# Essays on the U.S. Foreign Policy and Domestic Politics Connection

**Essays on the U.S. Foreign Policy and Domestic Politics Connection**

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Chan Kim

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Dissertation Advisor: Professor Stephen Ansolabehere Chan Kim

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# Abstract

The purpose of this dissertation is twofold. First, I address the debate on whether domestic politics and foreign policy are isolated from one another by demonstrating that the two are interconnected. I argue that explanations for foreign policy are not isolated to external affairs, and explanations for domestic politics are not isolated to internal affairs. As a result, domestic audiences can constrain the foreign policy conduct of those in power. Second, given this relationship, I clarify the nature of democratic accountability in foreign policy by showing the specific mechanisms by which it operates yet how it can be altered.

In the first paper, I demonstrate the magnitude and direction of voter blame for war casualties and their implications for U.S. electoral outcomes. I present a theory arguing that voters use local casualties to retrospectively punish the incumbent party in elections. In districts held by the incumbent party, casualties decrease the incumbent party's vote share as well as dampen turnout among voters.

In the second paper, I find that patronage exists in the U.S. ambassador selection process through political appointments, yet there is no evidence that political appointees underperform compared to career appointees. While patronage is prevalent among ambassador selections, term lengths, rather than political appointments, are an important predictor of ambassador performance.

In the third paper, I offer a domestic political explanation for why the U.S. outsources wartime role to private military contractors. I show that elected officials can potentially obscure the human costs of war because contractor casualties are underreported by the media and underestimated by the public compared to civilian soldier casualties. As a result, privatizing war allows legislators to reduce accountability in the use of military force.

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# Acknowledgments

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And finally, a most profound thank you to my parents, on whose shoulders I stand. If I have been able to accomplish anything of worth, it was made possible by your silent sacrifices that I, over time, have discovered and grown to more fully appreciate. This is for you.

# Introduction

A central question in the international relations literature is whether state behavior and domestic politics are isolated from one another. Foundational theories, such as structural realism, explain state actions by pointing to systemic and structural factors. More recently, however, scholars have identified how domestic politics can shape foreign policy conduct, such as through audience costs and two-level games. Furthermore, given how domestic audiences can constrain state-level behavior, what is the nature of democratic accountability in foreign policy? Specifically, how does it operate, and is it malleable?

In my dissertation, I address these questions through three papers demonstrating how foreign policy and domestic politics are interconnected and the specific ways in which democratic accountability in foreign policy operates yet can be altered by those in power. I show how outcomes in internal politics are driven by foreign policy and, conversely, how foreign policy decisions are influenced by domestic political considerations. Specifically, in my dissertation, I address the effect of casualties on elections, the role of domestic politics in ambassador selection and performance, and the political motives for war contracting.

## Paper 1

**Who is Held Accountable? A Partisan Theory of Myopic Casualty Retrospection**

The first paper examines the role of war casualties in congressional elections. Previous literature on the role of casualties on domestic politics have identified that casualties do matter for public opinion and election outcomes. However, scholars disagree about the magnitude and direction of blame for these consequences of war. To address this debate, we ask several

questions. Are local war casualties associated with legislative election outcomes for the party in power, even if the party was not responsible for starting the war? Do voters blame majority-party legislators for inaction in the wake of rising casualties? We present a partisan theory of myopic casualty retrospection, arguing that voters are most likely to blame local casualties on legislators from the incumbent party. We find that local U.S. casualties in the war in Afghanistan were negatively associated with 2010 Democratic vote shares in Democratic-held districts but not in Republican-held districts. Additionally, we explain these district-level results through individual voter-level models that show Afghanistan war casualties reduced voter turnout and vote for Democratic candidates in Democratic-held districts.

Our argument and findings raise several important normative theoretical implications regarding the domestic political role of casualties. It clarifies the magnitude and direction of voters' blame attribution for casualties of war, showing that casualties do indeed matter for domestic elections and that voter retribution is partisan, myopic, and retrospective. Additionally, these findings highlight the constraints on legislators in democratic polities to engage in prolonged wars. We conclude the paper by discussing the implications for the fields of international relations and U.S. politics.

# Paper 2

**Domestic Political Determinants of Ambassador Selection and Performance**

This paper investigates the presence of patronage in U.S. ambassador selection and tests its potential consequences for national interests. Across 7 presidential administrations from Ford to Obama, about a third of ambassadors were political appointees without prior diplomatic careers through the U.S. Foreign Service. Statistics like this feed into public concern that

influential positions in government are doled out to unqualified individuals out of favor rather than merit. This practice may result in consequences for agency performance and, therefore, U.S. national interests pursued through bilateral relations.

First, I systematically investigate if ambassador selection is driven by patronage. To determine the presence of patronage among ambassador appointees, I compile an original dataset filtering and consolidating 12 million campaign contributions, and I match them to ambassadors using identifier variables. The data shows that political ambassadors donate to the winning presidential candidate's party in federal elections at significantly higher rates, and in much greater amounts, than career ambassadors. This confirms speculation surrounding the influence of patronage in the ambassador selection process.

Second, I collect data on 1,247 U.S. ambassadors and find, however, no evidence that career ambassadors are more effective than political ambassadors at promoting national interests abroad. I create a data set comprising ambassadors during the Clinton, W. Bush, and Obama administrations and the change in bilateral trade, FDI, travel, and UN vote alignment with the ambassadors' assigned countries during their tenure. Results show no statistically significant differences in the changes in these economic, political, and social measures when comparing career and political ambassadors. Unlike career background, however, longer term lengths improve ambassador performance according to these outcomes. And a main determinant of term length is ambassador turnovers, particularly among political appointees which occur in abnormally large numbers during the first year of presidential terms.

Overall, while this paper confirms that many ambassadors are selected out of patronage, political appointees themselves are not harming U.S. interests. Rather, political appointees leaving office is reducing the average term length which, unlike diplomatic background,

influences ambassador performance. Therefore, strategic concerns about U.S. interests, and therefore accountability for them, should not be focused on minimizing political appointments but rather, quite oppositely, keeping them in office longer to increase term lengths.

## Paper 3

**Private Soldiers, Private Casualties: Political Motivations for Outsourcing War**

This paper provides a domestic political explanation for why the U.S. outsources wartime roles to private military contractors. Typical explanations for the prevalent use of contractors in U.S. wars have focused on economic and military advantages. Yet in many countries including the U.S., re-election-seeking politicians play a key role in determining war funding and operations, and existing explanations for war contracting do not account for relevant political motivations that may be at play.

This paper empirically demonstrates the political incentive to contract wartime services out to private firms. Using the citizen-soldier concept, I show that the public perceives substantive distinctions between civilian soldiers and contractors. Specifically, civilian soldiers are believed to be serving out of moral obligation and representing U.S. interests more than contractors, implying a greater public affinity toward civilian soldiers. I test the potential implications of this finding on two mechanisms which affect the political costs of casualties: public aversion to casualties and public awareness of casualties. I find that contractor casualties bear lower political costs than civilian soldier casualties because public awareness of the former is lower than the latter. Specifically, the media underreports, and the public underestimates, contractor casualties much more severely than civilian soldier casualties.

From a sitting politician's perspective, contracting wartime roles to private firms may be personally advantageous, given that previous studies have shown that casualties decrease vote shares of incumbents. And so lower public reporting and estimation of contractor casualties create conditions under which elected officials can minimize the political costs of pursuing war. The results of this paper contribute to a more comprehensive explanation for war privatization by empirically demonstrating motivations of war contracting rooted in domestic political incentives.

# 1 Who is Held Accountable? A Partisan Theory of Myopic Casualty Retrospection[1]

## 1.1 Introduction

U.S. support for the war in Afghanistan dropped from nearly universal support to only about 50 percent by late 2010. Additionally, at the start of the war in 2002, the U.S. had 12 fatal casualties in Afghanistan whereas in 2010, the U.S. experienced 499 fatal casualties. The conventional wisdom has been that the war in Afghanistan was initiated and expanded primarily at the impetus of George W. Bush and Republicans, and that the Democratic party has not been associated with the war and its increasing casualties. Yet in the 2010 elections, Democrats in Congress experienced what President Obama described as a "shellacking" when Republicans gained 63 seats in the House to recapture the majority. One such case was when Democratic incumbent Ciro Rodriguez of Texas's 23rd district lost to Republican challenger Quico Canseco. Within six months leading up to the election, this congressional district was home to 7 U.S. casualties from the war in Afghanistan while the mean casualty count among all districts in this time period was 1.069 and the median was 1.

While domestic factors were certainly central to these election results, could the collateral consequences of foreign policy, particularly in light of steadily decreasing U.S. support for the war in Afghanistan, have been an important factor? Do local casualties affect legislative election outcomes for the party in power, even if the party was not responsible for starting the war? Do voters blame majority-party legislators for inaction in the wake of rising local casualties? Or do voters blame legislators from the party that initiated the war responsible for casualties? We

[1] Coauthored with Christian Grose from the University of Southern California.

present a partisan theory of myopic casualty retrospection to explain why, during periods when local casualties are high, voters would punish legislators from the party in power instead of 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 not the majority 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.

In the following theoretical discussion, we first address the question of whether casualties affect public support for war. Then, we proceed to discuss whether the political effect of casualties can also be extended into electoral politics and shape legislators' fates. Lastly, we propose our partisan theory of myopic casualty retrospection which we use to explain who the public blames for the casualties of an increasingly unpopular war. To test our theory, we specifically study the war in Afghanistan, a case that has been relatively understudied in studying the topic of blame attribution.

We examine election results and individual voting behavior in the 2010 U.S. House elections, as this empirical case presents a clear test of the theory's expectations.[2] The period shortly preceding the 2010 elections is the first in decades where (1) the same political party controlled both chambers of Congress and the presidency during an increasingly unpopular war;

[2] The Republicans controlled the presidency and Congress from 2001-2006, a period in which the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan started and became unpopular. Therefore, empirical evidence of Republicans doing poorly in the 2006 elections would not distinguish between arguments that voters blame the party in power or the party that authorized the war. From 2007-08, a Republican president and Democratic Congress presided over increasingly unpopular wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, but blame was not easily attributable to one party given the presence of divided government. In 2009-10, one party controlled all elected branches of the federal government (the Democrats), but this party was not in control when the increasingly unpopular war in Afghanistan was initially authorized.

and (2) this majority party was not the party in power when the war was initially authorized. Our results show that Democratic candidates running in Democratic-controlled House seats in 2010 did worse in districts with larger numbers of home-district casualties, while district-level casualties had no impact on Republican candidates running in GOP-held seats. Examining individual-level voter behavior, we find that in Democratic districts, higher casualties resulted in lower turnout and an increased propensity to vote for Republicans. Whereas much of the scholarly attention focused on how domestic issues, such as the tea party and health care reform bill, affected the 2010 House elections, our findings demonstrate the important electoral impact of casualties.

A potential concern for our use of the war in Afghanistan is that the policy in Afghanistan during the Bush administration is not comparable to that during the Obama administration, and so electoral loss for Democratic incumbents in 2010 can not be interpreted as blame toward a party with no original ownership of a war. Although Bush and Republican lawmakers initiated the war, President Obama took ownership of the war during his presidency, particularly by escalating it with a surge. Consequently, leading up to the 2010 elections, the public potentially did not associate the war simply with Bush and Republicans but instead with Obama and Democrats. As a result, our experiment might not be ideal for examining how lawmakers get blamed for events that occurred long in the past.

This, however, assumes that Obama and Democratic lawmakers were just as unified in escalating the war in Afghanistan as Bush and Republican lawmakers were in starting the war. If this were true, our results would not reveal how incumbent Democrats were punished for the consequences of a war associated with Republicans but instead how incumbent Democrats were punished for the consequences of a war associated with Democrats. The difference, however, is

that whereas Bush had nearly unanimous Republican support for initiating the war in Afghanistan, Democrats were very divided in supporting the surge. In 2010, the House approved funds to pay for the 30,000-troop increase by a vote of 308 to 114 with Democrats making up 102 of the 114 nays. Arguably, Democratic lawmakers collectively never assumed the new public face for the war in Afghanistan because there was hardly a unified Democratic front for the surge. Though admittedly not perfect, our experiment nevertheless provides a nice test of Democrats' electoral punishment for the consequences of a policy they were not identified with initiating.

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, 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 are initially considered justified by the populace, growing casualties can decrease support for wars which in turn amplifies the electoral impacts of local casualties. In this process, majority-party officials who control the levers of government are the most likely to be punished by constituents as local casualties mount.

Our work is the first to theorize about and test the role of casualties on the election outcomes of the party in power separately from the party that authorized a war. We are also the first to demonstrate an empirical relationship between U.S. casualties in Afghanistan and election outcomes and voting behavior, and we are 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, voter responsiveness to legislative action and inaction, and our

understanding of domestic audience costs in military conflicts. There are also significant implications for the study of international relations, voting behavior, electoral politics, and American politics.

## 1.2 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 preside over a war with increasing casualties (Kriner and Shen 2010). Local casualties, defined as individuals from local geographic areas that die while fighting elsewhere, can particularly shape individual perceptions of war (Gartner, Segura, and Wilkening 1997).

Scholars have struggled with the question of whether casualties affect public support for wars. Some argue that rising marginal casualties almost always have a negative effect on local or national opinion (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 (Berinsky 2009; Boettcher and Cobb 2006, 2009; Gelpi and Mueller 2006; Gelpi, Reifler, and Feaver 2007; Gelpi, Feaver, and Reifler 2005/2006; Norpoth and Sidman 2007). While there has been debate regarding the conditions under which casualties matter, scholars generally agree 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. In instances where casualties matter, casualties are almost

always negative predictors of support for war. As Russett (2009) 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 affect voters' decisions. Casualties are a tangible and relatable consequence of conflict that people can feel or sympathize about. Even if voters do not personally know a soldier who died, the impact of the loss is often visible since people are interconnected in ways that enable them to feel the weight of a casualty. For instance, people are participants of social institutions and contexts conducive to interconnectedness – schools, workplaces, geographic regions – that connect people to each other's lives (Kriner and Shen 2007; Sinclair 2012). As a result, people gain a sense of sympathy and 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, local factors could magnify the negative impact that casualties have on support for the war, which could spill over to affect the opinions of inattentive voters living in a district with high numbers of casualties. The media, campaign challengers, and interest groups are 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 prompt mass publics to question the value of the war effort. In doing so, casualties decrease public support for continuing the war or for the officials considered responsible for prolonging the war. Increasing casualties represent the enhanced severity of a conflict, consequently weakening the justification of a war (Wood, Kathman, and Gent 2012). Casualties are a sign of difficulty in combat, and so the public increasingly questions the feasibility of winning or accomplishing objectives with minimal difficulty as war deaths grow.

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 in public support for war, much less has examined 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 posits 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. In the case of a legislator with a single-member, 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. Generally, just as increasing aggregate U.S. casualties may lead to a decrease in support for war, local casualties may be associated with parties' or officials' election results.

## 1.3 Theory

Voters unhappy with local casualties could potentially blame the president, Congress, or both – and they could blame the party in power when the war began or could blame the current ruling party. Legislators consider the consequences of their policy actions, anticipating that decisions leading to policy effects (such as casualties) perceived negatively 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 (Bianco 1994; Bishin 2000; Fenno 1978; Frisch and Kelly 2006; Grose 2011; Oppenheimer 1996; Powell 1982), since those who do not may not win reelection (Mayhew 1974). Legislators think carefully about the electoral ramifications of their decisions to support military interventions since these decisions can determine 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 they take in office, but exogenous events not within their control can have electoral consequences as well. 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. Voters may not remember which party started a war but will be more likely to know about the immediate, negative consequences of a war.

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 some of 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 (Fiorina 1981; Healy and Malhotra 2009), namely local casualties. If local casualties are high, myopic constituents may simply blame their legislators who are currently in the governing party and not blame the party or incumbents who voted to begin a war. Legislators' constituents have a somewhat more negative feeling about the ruling party 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.

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).

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 of a war (like Afghanistan) can be blamed on those legislators most recently serving. Similarly, less attentive 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 began.

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; Key 1961). 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 2007; 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.

## 1.4 Voter Dissatisfaction and Blame Attribution

The president is, of course, arguably more important than majority-party legislators at making decisions on expanding troops in existing military interventions. In the case of Afghanistan in 2010, for instance, 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 a troop surge. Voters may not know the institutional mechanisms by which more local casualties have occurred, but they are likely to know that the Democrats, for instance, control the presidency and may even know that the Democrats control the House. In 2006, 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 therefore casualties were inconsistent with the troop surge in Afghanistan in 2009-10. As Ferejohn (1986) 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. 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." In sum, in a situation in which there is unified government, it is likely that voters in districts with high numbers of casualties will blame the party in power in part to signal to the president their dissatisfaction with the state of the war. In a midterm election in particular, voters may be more likely to vote against the president's party or simply not turn out to vote. Either way, majority-party incumbents should fare poorly under the theory of myopic casualty retrospection.

An alternative target of voter blame can be a party and its affiliated legislators. In past work, there is observational equivalence when it comes to assessing how political parties in the legislature 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). This

previous work cannot determine whether casualties are blamed on the authorizing party or the inaction of the incumbent party.

Karol and Miguel (2007) found that Bush and, by logic, the Republican party were punished in states with higher casualties in 2004. Bush was the incumbent president before the 2004 election and also 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 mid-war 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.

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 he expects 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). 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, so the lack of focus on party could be due to the relative paucity of congressional partisan polarization (Theriault 2008).

In sum, most of the past work on casualties and election outcomes explicitly theorizes that negative electoral outcomes indicate voters disapprove of unpopular wars and the elected officials responsible for starting those wars. Other work posits that electoral blame will occur but does not specify who is likely to receive the blame or why. Empirically, none of the past work examines a time period in which the governing party controls a unified government and is distinct from the war-authorizing party.

In contrast, we explicitly argue that the incumbent party is most likely to be penalized by voters in districts with high casualties. Because casualties represent a government's inability to move foreign policy in the right direction, voters myopically and retrospectively vote against governing-party legislators representing casualty-heavy districts. The theoretical prediction is that districts with high numbers of casualties 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 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

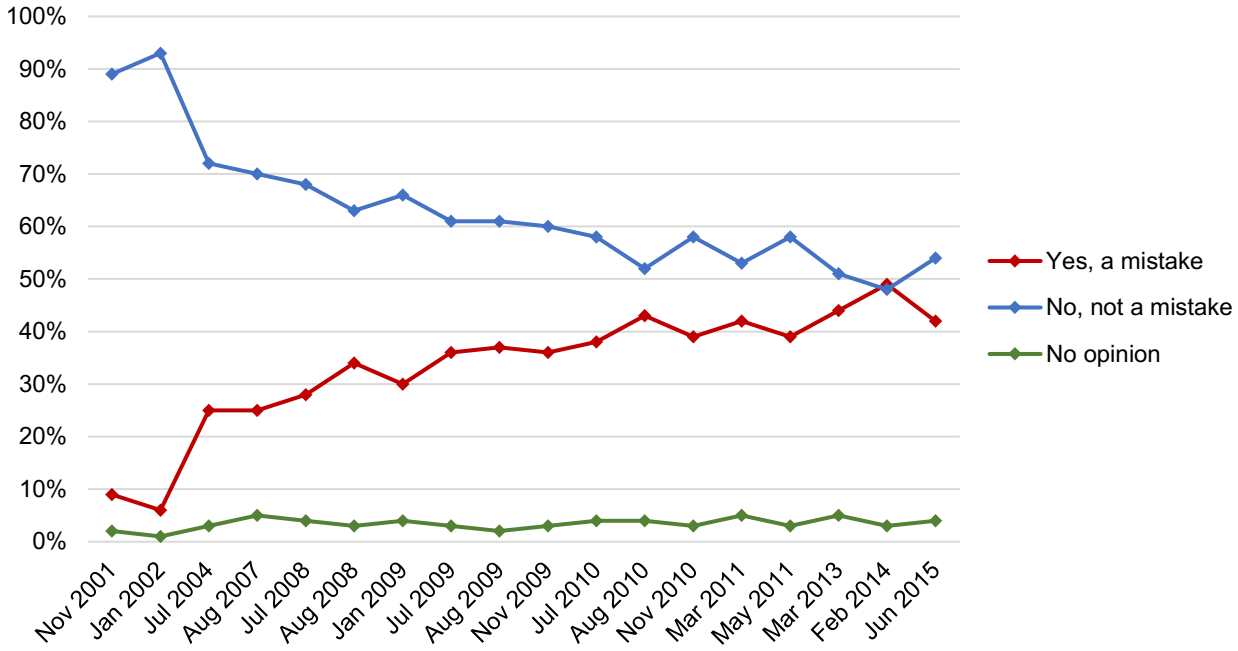
power that authorized the war, then citizens are less able to hold elected officials democratically accountable for long-run foreign policy decisions when party control in government institutions shifts. When voters blame the party in power, voters are voting responsively and retrospectively based on the collateral consequences of inaction. In 2010, for instance, voters in high-casualty areas may have voted against Democratic incumbents to express disapproval of the president's surge and the acquiescence of the Democratic-controlled Congress or may simply have been disaffected and not turned out.

## 1.5 Levels of Casualties and Public Support for the War in Afghanistan

Before we can test the expectations of our partisan theory of myopic casualty retrospection using the test case of the 2010 U.S. House elections, it is necessary to establish that public support for the war in Afghanistan has declined so that casualties would weigh on voters. Following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, the U.S. public rallied together with the desire to deliver retribution to those who attacked the U.S. (Hetherington and Nelson 2003), and the public shifted its support toward foreign and anti-terrorism policies (Hetherington and Husser 2012; Hetherington and Suhay 2011). In a January 2002 USA Today/Gallup poll, 89 percent of the public supported sending military forces into Afghanistan and only 9 percent opposed.

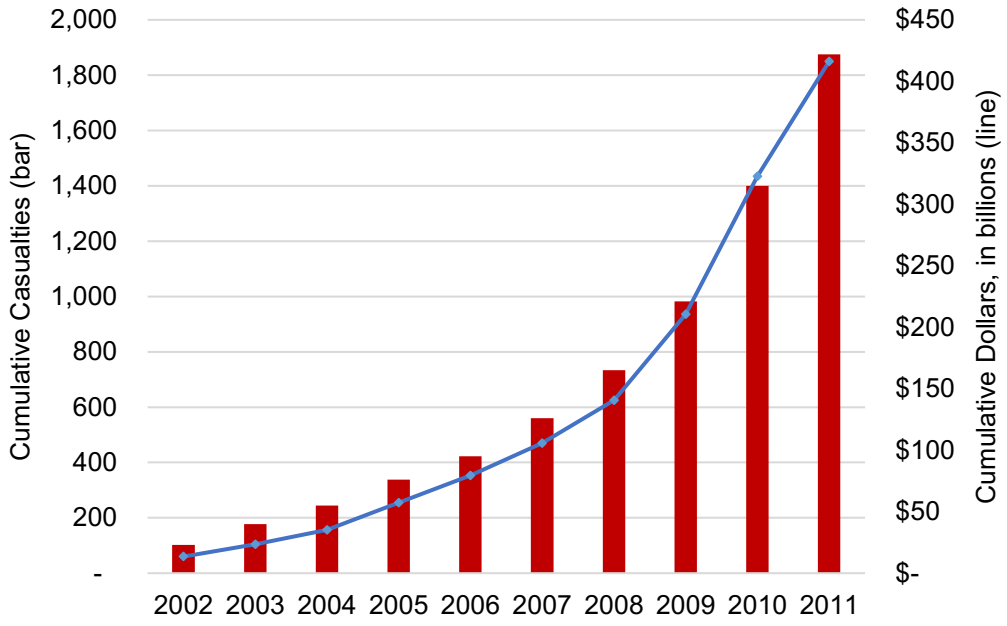
However, as the war progressed, public support for U.S. intervention in Afghanistan dropped significantly. Figure 1.1 shows an aggregate summary of public opinion on the war in Afghanistan from 2001 to 2010 using all surveys conducted by Gallup asking respondents whether the war was a mistake. By August 2007, for instance, disapproval of the war reached 25 percent. By August 2010, 43 percent of the U.S. public opposed the war while just slightly more

Figure 1.1: Declining Public Support for the War in Afghanistan, 2001-2015




*Note:* Data based on Gallup polls. Respondents were asked: "Thinking now about U.S. military action in Afghanistan that began in October 2001, do you think the United States made a mistake in sending military forces to Afghanistan, or not?"

Figure 1.2: Total Casualties and Financial Costs of War in Afghanistan, 2002-2011




*Note:* Data provided by the Congressional Research Service and Department of Defense.

than 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.[3] 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.' ability to emerge victorious in Afghanistan was waning.

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). As can be seen in Figure 1.2, which uses data from the Congressional Research Service and Department of Defense, 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 60 in 2002 to 1,850 by the end of 2011. Simultaneously, the total financial cost of the U.S. military effort rose from $23 billion in 2002 to $422 billion by 2011. What started as one of the most popular U.S. military interventions in history had become fairly unpopular by November 2010.

[3] The sources for the data in this paragraph are New York Times/CBS polls.

## 1.6 Hypothesis and Results

We argue that voters blame legislators of the governing party for negative consequences of a war. Our argument leads to the partisan myopic casualty retrospection hypothesis: the greater the number of casualties in Afghanistan, the worse Democratic incumbents fared in the 2010 elections. The mechanism for this electoral punishment toward legislators of the in-party 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 hypothesis exist. Extant literature has explored 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 a particular policy (Croco 2012; Mansbridge 2003). If this alternative explanation is correct, then voters would punish GOP 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 people are presented with bad news, they will blame incumbents regardless of which party they are affiliated.

We estimated four different models to analyze the effects of local war casualties on House 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 on Democrats and Republicans. The dependent variable, *Democratic Two-Party Vote Share 2010*, is

used in all 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.

To construct the two fatal casualty variables, we first collected the "home of record" of each soldier found on the list of fatal casualties reported by the U.S. Department of Defense. We used their hometowns to identify associated zip codes using the U.S. Postal Service database. We then matched the zip codes with congressional districts. In some cases, there was a uniquely matched congressional district with zip code(s); in other cases, more than one district was identified as overlapping the soldier's zip code(s). Because of this, we use two independent variables to measure district-level casualties.[4]

[4] We also estimated the models of election outcomes excluding congressional districts that were in the most populous areas of the country. It is possible that in very large cities and counties, residents are less likely to know about casualties in specific congressional districts as districts are fragmented and numerous. Thus, in Appendix A, we also estimated the regressions presented later in Tables 1.1 and 1.2 but excluded all districts in the nation's 15 most populous counties. The results were consistent with those presented in the text. In addition, in Appendix B, we also estimated the individual vote choice/turnout results presented later in Table 1.3, excluding respondents living in these most-populated areas. These results were also consistent with those presented in the text. Finally, in Appendix C, we re-estimated the individual-level results from Table 1.3 but measured Afghanistan casualties at the county level and not district level. We examined the 15 most populous counties separately. We found that outside of the

The first independent variable is *Afghanistan District Deaths (Measure 1)*. It is measured as the total number of fatal casualties of soldiers from a district, where every soldier death is coded as 1 casualty for each overlapping congressional district (e.g., if there were two casualties in zip codes overlapping Manhattan, NY then all four congressional districts that overlapped Manhattan were coded as having 2 casualties). 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 fatal casualties in each congressional district. In instances where a casualty's home zip code overlapped multiple districts, we divided by the number of congressional districts claiming the fatality. For instance, if there were two casualties in Manhattan, 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) in their study of Iraq casualties and 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

nation's biggest metro areas, the number of casualties in a respondent's county is associated with both vote choice and turnout similar to what is presented in Table 1.3.

Afghanistan casualty variables, except using data on U.S. casualties in Operation Iraqi Freedom.[5] We are not certain *a priori* whether the Iraq variables will have an impact as there were very few U.S. casualties in Iraq during the time period.

In order to control for factors typically associated with House election outcomes in 2010, we included a number of other independent variables. 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). Unless otherwise indicated, the 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.[6]

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), 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) found that Democratic members of the House who voted for Obama's health care bill did about eight percentage points worse in 2010 than those

[5] 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 election results have been associated with casualties in Iraq (e.g., Kriner and Shen 2007).

[6] 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.

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 District Two-Party Vote* 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.[7] *Quality Challenger* is 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 and as 0 otherwise. We also included a dummy variable *Scandal*, coded 1 if an incumbent who ran for reelection had an investigation for unethical activities or was cited for potential wrongdoings (it is coded 0 otherwise).[8]

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 (also collected from the U.S. Census).

The models examining Democratic House seats are shown in Table 1.1. Models 1 and 2 in Table 1.1 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 District Deaths*

[7] In Appendix D, we estimated the election results models using a lagged variable for past House election results. The results with this lagged variable were consistent with those in the text.

[8] This information was gathered from the U.S. House Committee on Ethics' Summary of Activities.

Table 1.1: Afghanistan Casualties and Democratic Two-Party Vote Share in 2010, Democratic House Seat Models

| | Measure 1<br>(1) | Measure 2<br>(2) |
|---|---|---|
| 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 100,000's) | -0.055 (0.038) | -0.050 (0.038) |
| Expenditures by Rep. (in 100,000's) | -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 |

*Note:* *p < 0.10; **p < 0.05; ***p < 0.01. Models were estimated using OLS with robust standard errors. Two-tailed significance tests reported for *Armed Forces in District* and *Veterans in District*. Results based on one-tailed tests are reported for all other variables.

(measures 1 and 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 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.

The *Iraq District Deaths* variables were not statistically significant predictors in either model, though the coefficient effect size 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.[9]

Other variables were significant predictors in the Democratic House seat models (Table 1.1). 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 1.1. Based on the coefficient of the *Health Care Roll Call* variable, Democrats who voted for the health care bill did about seven percentage points worse than those who did not vote in favor of the health care bill. Democratic legislators who voted for health care and whose districts had large numbers 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 1.1, a Democratic House member who voted for the health care bill and whose district had 5 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 0 local Afghanistan casualties.

The *Incumbent* variable was also a significant predictor of vote share in the models in

[9] In Appendix E, we added the casualties in Afghanistan to the casualties in Iraq to create a total district deaths variable. In these results, this combined variable was a statistically significant predictor of the Democratic two-party vote share in 2010 Democratic House seats similar to results in Tables 1.1 and 1.2.

Table 1.1. Not surprisingly, Democratic incumbents performed better than those running in open seats previously held by retiring Democrats. Interestingly, the electoral benefit of being a Democratic incumbent was not as large as the electoral benefit for voting against the health care bill. The percentage of the two-party vote that Obama received in the 2008 election had a statistically significant and positive effect on the Democratic House vote. 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 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, the Democratic vote share was reduced by about 0.3 percentage points. The percentage of *Armed Forces in District* was not a significant predictor in any models in Table 1.1.

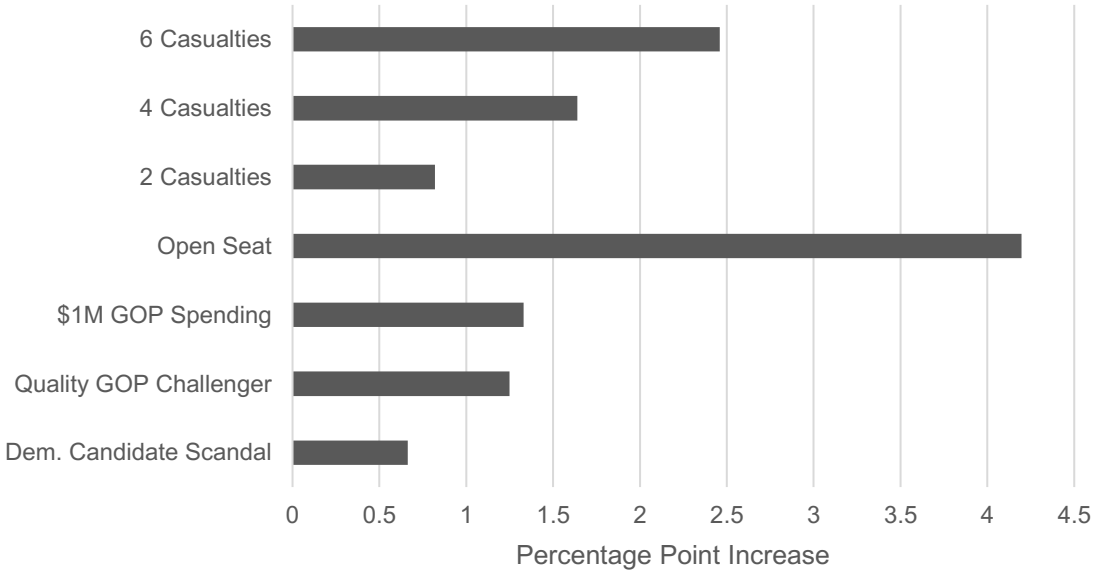
To better understand the substantive effects of war casualties on Democratic House members' vote shares, we calculated predicted values of the vote share for Democratic House seats based on Model 1 in Table 1.1. In Figure 1.3, we calculated the difference in the predicted vote share between districts with 0 casualties and districts with more than 0 casualties (while holding all other variables at their means).[10] A large majority of districts, 62.1%, had at least 1 local Afghanistan fatal casualty.

Also in Figure 1.3, we examine predicted values of the dependent variable while varying the *Expenditures by Republican* variable, the *Incumbent* variable, the *Quality Challenger*

[10] While the dependent variable in Table 1.1 was Democratic vote share, we display the results in Figure 1.3 by focusing on the increase in Republican vote share for ease of interpretability.

variable, and the *Scandal* variable (we individually calculate each of these variables' predicted values while holding all other independent variables in Model 1 of Table 1.1 at their means).[11] These variables have consistently been found to have effects on legislative election outcomes, so comparing the predicted effects of these variables to those of casualties will allow us to gauge the relative impact local Afghanistan casualties had on the electoral fortunes of House candidates in Democratic seats in 2010.

Figure 1.3: Effect of Local Afghanistan Casualties and Electoral Factors on GOP Vote Share in Democratically-Held House Districts, 2010 Elections




*Note:* Predicted values based on results reported in Table 1.1 (Model 1).

[11] 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 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.

The top part of Figure 1.3 shows that districts with 2 casualties resulted in a little less than 1 percentage point increase in the vote for the Republican candidate in Democratically-held districts. The value of 2 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 7 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 1.3 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 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 GOP 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 1.3, 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 1 standard deviation above the mean) was greater than the magnitude of the Democratic candidate being involved in a scandal, facing a quality challenger, or facing an opponent spending $1 million.

Table 1.2 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 1.2.

Other variables in Table 1.2 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 3 percentage point decrease in the Democratic vote share. Other statistically significant variables in the GOP vote share models in Table 1.2 were the *Obama 2008 District Two-Party Vote* and the percentage of *Armed Forces in 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 there was not a pox on both parties: voters did not punish Republicans for the local effects of the war in Afghanistan. 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. A suggestive implication of these results is that voters wanted the Democratic congressional majority (and possibly Obama) to move faster on Afghanistan

Table 1.2: Afghanistan Casualties and Democratic Two-Party Vote Share in 2010, Republican House Seat Models

| | Measure 1 (1) | Measure 2 (2) |
|---|---|---|
| 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, 141) | 27.51** | 27.92** |
| $R^2$ | 0.727 | 0.726 |
| N | 152 | 152 |

*Note:* *p < 0.10; **p < 0.05; ***p < 0.01. Models were estimated using OLS with robust standard errors. Two-tailed significance tests reported for *Armed Forces in District* and *Veterans in District*. Results based on one-tailed tests are reported for all other variables.

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 legislators were hurt at the ballot box.

## 1.7 Explaining Individual Voter Behavior

The results in Tables 1.1 and 1.2 and Figure 1.3 demonstrate that local casualties affected 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 became disillusioned about the Democratic party but felt no more closeness with the Republican party. If voters perceived that neither the party in power nor the GOP would be able to reduce the number of local casualties after the 2010 elections, then voters in high-casualty districts occupied by Democratic incumbents may have simply opted to stay home rather than vote for a Republican candidate. If so, 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.

However, individual voters who lived in Democratically-held congressional districts may also be more likely to vote for Republicans when local casualties are high. This would mean that high casualties could make a voter choose to vote out the in-party representative. 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 Cooperative Congressional Election Study.[12] 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. It could also suggest that greater numbers of Afghanistan casualties in a voter's congressional district leads to the voter choosing to vote against the Democratic candidate in Democratically-held seats.

We expect that voters in high-casualty House seats held by Democratic incumbents may have been 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 as turnout can affect a House incumbent's electoral support (Godbout 2013). So we estimated a Heckman probit selection model (see Bertelli and Grose 2007; 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, we include our independent variable of interest *Afghanistan District Deaths (Measure 1)*. This variable (described earlier) measures the total number of fatal casualties of soldiers who hailed from the

[12] In our individual-level models detailed in the text below, we use the sample weights provided by CCES.

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 variables are associated with the propensity to turn out, as older voters and those who have lived at the same address for a long 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 *White*, 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 in the selection equation is *Income*. Higher values indicate a higher income, 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 (Measure 1)*, is also included in the outcome equation. The *Iraq District Deaths (Measure 1)* variable is also included in the outcome equation.

*State of Economy* is an independent variable in the outcome equation but not in the selection equation. There are no congressional district-level measures of the economic health, so

we were forced to exclude this variable in the election outcome models earlier (Tables 1.1 and 1.2). Fortunately, in the individual-level models, we are able to measure a citizen's retrospective evaluation of the economy. The variable is a 5-point scale where 1 indicates respondents who state the economy has "gotten much better" and 5 indicates respondents who say the economy has "gotten much worse." *Gender* is an independent variable 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 have noted that men were more likely to vote GOP in 2010 (Kuhn 2010). Other independent variables in the selection equation predicting vote choice were *Party Identification*, *White*, *Education*, and *Income*. These are all individual-level variables coded as described previously. 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 GOP House seats.

Table 1.3 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. The left model is for seats held by Democrats, and the right model examines seats held by Republicans.

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 a negative predictor of turnout in the selection equation, meaning that voters in districts with high casualties were less likely to vote than those voters in districts with low casualties. Casualties in Democratic districts are associated with both dampening voter turnout and swinging individual

Table 1.3: Afghanistan Casualties and Individual Voting Behavior, Heckman Probit Model

*Outcome Equation, Dependent Variable: 1 = Vote for Democrat; 0 = Vote for Republican*

| | Democratic Seats | Republican Seats |
|---|---|---|
| Afghanistan District Deaths | -0.034* (0.019) | -0.003 (0.023) |
| Iraq District Deaths | -0.001 (0.089) | -0.217* (0.093) |
| State of Economy | -0.486** (0.025) | -0.475** (0.028) |
| Gender | -0.126** (0.047) | -0.063 (0.054) |
| Party Identification | -0.584** (0.015) | -0.559** (0.017) |
| White | -0.217** (0.061) | 0.092 (0.074) |
| Education | 0.065** (0.017) | 0.060** (0.020) |
| Income | -0.031** (0.009) | -0.013 (0.009) |
| Constant | 4.318** (0.186) | 3.307** (0.181) |

*Selection Equation, Dependent Variable: 1 = Turned Out to Vote; 0 = Did Not Vote*

| | Democratic Seats | Republican Seats |
|---|---|---|
| Afghanistan District Deaths | -0.032* (0.015) | -0.015 (0.012) |
| Iraq District Deaths | 0.013 (0.066) | 0.032 (0.043) |
| Age | 0.879** (0.055) | 0.793** (0.036) |
| Long-Term Resident | 0.581** (0.038) | 0.679** (0.030) |
| Party Identification | 0.014* (0.008) | 0.080** (0.006) |
| White | -0.091 (0.040) | -0.085 (0.051) |
| Education | 0.177** (0.012) | 0.178** (0.014) |
| Income | 0.069** (0.005) | 0.064** (0.006) |
| Constant | -0.973** (0.067) | -1.380** (0.085) |
| N | 20,562 (17,145 uncensored; 3,417 censored) | 15,530 (12,762 uncensored; 2,768 censored) |

*Note*: ** $p \leq 0.01$; * $p \leq 0.05$ (1-tailed tests for all variables).

vote choice away from Democratic legislators. The *Afghanistan District Deaths* variable had no statistical impact on either vote choice or turnout in the model of GOP-held seats, which is consistent with our partisan theory of myopic casualty retrospection.

Other variables predicted vote choice. Negative evaluations of the economy led to a decreased likelihood of voting for Democrats in the Democratic model. This suggests that the party in power in Congress was blamed by voters with weak evaluations of the economy. Also in the Democratic model, men, strong GOP identifiers, whites, and high-income individuals were less likely to vote Democratic. Higher-educated individuals were more likely to vote Democratic in the Democratic-seat model.

Like the district-level results in Tables 1.1 and 1.2, the *Iraq District Deaths* variable was insignificant in the Democratic-seat models. In the GOP-seat models, somewhat surprisingly, it was a negative predictor of the likelihood of voting Democratic. However, we are hesitant to interpret too much about this result as the variation in GOP seats on this variable is very low. Only 8 GOP congressional districts had greater than 0 Iraq casualties, and all but 1 district had more than 1 Iraq casualty. Also in the GOP models, negative evaluations of the economy and strong Republican partisan identification were associated with the propensity not to vote Democratic; while being highly-educated was associated with voting Democratic. In the selection equations of both the Democratic and Republican seat models, all of the individual-level independent variables except *White* were predictors of turnout.

In Appendix F, we also estimated separate models for Democratic identifiers, Independent identifiers, and Republican identifiers to see if vote choice and turnout differed by partisanship of respondents. Democratic respondents in Democratic districts were significantly less likely to turn out to vote when there was a larger number of Afghanistan casualties but were

not more likely to vote for the Republican candidate. In contrast, Republican respondents in Democratic districts were significantly less likely to turn out and significantly more likely to vote for the Republican candidate in districts in which there were a larger number of Afghanistan casualties. Independents were also more likely to vote for Republicans in Democratic districts with high numbers of casualties.[13]

These individual-level results provide the micro-foundations underlying the earlier results 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 elections. The results taken together show that, in Democratic districts, local Afghanistan casualties were associated with a reduction in vote share for House Democratic candidates, a decrease in the likelihood that a person turned out to vote, and a decrease in the likelihood that a person voted for Democratic House candidates.

## 1.8 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

[13] In addition, we also wanted to examine whether the relationship found in Table 1.3 for Democratic seats regarding casualties and vote choice and turnout was more likely to occur among respondents who pay attention to public affairs and are regular consumers of print, online, and/or TV news. Given our theory implies that respondents are either explicitly or implicitly knowledgeable about casualties, we would expect that those respondents with a high level of interest in public affairs and who are consumers of news media would be most likely to respond to casualties when casting their ballots and/or turning out to vote. When we analyze the models in Table 1.3 (for Democratic seats) on citizens who are attentive to the news media, the results are consistent with those in the text and presented in Appendix G. When we analyze the models in Table 1.3 on those with high political interest, we find consistent results to those in the text, which are presented in Appendix H. We do not find the same results on respondents who have lower political interest and who are not attentive to TV news and/or print/online news.

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.

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 but not 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., Kriner and Shen 2007), but is inconsistent with other work examining wars when the casualty counts were much larger.

The argument and findings presented are of interest to scholars of international relations, foreign policy, and U.S. electoral politics. Normatively, the results have 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 this initial decision. 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 also for inaction.

The results 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 work on casualties and elections (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 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 war has been overlooked by commentators who have focused on domestic components of the 2010 vote (e.g., 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.

# 2 Domestic Political Determinants of Ambassador Selection and Performance

## 2.1 Introduction

Several of President Obama's nominees for U.S. ambassador positions faced high-profile criticism. During Senate confirmation hearings, they could not demonstrate basic knowledge about the country to which they would potentially serve as chief diplomat. Colleen Bell, nominee for ambassador to Hungary, was a soap opera producer who could not explain U.S. strategic interests in Hungary. George Tsunis, nominee for ambassador to Norway, described the country's mainstream party as fringe voters spewing hatred. And former Senator Max Baucus, nominee for ambassador to China, admitted during his confirmation hearing that he is "no real expert on China" (*Hearing on Pending Nominations* 2014, sec. Committee on Foreign Relations).

President Obama, however, is hardly the only president who has been criticized for his selections for U.S. ambassador posts. The past 7 presidents, from Gerald Ford to Barack Obama, filled 26% to 38% of ambassadorial positions with political appointees, which the State Department defines as people who did not serve in the U.S. Foreign Service prior to office. A common critique is that these individuals were nominated not by merit but political favor, namely due to their financial support during presidential campaigns. And so appointees with no diplomatic backgrounds are potentially suggestive of a nomination system that is, to a fairly large degree, based on spoils rather than merit. Consequently, if much of U.S. diplomacy is in the hands of unqualified individuals, presidents who place them in these diplomatic positions may be compromising U.S. interests, particularly in an increasingly globalized world where countries' national interests are interdependent.

In this study, I investigate two questions arising from these discussions. First, is there evidence of patronage among political appointees for U.S. ambassador positions? Being a political appointee does not necessarily prove that the position was offered out of patronage, and existing proof of patronage is unsystematic and anecdotal. And so there is no definitive conclusion on whether political ambassador appointees were selected out of patronage. Second, if there is evidence of patronage, is patronage adversely impacting U.S. interests abroad? Specifically, are career ambassadors – those with diplomatic careers through the U.S. Foreign Service – better able to advance U.S. interests abroad than political ambassadors?[14] Although ambassadors serve as the chief diplomats to other countries and collectively represent U.S. foreign policy, the impact of their selection process on national interests is unclear due to a lack of empirical work from existing studies. This study aims to fill that gap, which is particularly relevant in an age when international relations and diplomatic efforts are deeply consequential for national interests.

## 2.2 Patronage Appointments and Agency Performance

To begin, what is patronage? For the purpose of this study, I adopt the definition of "party politicians [distributing] public jobs or special favors in exchange for electoral support" (Weingrod 1968). In U.S. politics, patronage is particularly prominent during presidential transitions, when presidents face the daunting task of filling a plethora of appointed positions throughout the executive branch. To deal with this, the White House developed internal institutional capacities over time, such as the Office of Presidential Personnel, that allowed

[14] The use of the term "career ambassador" in this study is not referring to the personal rank of Career Ambassador within the Senior Foreign Service awarded by the president for especially distinguished service.

presidents to evaluate scores of candidates for appointed positions, and many of them were selected out of political patronage (Lewis 2009; Patterson and Pfiffner 2001). Past scholars have identified sources of pressure weighing on presidents that entice them to offer patronage appointments. Presidents politicize bureaucracies to centralize decision-making authority in hopes of improving governmental performance (Moe 1985). Appointees can be useful for presidents wishing to control bureaucracies and make them more responsive to their will (Lewis 2010). Appointees can narrow the policy gap between agencies and the president (Stewart and Cromartie 1982; Wood 1990). Reports have revealed political appointees' backgrounds as major campaign donors and fundraisers for the incoming president (e.g., Picard 2015; Weisman and Hayashi 2009). As a result of politicization, many of appointed positions have been occupied by people who lack relevant experience for the job (Hollibaugh, Horton, and Lewis 2014; Lewis 2009).

Given the presence of patronage appointments in the federal government, scholars have investigated their potential ramifications on agency performance. Some studies leveraged the Program Assessment Rating Tool, an effort administered under the George W. Bush administration that evaluated about 1,000 federal programs according to metrics including accomplishing strategic goals, fiscal responsibility, and accountability. Studies find that federal programs run by political appointees tend to perform worse than those run by career professionals (Gallo and Lewis 2012; Gilmour and Lewis 2006). Career appointees drawn from the civil service tend to have higher levels of bureau experience and longer tenures compared to political appointees, which are directly linked to agency performance (Lewis 2007). This helped lead to further conclusions that balancing politically-appointed bureaucrats with merit-based subordinates help improve agency performance (Krause, Lewis, and Douglas 2006).

Existing works in this field, however, largely focus on federal positions that deal with domestic policy. It is unclear how, if at all, patronage appointments affect foreign policy outcomes, even though policymaking in the foreign and domestic arenas differ in key ways. For instance, crafting foreign policy must account for the reaction of different stakeholders – e.g. countries, international organizations, multilateral alliances – compared to domestic policy, whose actors are relatively confined to internal actors such as interest groups, political parties, and the public. Additionally, foreign policy work requires knowledge of the inner workings of a foreign nation – e.g. institutions, laws, and cultural norms – which may be more esoteric and require additional training to acquire. This is evident in the Foreign Service Officer Test administered by the State Department which measures applicants' knowledge in, among other topics, world history and affairs and is required to participate in the Foreign Service. Consequently, the literature on political patronage and bureaucratic performance does not sufficiently address implications for performance through foreign policy. And this is especially relevant today when a nation's domestic agendas are influenced by relations with the international community and, as a result, diplomats play a tangible role in advancing national interests (Clinton 2010).

To answer the questions posed in this study regarding the existence and potential ramifications of patronage in foreign policy, I focus on ambassadors for two main reasons. Firstly, ambassadors, like previously studied positions in the patronage literature, are appointed by the president and are known for having both career and political appointees. Secondly, they collectively represent the spectrum of U.S. foreign policy because they individually are the highest-ranking representatives promoting U.S. policy to specific nations abroad. Therefore, as a

cohort, they provide a comprehensive lens for understanding U.S. foreign policy toward countries with which the U.S. is interacting diplomatically.

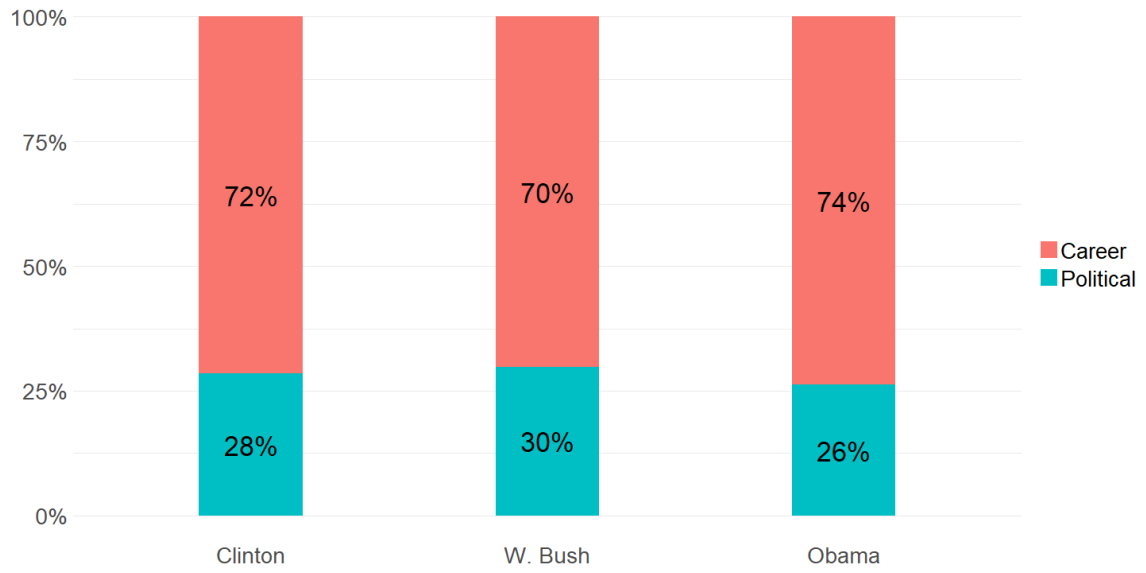
## 2.3 Political Patronage in Ambassador Selection

The State Department categorizes U.S. ambassadors as either career or political ambassadors. Career ambassadors are those who, prior to assuming their posts, served in the U.S. Foreign Service. As past foreign service officers, they are professionally trained diplomats with skills and experience in, among a wide-ranging spectrum of tasks, communicating U.S. interests, understanding nations and organizations abroad, and reporting on diplomatic issues. Political ambassadors, however, have not worked in the Foreign Service and, therefore, do not have direct experience in conducting diplomacy professionally on behalf of U.S. interests. They come from a gamut of backgrounds, including business, entertainment, community leadership, and politics.

Experience in the Foreign Service provides diplomatic training that is directly relevant to serving as ambassador. It provides extensive knowledge of the partner country, allowing them to think critically and analytically about U.S. bilateral relations. On the other hand, political appointees may have closer personal relations to the president, and so they may be better positioned organizationally to communicate and implement bilateral policies. Additionally, political appointees, particularly those who have some celebrity status, may be popular in the partner country while career diplomats are less known. And so the former can potentially better foster positive opinions of the U.S. abroad, which may lead to improvements in measurable bilateral outcomes. Or perhaps, alternative to either of these possibilities, a diplomatic background – or lack thereof – does not actually determine or affect an ambassador's ability to pursue U.S. interests through bilateral relations.

To proceed with these questions, the first step is to understand how many ambassadors are political versus career ambassadors. As shown in Figure 2.1, data on ambassadors during the Clinton, W. Bush, and Obama administrations demonstrate that, respectively, 28%, 30%, and 26% of ambassadors were political, which averages to 28%. To put this into perspective, this would mean that the U.S.' chief diplomats to about 54 countries today would not have professional diplomatic backgrounds.

Figure 2.1: Percentages of Career and Political Ambassadors




Political appointments such as these, however, do not necessarily imply reward for political favor, at least based on the definition of career versus political used in this paper. Strictly speaking, politically appointed ambassadors are those who did not serve in the Foreign Service prior to assuming office. Existing preliminary evidence of political patronage has focused merely on a few appointees who had fundraised and contributed exorbitant amounts for presidential candidates. Yet it is difficult to conclude anything from them because they are

anecdotal – merely focusing on several sensational cases – and do not provide a baseline comparison of career ambassadors' financial contributions.

To provide a more systematic assessment of patronage among ambassador appointments, I investigate if political and career appointees among the 1,247 ambassadors from the Clinton, W. Bush, and Obama administrations had differing rates of campaign contributions, which is one of the clearest and most direct ways a person can engage in patronage.[15] I created an original dataset on how much ambassadors and their family members financially contributed to the president's party in federal elections during the preceding presidential election cycle prior to assuming office. I include contributions to both presidential and congressional elections because they collectively represent more holistic support for presidential candidates to advance their political agendas.

I start with Federal Election Commission data on more than 12 million contributions to presidential and congressional candidates during presidential election years between 1992 to 2012.[16] The FEC provides contribution-level data on all contributions made to federal elections. I grouped these contributions by the unique contributor ID assigned to individual contributors, giving me the total contributions made by individual contributors. Each individual contributor is also assigned to a unique family group ID which I used to group individual contributors' contributions by family unit. After measuring family groups' contributions to federal elections, I matched ambassadors to these family group-level contributions by locating them amongst the

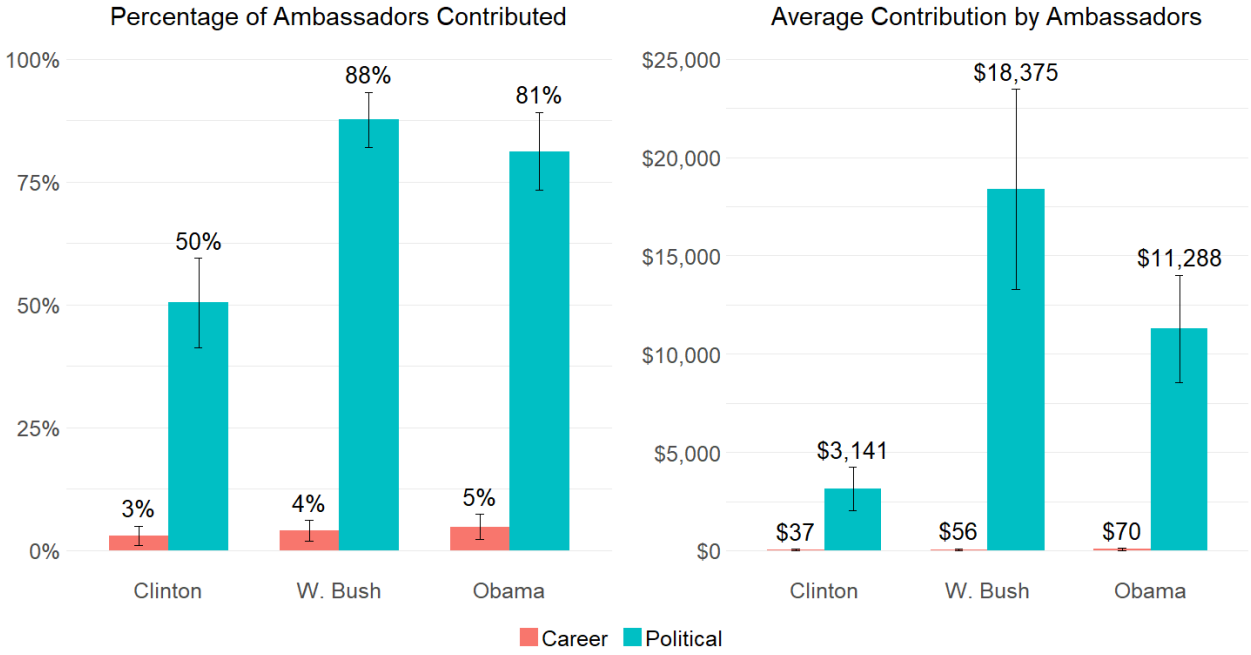
[15] This data does not include other forms of financial contributions, such as bundling and or organizing fundraisers, due to a lack of systematic, public data. However, I assume that personal contributions, like those measured here, and the aforementioned alternative forms of financial contributions are correlated.

[16] The election years specifically are 1992, 1996, 2000, 2004, 2008, and 2012.

contributor names listed within the family groups using contributor-level identification variables such as their names, occupations, employers, and associated family members.

Using my data, I test whether political ambassadors contributed to the winning presidential candidates' parties' campaigns prior to taking office at a higher rate than career ambassadors. I measure this in 2 ways: the percentage of ambassadors who made contributions to the president's party during federal elections, and the average contribution amount by ambassadors. The results are presented below in Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2: Ambassadors' Federal Campaign Contributions to President's Party




*Note*: 95% confidence intervals presented.

The results show that political ambassadors donated to the president's party during federal election cycles much more than career ambassadors in both rate and amount. Across all presidential administrations studied, a significantly higher proportion of political ambassadors

contributed to the president's party than career ambassadors. While on average only 4% of career ambassadors donated to federal elections, 73% of political ambassadors made financial contributions. Additionally, there is a massive difference in amount donated. While career ambassadors on average donated just $54 to federal elections, political ambassadors on average donated $10,935. These results reveal that political appointments are meaningfully linked to patronage and, consequently, a nomination system that is motivated, to non-trivial degree, by favor rather than merit.

If presidents can gain financial contributions from political appointees, then why don't presidents fill all ambassadors with bundlers and donors? There are several explanations. One is that skilled diplomats may still be needed to handle singular events like crises and emergencies. And so filling all ambassador positions with individuals lacking professional diplomatic experience may pose too high of a risk for an administration, given that any administration is likely to encounter some unexpected foreign policy crisis. Therefore, there may be an arbitrary tipping point of political appointees at which presidents perceive too high of a risk compared to the political benefits of politicizing bureaucracies. Additionally, in line with many existing findings regarding patronage appointments, presidents may believe that there is indeed a negative correlation between political appointees and agency performance. Presidents are held responsible for federal government performance, and so they may calculate that only some, but not all, of positions being filled with political appointees are a reasonable level of performance risk. And aside from issues of performance, there are legal reasons as well. The Foreign Service Act of 1980 stipulates that "positions of chief of mission should normally be accorded to career members of the [Foreign] Service" (*Public Law 96-465* 1980). While the word "normally" in the act is unspecified, it is reasonable to assume that filling all, or a vast majority of, posts with

political appointees will violate this public law – or at least cause major public reaction – and likely result in undesired legal or political objections.

## 2.4 Determinants of Ambassador Performance

Given the presence of patronage appointments among ambassadors, the subsequent question is whether they have ramifications for U.S. foreign policy interests. If political patronage dampens diplomatic performance, presidents are imposing diffuse costs on the nation for concentrated political gain. On the other hand, if patronage has no effect on the advancement of national interests abroad, the practice of offering ambassadorships to political donors should not be a source of concern. To address this question, I test if political and career ambassadors have differing records of advancing U.S. interests during their terms. I collect data on 1,247 ambassadors whose terms began during the Clinton, W. Bush, and Obama administrations. For each ambassador, I identify if he or she was a career foreign service officer prior to assuming office, a designation provided by the U.S. Department of State.

My main outcome variables are the changes in economic, political, and social measures of bilateral relations between the partner country and the U.S during the ambassadors' tenures.[17] I create metrics that are applicable to all partner countries and that the U.S. generally has an interest in growing globally. I measure economic relations as the volume of bilateral trade and foreign direct investment. I measure political relations as UN vote alignment, meaning the proportion of important votes (measured from 0 to 1) in the annual General Assembly of the

[17] For ambassadors whose terms extended beyond 2016, their ending year was set to 2016. And so the change in the dependent variable in their cases were from the year prior to their term to 2016.

United Nations on which the U.S. and the partner country took the same position.[18] And lastly, I measure social relations according to the number of people traveling between the two countries by air. Bilateral travel volume is intended to represent professional, educational, and cultural exchange between the countries, which ambassadors must facilitate through issuing visas and bilateral cooperation (Clinton 2010; U.S. Department of State 2017). This travel data is available through the U.S. Department of Transportation and represents the total number of passengers enplaned on flights of U.S. and foreign air carriers between the U.S. and the partner country. And so for each ambassador, I measure the changes in these economic, political, and social measures starting from the year prior to assuming office and ending in their last year in office.

I run fixed effects regression models for each outcome variable where results are fixed by partner country and presidential administration to account for time-invariant heterogeneity. I control for several country-level variables, which are shown in more detail in Appendix I. They include GDP and population level since countries with larger economies and populations will likely have greater numerical change in certain outcome variables such as trade, FDI, and air passengers. I also include polity scores, which evaluate countries' regime type on a scale ranging from -10 (strongly autocratic) to 10 (strongly democratic), membership in the World Trade Organization and North Atlantic Treaty Organization to account for existing economic and security ties with the U.S., and a lagged UN vote alignment in the year before ambassadors took office. At the ambassador level, I include ambassadors' term lengths and their age at the beginning of their terms, and the descriptive statistics on these variables are shown in Appendix J.

[18] For each General Assembly session of the United Nations, the U.S. State Department identifies a set of important votes that directly affect U.S. interests and on which the U.S. lobbied extensively.

According to the results presented in Table 2.1, there is no evidence that ambassadors with past diplomatic careers performed better on any of the metrics compared to those appointed politically. While generally the coefficients of diplomatic career were positive in most models (though negative in the UN vote alignment model), which would indicate that a professional diplomatic career improved the changes in these outcomes, none of them achieve statistical significance. Therefore, there is no evidence that having a past diplomatic career in the Foreign Service improves ambassadors' ability to promote U.S. interests through bilateral relations. Yet unlike diplomatic careers, term length has a positive effect on trade, FDI, and travel. These results suggest that ambassadors benefit from time, rather than a professional diplomatic background, to improve outcomes through bilateral relations. And so it is less important that they have diplomatic training and more important that they stay in office longer. Therefore, political appointments are not an issue for U.S. interests but rather the length of tenure in office.

Additionally, I re-estimated the models but replaced the career variable with a binary variable indicating change from political to career appointee. Ambassadors receive a 1 on this measure if they are a career appointee and their immediate predecessor was a political appointee. Whereas the previous models compared performance between all political and career appointees, these models measure the potential performance impact of switching from a political ambassador to a career ambassador. These models are intended to capture the potentially more drastic shifts in ambassador preparedness when a political appointee is followed by a career appointee. As seen in Table 2.2, however, the results remain largely unchanged compared to those presented in Table 2.1. While the new career variable remains generally irrelevant, the length of tenure has a

Table 2.1: Determinants of Ambassador Performance, Using Career Variable

| | Δ Trade (in millions USD) | Δ FDI (in millions USD) | Δ UN Vote Alignment | Δ Travelers (in thousands) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Career | 1,357.06 | 754.93 | 0.01 | 84.80 |
| | (1,335.07) | (3,519.92) | (0.02) | (52.25) |
| Term Length (in years) | 1,863.14*** | 2,426.81** | -0.01 | 31.40** |
| | (370.88) | (963.58) | (0.01) | (14.53) |
| Age | -19.28 | -28.42 | -0.001 | 1.32 |
| | (53.57) | (135.05) | (0.001) | (2.08) |
| GDP (in billions USD) | -11.31*** | 5.84** | 0.0000 | 0.15*** |
| | (1.13) | (2.53) | (0.0000) | (0.04) |
| Population (in millions) | 129.76*** | -71.22 | -0.001 | 0.17 |
| | (27.81) | (62.32) | (0.0005) | (1.09) |
| Polity Score | 7.15 | -203.81 | 0.01** | 1.80 |
| | (140.99) | (397.02) | (0.002) | (5.49) |
| WTO Member | -476.26 | 4,658.54* | -0.14*** | -89.73** |
| | (1,090.00) | (2,689.74) | (0.02) | (42.00) |
| NATO Member | 891.37 | -6,606.28 | 0.06 | -3.05 |
| | (2,260.23) | (7,255.93) | (0.04) | (88.95) |
| Prior UN Vote Alignment | 2,258.52 | 9,652.03 | -0.76*** | -22.58 |
| | (2,250.78) | (6,122.09) | (0.04) | (87.98) |
| Constant | -10,098.00** | -13,938.79 | 0.19** | -252.49 |
| | (5,072.19) | (17,902.90) | (0.09) | (198.90) |
| Country fixed effects | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| President fixed effects | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Observations | 1,021 | 746 | 1,033 | 1,039 |
| $R^2$ | 0.62 | 0.74 | 0.53 | 0.47 |
| *Note:* | | | | *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01 |

Table 2.2: Determinants of Ambassador Performance, Using Change to Career Variable

| | Δ Trade (in millions USD) | Δ FDI (in millions USD) | Δ UN Vote Alignment | Δ Travelers (in thousands) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Change to Career | 440.18 | 872.96 | -0.03 | 97.28* |
| | (1,577.35) | (4,411.98) | (0.03) | (57.84) |
| Term Length (in years) | 1,787.33*** | 2,426.71** | -0.003 | 38.91*** |
| | (379.52) | (1,030.66) | (0.01) | (14.10) |
| Age | -27.08 | -39.51 | -0.001 | -1.11 |
| | (55.41) | (147.66) | (0.001) | (2.06) |
| GDP (in billions USD) | -14.62*** | 3.70 | 0.0000 | 0.26*** |
| | (1.19) | (2.77) | (0.0000) | (0.04) |
| Population (in millions) | 102.32*** | -44.75 | -0.001 | -1.18 |
| | (27.56) | (64.31) | (0.0005) | (1.03) |
| Polity Score | 11.56 | -252.21 | 0.01*** | 2.28 |
| | (154.30) | (448.57) | (0.003) | (5.72) |
| WTO Member | -1,212.85 | 5,490.53 | -0.07*** | -32.51 |
| | (1,385.17) | (3,646.17) | (0.02) | (51.54) |
| NATO Member | 767.86 | -6,442.27 | 0.04 | -30.45 |
| | (2,298.86) | (7,677.82) | (0.04) | (85.85) |
| Prior UN Vote Alignment | 1,069.67 | 8,750.94 | -0.80*** | 13.67 |
| | (2,284.75) | (6,488.73) | (0.04) | (84.83) |
| Constant | -7,466.14 | -13,109.52 | 0.19** | -65.81 |
| | (5,094.20) | (18,111.15) | (0.09) | (189.82) |
| Country fixed effects | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| President fixed effects | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Observations | 932 | 674 | 938 | 944 |
| $R^2$ | 0.66 | 0.76 | 0.57 | 0.53 |
| *Note:* | | | | *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01 |

positive effect on trade, FDI, and travel. The only difference for using the new career variable is that it influences passenger travel, though weakly at the 10% significance level.[19]

So then why do ambassador term lengths matter for diplomatic performance? Unfortunately, this question is beyond the scope of this study because of the unavailability of relevant, measurable data. Regardless, past studies have studied the effect of legislators' term lengths on performance and may provide important insights. While ambassadors differ from legislators in important ways, such as being appointed versus elected, they also share similarities, such as requiring knowledge about certain topics and navigating institutions, which allow this body of literature to speak to this question.

The main identified casual mechanisms linking term length to performance are expertise and effort. Over time, incumbent legislators gain expertise in legislative procedures, political skills, and policy which increase their competency and results (Cain and Levin 1999). For instance, in arguing against congressional term limits, Hibbing (1991) finds that senior members of Congress have higher legislative involvement than junior members because seniority increases knowledge, efficiency, and value of legislators. Similarly, it is possible that ambassadors over time gain more knowledge about and expertise on conducting diplomacy, managing a bureaucracy, and dealing with a partner country.

On the other hand, others have found that term limits are associated with legislator effort. Titiunik (2016) argues that senators who serve shorter terms tend to be relatively unproductive as seen by higher vote abstentions, fewer bills introduced, and lower responsiveness to constituents.

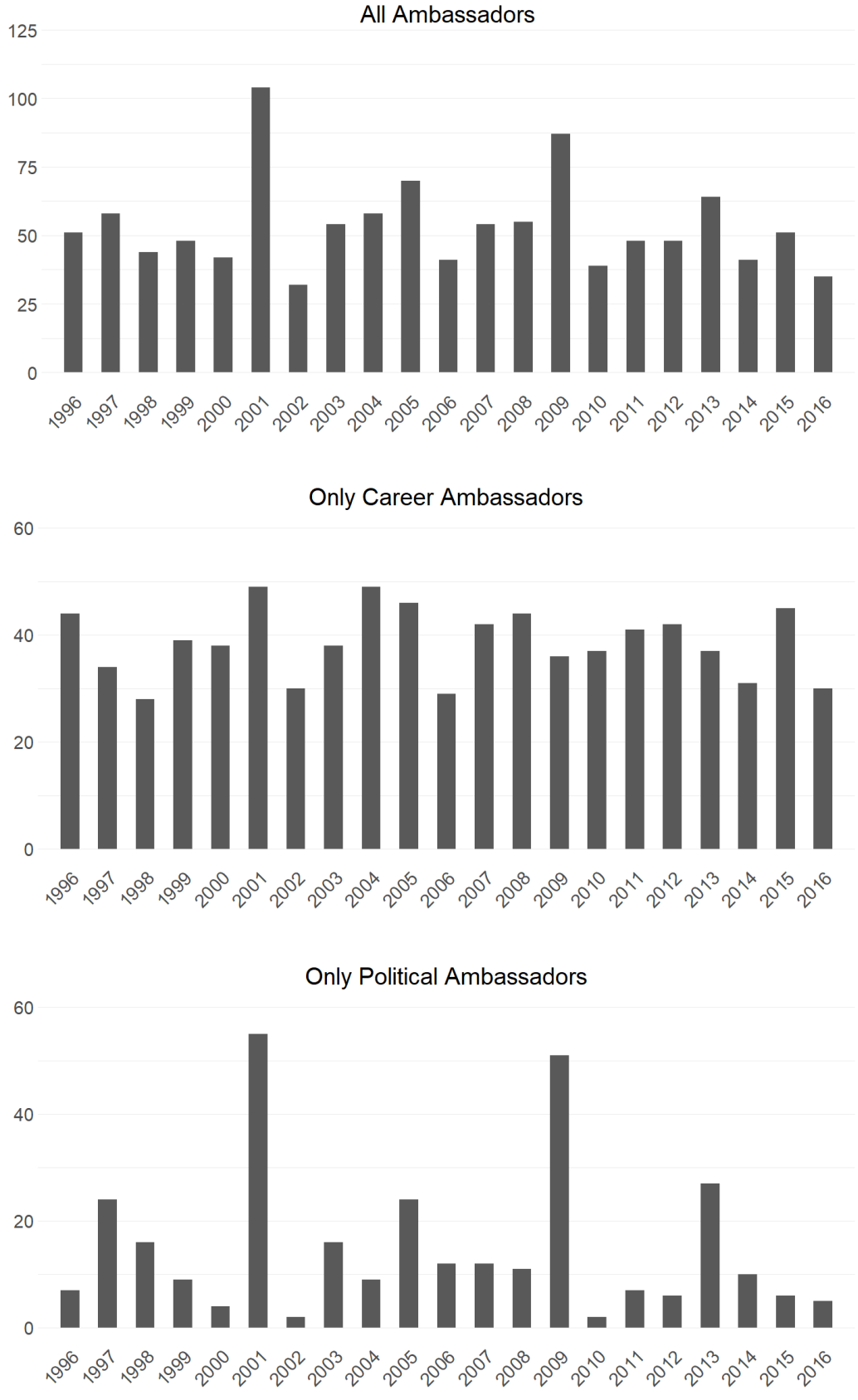
[19] In Appendix K, I also rerun the models but fix the results by country and year instead of country and president. The original models fixed results by president also partly to capture macro global trends and phenomena. But it is possible that there is variation within administrations across years, and so I estimated the models fixing by country and year. Regardless, the results remain generally the same.

Dal Bó and Rossi (2011) find that longer terms are associated with increased legislative effort because legislators are more likely to yield personal return for efforts over multiple time periods. It is plausible that ambassadors face a similar yield horizon constraint. If ambassadors anticipate serving shorter terms, for reasons such as personal plans or presidential transitions, they may expect that improvements in bilateral relations due to their current diplomatic efforts may not manifest until after they have left office. And so from their point of view, the rewards of their efforts will be reaped by subsequent ambassadors. Ambassador effort could potentially be conceptualized a variety of ways, such as frequency of meetings with top bureaucrats from the partner country, attendance at local social and political functions, and communication outreach through social and traditional media. Unfortunately, data on these sorts of activities are very limited and inconsistent across ambassadors and over time.

If term length helps determine ambassadors' ability to promote U.S. interests abroad, then what influences term length? Given the previous findings, a normative implication is that the president and Congress should do what they can to increase the average term length of ambassadors through methods such as the selection or removal of ambassadors. To answer this question, a logical place to look is to see what is causing ambassadors to leave office.

Figure 2.3 displays the count of ambassadors leaving office by year in the time span studied. The data shows spikes in ambassador resignations during the first year of new presidential administrations, specifically in 2001 and 2009. Furthermore, when ambassadors are segmented by career and political appointees, there's a clear divergence in resignation timing between the two types of appointees. While career ambassador resignations are relatively constant over time, political ambassadors exit office in droves at certain times, namely during the

Figure 2.3: Number of Ambassadors Leaving Office by Year



first year of presidents' first and second terms. This falls in line with past tradition of political appointees leaving office with a new presidential administration, particularly from one political party to another.

This pattern and earlier findings in this study highlight incoming presidents' conflicting considerations when it comes to dismissing versus retaining existing ambassadors. On the one hand, new presidents want to reshape their cohorts of ambassadors to maximize personal benefits, such as staffing an administration with people who possess similar ideologies and demonstrated loyalty. Existing political ambassadors were largely selected for their support of, and closeness to, an outgoing president, and so incoming presidents have little personal incentive to keep them in office. Additionally, like preceding presidents, incoming presidents have their own supporters to reward with patronage appointments, and so they must create vacancies in ambassadorships and other positions during their own administrations.

Yet the positive association between term lengths and diplomatic performance found in this study reveal the costs of high turnover on a president's other consideration, which is bureaucratic performance. By creating turnover and therefore reducing average term lengths of ambassadors, incoming presidents could deteriorate their administration's ability to effectively advance U.S. interests abroad. This study has shown that shorter term lengths are associated with dampened diplomatic performance as measured by FDI, trade, and travel. And so presidents should be wary of creating too much turnover during their administrations. Instead, they must strike an appropriate balance between dismissing and retaining existing ambassadors in order to accomplish both discussed here.

## 2.5 Conclusion

The empirical tests in this study provide two main insights. First, patronage appointments are prevalent among U.S. ambassadors. About a third of ambassadors serving in the Clinton, W. Bush, and Obama administrations were political appointees, and they contributed to the incoming presidents' party in federal election campaigns much more than career ambassadors in both rate and magnitude. This latter finding confirms people's suspicions that a non-trivial number of these positions are being bought rather than attained through years of diplomatic service. Yet there is no evidence that ambassadors with diplomatic backgrounds in the U.S. Foreign Service perform better than those appointed politically, which is the second main conclusion from this study. Instead, length of ambassadors' terms is a stronger predictor of improvements in bilateral relations measured as trade, FDI, and travel. So concerns about how to maximize U.S. interests abroad through diplomats should be less focused on minimizing political patronage and more on increasing the average tenure of ambassadors.

If political and career backgrounds do not influence ambassador performance yet longer term lengths do, it is not important that the government eliminate political appointees from federal positions. In fact, quite the opposite is true: government should try to keep political appointees in office longer. Data shows that political appointees resign in significant numbers during the first year of presidential terms. And so the political pressures on these ambassadors to leave office is reducing the average term length of ambassadors and, ultimately, compromising potential improvements in U.S. interests abroad.

Admittedly, there are challenges to measuring ambassador performance which may raise challenges to conclusions presented in this study. One problem is that ambassadors' roles and goals are abstract. According to the State Department, ambassadors are the highest-ranking diplomat to a specific nation with the task of representing U.S. interests and policies. And so

there may reasonably be differing opinions as to what constitutes U.S. interests and therefore how to measure performance. Additionally, successful diplomacy toward one country may be different from that toward another, and so performance can be very idiosyncratic by partner country and perhaps should be evaluated according to the specific country. For instance, the ambassador to Israel could be credited for facilitating negotiation between Israel and Palestine while the ambassador to Haiti could be credited for delivering emergency relief after its massive 2010 earthquake. Yet the measures implemented in this study are fairly general with the aim of improving external validity. And lastly, ambassadors can succeed by accomplishing singular events, such as helping ensure safe passage of a hostage or building consensus on a bilateral agreement, which are not captured by the outcome variables in this paper. For all of these reasons, it is possible that diplomatic backgrounds in the Foreign Service may indeed be important for ambassador performance based on different metrics.

And so this paper is by no means a definitive conclusion on the measurements and determinants of ambassador performance. Rather, it is intended to advance a quantified, systematic method of evaluating ambassadors and identifying influences on performance measured by outcomes which are generalizable across many partner countries. And according to this method, the implication of these findings is that concern about ambassadors should be shifted away from political patronage and more toward turnover rates. Additionally, there are spikes in ambassadors leaving office between presidential terms, and so it is in the national interest to promote continuity among ambassadors. Newly elected presidents, then, should be aware and mindful of the opportunity cost in national interests they incur when pushing out existing political appointees.

# 3 Private Soldiers, Private Casualties: Political Motivations for Outsourcing War

## 3.1 Introduction

A steadfast and unifying tradition in the U.S. is to honor the troops. They are held up in high regard by the ordinary civilian to the Commander in Chief. We have erected memorials to serve as solemn, lasting reminders of the people's debt to the soldiers and their sacrifices. Yet like any lofty rhetoric, this narrative does not fully capture a more complex reality. Namely, this tradition overlooks an important fact of war, which is that, regardless of one's normative stance on the issue, contracted personnel from private firms have played a large and multifaceted role in U.S. military efforts since the nation's founding. Despite their contributions, contractors are not met with fanfare or even regularly acknowledged by the public. In fact, they often remain absent from the public conscience. They are the hidden soldiers of war.

Yet there are strong reasons to believe that private military contractors will not continue to be obscured realities of war but rather, as evidenced by the past two decades, a more salient public issue. The growing trend of contracting military services shows no signs of abating. According to data from the Federal Procurement Data System, Department of Defense contract spending for services from 1990-2010 steadily increased with a compounded annual growth rate of 6.1%, rising from $49 billion in 1990 to $161 billion in 2010 (Ellman et al. 2011). In the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the ratios of total contracted personnel to total U.S. military personnel were, respectively, 1.42 to 1 and 1 to 1 (Department of Defense 2015). And according to Hagedorn (2015), none of the wartime Presidents in recent decades has prioritized the curbing of military contractors, suggesting a continued lack of leadership on this front in the years to come.

A number of high-profile incidents involving war contractors have increased public salience of war privatization, particularly in this information age where distant wars are delivered to living rooms. A primary example is the 2007 Baghdad incident in which employees from Blackwater – now called Academi – fired upon civilians in a public square, killing 17 and injuring 20. With the prominent role of military contractors in war, understanding public opinion toward the use of these private soldiers becomes central to unpacking the nexus of public opinion and foreign policy.

Much of the existing literature on military contractors, however, is legal in nature, tackling questions such as whether military contractors should be classified as mercenaries under international law, and how to keep contractors accountable for war crimes. And aside from economic and military explanations for war contracting, existing work on private military contractors has yet to probe whether political incentives may drive the use of hired soldiers in war. This is particularly relevant in the U.S. because legislators in Congress – re-election seeking politicians (Mayhew 1974) – wield a heavy influence on how war is conducted, operated, and funded. For instance, they create regulations on how the Department of Defense procures contractor services, hold hearings of military personnel to oversee wartime strategy, and control funding of military operations. Additionally, many scholars found that casualties have electoral implications for elected officials (Gartner, Segura, and Barratt 2004; Gelpi, Reifler, and Feaver 2007; Eichenberg, Stoll, and Lebo 2006; Karol and Miguel 2007; Kriner and Shen 2007; Mueller 1973). And so if politicians have key roles in how wars are fought, and casualties matter for re-election prospects, perhaps hiring private soldiers provide conditions which allow elected officials to minimize the political costs of pursuing military efforts. Yet there is no work so far that thoroughly explores public opinion on private military contractors and provides an

empirically-substantiated political explanation for continued war contracting. This paper aims to fill that gap by focusing on the role of private military contractors in shaping public opinion toward foreign policy and its implications for legislators' ability to prolong military ventures.

The purpose of this paper is twofold. First, I use the theoretical framework of the citizen-soldier from the military history literature to identify substantive distinctions in how the public views civilian soldiers and private military contractors. I find that the public holds differing evaluations of each soldier type based on the citizen-soldier framework, reflecting asymmetric levels of shared identity with and affection toward them. I demonstrate that the public does not associate contractors with the citizen-soldier model as much as they do for civilian soldiers and, consequently, possess greater affinity for the latter than the former.

Secondly, I test if these findings lead to unequal political costs between contractor and civilian soldier casualties through asymmetric levels of public aversion to, and public awareness of, casualties. I use a survey experiment to investigate whether the public is more tolerant of contractor casualties than civilian soldier casualties. I also use broadcast news data and casualty data to see if contractor casualties are underreported in the domestic media compared to civilian soldier casualties, which may reduce public awareness of contractor casualties. I find that although the public is equally averse to contractor and civilian soldier casualties, the media significantly underreports – and the public significantly underestimates – contractor casualties compared to civilian soldier casualties. This reveals politicians' ability to significantly reduce their public accountability for, and political cost of, pursuing war by contracting wartime roles to private military contractors.

A key limitation of my research, however, is that I am unable to conclude that elected officials are privatizing war due to the political conveniences of contracted soldiers. My tests do

not allow me to make direct inferences about political actors' behavior because pertinent public data does not exist. Instead, as stated before, this paper identifies how private military contractors provide the conditions under which political incentives to contract out wartime roles may exist. Whether or not these conditions directly affect politicians' decisions to hire private military firms is beyond the inferential scope of this paper.

## 3.2 Historical Usage of Private Military Contractors

Mercenaries are often referred to as the world's second-oldest profession. They have been around for as long as warfare itself. Examples range from the "Ten Thousand" Greek warriors hired by the Persian prince Cyrus in 401 B.C. to the 150 Swiss mercenaries sent to protect Pope Julius II in 1506 A.D., which established the ongoing designation of the Swiss Guard as the Pope's security stationed in the Vatican. Within the U.S. context, hired soldiers been used since the Revolutionary War during which Britain hired German private armies to fight American troops. Many of the approximately 300 German states at the time supplied Britain with soldiers, who were collectively called the Hessians because the German state Hesse-Kassel supplied most of them. Hessian soldiers numbered approximately 30,000 in total, representing about a quarter of all troops that Britain sent to fight in America (Axelrod 2013). A primary reason for their use was that Britain often required quick influxes of additional troops that it could not fulfill on its own. For instance, following the costly British victory at the Battle of Bunker Hill, the British general Thomas Gage wrote to the British Secretary of State for War Lord Barrington, recommending that the secretary quickly recruit foreign troops to meet the urgent demand for additional soldiers.

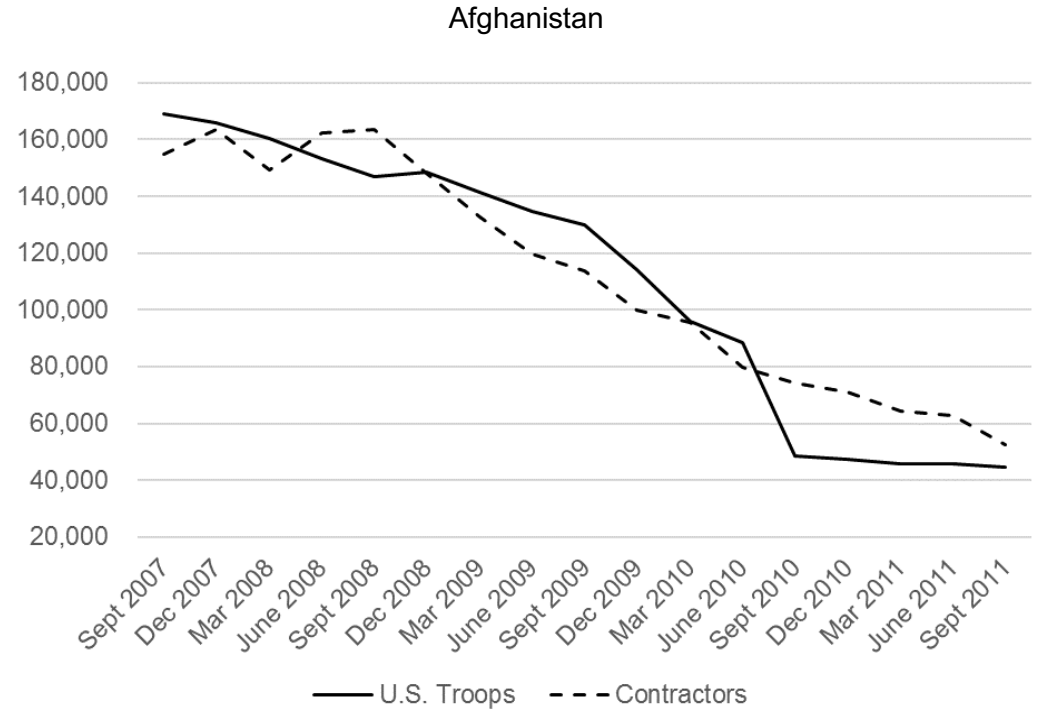
Though mercenaries have been around for millennia, the arguably distinct concept of private military contractors gained prominence only since the 1990's. Private military contractors are business organizations that provide a wide variety of professional military and security services. They offer both armed services, such as combat operations and convoy security, and unarmed services, such as intelligence analysis, operational coordination, and training military personnel. In just a few decades, the private military industry reached global status, as private military firms have since been active in every continent except for Antarctica (Singer 2003).

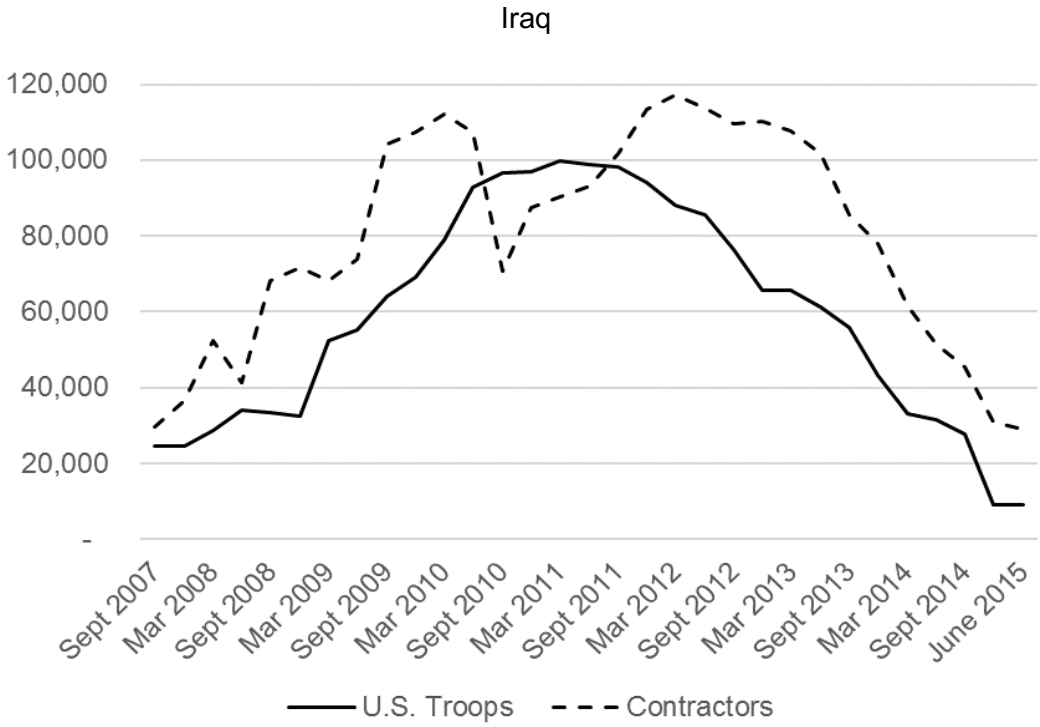
In the contemporary U.S., private militaries play prevalent roles in both armed and unarmed roles in wars (Gilsinan 2015). For instance, the number of contractors employed by the U.S. in Afghanistan and Iraq was often comparable to, and even greater than, the number of U.S. civilian soldiers during both wars. Figure 3.1 uses data from the Department of Defense to compare levels of U.S. troops and contractors in Afghanistan and Iraq starting in 2007, which is when the Department of Defense started releasing data on contracted personnel counts, until the end of U.S. combat involvement in the wars.[20]

Many existing explanations for why the U.S. government contracts war services relate to military and economic advantages. For example, local contractors from the warring country are familiar with the terrain, culture, and language of the region (Schwartz 2009). This may be particularly useful for counterinsurgencies, which require winning over the hearts and minds of local populations and operating in foreign lands. Also, contractors can be quickly mobilized for surges, like those of Iraq in 2007 and Afghanistan in 2009, as opposed to the civilian military which may require political and bureaucratic hurdles to mobilize (Avant 2006).

[20] Numbers for U.S. troops and contractors include those serving in both armed and unarmed roles.

Figure 3.1: Number of U.S. Troops and Contractors in the Afghanistan and Iraq Wars



Contractors can also potentially save the government money because they can be hired just for temporary security needs and do not require significant long-term costs associated with maintaining a large standing army such as training, long-term health care, and facilities (Schwartz 2009). In an era of a downsized military, contractors can be a "force multiplier" to supplement the military by providing the necessary capabilities to carry out contingency operations (Elsea, Schwartz, and Nakamura 2008). Private contractors are also sometimes much cheaper to hire than civilian soldiers because many of them subcontract operations to local and third-country nationals whose wages are often significantly lower and do not require overhead expenses relating to transportation, housing, and sustenance (Schwartz 2011).

Hiring contractors for war, however, has its risks. U.S. investigations have revealed that due to lack of oversight, regulations, and proper management of contractors' global operations, much of the U.S. money spent on military contracts ends up in the wrong hands. For example, a 2010 House subcommittee report found that contractors operating in Afghanistan regularly paid significant fees to local warlords to provide security along U.S. supply routes (Tierney 2010). A report from the Inspector General of the U.S. Agency for International Development found that more than $5-million in USAID funds may have been used to pay Taliban fighters in southern Afghanistan to help secure a development project (Boyer 2010).

An additional liability with using contractors is that they are not held accountable for their actions as strictly and effectively as in the military. Consequently, contractors may be more likely to engage in inappropriate behavior that undermine U.S. efforts abroad. The culture of impunity generally associated with military contractors tends to condone reckless violent measures, and Iraq war logs exposed by Wikileaks reveal dozens of incidents where private contractors escalated force from nonlethal measures to potentially lethal force (Chatterjee 2010).

These scandals attract blame for the hiring entity, like the U.S., in key countries of military operation such as Iraq because, as an Iraqi Interior Ministry official put it, "Iraqis do not know them [contractors] as Blackwater or other [private security contractors] but only as Americans" (Fainaru 2007). And so abuses committed by contractors weigh heavily on U.S. image abroad, directly hurting counterinsurgency efforts which, unlike more traditional warfare that is focused on military victory, relies additionally on winning over populations to root out the cause of insurgents and violent non-state actors (Kilcullen, Porter, and Burgos 2009). The U.S. military, however, is relatively more motivated by mission and is more strictly monitored and regulated on the battlefield, making it more difficult to commit deviant actions that undermine U.S. goals abroad.

## 3.3 Private Military Contractors and the Citizen-Soldier

Current explanations for war contracting, while relevant and important, are potentially overlooking a critical set of motivations: the political incentives. In the U.S., politicians motivated by staying in office are influential in deciding military operations and funding, including the practice of war contracting. No existing study has empirically investigated the potential political motivations for war contracting. To study this, I first turn my attention to the public's perception of soldier types, given that the political costs of casualties manifest through voter disapproval. To understand public attitudes toward private military contractors, I adopt the military history literature' framework of the citizen-soldier to conceptually distinguish, and therefore allow comparisons of public perception between, different soldier types.

One of the prominent models of military service put forth in the military history literature is the citizen-soldier, which was renewed out of republican theorists' emphasis on engaging

citizens in the activity of public life. To early republicans, citizenship was fundamentally linked to participating in the governance and defense of the republic. By actively participating in civic life, citizens cultivate shared interests and a common cause with their community and help the republic thrive against internal and external threats (Burk 2002). Therefore, a primary concern is how to keep citizens able and willing to engage in public service, including military service in defense of the nation.

Traditionally in the U.S., many in the population were able to serve their country through military service due to conscription. However, the introduction of the all-voluntary force in the U.S. in 1973 directly went against republican ideals by removing a crucial component of civic participation for large portions of the population. The end of conscription transformed the military into a professional one motivated by skills and the benefits that military service requires and offers. This development arguably severed the link between military service and citizenship, ultimately undermining the ideal of the citizen-soldier (Abrams and Bacevich 2001; Burk 2007; Cohen 2001; Segal 1989).

In the modern context when military service is no longer universal, some have called for the preservation of the citizen-soldier in order to restore participation in civic life (Janowitz 1983). Among these discussions, there are common components among multiple definitions of the citizen-soldier. First, the citizen-soldier acts out of moral obligation to the state. And second, the citizen-soldier shares interests with the broader community which it serves. These measures of the citizen-soldier highlight the perceived shared identity of citizens and the citizen-soldier. Citizens function as part of a broader society which they serve for moral interests and represent its collective interests. Therefore, I infer that if the public identifies certain types of soldiers more

in line with the measures of the citizen-soldier, this also reflects a higher sense of closeness and affinity toward those types.

I run a survey experiment through the Harvard Digital Lab for the Social Sciences to test whether the public holds differing evaluations of civilian soldiers and contractors based on the two key measures of the citizen-soldier framework. In the survey, I present the respondent with a vignette about an individual who served in a military role in the Afghanistan War. Treatment groups are randomly assigned a detail of him being a U.S. soldier or a U.S. contractor. I then ask the respondent to evaluate the individual using a 5-point scale (0 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree) based on the qualities associated with the citizen-soldier: serving out of moral obligation to the U.S. and sharing U.S. interests.[21]

I find that the public identifies civilian soldiers more closely to the citizen-soldier model than contractors. Figure 3.2 reports the mean response levels for each soldier type. As the results show, the public on average perceives the U.S. soldier as serving in war out of moral reasons and representing U.S. interests at higher rates – 17% and 12% more, respectively – than U.S. contractors. According to ANOVA single factor analyses, between-group mean variations are statistically significant at the 1% level for the moral reasons test and at the 5% level for the U.S. interests test. These results indicate that the public identifies U.S. soldiers more closely with the positive ideal of the citizen-soldier than contractors, implying a stronger sense of closeness with and affinity toward the former than the latter.

[21] The survey question is presented in Appendix L.

Figure 3.2: Public Evaluation of Soldier Types as Citizen-Soldier


*Note*: 95% confidence intervals presented.

## 3.4 Contractor Casualties and Political Costs of War

Given that the public feels differently about soldier types based on the citizen-soldier framework, does this affect the political costs of soldier types' casualties? If the public perceives a soldier to share their common interests and defends them for selfless motives, then they are more likely to feel closer and positive affinity toward him or her. Conversely, if the public does not perceive a soldier to fit within the citizen-soldier framework, they lack a sense of commonality and shared identity with the soldier. And so does the public's varying affinities toward private military contractors and civilian soldiers translate into different magnitudes of political cost between civilian soldier and contractor casualties? If true, then it makes sense for those in power, who can influence the makeup of soldiers during military conflicts, to maintain the use of a soldier type whose casualties would incur them relatively lower political costs.

The public has a general aversion to U.S. casualties, which are negatively correlated with public approval of war and the electoral outcomes of politicians deemed responsible (Mueller 1973). Casualties represent one of the most visible costs of war, and the public is particularly sensitive to them. Past studies have shown that in line with the casualty-aversion thesis, the public tends to be more supportive of military tactics that deploy technology instead of people. For example, public attitudes are more favorable toward air strikes rather than sending boots on the ground because they allow the country to pursue military goals while avoiding human costs (Eichenberg 2005).

Political scientists have also demonstrated that not all casualties are equal to the public. While research on public opinion toward foreign policy have broadly shown that war casualties are a negative predictor of both public approval and vote share of politicians, many studies provide evidence that not all casualties are equally consequential. For instance, Jentleson (1992) finds that public sensitivity to casualties varies by the principal policy objective of the military effort. Kriner and Shen (2012) discover that subjects are significantly more likely to oppose a war when they learn of a casualty from their home state, emphasizing the role of local casualties. Gartner and Segura (1998) highlight the role of recent casualties presented as marginal casualty counts as opposed to cumulative counts, as Mueller (1973) argues, in swaying public opinion toward war. Gartner (2008) argues that people who have social ties to the fallen are much more likely to oppose the incumbent president. And so not all casualties carry the same impact or weight for the public, depending on the nature of the soldier or casualty. In line with this reasoning, since the public perceives substantive differences between contractors and civilian soldiers according to the citizen-soldier framework, the public may have different sensitivities

toward their deaths. Consequently, the political costs of contractor versus civilian soldier casualties may be unequal.

To understand the political costs of contractors and civilian soldiers, I measure and compare two main mechanisms through which casualties can create political costs and may be conditional on levels of affinity: the public's aversion to casualties and the public's awareness of casualties. The strength of these mechanisms determines the magnitude of casualties' political costs. I conduct a survey experiment to test whether the public has differing levels of aversion toward casualties of contractors and civilian soldiers. In the survey, the respondent is told that the U.S. government is considering sending ground troops to combat the Islamic State, and that heavy casualties are expected. The difference between treatment groups is the type of soldiers that will comprise most of the forces sent onto the battlefield, specifically U.S. soldiers or U.S. contractors. The respondent is then asked to indicate their level of support for or opposition to sending troops to combat the Islamic State.[22] And so this experiment is intended to identify potential differences in sensitivity to casualties based on whether they are expected to be borne by civilian soldiers versus contractors.

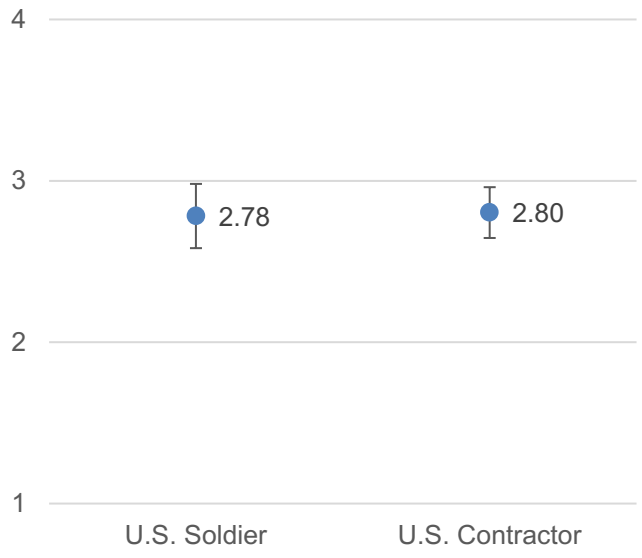
Between-group variation would demonstrate that the public is more willing to send one soldier type into harm's way than another, implying unequal aversion to their casualties. Specifically, if the public is more supportive of deploying contractors than civilian soldiers in this survey experiment, this would fall in line with previous findings wherein the public aligned civilian soldiers closer to the citizen-soldier framework than contractors. On the other hand, there may not be any meaningful differences in support for sending contractors and civilian soldiers. Contractors are people just as much as civilian soldiers, and so even if they aren't perceived to be

[22] The survey question is provided in Appendix M.

"one of us" as much as civilian soldiers, the public may be equally reluctant to send contractors as they are to send civilian soldiers. I hypothesize that the public will show higher levels of approval for sending troops if they are composed mostly of U.S. contractors compared to U.S. civilian soldiers.

The results in Figure 3.3 show that although the public perceives the soldier types differently based on the citizen-soldier concept as shown in the previous section, this does not lead to varying levels of tolerance for their casualties. Instead, the public shows similar levels of approval of sending troops across all vignettes featuring U.S. civilian soldiers and U.S. contractors. This indicates that the public has similar levels of aversion toward contractor and civilian soldier casualties.

Figure 3.3: Public Approval of Sending Troops by Soldier Type




*Note*: 95% confidence intervals presented.

There are two potential explanations for these findings. One is that the public is equally averse to casualties of civilian soldiers and contractors, and so they are similarly supportive of (or opposed to) sending the soldiers into harm's way as indicated by the results. An alternative explanation unrelated to casualty aversion is that the normative belief that hired soldiers should not be fighting U.S. wars is driving support for deploying contractors downward. It is possible, therefore, that the thought of privatizing war, rather than aversion to casualties, could be dampening support for sending contractors to war. Ultimately, these may lead to fairly equal levels of support for deploying the soldier types to combating the Islamic State as presented in the current results.

Public aversion to casualties is not the only way that casualties can carry political costs. Another important mechanism is public awareness of casualties, which is heavily influenced by the media that serves as a conveyor belt of information on political topics. Past studies have shown that public opinion on foreign policy is heavily reliant on the media (Baum 2002; Baum and Groeling 2010; Brody 1991). Iyengar and Simon (1993) find that the media's reporting on the Gulf War affected public opinion through priming, framing, and agenda setting. A main reason the public's information on, and attitudes about, foreign policy are influenced by the media is that much of the public is relatively inattentive or uninformed about political issues (Converse 1964; Sniderman 1993).

Yet past studies have shown that the media is biased in what it reports (Baum and Groeling 2010; Groeling and Baum 2008). Media outlets tend to cover issues that hit closer to home. And with respect to news about deaths, coverage is often based on the connection between the audience and victims. For example, on December 14, 2012, a man infiltrated Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut and shot 20 children. On the same day, a man rampaged

through Chenpeng Village Primary School in China, stabbing 23 children. Yet within a week following each attack and despite the similarity of the nature of the events, Sandy Hook attack was mentioned in U.S. television news 359 times while the latter received just 1 mention.[23]

This example reflects the reality that the domestic media provides relatively lower coverage of topics to which the public feels distant because these stories do not attract viewers. Similarly, stories of contractors' deaths should lack the level of sensationalism of civilian soldiers' deaths based on earlier findings showing that the public, in identifying civilian soldiers more closely with the citizen-soldier concept than contractors, shares a stronger sense of closeness with civilian soldiers. I, therefore, hypothesize that the media will provide more frequent coverage of civilian soldier casualties than contractor casualties. And if the communication medium through which the public largely hears about soldiers' deaths provides asymmetrical coverage of casualties based on the soldier type, I also expect the public to be unequally aware of casualties stemming from contractors and civilian soldiers. Specifically, if the media provides higher coverage of civilian soldier casualties than contractor casualties, I expect the public to underestimate contractor casualties more severely than civilian soldier casualties.

I investigate whether the domestic media provides more coverage of casualties of civilian soldiers than contractors by measuring the average mentions each casualty receives in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. This requires two types of data on contractor and civilian soldier casualties: actual casualty counts and news mentions of casualties. I collected casualty data for

[23] I used LexisNexis Academic to search for broadcast transcripts from CNN, ABC, CBS, Fox, and MSNBC from December 14, 2012 to December 20, 2012. The search algorithm for the Chenpeng attack retrieved transcripts that mentioned "chen peng" or "chenpeng" in the body. The algorithm for the Sandy Hook attack retrieved transcripts with mentions of "sandy hook" in the body.

U.S. civilian soldiers using the Department of Defense's Defense Casualty Analysis System. I gathered casualty data for contractors from the Department of Labor through the Defense Base Act, which requires all American defense contractor companies to report war deaths and injuries of their employees.[24] For news mentions of casualties, I collected counts of broadcast news transcripts from CNN, ABC, CBS, Fox, and MSNBC that mentioned casualties from the Afghanistan and Iraq Wars by conducting a search on LexisNexis Academic using a customized algorithm. This algorithm is provided in Appendix N. I create these counts for civilian soldier and contractor casualties separately. I then measure how many broadcasts on average each soldier type's casualty received by dividing the number of broadcast news mentions by the soldier type's casualty count for each fiscal year. So for instance, a value of 2 would indicate that each casualty on average received two mentions in the news, whereas a value of 0.1 would indicate that each casualty on average received 0.1 mentions in the news (or alternatively, there was 1 news mention for every 10 casualties).[25]

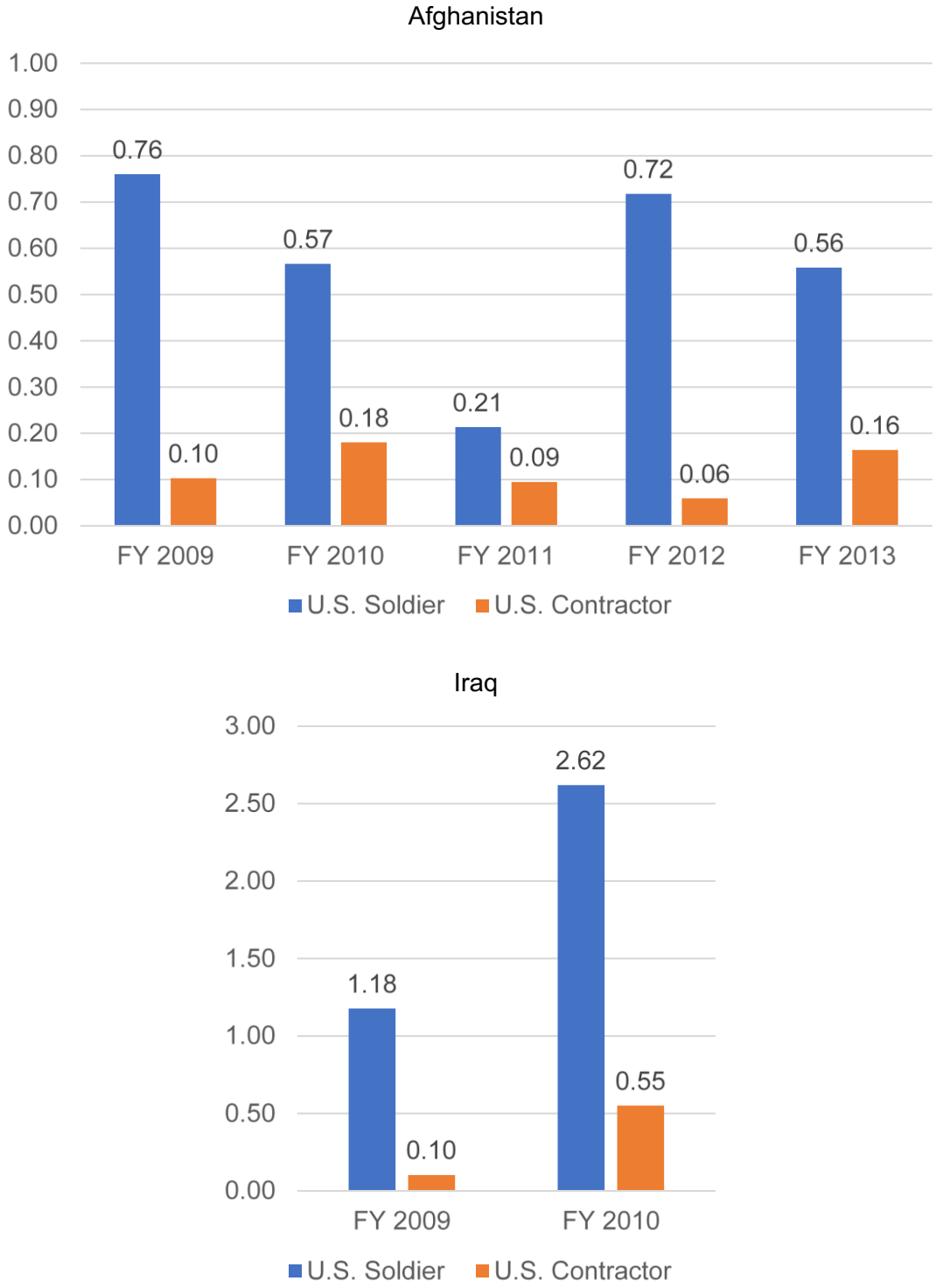
The results are presented in Figure 3.4. The findings indicate that for all fiscal years available, as hypothesized, U.S. civilian soldier casualties received much higher rates of news coverage than contractors. For the Afghanistan War, in fiscal years 2009-2013, contractor casualties on average received 75% fewer broadcast news mentions than civilian soldier casualties.[26] For the Iraq War, in fiscal years 2009-2010, contractor casualties on average

[24] Contractor casualty data is imperfect for two main reasons. First, data by fiscal year is available only starting in the 2008-2009 fiscal year. And secondly, the contractor casualty counts may be lower than reality because it is possible that Defense Base Act cases were not created for all injuries and deaths.

[25] All of this data – civilian soldier and contractor casualty counts and news coverage – is organized by fiscal year because the contractor casualty count data is organized by fiscal year.

[26] It is possible, however, that the main causes of contractor and civilian soldier casualties may be different and is therefore affecting media coverage. Perhaps contractor deaths tend to result more from non-combat incidents like workplace accidents while civilian soldier deaths result heavily from combat-related incidents. And because combat deaths are more sensational than non-combat deaths, this may be driving the asymmetrical media coverage rather

Figure 3.4: Broadcast News Mentions Per Casualty by Soldier Type




than the public's perception toward the soldier type. Data on contractor's reasons for death, however, is unavailable, and so I am unable to fully account for this. Nevertheless, I assume that these high numbers of deaths are likely not from unarmed roles like base construction, intelligence analysis, and cargo transport.

received 85% fewer broadcast news mentions than civilian soldier casualties.[27] The findings above demonstrate that contractor casualties and civilian soldier are provided differential levels of coverage in the media. Specifically, on a per casualty basis, contractor casualties are significantly underreported in the media compared to civilian soldier casualties.

I anticipate that differential media coverage of casualties will create a downstream effect where the public will have more severe underestimations about the underreported casualty type, which in this case is contractor casualties. This would highlight asymmetrical political costs between the two soldier types' casualties because the public has less information about one soldier type with which to blame elected officials during elections. Consequently, incurring contractor casualties in place of civilian soldier casualties bears relatively lower political costs for elected officials, given that past studies identified the negative association casualties have with political prospects, such as vote share. Due to the earlier findings about news coverage of casualties, I expect the public to underestimate contractor casualties at a greater magnitude relative to U.S. civilian soldier casualties in Afghanistan and Iraq. Specifically, if people are constantly being more informed of, and primed with, U.S. civilian soldier deaths compared to contractor deaths, they should underestimate the former at a less severe rate than the latter.

In my survey, I ask respondents to estimate how many U.S. soldiers and contractors died during the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.[28] These questions were asked at the beginning of the main questionnaire prior to any priming about the topic of contractors in war, and respondents were told not to consult other sources since their responses did not need to be correct. I then calculate the percentage level of error between the median casualty estimates to the actual

[27] Results for Iraq shown only for FY 2009-2010 because the U.S. had few remaining soldiers in Iraq in military roles after President Obama declared the end of U.S.' combat mission in Iraq in August 2010.

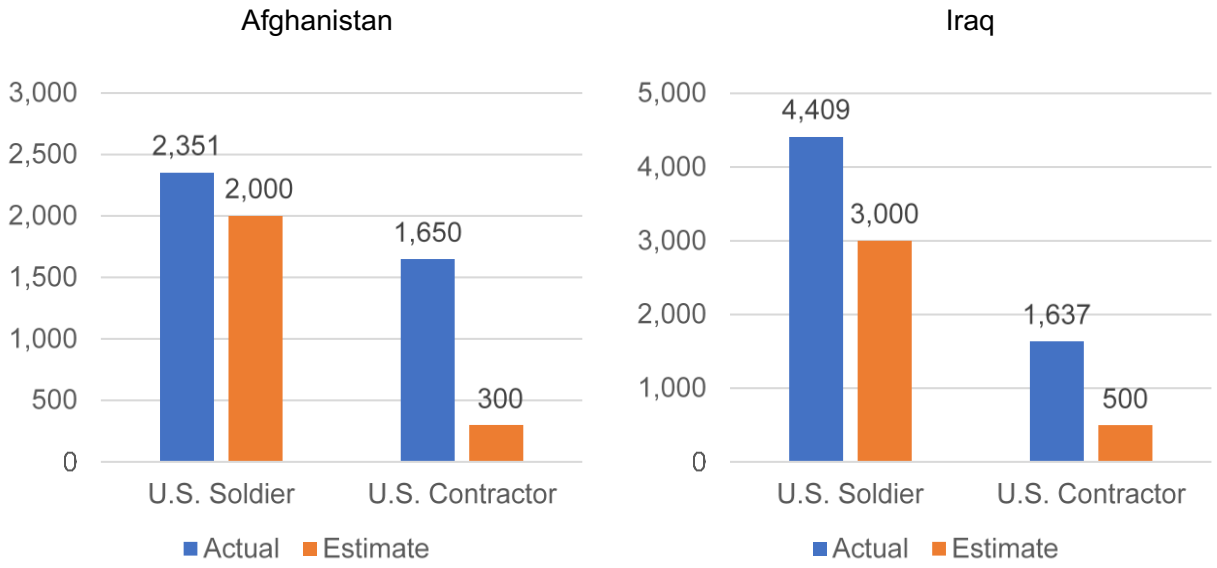
[28] Survey question is presented in Appendix O.

casualty counts. This provides a standardized measure to compare public awareness of contractor versus civilian soldier casualties.

Figure 3.5 presents the median public estimates and actual counts of casualties in the Afghanistan and Iraq Wars by soldier type, and Figure 3.6 shows the levels of error between the estimates and actual counts. In line with my hypotheses, the results indicate that the public vastly underestimates contractor casualties compared to civilian soldier casualties. Regarding the Afghanistan War, the median respondent underestimated U.S. soldier casualties only by 15%, guessing 2,000 when the actual count is 2,351. However, for contractor casualties, the median respondent underestimated by 82% of the actual count, guessing 300 when the actual count is 1,650. Similarly, in the Iraq War estimates, the median respondent underestimated U.S. civilian soldier casualties by 32% compared to 69% for contractor casualties. And so overall, as hypothesized, the magnitude of respondents' underestimation is larger for contractors than civilian soldiers. These findings offer a political explanation for why the U.S. continues to contract out many wartime roles to private firms at high rates.

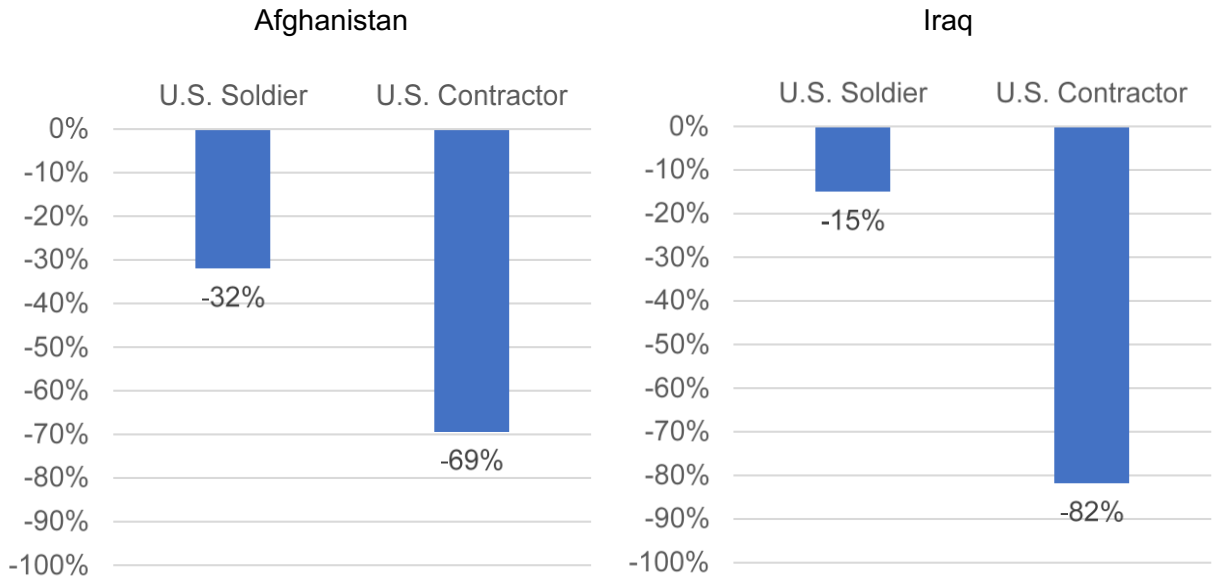
Additionally, it is important to keep in mind that the actual contractor casualty counts used in this study are incomplete tallies, and so the disparity in public awareness is probably more severe than demonstrated here. The available data is imperfect because a contractor death is recorded only if a compensation request has been submitted on the contractor's behalf, which does not occur in all instances of deaths. On the other hand, counts of civilian soldier casualties are accurate because they are provided by the Department of Defense in full. Therefore, it is likely that the disparity between public estimation and actual count of contractor casualties is higher than presented in this study.

Figure 3.5: Public Estimates of Casualties by Soldier Type




*Note*: Public estimates represent medians.

Figure 3.6: Error Levels of Public Casualty Estimates by Soldier Type




*Note*: Error levels are based on comparing actual casualty counts and median public estimates, which are from the data shown in Figure 3.5.

## 3.5 Conclusion

Private military contractors play a prevalent role in U.S. military efforts, and they have for centuries. Many existing explanations for their use have centered on economic and military advantages hired soldiers can provide. However, these explanations are insufficient because the U.S. Congress declares and funds wars, and they are primarily politicians seeking re-election. This paper provides an empirical demonstration of the political incentives for employing hired soldiers in war, therefore providing a more comprehensive understanding for why the U.S. contracts out wartime roles to private firms.

According to the citizen-soldier framework, the public makes a substantive distinction between contractors and civilian soldiers in that civilian soldiers are perceived to be serving out of moral obligation and representing U.S. interests more so than contractors. Consequently, the political cost of contractor casualties is, all else being equal, lower than civilian soldier casualties. Specifically, results from this study show that domestic media outlets tend to more severely underreport contractor casualties compared to civilian soldier casualties. This is a strong potential explanation for the demonstrated tendency for the public to vastly underestimate contractor casualties in war compared to civilian soldier casualties. And so theoretically, if a high proportion of soldiers dying in U.S. wars are contractors, the public has lower informational leverage with which to punish politicians than if civilian soldiers were dying at high rates.

The purpose of this paper is not to take a normative stance on the use of private military contractors in war. Rather, it provides theoretical contributions that expand on existing explanations for why the U.S. hires private soldiers during war. As contractors remain a prevalent component of war, they remain an important piece in fully understanding the

intersection of public and foreign policy. These findings shed light on this element of modern warfare that, as many experts project, will continue to be the reality of combat in the 21st century.

# Appendix A: Casualty Models Excluding Populous Districts

Table A.1: Afghanistan Casualties and Democratic Two-Party Vote Share in 2010, Excluding Populous Districts

| | Democratic Seats | Republican Seats |
|---|---|---|
| Afghanistan District Deaths (Measure 1) | -0.473 (0.256)** | -0.145 (0.318) |
| Iraq District Deaths (Measure 1) | -0.835 (0.964) | -0.293 (1.100) |
| Expenditures by Dem. (in 100,000s) | -0.052 (0.040) | 0.323 (0.068)*** |
| Expenditures by Rep. (in 100,000s) | -0.130 (0.061)** | 0.011 (0.030) |
| Health Care Roll Call | -7.370 (1.127)*** | |
| Incumbent | 5.017 (1.273)*** | -3.853 (1.056)*** |
| Obama 2008 District Two-Party Vote | 0.812 (0.043)*** | 0.588 (0.062)*** |
| Quality Challenger | -1.565 (0.857)** | 0.909 (1.650) |
| Scandal | -0.886 (0.926) | -0.053 (1.579) |
| Armed Forces in District | -0.056 (0.266) | 0.507 (0.271)* |
| Veterans in District | -0.234 (0.149) | -0.212 (0.160) |
| Constant | 16.588 (3.908)*** | 11.491 (2.969)*** |
| F (11, 189) | 120.51*** | |
| F (10, 112) | | 21.73*** |
| $R^2$ | 0.878 | 0.713 |
| N | 201 | 141 |

*Note:* *p<0.10; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. Models were estimated using OLS with robust standard errors. Two-tailed significance tests reported for Armed Forces in District and Veterans in District. Results based on one-tailed tests are reported for all other variables.

# Appendix B: Individual Voter Models Excluding Populous Districts

Table B.1: Afghanistan Casualties and Individual Vote Choice and Turnout, Excluding Populous Districts

*Outcome Equation, Dependent Variable: 1 = Vote for Democrat; 0 = Vote for Republican*

| | Democratic Seats | Republican Seats |
|---|---|---|
| Afghanistan District Deaths | -0.040 (0.021)** | 0.016 (0.024) |
| Iraq District Deaths | 0.030 (0.090) | -0.203 (0.091)** |
| State of Economy | -0.499 (0.027)*** | -0.478 (0.030)*** |
| Gender | -0.137 (0.050)*** | -0.054 (0.058) |
| Party Identification | -0.580 (0.015)*** | -0.548 (0.018)*** |
| White | -0.140 (0.064)** | -0.109 (0.086)* |
| Education | 0.056 (0.019)*** | 0.061 (0.021)*** |
| Income | -0.032 (0.009)*** | -0.020 (0.010)** |
| Constant | 4.323 (0.193)*** | 3.333 (0.194)*** |

Table B.1: Afghanistan Casualties and Individual Vote Choice and Turnout, Excluding Populous Districts (Continued)

*Selection Equation, Dependent Variable: 1 = Turned Out to Vote; 0 = Did Not Vote*

| | Democratic Seats | Republican Seats |
|---|---|---|
| Afghanistan District Deaths | -0.030 (0.016)** | -0.004 (0.018) |
| Iraq District Deaths | 0.020 (0.067)* | 0.059 (0.064) |
| Age | 0.889 (0.057)*** | 0.956 (0.061)*** |
| Long-Term Resident | 0.606 (0.041)*** | 0.610 (0.048)*** |
| Party Identification | 0.022 (0.008)*** | 0.088 (0.009)*** |
| White | -0.108 (0.044) | -0.116 (0.059) |
| Education | 0.177 (0.013)*** | 0.189 (0.015)*** |
| Income | 0.069 (0.006)*** | 0.060 (0.007)*** |
| Constant | -1.021 (0.074)*** | -1.414 (0.093)*** |
| N | 17,686 (14,773 uncensored; 2,913 censored) | 13,173 (13,173 uncensored; 2,377 censored) |

*Note*: ***p≤0.01; **p≤0.05; *p≤0.10 (1-tailed tests for all variables).

# Appendix C: Individual Voter Models Using County-Level Casualty Measure

Table C.1: Individual Vote Choice and Turnout, Using County-Level Casualty Measure

*Outcome Equation, Dependent Variable: 1 = Vote for Democrat; 0 = Vote for Republican*

| | Dem. Seats, Excluding Top 15 Populous Counties | Dem. Seats, Only Top 15 Populous Counties |
|---|---|---|
| Afghanistan County Deaths | -0.046 (0.035)* | -0.007 (0.041) |
| State of Economy | -0.500 (0.027)*** | -0.414 (0.058)*** |
| Gender | -0.136 (0.050)*** | -0.044 (0.125) |
| Party Identification | -0.581 (0.015)*** | -0.611 (0.040)*** |
| White | -0.148 (0.064)** | -0.393 (0.143)*** |
| Education | 0.056 (0.018)*** | 0.120 (0.043)*** |
| Income | -0.032 (0.009)*** | -0.026 (0.023) |
| Constant | 4.313 (0.190)*** | 4.082 (0.463)*** |

Table C.1: Individual Vote Choice and Turnout, Using County-Level Casualty Measure (Continued)

*Selection Equation, Dependent Variable: 1 = Turned Out to Vote; 0 = Did Not Vote*

| | Dem. Seats, Excluding Top 15 Populous Counties | Dem. Seats, Only Top 15 Populous Counties |
|---|---|---|
| Afghanistan County Casualties | -0.069 (0.023)*** | -0.029 (0.029) |
| Age | 0.889 (0.057)*** | 0.808 (0.175)*** |
| Long-Term Resident | 0.605 (0.041)*** | 0.437 (0.095)*** |
| Party Identification | 0.022 (0.008)*** | -0.037 (0.021)** |
| White | -0.116 (0.044) | 0.036 (0.098) |
| Education | 0.178 (0.013)*** | 0.179 (0.034)*** |
| Income | 0.069 (0.006)*** | 0.067 (0.013)*** |
| Constant | -1.024 (0.072)*** | -0.670 (0.177)*** |
| N | 17,686 (14,773 uncensored; 2,913 censored) | 2,806 (2,302 uncensored; 504 censored) |

*Note*: ***p≤0.01; **p≤0.05; *p≤0.10 (1-tailed tests for all variables).

# Appendix D: Casualty Models with Lagged Dependent Variable

Table D.1: Afghanistan Casualties and Democratic Two-Party Vote Share in 2010, Including Lagged Democratic Two-Party Vote Share

| | Democratic Seats | Republican Seats |
|---|---|---|
| Afghanistan District Deaths (Measure 1) | -0.406 (0.233)** | -0.119 (0.304) |
| Iraq District Deaths (Measure 1) | 0.469 (0.897) | -0.419 (0.992) |
| Expenditures by Dem. (in 100,000s) | -0.045 (0.034) | 0.275 (0.059)*** |
| Expenditures by Rep. (in 100,000s) | -0.073 (0.043)** | 0.021 (0.029) |
| Health Care Roll Call | -6.398 (1.012)*** | |
| Incumbent | 6.727 (1.329)*** | -3.752 (0.999)*** |
| Obama 2008 District Two-Party Vote | 0.714 (0.041)*** | 0.500 (0.066)*** |
| Quality Challenger | -0.633 (0.769) | 1.111 (1.305) |
| Scandal | -0.759 (0.834) | 0.598 (1.416) |
| Armed Forces in District | -0.124 (0.193) | 0.394 (0.213)* |
| Veterans in District | -0.216 (0.103)** | -0.178 (0.126) |
| Lagged Dem. Two-Party Vote | 0.219 (0.040)*** | 0.184 (0.076)*** |
| Constant | 4.667 (3.845)*** | 7.910 (3.155)*** |
| F (12, 193) | 222.34*** | |
| F (11, 129) | | 19.76*** |
| $R^2$ | 0.923 | 0.737 |
| N | 206 | 141 |

*Note*: *p<0.10; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. Models were estimated using OLS with robust standard errors. Two-tailed significance tests reported for *Armed Forces in District* and *Veterans in District*. Results based on one-tailed tests are reported for all other variables. Unopposed candidates in lagged measure are excluded.

# Appendix E: Casualty Models Using Combined Casualty Measure

Table E.1: Combined Casualties and Democratic Two-Party Vote Share in 2010

| | Democratic Seats | Republican Seats |
|---|---|---|
| Afghanistan and Iraq District Deaths (Measure 1) | -0.425 (0.213)** | -0.283 (0.288) |
| Expenditures by Dem. (in 100,000s) | -0.055 (0.038) | 0.291 (0.054)*** |
| Expenditures by Rep. (in 100,000s) | -0.133 (0.060)** | 0.017 (0.028) |
| Health Care Roll Call | -7.539 (1.052)*** | |
| Incumbent | 4.213 (1.197)*** | -3.644 (0.963)*** |
| Obama 2008 District Two-Party Vote | 0.834 (0.035)*** | 0.576 (0.055)*** |
| Quality Challenger | -1.272 (0.798)* | 1.374 (1.299) |
| Scandal | -0.646 (0.726) | -0.403 (1.568) |
| Armed Forces in District | -0.033 (0.210) | 0.383 (0.209)* |
| Veterans in District | -0.331 (0.101)*** | -0.129 (0.119) |
| Constant | 17.372 (3.334)*** | 11.152 (2.701)*** |
| F (10, 237) | 224.03*** | |
| F (9, 142) | | 30.57*** |
| $R^2$ | 0.907 | 0.727 |
| N | 248 | 152 |

*Note*: *p<0.10; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. Models were estimated using OLS with robust standard errors. Two-tailed significance tests reported for *Armed Forces in District* and *Veterans in District*. Results based on one-tailed tests are reported for all other variables.

# Appendix F: Individual Voter Models by Partisanship

Table F.1: Afghanistan Casualties and Individual Vote Choice and Turnout, Democrats Only

*Outcome Equation, Dependent Variable: 1 = Vote for Democrat; 0 = Vote for Republican*

| | Democratic Seats | Republican Seats |
|---|---|---|
| Afghanistan District Deaths | -0.018 (0.038) | -0.025 (0.035) |
| Iraq District Deaths | 0.312 (0.129) | -0.268 (0.136)** |
| State of Economy | -0.490 (0.046)*** | -0.483 (0.046)*** |
| Gender | -0.083 (0.088) | -0.117 (0.081)* |
| White | -0.356 (0.107)*** | -0.033 (0.090) |
| Education | 0.130 (0.032)*** | 0.002 (0.030) |
| Income | -0.020 (0.017) | 0.008 (0.013) |
| Constant | 3.134 (0.284)*** | 2.528 (0.262)*** |

*Selection Equation, Dependent Variable: 1 = Turned Out to Vote; 0 = Did Not Vote*

| | Democratic Seats | Republican Seats |
|---|---|---|
| Afghanistan District Deaths | -0.037 (0.023)* | -0.014 (0.028) |
| Iraq District Deaths | 0.125 (0.097) | -0.039 (0.108) |
| Age | 0.835 (0.090)*** | 0.876 (0.099)*** |
| Long-Term Resident | 0.549 (0.055)*** | 0.570 (0.070)*** |
| White | -0.143 (0.053) | -0.107 (0.073) |
| Education | 0.158 (0.018)*** | 0.188 (0.023)*** |
| Income | 0.069 (0.008)*** | 0.051 (0.010)*** |
| Constant | -0.753 (0.090)*** | -1.058 (0.124)*** |
| N | 8,626 (7,058 uncensored; 1,568 censored) | 4,592 (3,466 uncensored; 1,126 censored) |

*Note:* ***p≤0.01; **p≤0.05; *p≤0.10 (1-tailed tests for all variables). Includes strong and weak Democrats.

Table F.2: Afghanistan Casualties and Individual Vote Choice and Turnout, Independents Only

*Outcome Equation, Dependent Variable: 1 = Vote for Democrat; 0 = Vote for Republican*

| | Democratic Seats | Republican Seats |
|---|---|---|
| Afghanistan District Deaths | -0.035 (0.026)* | 0.027 (0.030) |
| Iraq District Deaths | -0.217 (0.129)** | -0.102 (0.126) |
| State of Economy | -0.723 (0.034)*** | -0.718 (0.038)*** |
| Gender | -0.228 (0.060)*** | -0.134 (0.073)** |
| White | -0.283 (0.081)*** | -0.244 (0.110)** |
| Education | 0.069 (0.023)*** | 0.127 (0.029)*** |
| Income | -0.041 (0.010)*** | -0.038 (0.013)*** |
| Constant | 2.866 (0.247)*** | 1.979 (0.295)*** |

*Selection Equation, Dependent Variable: 1 = Turned Out to Vote; 0 = Did Not Vote*

| | Democratic Seats | Republican Seats |
|---|---|---|
| Afghanistan District Deaths | -0.011 (0.025) | -0.021 (0.028) |
| Iraq District Deaths | 0.050 (0.115) | 0.143 (0.104) |
| Age | 0.885 (0.087)*** | 0.956 (0.093)*** |
| Long-Term Resident | 0.595 (0.064)*** | 0.578 (0.076)*** |
| White | 0.055 (0.070) | 0.019 (0.088) |
| Education | 0.219 (0.021)*** | 0.200 (0.024)*** |
| Income | 0.069 (0.009)*** | 0.074 (0.010)*** |
| Constant | -1.383 (0.119)*** | -1.378 (0.145)*** |
| N | 6,638 (5,376 uncensored; 1,262 censored) | 5,255 (4,256 uncensored; 999 censored) |

*Note:* ***p≤0.01; **p≤0.05; *p≤0.10 (1-tailed tests for all variables). Includes true independents and independent leaners.

Table F.3: Afghanistan Casualties and Individual Vote Choice and Turnout, Republicans Only

*Outcome Equation, Dependent Variable: 1 = Vote for Democrat; 0 = Vote for Republican*

| | Democratic Seats | Republican Seats |
|---|---|---|
| Afghanistan District Deaths | -0.072 (0.033)** | -0.030 (0.036) |
| Iraq District Deaths | -0.072 (0.146) | -0.248 (0.161)* |
| State of Economy | -0.475 (0.048)*** | -0.427 (0.039)*** |
| Gender | -0.048 (0.082) | -0.035 (0.079) |
| White | -0.446 (0.124)*** | -0.299 (0.101)*** |
| Education | 0.021 (0.031) | 0.004 (0.030) |
| Income | -0.038 (0.018)** | -0.001 (0.012) |
| Constant | 1.188 (0.456)** | -0.040 (0.216) |

*Selection Equation, Dependent Variable: 1 = Turned Out to Vote; 0 = Did Not Vote*

| | Democratic Seats | Republican Seats |
|---|---|---|
| Afghanistan District Deaths | -0.070 (0.028)*** | -0.028 (0.021)* |
| Iraq District Deaths | -0.164 (0.122)* | 0.080 (0.077) |
| Age | 1.156 (0.107)*** | 0.863 (0.063)*** |
| Long-Term Resident | 0.604 (0.079)*** | 0.715 (0.051)*** |
| White | 0.218 (0.092)*** | 0.212 (0.065)*** |
| Education | 0.168 (0.025)*** | 0.142 (0.018)*** |
| Income | 0.091 (0.010)*** | 0.083 (0.007)*** |
| Constant | -1.366 (0.141)*** | -0.975 (0.104)*** |
| N | 5,607 (4,797 uncensored; 810 censored) | 5,950 (5,137 uncensored; 813 censored) |

*Note:* ***p≤0.01; **p≤0.05; *p≤0.10 (1-tailed tests for all variables). Includes strong and weak Republicans.

# Appendix G: Individual Voter Models by Attentiveness

Table G.1: Individual Vote Choice and Turnout, Attentive vs. Inattentive Respondents

*Outcome Equation, Dependent Variable: 1 = Vote for Democrat; 0 = Vote for Republican*

| | Attentive Respondents, Democratic Seats | Inattentive Respondents, Democratic Seats |
|---|---|---|
| Afghanistan District Deaths | -0.034 (0.020)** | -0.013 (0.085) |
| Iraq District Deaths | 0.020 (0.093) | -0.219 (0.230) |
| State of Economy | -0.504 (0.026)*** | -0.313 (0.084)*** |
| Gender | -0.119 (0.048)*** | -0.159 (0.171) |
| Party Identification | -0.582 (0.015)*** | -0.581 (0.072)*** |
| White | -0.203 (0.063)** | -0.374 (0.219)** |
| Education | 0.050 (0.018)*** | 0.243 (0.062)*** |
| Income | -0.031 (0.009)*** | -0.028 (0.031) |
| Constant | 4.420 (0.205)*** | 2.888 (0.751)*** |

Table G.1: Individual Vote Choice and Turnout, Attentive vs. Inattentive Respondents (Continued)

*Selection Equation, Dependent Variable: 1 = Turned Out to Vote; 0 = Did Not Vote*

| | Attentive Respondents, Democratic Seats | Inattentive Respondents, Democratic Seats |
|---|---|---|
| Afghanistan District Deaths | -0.045 (0.016)*** | 0.016 (0.040) |
| Iraq District Deaths | 0.014 (0.072) | -0.075 (0.153) |
| Age | 0.784 (0.057)*** | 1.079 (0.207)*** |
| ` | | |
| Long-Term Resident | 0.567 (0.042)*** | 0.584 (0.092)*** |
| Party Identification | 0.009 (0.008) | 0.058 (0.022)*** |
| White | -0.017 (0.044) | -0.392 (0.099) |
| Education | 0.168 (0.013)*** | 0.217 (0.031)*** |
| Income | 0.069 (0.006)*** | 0.042 (0.013)*** |
| Constant | -0.848 (0.074)*** | -1.420 (0.161)*** |
| N | 18,597 (18,597 uncensored; 2,685 censored) | 1,895 (1,163 uncensored; 732 censored) |

*Note*: ***p≤0.01; **p≤0.05; *p≤0.10 (1-tailed tests for all variables). Attentive respondents are those who read a newspaper and/or watch TV news. Inattentive respondents are those who do neither.

# Appendix H: Individual Voter Models by Political Interest

Table H.1: Individual Vote Choice and Turnout, High vs. Low Political Interest Respondents

*Outcome Equation, Dependent Variable: 1 = Vote for Democrat; 0 = Vote for Republican*

| | Respondents with High Political Interest, Democratic Seats | Respondents with Low Political Interest, Democratic Seats |
|---|---|---|
| Afghanistan District Deaths | -0.031 (0.020)* | -0.058 (0.063) |
| Iraq District Deaths | -0.006 (0.088) | 0.071 (0.344) |
| State of Economy | -0.505 (0.026)*** | -0.192 (0.094)** |
| Gender | -0.113 (0.049)*** | -0.220 (0.187) |
| Party Identification | -0.587 (0.016)*** | -0.515 (0.054)*** |
| White | -0.138 (0.066)** | -0.792 (0.165)*** |
| Education | 0.059 (0.018)*** | 0.126 (0.066)** |
| Income | -0.030 (0.010)*** | -0.028 (0.020)* |
| Constant | 4.330 (0.217)*** | 3.210 (0.848)*** |

Table H.1: Individual Vote Choice and Turnout, High vs. Low Political Interest Respondents (Continued)

*Selection Equation, Dependent Variable: 1 = Turned Out to Vote; 0 = Did Not Vote*

| | Respondents with High Political Interest, Democratic Seats | Respondents with Low Political Interest, Democratic Seats |
|---|---|---|
| Afghanistan District Deaths | -0.054 (0.018)*** | -0.011 (0.033) |
| Iraq District Deaths | -0.046 (0.081) | 0.128 (0.129) |
| Age | 0.716 (0.059)*** | 0.438 (0.170)*** |
| ` | | |
| Long-Term Resident | 0.570 (0.046)*** | 0.497 (0.080)*** |
| Party Identification | 0.021 (0.009)*** | -0.045 (0.022)** |
| White | -0.079 (0.048) | -0.449 (0.077) |
| Education | 0.132 (0.014)*** | 0.188 (0.027)*** |
| Income | 0.063 (0.006)*** | 0.019 (0.011)** |
| Constant | -0.486 (0.082)*** | -1.023 (0.135)*** |
| N | 17,976 (16,002 uncensored; 1,974 censored) | 2,516 (1,073 uncensored; 1,443 censored) |

*Note*: ***p≤0.01; **p≤0.05; *p≤0.10 (1-tailed tests for all variables).

# Appendix I: Country-Level Descriptive Statistics

Figure I.1: Distribution of GDP (in Billions USD)

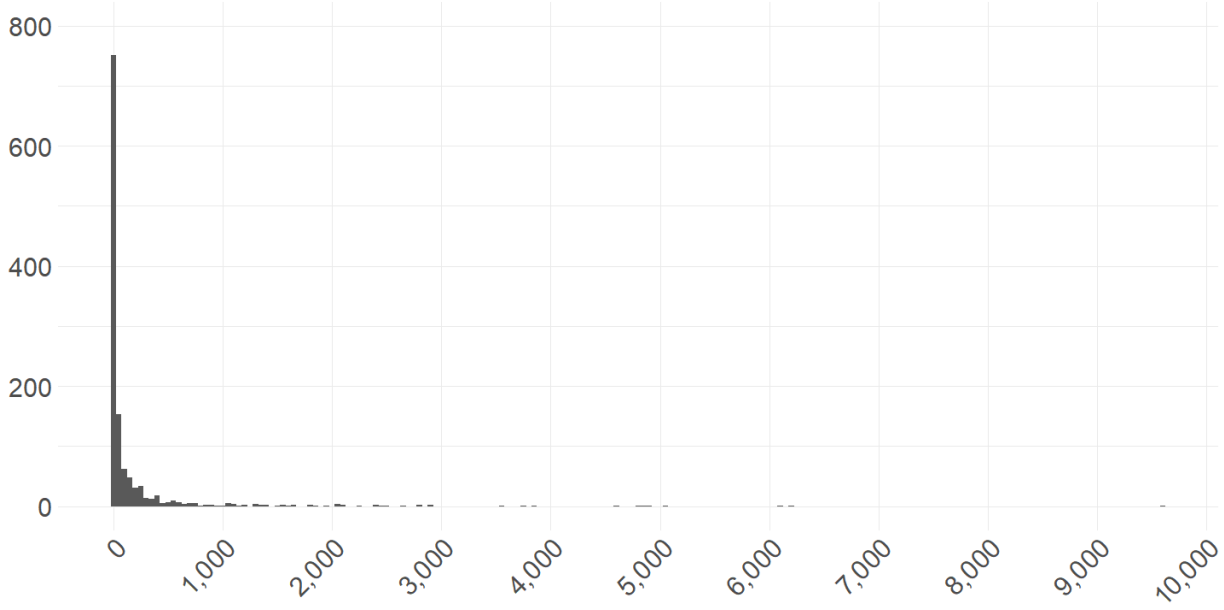
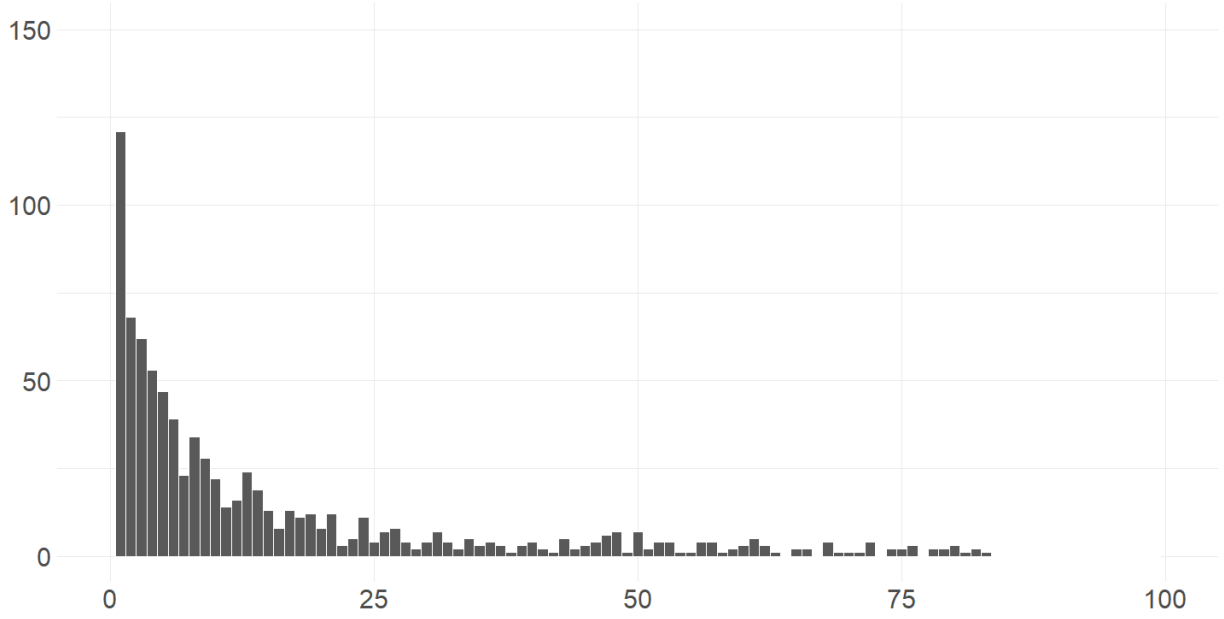



Figure I.2: Distribution of GDP, Excluding Top 25% (in Billions USD)



There are a few countries that constitute the outliers on the right side of the GDP distribution (e.g. China, Japan, and Germany). Also, the distribution is skewed to the left because of two factors. First, there are more countries with smaller GDP in the world than those with larger GDP. Second, most partner countries have multiple observations in the data since the data is comprised of country GDP at each point in time a new U.S. ambassador was selected, and most countries had several U.S. ambassadors in the time period studied. Therefore, combining these two factors, the count of smaller GDP's increases at a rate several times faster than that of larger GDP's. Figure I.2 shows the distribution of GDP in the dataset excluding the top 25% of GDP's for an additional view to demonstrate the heterogeneity of GDP.

Figure I.3: Distribution of Population (in Millions)

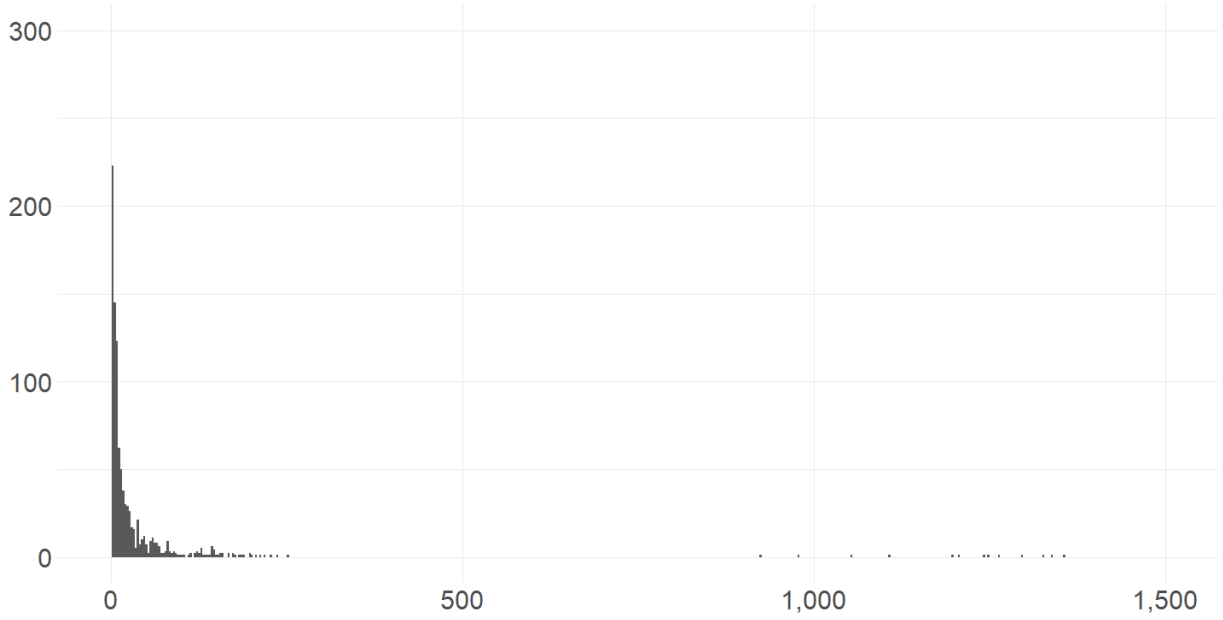
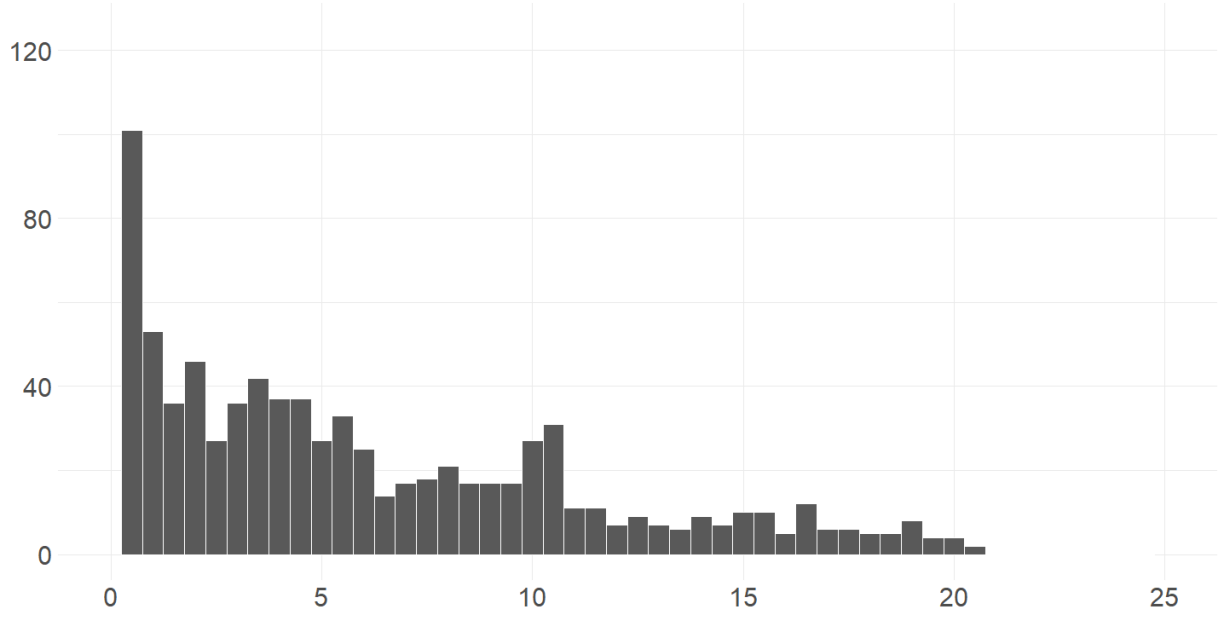



Figure I.4: Distribution of Population, Excluding Top 25% (in Millions)



Like GDP, the distribution of population in my dataset has several outliers that constitute the extreme right side of the distribution (e.g. China, India, Indonesia), and the distribution is skewed heavily to the left for similar aforementioned reasons. Like I do for GDP, I provide a figure showing the distribution of population excluding the top 25% of cases (Figure I.4).

Figure I.5: Distribution of Polity Scores

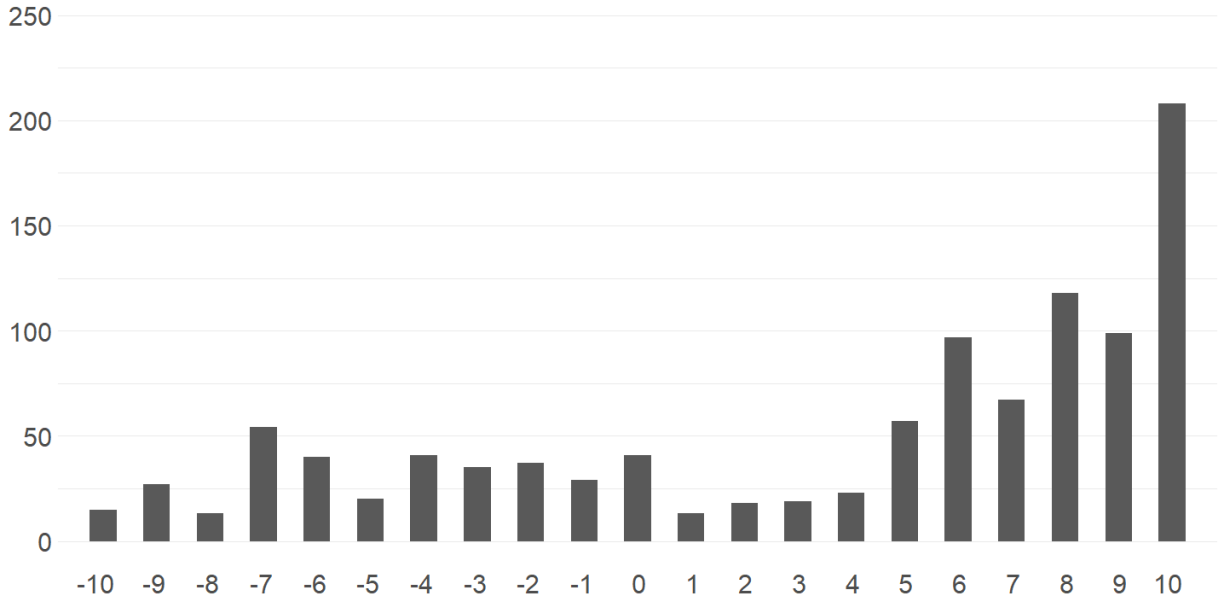



Figure I.6: Distribution of UN Vote Alignment

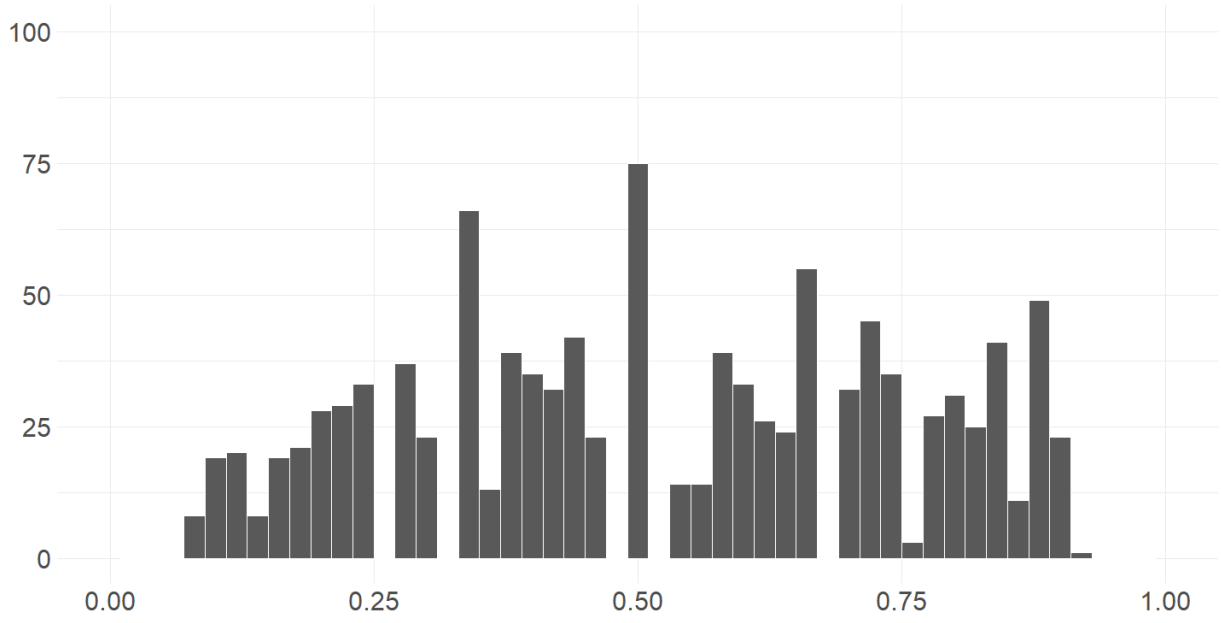


Figure I.7: Distribution of WTO Membership

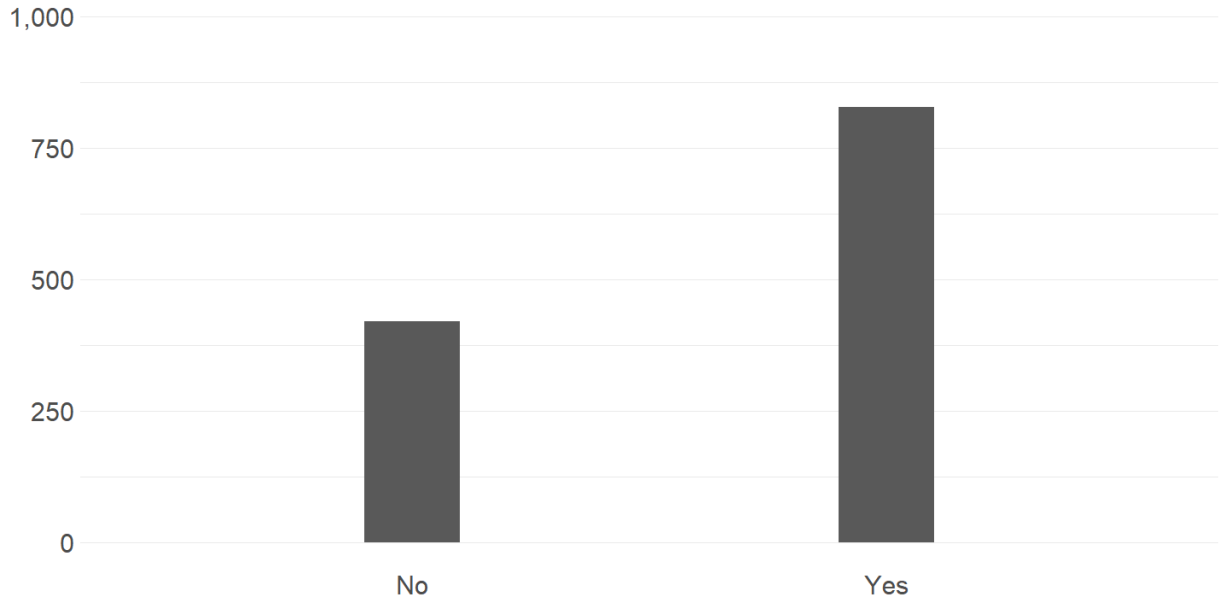
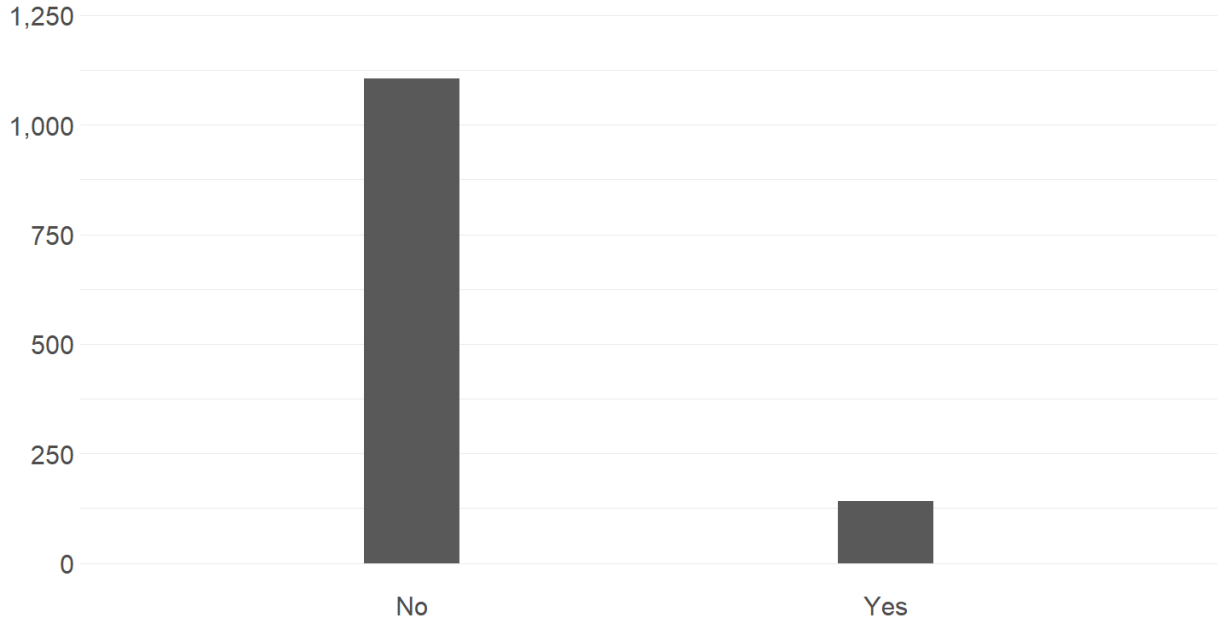



Figure I.8: Distribution of NATO Membership



# Appendix J: Ambassador-Level Descriptive Statistics

Figure J.1: Distribution of Term Length (in Years)

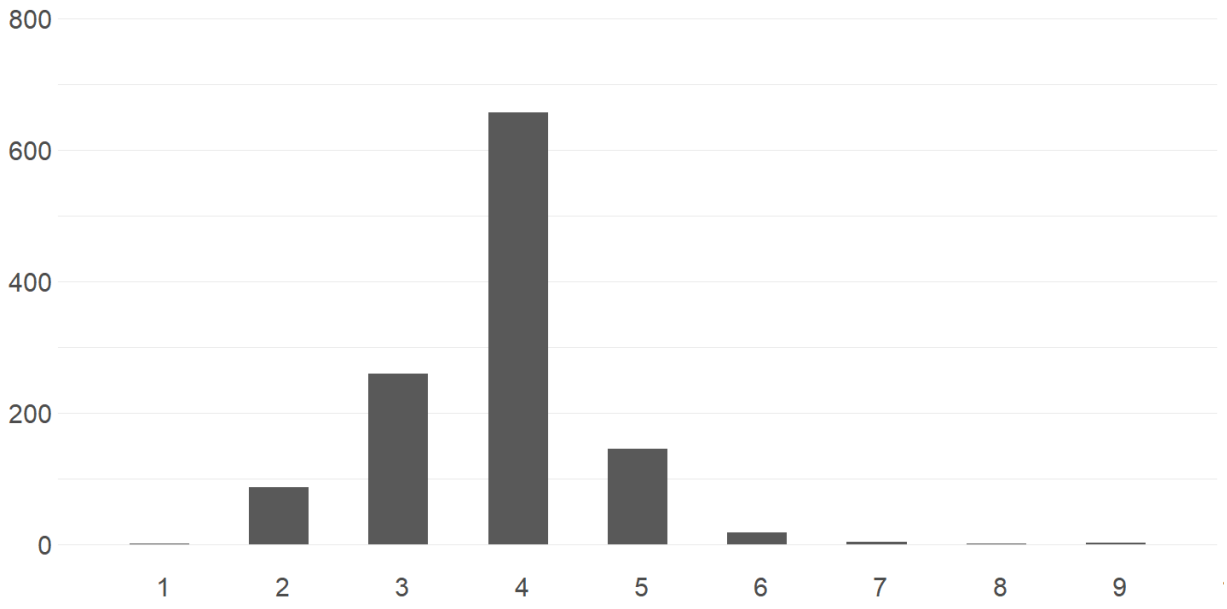
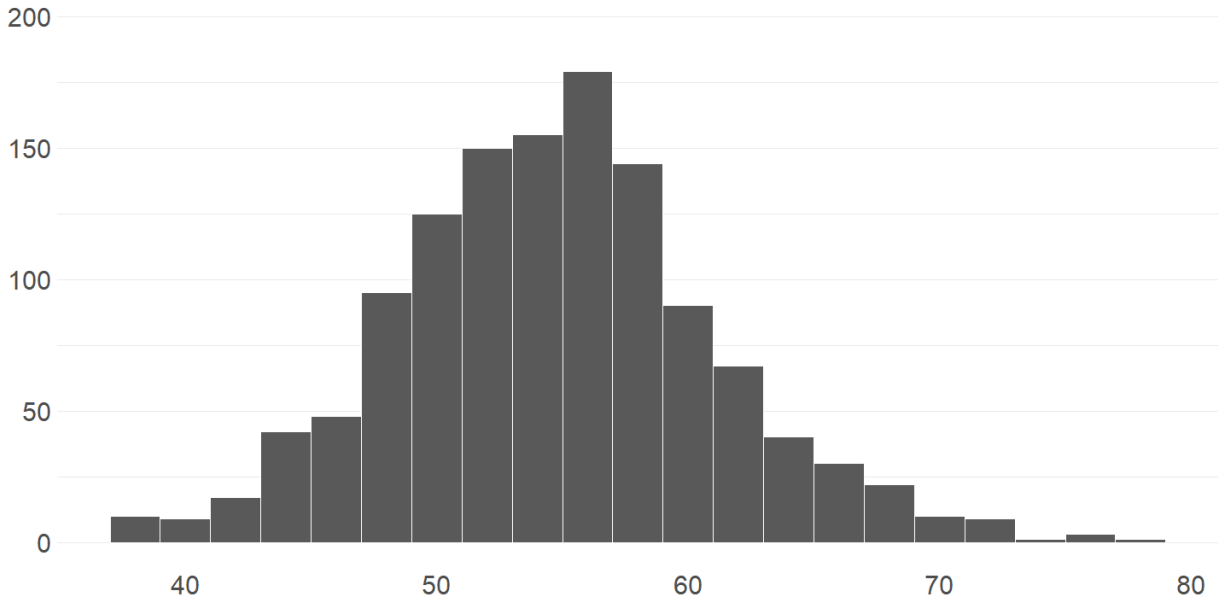



Figure J.2: Distribution of Age



# Appendix K: Performance Models, Fixed by Country and Year

Table K.1: Determinants of Ambassador Performance, Using Career Variable and Fixed by Country and Year

| | Δ Trade (in millions USD) | Δ FDI (in millions USD) | Δ UN Vote Alignment | Δ Travelers (in thousands) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Career | 1,207.86 | 2,102.94 | 0.003 | 82.45 |
| | (1,340.07) | (3,556.25) | (0.02) | (52.15) |
| Term Length (in years) | 1,659.06*** | 2,451.82** | 0.01 | 44.77*** |
| | (433.16) | (1,138.17) | (0.01) | (16.92) |
| Age | -26.49 | -10.63 | -0.001 | 1.16 |
| | (53.83) | (136.00) | (0.001) | (2.08) |
| GDP (in billions USD) | -10.41*** | 4.43* | -0.0000 | 0.15*** |
| | (1.17) | (2.64) | (0.0000) | (0.05) |
| Population (in millions) | 122.56*** | -66.09 | -0.0004 | 0.23 |
| | (28.01) | (63.42) | (0.0004) | (1.10) |
| Polity Score | 44.91 | -263.47 | 0.003 | 0.47 |
| | (141.40) | (400.05) | (0.002) | (5.48) |
| WTO Member | -87.01 | -1,905.70 | 0.05** | -22.62 |
| | (1,584.96) | (4,189.43) | (0.02) | (61.64) |
| NATO Member | 873.01 | -5,401.54 | 0.01 | -2.44 |
| | (2,298.42) | (7,406.37) | (0.03) | (90.02) |
| Prior UN Vote Alignment | 373.14 | 8,475.99 | -0.79*** | -105.56 |
| | (2,653.50) | (7,517.28) | (0.04) | (103.38) |
| Constant | -6,703.06 | -24,616.86 | 0.42*** | -105.16 |
| | (5,550.66) | (18,984.05) | (0.08) | (216.45) |
| Country fixed effects | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Year fixed effects | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Observations | 1,021 | 746 | 1,033 | 1,039 |
| $R^2$ | 0.63 | 0.75 | 0.68 | 0.49 |
| *Note:* | | | | *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01 |

Table K.2: Determinants of Ambassador Performance, Using Change to Career Variable and Fixed by Country and Year

| | Δ Trade (in millions USD) | Δ FDI (in millions USD) | Δ UN Vote Alignment | Δ Travelers (in thousands) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Change to Career | -41.30 | 5,217.59 | -0.02 | 100.60* |
| | (1,597.44) | (4,518.79) | (0.02) | (58.56) |
| Term Length (in years) | 1,569.56*** | 3,052.63** | 0.01** | 54.65*** |
| | (449.25) | (1,230.78) | (0.01) | (16.74) |
| Age | -40.20 | 10.50 | -0.001 | -1.16 |
| | (55.52) | (147.15) | (0.001) | (2.06) |
| GDP (in billions USD) | -13.84*** | 2.06 | -0.0000 | 0.25*** |
| | (1.23) | (2.87) | (0.0000) | (0.05) |
| Population (in millions) | 98.67*** | -64.13 | -0.0003 | -1.07 |
| | (27.77) | (65.28) | (0.0004) | (1.04) |
| Polity Score | 53.93 | -275.88 | 0.004* | 0.97 |
| | (154.56) | (445.89) | (0.002) | (5.73) |
| WTO Member | -84.74 | -3,049.36 | 0.04 | -36.44 |
| | (1,694.18) | (4,689.54) | (0.03) | (63.05) |
| NATO Member | 413.17 | -4,830.58 | 0.001 | -19.85 |
| | (2,325.93) | (7,748.16) | (0.03) | (86.92) |
| Prior UN Vote Alignment | -614.91 | 4,332.35 | -0.84*** | -85.71 |
| | (2,733.58) | (8,083.90) | (0.04) | (101.79) |
| Constant | 6,469.99 | -61,116.60*** | 0.35*** | -64.24 |
| | (6,876.18) | (22,172.25) | (0.10) | (256.83) |
| Country fixed effects | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Year fixed effects | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Observations | 932 | 674 | 938 | 944 |
| $R^2$ | 0.67 | 0.78 | 0.71 | 0.55 |
| *Note:* | | | | *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01 |

# Appendix L: Citizen-Soldier Survey Question

Vignette

- Matthew Russell is a *[insert treatment]* who recently spent a year in Afghanistan fighting al-Qaeda during the Afghanistan War. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about Mathew Russell?

Treatments

- U.S. soldier
- U.S. private military contractor hired by the U.S.

Provided statements

- He fought in the war for moral reasons
- He represents U.S. interests

Response options

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

# Appendix M: Casualty Sensitivity Survey Question

Vignette

- The U.S. government is considering sending ground troops to combat ISIS, the terrorist group that has gained control of much territory in Iraq and Syria in recent years. Experts believe that the U.S. will incur heavy casualties in battle. *[Insert treatment]*. Do you support or oppose the U.S. sending ground troops to combat ISIS?

Treatments

- Most of the troops sent to combat ISIS will consist of U.S. soldiers
- Most of the troops sent to combat ISIS will consist of soldiers from American private military companies hired by the U.S. government

Response options

- Strongly support
- Somewhat support
- Somewhat oppose
- Strongly oppose

# Appendix N: Search Algorithms for Identifying Casualty News Mentions

**Search algorithm used for identifying news mentions of U.S. soldier casualties in Afghanistan:**

BODY(Afghanistan) AND BODY(american soldier* w/5 (were killed OR was killed OR been killed OR dead OR died)) OR BODY(u.s. soldier* w/5 (were killed OR was killed OR been killed OR dead OR died))

**Search algorithm used for identifying news mentions of contractor casualties in Afghanistan:**

BODY(Afghanistan) AND BODY(contractor* w/5 (were killed OR was killed OR been killed OR dead OR died))

**Search algorithm used for identifying news mentions of U.S. soldier casualties in Iraq:**

BODY(Iraq) AND BODY(american soldier* w/5 (were killed OR was killed OR been killed OR dead OR died)) OR BODY(u.s. soldier* w/5 (were killed OR was killed OR been killed OR dead OR died))

**Search algorithm used for identifying news mentions of contractor casualties in Iraq:**

BODY(Iraq) AND BODY(contractor* w/5 (were killed OR was killed OR been killed OR dead OR died))

# Appendix O: Casualty Estimation Survey Questions

- To the best of your knowledge, how many U.S. soldiers died during the recent war in Afghanistan?
- To the best of your knowledge, how many private military contractors hired by the U.S. died during the recent war in Afghanistan?
- To the best of your knowledge, how many U.S. soldiers died during the recent war in Iraq?
- To the best of your knowledge, how many private military contractors hired by the U.S. died during the recent war in Iraq?

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