

Who is Held Accountable?
U.S. Military Casualties in Afghanistan and 2010 Congressional Election Outcomes

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Abstract: Are localized war casualties associated with U.S. election outcomes, and if so is the incumbent party penalized for local casualties? Did U.S. casualties from the war in Afghanistan affect congressional election outcomes in 2010? We present a partisan theory of myopic casualty retrospection, arguing that voters are most likely to blame localized casualties on legislators from the incumbent party. Our argument is in contrast to other work on casualties and election outcomes that implies that voters are more sophisticated, blaming legislators in the party that initially authorized the war that resulted in casualties. We find that local U.S. casualties in the war in Afghanistan were a significant, negative predictor of the vote share in Democratic-held House seats in the 2010 midterm elections, but local casualties had no impact on the vote share in GOP-held House seats. Local casualties in Democratic districts also resulted in individual voter-level decisions to abstain from voting and to vote for the Republican candidate. Our argument and evidence raise important normative theoretical implications regarding the ability to engage in prolonged wars in democratic polities. We conclude by discussing the implications for the fields of international relations, voting behavior, electoral politics, and legislative studies.

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The scholarly conventional wisdom has been that the war in Afghanistan was conducted and expanded primarily at the impetus of George W. Bush and the Republican party, and that the Democratic party has not been associated with the increasing casualties in a war started by a Republican president and a Republican Congress. Even as U.S. casualties in Afghanistan hit a historic high in 2010, scholars have pointed to the rise of the tea party and the unpopularity of the Obama health care plan in explaining 2010 election outcomes. In the 2010 midterm elections, Democrats in Congress experienced what President Obama described as a “shellacking” when Republicans gained 63 seats in the House to recapture the majority. While these domestic factors were certainly important, we argue that the collateral consequences of foreign policy were also important. Support for the war in Afghanistan in the U.S. dropped from nearly universal support to only about 50 percent by late 2010. In 2002, the U.S. had 12 fatal casualties in Afghanistan whereas in 2010, the U.S. experienced 499 fatal casualties.

Did local casualties in congressional districts affect election outcomes in 2010? Were legislators in the party in power, the Democratic party, blamed when local casualties in their districts were high? We present a *partisan theory of myopic casualty retrospection* to explain why voters would punish legislators from the party in power during periods in which local casualties are high – instead of punishing legislators from the party who initially authorized the war. Our central argument is that voters blame the in-party for casualties even when the in-party was the out-party at the start of the war. This theory predicts that legislators in the majority party with high numbers of district-level casualties will fare worse than same-party members with low numbers of district-level casualties; and that minority-party members will not be blamed at the ballot box for high casualties.

The results support our theoretical expectations. Democratic candidates running in Democratic-controlled House seats in 2010 did worse in districts with larger numbers of casualties, while casualties had no impact on Republican candidates running in Republican-held seats. This result is due as much to voters exposed to high casualties choosing not to turn out to vote as it is due to the voters choosing not to vote for Democrats.

Our argument and evidence raise important normative theoretical implications regarding the ability to engage in prolonged wars in democratic polities. If legislators face negative electoral consequences from increasing casualties of soldiers who hail from the legislators' constituencies, then legislators may be less likely to support wars even when the wars may serve an important policy purpose. An implication of our findings is that even with wars that begin very popular and are initially considered justified by the populace, casualty fatigue can eventually occur as the war becomes less popular. Elected officials who control the levers of government and represent the party in power are the most likely to be punished by constituents as local casualties mount.

Our work is the first to theorize about and separately test the role of the party in power versus the role of the party that authorized a war that led to casualties. We are also the first to demonstrate an empirical relationship between U.S. casualties in Afghanistan and election outcomes and voting behavior, and one of only a few to examine the impact of casualties on election outcomes in general. This research has significant implications for normative theories of democratic accountability and voter responsiveness to legislative action and inaction, as well as important implications for our understanding of domestic audience costs in military conflicts. There are additional implications for the study of international relations, voting behavior, electoral politics, and American politics.

Theory: Local Casualties, Public Opinion, and Election Outcomes

The public may be sensitive to the human cost of war in determining their support for military efforts because casualties symbolize the key costs and future directions of war (Gartner 2008a). We theorize that the public's sensitivity to casualties can negatively affect elected officials at the ballot box. Voters may punish elected officials who have presided over a war with increasing casualties (Kriner and Shen 2010). The local effect of casualties will particularly shape how a war is perceived by individuals (Gartner, Segura, and Wilkening 1997).

Thus, local casualties have the potential to also affect election outcomes in an elected official's constituency. In the case of a legislator with a geographic constituency as in the United States, if voters attribute responsibility for the casualties to the legislator specifically or to the party of which the legislator

is a member, then the legislator could do poorly during elections when the constituency observes a high number of casualties. Even in situations where the president may have engaged in war as a diversionary tactic to assist the president's electoral goals (Gent 2009), the spillover effects of casualties to legislators' individual districts can harm those specific legislators' reelection bids. As Koch (2011, 796) summarizes, casualties "influence incumbent politicians' electoral fortunes as increasing casualties may move the publicly stated positions of American senators and their challengers."

Scholars have struggled with the question of whether casualties affect public support for wars. Some implicitly or directly argue that rising marginal casualties almost always have a negative effect on opinion (e.g., Gartner and Segura 1998; Kriner and Shen 2010, 2012; Larson 1996; Mueller 1973) while others argue that casualties are conditional on other factors such as whether the public perceives victory in the war or how the war and resultant casualties are framed (e.g., Berinsky 2009; Boettcher and Cobb 2006, 2009; Gelpi and Mueller 2006; Gelpi, Reifler, and Feaver 2007; Gelpi, Feaver, and Reifler 2005/06; Norpoth and Sidman 2007). While there has been debate regarding the conditions under which casualties matter, there has generally been consensus among scholars on one conclusion: in a war the public views as unlikely to be successful, there is potential for a negative effect of casualties on public opinion. Under these conditions, greater numbers of casualties reduce overall support for the war. Therefore, the lack of scholarly consensus over how casualties affect public opinion does not invalidate the fundamental idea that casualties can decrease public support for war. In instances where casualties matter, casualties are almost always negative predictors of support for war. As Russett (2009, 16) notes, "[m]ilitary and civilian morale is likely to decline...in wars of choice that drag on with increased casualties."

The public has strong reasons to be averse to casualties in wars they view as unwinnable, and aversion to local casualties could potentially affect voters' decisions. Casualties are a tangible and relatable consequence of conflict that people can feel or sympathize about. Even if the soldier that is killed is not known to a person, the impact of the loss is often visible. People are interconnected through a variety of means that enable them to feel the weight of a casualty. For instance, people are participants of different institutions and social structures – schools, workplaces, geographic regions – that connect people

to each other's lives (Kriner and Shen 2007, 510; Sinclair 2012). As a result of these connections, people gain a stronger sense of closeness with war victims whom they are unrelated to and may not even know, therefore converting an abstract cost into a personal experience (Gartner 2008b).

Even if there is no direct knowledge of someone killed in war, the local environment could be such where support for the war is reduced due to casualties, and this could spill over to affect the opinions of inattentive voters living in a district in which there are high numbers of casualties. Campaign challengers, interest groups, and the media may be more likely to highlight the negative, collateral consequences of the war in a specific electoral district when local casualties have been high. Local casualties could be perceived consciously or subconsciously as "bad news," causing citizens to vote against the incumbent party or incumbent legislators because information can affect one's emotions and thus affect election outcomes (Healy, Malhotra, and Mo 2010). Ultimately, casualties represent a clear, concrete consequence of war that has the potential to influence public opinion.

Growing human costs make mass publics question the idea that a war advances a national interest because it prompts people to reevaluate just how valuable the war effort really is. In doing so, the public decreases the value they place on the national interest being pursued through the war, thereby decreasing their support for continuing the war or for the officials considered responsible for continuing the war. As for the justification of a war, increased casualties represent the increased severity of a conflict (Wood, Kathman, and Gent 2012, 655). Casualties are a sign of difficulty in combat, and so the public increasingly questions the feasibility of the U.S. to win or accomplish objectives with minimal difficulty as war deaths grow. Critically, the public thinks about what has happened most recently (e.g., casualties) and less about the initial rationale for the military conflict.

Casualties, election outcomes, and legislative representation

Does this theoretical link between casualties and public support for the war translate to the electoral realm? While significant work has been conducted on the role of casualties on public support for war, much less has been done examining the effect of casualties on election outcomes. Of that limited body of work, the effect of U.S. casualties on election and political outcomes has been tested almost

exclusively with the war in Iraq (Cohen 2007; Gartner and Segura 2008; Grose and Oppenheimer 2007; Karol and Miguel 2007; Kriner and Shen 2007) or Vietnam and earlier wars (Carson et al. 2001; Gartner, Segura, and Barratt 2004; Kriner and Shen 2009). In general, greater local casualties – typically defined as the number of fatal U.S. or domestic casualties in an elected official’s constituency – is associated with diminished electoral outcomes.

To our knowledge, no one has studied the effect of local U.S. casualties in Afghanistan on U.S. election outcomes, and very few have studied the effect of U.S. casualties in Afghanistan on public opinion. The only work on Afghanistan casualties and election results is outside of the United States (Loewen and Rubenson 2012 in Canada; and Koch 2011 in Britain). In contrast to our argument, neither of these non-U.S. studies find a negative relationship between casualties and election results.

We theorize that a larger number of local casualties will have a negative effect on legislative election outcomes. Just as increasing aggregate U.S. casualties may lead to a decrease in support for war, so too may local casualties affect elected officials representing areas with more casualties. While domestic policies often take precedence in shaping voter choices, foreign policy plays a role in U.S. electoral politics (Aldrich, Sullivan, and Borgida 1989).

Who Gets Punished? A Partisan Theory of Myopic Casualty Retrospection

Voters in the United States unhappy with local casualties could potentially blame the president, Congress, or both – and could blame the party in power when the war began or the current ruling party. Theories of representational accountability suggest that legislators will consider the consequences of their policy actions, anticipating that decisions leading to policy effects (such as casualties) perceived as negative by their constituents could cause voters to vote against them (Arnold 1990; Mansbridge 2003; Theriault 2005). Members of Congress often attempt to take positions or engage in other actions that reflect the will or interests of their constituents (e.g., Bianco 1994; Bishin 2000; Fenno 1978; Frisch and Kelly 2006; Grose 2011; Oppenheimer 1996), and those who do not may not win reelection (Mayhew 1974). Members of Congress are likely to think carefully about the electoral ramifications of their

decisions to support military interventions, as these decisions can affect the margin by which they may win subsequent elections (Gartner, Segura, and Barratt 2004; Grose and Oppenheimer 2007).

Members of Congress have control over their positions and actions taken in office, but more worrisome to legislators is when there are exogenous events not within their control that can have electoral consequences. Even more worrisome for legislators is when voters may blame them for decisions made far in the past, perhaps even by other legislators or by presidents. In the case of casualties in a long-running war like Afghanistan, the decision to go to war may have taken place years before the period in which significant casualties occurred and even before some of the legislators were in office. Even if legislators serving during the period of higher casualties were also serving when the initial vote to go to war was held, the president and the administration have a much greater role in decisions and strategies in the war. The linkage between the initial policy decision to go to war and collateral consequences like casualties many years later is not easily traceable by inattentive voters to specific members of Congress who may have served during that time. It is easy for voters to punish the current ruling party for casualties without thinking about who was initially responsible.

We argue that voters unhappy with local casualties may seek accountability through the elections of their local member of Congress, punishing those members of the ruling party from districts with the most local casualties. Existing accounts of the link between casualties and election outcomes often claim that voters punish individual legislators or those in the party that started the war, though these scholarly accounts require significant attention on behalf of voters – the voters must know which party is responsible for starting the war and possibly which legislators voted for the war. Since voters are relatively inattentive to these sorts of details, we argue that constituents will instead respond to the most immediate, retrospective information available to them (Healy and Malhotra 2009; Fiorina 1981). Thus, if local casualties are high, myopic constituents may simply blame their legislators who are currently in the governing party and not blame the party who started the war or incumbents generally responsible for beginning a war.

This partisan theory of myopic casualty retrospection does not necessarily imply that voters are ill-informed. Because Congress has the ability to authorize funding for military conflicts, a continuation or escalation of a war (like Afghanistan) can most easily be blamed on those legislators most recently serving. Similarly, inattentive voters are much more likely to know which party currently controls the presidency and Congress than which party or parties controlled the presidency and Congress when a war was initially begun.

Voters are unlikely to think about events many years ago that led to present-day casualties and instead are likely to blame the party presently serving in government. Legislators' constituents generally have a somewhat more negative feeling about their government in general and possibly their legislator in particular if there are large numbers of casualties, regardless of whether that legislator served during the initial congressional approval of the war. For example, during Vietnam, voters opposed to the war blamed Lyndon Johnson and hawks in Congress for escalation and resultant casualties, not those who had initially started the war. Immediate events, even if exogenous to the legislator, are those that the mass public, and therefore constituents, are most likely to receive and process (Zaller 1992).

The myopic casualty retrospection theory suggests that the most direct way for citizens to voice discontent is to blame the party currently in power. This is in line with the responsible party government thesis (APSA Report 1950). Voters are more likely to vote for or against majority party candidates in Congress based on how they evaluate the legislative branch's performance (Jones and McDermott 2004). Additionally, the majority party in Congress has a greater capacity than other legislators to implement changes to the status quo foreign policy (Cox and McCubbins 2005; Finocchiaro and Rohde 2008). Because the party in power is situated to deliver policy changes, if it does not, the public logically holds legislators from this party responsible for high local casualties.

Voting against governing-party legislators as a signal to the president

The president is, of course, arguably more important than majority-party legislators at making decisions regarding the expansion of troops in existing military interventions. In the case of Afghanistan in 2010, the Democratic party controlled both the presidency and both houses of Congress. Thus,

Obama's decision to increase troop levels is associated with the Democratic party in Congress even if Obama, not Congress, took the lead on the troop surge (Congress did eventually approve authorization of the surge in Afghanistan, but not all Democrats in the House supported it). Inattentive voters may not know the institutional mechanisms by which more local casualties have occurred, but they are likely to know that the Democrats control the presidency and may even know that the Democrats control the House as well. In 2006, the House Democrats came to power in part due to increasing unpopularity of the war in Iraq; and in 2008, Obama won the presidency while promising to reduce the number of U.S. troops overseas.

Thus, the promises of the Democratic party to reduce wars and thus casualties were inconsistent with the troop surge in Afghanistan in 2009-10. As Ferejohn (1986, 6) has argued, citizens vote by asking the incumbent party "What have you done for me lately?" and not based on policy promises from previous campaigns. Similarly, Fiorina (1981) states that voters "typically have one comparatively hard bit of data: they know what life has been like during the incumbent's administration." The inconsistency with the perception of Obama and the Democratic party as favoring troop drawdowns and the actual policies enacted prior to the 2010 elections made blaming the Democratic party a distinct possibility among voters in areas with high local casualties. Voters may have simply chosen not to participate in 2010 or perhaps vote against Democratic House members. Either way, Democratic House incumbents should fare poorly under the theory of myopic casualty retrospection.

An alternative view: Blaming the party in power when the war began

In past work on the effects of war casualties on election outcomes, there is observational equivalence when it comes to assessing how political parties in Congress are blamed. In all studies of casualties and the war in Iraq (Cohen 2007; Gartner and Segura 2008; Grose and Oppenheimer 2007; Karol and Miguel 2007; Kriner and Shen 2007), the GOP was the party in power at the time of the election (when the war was unpopular) and the GOP was the party in power when the war was initiated (when the war was popular). Thus, we are unable to determine whether voters blame the authorizing

party or whether they blame the incumbent party for inaction on ending a war that has become unpopular or perceived as unwinnable.

Karol and Miguel (2007) found that Bush (and by logic the Republican party) was punished in states with higher casualties in 2004. Bush was the incumbent president before the 2004 election and was simultaneously the president who started the war in Iraq. Gartner and Segura (2008); Grose and Oppenheimer (2007); and Kriner and Shen (2007) found that Republicans in the 2006 congressional elections from districts with high casualties did much worse than those from low-casualty districts. Of course, Republicans in Congress were both the party in power before the 2006 election and the party that initially approved the decision to go to war.

While the data examined by these authors studying U.S. casualties in Iraq cannot distinguish between ruling-party and authorizing-party blame, Kriner and Shen (2007) state that “ruling-party candidates from states that have suffered the heaviest losses...[bear] the brunt of the popular backlash.” The implication is that the party in power is affected by casualty counts. Others argue that only the authorizing party is to blame. Croco (2012) argues and finds that a “culpable leader,” meaning one “who either presides over the beginning of a war, or comes to power midwar and shares a political connection with a culpable predecessor,” is blamed by the public. She further finds that domestic audiences are unwilling to punish “nonculpable leaders” who do not bear responsibility for starting a war that yields negative consequences. If legislators in the party that authorized the war are considered culpable, then that would present an alternative to our argument.

Cohen (2007) finds that Iraq war deaths were associated with 2006 midterm senate election outcomes. Like others studying the 2006 elections, there is observational equivalence between ruling-party legislators and authorizing-party legislators. However, Cohen considers this finding to be a referendum on the decision to go to war in Iraq, which implies that his expectation is that the authorizing-party is blamed for local, constituency-level casualties.

Finally, others argue that voters simply blame incumbents but do not identify whether the incumbents were part of authorizing the war initially. Gartner, Segura, and Barratt (2004) find a link

between casualties in Vietnam and incumbents faring poorly at the ballot box, but they do not consider the role of political party (majority party or authorizing party) at all. They examined 1966-72, a period in which party control of Congress did not shift (though the president's party did). This period also coincided with a much less partisan-polarized Congress than the era in which we study (Theriault 2008), so the lack of focus on party could be due to the relative paucity of congressional partisan polarization.

In contrast to much of the past work on casualties where the party in power is observationally indistinguishable from the party who authorized the war, we explicitly argue that the incumbent party is most likely to be penalized by voters in districts with high casualties. Because casualties are generally representations of an inability for the government to move things in the right direction, voters myopically though retrospectively vote against legislators who are part of the governing party. The theoretical prediction is that districts with high numbers of casualties will result in majority-party legislators who do worse in their legislative elections.

Knowing whether voters are blaming the party responsible for initiating a war or whether voters are simply voting against the incumbent party regardless of whether that party started the war has direct implications for foreign policy decision-making in institutions. If voters only blame the party in power that authorized the war, then citizens are less able to hold elected officials democratically accountable for long-run foreign policy decisions when party control in government institutions shifts. Voters blaming the party in power creates a system of responsiveness, where voters are voting retrospectively based on the collateral consequences of inaction. In 2010, voters in high-casualty areas may have voted against Democratic incumbents to send a message that the president's surge and the acquiescence of the Democratic-controlled Congress were not these voters' preferred policies; or voters may simply have not liked higher casualties, whether they knew the casualties were the result of the surge.

Increasing Casualties and Decreasing U.S. Public Support for the War in Afghanistan

Before we can test the expectations of our partisan theory of myopic casualty retrospection, it is necessary to establish that public support for and the opinion that the U.S. could win the war in Afghanistan declined precipitously from its highs in 2001. Following the September 11, 2001 terrorist

attacks, the American public rallied together with the desire to deliver retribution to those who had attacked the United States (Hetherington and Nelson 2003), and the public shifted its support toward foreign and anti-terrorism policies (Hetherington and Suhay 2011; Hetherington and Husser 2012). As a result, the U.S. intervention in Afghanistan was backed by a high level of support in its early stages. In a January 2002 USA Today/Gallup poll, 89 percent of the public supported sending military forces into Afghanistan with only 9 percent opposed. This declaration of war was perceived by most of the U.S. public as a direct and justified response to the attacks because al-Qaeda was operating within Afghanistan under the safe haven of the Taliban regime.

FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

However, as the war progressed, public support for U.S. intervention in Afghanistan dropped significantly. Figure 1 shows an aggregate summary of public opinion on the war in Afghanistan from 2001 to 2010 using all surveys conducted by USA Today/Gallup asking respondents whether the war was a mistake (Jones and Saad 2010). By August 2007, for instance, disapproval of the war grew to 25 percent. By July/August 2010, almost 50 percent of the U.S. public opposed the war while just slightly more 50 percent still supported it. In a poll conducted after the November 2010 congressional elections, there was a slight uptick in support for the war, but still about 40 percent of the public opposed it.

Several factors explain this decrease in aggregate public support. For one, the public gradually lost confidence in whether the U.S. would succeed in Afghanistan. As the war dragged on for approximately a decade, the public increasingly perceived the military effort as difficult and costly. Polls showed that in December 2001, 51 percent of the public thought that the war was going very well.¹ From March 2009 to March 2011 during President Obama's first term in office, the percentage of people who thought that the war was going very well was consistently below 5 percent. Clearly, by the elections of 2010, the public's confidence in the U.S.'s ability to emerge victorious in Afghanistan was waning, and this decline in confidence correlates with the decline in public support for the war. Increasing casualties

¹ The source for the data in this paragraph are New York Times/CBS polls.

are associated with declining support for war when the public does not perceive success in the war (Gelpi, Feaver, and Reifler 2005/06).

FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

The number of troops on the ground increased from less than 40,000 in January 2009 to almost 100,000 in September 2010 (Belasco 2011, 12). This troop surge, supported by Obama and approved by a Democratically-controlled Congress, increased the chances of more casualties simply because more U.S. soldiers were exposed. As can be seen in Figure 2, the human and financial costs of the military effort in Afghanistan steadily increased throughout the duration of the war, and particularly in the period leading up to the 2010 elections. These human and financial costs correlated with increasing disapproval of the war in Afghanistan (Belasco 2011). The total number of U.S. casualties in Afghanistan rose from 49 in 2002 to 1,852 in 2011 (see Figure 2). Simultaneously, the total financial cost of the U.S. military effort rose from \$20.8 billion in 2002 to \$443.6 billion in 2011 (see Figure 2). The war was demonstrably costly and significantly more so with time. In 2001, what had started as one of the most popular U.S. military interventions had become fairly unpopular with the increasing casualty counts leading up to November 2010. The question remaining is whether collateral casualties from the increasingly unpopular war would have an effect on the 2010 elections.

Hypotheses

Our argument is that voters will blame the current governing party, and that negative consequences of the war will lead to reduced support for legislators of the governing party. Our argument leads to the *partisan myopic casualty retrospection hypothesis*. We hypothesize that the greater the number of casualties in Afghanistan, the worse Democratic incumbents fared in the 2010 elections. We anticipate that voters will attribute blame to the party currently in power expected to end the war rather than the party that was in power responsible for starting the war. This blame will be targeted primarily in those Democratic districts that have suffered the most local casualties. The mechanism for this electoral punishment toward legislators of the party in power may be due to voters casting ballots for Republicans or may also be due to casualty-sensitive voters choosing not to vote.

However, alternatives to our *myopic casualty retrospection hypothesis* exist. Extant literature has explored several other potential targets of blame attribution for policy outcomes. One existing hypothesis is that voters look backwards when determining who to blame for outcomes and specifically identify who was responsible for authorizing or deciding on a particular policy (Croco 2012; Mansbridge 2003). If this alternative explanation is correct, then voters would, therefore, punish Republican House candidates in Congress for the increasing number of local casualties in Afghanistan since the Republican party had the majority in the House when Operation Enduring Freedom was authorized. Another alternative to our hypothesis is that blame attribution for local fatal casualties does not operate through a partisan lens. If the public is presented with bad news, it will blame the incumbent regardless of which party he or she is affiliated.

Empirical Models: Are Local Casualties Associated with House Election Outcomes?

We estimated four different models to analyze the effects of war casualties on legislative election outcomes. Two models examined Democratic House seats and the other two models examined Republican House seats. We estimate Democratic and Republican House seat models separately as we have different expectations regarding the effect of casualties and other variables on Democrats and Republicans. The dependent variable, *Democratic two-party vote share 2010*, is used in all four models and is the percentage of the two-party vote in the district for the Democratic House candidate in the 2010 general election.

Two key independent variables measure the number of district-level casualties in the war in Afghanistan. Both independent variables are based on the number of hometown casualties in each congressional district as a result of Operation Enduring Freedom. A hometown casualty means a soldier was killed in Afghanistan and hailed from that congressional district. From an identification standpoint, this independent variable is exogenous, as which soldiers from which geographic areas died in war is well beyond the direct control of members of Congress. We tally all fatal casualties per congressional district in the six months before Election Day in 2010. Similarly short time frames have been used in past work examining the effect of casualties on congressional election outcomes (Grose and Oppenheimer 2007). In

addition to our measure being consistent with past work, it makes sense to study a limited time period leading up to Election Day. Support for war declines when casualties are recent (Gartner 2008a), and this logic may also apply to the timing effects of casualties and election outcomes.

To construct the two fatal casualty variables, we first collected the hometown, referred to as the “home of record,” of each killed soldier found on the list of fatal casualties reported by the U.S. Department of Defense. We then used their hometowns to identify associated zip codes using the United States Postal Service website. We then matched the zip codes with their congressional districts using the U.S. Census. In some cases, there was a uniquely matched congressional district with zip code(s), while in other instances more than one congressional district was identified as overlapping the soldier’s home zip code(s). Because of this, we used two independent variables to measure fatal casualties in Afghanistan.

The first independent variable is *Afghanistan district deaths (measure 1)*. This variable is the total number of fatal casualties of soldiers from a congressional district, where every soldier death is coded as 1 casualty for each overlapping congressional district. For instance, if there were two casualties in zip codes overlapping Manhattan, New York, then all four congressional districts that overlapped Manhattan were coded as having 2 casualties on this first variable. The number of local casualties in each congressional district ranges from 0 to 7.

The second independent variable is *Afghanistan district deaths (measure 2)*. This variable is also based on the total number of fatal casualties in each congressional district. In the instances in which a casualty’s home of record city/zip code was identified as overlapping multiple districts, we divided by the number of congressional districts claiming the fatality. For instance, if there were two casualties in Manhattan, New York, then all four congressional districts that overlapped Manhattan were coded as having 0.5 casualties (2 deaths divided by 4 districts = 0.5). These two measures of casualties are the same used by Grose and Oppenheimer (2007, 542) in their study of Iraq casualties and the 2006 House election outcomes. Two separate models were estimated, one with *Afghanistan district deaths (measure 1)* as the key independent variable and the other with *Afghanistan district deaths (measure 2)* as the key

independent variable. Models with each of these variables are estimated separately as the two measures are highly correlated.

Given the declining public opinion about the war in Afghanistan, we are primarily interested in U.S. district-level casualties in Afghanistan. However, we also include the variables *Iraq district deaths (measure 1)* and *Iraq district deaths (measure 2)* in the two models, respectively. These two variables are measured in the same way as described above for the Afghanistan casualty variables, except using data on U.S. casualties in Operation Iraqi Freedom.² These two Iraq variables are included in separate models. We are not certain *a priori* whether these Iraq variables will have an impact on election outcomes as there were very few U.S. casualties in Iraq during this time period.

In order to control for factors typically associated with House election outcomes in 2010, we included a number of other independent variables. Unless otherwise indicated, these independent variables are included in all four models. *Expenditures by Democrats* and *Expenditures by Republicans* are independent variables included to measure the campaign spending levels and thus competitiveness of each House district. Both variables are reported in 100,000s of dollars.³

We included the variable *Health care roll call*, which is coded 1 if the House Representative voted in favor of the health care reform bill in 2010 and 0 for all others. Tea party opposition to the health care bill was strong (Karpowitz et al. 2011, 303, 306), and this opposition may have been reflected in lower vote totals for members who supported the health care bill (Jacobson 2011). Nyhan et al. (2012, 16) found that Democratic members of the House who voted for Obama's health care bill did about eight

² Unlike Afghanistan, there were very few fatal casualties in Iraq in the time period leading up to the November 2010 elections. Nevertheless, we wanted to control for Iraq casualties as previous election results have been associated with casualties in Iraq (Grose and Oppenheimer 2007; Karol and Miguel 2007; Kriner and Shen 2007).

³ Because cross-sectional data on campaign expenditures do not linearly predict election outcomes well (e.g., both low and very high spending by incumbents can mean electoral dangers for those incumbents), we used a difference measure for these two variables. *Expenditures by Democrats* measures the amount of campaign spending by the Democratic candidate in the 2010 House elections minus the spending by the Democratic candidate in the same district in 2008; and *Expenditures by Republicans* is the same measure but for the Republican candidates. A negative value indicates a drop in expenditures, indicating the district is less competitive; while a positive value indicates the district may be more competitive. This difference measure helps us overcome the problems associated with cross-sectionally examining campaign spending's effects on vote outcomes.

percentage points worse in 2010 than those Democrats opposing the bill. This variable is included for the two Democratic models only, as only one Republican voted for the bill (Rep. Joseph Cao of Louisiana).

We also included independent variables to account for the quality of candidates running and the underlying partisanship of the district. *Incumbent* is coded 1 if the incumbent ran for reelection in 2010 and 0 if the seat was open. The *Obama 2008 two-party vote in district* is measured as the percentage of the district that voted for Barack Obama in the 2008 election. This variable is used to proxy for underlying partisan strength in each district. *Quality Challenger* was defined as candidates who had previously held elected office and ran against incumbents in 2010. This variable is coded as 1 if there was a quality challenger running against an incumbent and as 0 if there was no quality challenger. We also included a dummy variable *Scandal*. This variable is coded 1 if an incumbent who ran for reelection had an investigation for unethical activities or was cited for potential wrongdoings and is coded 0 otherwise.⁴

Lastly, we included independent variables to control for confounding explanations pertaining to districts with large military constituencies. *Armed Forces* represents the percentage of the district population aged 18-64 serving in the armed forces, and it was collected from the U.S. Census. *Veterans in District* is the percentage of the district population composed of veterans. These data were collected from the U.S. Census. These and other independent variables used in the models are similar to the variables used in Grose and Oppenheimer (2007) and Kriner and Shen (2007).

Results: The Effect of War Casualties on Vote Share in Democratic House seats in 2010

The models examining Democratic House seats are shown in Table 1. The findings suggest that Democratic House members were negatively affected by the local context of Afghanistan war casualties.

Models 1 and 2 in Table 1 examine the effect of district-level casualties in Afghanistan on the Democratic two-party vote share for Democratic House seats. In both models, the *Afghanistan war deaths* (measure 1 and measure 2) variables were significant and negative predictors of the Democratic vote share. These results suggest that voters punished the Democratic party –the party in power – for the

⁴ This information was gathered from the U.S. House Committee on Ethics' Summary of Activities for the 111th Congress (2009-2010).

negative collateral consequences of the war in Afghanistan. Supporting our expectations, larger numbers of Afghanistan fatal casualties are associated with lower vote shares for Democrats in the 2010 House elections.

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

The *Iraq war deaths* variables were not statistically significant predictors in either model, though the coefficient was quite large in Model 2. Because deaths in Iraq were very infrequent during the period studied yet deaths in Afghanistan were at one of the highest levels since the conflict began in 2001, it is not surprising that Iraq war deaths were an insignificant predictor of the vote while Afghanistan war deaths were significant predictors.⁵

Other variables were significant predictors in the Democratic House seat models (Table 1). Higher values of campaign expenditures by Republican candidates were associated with lower Democratic vote shares in both models. Consistent with Nyhan et al. (2012), Democrats' roll calls on the health care bill were negatively related to Democratic vote share in both models in Table 1. Based on the statistically significant coefficient of the *Health care roll call* variable, Democrats who voted for the health care bill did about seven and a half percentage points worse than those who did not vote in favor of the health care bill. The substantive effect of the health care vote is surprisingly large. Those Democratic legislators who voted for the health care bill and had a large number of Afghanistan casualties suffered at the ballot box. The "one-two punch" of an unpopular roll call and the collateral consequences of an increasingly unpopular war hurt many Democrats running in 2010. Based on the results in Model 2 of Table 1, a Democratic House member who voted for the health care bill and whose district had five local Afghanistan casualties did, all else equal, about 10 percentage points worse than a Democratic House member who voted against the health care bill and had zero local Afghanistan casualties.

The *Incumbent* variable was also a significant predictor of vote share in the models in Table 1. Not surprisingly, Democratic incumbents performed better than those running in open seats previously

⁵ In other unreported results, we added the casualties in Afghanistan to the casualties in Iraq to create a total war deaths variable. In these unreported results, this combined variable was a statistically significant predictor of the Democratic two-party vote share in 2010 Democratic House seats.

held by retiring Democrats. Interestingly, the electoral benefit of being a Democratic incumbent was not as large as the electoral benefit received for voting against the health care bill. In the models in Table 1, the percentage of the two-party vote that President Obama received in the 2008 election had a statistically significant and positive effect on the Democratic vote share. The *Quality challenger* variable was a negative and significant predictor of the vote share for Democrats in the models, though the *Scandal* variable had no significant effect. Those Democrats facing quality challengers, defined as those holding prior office, fared worse than those that did not face quality challengers.

The percentage of veterans in the district was a statistically significant and negative predictor of the Democratic vote share in the Democratic models. For every 1 percentage-point increase of veterans in the district there was a reduction in the Democratic vote share by about 0.3 percentage points. The percentage of *Armed Forces in District* was not a significant predictor in any models in Table 1.

FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE

To better understand the substantive effects of war casualties on Democratic House members' vote shares, we calculated predicted values of the vote share for Democratic House seats based on model 1 in Table 1. In Figure 3, we calculated the difference in the predicted vote share between districts with 0 casualties and districts with more than zero casualties (while holding all other variables at their means).⁶ A large majority of districts, 62.1%, had at least one local Afghanistan fatal casualty in the period leading up to the 2010 November general election.

Also in Figure 3, we examine predicted values of the dependent variable while varying the *Expenditures by Republican* variable, the *Incumbent* variable, the *Quality challenger* variable, and the *Scandal* variable (we individually calculate each of these variables predicted values while holding all other independent variables in Model 1, Table 1 at their means).⁷ These are the variables that have

⁶ While the dependent variable in Table 1 was Democratic vote share, we display the results in Figure 3 by focusing on the increase in Republican vote share for ease of interpretability.

⁷ We calculated the difference in predicted vote share between Democratic legislative candidates involved in a scandal; between a Democrat running against a Republican challenger spending \$0 and a Democrat running against a Republican challenger spending \$1 million (this \$1 million value is greater than the mean value spent by

consistently been found to have effects on congressional election outcomes, so comparing the predicted effects of these variables to the predicted effects of casualties will allow us to gauge the relative impact of the local context of Afghanistan war casualties on the electoral fortunes of House candidates in Democratic seats in 2010.

The top part of Figure 3 shows that districts with 2 casualties resulted in a little less than one percentage point increase in the vote for the Republican candidate in Democratically-held districts. The value of two casualties is just higher than the mean number of casualties in all districts. Four casualties, which is just greater than 1 standard deviation above the mean for all districts, led to about a 1.5 percentage point increase in vote share for the Republican candidate. Six casualties and seven casualties, the two largest values of Afghanistan casualties in districts, resulted in a large increase in the Republican vote share. The Republican vote share was 2.5 percentage points greater in Democratic districts with 6 Afghanistan casualties than in Democratic districts with 0 casualties, while 7 casualties resulted in a nearly 3 percentage point increase for the Republican candidates.

The bottom part of Figure 3 shows the effect of typical electoral variables on the vote share in 2010 Democratic districts. The presence of a Democratic scandal, a quality GOP challenger, and a GOP candidate spending \$1 million, all else equal, resulted in just under or just over a 1 percentage point increase in the Republican vote share in Democratic districts. The presence of an open seat, not surprisingly, had the greatest effect. The predicted values for Republican candidates in Democratic open seat districts were over 4 percentage points more than for those where Democratic incumbents were running.

Given the results in Figure 3, the magnitude of the effect of Afghanistan war casualties was substantial relative to other predictors of the vote. An increase from 0 to 4 casualties (approximately one standard deviation above the mean) was greater than the magnitude of the Democratic candidate being involved in a scandal, the Democratic candidate facing a quality challenger, or the Democratic candidate

Republican candidates running in Democratic seats); between Democratic candidates facing no quality challengers and those facing quality challengers; and between incumbent Democrats and Democratic candidates running in open seats previously held by Democratic representatives.

facing an opponent spending one million dollars on the campaign. Only an open seat gulped the effect of local Afghanistan casualties on the vote in Democratic districts in the 2010 general elections. In sum, it appears that Democrats running in Democratically-held seats did worse when there was a greater number of casualties.

Results: The Effect of War Casualties on Vote Share in Republican House seats in 2010

Table 2 displays the Republican seat models. Unlike in the Democratic models, casualties have no impact on the election outcomes for Republicans running in Republican-held districts. Legislators in Republican seats did no better or worse in districts with higher numbers of casualties. In addition, the Iraq districts deaths variable was statistically insignificant in the Republican seat models in Table 2.

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

Other variables in Table 2 are associated with the 2010 election results. Expenditures by Democrats resulted in a higher Democratic vote share in the district while the presence of a Republican incumbent running (instead of an open seat) led to an over three percentage point decrease in the Democratic vote share. Other statistically significant variables in the GOP vote share models in Table 2 were the *Obama 2008 district two-party vote* and the *percentage of Armed Forces in the district*. Because the key variable of interest, *Afghanistan district deaths*, is not related to the vote share in Republican districts, we do not estimate a figure of predicted values like we did for the Democratic House seats.

In sum, these results suggest that voters did not punish Republicans for the local effects of the war in Afghanistan. It also suggests that there was not a pox on both parties. When considering the Democratic and Republican models in tandem, the results show that voters punished the incumbent party in the 2010 elections. Even though the Democratic party did not control the House or the presidency when the war in Afghanistan was initially authorized and even though both parties initially supported the war in Afghanistan, only Democrats were penalized for the collateral consequences of the war. These results indicate that local casualties are associated with reduced vote totals for the party in power preceding the election and not the party that initially authorized the war. Prior to the 2010 election, Democrats controlled a unified government. A suggestive implication of these results is that voters wanted the

Democratic congressional majority (and possibly Obama) to move faster on Afghanistan withdrawal. Congressional Democrats in 2006 and 2008 and Obama in 2008 were elected in part because of growing opposition to prolonged wars. The 2010 election results suggest that voters became uneasy with increasing local casualties, and Democratic members of Congress took the blame at the ballot box.

Explaining Individual Behavior: Voter Abstention or Voting Against the Incumbent Party?

The results in Tables 1 and 2 and Figure 3 clearly demonstrate there was an effect of local casualties on the vote share only for Democratic members of Congress, supporting the expectations of the partisan theory of myopic casualty retrospection. While the district-level vote share is the most important measure from the eyes of a House member whose reelection may be on the line, it cannot tell us about individual-level voter behavior. Because the Democratic party had as recently as 2008 been perceived by many voters as more favorable than the 2008 Republican party to a quick withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan, it is possible that voters in high-casualty districts may simply have become disillusioned about the Democratic party but feel no home in the Republican party. If voters perceived that neither the party in power nor the Republican party would have an ability to reduce the number of local casualties after the 2010 elections, then voters in high-casualty districts occupied by Democratic incumbents may have withdrawn from the political process. Voters with local casualty sensitivity may have simply opted to stay home instead of voting for a Republican candidate or voting for the Democratic incumbent legislator from the party presiding over the war when there were large numbers of local casualties. If this is the case, then we would expect that a larger number of casualties in a House seat held by a Democrat will be associated with lower individual-level turnout.

If voters voted against legislators representing the party in power due to the increasing numbers of local casualties, then we would not simply expect an effect of local casualties on turnout. Instead, we would expect that individual voters who live in Democratically-held congressional districts with more casualties would be more likely to cast their ballots for Republicans. This would mean that high casualties could make a voter choose to vote the in-party representative out. Because the Republican party in 2010 was not necessarily associated with strong opposition to the war in Afghanistan, if voters in high-casualty

districts were more likely to vote for Republicans in Democratically-held seats, this would be evidence of fairly myopic, retrospective voting against the legislator of the party in power.

To better understand what is underlying our House district vote share results, we test these individual-level expectations using survey data from the 2010 CCES. The myopic casualty retrospection hypothesis could expect that greater numbers of Afghanistan casualties in a voter's congressional district would lead to the voter choosing not to turn out in 2010. The hypothesis could also suggest that greater numbers of Afghanistan casualties in a voter's congressional district should lead to the voter choosing to vote against the Democratic House incumbent or candidate in Democratically-held seats.

Empirical Models: Are Local Casualties Associated with Lower Turnout or Vote Choice?

We have expectations that voters in high-casualty House seats held by Democratic incumbents may have been both less likely to turn out to vote and less likely to vote for the Democratic candidate. If we do not consider the factors underlying turnout in our model of vote choice, we may have misspecification due to selection effects. Thus, to examine whether individual voter abstention or individual voter choice underlie the district-level results uncovered earlier, we estimated a Heckman probit selection model (for more details on this model, see Bertelli and Grose 2007, 240; Heckman 1979; and Van de Ven and Van Pragg 1981).

In the same model, we estimate both a selection equation where the dependent variable is turnout (coded 1 if the citizen voted and 0 otherwise) and an outcome equation where the dependent variable is vote choice (coded 1 if the voter voted for the Democratic House candidate and 0 otherwise). In the selection equation predicting whether an individual turns out to vote, we include our key independent variable of interest *Afghanistan district deaths*. We use measure 1 of this variable as described earlier, which is simply the total number of fatal casualties of hometown soldiers who hailed from the congressional district. In addition, we also include a variable measuring *Iraq district deaths (measure 1)*, which was also used in the earlier analyses.

Two variables not included in the outcome equation but included in the selection equation are *Age* and *Long-term resident*. Both of these variables are associated with the propensity to turn out, as

older voters and those who have lived at the same address for a long period of time are more likely to participate. The *Age* variable is coded 1 if the respondent is over 65 and 0 if not, while the *Long-term resident* variable is coded 1 if the individual has lived at the same address for at least 3 years and 0 if less than 3 years.

A number of individual-level independent variables are included in the selection equation. *Party identification* is a 7-point scale measuring the strength of the citizen's partisan attachment. Higher values indicate identification with the Republican party and lower values indicate identification with the Democratic party. Another variable in the selection equation is *Race*, which is coded 1 if the respondent is white and 0 otherwise. The variable *Education* is included as higher-educated individuals are more likely to vote, and higher values indicate higher levels of education. The final variable included in the selection equation is *Income*. Higher values of this variable indicate a higher income for the citizen, and thus a higher propensity to turn out to vote.

In the outcome equation, the dependent variable is the decision to vote for the Democratic candidate or the Republican candidate (1=Democratic candidate; 0=Republican candidate). The key variable, *Afghanistan district deaths*, is also included in this outcome equation. The *Iraq district deaths* variable is also included in the outcome equation.

Gender is an independent variable included in the outcome equation but not in the selection equation. It is coded 1 if the citizen is female and 0 if male, as some commentators have noted that men were much more likely to vote Republican in 2010 (Kuhn 2010). Other independent variables included in the selection equation predicting vote choice were *Party identification*, *Race*, *Education*, and *Income*. These are all individual-level variables coded as described previously as they are also included in the selection equation predicting turnout.

Consistent with the district-level analyses of election results reported earlier, we estimate one selection model for voters in Democratic House seats and a second selection model for voters in Republican House seats.

Results: The Effect of War Casualties on Turnout and Vote Choice in 2010

Table 3 displays the results of the individual-level analyses. The top part of the table is for the outcome equation, predicting whether an individual voted for the Democratic or Republican House candidate; and the bottom part of the table is for the selection equation for whether an individual chose to turn out or not. Model 1 looks at seats held by Democratic incumbents, and Model 2 looks at seats held by Republican incumbents.

The results for the key variable of interest, *Afghanistan district deaths*, support the expectations of our theory. Voters in Democratically-held districts with high numbers of casualties were significantly less likely to vote for the Democratic candidate. Interestingly, though, vote choice is not the whole story. The Afghanistan district deaths variable is also a statistically significant predictor of turnout in the selection equation, meaning that voters in Democratically-held districts with high casualties were less likely to vote than those voters in Democratically-held districts with low casualties. Casualties in Democratic districts are associated with both dampening voter turnout and swinging individual vote choice away from the Democratic party. The Afghanistan casualties variable had no statistical impact on either vote choice or turnout in the model of Republican-held seats, which is again consistent with our partisan theory of myopic casualty retrospection.

Like the district-level results in Tables 1 and 2, the Iraq district deaths variable was insignificant. Other variables predicted vote choice. Men, strong Republican identifiers, and whites were less likely to vote Democratic; and higher-educated individuals were more likely to vote Democratic in the Democratic-seat model. Similar results for the *Party identification* and *Education* variables were found in the Republican-seat model. In the selection equation parts of both the Democratic and Republican seat models, all of the individual-level independent variables were predictors of turnout.

The substantive effects of the *Afghanistan district deaths* variable in the Democratic-seats model may be better interpreted by calculating predicted effects while varying the key casualties variable of interest. When there were 0 Afghanistan deaths in a district, an individual had a 0.84 likelihood of turning out to vote and a 0.54 likelihood of voting for the Democratic House candidate. When there were 5 Afghanistan deaths in a district (more than 1 standard deviation above the mean), an individual's

likelihood of voting for the Democrat dropped to 0.49, and an individual's likelihood of turning out was reduced to 0.79. Again, in GOP-held seats, there was no impact of the *Afghanistan district deaths* variable on either turnout or vote choice.

These individual-level results provide the microfoundations underlying the earlier result in Table 1 showing that the more local Afghanistan fatal casualties there were in a Democratic incumbent's congressional district, the worse the Democrat did in the 2010 U.S. House general election. The results taken together show that, in Democratic districts, local Afghanistan casualties led to a reduction in vote share for House Democratic candidates, a decrease in the likelihood that citizens turned out to vote, and a decrease in the likelihood that a citizen voted for Democratic House candidates. There was no effect on district-level election outcomes or individual voting decisions in Republican-held seats.

Conclusion

We presented a partisan theory of myopic casualty retrospection. This theory purports that citizens will blame the incumbent party in power for local fatal casualties, even if that party was not responsible for initiating the war that led to the casualties. In addition, we argue that election results and vote choices related to casualties would be retrospective but myopically associated with only the most recent Congress. Voters do not consider whether the party currently in power was responsible for the policies that resulted in the local casualties. Instead, the results show that voters blame the party in power for inaction.

Specifically in the case we examined – the 2010 elections and U.S. casualties in Afghanistan – we found that vote shares for Democratic candidates were reduced in districts held by Democratic incumbents with high numbers of casualties. There was no effect of casualties on vote shares in Republican-held districts. Similarly, in those districts held by Democratic incumbents, individual vote choice was more likely to favor Republicans when there were large numbers of casualties; but there was again no effect in GOP-held districts. Perhaps most interestingly, higher district-level casualty counts were correlated with lower individual turnout in Democratic seats but not in GOP seats.

One surprising implication of our study is that there is election sensitivity to a very small number of casualties. The number of casualties across low- and high-casualty districts varied by only the single digits, yet this was enough to yield substantively meaningful differences in election outcomes and voting decisions. This is consistent with recent work on Iraq war casualties (e.g. Grose and Oppenheimer 2007; Kriner and Shen 2007), but is inconsistent with other work examining the effects of casualties in prior wars where the counts were much larger.

The argument and findings presented are of interest to scholars of international relations, American politics, electoral politics, congressional politics, representation, the domestic consequences of military conflicts, and foreign policy. Normatively, the results have important implications for our understanding of representation. Representation has traditionally assumed that democratic accountability involves an active decision by the elected official and then a subsequent evaluation of this decision by citizens in an election. The results demonstrate that the party in power who was *not* responsible for the policy decision to go to war in Afghanistan nevertheless faced negative electoral consequences for the effects (local casualties) of the initial decision to go to war. This creates a much higher expectation of democratic accountability for elected officials. Voters will punish legislators in the party in power not just for policy decisions that lead to unpopular collateral consequences but will also punish the party in power for inaction.

The results also speak to an emerging literature on elections and voting behavior that shows that very small exogenous events can have a fairly significant impact on vote outcomes and individual decisions (Healy and Malhotra 2009; Healy, Malhotra, and Mo 2010). It also adds to the emerging literature on casualties and election outcomes (Cohen 2007; Gartner and Segura 2008; Grose and Oppenheimer 2007, Karol and Miguel 2007; Kriner and Shen 2007, 2010), though is the first to separate out whether casualties are associated with negative electoral effects on the incumbent party in power or the party that initiated the war.

Finally, from an empirical standpoint, the results are somewhat surprising. The Afghanistan war was an important issue in some congressional campaigns in 2010. However, the role of this increasingly

unpopular has been overlooked by commentators who have focused on domestic components of the 2010 vote like the rise of the tea party movement and opposition to Obama's health care plan. Our results suggest that, consistent with past studies, the health care vote had a much larger effect than local Afghanistan casualties. However, our results also suggest that a key part of the story of the 2010 elections was local U.S. casualties in Afghanistan. The war in Afghanistan had grown unpopular by 2010, and voters in high-casualty districts blamed Democrats. This appears to be a secondary, and somewhat surprising, part of the story behind the Republican wave of 2010.

Table 1: Democratic House seat models

Dependent variable: *Democratic two-party vote share, 2010*

<i>Independent Variables</i>	<i>Model 1 Coefficient (s.e.)</i>	<i>Model 2 Coefficient (s.e.)</i>
Afghanistan district deaths (measure 1)	-0.410 (0.214)**	-----
Iraq district deaths (measure 1)	-0.836 (0.948)	-----
Afghanistan district deaths (measure 2)	-----	-0.716 (0.413)**
Iraq district deaths (measure 2)	-----	-1.991 (1.682)
Expenditures by Dem. (in 100,000s)	-0.055 (0.038)	-0.050 (0.038)
Expenditures by Rep. (in 100,000s)	-0.133 (0.060)**	-0.134 (0.059)**
Health care roll call	-7.574 (1.047)***	-7.718 (1.034)***
Incumbent	4.196 (1.196)***	4.093 (1.211)***
Obama 2008 District Two-party Vote	0.835 (0.035)***	0.834 (0.035)***
Quality Challenger	-1.249 (0.799)*	-1.272 (0.795)*
Scandal	-0.663 (0.728)	-0.628 (0.733)
Armed Forces in District	-0.035 (0.212)	-0.047 (0.210)
Veterans in District	-0.330 (0.101)***	-0.315 (0.100)***
Constant	17.379 (3.339)***	17.389 (3.349)***
F (11, 236)	209.18***	205.97***
R ²	0.907	0.908
N	248	248

* $p \leq 0.01$; ** $p \leq 0.05$; *** $p \leq 0.01$. Models were estimated using OLS with robust standard errors. Two-tailed significance tests are reported for Armed Forces in District and Veterans in District. One-tailed test reported for all other variables.

Table 2: Republican House seat models

Dependent variable: *Democratic two-party vote share, 2010*

<i>Independent Variables</i>	<i>Model 1 Coefficient (s.e.)</i>	<i>Model 2 Coefficient (s.e.)</i>
Afghanistan district deaths (measure 1)	-0.265 (0.288)	-----
Iraq district deaths (measure 1)	-0.714 (1.084)	-----
Afghanistan district deaths (measure 2)	-----	-0.213 (0.427)
Iraq district deaths (measure 2)	-----	-0.352 (1.294)
Expenditures by Dem. (in 100,000s)	0.289 (0.054)***	0.292 (0.056)***
Expenditures by Rep. (in 100,000s)	0.0173 (0.028)	0.018 (0.028)
Incumbent	-3.680 (0.979)***	-3.652 (0.998)***
Obama 2008 District Two-party Vote	0.576 (0.056)***	0.573 (0.057)***
Quality Challenger	1.386 (1.304)	1.429 (1.313)
Scandal	-0.444 (1.579)	-0.408 (1.555)
Armed Forces in District	0.385 (0.211)*	0.376 (0.207)*
Veterans in District	-0.121 (0.122)	-0.123 (0.125)
Constant	11.091 (2.726)***	11.036 (2.804)***
F (10, 140)	11.09***	27.92***
R ²	0.727	0.726
N	152	152

*p≤0.01; **p≤0.05; ***p≤0.01. Models were estimated using OLS with robust standard errors. Two-tailed significance tests are reported for Armed Forces in District and Veterans in District. One-tailed test reported for all other variables.

Table 3: Afghanistan casualties and individual vote choice and turnout, Heckman probit model

Outcome equation, dependent variable: 1=vote for Democrat; 0=vote for Republican

	Model 1 – Democratic seats Coefficient (s.e.)	Model 2- Republican seats Coefficient (s.e.)
Afghanistan district deaths	-0.026 (0.013)*	-0.006 (0.015)
Iraq district deaths	-0.054 (0.057)	-0.091 (0.057)
Gender (1=female; 0=male)	-0.163 (0.030)**	-0.065 (0.035)
Party identification	-0.696 (0.010)**	-0.663 (0.011)**
Race (1=white; 0=other)	-0.175 (0.037)**	0.042 (0.042)
Education	0.107 (0.012)**	0.084 (0.014)**
Income	-0.016 (0.005)**	-0.006 (0.015)
Constant	2.633 (0.110)**	1.674 (0.107)**

Selection equation, dependent variable: 1=turned out to vote; 0=did not vote

Afghanistan district deaths	-0.028 (0.010)**	-0.015 (0.012)
Iraq district deaths	0.056 (0.046)	0.034 (0.043)
Age (1=over 65; 0=not)	0.761 (0.034)**	0.792 (0.036)**
Long-term resident (1=3 years or more; 0=less than 3 years)	0.607 (0.026)**	0.677 (0.030)**
Party identification	0.025 (0.005)**	0.079 (0.006)**
Race (1=white; 0=other)	0.106 (0.025)**	0.069 (0.032)*
Education	0.151 (0.009)**	0.167 (0.010)**
Income	0.068 (0.003)**	0.063 (0.004)**
Constant	-0.862 (0.047)**	-1.225 (0.058)**
ρ	0.260 (0.087)	0.145 (0.079)
N	20689 (17272 uncensored, 3417 censored)	15639 (12871 uncensored, 2768 censored)

** $p \leq 0.01$; * $p \leq 0.05$.

Figure 1: Declining Public Support for the War in Afghanistan, 2001-2010

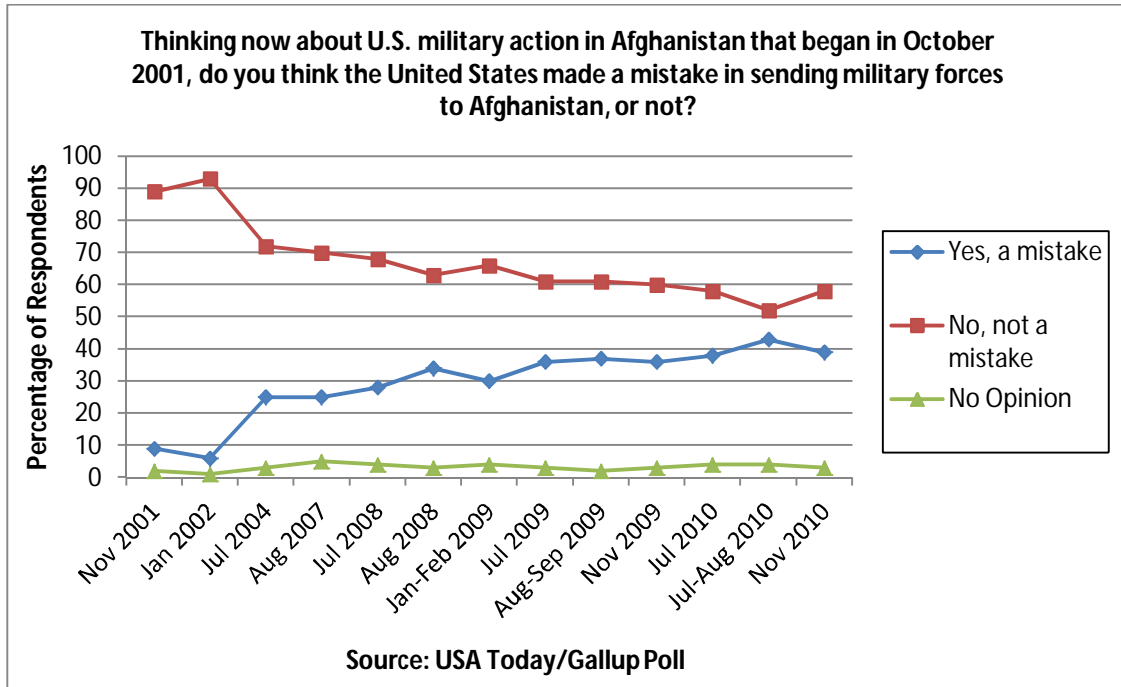


Figure 2: Total Casualties and Financial Costs of War in Afghanistan, 2002-11

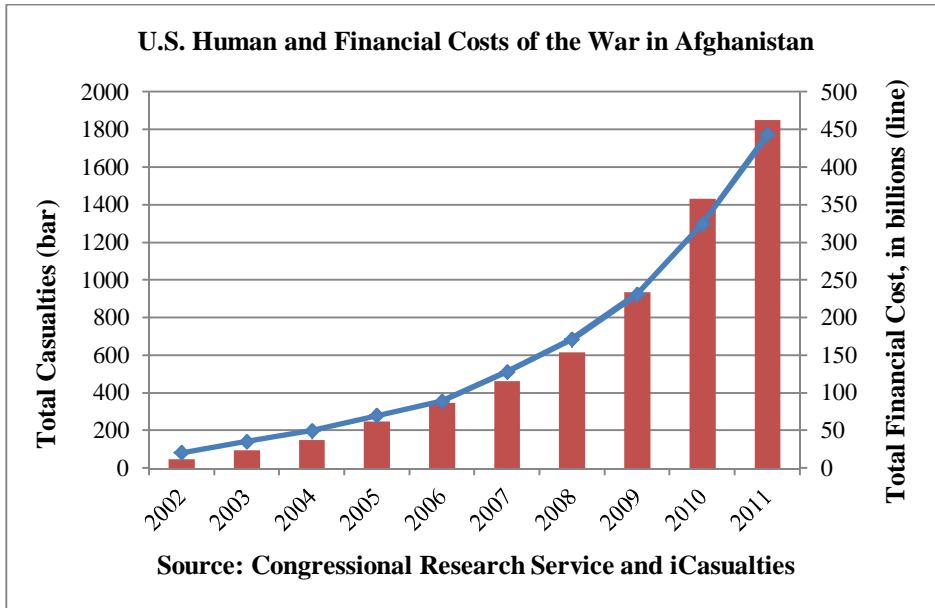
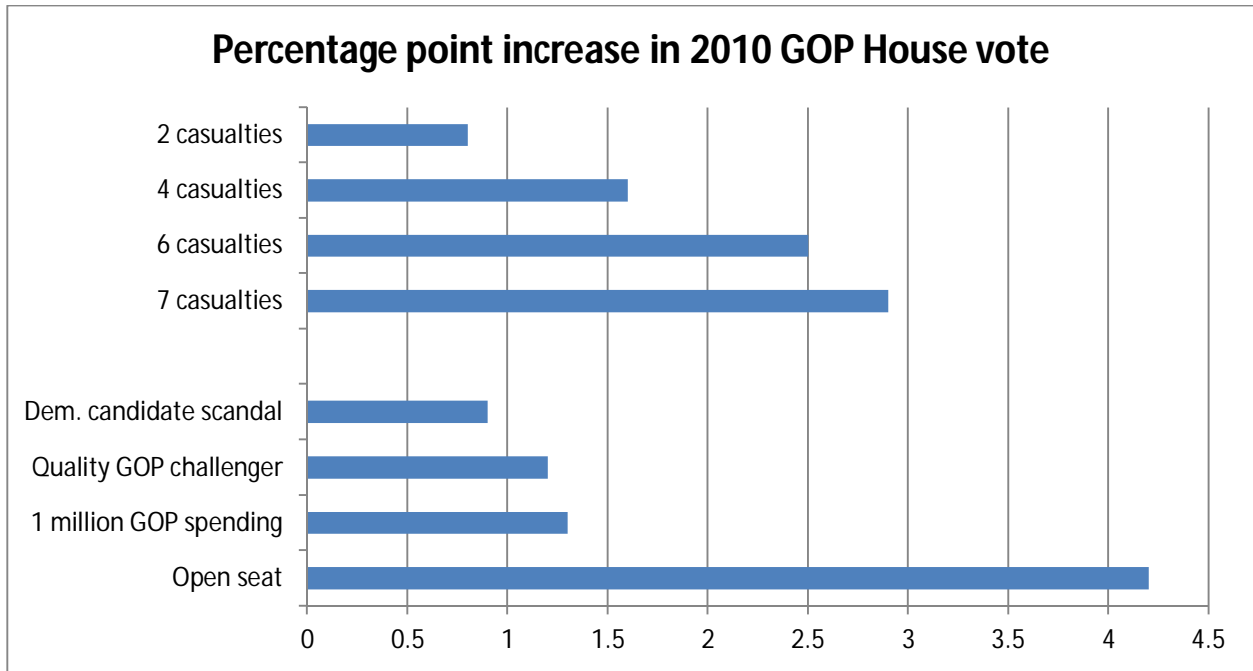


Figure 3: The effect of local Afghanistan casualties and electoral factors on the vote share in Democratically-held U.S. House districts, 2010



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