideologies in one party was complex, as were the differences amongst the members of both factions.

The existence of two differing sides in the Democratic Party over foreign policy was also not a new development but an evolution. G. Calvin Mackenzie and Robert Weisbrot note the change from conjoined “wings” of the party into “factions” over Vietnam certainly was dramatic.

In determining policy in Vietnam, these sides took very opposing approaches and opinions. Their debates in Congress reveal much about where they drew their opinions and the consistent appearance of vastly different interpretations of the past help explain why the two “wings” of the party became “factions” and fought so hard against each other over Vietnam policy in Congress.

The Congressional members of the Democratic Party during the Vietnam War could comfortably be separated into two ideals, one based upon the Cold War consensus

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21 Mackenzie, *The Liberal Hour* 285
22 Woods, *Political Tradition* 57
23 Mackenzie, *The Liberal Hour* 356
shared with the Republican Party, the other composed of a more isolationist and noninterventionist approach to foreign policy. The more traditionalist Democratic foreign policy perspective was skeptical of large scale military action overseas, while the other wing of the party was more in tune with the Cold War consensus that developed towards communist threats around the world after World War II. The party, following the “loss of China” charges in the early 50s, would grow in members who for the most part took a much harder line to foreign policy than the party’s senior members. This budding divergence was elucidated by Jack Anderson while reporting on the events of a new Congress in 1958. Anderson remarked upon how senior Senators William Fulbright and Mike Mansfield saw in Freshman Senator Thomas Dodd’s speeches on the Senate Floor a, “dangerous rigidity, buttressed by self-righteous moralizing” in foreign policy. They also noticed “point-by-point rebuttals” of their own previous speeches, a bold move for a freshman senator of one’s own party to take.  

It is essential to note that these Members of Congress did not all tightly fit into neat definitions of imperialist, anti-imperialists, and doves and hawks. Senator Ernest Gruening and Senator William Fulbright, both regarded as radical doves, had supported intervention and war on other occasions, including in the Dominican Republic. Senator Russell Long and other conservative Democrats also at times expressed their cautiousness over the Vietnam War policy to President Johnson. However, as politicians and representatives, their most important contributions to policy are made in the public arena, passing legislation and deciding to support or defeat it. In discerning the motives of these legislators you have to look at what outcomes they pushed for publicly, because

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these were the positions that they would have to defend to be re-elected, not the opinions
they held behind the scenes.

The split that we see between both sides of the party did not originate over
Vietnam; it was based in the evolution of two different liberal ideologies. This division
lied dormant in affecting policy until the Vietnam issue arose. It did not originate just
over the Cold War, and still exists to some extent today as a division within the American
Liberal movement as a whole.

The debate between pro and anti war Democrats in Congress was often highly
contentious. In their debates and speeches over Vietnam, both sides would reflect upon
the origins of their beliefs and their interpretations of America’s duty in the world. Their
perceptions of history would prove to be the backbone of their arguments for and against
the war, and illuminate much about why the impending fight between Democrats over
Vietnam was so impassioned.

**Cold War Internationalist Liberals**

A strong Cold War liberalism materialized after World War II under Presidents
Truman, Kennedy, and Johnson. Their philosophy was of Keynesian economic policy
through military and overseas action to protect the world from communism. Many
southern and more conservative Democrats dominated this wing of the party.

In their disagreements and attacks on fellow party members over policy,
conservative Democrats revealed much of their reasoning for their ideology. They would
constantly refer to Munich and the importance of remaining strong in opposition to
communism. Senator Russell Long stated on the floor that he believed the US was having
trouble finding success during the war because “Modern day appeasers and isolationists

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25 Mackenzie, *The Liberal Hour* pg 270
are making our task difficult.”

He and others harped upon the appeasement analogy, and brought up isolation to remind supporters and others that isolation may have invited World War II. Alabama Democrat Representative Armistead I. Selden said on the House floor in 1966: “Today there are those in our own country and elsewhere who ask: What is it that America is fighting for in Vietnam? And like Churchill, our answer is “if we left off fighting, you would soon find out.”

Representative John Race would reiterate a similar analogy, “Once again we hear expressed the views which did the men of my generation pay a terrible price for in World War II. We are told that Southeast Asia is far away but so were Manchuria and Ethiopia.” It is obvious that these conservative Democrats profoundly believed in the Munich analogy, something that their fellow more liberal Democrats regarded with suspicion.

Conservative Democrats such as Senator Russell Long even traced their views on Vietnam all the way back to the Mayflower:

This nation was founded because we had courageous men. We became a great nation because the people had courage. They did not give up because they had to fight the Indians. If the men who came on the Mayflower were frightened to helplessness the first time they had to fight Indians, they would have gone back to England on the Mayflower. But they fought the Indians and won, meanwhile losing some fine Americans, until this nation became great.

Here, Senator Long connected the struggle in Vietnam to the founding of the nation, and how necessary it was to follow our history as a people by continuing the fight in Vietnam. In debate over the war there were often references to the Civil War. Senator Long referenced a story about how Confederate General Hood attacked his enemy

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26 111 Congressional Record[Hereafter CR], 89th Congress, 1st session, p. 13947 (June 16 1965)
27 112 CR, 89th Congress, 2nd Session p.1123 (January 26 1966)
28 111 CR, 89th Congress, 1st Session p. 10507( May 14 1965)
29 112 CR, 89th Congress, 2nd Session p. 3041 ( February 16 1966)
relentlessly, just as the US should do in Vietnam, instead of ducking and dodging him.\textsuperscript{30}

Conservative Democrats harked upon their lessons of the past and their background, often as Southern Senators only one hundred years removed from the Civil War.

**Activist Anti Imperialists**

A modern group of activist anti imperialists emerged during the Vietnam War in opposition to an advanced form of Cold War liberalism which they felt endangered the fundamental ideals of the republic.\textsuperscript{31} It would be a mistake however, to believe that their views were formed strictly as a response to Vietnam; they for the most part always held them. The anti war element developed in early and vocal antiwar activists such as Senator Ernest Gruening, who was an anti-imperialist muckraker in the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century.\textsuperscript{32} This coalition was very diverse and often disagreed but consisted of antiwar Senators Fulbright, Gore, Gruening, Church, McGovern, and others. These dissenters in Congress found their voice and strength in protesting the War in Vietnam.

Liberal Democrats who opposed action in Vietnam drew very different analogies and interpretations from American history and the past. On April 25\textsuperscript{th}, 1965 Senator Morse recited lines of the very liberal Carl Sandburg’s “Good Morning, America” on the floor of the Senate to describe the views of his colleague Senator William Fulbright:

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Now its Uncle Sam sitting on top of the world.
Not so long ago it was John Bull and, earlier yet, Napoleon and the eagles of France told the world where to get off at….

Spain Rome Greece Persia
One by one they no longer sat on top of the world- now Young Stranger is Uncle Sam, is America and the song goes, “The Stars and Stripes Forever” even though forever is a long time.
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\textsuperscript{30} 112 CR, 89\textsuperscript{th} Congress, 2\textsuperscript{nd} Session p. 3161 (February 16 1966)
\textsuperscript{31} Woods Political Tradition pg 8
\textsuperscript{32} Woods, Political Tradition pg 57
Even though the oldest kings had their singers and clowns calling, “oh king, you shall live forever”\textsuperscript{33}

The poem reflected Senator Fulbright’s famous “Arrogance of Power” lectures which echoed of isolationism in decrying the war. Senator Albert Gore Sr. assessed at the Borah Institute, named for the famous isolationist Senator William Borah, that America had fallen off its path from the past. “We have now become obsessed and driven not by idealism, but by fear, not by righteousness but by self righteousness; not by wisdom but by folly; not by altruism but by fancied self interest.”\textsuperscript{34} He believed that by engaging in the Vietnam War, the US was betraying its historic beneficent principles for imperialist and selfish interests.

**Taking the “American” Path**

On one day of debate anti war Senator Ernest Gruening defended his dissent in a historical frame in response to attacks by the right of his party and Senator Long:

Abraham Lincoln, who was not greatly admired in the State of the Senator from Louisiana, opposed the entry of the US in the Mexican War, spoke against it in the congress and elsewhere and today no one vilifies the memory of Abraham Lincoln or castigates him for that courageous and proper attitude.\textsuperscript{35}

Southern Democratic Senator from Florida Senator Spessar Holland felt obliged to defend the attack on fellow Senator Long personally, describing how his own father and grandfather fought gallantly for the Confederacy but still respected Abraham Lincoln. “I want the record to show that most of us in the southland venerate the memory of Abraham Lincoln and do not believe that if he had lived we would not have had the troubles that came after the conclusion of that war”\textsuperscript{36} This debate, and the personal way

\textsuperscript{33} 112 CR, 89\textsuperscript{th} Congress, 2\textsuperscript{nd} Session, p. 8869 (April 25 1966)
\textsuperscript{34} 114 CR, 90\textsuperscript{th} Congress, 2\textsuperscript{nd} Session, p. 3471 (February 20 1968)
\textsuperscript{35} 112 CR, 89\textsuperscript{th} Congress, 2\textsuperscript{nd} Session p. 3042 (February 16 1966)
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid
both sides took it, underlines and reminds the reader of the very different backgrounds
both senators came from. Their regional and historical differences separated them to a
recognizable extent. This extent, somewhat based upon each Senator’s regional
backgrounds, divided the party bitterly and partly explains why both sides of the party
fought so bitterly over Vietnam policy.

Vastly different interpretations of history divided the way the two wings of the
party thought about the Vietnam War, and contributed to their stubbornness and
divisiveness over the issue. This debate over the origins of American foreign policy and
what was the “American” path to take displayed a much deeper and permanent difference
in philosophy among Democrats, one that inevitably clashed. Ultimately, this serves to
explain the uncompromising view both sides took towards Vietnam War policy.
Chapter IV

“An Intraparty Row”: Public Battles between Democrats in Congress 1964-1968

President Lyndon Baines Johnson’s time in office oversaw an intense evolution of both the popularity and strategy of America’s Vietnam policies. In 1964 the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution was pushed through Congress in response to the controversial Gulf of Tonkin attacks and easily passed, with its only major opposition coming from Democratic Senators Wayne Morse and Ernest Gruening. Much of the country supported the war in as much as they knew about it, so both Senators were seen as to the extreme of the country. As the problems in Vietnam grew with the war effort, however, sentiments in Congress and in the country at large changed. More and more Democratic Senators objected to the war in Vietnam and sought to change policy. A *US News and World Report* headline read, “Debate over foreign policy looking more and more like an intraparty row.”

The “no” votes from Senators Morse and Gruening during the 1964 Gulf of Tonkin vote would foretell the heated debate over policy that was to come. It was quite a decision for the two Senators to take such an unpopular stand at the time against a popular President from their own party. In Alaska, Senator Gruening’s state, 83% of the population favored going into war. Earlier, while he was still a Senator, Lyndon Johnson suavely convinced Wayne Morse to join the Democratic Caucus after leaving the Republican Party; a decision that worked to the mutual benefit of both men. These Senators however held nothing back in their criticism of the policy in the limited debate

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37 Johnson, Congress 108
in the Senate despite these limitations or connections to their party and the Johnson Administration.

Other leaders such as Majority Leader Mike Mansfield and Senator William Fulbright (who was the Resolution’s Floor Manager), expressed quiet pessimism over the value of the resolution, and would continue to be influenced by their loyalty to their President and the Democratic Party. The actions of dissenters over the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution foreshadowed the conflict that would evolve over the next few years within the Democratic Party over the war. Some Senators would object strongly, while others would quietly object but support the policy in public. Party loyalties, patriotism, and contrasting foreign policy philosophies amongst Democratic Party members would leave some Democrats afraid to challenge the President and would force others to be moderate and compromising in their dissent. This resulted in decisions not to challenge the President and culminated in little effective policy change while Lyndon Johnson remained President. This was illustrated both on the floor of Congress and in the public arena.

**Appropriation Battles**

The Party would often split openly on the floor of Congress in bitter disputes over policy. These are seen in an analysis of the battle over the Appropriation Bills of 1965 and 1966. Arguments over appropriations became distinct instances where members would sometimes condemn each other very harshly. The pro war side of the party would specifically attempt to squash or discredit any opposition to the war by members of their own party. These were some of the only opportunities Senators had to vote up or down on the war, and any trouble over the approval of military appropriations would have
forced President Johnson to reassess his policy. That is why debate was so essential for
the conservative Democrats to win, and why they resorted to using such negative tactics.

Military appropriations bills are rarely challenged, even when military action is
unpopular, because of the idea that voting down such a bill would be seen as non support
to troops in the field and because of the mistaken belief that taking such a vote would rob
military personnel of much needed supplies. Democratic Senators Russell Long, John O.
Pastore, and Thomas Dodd among others would latch onto that idea and use it to attack
and threaten members from voting against the bill in several different sessions of
Congress.

The Military Appropriations Bill of 1965 was the first real challenge to the
administration’s policy. Senators Ernest Gruening and Wayne Morse were joined by
Senators Gaylord Nelson, Joseph S. Clark, Majority Leader Mike Mansfield and William
Fulbright in questioning the value of the policy in Vietnam. Early on in debate,
conservative Democrat Senator Russell Long openly criticized opponents of the measure:

Speeches delivered on this floor and votes which would suggest that this nation
should get out of Vietnam at a time when we are fighting to defend that which we
are committed to defend contribute to the Communist notion that they can put
pressure upon us, and that if they continue their campaign of assassination and
terror and step it up, America will pull out. The only successful measure that we
have managed to develop by which to stop Communist aggression is a show of
strength. I hope that we will show that strength here today. 39

Senator Long unmistakably insinuated that Senators Morse, Gruening, and
Nelson’s impending votes against the appropriations bill would “contribute” to the cause
of the enemy. To Senator Long even suggesting wary support of the war in speeches
detracted from the war effort. Senator John O. Pastore harped upon the same note right
after Long: “I hope and pray that there would not be one single vote in opposition to

39 111 CR, 89th Congress, 1st Session, p 9770 (May 6 1965)
prove to the rest of the world that America is behind her boys 100 percent, without equivocation, without reservation, and without question,”[40] To Senator Pastore, even a “reservation” or “question” over the vote implied that these Senators did not support their “boys” overseas. This came as direct responses to speeches by their fellow Democratic Senators Morse, Gruening, and Nelson. The viciousness of the debate required Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield to attempt to moderate the discourse: “Let no one question the sincerity of the motives, the beliefs, and the patriotism of any Member of this body, regardless of how he may vote.”[41] This attempt to relax the debate failed. The bullying by conservative Democrats continued, and for the most part seemed to work. Senator Joseph Clark responded to these statements to repeat his criticism and dislike for the policy but stated that he would not vote against the measure, in part because one needed to, “send the message of supporting the troops.”[42] Conservative Democrats had successfully painted the vote of the 1965 appropriations bill as a vote for or against the troops. This tactic dismissed any fruitful vote over support of the Vietnam policy in general.

The 1966 Military Appropriations Bill debate would be even more contentious. Democratic Senators Russell Long and Stuart Symington spoke on the floor in February with Republican Minority Leader Richard Russell and posed rhetorical questions to each other as to why the bill was being filibustered so late into the year while “the boys” overseas waited for their support.[43] Symington, later on in the conversation condemned the delay that was being taken to continue debate over the bill, “Men are fighting and

[40] Ibid
[41] Ibid
[42] Ibid
[43] 112 CR 89th Congress, 2nd Session, p 4292 (February 28 1966)
dying in the cause of freedom. This delay can only result in increased casualties.” He would remark, “Based on information given to me, unless we go forward now, we will be responsible for additional casualties in Vietnam.” Democratic Senator Ross Bass added, “I am here to say that I am getting sick and tired of seeing our American fighting men disregarded in the way that they are.” All of these charges were made by Democrats about Democrats and served to make opposition look poorly in the public eye.

Whether abrupt or gently implied, it was easy to discern that many pro-war Democrats were attempting to intimidate the anti-war Democrats by any means possible. Senator Wayne Morse noted this on the Senate floor in a quirky way when reciting the Assistant Secretary of State’s quote in regards to himself:

Therefore I have no doubt that our losses in Vietnam will increase so long as anyone suspects that the handful of Senators and Congressmen and the bearded beatniks…

Senator Morse quickly interjected, “I HAVE ONLY A MOUSTACHE” in reference to Secretary Rusk’s comment which sought to tie him to the “bearded beatniks” or protesters, who were wholly unpopular at the time. In the midst of a barrage of attacks on him from pro-war Democrats during the 1966 Military Appropriations debate, Senator Morse recognized the attacks upon him on the floor:

I would be quite less than human, of course, if I applauded the innuendoes in the speeches that have been made in the last 10 minutes. I only want to say most respectfully to my colleagues that I do not yield to a single one of them in my sense of loyalty to my government and to the men in Vietnam.

Attacks upon the patriotism of dissident Democrats continued, and were once again effective as the Appropriations bill easily passed. While some anti-war senators

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44 Ibid, pg 4294
45 Ibid, pg 4296
46 Ibid
such as Morse and Ernest Gruening continued and stepped up their dissent, these attacks were effective in portraying them as radical and un-American. The attacks also intimidated other Senators from openly criticizing the war and losing their legitimacy in the same way that Senators Morse and Gruening did.

Calls for patriotism and loyalty to one’s country are a time proven way to stifle dissent over foreign policy in US history. From the Philippines to Vietnam to the current Wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, challenges to the patriotism of policy dissenters have been both the norm and an effective way of bullying such dissenters from challenging policy. Often those who smear the patriotism of others have little knowledge of the beliefs of those others, and rarely align themselves with the dissenters politically. This however was different in Congress during the Vietnam War. Hawkish Democratic Members of Congress were unafraid to challenge the patriotism of fellow Democrats on the floor of Congress, and would continue to keep the tactic up throughout the war. These attacks served as a distraction to the policy decisions being made in Congress and would damage the reputations of those who objected even moderately to the policies of President Johnson in Vietnam.

**Senator Russell Long: The Pro-War Bully-in-Chief**

Senator Russell Long led conservative Democrats in harsh and debilitating criticisms of anti-war Democrats and of any legislative attempts to curb the war. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearings over the war between 1964 and 1968 were noticeable for their introduction of the war issue into the living rooms of the average American. The witnesses and Senators who questioned the Vietnam policy in the famous Fulbright Hearings evoked condemnation from Senator Long:
I was not able to be present at the hearings of the foreign relations committee but I want to say that these advocates of retreat, defeat, surrender, and national dishonor have not been doing the country any good when they went before a television network suggesting that this nation was not committed to fighting aggression in this area.\textsuperscript{47}

Long suggests that Senator Fulbright brought into Congress “advocates of national dishonor” such as George Kennan and others who, in their testimonies, never came fully out and denounced American policy in Vietnam and who are often remembered as loyal Cold War warriors.

Long then went on to discuss the actions of his fellow Democrats during the hearings, “I do not regard this nation as being an international criminal, as the senator from Oregon has said, and I do not regard this nation as being an international aggressor, as the senator from Alaska has said.”\textsuperscript{48} He openly questioned Senators Morse and Gruening’s allegiances to their country by disguising the issue at hand. Senators Morse and Gruening had not in fact called the U.S. an “international criminal”, but had questioned the legality of the commitment. Long said of the American troops fighting in South Vietnam: “They might be defeated. But they are not going to get whipped in Vietnam. If they are beaten, it will be in Washington.”\textsuperscript{49} These McCarthy-like tactics suggested that only Long’s fellow Democrats were in the way of success in Vietnam.

Long once got into an argument with Senator McGovern on the floor:

\begin{verbatim}
SENATOR LONG. My prayer is that there may never be a white flag of surrender up there.
SENATOR McGOVERN. I do not believe that anyone is questioning the glory of the America flag, the question is what is in our national interest.
SENATOR LONG. The information I am getting- and it is coming from very high sources in the government- is that one of the greatest difficulties in bringing the war to an end is that every time a Senator suggests that we retreat and accept
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{47} 112 CR, 89\textsuperscript{th} Congress, 2\textsuperscript{nd} Session p. 3041 (February 16 1966)
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid, p. 3042
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid
defeat or surrender, that word goes right back to Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh, and the powers at Peiping.\textsuperscript{50}

Long deviously suggests that every time any Senator speaks about the issues, and from his own party at that, they support North Vietnam. Long would later more explicitly declare:

And every time a Senator makes a speech suggesting that we should withdraw, quit tomorrow, or limit our effort to what we are doing at this moment, all he is doing is encouraging the Communists to continue the war.\textsuperscript{51}

Long constantly stayed on message that his fellow Democrats were encouraging the opposition and were helping the opposition win the war. This attack on any and all forms of dissent by hawkish Democrats such as that by Senator Long would hamper the abilities of the dissident Democrats to furnish a respectable opposition and succeed in doing so.

**Attacks off the Congress Floor: Where the Gloves Came off**

While debates on the floors of Congress would often be particularly biting and awkward, public speeches and debates would often be more informal and more clearly portrayed the sense of disagreement and differences within the party. Politicians would feel more comfortable addressing friendly audiences than their colleagues. Therefore they could be much more revealing than Congressional speeches. Their words however would inevitably find their way into the Congressional Record anyway.

On May 7\textsuperscript{th} 1965 Democratic Senator Fred Harris of Oklahoma spoke before the Oklahoma Bankers Association regarding Vietnam. He pointedly dismissed Senator Fulbright’s critique of the administration’s war policy:

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid p. 3043
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid
A respected member of the Senate once made a speech on foreign policy called old myths and new realities. I would like to plagiarize a little and on another subject, Vietnam, turn that title around to call these remarks new myths and old realities.\textsuperscript{52}

Here he clearly admonishes Senator Fulbright’s speech and book, \textit{Old Myths and New Realities}. He chastised Senator Fulbright and was completely free to mock him off the Senate floor. On April 6\textsuperscript{th}, 1966 Senator Dodd gave a similarly critical speech to the United States Air Force Academy:

After all the nonsense that has been spoken by critics of our Vietnam policy, it is a most refreshing experience to be here with you today. Here there are no faint hearts, no divided counsels, no tortured self-doubting, no appeasement masquerading as something noble and humanitarian.\textsuperscript{53}

At this speech in front of an armed services graduation Dodd described the dissenters in Congress as “faint hearts, divided counsels,” who were “masquerading as something noble and humanitarian.” He went on to denounce the intelligence of his fellow Democrats who opposed the Vietnam policy, “While the ideal of pacifism may be an admirable thing when regarded abstractly, I frankly fail to understand how any intelligent man can seek to apply this abstract ideal to the world of politics.” He left no room for misunderstanding or compromise, “There are certain issues on which we can compromise and certain issues on which we cannot compromise.”\textsuperscript{54} These speeches, which openly mocked the bravery and intelligence of his fellow anti-war Democrats, received much attention and served to undermine the public’s view of many members of the Democratic Party.

While speeches in and out of Congress often vividly illustrated the division within the party, it was quite another thing to witness such a passionate argument in a television

\textsuperscript{52} 111 CR, 89\textsuperscript{th} Congress, 1\textsuperscript{st} session, p. 11461 (May 25 1965)
\textsuperscript{53} 112 CR, 89\textsuperscript{th} Congress, 2\textsuperscript{nd} session, p 7938 (April 6\textsuperscript{th} 1966)
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid
or radio debate. In a CBS Television and Radio Broadcast on February 13th, 1966 between Democratic Senators Frank Church, Ernest Gruening, Stuart Symington, and Republicans John Tower and Jacob Javits, Democratic Party lines and allegiances disappeared. Senator Church began to defend himself against a charge by Senator Tower when Senator Symington, a fellow Democrat awkwardly intervened and interrupted him to defend the Republican, Senator Tower:

SEN. TOWER. …you cannot say, well, the way to solve this is not by the intrusion of troops…
SEN. CHURCH. Well, now, of course, ‘John’, but you are pushing an open door here… All I am suggesting is-
SEN. SYMINGTON. You compared-
SEN. CHURCH. All that I am suggesting, ‘Stu’, if I may just finish-
SEN. SYMINGTON. But let me just finish.-
SEN. CHURCH. All I am suggesting is this.-
SEN. STYMINGTON. I am taking up for his side because you interrupted him [Senator Tower]. Now let me interrupt you.55

The sheer awkwardness of this debate shines through. Party lines became completely blurred as Senator Stymington was unafraid to cut off Senator Church in favor of a fellow hawk, albeit a Republican. While as the war went on the number of dissenters increased, the divisiveness of conservative Democrats in the media and on the floor made it extremely difficult for anti-war Democrats to successfully express their opinions.

**Consequences of a Divided Democratic Caucus**

While pro war Democrats were much more vitriolic in attacking the patriotism and sense of honor of antiwar Democrats, they were not only the ones engaging in the practice. At one point in response to an attack on the floor Senator Morse declared, “The policy I would follow is a policy that would stop killing them [American Soldiers]. The

policy the majority is advocating is a policy that will kill increasing numbers of them.”

Both sides engaged in divisive attacks upon each other openly on the Senate floor. While the pro-war group was more effective (no major anti-Vietnam bill ever succeeded) both groups often approached the problem in an uncompromising manner that would prevent any type of cooperation from occurring at all. Senator Morse would isolate himself from colleagues with comments such as this:

Last August, many Senators performed a rather pathetic exercise of explaining that their votes for the resolution should not be construed to support an expansion of the war. … I say to the reservationists, who think the President is not going to do these things, that by passing the joint resolution they are giving the President another vote of confidence. That is what he told us in the message he sent to Congress asking for the passage of the pending joint resolution.⁵⁶

Morse and his fellow anti-war Democrats vehemently did away with much compromise in their efforts to extract the US from Vietnam, as did the conservative Democrats. This left dissenters without having much say in affecting Vietnam policy, as the Johnson Administration for the most part closed its doors to anti-war Congressmen. They were ineffective in pursuing a policy of compromise within their party to at least have some means in affecting foreign policy.

⁵⁶ 111 CR, 89th Congress, 1st Session, p 9765 (May 6 1965)
Chapter V

Now Is the Time for All Good Men to-Come to the Aid of Their Party: The Democratic Party Defeats its Own

Democratic Members of Congress faced great pressure from both the Johnson Administration and the Democratic Party organization to avoid addressing and influencing the President’s Vietnam policy in Congress. As an organization, the Democratic Party was much more conservative than its legislative members and base voters during the Vietnam War, partially because of the influence the Johnson administration held over it. Democratic National Committee Chairman John Moran Bailey and other party leaders were absolutely loyal to and consulted often with the President. The DNC and the administration would prove to be unsuccessful in completely quieting Democratic dissent regarding the war, but their tactics to intimidate party members would be effective in preventing anti-war Democrats from addressing Johnson’s policy in the run up to the 1968 Presidential election.

Presidential Pressure

The divisions between anti-war Democratic Senators and President Johnson were clear. President Johnson disdained the liberal Democrats who he believed to be effete intellectuals: “a real plan of attack” for liberals would be to “get ten of them out here at a Georgetown house some night with Arthur Schlesinger” since “that’s what they do best: talk”.57 Liberal Democrats often felt just as negatively about Johnson. Senator Wayne Morse declared that if President Johnson “were ever to have a liberal idea, he would have a brain hemorrhage.”58 The dislike between the two sides was palpable, and from the very

57 Johnson, Congress 115
58 Johnson, Congress 64
beginning of the war until 1968 the Johnson Administration would do whatever possible to shame and scorn anti-war Democrats in order for its policy to succeed.

Various Democratic Senators faced intense pressure from the President not to take action in opposition to the war. Senators Ernest Gruening and Wayne Morse in particular were criticized and isolated for their early opposition to the war. On April 23, 1965 William P. Bundy, President Johnson’s Assistant Secretary of State debated Senator Gruening over the war and called upon Gruening to be loyal to the President and the party in a pre-debate aside:

SEN. GRUENING. Now is the time for all good men-
AS. SECY. BUNDY. To come to the aid of their party…And that means Democrats.⁵⁹

Columnist for the New York World-Telegram Murray Kempton witnessed this back and forth and commented on the debate and the unique separation between anti-war Democrats and their party:

We were watching an event for which there was no remembered precedent in our history. If we are not at war in Vietnam, we are indisputably engaged in what Bundy prefers to call a ‘sober and measured military effort.’ And now a representative of the President of the United States was publicly debating a Senator from the President’s own party who wants to stop the war before an audience overwhelmingly of the President’s Party and by any measure of its response, demonstrably hostile to his policy.⁶⁰

Bundy and the administration tried to bully their party’s members into supporting the war, and were on opposite sides of the issue from members of their own party. Apart from this debate, the Johnson Administration largely shut out Democratic naysayers from

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⁵⁹ 111 CR, 89th Congress, 1st Session, p 8435 (April 23 1965)
⁶⁰ Ibid pg 8436
any discussion over the war and its interactions with Congress were what Senator Morse would describe to be largely attempts to “cozy” up to other Democratic Senators. 61

While Senators Gruening and Morse were isolated from the beginning of the war, other anti-war Democratic Senators were at first cajoled and then reprimanded for not falling in line with the Administration. Prominent and powerful Democratic Senator William Fulbright trusted and was loyal to President Johnson during the beginning stages of the war. Senator Fulbright was at first “over persuaded to support the President” and relied on trust and friendship in initially supporting the President in Vietnam against his better judgments. 62 President Johnson also used gifts and his power as President to influence Fulbright to support him. 63 After initially supporting the war during the Gulf of Tonkin Fulbright changed his mind and was eventually banned from the White House for a whole year. He was given no voice in affecting President Johnson’s policies.

Other anti-war Senators were treated in much the same way. President Johnson once threatened Senator Frank Church at an official dinner by telling him he could get a dam (a project he wanted from appropriations) in Idaho from the famous commentator Walter Lippmann with whom he was allied. 64 Democratic leaders of the opposition were often afraid to challenge LBJ’s policy for fear of a dismantled Democratic Party. They were also very reluctant to betray a man whom many knew quite well personally.” Ultimately, loyalty to the President was an incisive factor in determining Congress’

61 111 CR, 89th Congress, 1st Session p 8440 (March 15 1965)
63 Woods, Fulbright 370
reluctance to affect war policy; out of 94 votes taken by Congress regarding the war only 9 came while Johnson was President.\textsuperscript{65}

**A “Tempest in a Teapot”: The Young Democrats**

Any dissent within the Democratic Party organization over Vietnam was chastised and denounced by party leadership. This can be seen in the several confrontations that the Young Democrats of America had with Democratic leaders over the Vietnam policy. In 1966 Congressman Armistead Selden mistakenly cited that the Young Democrats had participated in a Pro-War Democrats Rally, which they hastily denied. The Congressman referred to the mistake as a “tempest in a teapot” and went to the House floor to denounce their actions:

> The president of the Young Democrats declares, and rather vehemently, that his organization did not participate in this rally in support of the President’s policy in Vietnam. As a Democrat, I regret that they did not do so- and I am disappointed, to say the least, that the Young Democrat leadership desires to go to such great lengths to dissociate their organization from a cause which supports the policy of a Democratic President.\textsuperscript{66}

Young Democrats around the country rebelled against the party and urged for the end of the Vietnam War with resolutions that angered party leadership. Future Democratic Congressmen Henry Waxman and Howard Berman led a progressive anti-war California Young Democrats association that drew the ire of then State Assembly Speaker Democrat Jess Unruh.\textsuperscript{67} The national party was strikingly different from the less bureaucratic and more populist student led Young Democrats.

\textsuperscript{65} Stevenson, *Warriors* 61
\textsuperscript{66} 112 CR, 89\textsuperscript{th} Congress, 2\textsuperscript{nd} Session p.1123 (January 26 1966)
\textsuperscript{67} California Young Democrats History Page, No author attributed. http://www.youngdems.org/about-cyd/our-history/
Democratic National Committee Leader John Moran Bailey sought to assert control over the Young Democrats for their dissidence regarding Vietnam. On March 10, 1967 he gave a speech to their convention,

For those of you who may favor getting out of Vietnam right away, let me hastily state that my subject today is peace. Peace between Democrats... look at the alternative—slippery Dick, ruthless Ronnie, revolving Romney or perplexed Percy…People always vote Democratic when we quit fighting among ourselves and bring them the facts.  

His entire speech was devoted to urging Young Democrats to make peace with their party and stop “fighting” with party leadership. His speech simply tried to guilt young party members into be loyal to their party and to quiet down over Vietnam.

**The Ineffectual “Uprising” Within the Democratic Party**

President Johnson’s Postmaster General Larry O’ Brien toured the country in 1966 and 1967 several times for President Johnson so that he could be in touch with the Democratic base. While he believed most Democrats around the country supported the war effort, he had begun to hear rumblings against the policy. Democrats in California and in the Northeast were confronting him behind closed doors constantly over policy.

As he traveled he witnessed that there was,

Rising concern expressed by Democratic local and state leaders across the country regarding Vietnam…In meetings with people that were important to us and would be important in 1968, I found I was on the defensive a great deal of the time. More and more it was apparent that there was an uprising.

More and more people he talked to within the party began to protest the war, yet their “uprising” within the party had little to no effect policy wise:

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69 Transcript, Lawrence F. O’Brien Oral History Interview XX, 4/23/87, by Michael L. Gillette, Internet Copy, LBJ Library.pg 3
But you could not avoid noting that in 1967, more and more discussions with members would involve expressions of concern about Vietnam. That increased in degree as time went on. But if you look at this legislative record in 1968, you were not being adversely affected by the growing concern regarding Vietnam.70

Nothing legislatively was done involving Vietnam, yet O’Brien felt opposition to Vietnam in Democratic circles everywhere he went.

70 Transcript, Lawrence F. O’Brien Oral History Interview XXI, 6/18/87, by Michael L. Gillette, Internet Copy, LBJ Library. Pg 4
Chapter VI

“This was going to be devastating to the Democratic Party”: The 1968 Election and the Nixon Years

The 1968 Presidential elections came at a most conspicuous and inopportune time for the dissident Democrats. They were encouraged to batten down the rhetoric and protests so that the Party could be poised to re-elect the President. The fear of the problem of a divided Democratic Party was real, as the Republicans had noted it as an electoral strategy. Republicans in the House Republican policy committee pointed out that “the deep division within the Democratic Party over American policy in Vietnam is prolonging the war, undermining the morale of our fighting men, and encouraging the Communist aggressor.” Republicans were making political hay of these divisions all the way back in 1966, and Richard Nixon among others would constantly tout this division. Initially, the imperative was for the Democratic Party to unite over Vietnam for the sake of the Democratic President and for the sake of “peace” before LBJ decided against running. After President Johnson decided to no longer run, the National Party’s objective became to prevent an anti-war Democrat from becoming the party’s nominee.

Democrats in Congress were very much split over whether President Johnson should have run for re-election up until he announced his decision to not run. Many anti-war Democrats thought that Johnson had become unpopular, and that an anti-war candidate might better represent the party interests. Pro-war Democrats on the other hand saw in Johnson the only reasonable and honorable candidate that would seek peace through victory. In 1967 Senator Russell Long published a series of articles in the

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71 112 CR, 89th Congress, 2nd session, p. 5378 (March 9 1966)
Congressional Record attacking Senator Robert Kennedy, saying he opposed his candidacy and suggested,

    If the Democratic Party should choose the course of retreat, defeat and weakness in the face of the Communists, and have not been defeated in a single major battle in the war, I think a candidate running on that platform would be ignominiously defeated.  

Thus Long takes immediate sides in the affair, long before Senator Kennedy even suggested he might run. Long went onto declare that the US should not be afraid of the war and should have faith in its own purposes. He and other conservative Senators believed that if the Democrats chose a dovish candidate to run the party would be left with a deserving loss.

Other members of the Senate however believed that the Democratic Party could pick a candidate other than Lyndon Johnson, and many felt that they needed to. By doing so they could return to their principles and take a stand against the war as a party. Senator Vance Hartke published in the Congressional Record a statement by Arthur Schlesinger which he agreed with:

    Democrats disturbed over the widening of the war in Vietnam should not feel that they are abandoning the Democratic Administration. It is the Democratic Administration that which in this area is abandoning the historic principles of the Democratic Party.

Schlesinger and Hartke believed that Johnson had betrayed the party’s core principles, and that a replacement might be necessary if the war continued to be widened.

“The Right to Dissent Must Not Be Confused with the Duty to Implement Our Party Platform”

72 114 CR, 90th Congress, 2nd session, p 8083-8087 (March 28 1968 )
73 114 CR, 90th Congress, 2nd session, p 2968 (February 14 1968)
The records of John Moran Bailey, Democratic National Committee Chairman from 1961 until 1968, are useful in analyzing the DNC’s approach towards Vietnam. He gave many speeches to different Democratic constituencies around the country, praising Johnson’s Vietnam policies and encouraging Democrats to come together. He also attempted to frustrate liberal efforts in the party to push for more liberal policies. He and the DNC had no hesitation in standing completely behind Johnson and condemning the antiwar movement within the party.

On February 21st, 1967 Congressman Abe Multer sent a letter to several dissenters admonishing them for opposing the war. “The right to dissent must not be confused with the duty to implement our Party platform.” Upon receiving notice of the letter, Bailey wrote in confidence to Multer, “I should have personally thanked you for the letter you sent to Hartke, Edwards, and Kastenmeier. I thought it was great.” Bailey did not intervene and defend Democratic legislator’s rights to dissent, he instead supported bullying them.

On August 28th, 1967 the Committee distributed an article entitled, “Watch on the Potomac: The Kennedy Fulbright Movement”. The article attacked a group that sought to elect either Fulbright or Robert Kennedy in the 1968 Presidential election. Bailey blamed the anti-war movement for causing the party’s divisions and complicating future election efforts. House Democratic Congressmen Lionel Van Deerlin and Tennessee Democratic Party Executive JB Avery Jr. both sent letters in response saying it was inappropriate for the DNC to take sides. Representative Deerlin’s letter pointed out that the letter also attacked fellow Congressional Democrats. “It seems to me to be highly divisive for

75 Ibid
material critical of prominent Democrats to be distributed under the imprimatur of the Party organization.” Chairman Bailey replied unsympathetically,

“This was sent to Democrats across the country as an advisory and to put into perspective a group which has been disavowed by both Senators Kennedy and Fulbright, and in our view, seeks not to be helpful but a disruptive force. You take the position in your letter that you are not against anyone for the Presidency. We take the position of supporting the Democratic President of the United States and the Democratic Administration.” 76

He did not even attempt to deny that the letter was critical of Democratic leaders who stood up against the war, and reaffirmed the DNC’s support above all for the Democratic President. John Moran Bailey and others in the Democratic Party Establishment took strong sides against the dissenters in the party and sought to both divide the peace movement in Congress and consistently admonished it.

Speaking at the Southern Regional 1968 Victory Conference, Bailey was in a unique position to address many of the more conservative Democrats in the South regarding Vietnam. He criticized Vietnam dissenters and reassured conservative Democrats that the party would continue to support the war; “It is always easy to dissent, you know. It is always easy to capture a headline.”77 According to Bailey, dissenters only sought “fame” in opposing the Vietnam policy. In a comment that was sure to elicit laughter from the crowd, Bailey remarked, “Now most of these dissenters are sensitive and idealistic people and I am sure we all understand their feelings.”78 He openly mocked anti-war Democrats to please the many pro-war Democrats in the crowd. In marking the importance of his effort, Bailey finished his speech by noting, “Nowadays there is a saying, as goes the South so goes the nation.” It became Bailey’s and the Democratic

77 “Southern Regional 68’ Victory Conference, Atlanta, February 24 1968” Box Number 3 Ibid
78 Ibid
Party’s objective to ignore the dissenters in preparation for the 1968 election and to appeal more to the pro-war members of the Democratic Party, including much of the South. The Party was focused on re-electing a President who was pro-war, and sabotaged its own internal anti-war movement.

**Humphrey for President and the Chicago Convention**

After President Johnson chose not to run, and following a long and debilitating primary process, the Democrats chose Hubert Humphrey to run for President against Republican Richard Nixon. Humphrey had hinted privately at being against the war, but in public he ran on Johnson’s strategy for the war. Following his position as Postmaster General for the Johnson administration Larry O’Brien went to work for both the Robert F Kennedy and Hubert Humphrey campaigns. He noted that Humphrey’s criticism of the war was constrained by Johnson and the pro-war Democrats:

> Any departure from the Johnson Vietnam policy would be considered by him [LBJ] and southerners he clamed he was speaking for as totally unacceptable, and would bring about disruptions in the convention up to and including Connally putting Johnson’s name in nomination.  

President Johnson and the conservative Democrats insisted that Humphrey supported the war. The Humphrey campaign also felt pressure to ensure that they had conservative support:

> The concern Jim Rowe articulated on any number of occasions was Humphrey being too dovish on Vietnam would be harmful in the South….While he would not be too liberal for the Northeast or California, he could be considered a little too liberal for the south.  

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79 Transcript, Lawrence F. O’Brien Oral History Interview XXI, 6/18/87, by Michael L. Gillette, Internet Copy, LBJ Library. pg 4
80 Transcript, Lawrence F. O’Brien Oral History Interview XXV, 8/25/87, by Michael L. Gillette, Internet Copy, LBJ Library. Pg 7
O’Brien described his belief that the power that the Southern and more conservative Democrats held over the convention was absolute:

There was suggestion later that the Vietnam Plank should have been more doveish. While it may have reasonably satisfied 60 percent of the delegates, its unfortunate it didn’t satisfy over 80 percent of the delegates, where is the breaking point? The breaking point probably was pretty close in the language of that plank in Chicago. But as far as the South is concerned, Hubert Humphrey’s liberalism would have some impact on certain southern Democrats.  

The Vietnam plank for the election was inexorably linked to the division within the Party. While Humphrey and others wanted stronger language on the Vietnam Platform they could not do it. Both Lyndon Johnson and the conservative Democrats could have jeopardized the party’s chances of winning in the election even further. Their influence was clearly overriding.

The results of the effect of the 1968 Election to the doves within the Democratic Party were devastating. By losing to President Nixon the party and its members lost any means of control over war policy to a Cold Warrior who sought to “leave with honor”, but would continue to drag the war on. This did not have to be. By ignoring the concerns of the antiwar movement within the party the establishment leaders in the party, Bailey, LBJ, advisors to Humphrey, and other Democrats ignored much of their base in the election. They tried to please conservative Democrats in the South who left the party in droves. While Johnson had carried the South in 1964, in 1968 Humphrey received less than 10% of the white southern vote. They chose to defend and appeal to conservative members of the party whose differences with the vast majority of the party out west and in the northeast were enormous. Most importantly electorally, Humphrey lost by

81 Ibid
percentage points in key close states that at times leaned anti-war including California, Ohio, Wisconsin, Illinois, and Delaware. Had the party chosen a more anti-war candidate, it might be reasonable to suspect that they could have carried those states.

**The Aftermath of 68’: The Nixon Years**

Despite the effect that the 1968 elections had upon the Democratic Party as a whole, it did not influence the way many of its members approached the Vietnam issue. Neither did it influence the way that pro-war members of Congress continued to attack and criticize those within the Party who did not support President Nixon. Many in the party came to defend the Republican in control, and party allegiance was at a low. The bullying on the floors of Congress continued and warfare in the party became as negative and dubious as ever.

The biggest change in congressional policy that occurred regarding Vietnam was the vast growth in the amount of bills and amendments introduced against the war. The clear factor was that anti-war Democrats now felt unconstrained by the fact that their President was in power and that such a bill might undermine him. Without a President in power to command the party’s respect, the party power had declined quite a bit. Despite this, antiwar Democrats would still remain largely unsuccessful in directly affecting Vietnam policy. In a protracted battle over the “Amendment to End the War” in 1970 the differences amongst Democrats were once again the problem. Also, in various floor debates and speeches the undermining and attacks continued even worse than before. So while some of the constraints were lifted on anti-war Democrats and several anti-war measures were successful in forcing President Nixon to evolve his Vietnamese policies,
the movement was unsuccessful in enacting real change over directly affecting the Vietnam policy and was completely unsuccessful in demanding an end to the war.

The debate over the “Amendment to End the War” elucidates much on the allegiances of various members of the Party. Democratic Senator Robert Byrd noted that he disagreed with the amendment because,

> It would tie the hands of the President in his efforts to bring about an orderly and gradual withdrawal without rewarding communist aggression, and it might impede rather than hasten that withdrawal; and it could result in jeopardy to our own troops in Vietnam.\(^8^4\)

Democrat Spessard Holland would use the same tone in stating that ending the war prematurely would be “most unwise, unfair to the several hundred thousand Americans whose lives are directly affected by what goes in Vietnam because of their presence there.”\(^8^5\) Once again pro-war Democrats would blame anti-war Democrats for putting American troops in jeopardy. Pro-war Democrat Senator John C. Stennis followed Byrd,

> I do not believe, however, that we should cut and run from Vietnam by a legislative termination date which will broadcast to the enemy and our world the precise nature of our plans. When we leave South Vietnam- and I hope this will be soon- I believe we should leave with the American Flag flying proudly and not dragged in disorderly retreat.\(^8^6\)

While war supporters often cited their wish for the war to end, it was a tactic that President Nixon would use as well when declaring that he would attempt to “achieve peace with honor”. Pro-war Senators once again appealed to patriotism and by doing so questioned the patriotism of their own party members. They also denounced the only available means to affect policy; through taking war powers back from the President.

\(^8^4\) 116 CR, 91\(^{st}\) Congress, 2\(^{nd}\) session, p 30473-30475 (August 31 1970).
\(^8^5\) Ibid p. 30487
\(^8^6\) Ibid p. 30475
Many members of the party also put allegiance to the President in policy far ahead of the party. Senator Stennis avowed:

No Chief Executive of the nation can be effective as a negotiator or peacemaker or in the conduct of a war if he has one of his hands tied behind him. We had a policy that had our boys hands tied behind them in the battlefield. Now, this amendment unmistakably ties the President’s hand behind him. He is trying to get the boys out with his left hand. But he has to keep this mailed fist in position.\textsuperscript{87}

The Conservative Democrats went beyond party lines and took their loyalty to the President to another level.

But the doves fired back. In equally inhospitable terms Senator George McGovern would address the detractors of the amendments. Standing up before the voting of the amendment, McGovern said,

Every Senator in this Chamber is partly responsible for sending 50000 young Americans to an early grave. This Chamber reeks of blood… It does not take any courage at all for a Congressman, or a Senator, or a President to wrap himself in the flag and say we are staying in Vietnam because it is not our blood that is being shed.\textsuperscript{88}

The rhetoric used by both sides of Democrats in the debate showed just how far apart they still were philosophically. How could one compromise on ending the war when the country and its honor were at stake? Or how could one compromise on shortening the war and not feel responsible for the deaths of more American boys? The inability of pro and anti-war Democrats to compromise on any meaningful attempt to affect Vietnam policy put the anti-war Democrats at a clear disadvantage. Despite gaining in number and popularity, the anti-war Democrats in Congress again failed in bringing about an end to the war.

\textbf{A Case of Dirty Politics: George Meany vs. Senator Fulbright}

\textsuperscript{87} Ibid p. 30664 (September 1 1970)
\textsuperscript{88} Ibid,p. 30682
While the poisonous debate between Democrats calmed down slightly after the 1968 election, the behind the scenes maneuvering amped up. In a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing in 1969 Chairman Fulbright questioned the head of the AFL-CIO George Meany over whether the union had supported the war effort in return for support for union programs overseas during the Johnson administration. George Meany, testifying at the time, responded in force. He questioned Fulbright’s commitment to fighting communism and commitment to the country and completely denounced the charge. It was quite an occasion for the head of the AFL-CIO to attack and rail against a Democratic Senator like in a Committee hearing. The press reacted and the news got around quite a bit. However, the whole affair may have been orchestrated to make Senator Fulbright look bad in the press. Seymour Friedin, a roving journalist and aide to Senator Thomas Dodd wrote him a confidential memo attached with a very negative article towards Fulbright by Ken Crawford in Newsweek. Friedin wrote:

Attached is the column by Ken Crawford on Meany-Fulbright, about which Fulbright has already protested to Mrs. Graham, as I hear. She told him to go fly a kite; not that she may not be sympathetic but that a columnist has the right to air his own views and comments. I believe this is the way to go after someone or something—through an interested party. Invariably, it is successful. My interest in this case was highly specialized because, off the record, I did it.  

It is not clear through this letter whether Friedin set the occasion up or whether he built publicity around the case. Either way, however, what is clear is that Senator Dodd was acquaintances and in support of a dubious fellow whose position it was to undermine his fellow Democrats. In 1973 it was discovered that Seymour Friedin posed as a campaign reporter on Democratic Campaigns in 1968 and 1972 while in fact spying for President

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89 “Frieden Memo, 11 August 1969” Box 156 Folder 3978. Thomas J. Dodd Papers. Archives & Special Collections at the Thomas J. Dodd Research Center, University of Connecticut Libraries.
Nixon.\textsuperscript{90} Through numerous letters and correspondences before and following the event, it is clear that Friedin and Dodd were close friends. Friedin himself was paid by Nixon and the Republican to spy on Democrats. Needless to say it is important to differentiate that he was not spying on Dodd’s “type” of Democrat. Senator Dodd had his own corrupting problems to concern himself with, and was censured by the Senate in 1970 for various corruption problems. These incidents however reflected a continually developing and extremely negative divide within the Democratic Party over foreign policy. Conservative Democrats became aligned in utilizing the same “dirty tricks” that conservative Republican President Richard Nixon was known for in order to intimidate or affect the power of the antiwar Democrats.

http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9D0CE7DE1231F934A25757C0A967958260
Conclusion

The conservative elements of the Democratic Party were completely effective in preventing dissenting Democrats from ending the Vietnam War. Despite the war’s unpopularity and continuing failures anti-war Democrats were never able to bring the troops home through legislative means. Conservative Democrats trashed and belittled anti-war Democrats on the floors of Congress which prevented anti-war Democrats from gaining any traction in dissent. A pro-war administration and party bureaucracy also harassed and slowed anti-war efforts. Dissenting Democratic members of Congress were sabotaged by their own fellow party colleagues and did not have the strength to overcome their own party’s restraints.

The research of this study was limited in range. Further research could seek to validate or disregard the claim made here by more comprehensively investigating several areas. Research into the records and papers of all Congressmen involved could further contribute to or provide evidence against this thesis. For instance, by researching the Fulbright Papers in Arkansas or the Gruening Papers in Alaska one might be able to shed more light on the experiences of the dissenters. Further research into the relationships between the Johnson administration and the dissenters also could contribute to the study.

A deeper study of the Republican Party during Vietnam and its own interparty battles between doves such as Mark Hatfield and Jacob Javits and hawks such as Richard Nixon would complete a broader study of how party politics shaped Vietnam war policy. A study of the 1968 election, its results, and Vietnam’s effects on the Party might also contribute. Moreover, research into the impact party politics had on other wars, such as the Second War in Iraq and other controversial American interventions in history would
shed a greater light on how often and how common it is for interparty politics to shape foreign policy.

This study has served to illuminate the complicated battles that anti-war policymakers in Congress faced during the Vietnam War. It also implies the impact the political party system can often have “beyond the water’s edge”. When Senator Arthur Vandenberg warned against the interference of partisan politics with effective foreign policy he urged against the advancement of a party’s political interests at the cost of US security. He probably did not have in mind that political battles within one party might cloud what was best in American interests. Senator Vandenberg’s ideal however, serves to be just that, an ideal. As the experience of the Democratic Party during the Vietnam War shows, inter-party struggles for power and the American political process in general have an enormous effect upon how the United States conducts foreign policy.
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