

# Responding to War on Capitol Hill: Battlefield Casualties, Congressional Response, and Public Support for the War in Iraq

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*Recent scholarship argues that how members of Congress respond to an ongoing war significantly influences the president's strategic calculations. However, the literature is comparably silent on the factors influencing the public positions members take during the course of a military venture. Accounting for both national and local electoral incentives, we develop a theory positing that partisanship conditions congressional responses to casualties in the aggregate, but that all members respond to casualties in their constituency by increasingly criticizing the war. Analyzing an original database of more than 7,500 content-coded House floor speeches on the Iraq War, we find strong support for both hypotheses. We also find that Democrats from high-casualty constituencies were significantly more likely to cast antiwar roll-call votes than their peers. Finally, we show that this significant variation in congressional antiwar position taking strongly correlates with geographic differences in public support for war.*

When presidents commit American military forces abroad, they put in motion a chain of events whose twists and turns are often unpredictable. Clearly, presidents play the lead role in adapting policy to circumstances as they unfold on foreign battlefields. However, other political elites, particularly members of Congress, also respond as war events develop. Moreover, when Congress engages in the policy debate surrounding an ongoing war, recent research suggests it is with considerable consequence. Scholars have shown that presidents both anticipate congressional reactions to various military options when deciding whether to respond militarily to foreign crises and react to tangible congressional support for or criticism of their preferred military policies during the course of a conflict (Auerswald 2000; Clark 2000; Howell and Pevehouse 2007; Kriner 2010). None of these studies argues that Congress influences policy primarily by placing legislative constraints on the commander in chief. Rather, this emerging literature emphasizes the importance of individual policy entrepreneurs shaping public opinion by engaging the debate in the

public sphere (Carter and Scott 2009; Fowler n.d.; Johnson 2006; Mayhew 2000). Congressional support affords valuable political cover, while prominent congressional criticism can bring considerable public pressure to bear on the White House to change course.

This emphasis on Congress's capacity to influence public opinion is firmly rooted in the wartime opinion-formation literature. While one branch of this scholarship emphasizes the critical importance of conflict events to citizens' cost-benefit calculations and wartime attitudes (e.g., Boettcher and Cobb 2006; Burk 1999; Eichenberg, Stoll, and Lebo 2006; Gartner 2008; Gartner and Segura 1998; Larson 1996; Mueller 1973; Slantchev 2004; Voeten and Brewer 2006), other scholars have long focused on the importance of political elites as providers of heuristics for low-information citizens, particularly within the foreign policy arena (Almond 1950; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1997; Lippmann 1922; Popkin 1991). When elites rally behind the use of force, public support for war will remain strong (Brody 1991; Zaller 1992), even in the face of mounting casualties (Berinsky 2007, 2009). However,

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when elites divide on the wisdom of the administration's handling of a war, public support for the conflict wanes (Howell and Pevehouse 2007; Zaller and Chiu 1996).

It is clear that elite position taking matters for public opinion formation downstream, but what explains those elite positions in the first place? On this question, Berinsky laments, "the public opinion literature has been largely silent" (2009, 124). To be sure, existing scholarship provides some insight into congressional wartime position taking over time. For example, in an analysis of the media's influence over public opinion, Aday (2010) argues that elite consensus emerges in a conflict's early and relatively bloodless stages, while elite dissension grows as the situation on the ground deteriorates.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, despite their considerable importance, we know comparatively little about the strategic calculations members of Congress make when deciding what public positions to take regarding an ongoing military venture. Does congressional criticism simply track adverse developments—that is, does it inexorably increase as American casualties arise and abate as conditions improve? Or, do members of Congress exhibit more discretion in the timing and intensity of their challenges to the actions of the commander in chief?<sup>2</sup>

Zaller (1992) emphasizes the importance of opposition party elites' response to a war; but when will opposition party criticism reach the level necessary to produce a polarization effect? Other scholars highlight the paramount importance of criticism by members of the president's own party in shaping public support for war. Such cues garner maximum amounts of media attention (Groeling 2010; Groeling and Baum 2008) and have disproportionate influence on public attitudes (Baum and Groeling 2010) and even on the conduct of military actions (Kriner 2010). Yet, when does such criticism emerge, given these members' strong incentives to support a co-partisan leader in the White House?

This study endeavors to answer these questions by developing and empirically testing a new theory of how members of Congress respond to battlefield events—specifically, to combat casualties. Our theory posits that members of Congress respond to casualties and other

events on the ground, but that all legislators do not respond to casualties in the same way. A focus on both national and local electoral incentives leads to the expectation that partisanship will significantly condition members' reactions to casualties in the aggregate. However, when confronted with highly salient casualties within their constituencies, we hypothesize that members of all partisan stripes, on average, will become increasingly critical of the war.

The article proceeds in five parts. The following section develops a theory of elite opinion formation focusing on the electoral incentives governing legislators' response to combat casualties. The theory generates two hypotheses concerning how casualties will drive variation in congressional criticism of an ongoing war, both over time and within the legislature's ranks.

The second section empirically tests these hypotheses utilizing an original data set of over 7,500 content-coded speeches given on the floor of the House of Representatives concerning the Iraq War between March 2003 and December 2010. The third section extends the analysis to examine the forces driving roll-call votes on five key pieces of legislation concerning the conflict from the initial emergency supplemental appropriation of \$87 billion in October 2003 through the Democratically controlled 110th Congress. The fourth section exploits this significant variation in congressional rhetoric across the country to examine the influence of congressional position taking on public support for war. The final section concludes.

## How Congressional Elites Process Conflict Events

How do members of Congress respond to combat casualties when deciding what foreign policy positions to transmit to their constituents? These cost-benefit calculations are undoubtedly complex and vary significantly from member to member. However, following Mayhew (1974), we argue that a great deal of congressional wartime behavior can be understood through the lens of the electoral connection. A focus on national and local electoral incentives yields significant insight into patterns of congressional rhetoric over time as well as into the considerable variation in antiwar position taking from member to member.

Party scholars have identified a number of reasons that independent political actors would willingly sacrifice some of their autonomy to join a political party. Foremost among these is the drive to secure the electoral advantages that a strong partisan brand name affords in

<sup>1</sup>Similarly, Gartner, Segura, and Barratt (2004) analyzed the influence of state casualty tallies on both challenger and incumbent electoral positioning during the Vietnam War. See also Kriner's (2010) analysis of when during the course of wars Congress introduces and votes on legislative measures to constrain the commander in chief or holds investigative hearings.

<sup>2</sup>This is of considerable importance: the former would suggest that Congress's independent influence on wartime politics and policy-making is limited, whereas the latter would suggest considerably greater autonomy for congressional entrepreneurs trying to shape the policy debate in the public sphere.

helping them mobilize an ill-informed electorate (e.g., Aldrich 1995; Cox and McCubbins 1993; Downs 1957; Kiewiet and McCubbins 1991; Snyder and Ting 2002). Recent scholarship has also shown that how the electorate judges the two parties' positions and actions in foreign affairs, particularly within the context of an ongoing military campaign, can have significant repercussions at the ballot box in both presidential and congressional contests alike (Aldrich, Sullivan, and Borgida 1989; Cotton 1986; Gartner and Segura 2008; Gartner, Segura, and Barratt 2004; Gelpi, Feaver, and Reifler 2005/2006; Grose and Oppenheimer 2007; Karol and Miguel 2007; Kriner and Shen 2007). As a result, partisan electoral incentives are of paramount importance in shaping wartime position taking.

For opposition party members, criticizing the administration's conduct of the war may pay political dividends (Howell and Pevehouse 2007; Kriner 2010). Vocal congressional opposition to the administration, which is frequently featured prominently in the mass media, reminds voters of the unanticipated costs of the president's policies and may tarnish both the president's reputation and by extension that of his party in the next election. However, members of the opposition party must balance this desire to challenge the president's conduct of a war against the political perils of failing to support the troops in the field. When a war's costs are low and its prospects for success high, these political costs may outweigh any anticipated benefit from challenging the president's handling of the war. Spikes in casualties and mounting war costs, however, open windows of opportunity for opposition partisans to publicly challenge the administration.

For presidential copartisans, by contrast, any desire to distance themselves from a costly conflict that is not proceeding according to plan is likely outweighed by the serious damage such criticism would do to their partisan brand name. Congressional challenges to the president's conduct of military affairs, particularly from members of his own party, can seriously weaken popular support for the administration (Baum and Groeling 2010; Groeling and Baum 2008), creating a drag on all candidates running under the party's banner in the next election (Campbell 1991; Jacobson 2004). This is particularly true in the smaller-scale conflicts that have dominated the American military landscape since Vietnam. In such conflicts, the distribution of casualties across the country is sufficiently diffuse that presidential copartisans judge their electoral benefits best served by standing behind their party leader in the White House.

This leads to our first hypothesis: while American casualties will increase antiwar rhetoric from the opposition party, they should have little influence on the volume of

antiwar rhetoric emanating from the president's copartisans.

However, members of Congress seeking to maximize their probability of reelection are concerned about more than just their national partisan brand name; they are also attentive to conditions within their local constituencies. Recent scholarship has demonstrated that war is far from a monolithic event that affects all segments of American society equally. Most directly, some communities pay a much steeper price in blood when the nation goes to war than other communities (Althaus et al. 2011; Gartner and Segura 2000; Gartner, Segura, and Wilkening 1997; Koch and Gartner 2005; Kriner and Shen 2010). Members of Congress will also respond to the electoral incentives caused by their individual constituencies' experiences with a war when crafting the tenor and tone of their public policy positions. However, whereas members' response to casualties in the aggregate is conditional on partisanship, we posit that all members of Congress will respond in the same way to casualties sustained within their individual constituencies.

For members of the partisan opposition, high levels of constituency exposure to casualties reinforce their baseline partisan incentive to criticize the war, dissociate themselves from its costs, and place the blame on a president of the opposition party.<sup>3</sup> For the president's copartisans on Capitol Hill, local war deaths complicate their strategic calculations. While members of the president's party have partisan electoral incentives to toe the party line in response to casualties in the aggregate, when confronted with high war costs in their individual constituencies the peril of failing to take a public stand critical of the war's high costs may—for some members—outweigh the damage such a response could do to the party brand name. Thus, the concentration of casualties in an individual constituency may be enough to encourage some copartisan members to break with the White House and criticize a costly war.

This leads to our second hypothesis: members of both parties will respond to the accumulation of casualties within their local constituencies by increasing the volume of their antiwar rhetoric.<sup>4</sup> Thus, an electoral perspective

<sup>3</sup>Significant numbers of constituency casualties should also decrease the risk of being tarred with the charge of failing to support the troops in the field should a member vocally criticize the war and its conduct.

<sup>4</sup>Hypothesis 1 concerns temporal variance in antiwar rhetoric, and Hypothesis 2 concerns cross-sectional variance in individual members' antiwar rhetoric over the entire time period. As a result, it is possible to find that Republicans from high-casualty constituencies are more inclined to criticize the war than Republicans from low-casualty districts and at the same time to also find that patterns of

predicts that both opposition party members *and* presidential copartisans will become increasingly vocal in their criticism of a war as their constituencies are increasingly hit by battlefield casualties.

## Casualties and Patterns in Congressional Iraq War Rhetoric

We examine the interrelationships between casualties, congressional position taking, and public opinion through a sequence of three studies, each drawing on a unique data set. Taken together, these studies allow us to examine the differing ways in which congressional elites process information from foreign battlefields and how this variation may help explain geographic variance in public attitudes toward the war across the country. We first investigate the factors driving shifts in the intensity of congressional rhetoric criticizing the Iraq War from the initial invasion in March 2003 through the conclusion of the 110th Congress in December 2008.<sup>5</sup> To measure congressional signals critical of the war, we coded 7,000 speeches given on the floor of the House of Representatives during this period from the *Congressional Record*. Full coding details are provided in the supplemental information. In brief, after conducting a full text search for all speeches containing the word “Iraq,” coders read each speech, paying careful attention to any arguments made about both the initial decision to invade Iraq and whether the United States should stay the course there or begin to withdraw. Coders were then asked to make a summary judgment of whether the speech, on the whole, was supportive of the war and/or the president’s conduct of it or opposed to the conflict. In making this determination, arguments about the war’s conduct were given preeminence; that is, a speech that acknowledged going to war was the right thing to do, but that also argued the United States must begin to withdraw from Iraq, was coded as antiwar. Speeches that did not contain specific arguments for or against the war and/or its conduct were excluded

from the final data set. Ultimately, coders identified 5,279 speeches that were critical of the war.<sup>6</sup>

## Aggregate-Level Analysis

From the raw speech data, we then created monthly counts of critical congressional speeches given by members of each party. Time series for each partisan group are presented in the supplemental information. As expected, the vast majority of speeches given in the House criticizing the Iraq War were made by Democrats. However, Republican members did occasionally criticize the war from the floor of the House, and over time there is considerable variation in both parties’ propensities to publicly challenge the president’s conduct of the war.

To visually display the relationship between American war casualties and the timing and volume of congressional rhetoric criticizing the administration’s war policies, Figure 1 presents two simple scatterplots of antiwar rhetoric and lagged monthly casualties for both Democratic and Republican members of Congress. Among Democrats, there is a clear positive relationship; the volume of public Democratic criticism of the Iraq War increases in the wake of high American casualties. By contrast, among Republicans there is little evidence of any relationship between the two.

To probe further, we constructed a pair of negative binomial event-count models. In each specification, the dependent variable is the monthly sum total of the number of critical House floor speeches identified from the *Congressional Record*. The key independent variable is the number of American casualties sustained in the preceding month.<sup>7</sup> The models also control for a number of additional factors that might drive variation in congressional antiwar rhetoric over time. Because members of Congress may be more likely to attack when the president’s political capital is low than when it is high, the models also include two measures of the president’s political standing: lagged presidential approval and, because a president’s political capital is so intimately tied to the health of the economy, a lagged measure of the national unemployment rate. Finally, to account for fluctuations in the legislative business cycle that determine members’ opportunities to give floor speeches, we also control for

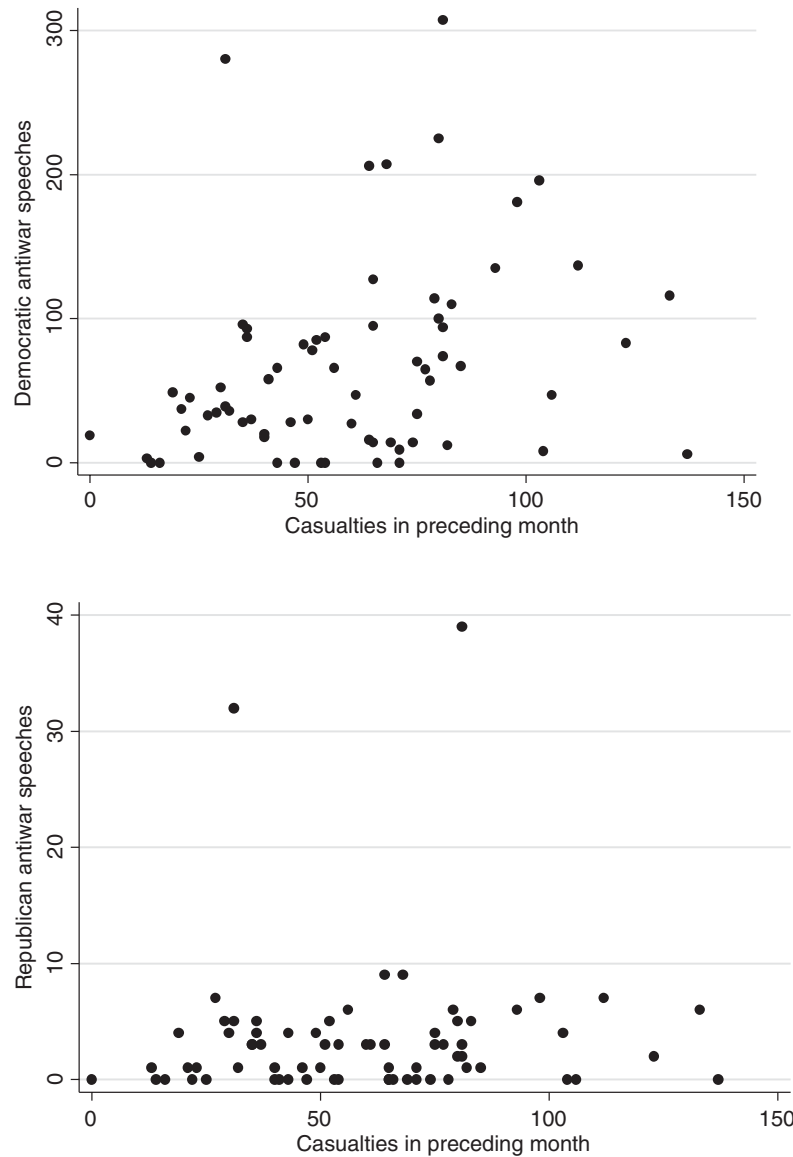
Republican antiwar rhetoric in the aggregate are not responsive to aggregate patterns in American casualties.

<sup>5</sup>We focus here on the period 2003–2008 because it is during the Bush administration that our theoretical expectations are clearest. In this period, Democratic antiwar rhetoric should increase in the wake of casualties, while Republican antiwar rhetoric should be unrelated to battlefield developments. For additional models and discussion extending this analysis through 2010, we refer readers to the supplemental information.

<sup>6</sup>As described in the supplemental information, intercoder reliability tests for members of the coding team yielded Cohen’s Kappas from .895 to .970, indicating a high degree of intercoder reliability.

<sup>7</sup>For a discussion of alternative operationalizations of casualties that yield substantively similar results, as well as for additional models that also include measures of negative conflict events and additional robustness checks, see the supplemental information.

**FIGURE 1 Aggregate Casualties and Monthly Congressional Antiwar Rhetoric, March 2003–December 2008**



the number of days that Congress was in session in each month. Results are presented in Table 1.

Strongly consistent with theoretical expectations, the models reveal a striking partisan divergence. Democratic members of Congress responded to casualties by increasingly criticizing the war and the Bush administration's handling of it. By contrast, there is little evidence that Republicans broke ranks with the president as American casualties mounted; in the Republican model, the relevant coefficient is smaller and not statistically significant.

Thus, in the aggregate, we see a significant partisan divide in congressional responsiveness to developments

on the battlefield. For Democrats, casualties opened windows of opportunity to attack President Bush's conduct of the war for political advantage. For Republicans, even significant increases in casualties were insufficient to spur increased congressional Republican attacks on President Bush's policies.

### Individual-Level Analysis

The preceding models analyze only aggregate trends in the volume of antiwar congressional rhetoric over time.



**TABLE 1 Casualties, Conflict Events, and Congressional Criticism of the Iraq War**

	Democrats	Republicans
Casualties	0.12*** (0.05)	0.07 (0.06)
Presidential approval	-0.00 (0.02)	-0.03 (0.02)
Unemployment	-0.34 (0.38)	0.07 (0.44)
Days in session	0.14*** (0.03)	0.13*** (0.03)
Constant	3.53** (1.63)	0.09 (2.08)
Observations	70	70

*Note:* Casualties (in 10s), approval, and unemployment variables all lagged one month. Robust standard errors in parentheses. All significance tests are two-tailed. \* $p < 0.10$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

They say nothing about the significant variation in anti-war rhetoric across individual members of Congress. For example, of the more than 300 House Republicans who served in Congress between March 2003 and December 2010, almost 71% gave no speeches critical of the administration's war policies. However, 88 House Republicans gave at least one speech critical of the war in Iraq, and 33 delivered more than one critical address. The variation is even more extreme on the Democratic side of the aisle. While 12% of the caucus gave no speeches critical of the war effort and more than 40% gave fewer than five, a full third gave 10 or more speeches attacking the administration and its handling of the situation in Iraq.

Aggregate-level casualties and major events cannot explain this variation. However, as a robust emerging literature reminds us, war gives rise to a myriad of local experiences reflecting the variable exposure of different communities to the costs of war. These local war costs can affect the electoral calculations that members of Congress make when deciding how to publicly position themselves regarding an ongoing war. For example, from 2003 through 2008 (when all but 544 of the 7,544 speeches in our full data set were made), all Democrats may have possessed a baseline incentive to point out the Bush administration's failings in Iraq in the hopes of tarnishing the Republican brand name and bolstering their party's prospects in the next elections. However, Democrats from constituencies that had most acutely seen the human costs of war may have faced even greater electoral incentives to denounce the war and its policy failings than Democratic members from districts more insulated from ca-

sualties. Similarly, whereas Republican members proved strikingly unresponsive to casualties in the aggregate, Republican representatives from high-casualty districts may have faced increased electoral pressure even when George W. Bush sat in the Oval Office to break with the administration publicly and acknowledge problems in the war effort.

To investigate the effects of local casualties on the cues congressional elites transmit to their constituents and whether this relationship is conditional on partisanship, we shift to an individual-level analysis of congressional rhetoric. Specifically, we use a new series of negative binomial event-count models to analyze the effect of local casualties and other demographic and constituency control variables on the number of speeches criticizing the Iraq War given by each representative in each Congress from the beginning of the war in 2003 through the end of combat operations in Iraq under President Obama in 2010.

The independent variable of interest is the exposure of each member's constituency to American combat casualties during the period. Constructing such a measure required careful attention to several details. For a number of reasons, the boundaries of many congressional districts are somewhat artificial with respect to most voters' daily lives. Individual communities may be split between multiple districts, and millions of Americans may watch television broadcasts or read newspapers issued from neighboring communities that sit on the other side of a district boundary. To account for this, we use geographic information system (GIS) software coupled with casualty data from the Department of Defense to construct measures of all casualties from census places within 50 miles of the population center of a congressional district, regardless of whether the fallen soldier's hometown was fully within the geographic boundary of a single district. We then take the natural log of this tally for each district to create our independent variable of interest. We use the natural log of casualties because we hypothesize that increases in casualties in the lower part of the range will have a greater influence than the same-sized increases in the upper part of the variable's range.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to this measure of local casualties, we include a number of control variables that may also affect

<sup>8</sup>For example, we hypothesize that an increase from 10 to 30 casualties from towns within or in close proximity to a congressional district will have a greater impact on congressional position taking than an increase from 70 to 90 casualties. The supplemental information provides further discussion of this operationalization of casualties as well as a series of robustness checks, including models with unlogged casualties and casualty tallies within a 100-mile radius.

the frequency with which a representative speaks on the floor against the war in Iraq. Most importantly, Republicans are significantly less likely to criticize the war policies of a Republican president than are Democrats. Moreover, even after Obama's ascent to the White House, after five years of public support for the war, Republican members should be significantly less likely to criticize it than their counterparts across the aisle. As a result, the model first includes a dummy variable identifying Republican members of the House. Moreover, to assess whether the effects of constituency casualties are different for Democratic and Republican members, the model also includes the interaction of this Republican dummy variable with the local casualties measure described previously.

A member's position within the chamber hierarchy might also affect her or his willingness to use the institutional forum of a floor speech to criticize the war. To control for the possibility that members of the leadership might be more or less willing to attack the White House's policies, we include a dummy variable identifying those holding leadership positions. Alternatively, members of committees dealing with foreign affairs and intelligence might be more willing to defend Congress's institutional prerogatives and confront the executive's handling of military affairs. To account for this possibility, we include a count of each representative's memberships on the foreign relations, armed services, intelligence, or homeland security committees. As a final control for institutional context, we include a measure of each member's seniority within his or her chamber. More senior members who are more invested in their institution may be more willing to confront the executive branch in the military arena; moreover, particularly in the House where floor time is more tightly regulated, more senior members may simply have more opportunities to express their opinions on the war than their junior colleagues (e.g., Hall 1996).

A significant literature on civil-military relations suggests that veterans of the armed forces may view military matters differently than civilians (Dempsey 2010; Feaver and Kohn 2001; Gelpi and Feaver 2002). Accordingly, we include an additional variable, whether each House member had served in the armed forces, to the models. Given the importance of members' personal backgrounds in influencing their voting behavior (Burden 2007), we also included a series of demographic variables to identify each member's race and gender (Dodson 2006; Rocca, Sanchez, and Nikora 2010). Finally, because this first model pools data from multiple Congresses, it also includes dummy variables for the 109th, 110th, and 111th Congresses.

Table 2 presents the results. Most importantly, the coefficient for the local casualties variable is positive and statistically significant. The coefficient for the Republican local-casualties interaction is also positive, but not statis-

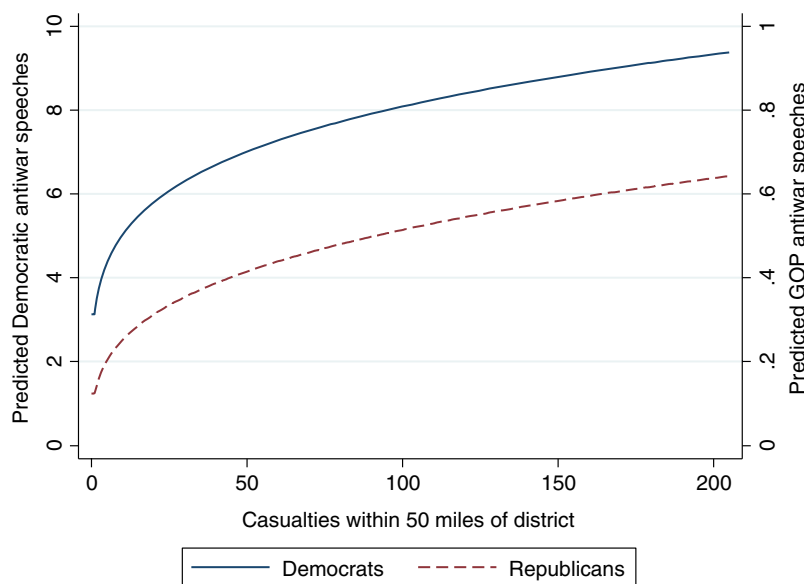
**TABLE 2 Local Casualties and Congressional Antiwar Rhetoric**

Ln casualties w/in 50 miles of district	0.21*** (0.05)
Ln casualties * Republican	0.10 (0.12)
Republican	-3.23*** (0.39)
Leader	-0.24 (0.19)
Foreign policy committee memberships	0.32*** (0.11)
Seniority in chamber	0.04*** (0.01)
Military veteran	0.75*** (0.20)
Female	0.39** (0.16)
Latino	-1.35*** (0.16)
African American	-0.20 (0.15)
109th Congress	-0.03 (0.17)
110th Congress	0.33** (0.16)
111th Congress	-1.21*** (0.27)
Constant	0.60*** (0.19)
Observations	1,769

*Note:* Robust standard errors in parentheses. All significance tests are two-tailed. \* $p < 0.10$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

tically significant. In sharp contrast to the stark partisan divide observed with respect to aggregate casualties in Figure 1 and Table 1, the model in Table 2 shows that both Democratic and Republican House members responded to their home constituencies' experiences with war casualties by stepping up their public criticism of the war.

Substantively, the effect of constituency casualties is also significant. Figure 2 plots the estimated effect of varying levels of local casualties on both a Democratic and a Republican member's predicted number of antiwar floor speeches. Increasing the number of casualties within 50 miles of the center of the median Democratic member's district from one standard deviation below to one standard deviation above the mean would almost double the number of antiwar speeches he or she is predicted to give (for a Democrat in the 110th Congress, this is an increase from about four to eight speeches). Given the

**FIGURE 2 Local Casualties and Antiwar Rhetoric**

paucity of Republican criticism of the war, the effects for GOP lawmakers are considerably smaller, though still significant. For a Republican, a similar shift would increase the predicted number of antiwar speeches from less than .2 to approximately .5.

The control variables also yield several relationships of note. First, as expected, Republicans gave significantly fewer antiwar speeches than did Democrats. Second, members' institutional positions also shaped their willingness to publicly question the Iraq War on the floor. Foreign relations committee members were significantly more vocal in their criticism of the Iraq War than were their peers who did not sit on these committees. More senior members of the House were also significantly more willing to challenge the war and the administration's conduct of it on the floor than were more junior members of the chamber.

Several demographic characteristics were also significant predictors of a member's volume of antiwar rhetoric. Women were more willing to criticize the war than were men, and Latino members were less so, after controlling for partisanship and other characteristics. Finally, members of the House who had served in the armed forces gave significantly more antiwar speeches than did those who never served in uniform.

### Individual-Level Analysis over Time

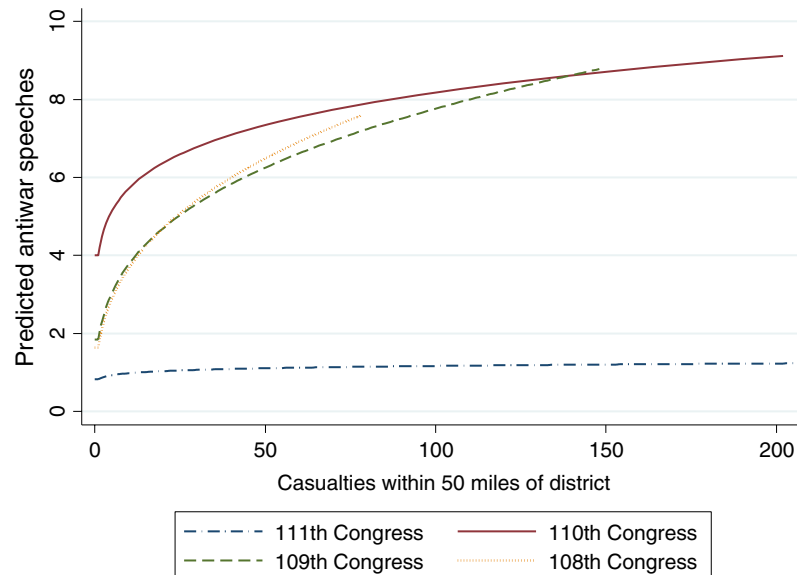
By pooling data from the entire course of Operation Iraqi Freedom, the preceding models may obscure more subtle trends in the influence of local casualties on the antiwar

position taking of members of both parties over time. The situation on the ground changed dramatically as the initial lightning victory in 2003 gave way first to a growing insurgency in 2004 and then to a veritable full-fledged civil war in 2005 and 2006. Moreover, the political climate in Washington also evolved; most significantly, Democrats took control of both chambers of Congress in the 110th Congress, and they secured the presidency in the 111th. To examine whether the influence of constituency casualties on a member's level of public war criticism changed over the course of the war, we reestimated the model from Table 2 with a series of new variables interacting each of the two constituency-casualties variables (i.e., the main effect and the Republican interaction) with dummy variables for the 108th, 109th, 110th, and 111th Congresses. Full results are presented in the supplemental information.

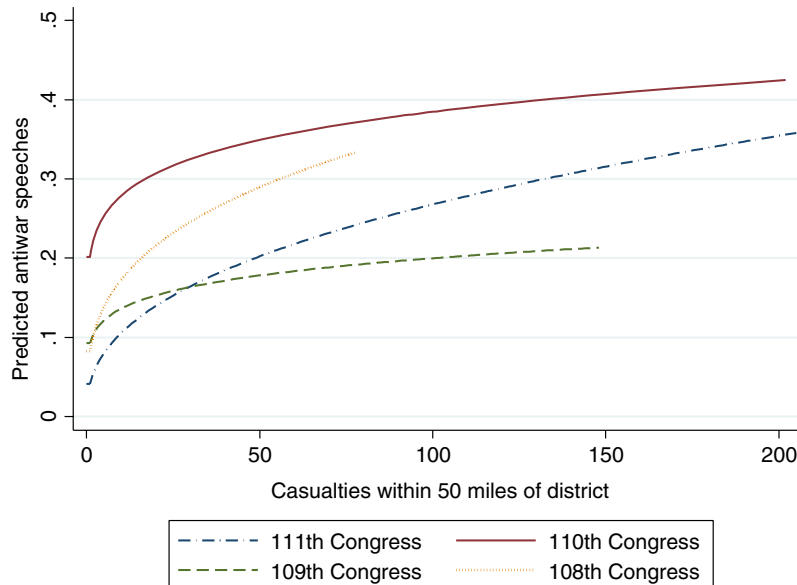
Figures 3 and 4 illustrate the effects of constituency casualties on the number of antiwar speeches given by Democratic and Republican members, respectively. On the Republican side of the aisle, in each Congress we see a significant positive relationship between local casualties and a member's volume of antiwar rhetoric. There is little evidence of any significant change in the relationship over the course of the war.

For Democratic members, by contrast, there is some evidence that the nature of the relationship changed over time. The effect of local casualties on a Democratic member's level of antiwar position taking is somewhat smaller in the 110th Congress than in the 108th and 109th (though the difference in coefficients is only statistically significant,  $p < .10$ , with the former). By the 111th Congress,



**FIGURE 3 Local Casualties and Democratic Antiwar Rhetoric by Congress**

Note: Each line ends at the maximum number of cumulative constituency casualties observed within 50 miles of a district centroid for that Congress.

**FIGURE 4 Local Casualties and Republican Antiwar Rhetoric by Congress**

Note: Each line ends at the maximum number of cumulative constituency casualties observed within 50 miles of a district centroid for that Congress.

the coefficient is no longer statistically significant. Because of data limitations, it is difficult to do more than speculate about what might be causing these differences. One possibility is that in the 110th Congress, Democrats had other vehicles at their disposal, such as committee hear-

ings and investigations, which they employed with great frequency, to challenge the Bush administration's conduct of the war (Kriner 2009).<sup>9</sup> Alternatively, attacking

<sup>9</sup>We thank an anonymous reviewer for suggesting this possibility.

the president's handling of Iraq may have become so universally advantageous to Democrats that in 2007–2008 all Democrats may have possessed strong incentives to criticize the war publicly, somewhat mitigating differences across constituencies with different casualty exposure.

The null finding for local casualties on Democratic antiwar rhetoric in the 111th Congress is also intriguing. It could be that the declining importance of local casualties in driving Democratic rhetoric is a result of Barack Obama replacing George Bush in the Oval Office. However, we are wary of inferring too much from such limited data. With the president having pledged to end the war and Operation Iraqi Freedom ending in August 2010, the volume of antiwar rhetoric overall shrank considerably in 2009 and 2010; indeed, the number of antiwar speeches decreased by 80% from its 110th Congress high. Perhaps the most striking result of this additional cut of the data is the consistency in the positive relationship between constituency exposure to combat casualties and the volume of congressional antiwar rhetoric for members of both parties over virtually the entire course of the conflict.

## Constituency Casualties and Democratic Voting Behavior

Giving floor speeches is but one means by which members of Congress can send policy cues to their constituents about military affairs. A second avenue is through roll-call votes. Between the Iraq War's initiation in 2003 and the Democrats' seizure of power in 2007, several legislative vehicles were brought to the floor of the House for a vote that allowed members to take highly public stands for or against the war in Iraq. In almost every case, an overwhelming majority of Republican members stood with the president and refused to cast a vote that could be construed as against the war. Similarly, on several votes in the 110th Congress, such as the vote for HR 1591 that mandated a timetable for withdrawal from Iraq, the Democratic leadership succeeded in achieving near unanimity within the Democratic caucus.

However, on four prominent roll calls, there is sufficient variation within Democratic ranks to examine whether constituency exposure to casualties also influenced Democratic members' roll-call voting calculations. The first vote, HR 3289, concerned the Bush administration's initial emergency supplemental appropriations request for \$87 billion to finance the war and occupation in October 2003. In 2004, Democrats again split on a resolution commemorating the one-year anniversary of the invasion, affirming that "the United States and the

**TABLE 3 District Casualties and Democratic Voting Patterns on Iraq War**

Year	Bill	Number of Votes	Avg. Casualties
2003	HR 3289		
	Antiwar	118	5.7
	Prowar	83	4.7
2004	H Res 557		
	Antiwar	105	9.9
	Prowar	90	7.5
2005	Woolsey amdt. to HR 1815		
	Antiwar	122	28.1
	Prowar	79	20.5
2007	HR 2237		
	Antiwar	169	54.8
	Prowar	59	24.8

*Note:* The difference in average casualties (within 50 miles of the district centroid) between antiwar and prowar votes for the 2003 vote is statistically significant,  $p < .10$ . For the votes in 2004–2007, the differences are all statistically significant,  $p < .05$ .

world have been made safer with the removal of Saddam Hussein." In 2005, 122 Democrats voted for an amendment offered by Lynn Woolsey that called on the administration to develop a plan for withdrawing American forces from Iraq, and in a 2007 vote, 169 Democrats backed legislation sponsored by Jim McGovern (HR 2237) that would require the near-immediate withdrawal of American forces from Iraq.

For each bill, Table 3 presents the number of Democrats taking an antiwar versus a prowar position, as well as the mean number of constituency casualties at the time of the vote for the Democrats in each group. In each case, the average Democrat casting an antiwar vote represented a constituency that had experienced a larger number of casualties than the average Democrat casting a prowar vote. For the 2003 vote on HR 3289, this difference in means is statistically significant,  $p < .10$ ; for all other votes, the difference in means is significant,  $p < .05$ .

In raw terms, the gap between prowar and antiwar Democratic voters grew steadily from 2003 such that by 2007, antiwar Democrats represented constituencies that had suffered 30 more casualties (or 120% more), on average, than Democrats who voted against the McGovern bill.

The data strongly suggest that greater constituency exposure to combat casualties encouraged some Democrats to be more likely to publicly cast antiwar votes than other Democrats. However, it is possible that there is something else about high-casualty constituencies that

made these representatives more likely to oppose the war than their fellow House Democrats. One way to examine the plausibility of this alternative hypothesis is to examine a vote cast *before* the United States had suffered any casualties—the 2002 authorization to use force against Iraq (HJ Res 114). House Democrats also split on this vote, with 79 voting to authorize force and 122 voting against it. If the results in Table 3 are the spurious product of some omitted underlying characteristic of these districts that predisposed their representatives to oppose the Iraq War, then representatives from districts that would later experience high casualties should have also opposed the Iraq War in 2002 at a greater rate than Democrats from districts that would later experience lower casualty totals. Replicating the analysis of Table 3 for this earlier vote and using 2003, 2004, 2005, and 2007 casualty tallies shows no evidence of any relationship (see supplemental information). Representatives of districts that would later experience high casualty totals were no more likely to vote against the Iraq War in 2002 than other Democrats; these representatives only became more likely to vote against the war as casualties in their districts mounted.

As an additional robustness check, we estimated a series of probit models, one for each vote that included all of the individual-level control variables from the preceding analysis of congressional speeches. Table 4 presents the results. In each vote, the coefficient for the constituency-casualty exposure measure is positive, and in three of the four models, it is statistically significant. From at least 2004 onward, Democrats who represented constituencies that had seen more casualties in the Iraq War were more likely to take a public stand against the war through roll-call votes. Moreover, the influence of district casualties on voting behavior appears to have increased over time from 2004 to 2005 to 2007.<sup>10</sup>

## Variation in Elite Rhetoric and Public Support for War

The preceding analyses of both roll-call voting behavior and congressional antiwar rhetoric make clear that members of Congress engage in multiple strategic calculations when deciding how to position themselves publicly on a military venture. The end result is considerable vari-

ation in the number and nature of policy-relevant cues that political elites transmit to their constituents. Can this variation in elite signaling help explain variation in war support across the country?

Given Congress's historically low approval ratings, skeptics may well question whether signals sent from Capitol Hill have much influence on popular support for war. However, as Fenno (1975) noted decades ago, millions of Americans continue to hold their local member of Congress in high esteem, even as they loathe Congress as an institution. Moreover, media coverage and consumption patterns provide a means through which members of Congress might shape the foreign policy judgments and preferences of their constituents.<sup>11</sup> Even with the proliferation of media outlets in recent years, many Americans continue to rely heavily on local news sources (Gilliam and Iyengar 2000). This, combined with local media's well-documented dependence on local members of Congress for information on national and international affairs, opens the door for congressional cues to be widely transmitted to their constituents back home (inter alia, Grimmer 2010; Kaniss 1991; Paletz and Entman 1981; Schaffner 2006).<sup>12</sup> Thus, while Americans may or may not be responsive to the overall tenor of debate on Capitol Hill, they may be much more likely to update their policy preferences in response to cues sent by their local representative.

To examine whether the variation in congressional position taking on the Iraq War can explain divergent patterns in both Americans' retrospective assessment of the war and in their prospective policy preferences, we examine two questions from a June 2006 Gallup survey querying popular attitudes on Iraq. The first question, capturing Americans' retrospective judgment of the decision to go to war, asked respondents whether the United States "made a mistake" in sending troops to Iraq. The second asked respondents about their preferred course for the future of the U.S. mission in Iraq, specifically whether the United States should stay the course or begin to withdraw.

Because this Gallup survey (USAIPOUSA 2006–24) asked a number of questions concerning the

<sup>10</sup>On each of these votes, Republicans voted almost unanimously in support of the war. Thus, while constituency casualties do appear to shape the willingness of both Republicans and Democrats to publicly criticize the war, the costs to the party brand name of voting against it on the floor appear to outweigh the local electoral incentives for Republican members.

<sup>11</sup>More generally, an extensive literature in political communications emphasizes the importance accorded to Congress by the media as a source of alternative frames to those championed by the White House (inter alia, Bennett 1990; Entman 2004; and Mermin 1999). Indeed, Althaus et al. (1996, 409) labeled Congress "the chief institutional locus of elite opposition."

<sup>12</sup>Grimmer (2010, 49–50) finds many floor speeches are designed for constituent consumption: transcripts and related materials are submitted directly to local news outlets, and many legislators' press releases are even run verbatim in newspapers in their districts.

**TABLE 4 Constituency Casualties and Democratic Voting Behavior**

	2003 HR 3289	2004 H Res 557	2005 HR 1815	2007 HR 2237
Ln casualties within 50 miles	0.11 (0.17)	0.26* (0.16)	0.51*** (0.14)	0.79*** (0.18)
Leader	-0.24 (0.87)	-0.90 (0.76)	-1.19 (0.99)	-0.53 (1.39)
Foreign policy committee memberships	-0.30 (0.28)	-0.59* (0.31)	-1.02*** (0.31)	-0.42 (0.32)
Seniority in chamber	0.05 (0.04)	0.12** (0.05)	0.01 (0.04)	0.11*** (0.04)
Veteran	-0.46 (0.44)	0.09 (0.47)	-0.12 (0.49)	-0.55 (0.46)
Black	2.22*** (0.63)	2.16*** (0.53)	1.29*** (0.46)	1.85** (0.77)
Latino	0.35 (0.52)	0.69 (0.53)	0.17 (0.59)	0.41 (0.72)
Female	0.91** (0.46)	1.39*** (0.51)	0.12 (0.42)	0.91* (0.52)
Constant	-0.34 (0.38)	-1.72*** (0.44)	-0.82* (0.47)	-2.15*** (0.62)
Observations	201	195	201	228

Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses. All significance tests are two-tailed. \* $p < 0.10$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

upcoming midterm elections, it provided information on each respondent's home state and congressional district. District-level identifiers are somewhat rare in most such surveys. This information allows us to assess whether there is a relationship between the volume of antiwar rhetoric transmitted to a respondent by his or her local representative and that respondent's wartime opinions and preferences.<sup>13</sup> The independent variable of interest in the first set of models in columns 1 and 2 is the total number of antiwar speeches given by each respondent's current representative in the House from March 2003 to June 16, 2006, one week before the first date that the poll was in the field. All models also include a range of individual-level controls, including measures of each respondent's partisanship, race, gender, age, and educational attainment. A probit model is used for the binary "Iraq was a mistake" dependent variable, and an ordered probit is used for the question examining respondents' willingness to stay the course in Iraq.

Table 5 presents the results. In both the "mistake" and "stay the course" models, the coefficient for House anti-

war speeches is in the expected direction and statistically significant. Citizens in districts where their representatives made more antiwar speeches were more likely to judge it a mistake and less willing to stay the course in Iraq than were their peers with identical partisan and demographic characteristics in other communities that were exposed to fewer congressional elite cues criticizing the war. The relationships observed in these initial results are also substantively meaningful. Simulations suggest that for a "typical" independent respondent, an increase in local congressional antiwar rhetoric from one standard deviation below the mean to one standard deviation above it would increase the probability that she judges the war in Iraq a mistake by 5% (from 54% to 59%). Similarly, increased antiwar cues from a respondent's home district representative would decrease her probability of favoring an open-ended deployment in Iraq or even sending more troops to the Middle East by 6% (from 43% to 37%).

These first-cut results provide an important and unique test of the elite-opinion leadership hypothesis. Rather than identifying periods of relative elite consensus or dissension and looking for evidence of mainstream or polarization effects (Berinsky 2007; Zaller 1992), they exploit the geographic variation in congressional antiwar position taking and show that this strongly correlates with geographic differences in war support. Respondents

<sup>13</sup>The volume of antiwar rhetoric and the number of antiwar votes a member cast on the three pre-June 2006 votes from Table 3 are too highly correlated to include in the same model. We focus here on rhetoric, as this measure reflects significantly more variation across districts than the antiwar votes measure.

**TABLE 5 Congressional Antiwar Rhetoric and Public Support for the Iraq War**

	Mistake	Stay the Course	Mistake	Stay the Course
House antiwar speeches	0.06** (0.03)	-0.07*** (0.02)	-0.00 (0.04)	-0.03 (0.02)
Antiwar speeches * Know party			0.25** (0.11)	-0.09* (0.05)
Republican	-1.07*** (0.11)	0.71*** (0.09)	-1.07*** (0.11)	0.71*** (0.09)
Democrat	0.68*** (0.11)	-0.28*** (0.09)	0.67*** (0.11)	-0.28*** (0.09)
Age	0.01*** (0.00)	0.01** (0.00)	0.01*** (0.00)	0.01** (0.00)
Education	0.01 (0.05)	0.12*** (0.04)	-0.01 (0.05)	0.12*** (0.04)
Male	0.04 (0.09)	0.43*** (0.07)	0.01 (0.09)	0.43*** (0.07)
White	-0.50*** (0.14)	0.32*** (0.11)	-0.51*** (0.14)	0.32*** (0.11)
Know party of Congress member			0.07 (0.10)	0.01 (0.08)
Constant	0.11 (0.25)		0.17 (0.25)	
Observations	970	956	970	956

Note: "Mistake" models are probits and "Stay the course" models are ordered probits. For the latter, cut points are omitted. Robust standard errors in parentheses. All significance tests are two-tailed. \* $p < 0.10$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

whose local representatives transmitted more policy cues critical of the war in Iraq were significantly more likely to judge the Iraq War a mistake and favor the speedy withdrawal of American forces than were respondents with identical partisan and demographic characteristics from districts that received fewer local congressional cues critical of the war.

However, as opinion scholars have long acknowledged, it is exceedingly difficult to make causal claims from such data. Perhaps most importantly, the relationship between congressional cues and public opinion is almost certainly endogenous to some extent. Members of Congress surely look to, even as they endeavor to lead, opinion in their district.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, an omitted variable may be driving both congressional position taking and opinion within a district, thereby skewing the estimate of the effect of the former on the latter. Eliminating

such concerns is exceedingly difficult with observational data such as these; however, we are able to conduct two additional rounds of analysis to further test our initial estimates of the relationship between local congressional rhetoric and public opinion.

First, we examined whether the relationship between congressional rhetoric and war support is stronger among the subset of citizens who should be most attentive to the positions taken by political elites. Although the Gallup survey did not include a battery of factual knowledge questions, it did ask respondents whether or not they knew the partisan affiliation of their local member of Congress. A little less than two-thirds of the subjects replied that they knew the party of their representative in Congress; and of those who replied in the affirmative, almost 80% correctly identified the party of their member of Congress. Respondents able to correctly identify their representative's partisanship should be more likely to receive and respond to local congressional elite cues concerning the Iraq War than those who could not. Accordingly, as a further test of our hypothesis, we replicated our analyses with two additional variables: a dummy variable indicating those respondents who correctly identified

<sup>14</sup>Nevertheless, considerable research argues that, particularly in the realm of foreign policy opinions, the causal arrow runs primarily from elites to the public (Berinsky 2007, 2009; Jordan and Page 1992; Zaller 1992; Zaller and Chiu 1996). Experimental research also speaks to the opinion-shaping power of congressional cues on war (Baum and Groeling 2010; Gelpi, Feaver, and Reifler 2009; Howell and Kriner 2009; Howell and Pevehouse 2007).



their representative's partisanship and the interaction of this variable with the antiwar speeches measure. Columns 3 and 4 of Table 5 present the results.

Strongly consistent with our theory, the coefficients for both interaction variables are in the expected direction and statistically significant. Among this subset of respondents, the estimated effect of a two standard deviation increase in antiwar rhetoric doubled; simulations reveal that, for the "typical" politically aware respondent, increasing antiwar rhetoric from one standard deviation below to one standard deviation above its mean would raise the respondent's probability of judging the war in Iraq a mistake by 10%. Similarly, for the typical politically aware respondent, simulations indicate that such a shift in antiwar congressional rhetoric would decrease the predicted probability of the respondent supporting staying the course in Iraq by 8%. This additional analysis does not eliminate concerns about endogeneity. However, it is strongly consistent with research by Zaller (1992), Berinsky (2009), and others arguing that the effects of elite rhetoric should be greater among the most politically aware segment of the population.

As a final robustness check, we endeavor to address concerns about endogeneity and omitted variable bias directly by following recent research and employing an instrumental variable approach (e.g., Canes-Wrone 2005; Gabel and Scheve 2007; Kriner 2009). Specifically, we estimate a pair of instrumental variable probit models with a continuous first-stage equation (congressional antiwar rhetoric) and binary second-stage equation (believing Iraq was a mistake / supporting staying the course in Iraq).<sup>15</sup> This modeling strategy requires an instrumental variable that is a strong predictor of a House member's number of antiwar appeals, but that is otherwise uncorrelated with public opinion. For our instrument, we use a member's level of seniority within the House. Congressional scholars have long noted that more senior members have greater opportunities and resources to engage in the business of Congress than their more junior colleagues (e.g., Hall 1996; Schiller 1995). Particularly relevant here, Hill and Hurley (2002) argue and demonstrate empirically that more senior members of the Senate have both greater resources and more formal and informal leadership roles that both allow and encourage them to give more policy-focused speeches than junior members. Thus, past research strongly suggests that member seniority should be correlated with increased speechmak-

<sup>15</sup>For this model, we collapse the ordinal stay-the-course index into a binary variable coded 1 if the respondent favored increasing the number of troops in Iraq or staying as long as necessary and 0 if he or she favored withdrawal in the next year or immediately.

**TABLE 6 Instrumental Variable Analysis, Rhetoric, and Opinion**

	Mistake	Stay the Course
House antiwar speeches*	.52*** (.15)	-.52*** (.16)
Republican	-.72*** (.25)	.67*** (.22)
Democrat	.42** (.19)	-.14 (.12)
Age	.01*** (.00)	.00 (.00)
Education	-.04 (.05)	.11** (.04)
Male	-.01 (.08)	.37*** (.11)
White	-.32* (.17)	.25* (.15)
Constant	-.11 (.23)	-.73** (.36)
Observations	970	956
Wald test of exogeneity	4.22 (p = .04)	3.30 (p = .07)
Anderson-Rubin test statistic	4.79 (p = .03)	4.65 (p = .03)

*Note:* Results from second-stage equation of instrumental probit models. "House antiwar speeches" are predicted values obtained from a first-stage OLS model using a member's seniority in the House as an instrumental variable. All significance tests are two-tailed. The Anderson-Rubin test statistic, which is robust to weak instruments, shows that we can reject the null hypothesis of no relationship between antiwar rhetoric and Iraq War opposition,  $p < .05$ . \* $p < 0.10$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

ing with respect to the war in Iraq. Consistent with this prior research, chamber seniority was a strong and significant predictor of antiwar rhetoric in Table 2; furthermore, there is no theoretical reason to believe that it should have any independent influence on a survey respondent's attitudes toward the war.

Results are presented in Table 6. Consistent with Table 2, in both unreported first-stage equations, chamber seniority is a strong and statistically significant predictor of the level of antiwar rhetoric in a respondent's congressional district.<sup>16</sup> And most importantly, in both models the instrumental variables approach continues to find statistically significant effects for the level of antiwar

<sup>16</sup>Interested readers are referred to the supplemental information for full results of the first-stage equations and additional diagnostics/robustness checks for the instrumental variables analysis.

rhetoric from a respondent's local member of Congress on his or her attitudes toward the conflict in Iraq.

None of these analyses can decisively prove a causal effect (on the limits of instrumental variable approaches, see, *inter alia*, Bartels 1991). However, taken as a whole, these three rounds of analysis—the simple partial correlations observed in the baseline regressions, the interactions with political knowledge, and the instrumental variables analysis—are strongly consistent with our argument that variation in congressional cues has helped produce the significant geographic variance in wartime opinions and attitudes across the country observed in prior research (e.g., Gartner, Segura, and Wilkening 1997; Hayes and Myers 2009; Kriner and Shen 2010).

## Discussion

Despite a growing literature asserting that, by engaging in the public sphere, Congress influences public opinion and that this, in turn, shapes presidential decisions when conducting major military operations, comparatively little scholarship has directly examined the factors shaping individual legislators' calculations concerning whether and when to publicly criticize an ongoing war. The preceding analyses show that members of Congress neither decide their policy positions in a vacuum with no attention to real-world events nor do they automatically and uniformly respond to developments on foreign battlefields. We find that members of Congress do incorporate information about American casualties in the aggregate, as well as information about their local constituency's exposure to war costs, into their strategic calculations when taking public positions on a war. However, congressional responsiveness to developments on foreign battlefields is mediated by partisanship. Opposition partisans respond to both casualties in the aggregate and in their local constituencies by becoming increasingly critical of a war and its conduct in the public sphere. Presidential copartisans, by contrast, largely do not respond to casualties in the aggregate; however, even the president's partisan allies on Capitol Hill respond to casualties sustained in their home constituencies by becoming increasingly critical of the war. These results are strongly consistent with our theoretical approach emphasizing the importance of both national and local electoral incentives in governing congressional position taking.

In uncovering the dynamics driving elite position taking throughout the course of Operation Iraqi Freedom, the analysis also begins to bridge a significant divide in the wartime opinion literature between scholars emphasizing the importance of unmediated conflict events and

those championing the influence of political elites. Rather than reaffirming an either/or dichotomy, our results suggest an integration of the two perspectives. Even though many Americans do not know the number of casualties sustained in war (Berinsky 2007; Myers and Hayes 2010) and large segments of the public hold widespread misperceptions about objective conflict developments (Jacobson 2006; Nyhan and Reifler 2010), political elites do follow changing conditions on the ground and update their strategic calculations about what public positions to take regarding the war accordingly. Thus, events may indeed play an important, if indirect, role in shaping public opinion toward war, even in the face of public ignorance, through their influence on the cues transmitted by political elites. And elites serve as an important filter, responding in different ways to the same conflict events depending on their personal political calculations.

Our analysis also presents a new type of evidence bolstering arguments that political elites significantly influence public support for war. Rather than focusing exclusively on elite consensus versus dissension, we demonstrate that the variation in war policy cues transmitted to constituents strongly correlates with geographic variance in Americans' retrospective and prospective public policy preferences. In so doing, our results also suggest a mechanism capable of explaining the observed cleavages in opinion and voting behavior between residents of high- and low-casualty communities documented in prior scholarship (e.g., Althaus, Bramlet, and Gimpel 2011; Gartner, Segura, and Wilkening 1997; Grose and Oppenheimer 2007; Hayes and Myers 2009; Karol and Miguel 2007; Kriner and Shen 2010). Local casualties affect local elite position taking, which in turn can produce significant geographic cleavages in policy attitudes and political behaviors.

Finally, our analysis also has important implications for policy makers and competing assessments of the casualty sensitivity of the American public (*inter alia*, Feaver and Gelpi 2004; Gelpi, Feaver, and Reifler 2009; Kull and Destler 1999). Because casualties do encourage opposition party elites to break with the administration and increasingly criticize its handling of the war, the accumulation of casualties should blunt any rally effect initially enjoyed by the White House as citizens receive more elite cues critical of the war. However, members of the president's party are much less likely to criticize the war and the administration's prosecution of it, even in the wake of casualties and adverse events. This is important, as same-party criticism is deemed particularly newsworthy by the mass media (Baum and Groeling 2010), and, because it is a "costly" signal (Calvert 1985; Huckfeldt 2001; Morrow 1989; Myers 1998), such criticism is particularly

influential with the public. However, as casualties rise to the point that they begin to mount within the local constituencies of key members of the president's own party, he has more to fear. High constituency casualties may encourage even presidential copartisans to break with their party leader; this, in turn, threatens to erode public support for war further still.

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## Supporting Information

Additional Supporting Information may be found in the online version of this article at the publisher's website:

- Inter-coder reliability
- Robustness checks on aggregate rhetoric analysis
  - Alternative model specifications
  - Data from the 111th Congress
- Robustness checks on individual-level rhetoric analysis
  - Alternative operationalizations of district casualties
  - Alternative model specifications
- Robustness checks on voting behavior analysis
  - Alternative operationalizations of district casualties
  - Analysis of pre-war data
- Robustness checks on public opinion analysis
  - Alternative model specifications
  - Additional instrumental variables analysis
- Complete coding appendix