

The Effect of Unemployment on Democratic Warfare

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THE EFFECT OF UNEMPLOYMENT ON DEMOCRATIC WARFARE

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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ABSTRACT

This study was done to see the effects of a war on the economy and the internal politics of the United States. In selecting the engagement, we would study we agreed the Iraq War would be aided by a large amount of sampling of public opinion that was more nuanced than in previous wars. The Iraq War was a very complicated war, as it was controversial from the beginning and became a political issue while continuing to be a war fought by Americans abroad. Based on the literature, there were many starting effects and assumptions that were accounted for such as the ‘rally round the flag effect.’ As a historical landmark, the Iraq War is important for being a significant conflict after the Vietnam War, another very controversial conflict in the eyes of the American public.

The hypothesis that I presented were not supported by the data. The impact of the war on the economy was not strong enough that it would create pressure for the sort of model I created to apply. In this model the economic problems faced domestically could lead to more unemployment and therefore to higher military recruitment rates. While this was partially true in 2008, the consequence was not a significantly higher amount of people in the military. Ultimately, this project requires to be done in a more thorough setting where effects may be compared with those of other similar countries in similar scenarios.

Keywords: political science, war studies, war, Iraq, Iraq war, statistics, labor economics, economy in war, war support, casualties, presidential approval, unemployment, military recruitment, American politics

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INTRODUCTION

On March 20, 2003, the United States (U.S.) and her Coalition partners invaded Iraq to neutralize their perceived weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) capability. While their major combat operations triumphed, the war evolved into a counter-insurgency mission that saw limited success. This study aims to analyze how public opinion is shaped by wartime events that impact the amount of support for the mission and unemployment. The Iraq War is significant to analyze, as it is the first long-term and concluded American war since the Vietnam War. To understand how democracies behave during preventative warfare, the distinction between capitalist democracies and non-democratic closed economies must be discussed as it relates to their armed forces. Next, I explain the influence of military recruitment and unemployment on presidential approval. Following that, I discuss casualties and war support as it pertains to presidential approval. The methodological section includes some hypotheses and the model I created to better explain my argument. At that point, the paper concludes with a summary and my suggestions for the expansion of this study through further research.

The case of the Iraq War is one of a conflict fought by a hegemonic democracy against a despotic and militaristic regime. The impact of the war can be seen in the political and economic spheres, which affects the rise or fall of presidential approval rates and thus impacts politics. This project will attempt to untangle these influences to understand the political and economic impacts on the democracy spearheading the intervention.

My intent is to analyze the common trends found between casualties and public support and study by comparing changes in unemployment to public support. The Iraq War is a peculiar episode in that it is not a minor war, but it is very far from being a total war. This makes it a good

conflict to study the impact of unemployment on the war effort. I say this because this conflict is one of a limited scope. A total war is one where the hostilities do not differentiate between civilian and military targets, creating a situation where states must militarize as much as possible to prevent their demise. In doing so the state's economy becomes entirely attached to the war, and one would expect a massive impact on the economy due to important changes in production and due to high conscription numbers. A minor war would not cause such a disruption in the economy; therefore, one could compare the status of the economy before and during the war to see the impact of warfare on a mostly civilian economy that has yet to be militarized by the state. War mobilizes resources that the state would not mobilize otherwise, therefore war economies might see some differing effects from peacetime economies.

DEMOCRACIES AT WAR

Democracies often have voters as their soldiers, impacting the relationship between the state and the armed forces.¹ Many soldiers and their families are citizens in their society, meaning they get to vote for, or against, a bellicose president. While not all soldiers are voting citizens, they hold some political influence as a representation of veterans and by forming part of the collective memory.² This means that the military is not an institution which has no political impact but quite the opposite. The U.S. is not a demilitarized society. It has strong democratic principles and will likely continue to respect that identity. The responsibility of the military to guard the people gives military service in democracies a sense of civic duty, with many soldiers being full members of the community or working toward that goal. This ensures there are democratic principles that unite the military to the state. Non-citizen soldiers can be rewarded with citizenship in the U.S., and this has been proven to be a significant incentive for non-citizens to serve.³

Since 1973, the U.S. has had no draft, thus, the military consists of an all-volunteer force. Recruitment is different under these conditions, as people are not conscripted but see some value in military service and volunteer.⁴ This also means that the military might be more effective in

¹ Reiter, Dan, and Allan C. Stam. 2002. *Democracies at War*. Princeton University Press. 25-28.

² Sethi, Rajiv. "Collective Memory." *International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*, 2nd edition.

³ "What Affects Decisions to Enlist in the Military?" RAND Corporation. Accessed April 23, 2018. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RB7523/index1.html.

⁴ Cohn, Lindsay P., and Nathan W. Toronto. "Markets and Manpower." *Armed Forces & Society* 43, no. 3 (2016). Princeton University Press. 437-438.

combat, as commanding officers are there voluntarily and do not see their service as something that is keeping them from alternate civilian jobs.⁵

Citizens in a democracy like the contemporary U.S. enjoy the right to vote for their leaders, who in turn decide to pursue or avoid war. Therefore, the voter can be considered a check on the executive to limit their military ambitions. Presidents have been aware of such a reality and have, therefore, always justified their wars prior to engaging.

Democracies enjoy other advantages stemming from their capitalist system. Democracies tend to have strong financial markets that accelerate the rate of production and innovation in technology due to monetary incentives.⁶ Therefore, firearm special interests in the U.S. hold political power due to a strong military-industrial complex. In turn, this creates a group of business interests in the U.S. that profits from warfare and incentivizes the government to pursue certain policy via election contributions.⁷ The profiting from war further accelerates the militarizing of an economy, as more capital in the industry exacerbates the development of weapons systems. A well-equipped army can engage in warfare that limits casualties, while more efficiently defeating an enemy. The U.S.'s reliance on ordinance and high-altitude bombing is certainly helped by mass production and a robust financial system.⁸ Initiative by the officers is

⁵ Micewski, Edwin R., "Conscription or the All-Volunteer Force: Recruitment in a Democratic Society" in *Who Guards the Guardians and How Democratic Civil-military Relations*, ed. Bruneau, Thomas C., and Scott D. Tollefson, Univ of Texas Pr, 2008. 24.

⁶ *Ibid*, 198-199.

⁷ Hartung, William D., and Michelle Ciarrocca. "Report: Ties That Bind: Arms Industry Influence in the Bush Administration and Beyond." *World Policy Journal*. October 2004. Accessed May 30, 2018. <https://worldpolicy.org/report-ties-that-bind-arms-industry-influence-in-the-bush-administration-and-beyond/>.

⁸ Gelpi, Christopher, Peter D. Feaver, and Jason Reifler. *Paying the human costs of war: American public opinion and casualties in military conflicts*. Princeton University Press, 2009. 46-47.

only possible when they have enough supporting material to act independently of higher command, without sacrificing efficiency.

Modern democracies cannot act without public support, yet public opinion is not randomly generated but can be carefully managed. Studies done with seemingly neutral countries were conducted prior to the war to get a sense of the aggregate American's opinion of conducting military engagements abroad. There were two different studies done with countries that had been largely absent in American rhetoric then, one being Yemen and the other East Timor.⁹ Respondents to the Yemen test showed that support for the mission was highly impacted by the White House's framing of the conflict, consistent with Bruce Jentleson's hypothesis.¹⁰ In this and other cases, the primary policy objective (PPO) framing that was most enthusiastically supported by respondents then, was that of intervention as a part of the 'war on terrorism.' It is unsurprising to find that the new framing of the 'war on terror' was the most influential framing, given how transformative the September 11th attacks were for the U.S. The East Timor survey demonstrates the influence that domestic and international elites have through their rhetoric. The impact of elite rhetoric is strong, as intervention in East Timor would yield 11 percent approval if only the president supports the plan, and 35 percent approval when there is international and domestic consensus that multilateral action must be taken in East Timor. These results show that the American public is not inherently bloodthirsty and demonstrates that war can only be achieved when those in charge have reached a consensus.

⁹ Ibid, 100-117.

¹⁰ Jentleson, Bruce W. "The Pretty Prudent Public: Post Post-Vietnam American Opinion on the Use of Military Force." *International Studies Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (March 1992): Accessed June 14, 2018. 53-71.

The warfare waged by democracies is unlike that of other governments, as democracies cannot begin interventions without popular support. Soldiers that are employed in democratic and capitalist developed nations are unlike their non-democratic counterparts. Democratic soldiers are empowered members in their society or are working to reach that status. Citizens can vote for leaders and therefore voice their support for the foreign policy pursued and may be influenced by non-citizens. In the U.S., the primary issue for voters in most elections is the economy, as that is the experience that directly relates to their lives the most.¹¹ In times of war, foreign policy also ascended to the top level, with about 35% of the population in 2004 identifying that as their most important issue.¹² When the United States is engaged in warfare, the political climate changes to reflect the changed perspective on the world.

¹¹ Gelpi, Feaver, and Reifler, *Paying the Human Costs of War*, 169.

¹² *Ibid*, 182-187.

ECONOMICS AND RECRUITMENT

What leads civilians to take jobs in the military in times of war? The answer is not easy to pinpoint, as there are several factors at play.¹³ The economy impacts everyone, therefore it's logical that it would also impact an individual's choice to serve in the military. Soldiering is a job regardless of the differences, and as such there are economic forces that dictate how recruiting will be conducted, namely that of unemployment. It is an investment (therefore a cost) for the government to train soldiers, forcing the military to be prudent with the resources at their disposal.¹⁴ The fact that both the soldier and the military must act as rational economic actors, makes the democratic military one that is inherently more efficient. Large markets to pool resources from and providing incentives for skilled commanders allows for an advantage unmatched by any other state.¹⁵

The advancement of technology has changed how we see war and who the participants are. The trend away from relying on 'troops on the ground' started decades before the 2003 invasion. The unpopularity of some prior missions, and the government's desire to not dampen war support, led to the development of high-altitude bombing.¹⁶ The apex of this practice would be the bombings of Kosovo, where no American casualties were taken at the cost of higher civilian casualties resulting from the new tactic. This change created even more variety in the experiences of those serving in the military, reinforcing an environment where soldiers must be specialized and required more technical training.¹⁷ This embracing of capitalism enables the

¹³ Cohn and Toronto, "Markets and Manpower," 436.

¹⁴ Ibid, 439-442.

¹⁵ Ibid, 438-439.

¹⁶ Gelpi, Feaver, and Reifler, *Paying the Human Costs of War*, 45-46.

¹⁷ Cohn and Toronto, "Markets and Manpower," 440-441.

usage of PMCs (Private Military Contractors), justified under the argument that they cost the taxpayer less.¹⁸ Their lack of discipline and the relative independence they were given led directly to the uprisings in Fallujah.¹⁹

The increased role of technology in war does not diminish the role of the combat soldier. Since better trained and equipped militaries require less soldiers, their personal contributions become more significant. Since there are less people involved in warfare than in previous engagements, there are fewer personal accounts of what occurs in the battlefield, which could make for a more unified voice from those who have served. I argue that these soldiers have an inherent incentive for supporting warfare as it could mean more opportunities for advancement for the individual soldiers. Some soldiers are also attracted to joining the military solely because they want to fight the enemies of the U.S., as was the case with many recruits who joined up immediately following 9/11. According to manpower dynamics literature, modern militaries rely on either conscription or an all-volunteer force. Except for a few demilitarized or failing states, the demand for soldiers is nearly universal as there are a plethora of security challenges facing nations today ranging from conflict prevention, peace support, humanitarian missions and national defense.²⁰

The history of the 19th and 20th centuries pushed many threatened states to adopt conscription, with armies swelling in numbers. Conscription brought about the need for a

¹⁸ Ibid, 438-439.

¹⁹ Gelpi, Feaver, and Reifler, *Paying the Human Costs of War*, 161.

²⁰ Cohn and Toronto, "Markets and Manpower," 447-449.

professionalized officer corps that trained uneducated masses for combat.²¹ Originally, conscription was associated with republican values of civic duty, but as casualties increased drastically and tensions spiked between civilians and the military most democracies began to adopt volunteer forces.²² The “ever-evolving technological innovations in communications, equipment, and weaponry demand the best-qualified and best-trained personnel,” shaping how modern democracies wage war, preferring quality over quantity from their troops.²³ Recruitment methods impact a society’s ability to wage war efficiently, thus impacting how a state conducts warfare. States are constrained in their choices since they must find an effective and inexpensive way to fill their ranks while maintaining efficiency.

Militaries as organizations face many of the same issues as corporations in the private market. These entities must compete for resources, more qualified personnel and must adapt to the ever-changing nature of society. The balance between less well-trained troops and more men on the field must be achieved by each state according to their own needs. Conscription is tolerated when the security threat is obvious, and military service is not seen as disadvantageous.²⁴ Conscription may be employed in a democracy under those conditions, but the drafts must not appear unwarranted, or recruitment will suffer. If a draft is created that seems to be unnecessary or predatory, people who would gladly serve under a justified condition would consider leaving the country or hiding to avoid service. This sort of impact was seen in the Vietnam War era, with people fleeing the draft because they did not think Vietnam was worth

²¹ Micewski, “Conscription or the All-Volunteer Force” in *Who Guards the Guardians and How Democratic Civil-military Relations*, ed. Bruneau, and Tollefson, 212.

²² *Ibid*, 214.

²³ *Ibid*, 217.

²⁴ Cohn and Toronto, “Markets and Manpower,” 440.

American involvement or because they considered the draft to be racially insensitive.²⁵ While both recruitment practices have their advantages and disadvantages, the doctrine of war used by the U.S. is better suited to a volunteer force, as American forces have rarely been used for national defense.²⁶

Recruiting is a balancing game and an economic activity that the military participates in. This balancing act is dependent on the economy and population of the state. The general trend is for individuals who have better opportunities or more job protections (and economic safety nets in general) to not volunteer for service.²⁷ Essentially, those who volunteer tend to consider the military a better opportunity for them than their civilian alternatives. This tends to suit armies whose stance isn't one of classical national security but are more expeditionary. Arguments have also been made that volunteer forces allow for justification of a more aggressive foreign policy, as conscripts are more dependable in national defense roles.²⁸ Volunteers are conducive to a more aggressive foreign policy because the government cannot be blamed for taking these people out of the job market, since they have voluntarily agreed to military service instead of taking a civilian job. This line of thinking makes foreign military intervention less controversial with the public, therefore it is more palatable. Volunteer forces tend to cost more in terms of payroll since draftees are paid less than volunteers, the cost per soldier increases as volunteer forces grow and the state is more likely to raise taxes to expand the volunteer forces.²⁹

²⁵ Appy, Christian G. *Working-class War: American Combat Soldiers and Vietnam*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, 1993. 221-225.

²⁶ Cohn and Toronto, "Markets and Manpower," 438.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 439-441.

²⁸ Micewski, "Conscription or the All-Volunteer Force" in *Who Guards the Guardians and How Democratic Civil-military Relations*, ed. Bruneau, and Tollefson, 228-231.

²⁹ Cohn and Toronto, "Markets and Manpower," 441.

Conscripts might cost less per soldier, but they are on average less effective in offensive roles than in defensive ones. There is also a high deadweight loss in volunteer forces due to inefficiencies in tax collection, that might be alleviated by conscription.³⁰ A deadweight loss occurs when the government imposes taxes or limitations on production or transactions of a good, causing there to be less sales than would have optimally happened. Because volunteers are paid higher wages than conscripts, the government is more likely to increase taxes to pay for more volunteers, further disturbing the labor market. This would indicate that there is undoubtedly a correlation between unemployment, recruitment and an individual's desire to volunteer. The findings "[indicate] that states with less regulated labor markets, in general, should prefer volunteer forces over conscription, unless there are pressing military reasons for a draft (e.g., a high threat of homeland invasion)."³¹

While democracies benefit from having meritocratic practices in their militaries, market factors still impact their performance in war. Much of the literature on casualties mentions the unequal burden of that weight on the lower socioeconomic sectors of a population. Aggregate county-level analysis has shown there to be a casualty gap, or an inequality in the distribution of casualties across communities on a basis of education and economic background, in the U.S.³² This trend has only increased from the Korean War through to the war in Iraq. This inequality is in part because of the societal competition over the same population pool. Recruits tend to have

³⁰ Ibid, 441-442.

Deadweight loss is "the loss of economic efficiency in terms of utility for consumers/producers such that the optimal or allocative efficiency is not achieved."

Perloff, Jeffrey M. *Microeconomics: Theory and Applications with Calculus*. Boston: Addison-Wesley, 2011.

³¹ Cohn and Toronto, "Markets and Manpower," 442.

³² Kriner, Douglas L., and Francis X. Shen. *The Casualty Gap: The Causes and Consequences of American Wartime Inequalities*. Oxford University Press, 2010. PDF. 27-41

lower economic and educational backgrounds in comparison to their own counties. Recruitment offices also tend to have an easier time recruiting when unemployment is higher.³³ These two factors point to the possibility that recruits are more likely to come from a lower economic background, have less skills applicable to the military, and thus are more likely to be tasked with risky combat roles.

There is research to suggest a strong link between unemployment and recruitment. A study done by the RAND Corporation on recruitment from high school seniors and graduates shows different incentives for different circumstances in the individual's life.³⁴ Higher national unemployment did correlate with more recruitment among seniors, but it's important to note that unemployment by itself does not push seniors into the military, as those with a high family income are not as likely to volunteer regardless of unemployment. Interestingly, graduates who have jobs are more likely to volunteer the more hours they are given at work, perhaps signaling that economic desperation and having fewer other life commitments (such as family) are important recruitment factors. Kilburn and Klerman argue that personal factors were more influential in the choice to enlist than direct economic factors, yet the trend would suggest that recruits are likely to volunteer when they perceive the military as an avenue of upward social mobility. Recruitment officers are aware that recruitment is easier when the economy is underperforming.³⁵ Confidence in the military in times of war is essential as it sets up the starting

³³ Ibid, 48-52.

³⁴ RAND Corporation, "What Affects Decisions to Enlist in the Military?"

³⁵ Kriner, and Shen, *The Casualty Gap*, 23.

war support. Gallup polling suggests that the military has been the most respected institution in the United States for the last two decades, due to their efficiency and professionalism.³⁶

Since the economy is consistently one of the most important topics for voters, the economy indirectly shapes our foreign policy. It is also important to note that many people think that there is a connection between the president and the economy. There is both direct and indirect influence, that the president has on the economy. Direct influence is exerted through pursuing certain policies whereas indirect influences come in the form of rhetoric.³⁷ Many citizens see the president as the steward of the economy, and while they do not hold him/her entirely responsible, they do expect good stewardship in general. While most know that the president does not immediately control the economy, respondents displayed differences in their economic perception based on the president's party identification.³⁸ Perceptions of the economy cannot be separated from the labor market, where one would see the most impact from unemployment. Therefore, issues in the economy and how the war advances, may be seen as deficiencies in the steward's job.³⁹

³⁶ Gallup, Inc. "Confidence in Institutions." Gallup.com. Accessed April 23, 2018. <http://news.gallup.com/poll/1597/confidence-institutions.aspx>.

³⁷ Boef, Suzanna De, and Paul M. Kellstedt. "The Political (and Economic) Origins of Consumer Confidence." *American Journal of Political Science* 48, no. 4 (2004). 634-635.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 635-638.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 638-647.

CASUALTIES

Most of the early literature on casualty effects stems from John Mueller's work on the Korean and Vietnam Wars. He determined that as casualties rose, war opposition would increase non-linearly, in relation to voter's casualty tolerance.⁴⁰ Gelpi, Feaver and Reifler disproved this early hypothesis with their regression analysis of war support and casualties.⁴¹ They found that the more logical explanation for the fluctuations among war support was casualties incurred when the U.S. seemed to be losing those conflicts, lowering war support. War support is a function of expectations of success and rightness in the decision to go to war.⁴² Casualties by themselves do not damage war support to make the American public willing to withdraw from a military intervention. Instead, it is the combination of casualties, lack of war progress and debate within the public about how justified military interventions are.⁴³ Regressions indicated that the public was responsive to heightened casualties only in times when war seemed hopeless or unjustified, as war support remained relatively unmoved by the same number of casualties at a point when war appeared to be necessary and progressing toward victory.

Casualties in war have decreased significantly for the U.S. since the Second World War. This can be attributed to the increased levels of technology in our weapons systems, more advanced medical experience and practices, a military doctrine that attempts to minimize exposure to risks, and perhaps more effective intelligence assets.⁴⁴ All this means there are less

⁴⁰ Mueller, John E. *War, Presidents, and Public Opinion*. John Wiley & Sons, 1973. 23-41.

⁴¹ Gelpi, Feaver, and Reifler, *Paying the Human Costs of War*, 10-15.

⁴² *Ibid*, 26-33.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 88-90.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 244-246.

It is also worth mentioning that the United States has not confronted enemies as relatively powerful militarily as Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, and the Empire of Japan since WW2. The Baathist army of Iraq was not comparable to the Wehrmacht.

troops on the ground. In response, people's upper limit for casualties in a given mission has decreased proportionally, thus the public would no longer accept losses comparable in value with the Second World War but would accept the same proportion of casualties for combat today.

The American public cannot endure active combat in a foreign war endlessly. The literature makes it clear that there are limitations to the use of casualties as a cause of dissatisfaction with the war, hence it is only used as a yardstick to measure the cost of war as it progresses.⁴⁵ Using the answers to these questions, it is easy to divide the American population into three distinct groups: doves, hawks, and the swing constituency.⁴⁶ Doves tend to oppose war despite the amount of lives lost, hawks tend to support wars to unsustainably high levels of casualties and the swing constituency may accept moderate amounts of casualties.⁴⁷ For this reason, political efforts are usually focused on attracting the swing constituency and not the other groups.

Cuing respondents on casualties had distinct results from when surveyors did not mention casualties. Thinking in terms of lives lost in a conflict, opens the door to fallacies like failing to accept sunk costs.⁴⁸ Those who were cued into it were more likely to only support missions that the Joint Military Staff would be very confident of, as supported by another study.⁴⁹ Despite this significant difference, the public is sensitive to casualties regardless of being cued to thinking about them. Albeit they are less sensitive when not cued in to think in terms of lives.⁵⁰ The

⁴⁵ Ibid, 246-247.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 237.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 78.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 141.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 117-122.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 114.

public uses casualties as a metric of success. They can make trade-off decisions about how many casualties are too many, called their casualty tolerance.⁵¹ This casualty tolerance is affected by the mission objective, meaning different conflicts have different levels of tolerance from the public and therefore enjoy different levels of support from the people.

The PPO approach makes the argument that voting behavior is mainly affected by the rhetorical framing of the conflict by the White House. Jentleson concluded that the public polled differently for missions justified as humanitarian, security oriented, and later as part of the global ‘war on terror.’⁵² Security scored higher than humanitarian in aggregate, with anti-terrorism surpassing it in the later round of surveying.⁵³ This is not at all universal, as was the case in the interventions in Somalia in the early 1990s, when humanitarian justifications rallied more support from the public than the later security framed missions of UNOSOM II.⁵⁴ There were some significant demographic differences among those surveyed, along with some of the possible explanations given. Older respondents expected higher casualties, probably due to them having experienced previous wars. Women were less likely to give a larger window of opportunity (with higher casualties). Non-whites were 15 percent less likely to support the war up until 1500 deaths. More educated respondents typically had a higher casualty tolerance, likely because on average more educated respondents are wealthier and are less likely to have a close relation with a combat soldier. Another potential explanation is that more educated respondents are more aware of the political ramifications and are more defeat phobic than casualty phobic. 83

⁵¹ Ibid, 104.

⁵² Ibid, 100-101.

⁵³ Ibid, 82.

⁵⁴ Burk, James. “Public Support for Peacekeeping in Lebanon and Somalia: Assessing the Casualties Hypothesis.” *Political Science Quarterly* 114, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 53-78. Accessed May 26, 2018.

percent of Republicans and 35 percent of Democrats supported up to 1500 deaths in Iraq in Nov 2004.⁵⁵ When respondents were asked what the best response to the problem in Iraq would be, 75 percent wanted more pressure, 69 percent wanted more troops, and among those who had heard about Fallujah, they were 10 to 20 percent more likely to want more troops.⁵⁶ Originally, much of the public accepted the idea that the atrocities in Fallujah were done by a small group of extremists, but later the American public made clear in polls that ‘the hate’ was coming from Iraq in general, showing a change in perspective and a disassociation from events on the ground and public perception.⁵⁷

Casualties are only tolerated when they are accompanied by victory on the ground and in the minds of people. Unsurprisingly, survey respondents signaled that the American military should focus on decreasing American combat casualties, American combat injuries and even local civilian casualties in Iraq. The results were only the opposite when asked about enemy combatants. The public was less affected by the number of injured compared to casualties of U.S. troops. The significance is that while this impact is lower, it shows the public reacted to both those killed and those injured.⁵⁸ These results indicate that the public is not impartial to any civilian deaths, with academic debates arguing that they hold more influence than previously

⁵⁵ Gelpi, Feaver, and Reifler, *Paying the Human Costs of War*, 155-157.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 162-163.

The Battle of Fallujah was the initial Shia uprising as a response to the American occupation there. Angry mobs killed four American PMC troops and took video of the incident, making it a highly publicized event. The battle that followed was the deadliest encounter for Coalition forces during the war. It was perceived as one of the initial events of the anti-insurgency efforts.

⁵⁷ Johnson, Dominic, and Dominic Tierney. 2006. *Failing to Win: Perceptions of Victory and Defeat in International Politics*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 11-20.

⁵⁸ Gelpi, Feaver, and Reifler, *Paying the Human Costs of War*, 255-260.

considered.⁵⁹ When compared to other wars, this conflict had a much lower number of casualties due to battlefield medicine improving. This makes this war one with relatively few killed to the relatively many injured. Therefore, when we test for casualties we will test for both those killed and those injured.

There has been some controversy around the use of casualties as a metric of pressure in a war, as previous engagements were affected by other factors. The Somalia mission is discussed first, with the notion that 18 casualties led to the desire to withdraw from the country. The data seems to prove the opposite held true, and the desire to respond with an equal or more aggressive military posture was the most popular idea among Americans after the Battle of Mogadishu.⁶⁰ Polling data shows that no pressure to withdraw was caused by the casualties suffered, instead the pressure to withdraw came from the majority perception in the U.S. that the Somalis did not want American help despite it being a humanitarian mission.⁶¹ Results show that most Americans would have supported staying in Somalia. Similarly, other deployments such as that in Lebanon echo the results, showing a concurrence between most scholars writing on the subject.⁶² In the case of Lebanon, the bombing that killed over two hundred American marines also resulted in more respondents signaling for a more aggressive response, instead of more

⁵⁹ Burk, "Public Support for Peacekeeping in Lebanon and Somalia," 56-57.

⁶⁰ Gelpi, Feaver, and Reifler, *Paying the Human Costs of War*, 37-45.

The Battle of Mogadishu was a firefight that ensued because of one of the attack helicopters being downed in the Somali capital. American forces pushed to the crash site to exfiltrate any survivors, taking 18 casualties and killing hundreds of Somali insurgents.

⁶¹ Johnson and Tierney, *Failing to Win*, 6.

⁶² Klarevas, "Casualties, Polls, and the Iraq War," 186-198.

desire to withdraw.⁶³ The American people are willing to bear relatively large casualties in the execution of a popular and justified war.

⁶³ Burk, "Public Support for Peacekeeping in Lebanon and Somalia," 69-73.

WAR SUPPORT

The public's attitude toward a war is a function of several variables. The expectations of success combined with how justified the public believes the war to be yield a product used as a measure of the public's support for war.⁶⁴ In democracies, voters act as a check on government action. In this case, that forces the president to justify military interventions. How the public receives that justification will determine the amount of support the war effort will garner. The public's expectation of success is based on their confidence in the military leadership and their perception of the mission's progress.⁶⁵ Both domestic and battlefield events can change perceptions of the war.

Support for a war is dependent on the national circumstances and can drop quickly in the face of defeat. This is shown by studies done on the differences between the U.S. Restore Hope mission and the UNOSOM II mission.⁶⁶ War support had already eroded due to the unorganized nature of the earlier UNOSOM II mission that led to some reckless casualties.⁶⁷ Had the Battle of Mogadishu not happened after the embarrassing mistakes of the UNOSOM II mission, the event might not be remembered as such a large defeat.⁶⁸ One could even make the argument that the mission was successful even if seen as a failure by the American public.⁶⁹ War support tends to

⁶⁴ Gelpi, Feaver, and Reifler, *Paying the Human Costs of War*, 117-118.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 118-122.

⁶⁶ Johnson and Tierney, *Failing to Win*, 205-241.

Operation Restore Hope (1992-93) was an American mission to pacify Somalia to aid the administering of humanitarian aid. UNOSOM II (1993-95) was the combined multilateral UN sanctioned intervention in Somalia to secure the country to bring in humanitarian aid. By the end, it included putting an end to the civil war by capturing or killing the warlord Aidid.

⁶⁷ Gelpi, Feaver, and Reifler, *Paying the Human Costs of War*, 37-44.

⁶⁸ Johnson and Tierney, *Failing to Win*, 209-211.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 211-212.

decrease throughout the mission as casualties increase and more negative events are exposed, as hopelessness in the mission grows.

The work of Steven Kull and Clay Ramsay has expanded much of the literature on war support, explaining the impact of domestic and international politics. In the United States, party identification has a large impact on the voter's perception of the world.⁷⁰ Republicans are exclusively receptive to domestic politics, whereas Democrats pay attention to domestic politics and use international institutional support as a 'second opinion' on the use of force. A war cannot be started in the U.S. if the executive is not invested in the mission, but they alone cannot secure all the support to launch a war. A president trying to secure support for a war may only get about 11 percent of the voters to strongly support it, while a president with bipartisan and international support may convince as much as 35 percent of the voters to be strongly supportive of the war.⁷¹ Major support for a mission by either party will convince most of those voters to support the war, with bipartisan support ensuring relatively high support for the war.⁷² Lacking support from either party or the international community will hinder the potential war support enjoyed at the beginning of the war, when the support will be highest.

Initial surveys will overstate support, as the "rally 'round the flag'" effect inflates support short term.⁷³ Elite consensus and perceptions of success have been demonstrated to be pivotal in forming the amount of support for the war.⁷⁴ Expectations of success are prospective and

⁷⁰ Gelpi, Feaver, and Reifler, *Paying the Human Costs of War*, 156-157.

⁷¹ Ibid, 109-117.

⁷² Ibid, 111.

⁷³ Ibid, 68. & Baker, William D., and John R. Oneal. 2001. "Patriotism or Opinion Leadership? The Nature and Origins of the 'Rally 'Round the Flag' Effect. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 45, no. 5 (October); University of Maryland. 661-687

⁷⁴ Gelpi, Feaver, and Reifler, *Paying the Human Costs of War*, 155.

therefore not fixed.⁷⁵ In the summer of 2006, support for the war decreased due to the delay in forming an effective Iraqi government and growing indications that sectarian violence could evolve into a civil war.⁷⁶ President Bush lost his majority in Congress that year, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld resigned and the Iraqi strategy changed. Increased sectarian violence was matched by a downward trend in American casualties, showing how support for the war can decrease even among low casualty rates.⁷⁷

The public form their perceptions of success based on presidential rhetoric. When surveyed, responders are likely to reflect rhetoric coming from the White House, being quick to adopt the new narrative provided by the president.⁷⁸ President Bush originally justified the war as a preemptive action to neutralize the threat of WMDs. This objective switched to defending our regional allies as the WMDs proved to be unsupported by facts. After, the objective changed again, now reflecting a need to support democracy in Iraq to stabilize the country.⁷⁹ These changes were in part because of the Kay Report disproving the WMD scenario and the capturing of Saddam Hussein leaving the U.S. without a clear enemy.⁸⁰ The public noticed Bush's early pivots toward the democratic justification and were quick to adopt them, indicating how the public will form perceptions of victory not based on what the president repeats most, but by rhetoric the public is sensitive to. In this case, the public was already sensitive to the idea of

⁷⁵ Ibid, 188-190.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 188.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 189.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 191-195

⁷⁹ Ibid, 195-197

⁸⁰ Ibid, 220-224.

forming a democratic republic in Iraq and were eager to ditch previous explanations, while maintaining the framing of the war as part of the larger ‘war on terror.’⁸¹

Individuals have prospective and retrospective thoughts on war, and this is reflected in their voting behavior. The 2004 election offered an insight into how these beliefs can be manifested in an election, as explained by Morris P. Fiorina’s theory of retrospective voting.⁸² Retrospective judgements about how right a leader was in entering a war are pivotal in forming judgments on leadership. A study shows that this is the single most influential factor when voters are considering electing a new president in times of war.⁸³ This trend makes arguing against the warring president more difficult to do while maintaining support for the war high, as was the case for Kerry in the 2004 elections.⁸⁴ The incumbent president may be benefiting from the opinion that changing a well perceived wartime steward might be unwise.

⁸¹ Ibid, 195.

⁸² Ibid, 168.

⁸³ Ibid, 178.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 185-187.

METHODOLOGY AND VARIABLE MEASUREMENT

A time series was to be used to establish the relationship between casualties, war support, unemployment, and recruitment. The idea is to compare the data to see the impact that wartime events and unemployment place on the war effort. To accomplish this, the datasets used are those provided from official websites such as that of the Department of Labor and the Department of Defense. Initially, the interaction between casualties, support for the war and presidential approval will be studied. In general, when there are higher casualties and lower levels of war support, presidential approval is lowered. The opposite also holds true, especially at the beginning of an operation due to the ‘rally round the flag effect.

Unemployment was used to measure how recruitment efforts were helped or hindered by perceptions of victory in the case of the Iraq War. Unemployment is reported in monthly frequencies from the Department of Labor Statistics. With all other factors kept the same, my hypotheses are as follows:

H_1 = if aggregate unemployment levels are higher, then aggregate military recruitment should increase.

This is due to more people seeking jobs with the military, and this revamping of military recruitment will make more voters rely directly on foreign policy for certain types of career promotions. In turn, this might affect presidential approval during war, as more Americans (and thus more voters) would rely on an aggressive foreign policy for economic reasons. Voters might also be approving of what appears to be lower unemployment rates after military recruitment.

Military recruitment was ascertained through yearly Defense Manpower Requirement Reports produced by the Department of Defense. These reports indicate the actual and projected total manpower yearly. The combining of the actual recruitment figures per year would give us an accurate idea of the number of recruits coming into the military.

H₂= if aggregate military recruitment increases, then there should be a comparable increase in presidential approval.

Alongside that, there is another hypothesis that combines the intervening and the dependent variable of presidential approval. This one deals with war support and how that interacts with casualties to impact presidential approval. War support is measured as the percentage of the population that approves of the handling of the war. Opinion polling on the Iraq War was best accomplished by Gallup, however this surveying was not always consistent and the lack of consistent data after 2007 severely limits the scope of my study. Response gaps range from a few weeks to several months, at some points including only two observations a year closer to 2011.

Casualties are reported daily, thanks to the Iraq Coalition Casualty Count project (icasualties.org) compilation. Casualties are an important benchmark to the cost of the war and can influence war support when the war is perceived as being lost.

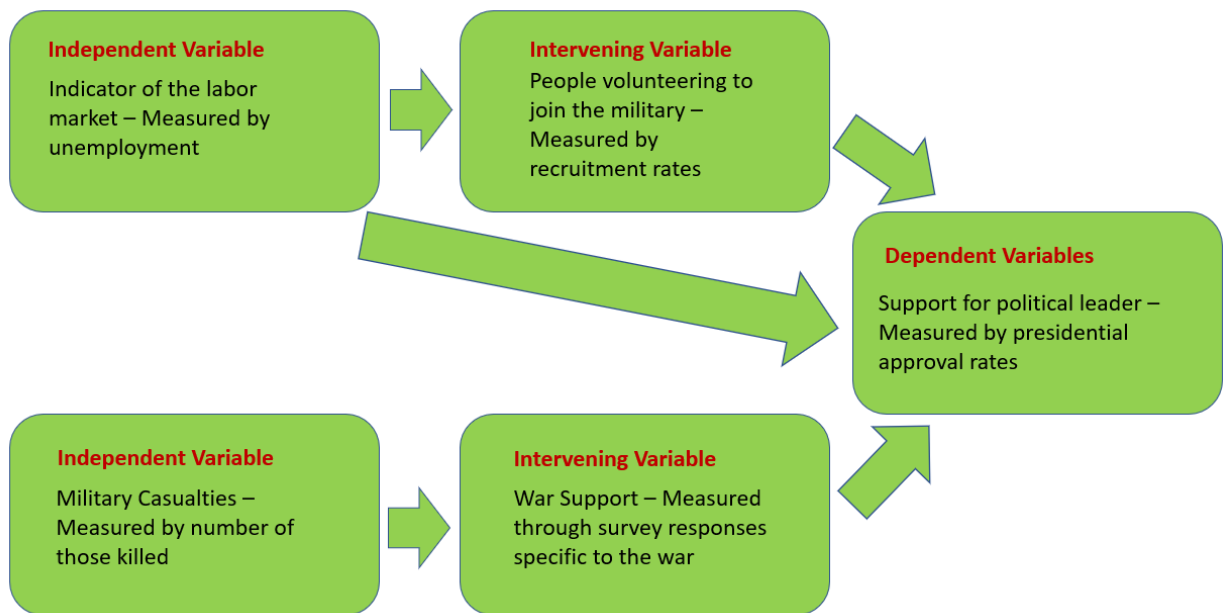
H₃= if war support levels increase within the population, then there will be higher presidential approval.

This is natural and reassuring. As more people report approval of the president's handling of the war, more people will approve of his/her job more generally. Presidential approval data

was gathered through The American Presidency Project from the University of California.

Presidential approval is reported multiple times a month, with frequency varying from weekly to biweekly.

Figure 1: Theoretical model of interacting effects on presidential approval



Feaver, Gelpi and Reifler use their models to reach all the conclusions from where our understanding of war support comes from. I build on the work of other academics, with most of my economic ideas stemming from the work of Suzanne De Boef and Paul M. Kellstedt. While their work focuses on consumer confidence and mine will look at unemployment, the political influence in the economy is the same in principle.⁸⁵ In that effort Feaver, Gelpi and Reifler use dummy variables to differentiate effects from presidential approval and policy surveying for events unrelated to the Iraq War such as Hurricane Katrina.⁸⁶ If a more detailed week by week

⁸⁵ Boef and Kellstedt, "The Political (and Economic) Origins of Consumer Confidence." 647-648.

⁸⁶ Gelpi, Feaver, and Reifler, *Paying the Human Costs of War*, 59.

analysis could be completed there are several important dates to watch for, including events such as: Hurricane Katrina, the Battle of Fallujah, the Kay Report⁸⁷, the stages of the war (major combat, occupation, Iraqi sovereignty, surge), and the capture of Saddam Hussein. These events combine with casualties and war support to provide a more thorough explanation of how public support builds and erodes over time. Some of the data on unemployment and military recruitment recommends using lag periods of one and three months to get a more accurate representation of economic impacts on the job market.⁸⁸ After all, just because more people volunteered to join the military, does not mean there will be more soldiers in combat zones the next week.

The variables selected were the best publicly available quantitative variables. National unemployment and presidential approval proved to be the best documented of all the variables, as they were both regularly surveyed. Unemployment data is not without its flaws, as it is only reported as a national aggregate per month, therefore exact weeks cannot be matched to see the impact unemployment would have on recruitment. The casualty data was very well collected by the Iraq Coalition Casualty Count, as the reporting was accurate and very detailed. Military manpower information proved more difficult to arrive at and has significant limitations. Publicly available manpower numbers are only offered once per year in a report finished after said year, and total recruitment is not an isolated aspect of these reports. Simultaneously, the reports are not always guaranteed, leaving us to use Department of Defense predicted figures for one of our

⁸⁷ The Iraq Survey Group report was done by David Kay, a former UN Chief Weapons Inspector. In his report, Kay mentions that there were no WMDs present in Iraq after the 2003 invasion. While he qualified that Bush did the right thing, many used his findings as evidence of an unjust war.

⁸⁸ Wilson, Michael J., and M.S. Perry. "The Career Decision Survey: Modeling the Army Enlistment Decision." 1988. Accessed June 16, 2018. 35-36.

observations. War support was perhaps the worst surveyed variable and that limits the conclusions that can be drawn from this study. Surveying was more constant in the initial years of the war, with at least an observation per season. In later years, Gallup stopped asking the question as frequently, making the surveying later into the war insufficient to get a sense of public opinion changes based on wartime events. This is particularly unfortunate since many changes in the later years of the conflict played a significant role in bringing about the events that would culminate in the withdrawal of US forces from Iraq, such as the Great Recession beginning in 2007, the Surge of 2007, Obama's campaign and later presidency, and the shifted focus away from Iraq and toward the war in Afghanistan.

While there are ways to work around missing data, there is only so much that can be done before the loss to accuracy is greater than would be preferred. As discussed before, the best surveying question that tries to capture the people's value of war support was collected by Gallup but was done irregularly after 2007. This lack of information is made more impacting by the fact that it fails to accurately document the later years of the war. Missing datapoints were extrapolated from the other observations when it came to war support, at a loss to accuracy.

ANALYSIS

To reach my conclusions I had to create graphs and compare their trajectories. I created graphs for every variable as well as some graphs with more than one variable. I included some of the graphs that I believe are the most important to understanding the effects I studied. The graphs had to be created in a way that the data was standardized into biannual segments to make for better comparisons across time. With a larger project and a more robust dataset, the type of week by week analysis that is required to test the combined effects can be done effectively.

There are competing effects happening with my argument. My line of thinking for the second hypothesis is that military recruitment would alleviate some of the tensions caused by high levels of unemployment. At the same time, these new volunteers are likely to not be huge opponents of current American foreign policy and could even come to agree with an aggressive approach from the White House to end the war. Only a more detailed and thorough study would be able to determine if my line of thinking would detract at all from the negative impact that high unemployment means for a prosperous economy. Because my project had no way to isolate Bush's approval, it is difficult to comment on how much of this effect was observed. It is important to note that Bush's base of support for the war never entirely wavered, as war support and Bush's approval never drop below the high twenties. These lows do not even coincide in time, as Bush's approval drops much closer to the end of his presidency, and the American public is least supportive of the war in 2007.

The data collection that was necessary to complete this project included a deliberate selection of variables. These variables were chosen because they are the best indicators that can be used to further the argument that the domestic economy influences war time events abroad,

and therefore impacts presidential approval. Ultimately, the objective of the project cannot be accurately achieved due to irregular data sampling, the inability to reduce the cyclical impact that patterns have on the time series and a dataset that is even more robust is needed. This does not mean that my efforts were wasted, as this paper serves as a stepping stone to a more comprehensive study.

The effects that are most apparent are those of mounting casualties and low war support leading to a lowered approval for the president. Regardless of interpretation, the Iraq War cannot be said to have been a popular mission much after the initial combat with the Iraqi military was over. The commitment of more troops and more engagements in 2007 to a war that increasingly seemed unjustified, took its toll on Bush's approval rating. Yet, this damage was not enough to create a crisis of confidence in the president. The fact that the economy changed violently by the end of 2007 is also an important effect that must be studied further. The impact of such a change could explain why there was a slight resurgence in support for Bush. This could perhaps be like a 'rally 'round the flag' effect for the economy, where voters are willing to support their executive more in the short term due to daunting circumstances. In this case, the economy failing and our intervention in two hard-fought wars, as well as natural disasters at home, could have created a sense that Americans needed less changes and not more, therefore no extreme pressure ever mounted to get rid of Bush or to leave Iraq.

In social sciences time itself can be an influencing variable. One simple example to illustrate this point is the number of iPhone sales in the United States. New iPhone models are usually released around August, with their stores attracting many eager customers. Sales would likely be expected to increase at first and slowly decrease. One should not expect the same

number of sales on debut day, cyber Monday and Christmas, as they would all have their own independent effect on sales. This chronologic cyclical impact can be seen in our study in responses to surveys asking about presidential approval or war support for missions in Iraq.⁸⁹ One can imagine a respondent being less sympathetic to the effort in Iraq after being laid off work, or more sympathetic after having a wonderful Thanksgiving reunion with their extended family. This impact is controlled for by having multiple ‘players’ go through similar processes in the same time, so for this project that would imply the addition of other similar states that fought in Iraq alongside the United States. These would have to be prosperous democracies such as the UK, Germany, Australia and others that participated in the war. Just as time can be an impacting factor, so can other events that also impact the war. The presidency transferring from Bush to Obama (and from a Republican to a Democrat) might have created an impact, that can also not be isolated as the project does not compare the United States to any other actor. This project has exclusively focused on the United States and their domestic markets, expanding this project to include other highly industrialized democracies would shift the project from being a time series analysis to a pooled time series analysis.

More data is needed to understand the impact of domestic economics on preventative warfare in a highly industrialized democracy. Because of irregular surveying of American war support and variables using different degrees of measurements, we decided that the best course of action would be to standardize all the variables into a biannual observation. This was done by averaging all observations within their respective six-month period into one value we could use

⁸⁹ Seasonally-Adjusted Data: What It Really Means | Bureau of Transportation Statistics. Accessed November 05, 2018. <https://www.bts.gov/explore-topics-and-geography/topics/seasonally-adjusted-data-what-it-really-means>.

to compare effects across variables. At that point the five variables were created into informational graphs to be compared and to identify patterns. The missing war support value for the second half of 2011 was replaced by extrapolating a pattern from the entire war support data.

Ultimately, the study yielded some expected and unexpected results. War support figures seem to have some correlation to presidential approval, as the war support pattern generally matches those of the Bush and Obama administration. By comparing the points on the informational graphs, the combined effect between unemployment and military recruitment was weaker than expected, as unemployment spikes after the housing market collapses, and total military manpower does not see as large of an increase as I expected. Presidential approval seems to not be as impacted by the economy as by the war, and this is seen in the very mild drop in President Bush's popularity in Late 2007. However, this effect is difficult to isolate with certainty due to the events around it. International issues including war should attract most of the American public's focus, yet after Late 2007, voters are expected to revert to a more self-centered economic outlook on government. It is also difficult to say how war support is affected by a deteriorating economic climate. Are voters considering the possibility that more military interventionism might increase government spending and increase confidence in the US markets, or are they suggesting cutting defense spending to inject that money into the economy instead? Without more specific surveying or expanding the study to one of democratic citizens in general across many prosperous democracies, it is difficult to isolate those opinions. The ideas of Gelpi, Feaver and Reifler were not disproven, as casualties alone did not create pressure to leave the country, as is seen in how war support is unaffected by the increase of US casualties during the Surge.

Figure 2: Casualties

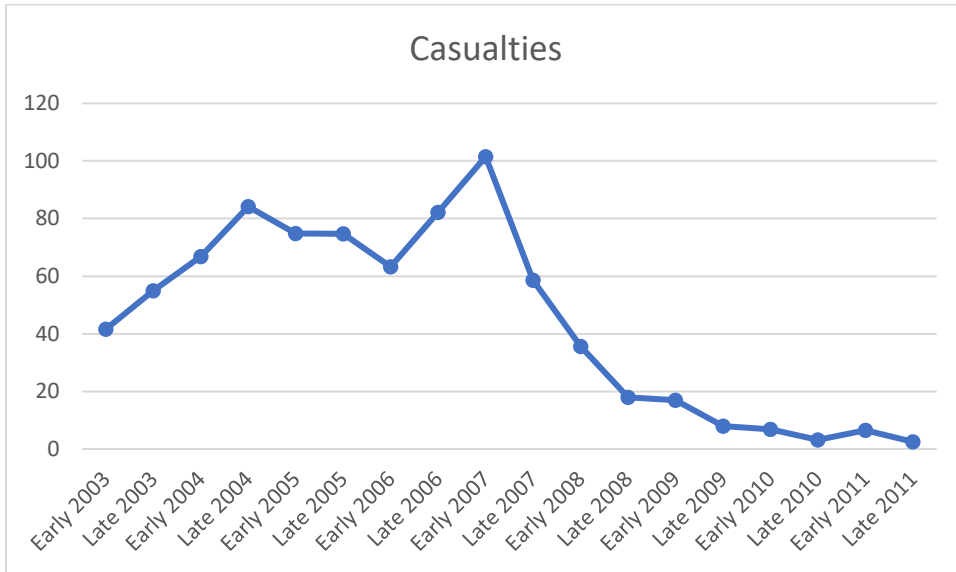


Figure 3: National unemployment

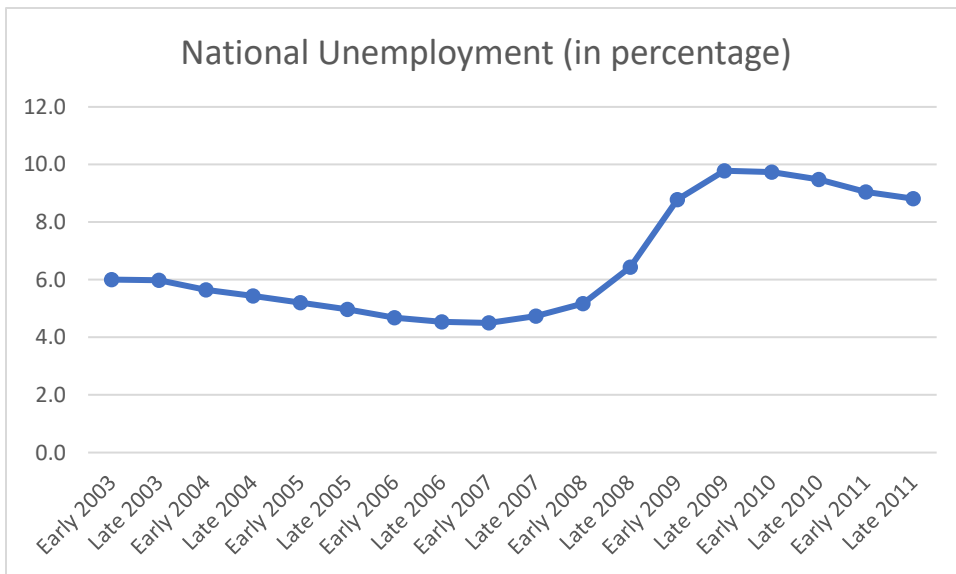


Figure 4: Casualties & war support

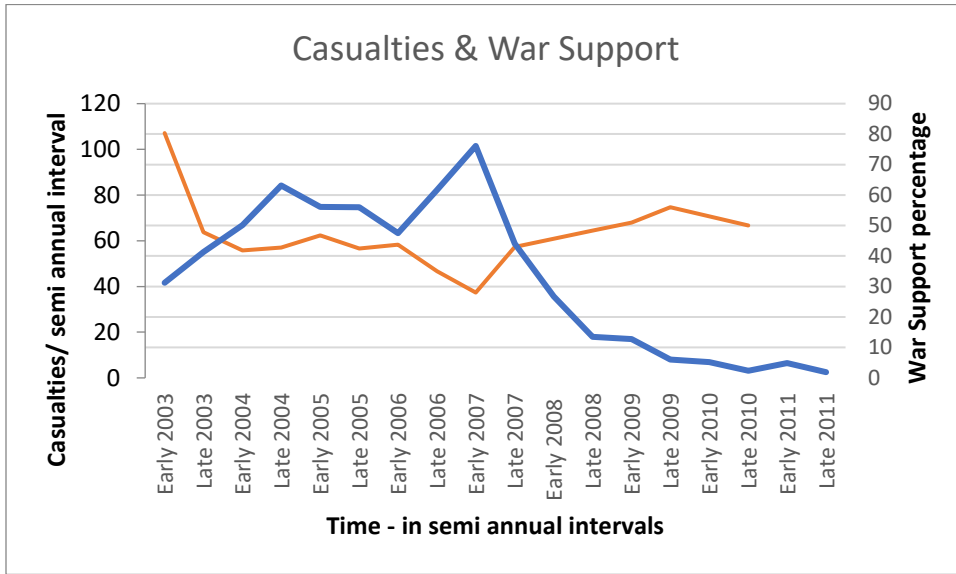


Figure 4 shows war casualties in blue and war support in orange lines.

CONCLUSION

By studying the combined effects of casualties and support for the given mission we can get a sense of how tolerant the public is on the war. This combined effect is heavily colored by perceptions of the war and events on the ground, with casualties being more impacting when progress is slow. War support and unemployment were studied to calculate their impact on recruitment efforts shortly before and during the war. The fact that the U.S. employs a volunteer force and is considered a less regulated market leads me to conclude that unemployment might be more impactful in times of war.

The study of war is nowhere near complete. The media's impact was largely discussed in the literature as an important factor.⁹⁰ Rhetoric used on the campaign trail during election years is an important part of the public discourse, that ultimately shapes public opinion and creates points of debate between candidates. This debate proliferates critiques of the government and ideas about what the best option is, thus challenging the incumbents' actions while in office.⁹¹ Psychological and sociological trends could be further studied to understand how people perceive success and how societies react to wars. Interactions between nationalities in this way color their historical identity and this bias may have important long-term impacts.⁹² There are also possibilities to expand on the economic part of the study, as there could be some economic tolerances that might be present in war just like there is tolerance for casualties.

There is some feedback loop of sorts between the war support, casualties, unemployment, and presidential approval. The literature suggests this link through the idea that the public sees

⁹⁰ Gelpi, Feaver, and Reifler, *Paying the Human Costs of War*, 248-255.

⁹¹ *Ibid*, 173-175.

⁹² Johnson and Tierney, *Failing to Win*, 31-36.

the president as a steward of the economy and government. If recruitment was hampered (by either economic reasons or from a lack of war support), there could be backlash against the administration for their perceived errors in stewardship. This feedback loop system needs to be studied in more detail to see how the cyclical nature of economic and political influence feed each other.

Studies on warfare are limited to time-specific episodes, each one changing based on the technology available at the time and the circumstance around the conflict. It does not seem that the historical trend of states warring will disappear anytime soon, meaning the same principles in this study may be applied to other modern conflicts. The war in Afghanistan could be studied following the principles of this study to see how long-term economics affect the war effort. While polling data may be difficult to secure consistently for previous wars, contemporary wars have been better catalogued as far as domestic polling.

Presidential campaigning rhetoric must be analyzed in its impact on war support. We know that elite rhetoric has some impact on public opinion, yet we do not have a clear picture of how political debates and multiple political voices on one issue can impact war support. There is likely also an impact on presidential approval, as there would be more rhetoric against the White House's actions in the public discourse than during a non-election year. Ultimately, the historical approach of that party to this issue seems to be a telling factor in what the winning candidate's

approach will be, as voters gravitate toward a fresh approach but one that isn't too far off the beaten path.⁹³

Presidential campaigning rhetoric is a factor that should have been studied more closely, as the effect it has on public opinion is divisive rather than conciliatory. John McCain and Barack Obama's 2008 election shed light on the impact of campaigning rhetoric when there is no incumbent, therefore being different than the 2004 election. McCain and Obama became the winners of their respective primaries, therefore solidifying their parties' stances on the war. Their winning shut out voices that spoke against their parties' historical take on Iraq, such as Ron Paul's labelling of the invasion a mistake despite his run as a Republican. This entrenched both sides further in their parties' arguments on the war, with Republican voters being more likely to support an even more aggressive approach and Democrats wanting more discussion of a timetable for leaving Iraq.⁹⁴ McCain's take on the war was that the Surge was working and needed to be followed through to success, adding that a timetable would be akin to surrendering to the enemy on an arbitrary date. Obama's approach was that the global war on terror started by Bush remained our top security priority and needed to be pursued in a smarter more calculated way, with Iraq being a 'distraction' to meeting that goal.⁹⁵ Near the end of the campaigning season, the economy eclipsed the Iraq issue in the priority of voters, yet most of the debating had been over war policy. Obama's rhetoric worked to create an association between McCain and the failed approach of the Bush presidency. While voters continued to express through surveys that

⁹³Bostdorff, Denise M. "Judgment, Experience, and Leadership: Candidate Debates on the Iraq War in the 2008 Presidential Primaries." EBSCO. July 1, 2009. 268-269.

⁹⁴ Ibid, 223-225.

⁹⁵ McCrisken, Trevor. "Ten Years On: Obama's War on Terrorism in Rhetoric and Practice." July 1, 2011. 785-788.

they felt McCain was the more experienced candidate, they felt more comfortable with Obama's judgement than that of McCain.⁹⁶ It is argued that the arguments made by McCain against Obama were very similar to those made by Hillary Clinton during the Democratic primaries, and this gave Obama a chance to practice his defense. Ultimately, the direction of the war seems to have been chosen more by the political parties' historical stance toward the war than the American public, as there was support for both continuing the war and leaving. There never developed any serious pressure to leave Iraq as occurred during the Vietnamese war era.

The United States is a very particular country. Being a democratic mixed economy with strong capitalist tendencies and a relatively unregulated market give the U.S. their ability to fight with low numbers of highly trained troops and complex weapons systems. Other nations have their own way of recruiting and then equipping their armies, which may be studied further to understand the political and economic influences behind such a decision. This study is also limited in scope to the Iraq War, and only deals with American public opinion. This study could be expanded to include the domestic opinion of other Coalition countries that participated in the invasion of Iraq, particularly those that resemble us in their government and economic system.

⁹⁶ Bostdorff, "Judgment, Experience, and Leadership," 268-269.

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