

Foreign Policy Association  
of Harrisburg  
P.O. Box 60665  
Harrisburg, PA 17106

## Congress and the Making of U. S. Foreign Policy

Scribed by Milena Valcheva

Major General William E. Rapp, the 50<sup>th</sup> Commandant of the U.S. Army War College, spoke to the association on Congress and the Making of U.S. Foreign Policy. He is uniquely qualified to speak on this topic because of his recent assignment as Chief, Army Legislative Liaison. For his complete biography, please see the January 2015 newsletter.

Major General Rapp gave us his personal opinions organized in four topics based on his experience with congress: congressional purview in foreign affairs; Congress and the American people; foreign policy with the 114<sup>th</sup> congress; and areas in which there could be “POTUS / congressional confluence” and where they may be at “loggerheads.”

Article 2 of the Constitution gives power over foreign policy to the President, but Congress has its Article 1 responsibilities. They include budgets, power to regulate international trade, senate confirmation of treaties, senate confirmation of nominees and ambassadors, congressional oversight, and the power to declare war. Past congressional actions like the 1997 Leahy Amendment prohibiting foreign aid to any foreign country that had humanitarian problems have impact today. This amendment prevents the US military from having a relationship with Indonesian Special Forces which the General feels would be advantageous since Indonesia is the largest Muslim country and could be a moderating force. We are in an era where Congress is not going to let the President run foreign policy on his own.

General Rapp believes the American people have exactly the Congress they want and that Congress does exactly what the Americans want them to do. Only nine percent of Americans approve of congress; but 62% approve of their congressmen. Congressmen do exactly what their constituents want and when they don't, they get voted out. For example Eric Cantor, Republican Majority Leader in the House of Representatives, was voted out by his own party as was Silvestre Reyes, a democrat from Texas. Eighty two percent of the seats of Congress are not contested between the two parties so they do not have to worry about the political center. The republicans face pressure from the right and the democrats face pressure from the left. Fifteen years ago 40 to 50 seats of Congress were in the political center. Today there are only three. Ninety eight percent of Americans thought Ted Cruz was “an idiot” when he filibustered in the Senate to prevent the passage of a budget to keep the government open in October 2013, but his approval rating in Texas shot above 75%. Congress hasn't governed (compromise and find middle ground that is acceptable to the majority of the people) for years. Posturing is more important than governing. For example, Congress has exercised its oversight role by inviting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to speak to Congress instead of doing something constructive that could assist in resolving the Iran situation.

With respect to foreign policy, there will not be a congressional vote going forward that is not colored by the upcoming 2016 Presidential elections. The congressional leaders have changed in the House Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, but they have not put out their agendas yet.

There are a few areas where there may be agreement between the President and Congress. One is militant Islam. The President asked Congress to approve the use of military force in Iraq and they will probably agree to something there. Another is international trade, where the TransPacific Partnership is likely to have bipartisan support. There is also a possibility of bipartisanship on cybersecurity and opposition to the International Telegraph Union (ITU) regulation of the internet that is supported by Russia, Iran and China.

Congress wants to impose more sanctions on Iran, but the White House does not want them to interfere with the nuclear talks with Iran before the June 30 deadline. Other issues where there will probably be differences include normalizing relations with Cuba, and closing Guantanamo Bay detention camp.

Relations between Congress and the White House were “poisoned” by the President's unilateral actions on immigration. Because of the split between would be moderates and the tea party, Speaker Boehner has had to resort to soliciting democrats to get bills passed. On the other hand the fact that Vice President Biden and Majority Senate Leader McConnell are personal friends should help relations. On balance, however, this does not bode well for the military as sequestration is scheduled to come back into effect September 30 of this year.

### 2014-2015 Program Topics / Schedule

March 26	Demographic Trends Affecting U.S. Foreign Policy
April 23	The State of the World
May 7	Embassy Trip - Germany
May 28	China and the World

### 2014-2015 FPA Officers

<b>President:</b>	Dr. Clem Gilpin 944-4913 ceg5@psu.edu
<b>Vice Pres:</b>	Dr. Michele Sellitto 968-1995 msellitto@comcast.net
<b>Secretary:</b>	Hattie Ann Glasscock hglasscock07@comcast.net
<b>Treasurer:</b>	Frank Matunis 526-4747 frankx912@verizon.net

---

**Membership:** Fay Geegee 737-4639  
2geegee@msn.com

**Newsletter:** Kevin Springman 763-1086  
kevintspringman@gmail.com