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Jason Reifler
Georgia State University, jreifler@gsu.edu

Christopher Gelpi

Peter Feaver

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Polit Behav
DOI 10.1007/s11109-007-9029-6

ORIGINAL PAPER

Iraq the Vote: Retrospective and Prospective Foreign Policy Judgments on Candidate Choice and Casualty Tolerance

Christopher Gelpi · Jason Reifler · Peter Feaver

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Abstract In this article, we model the effect of foreign policy attitudes on both vote choice and casualty tolerance, using survey data collected during the 2004 election. We show that prospective judgments of the likelihood of success in Iraq and retrospective judgments of whether the war in Iraq was right are significant determinants of both vote choice and casualty tolerance. The prospective judgment of success is key in predicting casualty tolerance, while retrospective judgment of whether the war was right takes precedence in determining vote choice. In addition, there is an important interaction between the two variables, so the effect of one is conditional on the value of the other. We believe this is compelling evidence that foreign policy matters, and that it matters in reasonable ways.

Keywords Voting behavior · Casualty tolerance

Introduction

At first glance, the parallels between the 1992 and 2004 Presidential elections appear striking. Both elections featured an incumbent named George Bush who had enjoyed tremendous public support after launching a war in Iraq. Despite the high levels of support, both President Bushes soon found

C. Gelpi · P. Feaver
Department of Political Science, Duke University, Durham, NC 27708, USA

J. Reifler (✉)
Department of Political Science, Loyola University Chicago, 6430 N. Kenmore, Chicago, IL 60626, USA
e-mail: jreifle@luc.edu

themselves deadlocked in the polls against surprisingly robust Democratic challengers, who were buoyed by widespread perceptions of a weak economy and skyrocketing health care costs. Yet Bush ''43'' eventually won reelection, while Bush ''41'' met defeat. What can explain this change in electoral fortunes? There are many possible and complementary explanations for why Bush 43 won despite facing a daunting electoral environment. In this chapter, we focus on one explanation that has been the subject of extensive public comment: the role of the ongoing Iraq war.

Pundits reconcile the different fates by stating that ''Commanders-in-Chief do not lose elections in wartime.'' For this law-like aphorism to hold, incumbents must actually be able to obtain their party's nomination. Harry Truman and Lyndon Johnson were so unpopular—due in large part to public disenchantment with American participation in the Korean and Vietnam wars—they abandoned their efforts to run for reelection.[1] Moreover, the belief that Americans will not oust incumbent President's during wartime flies in the face of the even more well-entrenched view that Americans will not tolerate casualties in war. The war in Iraq was barely a week old when observers began to worry that news of combat fatalities would cause public support to collapse (Elder & Nagourney, 2003, Purdum, 2003; Ricks, 2003). By October of 2004, as Presidential elections loomed, more than 1,100 U.S. military personnel had been killed in Iraq fighting against an insurgency that continued more or less unabated. Had most pundits foreseen this turn of events, they surely would have predicted a complete collapse of public support for the Bush Administration and for the war in Iraq. Moreover, they would have predicted a lopsided electoral defeat for the President in November. With these competing views of how the war in Iraq would play out politically, pundits and political observers had inadvertently pitted the irresistible force (the effect of casualties on public opinion) against the immovable object (an incumbent President during war).

The relationship between the war in Iraq, American casualties, and the Presidential election is—to say the least—somewhat conflicted. In this article, we seek to make sense of these contradictory expectations by providing a more systematic and nuanced argument linking attitudes toward the war in Iraq, tolerance for U.S. military casualties, and Presidential vote choice in 2004. We do so by uniting two distinct literatures, foreign policy voting and support for using the military/casualty tolerance within a single theoretical framework derived from Fiorina's (1981) theory of retrospective voting. The economic voting literature has long examined the relative weight of retrospective versus prospective evaluations in explaining presidential approval and vote choice. The literature on support for the use of force and casualty tolerance literature is also keenly interested in comparing the weight of retrospective and prospective evaluations. However, little work has tried to

[1] Truman was eligible to run but withdrew after losing in the New Hampshire primary to Estes Kefauver. Johnson announced his decision not to run for reelection after the Tet offensive in Vietnam prompted challenges from Eugene McCarthy and Robert Kennedy.

integrate these two literatures. This paper is an effort to examine the contribution of retrospective and prospective foreign policy evaluations to both voting and casualty tolerance. Moreover, our analysis balances the importance of normative judgments (retrospective evaluations of the ''rightness'' of the war) against empirical judgments (prospective judgments of the war's eventual success).

We argue that the willingness of the public to pay the costs of war and to reelect incumbent Presidents during wartime are dependent on these two attitudes and the interaction between them. In particular, we show that retrospective normative evaluations of whether President Bush ''did the right thing'' in attacking Iraq and empirical prospective judgments about whether the U.S. will ultimately be successful in Iraq are two critical attitudes for understanding how foreign policy judgments affect vote choice and one's tolerance for casualties. Further, we show that the retrospective normative judgments serve as a more powerful predictor for vote choice, while the prospective empirical evaluations of mission success better predict continued support for the war in Iraq. These claims are consistent with the broader literature on how foreign policy influences voting behavior, and the literature that examines the public's response to war and casualties. We also show that these retrospective and prospective judgments are interactive—a person's attitude on one conditions the effect of the other. This interaction operates on ''political'' support (vote choice) as well as ''mission'' support (casualty tolerance).

To our knowledge, no other work integrates political support for the President and support for American war efforts into a single theoretical model and uses the same predictor variables to explain the separate dependent variable measures of vote choice and casualty tolerance. This article bridges important gaps in the literature by using one theoretical framework to connect two separate research questions: (1) whether and how foreign policy affects political evaluation and choice, and (2) the conditions under which American citizens will bear the financial and human cost of military missions. To us, these two questions seem inherently linked—support for missions should connect to the Commander-in-Chief responsible for executing such missions. These judgments are connected, yet with important differences. We find that the retrospective normative judgments are more important for vote choice, and the prospective empirical judgments better explain casualty tolerance.

Literature Review

Foreign Policy and Political Behavior

Scholars have long been troubled by Americans' inability to answer survey questions ''correctly.'' Poor performance on surveys has led observers to view the American public as an ill-informed lot with little ability to think coherently about the substance of politics (Campbell, Converse, Miller, & Stokes,

1960; Converse 1964), with issues playing a small to non-existent role in shaping citizens' voting decisions. Foreign policy evaluations were viewed as among the least likely to affect political choices. When forming attitudes about the performance of the economy, citizens have their personal experience to fall back on. But foreign policy is so removed from the everyday lives of most citizens, it was argued, that it is simply unreasonable to think that what happened beyond U.S. borders would have a large impact on Americans' political behavior. In support of this claim many studies showed, at best, weak evidence that foreign affairs affected the voting decision (e.g. Almond, 1950; Stokes, 1966). As Almond writes "Foreign policy attitudes among most Americans lack intellectual structure and factual content."

Over the past two decades, however, two reinforcing lines of research have suggested that foreign policy judgments may have a greater influence on political behavior than previously thought. First, John Hurwitz and Mark Peffley (Hurwitz & Peffley, 1987a, 1987b; Peffley & Hurwitz, 1993) demonstrate that citizens have reasonably structured attitudes concerning foreign policy. Moreover, their research demonstrates that public attitudes toward foreign policy affect political evaluations, and citizens respond in understandable ways to changing world events. Such evidence of a "rational public" regarding foreign affairs is widespread (Holsti, 1997; Shaprio & Page, 1988; Wittkopf, 1990). Aggregate opinion on foreign and defense policy is remarkably stable and changes "have seldom, if ever, occurred... without reasonable causes, such as the actions of foreign friends or enemies or changes in the United States' position in the world" (Shaprio & Page, 1988, pp. 220–221). Christopher Wlezien (1995, 1996) shows additional evidence that that the public's preferences for changes in defense spending respond well to actual levels of spending on defense, as well as to feelings about the Soviet Union.

Second, not only does the public have well-structured and relatively stable attitudes about foreign policy, but mounting evidence suggests that these attitudes have an impact on political behavior. It has long been known that economic evaluations have an effect on presidential approval and vote choice (e.g. Kiewiet, 1983, Kinder & Kiewiet, 1979, 1981). An increasing amount of evidence has emerged showing that foreign policy judgments matter as well as, and in roughly equal magnitude to, economic evaluations. For example, in a timeseries of aggregate quarterly presidential approval data, Nickelsburg and Norpoth (2000) show that the President is as much "Commander-in-Chief" as "Chief Economist." Adding major foreign policy events as predictor variables to their model, these international events matter at least as much as economic evaluations. Using individual level data from several national random sample surveys conducted from 1983 to 1987, Wilcox and Allsop (1991) find approval of Reagan's foreign policy is consistently a good predictor of Reagan's overall approval, though its strength relative to domestic issues does depend on the salience of economic or foreign policy issues. Taking one step further in the causal chain linking attitudes and vote choice, Nincic and Hinkley (1992) demonstrate that foreign policy attitudes influence candidate evaluations in

the 1980 and 1984 presidential campaigns. Similarly, in an analysis of the 1980 and 1984 Presidential electoral choice, Aldrich, Sullivan, and Borgida (1989) find that foreign policy issues were just as powerful a vote determinant as domestic issues. The impact of foreign policy on electoral choice does appear to wax and wane with the flow of current events. This pattern is hardly surprising. As we note below, survey responses regarding the nation's ''most important problem'' suggest that the economy is nearly always salient in the minds of voters, while concern about foreign affairs varies substantially.

In sum, we point to three well-supported findings concerning foreign affairs and political behavior: (1) Citizen attitudes about foreign policy are well structured, (2) Foreign policy evaluations matter for presidential approval and presidential vote choice, and (3) Citizen attitudes are generally stable, and changes in attitudes reflect changes in the international arena.

While analysts generally agree that public opinion is stable and responds to events, substantial differences of opinion exist concerning whether citizens respond to the international events themselves, or if foreign policy attitudes are mostly mediated by elite rhetoric and framing. Of course, American citizens are (mostly) incapable of witnessing international events without them first being mediated by the press. Thus, the press certainly has the potential to uniformly shape opinion—as long as the reporting from different bureaus is substantially similar—regardless of how well the reporting reflects the reality on the ground. If the press systematically reports international events differently than they occur, then we should expect citizen opinions to reflect media coverage more than the ''events themselves.'' The Tet Offensive during the Vietnam War may be a classic example of where the media were unified in their reporting, but where the reporting arguably differed sufficiently from the actual events. Thus the resulting changes in opinion were moved by the reporting, rather than the event. More specifically, while Tet was a tactical failure for the attacking Communist forces, it was reported to the American public as a disaster for the U.S. and evidence of a stalemate (Johnson & Tierney, 2006).

Even if the press accurately reports international events, political elites may be able to control how the public understands the issues. Looking again to the public's preferences for changes in spending for defense, Witko (2003) finds exactly this—the public does not respond to what the Soviet Union does, but rather to how policy elites talk about the Soviet Union. This account is substantially in accord with Zaller's (1992) account of mass opinion and attitude change being driven primarily by elites and in many ways. Berinsky (2007) goes one step further to argue that responses to international affairs are primarily endogenous to political predispositions.

Important questions remain that we hope scholars will address. First, to what extent is press coverage of military conflict ''accurate'' and how would we measure such accuracy? Second, how much latitude do elites have to reframe press coverage of military conflict and how influential can their framing efforts be? Third, to what extent are perceptions of international affairs endogenous to political predispositions? A similar debate recently

started taking shape on whether economic perceptions are endogenous (e.g. Evans and Anderson 2006, Lewis-Beck 2006). While political predispositions are likely to play a role in shaping individual level attitudes about international events (see Nyhan & Reifler, 2006; Reifler, nd for individual level evidence concerning responding to information about international events in the context of Iraqi WMD), it is also clear at the aggregate level that people update their perceptions in reasonable ways. For example, over time the percentage of the public who believe that Iraq had an active WMD program at the time of the U.S invasion has greatly decreased.

Fortunately, for our purposes we do not need to resolve these debates in order to proceed with our analysis. Our central focus is the impact of perceptions of the war in Iraq both on the willingness to continue fighting in Iraq and the propensity to vote for Bush. We remain agnostic on the question of whether these perceptions reflect ''reality'' or elite rhetoric, though as we note in our conclusion, we think that our research focuses new attention on the importance of addressing this debate. The endogeneity of foreign policy views, on the other hand, is more of a concern and we return to this question in the discussion.

Building on Earlier Research on War and Public Opinion

Ever since the Vietnam War, policymakers have worried that the American public will support military operations only if the human costs of the war, as measured in combat casualties, are minimal. Mueller (1973) argued that public support for the Vietnam and Korean Wars dropped in proportion to the log of casualties. In Mueller's words: ''While [the American public] did weary of the [Korean and Vietnam] wars, they generally seem to have become hardened to the wars' costs: they are sensitive to relatively small losses in the early stages, but only to large losses in later stages.'' Casualties drained public support, but only slowly.

This complex finding—that casualties have a more corrosive effect on public support early in the war than they do later—gradually became simplified in the conventional wisdom to the view that the public will not tolerate casualties. Edward Luttwak summarized the conventional wisdom well: ''The prospect of high casualties, which can rapidly undermine domestic support for any military operations, is the key political constraint when decisions must be made on which forces to deploy in a crisis, and at what levels'' (Luttwak, 1996, p. 36).

In other words, Mueller argued that the public was *casualty sensitive*. But the conventional wisdom, pushed in part by missions like Somalia, translated Mueller's claim into a conviction that the public was *casualty phobic* (Hyde, 2000; Klarevas, 2000; Lane, 1998; Luttwak, 1994; Moskos, 1995; Record, 2000; Sapolsky & Shapiro, 1996). Casualty sensitivity recognizes the human toll as a cost of war; casualty phobia refers to a sensitivity so great that it amounts to an unwillingness to support a military operation if even very low human costs are incurred (Feaver & Gelpi, 2004). We hope to revise this conventional wisdom

by demonstrating that the public's willingness to pay the human costs of war and its propensity to punish its leaders in the voting booth for using force vary depending on specific attitudes about the war.

Casualty sensitivity is, to put it crudely, one's price sensitivity to the human cost of war. As with other forms of price sensitivity, some members of the public are more sensitive to the costs than others. We see in the public a continuum of casualty sensitivity ranging from the minimally sensitive—those who view casualties as a necessary cost of war and not a determining factor in shaping support—all the way to maximally sensitive, or those who support only military missions that guarantee virtually no casualties.[2] Over the past decade, many scholars have worked to debunk the myth of a strictly casualty phobic public.

While the view that the public is casualty phobic is widely entrenched among policymakers and the elite (Destler & Kull, 1999), something close to the opposite consensus has emerged in academic studies of American public opinion. Bruce Jentleson (Jentleson & Britton, 1998; Jentleson, 1992) finds that the public is ''pretty prudent,'' and will support paying even costly military operations provided the mission rationale conforms to certain standards. Eric Larson (1996) argues that the public uses a rational cost-benefit model in which the public depends very heavily on elite cues; when there is an elite consensus (defined as congressional support) in favor of a military mission, casualties are not highly corrosive to support. James Burk (1999) shows that public support for missions did not collapse with casualties, even in the ''hard'' cases of Lebanon 1983 and Somalia 1993. Destler and Kull (1999) show that public casualty tolerance even in ''unpopular'' missions like peace operations in Bosnia is much greater than previously thought; moreover, public tolerance of casualties is particularly a function of ''international elite consensus'' in the form of multilateral support for the military operation.

Of course, even if the public as a whole is not casualty phobic, it still may be the case that some people are. Feaver and Gelpi (2004) argue that there is significant variation within the public regarding the use of force. They show that public attitudes toward the use of force fit a quadripartite pattern: solid hawks (roughly 30–35%) who will support virtually any military mission regardless of the costs; solid doves (roughly10–30%) who will oppose almost any mission regardless of cost; casualty-phobics (roughly 15–20%) who support a mission provided it is extremely low cost; and defeat-phobics (roughly 15–40%) who support a mission, despite mounting costs, provided that the mission is likely to succeed, but who turn on a mission if it looks like it is doomed to failure. The quadripartite pattern allows for variation in the proportion in each category, depending on the specifics of any given mission.

While many factors matter—stakes, elite consensus, type of mission, and so forth—Feaver and Gelpi (2004) give pride of place to ''expectations of

[2] Some members of the public might also be insensitive to casualties because they are opposed to the use of military force regardless of the number of U.S. casualties—that is some portion of the public opposes the use of force even it results in no U.S. casualties. We account for this possibility in our measurement of casualty tolerance.

success.'' When members of the public think victory is likely, they will support paying the human costs of war. When they think victory is not likely, even small costs will be corrosive of public support. In a comprehensive analysis of aggregate public opinion trends from 1981 through 2004, Richard Eichenberg comes to a similar conclusion: ''successful military operations enjoy high support, regardless of other factors that may be present'' (Eichenberg, 2005, p. 11).

Bringing the two literatures together—the role of foreign policy and the impact of casualties on public opinion—produces the following baseline expectation: mounting casualties should not by themselves jeopardize the political fortunes of an incumbent, but the President does not have a blank check. Instead, public support for the war and the president will depend upon specific attitudes about the war. The public is able to reasonably incorporate information from the international arena into its judgments, and these judgments affect presidential approval and vote choice. The public demands success when its president goes to war, and it demands that the president provide a good reason for the fighting. Neither of these factors—most especially perceptions of success—are entirely under the control of policy makers, which brings us to the election of 2004.

Foreign Affairs as Salient Concern

If foreign policy judgments are going to matter in decision-making, then those attitudes need to be accessible for the decision-maker (Aldrich et al. 1989). Not surprisingly, foreign policy was a salient issue during the 2004 election campaign. After all, during the four years that had elapsed since the 2000 Presidential election, the U.S. experienced a startling domestic attack from a foreign enemy and the U.S. embarked on high-profile conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. Looking at the Gallup poll's most important problem over the last several presidential elections, foreign affairs dramatically stands out as more salient in 2004. The Gallup survey reports that in 2004 roughly the same proportion of voters state international concerns (22%) as economic issues (26%) as the ''most important problem.'' While 22% for foreign affairs is the highest since 1984, the economy still trumped international concerns by a 2-to-1 margin (47% to 23%) in Reagan's reelection. In the three presidential elections from 1992 to 2000, mentions of international affairs were 5% or less.[3]

Polling we conducted also shows that respondents report foreign affairs as an important concern in the voting decision. In six separate surveys from

[3] Gallup does not have apples-to-apples data for 1988. In most years, the ''most important problem'' question allows respondents to mention more than one problem, i.e. the same respondent could say both ''the economy'' and ''foreign affairs.'' Because of the multiple responses, the cumulative total of the marginals exceeds 100%, sometimes by a wide margin. In 1988, Gallup used a single response format. In the single response format, 9% mention something related to foreign affairs or defense policy as the most important problem. This proportion is still more than double what was reported in the multiple response format during the 1990s.

Table 1 Most important issue

	3/5–3/18	3/19–4/2	4/3–4/16	4/17–4/29	6/18–6/28	10/21–11/1
Foreign policy issues like Iraq and the War on Terrorism	16%	19%	20%	24%	26%	30%
Economic issues like jobs and taxes	72%	70%	67%	63%	61%	59%
Social issues like abortion and gay marriage	10%	9%	11%	11%	11%	10%
N	930	889	881	899	900	1,125

March 2004 to November 2004, we used a closed ended question to ask respondents which issue (economy, foreign policy, social issues) was most important to them personally when choosing which candidate to vote for.[4] Because we only polled in this election, we cannot make inferences about the importance of foreign affairs compared to other years based on this data alone. However, Table 1 shows that the proportion stating foreign policy as the most important issue doubled between the conclusion of the Democratic primary campaigns and the general election in November.

In the 2004 election, then, foreign policy was a salient concern. The war in Iraq was shaping up to be, in the words of Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, a ''long, hard slog''—with a mounting human toll, making the election of 2004 an ideal place to examine the electoral politics of war.

The Model

We build on Fiorina's (1981) model of retrospective voting to construct a model that uses the same antecedent attitudes as predictors of vote choice and casualty tolerance. Fiorina's landmark work successfully synthesizes what many saw as the irreconcilable traditions of behavioralism and rational choice by creating a generalized voter's calculus containing three distinct components: (1) political predispositions, (2) retrospective evaluations of the incumbent, and (3) prospective judgments or future expectations.

We argue that two logically distinct attitudes—one's willingness to continue to pay a human cost in the war in Iraq and one's vote choice in the 2004 election—are functions of retrospective and prospective judgments, as well as one's political predispositions (Party ID). Retrospectively, voters are judging whether the decision to invade Iraq was the right one. Prospectively, voters are judging whether the war in Iraq will turn out to be successful.

The impact of these attitudes on vote choice and casualty tolerance are strongly intuitive. If the decision to invade Iraq was wrong, then it makes

[4] The surveys were conducted by Knowledge Networks, which maintains a panel of respondents recruited through Random Digit Dialing (RDD), who are equipped with WebTV and complete surveys online. Detailed sampling information is available from the company website, http://www.knowledgenetworks.com. Studies have found that the Knowledge Networks sampling methodology yields representative samples (Couper, 2000; Krosnick & Chang, Unpublished typescript), with results comparable to RDD telephone surveys.

sense to elect a leader who would make (or would have made) different choices. Thus we expect retrospective normative attitudes about whether attacking Iraq was the ''right thing'' to matter most in determining vote choice. If the war is hopeless, why continue to pay a price? Thus we expect prospective attitudes about the likelihood of success to have the greatest impact on casualty tolerance.

We expound on this intuition two steps further: we argue that (1) the interaction of the retrospective (normative) and prospective (empirical) judgments determines vote choice and casualty tolerance, and (2) the relative weight assigned to retrospective or prospective judgments differs, depending on whether it is vote choice or casualty tolerance that is in question.

We additionally argue that the effect of these two attitudes on vote choice and casualty tolerance will be interactive. According to the logic outlined above, we would expect attitudes about whether attacking Iraq was the ''right thing'' to have little impact on casualty tolerance for respondents who feel that success is unlikely. If victory is unlikely, the initial wisdom of the decision to use force has little impact on the expected benefits (and thus the tolerable costs) of the war. But if victory is likely, then attitudes about whether the war was the ''right thing'' should have a substantial impact on the expected benefits from the conflict and influence casualty tolerance.

Similarly, the likely prospects for success should have little impact on one's judgment about the wisdom of using force if one does not believe that using force was the ''right thing'' in the first place. However, if one believes that the initial decision to use force was the ''right thing'' to do, then one's attitude about the likelihood of success should have a significant impact on one's judgment of the overall wisdom of U.S. policy, and thus on one's willingness to reelect the President.

Data and Methods

We propose here a latent variable approach in place of an explicitly spatial model. Rather than utility functions of competing candidates, we see ''Bush support'' and ''casualty tolerance'' as underlying attitudes expressed as latent variables. Individuals possess an amount of ''Bush support'' or ''casualty tolerance'', which we model as

$$y_i* = \boldsymbol{x}_i\beta + \varepsilon_i \tag{1}$$

We keep this compatible with Fiorina (1981) by using independent variables consistent with his generalized voter's calculus. We include separate evaluations for political predispositions (long-term past experience), political past experience (near-term experience under an incumbent), and future expectations, which yields the following equation:

$$y_i* = PID_i + RJ_i + PJ_i + \varepsilon_i \tag{2}$$

Table 2 Dependent variable marginals

Vote choice		Casualty tolerance	
Kerry	40.5%	Oppose with 0 deaths	23.0%
Lean Kerry	6.6%	Support with 0 deaths	23.7%
Undecided	2.2%	Support with 1,500 deaths	20.3%
Lean Bush	4.8%	Support with 5,000 deaths	17.2%
Bush	45.9%	Support with 50,000 deaths	15.9%

In Eq. (2), y_i* is how much "Bush support" or "casualty tolerance" one possesses. The variables $\mathbf{x}_i$ are expressed generally as the long term political past experience (party ID or PID), political past experience under an incumbent (retrospective judgments or RJ), and future expectations (prospective judgments or PJ).

Our *Vote Choice* and *Casualty Tolerance* dependent variables are both five point ordinal scales. The data we analyze come from polling we conducted immediately prior to the November 2004 election. Table 2 reports marginals and full question wording is available in the appendix.

Because we are using ordinal scales to represent underlying latent attitudes, ordered logit is an ideal estimation technique. We estimate the following models for both vote choice and casualty tolerance:

$$\begin{aligned} y_i* = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Party\,ID + \beta_2 RightThing + \beta_3 Success \\ + \beta_{23} RightThing * Success + \varepsilon_i \end{aligned} \tag{3}$$

$$\begin{aligned} y_i * = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Party\,ID + \beta_2 RightThing + \beta_3 Success + \beta_{23} RightThing * Success \\ + \beta_4 Age + \beta_5 Education + \beta_6 Female + \beta_7 Minority + \varepsilon_i \end{aligned} \tag{4}$$

Party ID is a standard partisan identification question, coded as Democrat (–1), Independent (0), and Republican (1). *RightThing* and *Success* are both four-point Likert scales. *RightThing* asks respondents if they approve of the original decision to use military force against Iraq and is coded from "Strongly Disapprove" (0) to "Strongly Approve" (3). *Success* asks respondents if they think the U.S. is likely to succeed in Iraq, and is coded from "Not at all likely" (0) to "Very likely" (3). The independent variables are coded so that we would expect to see positive coefficients in the ordered logistic regressions. In other words, we expect a one unit increase in the independent variable to be associated with a respondent possessing a greater quantity of the underlying attitude under investigation, whether voting for Bush or casualty tolerance. Table 3 shows the estimates from Eqs. (3) and (4) for both *Vote Choice* and *Casualty Tolerance*.

As expected *RightThing* is a significant predictor of the both vote choice and casualty tolerance-dependent variables, as is *Success*. Also as hypothesized, there is a significant interaction term.

Table 3 Ordered logistic regression results

	Vote choice		Casualty tolerance	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Party ID	1.60***	1.60***	0.33***	0.21*
	(0.12)	(0.13)	(0.08)	(0.08)
Iraq *RightThing*	0.53**	0.54**	0.06	0.12
	(0.19)	(0.20)	(0.13)	(0.13)
Likelihood of *Success*	–0.06	–0.03	0.51***	0.66***
	(0.19)	(0.19)	(0.13)	(0.13)
RightThing * *Success*	0.47***	0.46***	0.29***	0.25***
	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.06)	(0.06)
Female		0.33		–0.30*
		(0.17)		(0.12)
Minority		–0.31		–0.60***
		(0.23)		(0.17)
Age		0.04		0.11**
		(0.05)		(0.04)
Education		–0.09		0.28***
		(0.09)		(0.06)
Pseudo R^2	0.43	0.43	0.18	0.19
Log-Likelihood	–645.15	–641.49	–1363.81	–1333.51
Log-Likelihood χ^2	964.72	972.05	583.68	644.28
N	1,007	1,007	1,037	1,037

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

*** $p < .001$

Because logit coefficients are extremely difficult to interpret directly, we use predicted probability graphs to show the relationship between variables and the importance of the interaction term. Figures 1 and 2 show predicted probabilities of voting for George W. Bush (estimated from Model 2). Consistent with our expectations (following from Fiorina) respondents'

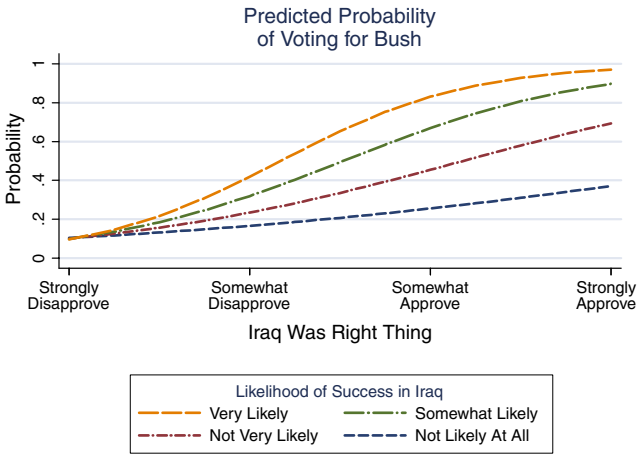

Fig. 1 Vote choice predicted probabilities by *RightThing* (estimated from Model 2)

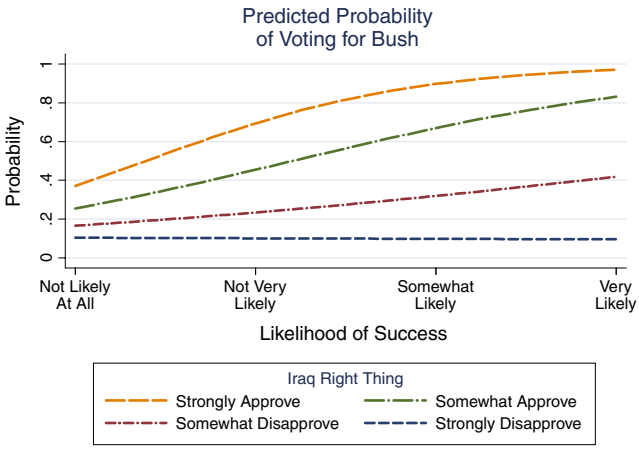

Fig. 2 Vote choice predicted probabilities by *Success* (estimated from Model 2)

retrospective judgments on whether attacking Iraq was the "right thing" has the greater impact on vote choice. Figure 1 shows how the predicted probability of voting for Bush changes across values of *RightThing*, and the course of this change depends on the values of *Success*. Although it can be hard to discern directly from Table 3, the graph shows that *RightThing* always matters in predicting the probability of voting for Bush. Certainly, *RightThing* matters more as one ascends through *Success* from "Not at all likely" to "Very likely."

When we graph the predicted probability of voting for Bush as a function of *Success* (Fig. 2), we find that this variable does not always matter. When *RightThing* is "Strongly Disapprove," *Success* has little to no effect on the predicted probability of voting for Bush (this is the graphical way to interpret the non-significant coefficient for *Success* in Table 3 in Models 1 & 2). The effect of *Success* is significant for all other values of *RightThing*. When we examine the predicted probability of voting for Bush across the values of *Success*, and see how the change is affected by different values of *RightThing*, we see much more modest differences in the change across *Success*, but much greater differences in the predicted probability at the lowest point in the scale ("Not at all likely").

Figures 3 and 4 show a nearly identical pattern, but in reverse. Consistent with our expectations, when predicting whether one will tolerate at least 1,500 casualties in Iraq, *Success* becomes more important and *RightThing* explains less of the action. When *Success* is "Not at all likely," the probability of tolerating 1,500 casualties is equally low regardless of the value of *RightThing*. (Again, this is the graphical way to interpret the non-significant coefficient for *RightThing* in Models 3 & 4.) *Success*, however, is always significant and is responsible for a big change in the predicted probability of supporting the war in Iraq, even if the U.S. suffers 1,500 casualties.

So what is the substantive significance of these attitudes and the interaction between them? People who hold both beliefs—that the war was right and that the U.S. will win—indicate the strongest support for continuing military action even in the face of mounting casualties and for reelecting President Bush.

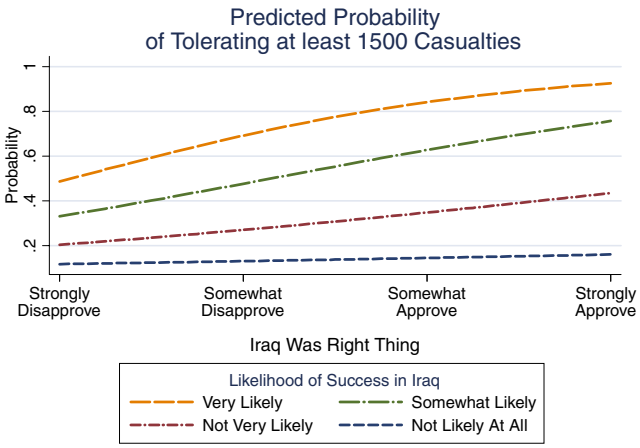

Fig. 3 Casualty tolerance predicted probabilities by *RightThing* (estimated from Model 4)

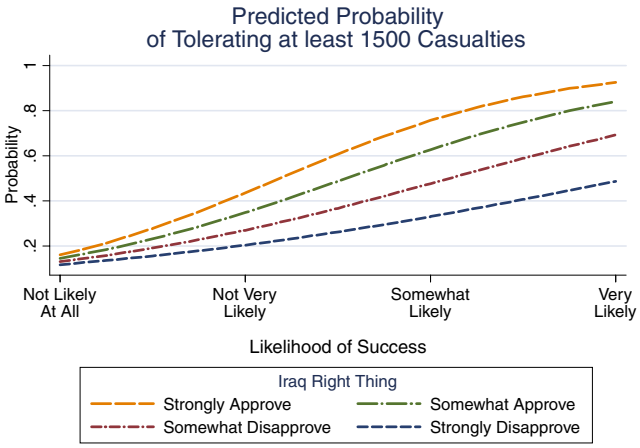

Fig. 4 Casualty tolerance predicted probabilities by *Success* (estimated from Model 4)

Likewise, people who hold the opposite view—that the war was wrong and that the U.S. will lose—have the strongest opposition both to paying any more human cost and to reelecting Bush. Think of the former as the "Bush Base" and the latter group as the "Vietnam Syndrome" crowd. The intermediate attitudes—the "Noble Failure" view that the war was right but we will lose, and the "Pottery Barn" view (you break it, you fix it) that the war was wrong but we will win—operate in surprising ways.[5] The Pottery Barn crowd is, on average, more likely than the Noble Failure crowd to stomach continued military action. In contrast, the Noble Failure subgroup indicates stronger support for Bush.

[5] We adopt the "Pottery Barn" label from Friedman.

Table 4 Predicted probabilities

	Vote Bush	Support 1,500+ casualties
Bush Base (49%)	83%	89%
Noble Failure (8%)	53%	34%
Pottery Barn (15%)	26%	40%
Vietnam Syndrome (29%)	13%	21%

What can these results tell us about why Bush 43 was able to win reelection despite a costly and controversial war? The war did not help Bush 43 because the public reflexively refuses to oust the Commander-in-Chief during wartime. After all, a significant proportion of the public was strongly opposed to the war and sought vigorously to remove the President as a result. Instead, the war probably helped the President to win reelection and maintain support for the war because he was able to persuade a majority of the public of two simple points: (1) attacking Iraq was the ''right thing'' to do, and (2) the U.S. will ultimately succeed in Iraq. Specifically, we found that 49% of our respondent's fell into the ''Bush Base'' category described above, while 15% were identified as ''Pottery Barn,'' 8% as ''Noble Failure,'' and 29% as in the ''Vietnam Syndrome'' category. Support from Bush Base and Noble Failure voters kept the President in office, while Bush Base and Pottery Barn respondents maintained popular support for the war (see Table 4).[6] Of course, it is difficult to say for certain whether the war ''helped'' Bush win reelection because the appropriate counterfactual is not obvious.

To probe the robustness of our results, we re-run the analyses just among those who say foreign policy is the most important issue and among those who say economics is the most important issue. We find that the issue respondents report as being most important slightly changes the relative strength of our predictor variables, but that the overall causal story remains intact: *RightThing* is a better predictor of the vote, while *Success* is a better predictor of casualty tolerance (Table 5).

Restricting our analysis to just those respondents who cite economic concerns almost perfectly reproduces our findings (which should be expected given their preponderance in the dataset). Goodness-of-fit statistics, such as maximum likelihood analogs to R^2, drop. But this should also be expected; those who do not identify foreign policy as their primary concern ought to have less variance explained with measures of foreign policy attitudes.

Replicating the ordered logits among the subset of respondents who report foreign policy as the most important issue, we are able to explain a greater proportion of the variance. If we are making a claim about the explanatory power of foreign policy attitudes, it stands to reason that our model should perform better among those who consider foreign policy the most important

[6] The results in Table 4 are estimated from models not presented here (though available online). In these models, we condense the four point scales in *RightThing* and *Success* to dummy variables, and use the dummy variables as predictors. Results are substantively identical. We explain these choices in more detail in the discussion section.

Table 5 Logit models by most important issue

Dependent variable	Economy most important		Foreign policy most important	
	Vote	Casualty tolerance	Vote	Casualty tolerance
Party ID	1.65***	0.19	1.63***	0.35*
	(0.15)	(0.11)	(0.35)	(0.17)
Iraq *RightThing*	0.70**	0.15	0.24	0.27
	(0.25)	(0.17)	(0.52)	(0.27)
Likelihood of *Success*	0.10	0.61***	0.01	0.98***
	(0.25)	(0.17)	(0.43)	(0.27)
RightThing * *Success*	0.29*	0.21*	0.87**	0.12
	(0.13)	(0.09)	(0.31)	(0.12)
Female	0.27	–0.58***	0.24	–0.07
	(0.21)	(0.15)	(0.46)	(0.21)
Minority	–0.13	–0.49*	–0.85	–0.96**
	(0.27)	(0.21)	(0.62)	(0.34)
Age	0.11	0.18***	–0.25	–0.00
	(0.07)	(0.05)	(0.13)	(0.06)
Education	–0.09	0.25**	–0.01	0.19
	(0.11)	(0.08)	(0.24)	(0.12)
Pseudo R^2	0.36	0.15	0.62	0.24
Log-likelihood	–437.90	–788.01	–104.22	–379.70
Log-likelihood χ^2	493.40	283.41	333.07	233.83
N	590	605	305	313

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

*** $p < .001$

issue. In explaining vote choice, the Pseudo R^2 jumps. The interaction between *RightThing* and *Success* continues to be significant when we are predicting vote choice. However, when we examine casualty tolerance, the interaction term loses its significance. Dropping the interaction term from the model leaves both *RightThing* and *Success* as significant predictor variables, with the latter having a coefficient more than two and a half times as large as the former. While the interaction term is no longer significant, the relatively greater importance of *Success* as a predictor variable conforms with our overall story and explanation of how different attitudes affect vote choice and casualty tolerance. The more one cares about foreign policy, the more one focuses on the likelihood of success as the critical factor in deciding whether to supporting the continuation of the war.

Discussion

While we are strongly confident in the strength of our results, we would be remiss if we did not also point potential problems in our analyses. We see three main threats to our inferences: (1) collinearity between our predictor variables of theoretical interest, (2) an underspecified model, and (3) problems of endogeneity. Below we address each of these concerns.

Multicollinearity

As one might expect, people who see the war in Iraq as the ''right thing'' and also more apt to believe it will be successful. Similarly, those who think that war was the wrong thing are less optimistic about success. Some may view the variables as simply two different indicators of the same construct. If that is the case, then our coefficients may not be well estimated, leading us to posit differing causal significance to variables that are not actually distinct.

The *Success* and *RightThing* variables are highly correlated (rho = .66). While high, there is still a substantial amount of variation between the two. Table 6 reports the correlations between all of the independent variables we use in the models above. As should be expected, *Success* and *RightThing* both correlate strongly with the interaction made from those two variables. Table 7 presents variance inflation factor (VIF) scores for several different combinations of our independent variables. The VIFs are all below the standard rule-of-thumb threshold of 10 for excessive collinearty, except for the interaction of the four-point Likert versions of *Success* and *RightThing*. Of course, the interaction should exhibit more collinearity as it is a function of the two

Table 6 Correlations between variables

	RightThing	*Success*	*RightThing * Success*	*Female*	*Minority*	*Age*	*Education*
RightThing	1						
Success	0.6599	1					
*RightThing * Success*	0.9004	0.8303	1				
Female	–0.0810	–0.0453	–0.0724	1			
Minority	–0.2269	–0.1177	–0.2053	0.0061	1		
Age	–0.0253	–0.0560	–0.0171	0.0009	–0.1609	1	
Education	–0.0226	–0.0416	0.0002	–0.0329	–0.1453	0.0131	1

Table 7 Variance inflation factor (VIF) values

	Without interaction term	With interaction term	Without interaction term (dummy variables)	With interaction term (dummy variables)
RightThing	1.86	6.20		
Success	1.78	3.78		
*RightThing*Success*		11.25		
Female	1.01	1.01	1.01	1.01
Minority	1.11	1.11	1.12	1.13
Age	1.03	1.04	1.03	1.03
Education	1.03	1.04	1.03	1.03
RightThing (dummy)			1.49	4.02
Success (dummy)			1.41	2.43
*RightThing*Success* (dummy)				2.52
Mean VIF	1.30	3.63	1.18	2.43

variables. It is important to note that the predicted probabilities reported above in Table 4 are calculated from a model using the dummy variable versions for two reasons. First, the four named sub-populations are simply easier to calculate with dummy variables. Second, we are reporting predicted probabilities in which even the interaction term has a VIF below the standard rule-of-thumb cutoff of 10.

Does the level of multi-collinearity threaten our inferences? We firmly believe that it does not. Our core argument is that retrospective evaluations of the rightness of the war better predict vote choice, whereas prospective judgments of success better explain casualty tolerance. If we rerun the model without the interaction, we find even stronger overall support for the claim that *Success* is a more powerful predictor of casualty tolerance and that *RightThing* is a better predictor of vote choice. As noted above, we obtain this same result if we model our interaction with three dummy variables (which in effect represent the ''Bush Base,'' ''Noble Failure,'' and ''Pottery Barn'' subgroups). This specification captures the interaction argument with a substantially lower level of multicollinearity—albeit without some theoretical nuance—and yields the same empirical result. Thus the overall argument that success trumps rightness when it comes to casualties is very strongly supported, as is the claim that rightness trumps success when it comes to voting. Table 8 presents results of our models without an interaction term, and the

Table 8 Models without interaction terms

	Vote choice		Casualty tolerance	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Party ID	1.57***	1.57***	0.35***	0.21*
	(0.12)	(0.13)	(0.08)	(0.08)
Iraq *RightThing*	1.30***	1.29***	0.54***	0.53***
	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.07)	(0.07)
Likelihood of *Success*	0.63***	0.64***	0.94***	1.03***
	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.09)	(0.09)
Female		0.32		–0.31**
		(0.17)		(0.12)
Minority		–0.35		–0.65***
		(0.22)		(0.17)
Age		0.10		0.20***
		(0.08)		(0.06)
Education		–0.08		0.30***
		(0.09)		(0.06)
Pseudo R^2	0.42	0.42	0.17	0.19
Log-likelihood	–654.87	–650.60	–1374.81	–1333.51
Log-likelihood χ^2	945.29	953.82	583.68	644.28
N	1,007	1,007	1,037	1,037

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

*** $p < .001$

results support the same substantive interpretation—*RightThing* matters more for vote choice and *Success* matters more for casualty tolerance.

Under Specified Model

Another possible critique of the results presented here is that we have underspecified models. Certainly, there are many additional causes of vote choice that one could include—ideology, opinion on important domestic issues, candidate traits, thermometer ratings, perhaps even spatial placement of the competing candidates or other NES-type variables. We fully agree and recognize that testing alternate specifications with these additional variables could lead to stronger inferences. Unfortunately, we do not have those data and are unable to test other model specifications. Our principal aim during data collection was to test the public's willingness to ''pay'' the cost of casualties as the ''body bags started coming home.'' As such, we elected to ask fewer questions and draw additional samples at different points in time (and therefore at increasing casualty numbers). Clearly, this is a difficult tradeoff. We believe that we have made the correct choice since the question of the public's response to casualties and war in the context of an election is of central concern to scholars and policy makers at this time.

While we did not ask about candidate placement or traits, we did ask respondents about whether they believed that Bush or Kerry would do a better job handling the economy and social issues. We retained our more limited specification, however, because we were not sufficiently satisfied that responses to questions about which candidate would handle issues better were conceptually distinct from our vote choice question. Nonetheless, the results in Table 3 remain robust even when we control for candidate preference in handling the economy and social issues. Remember also that when we restrict our basic models only to those who say that ''foreign policy'' was the most important issue, model performance improves.

Another possible form of underspecification concerns the extension of our results to other wars and elections. In Feaver, Gelpi, and Reifler (2005/2006), we present aggregate level results that the importance of success in shaping casualty tolerance is also present in other wars. We would acknowledge, however, that the impact of wars on elections is likely to vary depending on candidates' positions on the war in question. Brody and Page (1972), for example, find that attitudes toward Vietnam had little impact on electoral choice in 1968 because Humphrey and Nixon differed little on this issue. Aldrich (1977), on the other hand, finds that Vietnam had a significant impact on voting in 1972 because of the distinct positions taken by Nixon and McGovern. The Iraq war in 2004 falls into the latter category because Bush and Kerry took differing positions on whether the war was—in retrospect—the ''right thing'' to do (Kerry's initial vote for the war notwithstanding). If candidates do not take different positions on the ''rightness'' of a war—or do not otherwise differentiate themselves along some other prominent war dimension—we would not expect public attitudes toward the war to influence vote choice substantially.

Endogeneity

Finally, one of the problems inherent in attitudinal research is that the causal direction is unknown—the dependent variable may be influencing the independent variables. Choosing to vote for Bush or Kerry, for example, could affect how one views the Iraq war. It is possible that the causal direction actually begins with voting, and ends with evaluations of war (or other predictors in the model). In other work, we present additional analyses using instrumental variables to try to isolate the causal influence of perceptions of success and whether the war was the ''right thing'' to do. Moreover, we conduct experiments that allow us to identify the causal impact of success on casualty tolerance. We have not yet been able to conduct such experiments regarding retrospective judgments of the ''rightness'' of the war and vote choice, but we agree that such research is important and we hope to investigate this issue in the future.

It is worth noting, however, that we control for party identification in our analyses, which we would view as causally prior to vote choice. Thus our estimated coefficients already account for any relationship between partisanship and voters' prospective and retrospective evaluations of Iraq. As a result, if vote choice created the coefficients we observe for ''success'' and ''right thing,'' it must have been some aspect of vote choice beyond party preference that did so.

Future Research

Perhaps the most pressing issue for future research is to develop a more refined answer to the question ''how do citizens judge success?'' (and perhaps even more importantly—''are citizens using the correct metrics in evaluating success?''). To a large extent, the argument presented here is agnostic to whether citizens make direct judgments about the war (or, at least as direct as possible given that they are only exposed to what the media is able to report), or whether citizens are mostly unaware of the ''real'' situation and simply follow elite level debate. We tend to come down more on the side that citizens follow what happens abroad via the news and can form judgments independent of simply parroting what their preferred elite says. But the results presented here are not affected by this prior question of where perceptions come from.

Nonetheless, two logical next steps that flow from our research are: (1) developing a better and more complete accounting of how citizens process information about international affairs, and (2) developing a better understanding of how new pieces of information about foreign policy (including how they are framed) affect judgments. We believe there is some exciting work in this area, especially in the use of experiments (e.g. Berinsky, 2007; Boettcher & Cobb, 2006; Tomz, 2007).

Conclusion

The presidential election of 2004 was profoundly influenced by judgments about the war in Iraq. But the public did not reelect the Commander-in-Chief simply because there was a war on. Instead, the public appears to be drawing carefully reasoned and reasonable judgments both about the war and about the election. Our analysis indicates that a single theoretical model can be used to describe both American's willingness to support continued fighting and their willingness to reelect the President. Specifically, we identify two attitudes—one prospective and the other retrospective—as key factors in shaping opinion. Consistent with previous work on electoral behavior (Fiorina, 1981), we find that retrospective judgments about the President's decision to use force are most influential in determining vote choice. Consistent with previous work on casualty tolerance (Feaver & Gelpi, 2004), we find that prospective judgments about the likelihood of success in Iraq are most important in determining support for continuing to fight in Iraq.

Acknowledgments This work is supported by grants from the Carnegie Corporation and the National Science Foundation. The authors would like to thank an anonymous reviewer, the editors of *Political Behavior*, John Aldrich, and seminar participants at Duke University for their helpful comments.

Appendix

Most Important Issue: Respondents were asked "When choosing for whom to vote, which of the following issues are most important to you personally?" Answer categories were "Foreign policy issues like Iraq and the War on Terrorism," "Economic issues like jobs and taxes," and "Social issues like abortion and gay marriage."

RightThing: Respondents were asked, "We would like to know whether you think President Bush did the right thing by using military force against Iraq. Would you say that you strongly approve, somewhat approve, some what disapprove or strongly disapprove of his decision?" [Strongly approve = 3, Somewhat approve = 2, Somewhat disapprove = 1, Strongly disapprove = 0].

Success: Respondents were asked, "Regardless of whether you think that the President did the right thing, would you say that the U.S. is very likely succeed in Iraq, somewhat likely to succeed, not very likely to succeed, or not at all likely to succeed?" [Very likely to succeed = 3, Somewhat likely to succeed = 2, Not very likely to succeed = 1, Not at all likely to succeed = 0].

Vote: Respondents were asked "If the general election for President were held today and the candidates were: George W. Bush, the Republican, John Kerry, the Democrat, Ralph Nader, the Independent for whom would you vote?" If undecided, respondents were asked "Toward whom do you lean?" [Bush = 4, Lean Bush = 3, Undecided = 2, Lean Kerry = 1, Kerry = 0].

Casualty Tolerance: To measure casualty tolerance, we asked respondents a series of questions, including a split sample design to assess if the number of dead and wounded affects opinion differently than just the number dead. We found no difference by including information about the number wounded in addition to those killed. In the questions that follow, the extra wording for the split sample is included in parentheses.

All respondents received the statement, ''Regardless of whether you think the President made the right decision in attacking Iraq, as you know the United States is engaged in an ongoing military operation there and has suffered about 1,000 military deaths (and over 7,000 military wounded).''

Respondents were then asked, ''Would you support continued U.S. military action in Iraq until a new Iraqi government can take over if it resulted in no additional U.S. military deaths?'' [If they said no *Casualty Tolerance* = 0, if they said yes they were asked] ''would you support continued U.S. military action in Iraq until a new Iraqi government can take over if it resulted in up to 1,500 total U.S. military deaths (and over 10,000 military wounded)?'' [If they said no *Casualty Tolerance* = 1, if they said yes they were asked] ''Would you support continued U.S. military action in Iraq until a new Iraqi government can take over if it resulted in up to 5,000 total U.S. military deaths (and over 30,000 military wounded)?'' [If they said no *Casualty Tolerance* = 2, if they said yes they were asked] ''Would you support continued U.S. military action in Iraq until a new Iraqi government can take over if it resulted in up to 50,000 total U.S. military deaths (and over 300,000 military wounded)?'' [If they said no *Casualty Tolerance* = 3, if they said yes *Casualty Tolerance* = 4].

Age: Seven category variable [18–24 = 0, 25–34 = 1, 35–44 = 2, 45–54 = 3, 55–64 = 4, 65–74 = 5, 75+ = 6].

Education: Four category variable [High school or less = 0, High school diploma = 1, Some college = 2, Bachelors degree or higher = 3].

Female: Dummy variable [Male = 0, Female = 1].

Minority: Dummy variable [White Non-Hispanic = 0; Black, Hispanic or other = 1].

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