Casualty Politics and Congressional Rhetoric

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the ethics of and reasons for casualty rhetoric in U.S. congressional debates—both on the House floor and in TV media debates. Normatively, it argues that casualty rhetoric is an obligation for elected politicians and that it enhances the inclusionary and public reasoning mechanisms of wartime deliberations in democracies. Empirically, it models Iraqi civilian and U.S. combat casualty rhetoric in the U.S. House of Representatives. Robust effects are found for past voting behavior, partisanship, veteran status, ideology, and gender variables. The dissertation further explores wartime deaths as normative constructs, and assesses how politicians construed the loss of life in Iraq during congressional debates. The meaning of casualties is found to be contingent upon contextualized wartime information that is selectively and strategically deployed by politicians. The dissertation also examines how members of the U.S. Congress contextualize U.S. combat casualties in Iraq during appearances in the TV news media. It finds that Democrats and Republicans uniformly discuss war casualties in critical and supportive terms, respectively. This partisan uniformity in casualty rhetoric has implications for the finding that cross-party criticism and support influences public opinion on war. The dissertation concludes by considering the implications of this study for U.S. drone warfare and for theorizing discourse ethics in International Relations (IR). The arguments and findings speak to literatures on the role of congressional rhetoric during war, casualty politics, and theories of discourse ethics in IR.
Casualty Politics and Congressional Rhetoric

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Casualty Politics and Congressional Rhetoric

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# Contents

List of Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Exploring Congressional Casualty Rhetoric</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Playing Politics with the Dead? Fallen Soldiers and the Subaltern Politics of Congressional Casualty Rhetoric</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Casualty Contextualization and Congressional Rhetoric in the TV Media</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Discourse Ethics, Drones, and the Future of U.S. Military Adventurism</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

References 160
List of Tables

Table 2.1 Explaining U.S. Combat Casualty Rhetoric / 41
Table 2.2 Marginal Effects for Key Independent Variables: Predicted Number of U.S. Combat Casualty Speeches / 42
Table 2.3 Hypotheses and Results / 46
Table 2.4 Logit Analysis of District Casualties and Predicted Probability of District Combat Casualty Rhetoric / 47
Table 3.1 Key Descriptive Statistics / 78
Table 3.2 Explaining Civilian Casualty Rhetoric / 80
Table 3.3 Marginal Effects for Key Independent Variables: Predicted Number of Civilian Casualty Speeches / 81-82
Table 4.1 Casualty Contextualization / 117
Table 4.2 Valence of Death Rhetoric, 2004 and 2006 / 120
Table 4.3 Consumer and Investment Statements, 2004 and 2006 / 125
Table 4.4 U.S. Combat Deaths and Cost Contextualization, 2004 and 2006 / 130
Table 4.5 U.S. Combat Deaths and Benefits Contextualization, 2004 and 2006 / 135
Table 4.6 U.S. Combat Deaths and Legitimacy Contextualization, 2004 and 2006 / 138
Table 5.1 Hypotheses and Results from Chapters Two and Three / 145
Chapter 1
Exploring Congressional Casualty Rhetoric

Current estimates indicate that 6,648 killed U.S. soldiers and approximately 116,409 Iraqi civilians have been killed in Iraq since the war began in March 2003 (O’Hanlon 2012).

In the International Relations (IR) and Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) literature, there is a tradition of treating wartime deaths as variables, and examining their effects on political behavior. Scholarly interest in combat casualties continues to grow, primarily with a focus on exploring the effects of combat deaths on voting behavior and public support for war (Federico, Golec, and Dial 2005; Gartner 2008; Gartner and Segura 1998; Gelpi, Feaver, and Reifler 2009; Karol and Miguel 2007; Kriner and Shen 2007).

There is little research on casualty rhetoric, though experimental research occasionally relies on mock casualty rhetoric to explore the framing effects of casualties on support for war (e.g. Boettcher and Cobb 2006, 2009; Edy and Meirick 2007). Framing studies suggest differential effects of casualties on the public depending on exposure to different casualty frames. Beyond casualty frames, the significance and implications of casualties are contingent on many other factors, such as partisanship and the intensity of partisanship. Gaines et al. (2007: 967) find that “the meanings that people [give] to their factual beliefs about troop losses, not the beliefs themselves, [drive] their opinions toward the [Iraq] war.” Casualties are not simply facts; they are interpreted through partisan lenses, beliefs about war, and modified by contextual information. This point is echoed by Zehfuss (2002: 194), who argues that, “even when something as

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1 The traditional definition of “casualties” includes those who suffer fatalities and wounds during war. However, the (IR) literature generally uses the term “casualties” to refer to war death. This paper continues this practice, and uses “casualties” and “death” interchangeably.

2 For an exception, see Kriner and Shen (2010), which examines the causes and consequences of a “casualty gap.”
suggestively ‘real’ as death is concerned, interpretation is needed to assess how it matters and indeed, I would argue, what it is.”

A different body of literature suggests that elite and congressional war rhetoric impacts the public’s support for war (Berinsky 2007, 2009; Groeling and Baum 2008, 2009; Zaller 1992). For example, Berinsky’s (2009) elite cue theory proposes that the public turns to elite political actors—often members of Congress—to guide their positions on war. We might expect that congressional casualty rhetoric therefore plays a role in shaping citizens’ perceptions of wartime losses and giving meaning to these losses. Congressional war rhetoric, however, is also shaped by the local human costs of war, with local combat casualties increasing congressional criticism of war (Kriner and Shen n.d.). Together, these literatures—pertaining to (1) the impact of casualties on the public and (2) congressional war rhetoric—suggest that combat casualties and congressional war rhetoric are both interrelated and independently influential on U.S. society. These literatures also suggest that, combined, these factors might impact the public’s views on the conduct of war and war casualties.

This dissertation builds on these literatures by exploring congressional casualty rhetoric. Though politicians’ rhetoric is considered vital to public opinion and voting behavior, the issue of politicians’ casualty rhetoric remains opaque. Most scholars would likely accept the argument that politicians’ casualty rhetoric influences public views on war and wartime death, yet this issue has received very little consideration. In the following chapters I examine the determinants of speaking about the 6,648 killed U.S. soldiers and the 116,409 or so killed civilians in Iraq. I also evaluate how members of Congress (MCs) interpret and speak about these losses. Empirically, I examine casualty
rhetoric within the U.S. House of Representatives, as well as casualty rhetoric by representatives and senators in TV news media.

The focus of the dissertation is how and why members of Congress speak about killed U.S. soldiers and foreign civilians, and why it matters. I explore this theme by considering four questions: What explains variation in speaking about wartime deaths among U.S. politicians within Congress? How do politicians debate wartime death within Congress? How do politicians debate these lost lives in the TV news media? Why should it matter whether and how elected officials speak about these wartimes losses? I grapple with these empirical and normative questions in three parts. The second and third chapters address the analytical question of who speaks about dead U.S. soldiers and dead Iraqi civilians, respectively. These chapters also provide an interpretive analysis of how politicians debate wartime casualties. Each of these chapters also takes up the question of why U.S. elected representatives should speak about these deaths. The fourth chapter explores the rhetoric of wartime losses among members of Congress in TV news media.

This dissertation is part of an emerging body of research that suggests Congress plays a larger role than previously thought with regard to the conduct of war (Brulé, Marshall, and Prins 2010; Howell and Pevehouse 2005, 2007; Kriner 2010; Marshall and Prins 2011). Howell and Pevehouse (2007: 97) argue the following:

When they choose to do so, members of Congress can exert a great deal of influence over the conduct of war. They can enact laws that dictate how long military campaigns may last, control the purse strings that determine how well they are funded, and dictate how appropriations may be spent. Moreover, they can call hearings and issue public pronouncements on foreign policy matters. These powers allow members to cut funding for ill-advised military ventures, set timetables for the withdrawal of troops, foreclose opportunities to expand a conflict into new regions, and establish reporting requirements. Through legislation, appropriations, hearings, and public appeals, members of Congress can substantially increase the political costs of military action-sometimes forcing presidents to withdraw sooner than they would like or even preventing any kind of military action whatsoever.
Thus, Congress may shape the conduct of war through a variety of mechanisms. Past scholars are correct in asserting that the President is the most powerful actor with regard to initiating and conducting war (Fisher 2000; Ostrom and Job 1986). As Kriner (2010: 11) posits, however, “this does not mean . . . that Congress exerts no influence over the conduct of American military policy” (emphasis original). Kriner (2010) finds a number of instances in which Congress shapes the commencement, scope, and length of the use of military force abroad. Congressional influence is often indirect, manifesting through the introduction of legislation challenging the use of force as well as through “engaging the debate over military policymaking in the public sphere” (Kriner 2010: 12). This dissertation builds on these studies by examining how combat casualties are part of congressional debates in the public sphere.

A limitation of the dissertation is that it does not examine possible effects of congressional casualty rhetoric. It takes at face value a number of related studies which either suggest or contain an underlying logic indicating the likelihood of congressional casualty rhetoric as influential on the public. This dissertation is therefore a content-analytic approach to congressional rhetoric; it does not attempt to measure the effects of casualty rhetoric on the public. The results of this dissertation would benefit greatly from experimental studies including variants of congressional casualty rhetoric found in the following chapters. Future studies might extend the findings here to determine detailed effects of casualty rhetoric. I focus on content because questions of effects are not fully significant without an understanding of how rhetoric unfolds among politicians. In exploring how debates about U.S. and civilian war deaths actually occur, this dissertation provides a path for future measurements of casualty effects.
There are, of course, important reasons for studying the content of casualty rhetoric that have nothing to do with its effects. I argue that casualty rhetoric is beneficial to the health of American democracy. Politicians have a responsibility to speak about those who have been directly impacted by their decisions. In delegating broad authority to President George W. Bush to use military force in Iraq, members of Congress were partially responsible for the deaths of soldiers and civilians there. From this responsibility stems an ethical obligation to speak of such deaths, in turn permitting them to play a role in public debates. Providing a space for the dead in these debates brings fallen soldiers and civilians into the consideration of wartime legislation and how citizens should think and feel about these deaths in relation to their positions on war. In this way, casualty rhetoric is beneficial to democracy because it ensures that the most devastating cost of war becomes central to the public reasoning process. Casualty rhetoric provides a normatively valuable quasi-agency to killed soldiers and civilians. Because dead soldiers and civilians cannot speak and must therefore be spoken about and spoken for in order to be represented, casualty rhetoric serves a valuable representative function, extending representation to the deceased. By responding to and representing dead soldiers and civilians in public democratic institutions, politicians accommodate a virtual form of agency on behalf of the dead.

Casualty rhetoric thus enhances two important components of democratic deliberations: public reasoning and inclusion. Speaking of the dead allows them to become part of the public reasoning process regarding whether politicians should support or criticize the war, as well as how to proceed with future combat operations. It also includes them in the public conversation about what their deaths mean with respect to
past and future U.S. foreign policy practices. While speaking about and for the dead is a contestable and ethically complicated act, it is preferable to silence. This point will be discussed further in the coming chapters.

**Chapter Overviews**

In the second chapter, “Playing Politics with the Dead? Fallen Soldiers and the Subaltern Politics of Casualty Rhetoric,” the determinants and normative value of speaking about killed U.S. soldiers is examined. This chapter is concerned with U.S. combat casualty rhetoric for a number of reasons. Research suggests that local casualties impact the public’s support for war (Gartner and Segura 1998, 2000), but also that the public tends to know little about aggregate casualty numbers (Berinsky 2007). Public views on the use of force, however, are often linked to elite framing (Entman 2004), and fallen soldiers may likewise emerge as “framed subjects” politicians use to their advantage to shape public opinion on war. Gartner, Segura, and Barrat (2004) propose that local casualties are the most important costs with regard to attitude formation about war among citizens, and find that politicians are responsive to local casualties in terms of formulating and expressing policy positions. Similarly, local casualties are related to increased congressional criticism of war (Kriner and Shen n.d.). This chapter seeks to build on the important insights generated by these studies. To my knowledge, there has been no exploration of whether and how the articulation of casualties is constitutive of rhetorical policy positions. This chapter therefore examines casualty rhetoric within the U.S. House of Representatives, and explore how casualties were central to criticism and support of the Iraq War.
To understand the determinants of U.S. combat casualty rhetoric, I examine casualty rhetoric in two important years: 2004 and 2006. Both of these years were election years for members of the House, and the Iraq War was a major concern in these election years. To understand how representatives spoke about U.S. combat deaths, I conduct an interpretive analysis of congressional rhetoric about these losses. I then compare the different ways Democrats and Republicans spoke of these losses.

Normatively, I contend that one of the ways we may realize the value of casualty rhetoric is by recognizing the subaltern characteristics of killed soldiers. I conceptualize killed soldiers in subaltern terms because they are voiceless, and because many come from marginalized contexts. The chapter observes that killed soldiers literally cannot speak and consequently must be *spoken about* and *spoken for* in order to be represented.

The third chapter, “[Ac]counting [for] Their Dead: Congressional Rhetoric and Lost Iraqi Civilian Lives,” explores Iraqi civilian casualty rhetoric among U.S. House members. This chapter searches for the determinants of Iraqi civilian casualty rhetoric using the same theoretical perspectives as chapter two: strategic ownership and personal characteristics. I do not include constituent characteristics in this chapter. Studies on the human costs of U.S. wars typically focus on American combat deaths; however, it appears foreign civilian casualties might also matter. Studies on agenda setting in campaigns demonstrate that whether candidates discuss or eschew certain issues impacts the extent to which voters consider these issues (Simon 2002). Some scholars suggest that knowledge of casualties (including civilian) may dampen public support for war (Eichenberg 2005: 173). In recent research on how casualties impact public opinion on war, Gelpi, Feaver, and Reifler (2009: 256) ask, “at some level there is an unavoidable
trade-off between their civilian casualties and our military casualties; how does the public weigh that trade-off and what, to use an infelicitous metaphor from economics, is the exchange rate?” Their study provides some clues indicating that the U.S. public is sensitive to foreign civilian deaths. If civilian casualties matter in this way, it is germane to inquire into politicians’ responsiveness to these deaths, as political elites play a role in shaping public opinion on war (Berinsky 2007; Groeling and Baum 2008).

This chapter also considers the extent to which speaking about civilian casualties might also be normatively important. Emmanuel Lévinas (1997: 100), a philosopher noted for his contribution to the ethical study of Self-Other relations, argued that consciousness of others’ suffering was central to any theory of ethics: “What is signified by the advent of conscience . . . if not the discovery of corpses beside me and my horror of existing by assassination? Attention to others and, consequently, the possibility of counting myself among them, of judging myself—conscience is justice.” If attention to the suffering and deaths of others is central to ethical relations among individuals and groups, then attentiveness to these losses in legislative debates may promote a more ethical conversation on war. To some extent, then, research on civilian casualty rhetoric within war debates enables us to understand the justness of democratic deliberations on war in the United States.

Chapter four, “Casualty Contextualization and Congressional Rhetoric in the TV Media,” examines how representatives and senators contextualized war casualties in the months leading up to the 2004 and 2006 elections. To my knowledge, there exists no study that assesses how U.S. politicians contextualize U.S. combat casualties in the news media. While numerous studies find that elite rhetoric—particularly by MCs—shapes the
public’s perceptions of the justifiability and appropriateness of war (Berinsky 2007; Groeling and Baum 2008; Gelpi et al. 2009), there has been virtually no research on how MCs contextualize wartime death in the news media. If perceptions of future success and justifiability are central to structuring the impact of casualties on the public, do MCs contextualize their statements about casualties in these terms? Additionally, do MCs contextualize casualties in ways that align with the findings of experimental studies? I pursue these and other questions in this chapter.

In addition to questions concerning the contextualization of casualties, I seek to determine the degree of issue convergence between partisan MCs and the valence of casualty statements. Unlike on the House and Senate floors, MCs in TV interviews need to respond to questions from journalists, which might include questions about casualties. For politicians hoping to avoid speaking about the human costs of war, the media environment should make issue avoidance difficult. Consequently, I expect issue convergence on casualties, though I anticipate a difference in casualty statement valence among members of opposite parties. Since past studies indicate, however, that the media seeks out criticism of the president by members of his own party, I also expect to find a high percentage of critical Republican casualty rhetoric (Groeling and Baum 2008; 2009).

In pursuing these questions, this chapter builds on a growing body of work on the effects of U.S. combat casualties in American politics. Existing research has examined the significant effects of congressional rhetoric, perceptions of success and justifiability during war, and casualties on public views on war and voting behavior, but researchers have yet to explore precisely how MCs debate wartime death in the media. Such debates might impact the public’s perceptions of war success/failure, and could influence the
impact of casualties on the public through structuring the meaning of these deaths. Questions about the independent effects of variables on casualty sensitivity and support for war among the public could include questions about how partisan elites actually contextualize casualties during key periods. Because Americans are generally relatively uninformed about foreign affairs (see, for example, Baum 2003), and because many Americans get their information from TV news, the voices of congressional elites in the TV news media are a central means of knowledge and accountability (Baum and Groeling 2008).

There are a number of implications of this chapter for research on domestic politics and the conduct of war. Congressional criticism affects the capacity of presidents to rally the public to continue the use of force abroad (Kriner 2010). For example, if MCs—particularly members of the president’s party—discuss combat casualties in critical terms such as failure or inability to achieve a military victory during interviews on TV, then perhaps congressional casualty rhetoric in the media serves as an important mechanism of a “democratic brake on military adventurism” (Kriner and Shen 2007: 507). Alternately, if politicians are able to configure war casualties as part of a successful war or as “noble sacrifices,” or contextualize these deaths with information about killed insurgents, then combat casualties may provide less of a restraint on sustaining aggressive military action abroad. In either case, this chapter provides an empirical basis of casualty contextualization among MCs in the TV media to better understand how the rhetoric of combat casualties serves as a restraining or supporting mechanism for how casualties influence public opinion and voting behavior.
This chapter is therefore relevant to arguments about democratic leaders’ capacity to continue waging war. Sensitivity to casualties among citizens in democracies is one of the purported mechanisms for why it may be difficult not only for democratic leaders to use force, but to sustain support for the use of force (Ray 1995; Smith 2005). Indeed, scholars argue that leaders in democracies pick wars that preferably cost relatively few lives (Reiter and Stam 2002). While it has been suggested that the public does not comprise a formidable constraint on the use of force because, as Rosato (2003 594-595) notes, “the costs of war typically fall on a small subset of the population that will likely be unwilling to protest government policy,” recent research indicates that far more Americans are connected in some way to combat casualties (Kriner and Shen 2010). It is not only the dead and their immediate families that are impacted by the lethality of combat; rather, broad segments of the American public are connected to the dead and exhibit various degrees of sensitivity to the human toll of war (Kriner and Shen 2010). Congressional statements about these human costs in the TV news media provide an important component of public debates about war and the consequences of sending troops to battle. MCs provide information and context about these consequences, and publicly challenge or support the president’s narrative of wartime success.

In the fifth and final chapter, “Discourse Ethics, Drones, and the Future of U.S. Military Adventurism,” I compare and synthesize the findings of chapters two through four, and extend my findings and arguments from these chapters to other contemporary and future combat contexts. In particular, I examine the role of congressional casualty rhetoric with regard to future possibilities of U.S. wars, and argue for the importance of congressional casualty rhetoric in the context of drone strikes in Yemen and Pakistan.
Chapter 2
Playing Politics with the Dead? Fallen Soldiers and the Subaltern Politics of Casualty Rhetoric

What happens when the unique death . . . . when all talk of death comes to be inflected by a prescribed rhetoric? –Jacques Derrida (2003: 17)

Introduction

Most debates about the Iraq War revolved around costs, including economic, reputational, and human costs. Floor speeches in the U.S. House of Representatives provided crucial opportunities for legislators to discuss their views on Iraq and debate the meaning and implications of these costs. Though each of these costs is important, Gartner, Segura, and Barratt (2004: 467) suggest that “wartime deaths . . . represent a, if not the, most visible cost of a nation’s involvement in war and serve to highlight both the relative importance of the conflict to its citizenry, as well as the successfulness of the effort” (emphasis original). This chapter examines speeches about U.S. combat casualties within the U.S. House of Representatives, which I refer to as combat casualty rhetoric. In particular, I examine why and how representatives engaged in this practice, and also explore the normative value of this practice.

There are three main arguments and findings in this chapter. First, I argue that casualty rhetoric is a normatively valuable democratic practice, as it provides the conditions of agency for the dead, interjecting them into public deliberations, affording them the possibility to affect political negotiations within democratic institutions and affect individuals within the public sphere. I conceptualize dead soldiers as subaltern subjects, killed subjects who were often from marginalized communities before death, and unable to speak to the meaning of their deaths upon their demise. Related to this argument is the contention that elected politicians are morally obligated to speak of
deaths for which they hold partial responsibility. Second, I find that local combat deaths, party affiliation, ideology, voting record on authorizing the Iraq War, Foreign Affairs committee membership, combat military service, and, to a lesser extent, race, influence the extent of representatives’ U.S. combat casualty rhetoric. Lastly, beyond the determinants of casualty rhetoric, I find that politicians largely speak of U.S. combat deaths in polarized terms, speaking of the dead in order to attack their opponents or to support his or her own preferred policy in Iraq.

This chapter is concerned with U.S. combat casualty rhetoric for a number of reasons. Research suggests that local casualties impact the public’s support for war (Gartner and Segura 1998, 2000), but also that the public tends to know little about aggregate casualty numbers (Berinsky 2007). Public views on the use of force, however, are often linked to elite framing (Entman 2004), and fallen soldiers may likewise emerge as “framed subjects” by politicians to use to their advantage to shape public opinion on war. Gartner, Segura, and Barrat (2004) propose that local casualties are the most important costs with regard to attitude formation about war among citizens, and find that politicians are responsive to local casualties in terms of formulating and expressing policy positions. Similarly, local casualties are related to increased congressional criticism of war (Kriner and Shen n.d.). This chapter builds on important insights from these studies. To my knowledge, there has been no exploration of whether and how the articulation of casualties is constitutive of rhetorical policy positions. This chapter therefore examines casualty rhetoric within the U.S. House of Representatives, and explores how casualties were central to criticism of and support for the Iraq War.
There are a number of possible explanations of variation in casualty rhetoric among U.S. politicians. From one perspective, rhetorical behavior among politicians is strategic (Fenno 1978; Mayhew 1975). Accordingly, speaking about fallen soldiers should be governed by strategic incentives such as increasing vote shares or damaging partisan opponents’ reputations, for example. From a different strategic view, rhetoric could be employed for “policy motives” rather than “electoral motives” (Maltzman and Sigelman 1996; Sigelman, Deering, and Loomis 2001). That is, rhetoric on the House floor is about winning policy battles within Congress, rather than winning votes or garnering media attention. Of course, both policy and electoral motives are likely to be at play simultaneously (Kingdon 1973).

Strategic factors may not fully explain differences in engaging in casualty rhetoric among elected representatives. Personal characteristics, such as whether politicians are women or combat veterans, may also affect the likelihood of speaking about fallen soldiers. Constituency characteristics, such as the number of killed soldiers in congressional districts, could also influence the extent of casualty rhetoric. This chapter seeks to determine the extent to which these factors—strategic, personal, and constituent—influence speaking about U.S. combat casualties in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Apart from understanding how fallen soldiers causally impact political outcomes and policy positions, there are non-causal, normative reasons for the study of casualty rhetoric among U.S. politicians. Because Congress is connected to the fates of soldiers, there is a normative obligation for legislators to recognize and acknowledge the deaths of soldiers during congressional debates. In delegating broad authority to President George
W. Bush to use military force, Congress was partially responsible for the fates of soldiers in Iraq. Democrats and Republicans alike acknowledged this responsibility within the U.S. House of Representatives. For example, during a debate about the Department of Defense Appropriations Act, a bill which would provide billions in funding for operations in Iraq, Democratic Representative Barbara Lee (D-CA) commented on the deaths of “2,700 of our young men and women” and noted how “the [Iraq] war was authorized by this body.”1 During a five-minute, non-legislative speech, Republican Representative Mark Foley (R-FL) discussed how he “went to a funeral in [his] district of a young man who was killed in Iraq two weeks before he was to return home and marry his high school sweetheart. . . . When I approached his parents, I felt remorse, obviously, because I had voted to send their child to that place.”2 Though Congress as an institution is in part responsible for the fates of soldiers, there might be considerable variation in casualty rhetoric among individual representatives. This chapter explores this variation as well as ethical arguments pertaining to speaking of and for these fallen soldiers.

This chapter proceeds in three sections. The first section conceptualizes the dead soldier as a subaltern subject. Drawing from Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s conceptualization of subalternity as a rhetorical/representation problem, I assemble a normative theory for speaking of/about or representing the dead within public democratic institutions. Though speaking about and for dead soldiers is an ethically delicate endeavor, I argue in favor of casualty rhetoric as a preferable practice to silence. This preference stems from the relationship of speaking and responsibility, and also from the conceptualization of rhetorical acknowledgment as a form of phenomenological concern

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1 Representative Barbara Lee, Congressional Record, September 26, 2006, H7411.
2 Representative Mark Foley, Congressional Record, May 6, 2004, H2703.
for others, even dead others. The second section provides an empirical analysis of casualty rhetoric using speech data from the *Congressional Record*. In this section I test hypotheses derived from three distinct, though not mutually exclusive, theoretical perspectives on casualty rhetoric. These perspectives are categorized as (1) strategic ownership, (2) constituent interests, and (3) personal characteristics. The results provide strong support for strategic ownership and mixed results for constituent and personal characteristics. The third section examines the content of casualty rhetoric, and provides an assessment of how politicians framed U.S. combat deaths in Iraq.

This chapter endeavors to rethink questions of ethical foreign policy discourse. Many IR scholars have considered various questions pertaining to ethical discourse in global politics (Linklater 1998, Risse 2000; Hutchings 2005). This chapter is focused on the ethics and determinants of speaking about and for fallen American soldiers. Though the focus here is on rhetoric among U.S. politicians, theorizing the ethics of death within war rhetoric has implications for the politics of recognition and acknowledgment within ethical discourse. Linklater (1998) and many other normative IR theorists argue for Habermasian dialogic communities, prioritizing dialogue as the central condition for moral reasoning. Indeed, a guiding principle in Jürgen Habermas’ (1999: 57) theory of deliberative democracy is that, “real argument makes moral insight possible.” Yet “real argument” and “moral insight” are contestable terms, and it is unclear whether the former, however defined, yields the latter in practice. Furthermore, the question of power and strategy are often absent or seen in negative terms by discourse theorists. For example, Andrew Linklater (2005:142) argues that speakers should try to reduce “overt and subtle forms of power.” By looking at the determinants of rhetoric, however, we
might need to modify theories of discourse ethics to more faithfully account for strategic interests and power. Randall Schweller (1999: 147,150) argues, for example that, “Whether Linklater, or Kant, or Marx, or Habermas, or other contemporary critical, feminist, postmodern theorists believe that something will happen, must happen, can happen, and should happen, does not make it so—or likely to be so—in the foreseeable future” and suggests that “foreign policy is too serious a business to entertain utopian ideas about dramatically reconstructed social relations.” Envisioning dialogic futures is important, though evidence, strategic interests, and everyday politics need to be more fully accounted for within these visions. Debating war and death in the United States entails specific interests and actors, but approaching dialogue and debate from the perspective in this chapter (accounting for interests and incentives along with theorizing the normative politics of debate) suggests possibilities that extend beyond this context.

This chapter suggests a compromise between discourse ethics theorists and Schweller’s critique of these theorists as engaging in “fantasy theory.” We should theorize discourse ethics and understand the ethical implications of allowing for and silencing voices in public debates; however, we should also closely consider empirical evidence about actual debates among real politicians. Doing so enables interplay between normative theory and empirical research, where ethical concerns and empirical dynamics are explored concurrently, yielding more fruitful conversations about both.

**Toward a Normative Argument for Casualty Rhetoric**

Despite the expected and common occurrence of wartime fatalities, the deaths of soldiers are understandably still significant, first and foremost in the very basic sense that every
death is noteworthy and meaningful. To put it more eloquently, philosopher Jacques Derrida (cited in Bennington 2010: 40), in his *Béliers* lecture, envisaged each death as the disappearance of a world:

> For each time, and each time singularly, each time irreplaceably, each time infinitely, death is nothing less than an end of the world. Not only one end among others, the end of someone or something in the world, the end of a life or a living being. Death . . . marks . . . the end of a unique world, the end of the totality of what is or can present itself as the origin of the world for such and such a unique living being . . . .

While Derrida’s consideration of death-as-world-disappearance applies to all, soldiers are marched to death in order to achieve political outcomes chosen by politicians; consequently, the loss of soldiers is humanly and politically significant. Their political significance makes them likely subjects of political rhetoric, though no studies examine the normative value or unscrupulousness of disclosing these losses in political arguments. In what follows, I justify casualty rhetoric from a normative and subaltern perspective, define different forms of casualty rhetoric, and consider ethical drawbacks of the practice.

I contend that one of the ways we may realize the normative value of casualty rhetoric is by recognizing subaltern characteristics of killed soldiers. One of the central works of postcolonial theory, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s (1994) “Can the Subaltern Speak?” elaborates on the problematic practice of representing others, particularly those in the “postcolonial world.” The difficulty of representation entails the dual issue of speaking *for* and speaking *about* (Spivak 1994: 70). Speaking *for* others often marginalizes them or runs the risk of appropriating them by imposing/inscribing interests, motives, and desires onto them. Speaking for others, in terms of representing others politically, may be accompanied by a false sense of knowing others’ interests and ambitions, which might be imprecise, inaccurate, and could conflate or eclipse others’
desires with the speaker’s desires. Speaking about others runs the risk of distorting and essentializing complex and fluid identities, producing others in ways that may ultimately serve the interests of the speaker.

Conceptualizing killed soldiers as subaltern subjects is an admittedly problematic enterprise, first and foremost because there is no exact definition of subalternity or the subaltern subject. In general usage, “subaltern” is commonly employed to engage in questions about marginalized groups. According to Beasley-Murray and Moreiras (2001: 2) “Subalternity . . . is a situation of relative inferiority within a social order, structured according to the principle of hegemony, which defines and calibrates that relation of inferiority.” The authors’ definition relies on Laclau and Mouffe’s usage of hegemony in terms of hegemonic forms of articulation, which may produce an infinite number of subaltern subjects. For example, “women” under conditions of social subordination are often seen as subaltern “subjects” whose own interests and desires are subdued by hegemonic, gendered discourses. Nancy Fraser (1992: 123) notes that such marginalized subjects might form “subaltern counterpublics,” or “discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs.” Essential to any understanding of subalternity is the issue of groups who struggle to speak, and are challenged with externally instituted discourses of who they are and what they want.

It is from this understanding that we may shift the central problem of subalternity from within the confines of postcolonial theory and the postcolonial world to broader contexts involving circumstances of speaking for and about others who have difficulty speaking or who have no voice. Indeed, Timothy Bewes (2006: 39) makes this very
contention: “For Spivak, not being able to ‘speak’ is not a *description* but the *definition* of the "subaltern" state. Subalternity is not an ‘identity,’ and the concept has no necessary correlation with ethnicity, or race, or even gender” (emphasis added). With this understanding, it is possible to imagine the issue of speaking for and about fallen soldiers as a subaltern problem of speaking for and about those who cannot speak. Killed soldiers literally cannot speak and consequently *must* be spoken about and spoken for in order to be represented. Even the writings and recorded moments of speaking soldiers must be taken up by others who are living.

There is another way we may imagine fallen soldiers within a subaltern framework. While living soldiers are often valorized rather than marginalized in U.S. society, those who die disproportionately come from poorer, often marginalized communities. Douglas Kriner and Francis Shen (2010: 47) find that “since the conclusion of World War II, socioeconomically disadvantaged communities have borne a disproportionate share of America’s war casualties.” From this empirical evidence they make the following claims:

> The idea that poorer segments of the country are bearing a disproportionate share of the nation’s sacrifice on the battlefield is antithetical to American democratic norms and political thought. . . . Given this fundamental conflict between core values and the realities of contemporary military conflict and policy, it is little wonder that most discussions of the casualty gap are deeply submerged and kept far from the mainstream of political debate (Kriner and Shen 2010:103).

If those who die during war tend to come from marginalized communities, and this reality is precluded from entering mainstream political discourse, then we may consider fallen soldiers as subaltern subjects from this perspective as well. From this view, many

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3 While the casualty gap may be at odds with a particular conception of democratic norms in the United States, this gap may also be seen as consistent with U.S. capitalist norms. I thank Jeremy Pressman for bringing this to my attention. There are also related class norms at play, as Bacevich (2007: F9), in writing about the connection between an all-voluntary army and military adventurism, notes that, “Cheering the troops on did not imply any interest in joining their ranks. Especially among the affluent and well-educated, the notion took hold that national defense was something ‘they’ did, just as ‘they’ bused tables, collected trash, and mowed lawns.”
dead soldiers came from rather marginalized contexts during their lives, and this marginalization could be understood as “doubled” in death due to the exclusion of the dead in political discourse.

Kriner and Shen (2010) also find that high numbers of combat casualties suffered in communities has an independent and negative effect on civic and political participation in these communities. They note that:

These communities were asked to bear disproportionate shares of wartime sacrifices. As a result, those communities with the greatest stake in government military policy decisions and the greatest need for government assistance paradoxically became increasingly disengaged from the political process. In this way, the casualty gap may threaten the very fabric of representative democracy (Kriner and Shen 2010: 212).

These findings provide added grounds for conceptualizing fallen soldiers in subaltern terms. Dead soldiers tend to come from marginalized communities, and their deaths produce increased estrangement in their communities from the political processes that helped contribute to their deaths in the first place.

Before moving further in this discussion of subaltern politics of casualty rhetoric, I wish to specify two broad forms of casualty rhetoric: Casualty recognition and casualty acknowledgment. I consider casualty recognition as the discursive act of mentioning the dead, and define casualty acknowledgment as the discursive act of responding to the dead. The former refers to the practice of mere inclusion of the dead in a political speech. This inclusion may take a variety of forms. First, casualty recognition may be abstract. This means that dead soldiers are mentioned in a general way, as non-specific instances of death. For example, a legislator may refer to the fact that “many soldiers have died in Iraq.” This non-specific recognition of death neither identifies an individual’s death nor a particular number of those who have died. Casualty recognition may also be referential, of which there are two forms: Numerical and identifiable. Numerical recognition is a
reference to a specific number of dead soldiers. Such recognition may refer to the number of total casualties, state casualties, or district casualties. Identifiable recognition means referencing the name of a specific soldier who has died in war.

Casualty acknowledgment is a more profound form of recognition. I define casualty acknowledgment as a response to dead soldiers. It involves recognition, but moves beyond recognition by engaging with the dead as an Other with agency. For example, acknowledgment could include speaking about the impact of the dead on his or her family or community, or could include discussing how the fallen soldiers understood his or her role in the war. The soldier lived a life that was cut short due in part to the decisions of politicians. By responding to dead soldiers in public democratic institutions, politicians allow for them to have a public impact—a virtual form of agency.

Of course, politicians will frame these deaths in ways that suit their political purposes. It might be rhetorically useful for war supporters to acknowledge fallen soldiers in ways that frame their deaths as somehow beneficial to U.S. security or the spread of democracy in the Middle East, for example. Likewise, war critics might find it rhetorically desirable to frame these deaths as reasons to extricate the United States from the Middle East. From a critic’s perspective, “playing politics” with the deceased may seem like an objectionable practice rather than ethical behavior.

I argue that speaking of fallen soldiers, even for purely political reasons, is less objectionable than remaining silent about these deaths, and is in fact normatively beneficial to democratic deliberations. Again, one of the principal questions of Spivak’s discussion of subaltern politics is the issue of voice. Who has a voice in political processes? Who is silenced? How are groups spoken of and for? What are the ethical
hazards associated with speaking of and speaking for? What are the ethics of silence and silencing? Since the dead literally cannot speak, living speakers must engage in speaking of and for them if the dead are to be represented in political processes.

I argue that speaking of and for fallen soldiers is necessary. Early in Mémoires: For Paul de Man, Derrida (1989: xvi) observes that, “Speaking is impossible, but so too would be silence or absence.” Elsewhere, Derrida (2003: 50) asks rhetorically about remaining silent instead of speaking about the dead: “But then what, silence? Is this not another wound, another insult?” Speaking of the dead, as will be discussed below, is inherently complicated as the dead always exceed our memories and discursive treatments of them, jeopardizing any faithful account of their identities. In terms of dead soldiers, however, silence creates a more problematic absence in public discourse. It is, perhaps an “insult,” to borrow from Derrida. Reticence forecloses any public memory of fallen soldiers, which inhibits any entryway into public discourse for the dead. However corrupted their memories and meanings are when they emerge, the dead’s presence in war deliberations is superior to their absence. Since death is the most drastic cost of war, debating this cost should play a central role in public deliberations on war.

Central to this argument is the claim that speaking of the dead creates the conditions for the deceased to become agents in the public’s consciousness. The agency to impact congressional governance of the conduct of war, however, is in part dependent upon speaking of the dead during public debates on the congressional floor. Once, the dead are spoken of or spoken for, they become part of the public conversation on how policymakers should think about war and how they should orient themselves toward war legislation. Creating the conditions for agency is one of Spivak’s goals in theorizing
subalternity (Birla 2010). Rosalind O'Hanlon (2012: 80) sees that “recuperation of the subaltern as a conscious human subject-agent” as one of the central aims of subaltern studies.

Speaking of the dead is ethically complex, however. The dead are gone and cannot speak for themselves. Derrida (1989: 34) contends that “Upon the death of the other we are given to memory, and thus to interiorization, since the other, outside us, is now nothing. And with the dark light of this nothing, we learn that the other resists the closure of our interiorizing memory.” Speaking of and for the dead runs the risk of structuring the meaning of their lives and deaths in ways that conform to one’s own desires. The dead are ultimately and purely transformed memories within the mind and public consciousness. The dead, no longer in bodily form with exterior presence, are interiorized in ways that conform to the living’s desires to remember them as the living see fit. This is what Jean-Paul Sartre (2001: 519) means when he suggests that the “very existence of death alienates us wholly in our own life to the advantage of the Other. To be dead is to be prey for the living.” Casualty rhetoric therefore is a form of rhetorical behavior that reduces the dead to whatever object of memory politicians hope to construct. Derrida (2003: 50) discusses this reduction in his theorization of mourning, asking “are we going to make the dead our ally . . . to reduce him in any case to what can still be contained by a literary or rhetorical performance, one that attempts to turn the situation to its advantage by means of stratagems?” Yet even as objects of memory, the dead become subjects with agency, however altered or transfigured these subjects become within rhetorical practices permeated with strategies.
Even though most forms of casualty rhetoric are fundamentally reductionist in terms of shifting the meaning of the dead and death to align with political ideas of the speaker, the normative value of enabling the dead to be present and enter into the public consciousness within deliberative institutions with legislative power outweighs the pitfalls of reductionism and political manipulative practices. The mere presence of the dead within rhetorical space creates a demand to become accountable to the wishes of the dead. These wishes, manifold and constructed for political purposes, are used to promote broader interests of support or opposition to war. Absent causal consequences on political outcomes, casualty rhetoric provides space for their desires, which are also connected to the desires of the living, within the legislative agenda. The rhetorical presence of the dead within deliberative bodies therefore “matters” in ways that are not purely for the purposes of effects in democratic systems, but rather because their manifestation constitutes an ethical practice of acknowledgment. Politicians send soldiers to die, and should acknowledge their deaths publically within legislative debates.

A question remains, however, as to whether casualty recognition exclusive of casualty acknowledgment may also be considered an ethical practice. Do mere declarations of abstract death or numerical tallies of the dead also generate some condition of agency for the dead? I argue that mere recognition is an anemic response to a severe consequence of war, but it is a reply nonetheless. One could even contend that recognizing the actuality of death within floor debates without moving beyond recognition could be more ethical, since it opens congressional discourse to a severe fact without reducing the dead to the desires and interests of the speaker.
To conclude this section, I have argued that the normative obligation for elected officials to publically speak about war death and dead soldiers stems from institutional responsibility in creating the conditions of death. Soldiers do not die unless elected officials authorize their deployment to the battlefield. When Congress authorized President George W. Bush to use military force against Iraq (Public Law No: 107-243), members of the U.S. House and Senate facilitated the possibility that soldiers would serve and die in Iraq. When Congress continued to fund the war and provide rhetorical support to the war, it sustained the possibility that soldiers would continue to die in Iraq. Members of Congress were therefore indirectly responsible for the deaths of U.S. soldiers in Iraq. This question of responsibility does not depend on whether or not a war is just. Whether or not the war in Iraq was just or justified, Congress was indirectly responsible for the deaths of soldiers in Iraq. The ethics of publically recognizing or acknowledging the deaths of soldiers flows from this indirect responsibility.

**Explaining Casualty Rhetoric**

The previous section argued for the normative value in speaking about dead soldiers, whether speaking of the dead emerges as a form of recognition or acknowledgment. However, speaking of dead soldiers in an environment of electoral competition and partisan politics means that there are strategic, personal, and constituent incentives that govern the emergence of casualty recognition and acknowledgment in political debates. This section moves us away from a normative theory for casualty rhetoric and toward an empirical theory of this practice.
There are three simple theoretical arguments that drive this chapter. If we conceptualize U.S. combat casualties as a sub-issue of the larger issue of the Iraq War, then we may approach casualty rhetoric in terms of “issue politics” (Sulkin 2005). The fundamental premise is that the choice of rhetorical content is largely attributable to issues politicians perceive as being beneficial to speak about. These benefits may be perceived as rooted in strategic advantages, personal characteristics, or constituent characteristics. These three incentive structures inform my assembly of three, non-mutually exclusive theories of casualty rhetoric: (1) strategic ownership, (2) constituent characteristics, and (3) personal characteristics.

Strategic Ownership

One way to understand variation in rhetorical behavior on issues is to focus on strategic interests. The literature on “issue ownership” suggests that politicians should speak about issues they “own,” which often means issues they are credibly known for (Petrocik 1996; Petrocik, Benoit, and Hansen 2003). Related literature on rhetoric and heresthetics by William Riker suggests that politicians should speak about issues that work to their strategic advantage. Rhetorical behavior should be strategic in that the speaker should perceive some benefit to publically engaging an issue. Riker’s (1996) “Dominance Principle” of rhetoric suggests that when one group has an advantage on an issue, this group should speak about it. Likewise, if one group has an advantage on the issue, the

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4 Sulkin (2005: 45) might identify this issue more as an “event,” since it is limited by space and time.
5 By “theory” I mean a weak version of the concept to signify a cohesive set of reasons for a particular type of behavior from which we may derive testable hypotheses. Gabriel Abend (2008: 178) suggests many different meanings of “theory,” one of which is “an explanation of a particular social phenomenon,” which is how I conceptualize the meaning of theory here. This is in contradistinction to the meaning of theory that seeks to establish general relationships among variables, independent of time and place.
other group should avoid attending to it. The result is that politicians will diverge to
discuss orthogonal issues (Austen-Smith 1993). This expectation translates into
orthogonal rhetorical content by members of different political parties, since parties
rather than individuals tend to “own” issues. Strategic ownership expects party-based
rhetorical disparities to identical issues.

Perceptions of strategic ownership of U.S. casualties should be a critical factor in
affecting a legislator’s decision to speak about this issue. But who would perceive
ownership of U.S. combat casualties in Iraq? During the period of this study (2004 and
2006), it appears that neither Republicans nor Democrats owned the issue of the Iraq
War, but Democrats may have perceived ownership of U.S. combat casualties. Because
the Republican Party was more associated with the decision to invade Iraq than
Democrats, they could be perceived to be more associated with the negative costs of the
war. Democrats could perceive ownership of this issue by mere virtue of this association,
and comment on casualties as a means to criticize the President and the Republican Party.
Indeed, relevant research suggests that U.S. combat casualties offer openings to publicly
attack the president’s conduct of war and to create distance from these costs (Kriner and
Shen n.d.: 5). From this perspective, ownership of this issue could enable casualty
rhetoric to be central to attack politics and negative campaigning (Lau and Pomper 2002).

The theoretical expectation regarding partisanship and strategic ownership of
combat casualties may be summarized in the following hypothesis:

\[ H_1: \text{Democrats will give more casualty speeches than Republicans.} \]

Note that this hypothesis is not deterministic but probabilistic, so we should still expect to
see Republicans engage in casualty rhetoric. Indeed, there may be some degree of issue
convergence, where politicians of different parties end up speaking about the same issues
(Sigelman and Buell 2004). Republicans may feel compelled to speak about casualties for strategic reasons. For example, they may be responsive to Democrats’ negative framing of casualties by putting a positive spin on U.S. combat casualties, particularly if the public perceives the war as successful. For example, Republicans (and some Democrats) could speak about casualties in the context of war support, perhaps engaging in casualty rhetoric along the lines of not wanting soldiers to “die in vain” (Boettcher and Cobb 2009). Republicans may also engage in casualty rhetoric so as not to be perceived as indifferent to these costs.

Another expectation regarding strategic ownership pertains to voting records. I expect that a Representative’s voting record on H.J. Res. 114, the Iraq War resolution authorizing President George W. Bush to use force in Iraq, should affect rhetorical behavior on combat casualties. Democrats who voted to authorize the Iraq War might be less credible in speaking about casualties than Democrats (and Republicans) who voted against the resolution authorizing the war (H.J. Res 114). Representatives who voted against this resolution and those who were not in Congress to vote may be more credible in speaking of U.S. combat casualties in Iraq. Politicians who voted against authorizing the use of force in Iraq could more credibly attack the President about U.S. casualties in Iraq since they voted against authorizing the President to send troops abroad. Representatives who voted in favor of the resolution may be reluctant to speak about U.S. casualties since they share responsibility for these deaths.

The following hypotheses stem from these expectations:

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6 When asked, “How well is the Iraq War going,” over 50% of the public saw the war going very well or fairly well into 2006. http://www.pewresearch.org/2008/03/19/public-attitudes-toward-the-war-in-iraq-20032008/
**H2:** Representatives who voted against H.J. Res.114 will give more casualty speeches than Representatives who voted for H.J. Res.114.

**H3:** Representatives who did not vote on H.J. Res 114 will give more casualty speeches than Representatives who voted for H.J. Res.114.

**Constituent Characteristics**

The second theory of casualty rhetoric is derived from the literature on constituent characteristics and legislator responsiveness (Bartels 1991; Serra and Moon 1994; Clinton 2006). Politicians should be strategically responsive to the opinions of their constituents and the issues that matter to them (Bovitz and Carson 2006; Hayes, Hibbing, and Sulkin 2010). Issue saliency within congressional districts should affect rhetorical behavior in the House of Representatives. Differences in an issue’s saliency among congressional districts should be associated with variation in the rhetorical responsiveness to the issue among representatives.

Local casualties are a highly visible, important issue for citizens in the United States (Gartner, Segura, Barratt 2004), and should be salient within congressional districts. I expect that the number of casualty speeches by politicians should increase as the number of casualties increases in his or her congressional district. Of course, the number of casualties in a congressional district might not entirely match how important these casualties are in each district. For instance, casualties may be very “important” in some districts and only somewhat “important” in others. Each additional death, however, may signal that the issue of combat casualties in Iraq is increasingly important. Many politicians attend the funerals of dead soldiers, and even if not directly in contact with families of the fallen, are generally aware of local combat casualties. Gartner, Segura and Barratt (2004: 476) find that “citizens are well informed of local costs and sensitive to the
positions of locally elected leaders.” It therefore seems likely that politicians will be more aware of the human costs of Iraq as members of their districts are killed there. It follows that they would more likely speak about combat casualties as their number increases:

\[ H_4: \text{The number of casualty speeches that a representative gives will increase as the casualties in his or her congressional district increase.} \]

Another salient constituency characteristic that might affect casualty rhetoric is the proportion of district residents who are military veterans. Representatives with significant proportions of veterans in their districts may feel more obligated to discuss the human costs of war, since veterans might be more concerned with these costs:

\[ H_5: \text{The number of casualty speeches that a representative gives will increase as the proportion of veterans in his or her congressional district increases.} \]

**Personal Characteristics**

The third theoretical argument driving this chapter stems from the literature on politicians and personal characteristics. Politicians should rhetorically respond to issues that matter to them personally. The ideology of representatives should be an important factor in affecting a legislator’s decision to speak about casualties. In particular, I expect liberal representatives to make more casualty speeches than their conservative colleagues. Patrick Cronin and Benjamin Fordham (1999) argue that liberals have generally been opposed to internationalist foreign policy behavior, which includes supporting military strength and enlarging American influence abroad, since the mid-1960s. Increasing liberalism should be related to less support for war, and should increase the number of casualty speeches a representative makes. Conversely, increasing conservatism should be
related to higher support for war, and should decrease the number of casualty speeches a Representative makes.\footnote{Intuitively, ideology might be highly related to the ideological preferences of the constituency. However, Brunell (2006) suggests that legislator ideology and constituency ideology are not always so tightly linked.}

\begin{equation}
H_6: \text{Conservative representatives will give fewer casualty speeches than liberal representatives.}
\end{equation}

I also suspect that veterans and combat veterans will make more casualty speeches than nonveteran representatives. Veterans, especially combat veterans, should be more perceptive of the human costs of war since they have experienced these costs more directly than nonveterans. Noncombat veterans, though having never been exposed to combat death directly, are still socialized through military training which “teaches lessons about the role of military force in American foreign policy and lessons about how military force ought to be used” (Gelpi and Feaver 2002: 791-792). Because of this training, I anticipate noncombat veteran politicians to be more sensitive to U.S casualties in Iraq than nonveteran lawmakers.

\begin{equation}
H_7: \text{Representatives who are combat veterans will give more casualty speeches than representatives who never served in the military.}
\end{equation}

\begin{equation}
H_8: \text{Representatives who are noncombat military veterans will give more casualty speeches than representatives who never served in the military.}
\end{equation}

Race may also be an important personal characteristic affecting a legislator’s decision to speak about casualties, as scholars have found that race impacts views on war (Nincic and Nincic 2002). African Americans and Latinos have frequently expressed concern with the possibility that members of their racial communities suffer a disproportionate number of casualties (Barreto and Leal 2007; Kriner and Shen 2010). Though research suggests that there is no “racial casualty gap,” legislators like Charlie Rangel (D-NY)
have argued for the reinstatement of the draft in order to address the perception of unequal burdens of war (Kriner and Shen 2010). For this reason, I expect that African American and Latino legislators may speak about war casualties more than other legislators.

\[ H_9: \text{African American representatives will give more casualty speeches than white representatives.} \]

\[ H_{10}: \text{Latino representatives will give more casualty speeches than white representatives.} \]

Many scholars also argue that sex and gender impact views on foreign policy and war (Wilcox, Hewitt, and Allsop 1996). In particular, a large body of research concludes that women in the United States tend to be less supportive of war (Brooks and Valentino 2011). Concerns about U.S. combat deaths are one of the many reasons for this. Indeed, sex differences in the support for war increase when men and women are faced with questions about casualties (Eichenberg 2003; 2005). Women also tend to react more negatively to war than men when presented with information about female U.S. combat deaths (Gartner 2008). For these reasons, I expect female legislators to be more conscious of civilian casualties than male legislators.

\[ H_{11}: \text{Female representatives will give more casualty speeches than male representatives.} \]

**Methods and Caveats**

**Dependent Variable**

The dependent variable indicates the level of casualty recognition and acknowledgment by each representative in in the second sessions of the 108th Congress and the 109th Congress (2004 and 2006). Due to prohibitive time costs, I limited the analysis to these two years. Rather than model casualty recognition and acknowledgment separately, I
coded either instance as a “casualty speech.” Hence, a casualty speech was defined as a legislative speech, a one-minute speech, or a special-order speech, delivered orally, that included remarks about [a] U.S. soldier death[s]. Multiple remarks about soldier death in a single speech were counted as one civilian casualty speech. If a member made remarks about U.S. soldier deaths during a legislative speech and, for example, a one-minute speech in the same day, I counted each speech separately. Extensions of remarks were excluded. Also excluded were nonlegislative memorializations of fallen soldier, which were routine mentions of specific killed soldiers that were never included debates about the Iraq War. To locate speeches, I searched the Daily Congressional Record in ProQuest® Congressional. I searched the second sessions of the 108th and 109th Congresses (2004 and 2006) for key words listed in Appendix A.

A limitation of this research design is that it focuses on U.S. House members but not members of the U.S. Senate. The U.S. Senate is more influential, and the average member of the U.S. Senate is more important than the average member of the U.S. House. I am not exploring the influence of House members on policy; rather, I am examining the determinants and content of rhetoric. The larger size of the U.S. House increases the variance of the dependent variable, giving us a better estimate of determinants on casualty rhetoric. It also seems likely that members of the House will be more rhetorically responsive to local combat deaths, since their constituencies are generally much smaller than those of U.S. senators. Since this chapter is limited to the House, I caution extending implications of this study to members of the Senate.

There are of course important differences in speechmaking in the House and Senate. Conventional wisdom suggests that floor speeches in the House are more
constrained than in the Senate (Binder and Smith 1998). One reason is that during legislative debates in the House, members’ speeches are strictly confined to the question under consideration. Another reason is negative agenda control in the House (Cox and McCubbins 2005). Legislative debate in the House is controlled by the majority party, with the majority party able to block consideration of bills that are not supported by a majority. Recent scholars, however, have challenged the idea that Senate debate is less restrictive than the House (Cox and McCubbins 2005; Den Hartog and Monroe 2011). Gailmard and Jenkins (2007: 699) argue that, “in terms of keeping unwanted measures from receiving floor consideration, the Senate majority party is no less successful than the House majority party when it faces disagreement from some nonmajority party actor.” Related research by Wirls (2007), who tested the hypothesis that the “golden age” of pre-civil war Senate debate was more drawn-out and intense than House debate, found House debates to be as long and forceful as Senate debates on the key concerns of the time.

In the U.S. House of Representatives, members give legislative and non-legislative speeches, with the former being more restrictive. Legislative speeches refer to remarks given during pending legislative business about bills, resolutions, and amendments. There are customary opportunities for unrestricted discussion of whatever issues members may wish to speak on. At the beginning of legislative business days, lawmakers in the House may give one-minute speeches. Since 1979, when cameras were installed in the House, the use of one-minute speeches has expanded significantly (Browning 1999; Mulvihill 1997). Members may also give special-order speeches at the end of the day.
Because of the differential access to speaking in the House, House speechmaking may be seen as an important measure of members’ priorities. Schickler, Pearson, and Feinstein (2010: 678-679) note that “Members’ opportunities to speak on the House floor are constrained by the demands on their schedule and competition for time on the floor. Floor speeches therefore provide some insight into members’ top priorities.” Assessing House casualty rhetoric therefore offers an understanding of the importance of casualties to House members.

**Independent Variables**

**Strategic Ownership Variables**

Dummy variables are used to measure the Party ID variable (1=Democrat, 0=Republican). Dummy variables are also used to measure the Iraq War Resolution vote variable (1="Nay Vote," 2="Did Note Vote," 0="Yeah Vote").

**Constituency Characteristics Variables**

Like Kriner and Shen (n.d.), I use the home city and county of record for fallen soldiers to match Iraq casualties to districts. A problem exists, however, because there are instances where two or more congressional districts cover the same city. For Kriner and Shen, if a casualty matches multiple congressional districts, they assign the casualty to each district. This overestimates the number of casualties in many congressional districts, however. In this chapter, if a casualty corresponds to multiple congressional districts, I divide the casualty by the number of districts, and assign the partial casualty to

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8 I coded Bernie Sanders, an independent, as a Democrat in these regressions. See note 4 in Abramowitz, Alexander, and Gunning (2006: 78).
each corresponding district. In this way, I have chosen to potentially underestimate the
effects of district casualties rather than run the risk of overestimating their effects.

For veteran population, I measured the proportion of district residents who are
military veterans using the Geographic Distribution of Veteran Affairs Expenditures
(GDX) Report tables for 2006, which include the number of veterans in each
congressional district during 2004. I then divided the number of veterans in each
district by each district’s population (108th Congress).

Personal Characteristics Variables
Ideology is measured as the average DW-Nominate score for each member. I added each
member’s score from the 108th and 109th Congresses, and divided by two. DW-Nominate
scores range from -1 to 1, with -1 indicating the highest level of liberalism, and 1
indicating the highest level of conservatism.

The other personal characteristics were measured with dummy codes: Veteran
status (Veteran= 1, Combat veteran= 2, Nonveteran= 0), minority status (African-
American legislator= 1, Latino legislator= 2, White legislator= 0), and sex (female=1,
male= 0).

Institutional Control Variables
I also include three institutional control variables. I include seniority (number of years
served) because I suspect newer representatives will make more speeches if they have
served less years. I also include a variable that measures whether members served on a

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9 I also ran regressions that used Kriner and Shen’s method of measuring district-level casualties. The
results did not substantively differ from the preferred method.
10 http://www.va.gov/vetdata/Expenditures.asp
House committee dealing with war legislation (0=No Committee Service, 1=Committee Service). Legislators serving on these committees may have more opportunities to speak about the Iraq War, and hence may have more opportunities to speak about casualties. These committees are: Armed Services, Foreign Affairs, Homeland Security, Select Intelligence, and Veteran Affairs.\textsuperscript{11} I gathered this information from \textit{CQ Press’s Politics in America}. I also control for party leadership, since spokespersons for their party may speak more and, by extension, may speak about U.S. casualties more frequently. Party leaders in each congress are the following: The Speaker of the House, Majority Leader, Majority Whip, Minority Leader, Minority Whip, and the heads of each party caucus or party conference. This information comes from the Congressional Research Service.\textsuperscript{12} Party leaders are coded “1”, while all other members in each congress are coded “0.”

\textbf{Statistical Tests}

The dependent variable is operationalized as the number of casualty speeches given orally on the House floor during both legislative sessions. Because the dependent variable is a count, I used negative binomial regression. The negative binomial regression allows for the conditional variance of the dependent variable to exceed its mean value by introducing an individual unobserved disturbance to the model (Hilbe 2011). For over-dispersed data, the negative binomial regression is preferred over the Poisson regression. An alpha likelihood test showed that the data were indeed over-dispersed.

\textsuperscript{11} During the 108\textsuperscript{th} and 109\textsuperscript{th} congresses, the Committee on Foreign Affairs was named the Committee on International Relations.

I include the results from three regression models in table 2.1. There was severe collinearity between party ID and ideology (adjusted $r^2 = .9109$), so I did not include them in the same model. There was also strong collinearity between Party ID and voting on H.J. Res 114 (Cramér's $V = .6271$), so I conducted two statistical tests, one that included the Iraq War Resolution vote variable and another that excluded it. Hence, the first model includes party ID and excludes Iraq War Resolution vote and ideology. The second model includes both party ID and Iraq War Resolution vote but excludes ideology. The third model excludes party ID and includes both Iraq War Resolution vote and ideology.

Because it is difficult to interpret the results of negative binomial regression, coefficients from negative binomial regression models were transformed to marginal effects in table 2.2. Marginal effects enable us to understand how independent variables affect the expected mean counts of speeches while holding all other independent variables at specified values.

**Results**

The results confirm some of the hypotheses but call into question others. Appendix B provides selected descriptive statistics for the strategic ownership theory. Here we see that Democrats accounted for approximately 80% of all casualty speeches, and Republicans accounted for approximately 20%. Representatives who voted against the Iraq War Resolution accounted for approximately 64% of all casualty speeches, while those who voted in favor of the resolution accounted for approximately 27% of all casualty speeches. These descriptive statistics are indicative of the possibility of strong support for the strategic ownership theory of casualty rhetoric.
More importantly, when we examine coefficients from the strategic ownership theory in models one through three, we see that “Party ID” and “Iraq War Resolution Vote” each have a strong impact on casualty rhetoric. The coefficients for “Democrat,” “War Resolution ‘Nay Vote’,” and “Iraq War Resolution ‘Did Not Vote,’’” are in the expected (positive) direction, though the latter fails to reach statistical significance. When “Party ID” is included in the same model as “Iraq War Resolution Vote,” the impact of “Party ID” loses strength, as members’ votes on giving President Bush authorization to go to war in Iraq appears to explain much of the casualty rhetoric in the House, and is in fact slightly more influential than “Party ID” on casualty speechmaking.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2.1 Explaining U.S. Combat Casualty Rhetoric</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Variables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strategic Ownership</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat (+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.220)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War Resolution &quot;Nay Vote&quot; (+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(—)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War Resolution &quot;Did Note Vote&quot; (+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(—)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Constituent Characteristics</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Casualties (+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.026)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran Population (+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal Characteristics</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology (-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(—)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran (+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.306)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combat Veteran (+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.282)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female (+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.350)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American (+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.351)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino (+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.343)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Institutional Controls</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee (+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.233)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seniority (-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership (+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.633)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.263)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wald $X^2$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P &gt; $X^2$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo $R^2$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log pseudo-likelihood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Observations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses. Symbols in brackets represent the expected direction of the coefficient.

***p < .01; **p < .05; *p < .10.
The marginal effects provided in table 2.2 offer a more useful illustration of the impact of “Party ID” and “Iraq War Resolution Vote” on casualty rhetoric. With regard to “Party ID,” a change from Republican to Democrat leads to a 412.09% increase in casualty rhetoric (model 1) and a 170.41% increase in casualty rhetoric (model 2), respectively. Substantively, this indicates that the average MC who voted

### Table 2.2 Marginal Effects for Key Independent Variables: Predicted Number of U.S. Combat Casualty Speeches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Model 1 ME</th>
<th>% Diff</th>
<th>Model 2 ME</th>
<th>% Diff</th>
<th>Model 3 ME</th>
<th>% Diff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strategic Ownership</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>2.917</td>
<td>+412.09%</td>
<td>2.012</td>
<td>+170.41%</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War Resolution &quot;Nay Vote&quot;</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>2.543</td>
<td>+202.96%</td>
<td>2.353</td>
<td>+188.09%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Constituent Characteristics</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Casualties $\sigma$ Increase</td>
<td>2.464</td>
<td>+35.67%</td>
<td>2.448</td>
<td>+34.14%</td>
<td>2.498</td>
<td>+38.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Casualties Max</td>
<td>4.957</td>
<td>+173.00%</td>
<td>4.801</td>
<td>+163.01%</td>
<td>5.285</td>
<td>+193.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal Characteristics</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology $\sigma$ Increase</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>2.637</td>
<td>+64.28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology Max</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>3.320</td>
<td>+106.84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>0.427</td>
<td>-68.23%</td>
<td>0.364</td>
<td>-71.81%</td>
<td>0.367</td>
<td>-71.46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combat Veteran</td>
<td>1.947</td>
<td>+68.37%</td>
<td>1.783</td>
<td>+59.37%</td>
<td>1.805</td>
<td>+60.89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Institutional Controls</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1.617</td>
<td>+61.07%</td>
<td>1.687</td>
<td>+73.47%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: All percent differences for categorical variables are calculated using the baseline category in table 2.1. Percent differences for “Democrat” are calculated using "Republican" as the baseline. Percent differences for “War Resolution Nay Vote” are calculated using "Iraq War Resolution "Yeah Vote" as the baseline. Percent differences for “Latino” are calculated using "White" as the baseline. Percent differences for “Combat Veteran” are calculated using "Not Veteran" as the baseline. Percent differences for "Committee" are calculated using "No Committee" as the baseline. All percent differences for continuous variables are calculated the following way: Percent differences for "District Casualties $\sigma$ Increase" and "District Casualties Max" are calculated using the mean district casualty number in the sample as the baseline. Percent differences for "Ideology $\sigma$ Increase" and "Ideology Max" are calculated using a hypothetical DW-Nominate score of zero as the baseline.
against the “Iraq War Resolution,” while holding all other variable at their means, gave 2.54 (model 2) and 2.35 (model 3) casualty speeches.

Consistent with the strategic ownership perspective, Democratic Party affiliation and voting against H.J. Res. 114 were highly influential on casualty speechmaking. These results provide strong support for the strategic ownership hypotheses (hypotheses 1 and 2); Democrats and Representatives who voted against H.J.Res.114 spoke about casualties much more than Republicans and MCs who voted in favor of H.J.Res.114. These results are in line with what we would expect from the perspective of strategic ownership; Democrats and MCs who voted against the Iraq War resolution credibly owned the issue of U.S. combat deaths, and likely many of them did so to their strategic advantage.

Results from constituent characteristics theory are mixed. District casualties have a very strong relationship to casualty rhetoric, while the proportion of veterans within a district has no statistically significant impact. The coefficient for district casualties is highly significant and in the expected direction. An increase in casualties in a representative’s district is estimated to lead to an increase in their number of casualty speeches. In table 2.2, we see the noticeable marginal effect of district casualties. While holding all other factors at their mean values, representatives from districts with the highest number of U.S. combat deaths are predicted to make between 163.01% (model 2) and 193.48% (model 3) more casualty speeches than representatives from districts which suffered the mean number of combat fatalities. The impact of district casualties on rhetorical behavior in the U.S. House of Representatives is very strong, confirming hypothesis 3.
The results for hypotheses in the personal characteristics theory are mixed. As expected, increased conservative ideology is related to less combat casualty rhetoric (table 2.1, model 3). Model 3 in table 2.2 demonstrates the marginal effect of ideology on casualty rhetoric. The most liberal representatives are predicted to give 106.84% more casualty speeches than a perfectly moderate representative (DW-Nominate score of zero), while holding all other variables at their means, including Iraq War Resolution vote. Increasing the ideology score one standard deviation in the liberal direction leads to a predicted percent difference increase of 64.28%. Hence, hypothesis 5 is confirmed. There is a clear rhetorical divide between liberals and conservatives on the issue of combat casualties.

Only one of the personal characteristics variables performed as expected. Combat veteran status was positively associated with casualty rhetoric, reaching statistical significance in each model. Veteran status, however, failed to reach statistical significance in any model. These results speak to the importance of combat experience, not simply military service, in shaping wartime rhetoric. While Gelpi and Feaver’s (2002) study finds that military service has a strong impact on the use of force in Congress, the findings here indicate that differences in military service may affect whether politicians engage in debates about the human costs of combat operations.

Surprisingly, the coefficient for gender never reached statistical significance. Female representatives do not speak about combat death any more than male representatives. Though women in the general public may be more sensitive to combat casualties than men, female politicians do not speak about combat deaths at higher levels than male politicians.
The impact of race yielded two surprises. First, African American representatives did not speak about U.S combat deaths more than white representatives. Second, Latino representatives are negatively and significantly associated with combat casualty rhetoric.

These results are summarized in table 2.3, where I present each hypothesis, the expected and actual direction of the coefficient, and whether or not the hypothesis could be supported. The findings of the first part of this study suggest that strategic ownership variables, ideology, combat veteran status, and district-level casualties strongly influence the number of casualty speeches representatives give. Perhaps the most intriguing finding is the relationship between district-level casualties and casualty rhetoric. This finding indicates rhetorical responsiveness to human costs at the district level, and suggests the possibility that politicians take into account constituency losses during their deliberations on war.

However, we still do not know whether district-level casualties prompt representatives to speak about local losses or combat deaths in general. Another way to explore the issue of district-level casualties and casualty rhetoric is by examining the relationship between district-level casualties and speaking about these district-level losses. In other words, are representatives more likely to speak about combat deaths from their own congressional districts as the number of combat deaths from their districts increases? To explore this question, I conducted a logit regression where the dependent variable is “1” if the representative spoke about combat death[s] from their own district one or more times, and “0” if the representative never spoke about combat death[s] from their district.

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13 I thank Jeremy Pressman for bringing this issue to my attention.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic Ownership</th>
<th>Expected Direction</th>
<th>Actual Direction</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(H11) Democrats will give more casualty speeches than Republicans.</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(H12) Representatives who voted against H.J. Res.114 will give more casualty speeches than representatives who voted for H.J. Res.114.</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(H13) Representatives who did not vote on H.J. Res.114 will give more casualty speeches than representatives who voted for H.J. Res.114.</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>Not Supported</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constituency Characteristics</th>
<th>Expected Direction</th>
<th>Actual Direction</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(H14) The number of casualty speeches that a representative gives will increase as the casualties in his or her congressional district increase.</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(H15) The number of casualty speeches that a representative gives will increase as the proportion of veterans in his or her congressional district increase.</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>Not Supported</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Characteristics</th>
<th>Expected Direction</th>
<th>Actual Direction</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(H16) Conservative representatives will give fewer casualty speeches than liberal representatives.</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(H17) Representatives who are combat veterans will give more casualty speeches than representatives who never served in the military.</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(H18) Representatives who are noncombat military veterans will give more casualty speeches than representatives who never served in the military.</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>Not Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(H19) African American representatives will give more casualty speeches than white representatives.</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>– and +</td>
<td>Not Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(H10) Latino representatives will give more casualty speeches than white representatives.</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>Not Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(H11) Female representatives will give more casualty speeches than male representatives.</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>Not Supported</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: + and – symbols represent the expected and actual direction (positive or negative) of the coefficient corresponding to the hypothesis.
The results are presented in table 2.4, along with the predicted probabilities of district-level casualty rhetoric at the mean-level of district casualties, at one standard deviation increase in district-level casualties, and at the maximum district-level casualties in the sample. The logit regression included all of the same variables used in table 2.1, and included the three different models, though I only present the results for district-level casualties. The findings clearly support a statistically significant relationship between district-level casualties and constituent casualty rhetoric. An increase in combat deaths in a congressional district increases the predicted probability of speaking about district-level combat deaths. A one standard deviation increase from the mean in combat deaths increases the likelihood of speaking about district deaths from 9.3% to ~13%. A member with the maximum number of district deaths in the sample had between a 25.6% and 26.1% predicted probability of speaking about district deaths. These results demonstrate an even stronger relationship between local losses and casualty rhetoric.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2.4 Logit Analysis of District Casualties and Predicted Probability of District Combat Casualty Rhetoric</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District Casualties Logit Coefficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Casualties Mean Predicted Probability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Casualties SD Increase Predicted Probability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Casualties Max Predicted Probability</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses.

***p < .01 ; **p < .05; *p < .10.

Acknowledgment, Recognition, and Framing Casualties

The study thus far is somewhat limited, since I have demonstrated why politicians are inclined to speak of lost lives, but have not yet addressed how politicians speak about these casualties. We know that Democrats, liberals, and those who voted against H. Res.
114 spoke about fallen soldiers much more than Republicans, conservatives, and those who voted in favor of H. Res. 114, and thus seemingly “owned” the issue of combat casualties. Yet there were clearly instances of “trespassing,” meaning representatives who did not “own” this issue still commented on U.S. combat casualties (Sides 2006). In this section I explore how fallen U.S. soldiers were recognized and acknowledged through different frames during legislative and non-legislative debate in the House. The objective of this section is to illustrate the various ways in which fallen soldiers were part of debates about the Iraq War. In particular, I examine the following framing strategies: families, responsibility and indifference, profiteering, comparative casualties, unnecessary losses, and the removal of Saddam Hussein.

Casualty Rhetoric and Framing

Families

Responding to family grief over the deaths of their sons, daughters, husbands, and wives represented one of the central forms of acknowledgment of the dead. This form of acknowledgment was a response to how their deaths impacted the deceased soldiers’ families. Republicans and Democrats diverged in their way of addressing families of the deceased. Republicans framed family grief in somewhat positive terms, suggesting that the families of fallen soldier could be proud of what their relative died for. In a special-order speech, Phil Gingrey (R-GA), for instance, weaved together the importance of supporting the troops and acknowledgment of the impact dead soldiers have on families:

I am a graduate of the Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta. The president of the student body just a couple of years ago at Georgia Tech, my alma mater, a young first lieutenant, Tyler Brown, was killed leading his troops in a firefight in Iraq. . . . I know that his mom and dad and his older brother Brent are suffering deeply now, as much as a person could possibly suffer, over the tragic loss of their son and brother. As the chairman says, Mr. Speaker, you cannot support the
troops out of one side of your mouth and criticize them out of the other. This is the one thing that this family, this Brown family, has to hold on to for the rest of their lives, to know that Tyler, their son, who had such great potential, who gave his life for this country, killed in action, was not killed in vain. I really appreciate the chairman, Mr. Speaker, bringing that out tonight, because you cannot be for the troops and against them. You cannot have it both ways.  

Another form of acknowledgment of family bereavement came in the form of empathy from personal experience. For instance, Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) spoke of personal understanding of the impact of death on families together with criticism of war:

> My uncle was killed at the Battle of the Bulge, and for my father's entire life it was as if it had happened yesterday. We know that experience has been repeated over and over again across our country. In remembering those who died, and their families who mourn them, let us also salute all of our men and women . . . 2,500 killed, 18,000 wounded, more than half of them permanently, straining our military readiness and eroding our reputation in the world. The President of the United States says, stay the course. Stay the course? I don't think so, Mr. President.

Pelosi’s remarks also engage in a practice of using experience as a basis for authority to speak about what others feel with regard to combat death. Contextualizing criticism of the president with engagement of dead soldiers’ families orchestrates subaltern subjects who apparently speak out against war.

Occasionally, representatives read statements from fallen soldiers’ family members on the House floor. This practice permitted these bereaved family members to have a voice and consequently a form of quasi-agency during legislative debates. This complex form of casualty rhetoric acknowledged the dead by allowing family members of the deceased to respond to the death through their representatives. During debates about H. Res. 557, Stephanie Tubbs Jones (D-OH), for instance, quoted the father of a fallen soldier from her district as a means to acknowledge war death and to simultaneously construct the meaning of such death in negative terms:

> I stand here representing the 11th Congressional District of Ohio. In the Iraqi war, I lost two of my constituents. I read to my colleagues now the statements of the father of one of those constituents.

---

Like Pelosi’s comments above, Jones’ form of casualty rhetoric positions the fallen soldier against the president. However, the authoritative foundation for this positioning emerges from the voice of the father. By allowing the father to speak for the dead soldier, the soldier acts as a quasi-agent, speaking to conceptualize the war in negative terms.

While many forms of acknowledging the grief of families were accompanied by support or criticism of the war, this was not always the case. A special-order speech by Artur Davis (D-AL) represents a form of acknowledgment that neither condemned nor supported the war, but rather grappled with how to properly respond to the bereaved:

I spent Monday attending Memorial Day events. And on Monday morning in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, I had a chance to stand as close as I am to you right now in proximity to the widow of a gentleman who died in Iraq. His whole family was there. And something occurred to me. What do you say to a woman in that circumstance? She really did not want to hear from me about politics. She really did not want to hear about Bush or Rumsfeld or Tenet. I do not know if she wanted to hear anything about policy or matters of state at all. But I do know that she wanted a little bit of comfort, a little bit of solace, a little bit of understanding. There are so many families like that. That is what they want from us. They want some sense that we empathize with their pain. And we do. There is not a one of us who sits in this institution who does not 100 percent support the men and women who are fighting there. Because at this point they are not fighting for a policy. They are fighting for survival. They do not pick up The New York Times to see if Bush is up or Kerry is up. They are simply trying to stay alive for a few more hours. And a lot of them, by the way, are younger than we are. We are three of the youngest people in this institution. A lot of these people are far younger than we are. . . . We are close to the 60th anniversary of Normandy, and I do not know how many of my colleagues know the story of the letter General Eisenhower wrote. General Eisenhower, as he was contemplating sending thousands of young men to their fate, wrote a letter that was meant to address a failure, a failure that he personally might not have survived. And the letter said something to the effect that this is my responsibility alone. If there is an error that has been made, it is my error. That seems like more than 60 years ago. It seems like light years ago, sometimes, in this town. Because as you two know very well, sometimes we occupy a town where "I am sorry” is the last thing people will say. "I am responsible” is the last thing people will say. Or, at best, "I take responsibility" is what you say and not what you do. So I think as we move deeper into this election year, as we contemplate the loss of life in Iraq, we all need to find some way to appeal to the better angels in our nature and some way to be true to our spirit and our values. And if we do that, we will find our way home, literally and figuratively. We will find our way to a policy that works for our country, a policy that is oriented in the best of our instincts.

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16 Representative Stephanie Tubbs Jones, Congressional Record, March 17, 2004, H1169.
17 Representative Artur Davis, Congressional Record, June 3, 2004, H3771.
What is interesting about Representative Davis’ remarks is that he explicitly rejects politics in favor of empathy, and sees these as mutually exclusive. He responds to the pain of a widow by grappling with how to reply, and argues that he could not know precisely what she wanted to hear so he chose to be empathetic.

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, the decisions of Congress impact the lives of soldiers. Congressional acquiescence to Presidents’ plans to send troops abroad means that soldiers might die that otherwise would not. Congressional decisions to continue funding a war mean that soldiers will continue to be deployed, some of whom will die. Regardless of whether a decision is just or justified, the role of Congress, while limited, is partially responsible for the deaths of U.S. soldiers during war. In this section, I provide some brief illustrations of how this acknowledgment of congressional responsibility manifested among politicians in the House.

**Responsibility and Indifference**

Critics of the war often noted the responsibility of Congress for the deaths of U.S. soldiers, but generally distanced themselves from personal responsibility. Two of the central framing strategies of Democrats were to criticize President Bush for indifference to fallen soldiers or blame President Bush for these deaths. During debates over H. Res. 557, Representative Pete Stark (D-CA) opposed the resolution, and accused the President for being unaccountable and unconcerned with U.S. deaths in Iraq:

> I rise today in opposition to this resolution. We ought to be honoring those who gave their lives, their limbs and sacrificed their futures for our country. So far, 565 service members have lost their lives, more than 3,000 have been wounded-many losing limbs-and now we are seeing American civilians becoming targets. . . . On this anniversary of the war we ought to include in this resolution the names of the heroes who gave their lives. We ought to be honoring and commending these brave Americans for what they have given and sacrificed along with the troops who continue to serve valiantly. But, the Bush administration doesn't want to talk about—or expose—the 565 Americans who've been killed and the 3,254 wounded. The omission of this remembrance
demonstrates that President Bush and his Administration are good at taking credit, but terrible at accepting responsibility. . . . President Bush won't attend any funerals or memorial services for soldiers killed in action in Iraq. In fact, he's prohibited access to Dover Air Force Base to the media altogether. The Department of Defense has broken a long tradition by prohibiting arrival ceremonies because the images of these casualties are an embarrassment to President Bush. The President knows that American troops were sent to Iraq ill prepared and without enough equipment to keep them safe. Soldiers face daily threats there. They don't have sufficient body armor or armored vehicles as rocket propelled grenades and roadside bombs take lives and limbs. The President knows the troops wouldn't be there in the first place if he hadn't misled the American people.  

Representative Stark’s casualty rhetoric is largely numerical recognition rather than a particular acknowledgment. His rhetorical moves attempt to make visible the numbers of soldiers lost while simultaneously reducing them to serve as figures to criticize the president for rendering them invisible. Such a move provides some degree of agency to the collective mass of killed soldiers to present themselves a perceivable force, though a force constituted to ultimately serve anti-war interests.

**Profiteering**

Another Democratic strategy, though not very common, of speaking about casualties was to connect these deaths to accusations of war profiteering. The slogan “No blood for oil” was a common phrase used by anti-war protesters before and during the Iraq War (Jhaveri 2004). Some representatives in the House also took up this argument, and framed U.S. losses in Iraq by emphasizing questions of oil profits and oil profiteering. In his criticism of the Iraq Study Group’s recommendation that Iraq allow for the privatization of its oil, Representative Dennis Kucinich (D-OH) asked whether it was

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“possible that our troops are dying for the profits of oil?” Henry Waxman (D-CA) made a related argument during debates over H. Res. 861, suggesting that:

The fiasco in Iraq was a windfall for some. Halliburton made more than $2 billion in profits last year. Its total revenue has increased by 66 percent since 2002. Another beneficiary was David Brooks. He is the CEO of a company that makes bulletproof vests. In 2001, Mr. Brooks reportedly earned $525,000. In 2004, he earned $70 million. Last year, the U.S. Marines recalled more than 5,000 of the company's armored vests. But by that time Mr. Brooks had pocketed $186 million. Well, the American people might think that Congress would rise up in the face of such unconscionable profiteering. When our troops are willing to sacrifice so much, and they do sacrifice so much, how can we let others create cynical fortunes off their blood?

Republicans did not engage the question of oil and war profiteering and casualties. There was most likely little reason to respond to blood-for-oil rhetoric, since it was fairly uncommon among Democrats.

Comparative Casualties

One casualty rhetoric theme for Republicans was to compare U.S. casualties in the Iraq War to casualties from other U.S. wars. Representative Tom Cole (R-OK) noted how:

This war has the lowest casualty rate in American history, and the stakes are enormously high. Were we to lose in this particular endeavor, there is no question that our enemies around the world would gather strength. It would be seen as a victory for terrorists; it would be seen as a lack of will on the part of the United States. I think the stakes here are worth it.

This was indeed true of the Iraq War. Many previous wars took the lives of many more U.S. soldiers. Emphasizing this presented fatalities in terms that favored a primarily Republican narrative that envisioned the Iraq War as ultimately winnable at relatively low costs. However, as we see in the above illustration, a more frequent and perhaps

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19 Representative Dennis Kucinich, Congressional Record, December 7, 2006, H8892.
20 House Resolution 861 (H. Res. 861), titled, “Declaring that the United States will prevail in the Global War on Terror, the struggle to protect freedom from the terrorist adversary,” was introduced by Henry Hyde (R-IL) in the middle of June 2006. The legislation was a symbolic bill meant to demonstrate congressional support for the Iraq War, and to declare “that it is not in the national security interest of the United States to set an arbitrary date for the withdrawal or redeployment of United States Armed Forces from Iraq.” After a full House debate, it passed by a wide majority 256 – 153.
more relevant theme was the conceptualization of the Iraq War in terms of high stakes. Similar to constructions of conflicts during the Cold War, we see Representative Cole reminding his colleagues and Americans about the concerns of appearing weak (Campbell 1998).

Democrats did not directly compare U.S. casualties in Iraq to other wars, though they did bring them up in relation to deaths suffered during the Vietnam War. Representative Raúl Grijalva (D-AZ) argued that prolonging the war in Iraq would, like Vietnam, lead to more deaths of U.S. soldiers:

All of the lies that were offered to justify sending our men and women to fight and die have evaporated in the light of truth. All that we are left with is this argument that we're there now, so we have to stay "as long as it takes." This is nonsense. This is the same illogical rhetoric that kept our Nation in Vietnam, the rhetoric that doubled the cost of that conflict in American lives. More than half the combat deaths in Vietnam occurred after Richard Nixon was elected on a promise to bring the war to an end, and after the American people had already decided that they did not want one more soldier to die in Vietnam. Our vital task today in this Congress is to prevent a repeat of that tragedy in Iraq, to stop the bleeding, to make the will of the American people, which is to bring our troops home, the policy of our government as soon as possible.  

Republicans often preemptively debated comparisons to Vietnam, or responded to these comparisons, often engaging the question of casualties within this comparison. Representative Dennis Hastert (R-IL) argued that:

Every brave man and woman who sacrificed their lives, their limbs, or their blood and sweat and tears to fight the Hussein regime did so for a righteous and just cause. This is not like Vietnam. Vietnam is over. This war we fight now is a war against terrorists. It is a war against those who have attacked and killed Americans abroad and on our own soil. Saddam Hussein was a terrorist of the worst kind (emphasis added).  

Debating casualties in Iraq therefore sometimes entailed a debate over Vietnam and the meaning of the over 58,000 American soldiers’ lives that were taken in the 1960s and 1970s. Because the United States withdrew from Vietnam without achieving victory, the memory of this war has been continually contested. During the Iraq War, there were

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23 Representative Raúl Grijalva, Congressional Record, June 16, 2006, H4165.
24 Representative Dennis Hastert, Congressional Record, March 17, 2004, H1188
multiple and divergent “lessons” of Vietnam that were supposed to apply to the conduct of the United States in Iraq. Critics of the war frequently brought up the cost of blood in Vietnam as a lesson to withdraw sooner than later; supporters contested this depiction, suggesting differences between the wars and the meanings of lost lives in these wars.

**Unnecessary Losses**

Related to the above theme was the Republican strategy of framing fallen soldiers in terms of “dying in vain” in relation to the possibility of winding down involvement in Iraq. This theme, however, was not a purely Republican strategy. For example, Democratic Representative Steny Hoyer (D-MD), after discussing a recent death of a member of his district during the Iraq War, argued that “Our mission in Iraq has not been accomplished. . . . we will not retreat from our objective to eliminate the source of terrorism and those who perpetrate it. The legacy of the men and women who have committed the ultimate sacrifice in Iraq demands that we do no less.25 Another poignant illustration of this muscular rhetoric connecting withdrawal from Iraq with faintness and injustice to the dead comes from Representative Jack Kingston (R-GA) who argued that the United States “can't faint in the face of adversity. There are so many in America, the Michael Moores, the Cindy Sheehans, the fringe branch of the liberals that want us to cut and run. I think that would be such a huge disservice to all the troops who have died.” Finally, a sample from Representative Terry Osborne (R-NE) carries forward this frame by including the desires of soldiers and family members as a partial basis to continue fighting for the memory of the deceased:

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I have traveled to Iraq multiple times, and I met on one of these visits a young captain from Nebraska. He said that if we do not see this thing through every soldier we have lost will have died in vain. I think what he says is true. I called a mother this morning whose son had just been killed. She was proud of her son. She was proud of the sense of mission he had. And I really hate to tell her that we are leaving, that he died in vain.26

Democrats generally avoided saying that soldiers died in vain, though they often argued that their deaths were avoidable and ultimately needless sacrifices. For example, Jim McDermott (D-WA) noted that, “Another U.S. soldier died today in Iraq. The total number of U.S. men and women serving this country in Iraq who have died has climbed to 2,292. They have paid the ultimate sacrifice for Bush's folly.”27 Sam Farr (D-CA) argued that, “Over 20,000 U.S. military personnel have been killed or wounded in Iraq. The loss of American lives is tragic and unnecessary.”28 Others noted how the deaths of soldiers did not make Iraq safer or more secure: “3 years after Saddam's fall, 2,500 U.S. troops are dead, a number confirmed by the Pentagon just today, and insurgents appear more active than ever.”29

The Removal of Saddam Hussein

Finally, we see some issue convergence between Democrats and Republicans on the theme of the removal of Saddam Hussein. To illustrate, during debates over H. Res 557 there was clashing casualty rhetoric in relation to the removal of Hussein. This was spurred on due to the language of the resolution. During Fox News’ “Special Report with Brit Hume,” correspondent Brian Wilson noted:

> With the one-year anniversary of the war in Iraq looming, a spirited debate Wednesday, on the floor over House Resolution 557, a non-binding Republican measure designed to express that Saddam was a bad guy. That the people of Iraq have exhibited courage, and that lauded the valiant

26 Representative Terry Osborne, *Congressional Record*, June 15, 2006, H4080.
service of U.S. and coalition troops. Most members had no problem with all of that, but there was this other little phrase stating, “The United States and the world have been made safer with the removal of Saddam Hussein and his regime from power.”

The loss of U.S. lives in Iraq was often central to constructions of the meaning of Hussein’s ouster. During the debate, Representative George Miller (D-CA) posited that “Americans did not die in Iraq to punish Saddam Hussein for his reprehensible and vile actions” and Representative Charlie Rangel (D-NY) contended that “they (U.S. soldiers) did not sign up to get rid of Saddam Hussein. As evil as this guy may be, one day some of us may be asked the question, was it worth 550 American lives?” Democrats therefore used the issue of combat casualties to strategically frame the potentially positive event of the removal of Saddam Hussein in terms of the human costs needed to achieve his removal.

Republicans did not shy away from the connection between casualties and the removal of Hussein. Like Democratic Representatives Miller and Rangel, Republican Representative David Dreier (R-CA) also spoke about Saddam Hussein and U.S. casualties in Iraq. He stated that:

In the past year, we have lost over 550 of our best and brightest Americans, with another 3,190 wounded. That number, as it is in any conflict, is too high. Without question, we owe the soldiers we have lost, the soldiers who remain, and their families, an enormous debt of gratitude. Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what this resolution marking this first anniversary is designed to do. If there is any solace, it is knowing that because of their actions, America and the world are safer places today with Saddam Hussein’s regime dismantled. Because of our military, the people of Iraq have a bright future, where Sunni, Shiite, and Kurd alike can dream of being treated equally, of electing their representatives, of owning a prosperous business, and being free to say, worship, and read what they want.

Hence, Representative Dreier argued in favor of H. Res. 557 in part because he saw the loss of U.S. soldiers as a necessary consequence of achieving an important strategic

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32 Representative David Dreier, Congressional Record, March 17, 2004, H1122.
objective—the removal of Saddam Hussein from power. He spoke of the loss of U.S. lives as a means of enhancing U.S. security and fostering a democratic future in Iraq. Hence, we see in these examples the possibility of dialogue with regard to the meaning of death among U.S. politicians.

**Conclusions**

The starting point for this study was rooted in a normative argument about the value of publically speaking about and for fallen soldiers in democratic institutions. Dead soldiers were conceptualized within a framework of subalternity in order to highlight the question of whether and how to represent those who cannot speak. Even with numerous ethical concerns with speaking of and speaking for dead soldiers, I put forward an argument suggesting casualty rhetoric is an important normative component to deliberations on war. I then examined empirically who spoke about U.S. combat casualties among U.S. politicians in the House.

One may question whether the empirical findings about who speaks of the dead render the normative arguments hollow since strategic aims appear to trump any ethical objective of casualty recognition and acknowledgment. The empirical results suggest that there is little issue convergence between Democrats and Republicans, and that casualty rhetoric does not appear to be attributable to ethical obligations but rather to strategic and constituent factors. Again, I suggest that the inclusion of the dead during public deliberations is beneficial as it provides the conditions of agency for the dead soldiers, and allows political space for the meaning of fallen soldiers to be negotiated. Consciousness of these lost lives in public rhetoric enables them to become audible
quasi-agents rather than marginalized subjects absent in the rhetorical consciousness of the public sphere.

Furthermore, there was some convergence on the issue of U.S. combat casualties, and the discussion of the different framing techniques suggests that a limited form of dialogue transpired between war critics and war supporters about the meaning of U.S. combat casualties. Democrats and liberals ultimately owned this issue, but Republicans did indeed trespass on the issue in order to resist claims that the loss of life in Iraq implied a basis to withdraw from combat operations. Furthermore, discussions of family bereavement and quoting families of dead soldiers indicate the centrality of affective concerns and the allowance of marginalized voices to appear during war debates. Framing death in ways that advance political interests still allows the dead to be present during war deliberations. The manifestation of the dead during these deliberations is central to an ethical debate, even if political desires and interests of the living are mapped onto dead soldiers. It can be assumed that many fallen soldiers shared some of the desires and interests of legislators in Congress. More importantly, soldiers died for the interests of politicians, and even if the desires and interests of soldiers could not be presented in fuller terms, the dead soldiers deserve to be spoken of and for.

This study, which narrowly focused on casualty rhetoric, has broader implications for political theory and IR research. The question of speaking of and for the dead has received little attention, even though the topic of representation is central to the broader discipline of political science. Communities are comprised of not only the living but also the dead, who persist through memories among the living (Wasinski 2008). How the
dead should be discussed and represented deserves scholarly attention, particularly when elected representatives enable and thus are responsible for the conditions of death.

Though foreign policy research has conducted a significant body of research on the impact of casualties on public opinion, we have little knowledge of how these casualties are debated by elected politicians (Gartner 1998; Gelpi, Feaver, and Reifler 2009). This chapter moves us toward a fuller understanding of casualty politics by exploring who speaks and how they speak about casualties. This chapter also has implications for the presence or absence of dialogue in congressional foreign policy rhetoric. I demonstrate that on the issue of combat casualties we see relatively little convergence between parties. Some Republicans, however, were willing to “trespass” on this issue, accounting for approximately 20% of all casualty speeches (Appendix B).
### Appendix A Search Terms

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<th>Search Term</th>
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<th>Mean (Median)</th>
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<th>% of Casualty Speeches</th>
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### Appendix B Descriptive Statistics for the Dependent Variable:

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<th># of Casualty Speeches</th>
<th>% of Casualty Speeches</th>
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<td>707</td>
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Chapter 3
[Ac]counting [for] Their Dead: Rhetoric and Iraqi Civilian Casualties

Introduction

U.S. wars have had a devastating impact on civilian populations (Tirman 2011). In Vietnam, Colin Kahl (2007: 14-15) notes how the United States “fought in ways that put civilians directly in the crosshairs . . . a conservative estimate of civilian deaths from violence in South Vietnam places the total at 522,000 (out of a total population of 16 million in 1966).” In Iraq, though most civilian deaths were not directly the result of U.S. combat operations, the Brookings Institution’s Iraq Index estimates that 116,409 Iraqi civilians died between the beginning of the Iraq War in 2003 and June 2012 (O’Hanlon and Livingston 2012). These dire statistics raise important questions about U.S. foreign policy discourse: During times of war, do elected officials speak of these costs? If so, which politicians are most likely to comment on them? How do politicians make sense of and construct these distant costs of war during legislative debates?

Studies on the human costs of U.S. wars typically focus on American combat deaths; though it appears foreign civilian casualties might also matter. Studies on agenda setting in campaigns demonstrate that whether candidates’ discuss or eschew certain issues impacts the extent to which voters consider these issues (Simon 2002). Some scholars suggest that knowledge of casualties (including civilian) may somewhat dampen public support for war (Eichenberg 2005: 173) In recent research on how casualties impact public opinion on war, Gelpi, Feaver, and Reifler (2009: 256) ask, “at some level there is an unavoidable trade-off between their civilian casualties and our military casualties; how does the public weigh that trade-off and what, to use an infelicitous
metaphor from economics, is the exchange rate?” Their study provides some clues indicating that the U.S. public is sensitive to foreign civilian deaths. If civilian casualties matter in this way, it is germane to inquire into politicians’ responsiveness to these deaths, as political elites play a role in shaping public opinion on war (Berinsky 2007; Groeling and Baum 2008).

Speaking about civilian casualties might also be normatively important. Emmanuel Lévinas (1997: 100), a philosopher noted for his contribution to the ethical study of Self-Other relations, argued that consciousness of others’ suffering was central to any theory of ethics: “What is signified by the advent of conscience . . . if not the discovery of corpses beside me and my horror of existing by assassination? Attention to others and, consequently, the possibility of counting myself among them, of judging myself—conscience is justice.” If attention to the suffering and deaths of others is central to ethical relations among individuals and groups, then attentiveness to these losses in legislative debates may promote a more ethical conversation on war. To some extent, then, research on civilian casualty rhetoric within war debates enables us to understand the justness of democratic deliberations on war in the United States.

It could also be argued that because Congress is connected to the fates of civilians during wartime, that there is a normative obligation for legislators to recognize and acknowledge the deaths of civilians during congressional debates. In delegating broad authority to President George W. Bush to use military force, Congress was partially responsible for the fates of civilians in Iraq. Though thousands of Iraqi civilians were killed in the Iraq War, these lost lives had no voice within the deliberative process in Congress. Because Iraqi civilians were severely impacted by Congress’s decision to
provide President George W. Bush authority to use force in Iraq, speaking about these lost lives fulfills an important component to democratic deliberations, namely reasoning and inclusion. The first section of the chapter outlines a normative argument for civilian casualty rhetoric in democratic institutions.

If speaking about civilian deaths is normatively important, what explains it? Who is most likely to express any concern with these costs? Like other forms of rhetoric, is the manifestation of rhetorical behavior inclusive of these costs the result of partisan and strategic incentives (Petrocik 1996; Petrocik, Benoit, and Hansen 2003, Riker 1996, Sides 2006)? Does a pattern of civilian casualty rhetoric therefore emerge along party lines? Or do both parties speak of these costs in order to strategically frame them on their own terms? Is there a gender gap or a military service gap in civilian casualty rhetoric? The second section of the chapter addresses these empirical questions in the context of the U.S. House Representatives. I find that partisanship, representatives’ vote on the Iraq War resolution of 2002 (H.J. Res. 114), and gender are strongly associated with civilian casualty rhetoric in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Once we empirically establish why politicians speak about civilian deaths during wartime, we still need to examine how politicians debate these deaths. In order to gain a fuller understanding of civilian casualty rhetoric among elected officials during war debates, I explore Iraqi civilian deaths as normative constructs, assessing how these deaths emerge within the divergent interpretive frameworks of different groups of politicians.
Democratic Deliberation, Discourse, War, and Civilian Casualties

I argue that speaking about civilian casualties is normatively important in democratic institutions. This claim is not connected to normatively beneficial outcomes; rather, it is rooted in the ethics of inclusion and reasoning within political communication (Habermas 1990). Inclusion and public reasoning are perhaps the two most central components to ethical deliberation in democracies (Bohman 2000; Gutmann and Thompson 2004; Schneiderhan and Khan 2008). Public reasoning is the condition for public accountability and involves an exchange of ideas in the aim of providing the best justification for proposed policies (Cooke 2000). Most normative discourse theorists examine how groups within societal and state boundaries are able or unable to find a voice in the deliberative process, but have little to say about groups who are outside of these boundaries but nevertheless are affected by the decisions of deliberative democratic bodies. Even though groups external to these boundaries are unable to participate in deliberations, this does not mean that their interests and voices cannot be part of deliberations. Elected officials may speak and should speak about how policies impact these groups. When elected officials do comment on these externally affected groups, they engage in a form of discursive representation (Dryzek and Niemeyer 2008).

Because deliberative participation excludes foreign groups in the collective decision-making process, elected officials who speak about excluded actors permit a form of representation that is purely discursive but nonetheless important. Allowing external and formally excluded groups to exist as relevant with regard to decisions within political discourse improves the public reasoning and inclusionary foundations of ethical deliberations in democracy. Affected groups should therefore be included by being
spoken of, and should be part of the public *reasoning* in supporting/defending/rejecting policies.

For the purpose of this chapter, if people are killed as a result of democratic policies, democratically elected officials should publically address these deaths. Again, this claim is disconnected from any normative policy outcomes that may be the result of such inclusion and public reasoning with regard to killed civilians in democratic debates. Such inclusion and public reasoning by no means guarantee that a particular or more ethical outcome will occur. This account of speaking about civilian casualties therefore leads to a focus on whether and how it occurs, not on the effects of this communication.

Despite the claim that speaking about civilian casualties is normatively beneficial to democracy, research on political rhetoric suggests that politicians will frame these deaths in ways that suit their political purposes (Sides 2006). For example, it might be rhetorically useful for war supporters to acknowledge killed Iraqi civilians in ways that link their deaths to beneficial outcomes such as freedom and democracy in Iraq. Likewise, war critics might find it rhetorically desirable to frame these deaths as reasons to extricate the United States from Iraq. From a critic’s perspective, “playing politics” with the deceased may seem like an objectionable practice rather than ethical behavior.

As developed in chapter two, I argue that speaking of killed civilians, even for simply political reasons, is less offensive than remaining silent about these deaths, and has beneficial implications for democratic deliberations. Again, one of the principal questions regarding deliberative politics in democracies is the issue of voice (Fishkin 2009; Young 2001). Who has a voice in political processes? Who is silenced? How are groups spoken for (Alcoff 1991)? What are the ethical hazards associated with speaking
speaking for? What are the ethics of silence and silencing? Since the dead literally cannot speak, living speakers must engage in speaking of and for them if the dead are to be represented in political processes. Silence bars the memory of killed civilians, from entering into legislative debates about the Iraq War. This silence is perhaps even more problematic than in the previous chapter on dead U.S. soldiers. Killed soldiers come from congressional districts, and representatives often go their funerals. Killed soldiers are therefore more public and recognized than killed Iraqi civilians, and are more connected to elected representatives. Killed Iraqi civilians often have no impact on communities in the United States, and may easily be ignored and forgotten. Bringing them into legislative debates provides an important quasi-agency for killed civilians to have a public impact on war deliberations.

As suggested in the previous chapter, speaking of the dead creates the conditions for the dead to become agents in the public’s consciousness. The agency to impact congressional governance of the conduct of war, however, is partially dependent upon speaking of the dead during public debates in Congress. Once, the dead civilians are spoken of or spoken for, they become part of the public conversation on how politicians should think about war and how they should orient themselves toward war legislation.

Of course, speaking of dead civilians is just as ethically complex as speaking of killed U.S. soldiers. Dead Iraqis are gone and cannot speak for themselves. Speaking of and for the dead runs the risk of structuring the meaning of their lives and deaths in ways that conform to one’s own wishes. The dead are ultimately and purely transformed memory and memories within the mind and public consciousness. The dead become whatever representatives make of them. However, even speaking of killed civilians in
politicized rhetoric imbues them with quasi-agency, which is preferable to preventing them from becoming part of the debate about the Iraq War.

The presence of killed civilians dead creates the possibility for political accountability to them. The manifestation of the dead within democratic institutions “matters” not solely for the purpose of impacting policy but also because the dead civilians deserve some form of voice and representation with those who played a part in their deaths. Politicians set in motion the condition for civilians to die, and should bring public attention to these deaths during legislative debates.

**Strategic Ownership Theory and Civilian Casualty Rhetoric**

The previous section argued for the normative importance for speaking about killed civilians, even for purely political reasons. Indeed, speaking of dead civilians in an environment of electoral competition and partisan politics means that there are likely to be strategic incentives that govern the emergence of civilian casualty rhetoric in political debates. Indeed, as John Dryzek (2001: 653-654) notes, “Deliberation often has to be subordinated to strategy in the interests of winning.” This section moves us away from a normative theory for casualty rhetoric and toward an empirical theory of this practice.

There is a simple theoretical argument that drives this study. If we conceptualize civilian casualties as a sub-issue of the larger issue of the Iraq War, then we may approach casualty rhetoric from within a framework of “issue politics” (Sulkin 2005). The fundamental premise is that the choice of rhetorical content is largely attributable to issues that politicians perceive a benefit from speaking about. These benefits may be

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1 Though Sulkin (2005: 45) might identify this issue more as an “event”, since it is limited by space and time.
perceived as rooted in strategic advantages or personal characteristics. Unlike the previous chapter, I do not explore any constituency-based theories of rhetoric; constituents are most likely uninformed of or unconcerned with civilian deaths in Iraq. Thus, two incentive structures inform my assembly of two, non-mutually exclusive theories of casualty rhetoric: strategic ownership and personal characteristics. In this section, I test hypotheses about civilian casualty rhetoric among House members. Hypotheses relate to both members’ desire to speak about strategically owned issues and how certain personal characteristics might affect speaking about civilian deaths in Iraq.

**Strategic Ownership Perspective**

Similar to the study in chapter two, one way to understand variation in rhetorical behavior on issues is to focus on strategic interests. The literature on “issue ownership” suggests that politicians should speak about issues they “own,” which often means issues they are credibly known for (Petrocik 1996; Petrocik, Benoit, and Hansen 2003). Related literature on rhetoric and heresthetics by William Riker suggests that politicians should speak about issues that work to their strategic advantage. Rhetorical behavior should be strategic in that the speaker should perceive some benefit to publically engaging an issue. Riker’s (1996) “Dominance Principle” of rhetoric suggests that when one group has an advantage on an issue, this group should speak about it. Likewise, if one group has an advantage on the issue, the other group should avoid attending to it. The result is that politicians will diverge to discuss opposite issues (Austen-Smith 1993). This expectation translates into contrary rhetorical content by members of different political parties, since parties, rather than individuals, tend to “own” issues.
Perceptions of strategic ownership of Iraqi civilian casualties should guide legislators’ decisions to speak about this issue. But who would perceive ownership of civilian casualties in Iraq? It seems intuitive that negative costs of war are likely to be attributed to the party most associated with the decision to use force abroad. As such, it follows then that members of the party least associated with negative costs of war could perceive ownership of these costs. Perception of ownership provides these members with an incentive to speak on this issue. The pursuit to gain reelection and help their party’s reputation gives incentives to speak about civilian casualties as a means to criticize the President and the other party. Relevant research suggests that U.S. combat casualties offer openings to publicly attack the president’s conduct of war and to create distance from these costs (Kriner and Shen N.d.: 5). Iraqi civilian casualties might also expose Republicans to additional criticism by Democrats. From this perspective, civilian casualty rhetoric stems from incentives related to attack politics and negative campaigning (Lau and Pomper 2002). Dummy variables are used to measure the Party ID variable (1=Democrat, 0=Republican). The theoretical expectation regarding Party ID may be summarized in the following hypothesis:

\[ H_1: \text{Democrats will give more casualties speeches than Republicans.} \]

Note that this hypothesis is not deterministic but probabilistic, so we should still expect to see Republicans engage in casualty rhetoric. Indeed, there may be some degree of issue convergence, where politicians of different parties end up speaking about the same issues (Sigelman and Buell 2004). Republicans may feel compelled to speak about civilian casualties for strategic reasons. For example, they may be responsive to Democrats’ negative framing of casualties by putting a positive spin on them, perhaps highlighting when civilian casualty numbers decline, or linking them to positive aspects of the war,
such as democratization in Iraq. Though it might be difficult to positively spin civilian losses in Iraq, these deaths could be downplayed or considered necessary costs to achieving victory. Republicans could also engage in civilian casualty rhetoric so as not to be perceived as indifferent to these costs.

Another expectation regarding strategic ownership pertains to voting records. I expect that a Representative’s voting record on H.J. Res. 114, the Iraq War resolution authorizing President George W. Bush to use force in Iraq, should affect rhetorical behavior on civilian casualties. Democrats who voted to authorize the Iraq War might be less credible in speaking about casualties than Democrats (and Republicans) who voted against the resolution authorizing the war (H.J. Res. 114). Representatives who voted against this resolution and those who were not in Congress to vote might be more convincing in speaking of civilian casualties in Iraq. Politicians who voted against authorizing the use of force in Iraq could more believably attack the President about civilian casualties in Iraq since they voted against authorizing the President to send troops abroad. Representatives who voted in favor of the resolution may be reluctant to speak about these civilian losses since they share responsibility for these deaths. Categorical variables are also used to measure the Iraq War Resolution vote variable (0= “Yea Vote,” 1=“Nay Vote,” 2= "Did Note Vote"). The following hypotheses stems from the expectation of voting record and strategic ownership of casualties:

\[ H_2: \text{Representatives who voted against H.J. Res.114 will give more civilian casualty speeches than representatives who voted for H.J. Res.114.} \]

\[ H_3: \text{Representatives who did not vote on H.J. Res 114 will give more civilian casualty speeches than representatives who voted for H.J. Res.114.} \]
Personal Characteristics

The second theoretical argument driving this chapter stems from the idea the literature on politicians and personal characteristics. Politicians should rhetorically respond to issues that matter to them personally. The ideology of Representatives should be an important factor in affecting a legislator’s decision to speak about casualties. In particular, I expect liberal Representatives to make more casualty speeches than their conservative colleagues. Patrick Cronin and Benjamin Fordham (1999) argue that liberals have generally been opposed to internationalist foreign policy behavior, which includes supporting military strength and enlarging American influence abroad, since the mid-1960s. Increasing liberalism should be related to less support for war, and should increase the number of casualty speeches a Representative makes. Conversely, increasing conservatism should be related to higher support for war, and should decrease the number of casualty speeches a Representative makes.2 Ideology is measured using DW-NOMINATE scores.

\[ H_c: \text{Conservative representatives will give fewer civilian casualty speeches than liberal representatives.} \]

Military Service

There were many speeches about the benefits and costs of the Iraq War during debates over \textit{H.R. 4939 (2006)}, which focused on Iraq War appropriations, among other things. Few politicians mentioned civilian casualties. Rep. John Conyers (D-MI), however, gave a speech in which he said: “I am a Korean War veteran. I support our troops as much as anyone in this body, but . . . . Mr. Chairman, the price for continuing this war is too high,

---

2 Intuitively, ideology might be highly related to the ideological preferences of the constituency. However, Brunell (2006) suggests that legislator ideology and constituency ideology are not always so tightly linked.
not only in budgetary terms, but in American lives, Iraqi civilian casualties . . . “

Was Rep. Conyers’ discussion of civilian casualties part of a pattern of combat veterans speaking about civilian casualties? Though Rep. Conyers was firmly against the war, did combat veterans in support of the war also speak about civilian casualties more than their civilian counterparts? Does experience in combat produce greater consciousness of civilian casualties than military service without involvement in combat?

Veterans, especially combat veterans, should be more perceptive of the human costs of war, including civilian deaths. Ilona Pivar (2007: 76) finds that many combat veterans suffer from traumatic grief, often because of “exposure to significant numbers of civilian casualties . . . and concern about culpability for having caused death or harm to civilians in cities.” Even if combat veterans were not exposed to civilian death, or did not suffer from traumatic grief from such exposure, I expect that they will more likely to be aware of these deaths and the grief they may cause than those who never served in combat. I expect politicians who are combat veterans to be more conscious of civilian casualties than noncombat veteran and nonveteran politicians. Noncombat veterans, though having never been exposed to civilian death, are still socialized through military training which “teaches lessons about the role of military force in American foreign policy and lessons about how military force ought to be used” (Gelpi and Feaver 2002: 791-792). Because of this training, I anticipate noncombat veteran politicians to be more conscious of civilian casualties than nonveteran lawmakers. Veteran status is coded as a dummy variable. I used CQ Press Politics in America to determine whether members were civilians (=0), veterans (=1) or combat veterans (=2).

---

3 Representative John Conyers, Congressional Record, March 16, 2006, H1110
\(H_5\): Representatives who are combat veterans will give more civilian casualty speeches than representatives who never served in the military.

\(H_6\): Representatives who are noncombat military veterans will give more civilian casualty speeches than representatives who never served in the military.

**Gender**

Many scholars suggest that sex and gender impact views on foreign policy and war (Wilcox, Hewitt, and Allsop 1996). In particular, a large body of research concludes that women in the United States tend to be less supportive of war (Brooks and Valentino 2011). Concerns about U.S. combat deaths and civilian casualties are one of the many reasons for this. Gender differences in the support for war increase when men and women are faced with questions about casualties (Eichenberg 2003). Pamela Johnston Conover and Virginia Sapiro (1993) find that women and feminists are both less supportive of war than men, and more opposed to the bombing of civilians. Feminists in particular may see war as disproportionately impacting innocent civilians in war (Nincic and Nincic 2002: 552). Though women and men may be feminists, most feminists tend to be women (Conover and Sapiro 1993: 1081). Women also tend to react more negatively to war than men when presented with information about female U.S. combat deaths (Gartner 2008). Since women and children suffer disproportionately from war, women may be more concerned with civilian casualties (Hynes 2004; Plümper and Neumayer 2006). For these reasons, I expect female legislators to be more conscious of civilian casualties than male legislators. Gender is dummy coded (0=Male, 1=Female).

\(H_7\): Female representatives will give more civilian casualty speeches than male representatives.
Race

I also expect race to affect a legislator’s decision to speak about casualties, as scholars have found that race impacts views on war (Nincic and Nincic 2002). As mentioned in the previous chapter, African-American and Latinos have frequently expressed concern with the possibility that members of their racial communities suffer a disproportionate number of casualties (Barreto and Leal; Kriner and Shen 2010). Though research suggests that there is no “racial casualty gap,” legislators like Charlie Rangel (D-NY) have argued for the reinstatement of the draft in order to address the perception of unequal burdens of war (Kriner and Shen 2010). African American and Latino legislators may therefore be more likely to speak out against the war, and may consequently include other costs, such as civilian casualties, in their rhetoric against war.

Race is coded as follows: African American =1, Latino=2, White = 0.

\( H_8: \text{African American representatives will give more casualties speeches than white representatives.} \)

\( H_9: \text{Latino representatives will give more casualties speeches than white representatives.} \)

I also include three institutional control variables. I include seniority (number of years served) as previous research finds a negative relationship between the number of years Representatives have served and the number of speeches they give (Morris 2001). I also include a variable that measures whether members served on a House committee dealing with war legislation (0=No Committee Service, 1=Committee Service). Legislators serving on these committees may have more opportunities and incentives to speak about the Iraq War, and therefore may also speak more about civilian casualties. These committees are: Armed Services, Foreign Affairs, Homeland Security, Select
Intelligence, and Veteran Affairs. Committee membership data comes from *CQ Press Politics in America*. Lastly, I control for party leadership, since spokespersons for their party may speak more, and, by extension, may speak about civilian casualties more frequently. Party leaders in each congress are the following: The Speaker of the House, Majority Leader, Majority Whip, Minority Leader, Minority Whip, and the heads of each party caucus or party conference. Party leaders are coded “1”, while all other members in each congress are coded “0.”

The dependent variable in this analysis is the number Iraqi civilian casualty speeches by individual members of the House in the 108th (2003-2004), 109th (2005-2006), and 110th (2007-2008) Congresses. A civilian casualty speech is defined as orally delivered remarks about Iraqi civilian death in a legislative speech, a one-minute speech, or a special-order speech. Multiple remarks about Iraqi civilian death in a single speech were counted as one civilian casualty speech. If a member made remarks about Iraqi civilian death during a legislative speech and, for example, a one-minute speech in the same day, I counted each speech separately. To locate these speeches, I searched the *Daily Congressional Record* in ProQuest® Congressional. In conducting word searches, I searched for variants of Iraq or Iraqi or civilian or citizen or people combined with variants of the following words: blood, body count, innocent, casualty, cost, dead, death, died, dying, fatality, human, kill, life, lives, loss, lost, perish. These terms are also included in appendix A in chapter 1. For each congress, I included every member who

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4 During the 108th and 109th congresses, the Committee on Foreign Affairs was named the Committee on International Relations.
5 For the 108th Congress, coding of speeches began from the first day of the war, rather than the first day of the Congress. Members who did not serve a full term in a Congress were excluded from the dataset in that Congress.
was present for each of the two sessions. Members were omitted from the analysis if they were not present for both sessions for each congress.

I used negative binomial regression because the dependent variable is a count, and the data were overdispersed. For over-dispersed data, the negative binomial regression is preferred over the Poisson regression. The negative binomial regression model is useful here as it allows for the conditional variance of the dependent variable to exceed its mean value by introducing an individual unobserved disturbance to the model (Hilbe 2011).

Because it is difficult to interpret the results of negative binomial regression, coefficients from negative binomial regression models were transformed to marginal effects in table 3.3. Marginal effects enable us to understand how independent variables affect the expected mean counts of speeches while holding all other independent variables at their mean values. For statistically significant continuous independent variables, I also include the percentage difference between the mean value and a one standard deviation increase, and the percentage difference between the mean value and the maximum value. For statistically significant dummy independent variables, I also include the percentage difference between the baseline category and the other categories.

RESULTS
The key question addressed is simply how casualty rhetoric among U.S. House members is influenced by strategic ownership variables and personal characteristics. Descriptive statistics for key independent categorical variables are presented in table 3.1. Before discussing regression results, it is useful to provide a brief overview of the descriptive statistics.
Overall, members of the House did not speak very much about Iraqi civilian deaths. The modal number is zero in each congress. The total number of civilian casualty speeches in each congress never reaches the total number of members of Congress analyzed in the study.

Table 3.1 provides the difference in proportion of civilian casualty speeches and the proportion of membership in the U.S. House. This number indicates whether categorical variables are associated with greater or fewer civilian casualties speeches than their population in the sample would suggest. It is one indicator of issue convergence. In a scenario of perfect issue convergence, we would see the proportion of civilian casualty speeches associated with each category equal to the proportion of the members in each category.

The descriptive statistics in Table 3.1 suggest that there is little issue convergence, indicating support for strategic ownership hypotheses. For example, the difference between % of House membership and % of civilian casualty speeches for Republicans is between approximately −25 (110th Congress) and −33 (108th Congress (2003-2004)). The difference between % of House membership and % of civilian casualty speeches for
members who voted against H.J. Res. 114 is between +33 (110th Congress) and +47 (108th Congress).

Table 3.1 also indicates that certain personal characteristics are associated with civilian casualty rhetoric. Though females comprise between ~13% and ~15% of the House, their share of civilian casualty speeches is between ~41% and ~64%. This difference is most pronounced in the 110th Congress, where the difference in female membership in the House and the share of civilian casualty speeches is approximately +50. In addition, female legislators have the highest mean number of speeches in each congress. African-American legislators also gave more speeches relative to their membership in the House. The difference between % of House membership and % of civilian casualty speeches for African-American representatives +16 (108th Congress) is approximately +8 (109th and 110th Congresses).

The patterns in the descriptive statistics suggest that Democrats, members who voted against the Iraq War resolution, women, and African Americans dominated debates about Iraqi civilian deaths. To see whether these patterns are statistically significant when other variables are includes, I now examine the variation in civilian casualty rhetoric using negative binomial regression.

Table 3.2 presents results for the negative binomial regression of civilian casualty rhetoric. Due to collinearity issues, the table contains the results for three models for each congress (108th (2003-2004), 109th (2005-2006), 110th (2007-2008). The first model includes the party ID and excludes the ideology and vote on H.J. Res. 114 variables. The second model includes ideology and excludes Party ID and vote on H.J. Res. 114
variables. The third model excludes party ID and includes ideology and vote on H.J. Res.

114 variables. Models are estimated with robust standard errors.

Table 3.2 Explaining Civilian Casualty Rhetoric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td>Model 2</td>
<td>Model 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat (+)</td>
<td>1.250***</td>
<td>1.013***</td>
<td>0.737**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.333)</td>
<td>(0.359)</td>
<td>(0.304)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology (−)</td>
<td>−1.290***</td>
<td>−0.359</td>
<td>−0.900***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.434)</td>
<td>(0.424)</td>
<td>(0.389)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War Resolution</td>
<td>1.948***</td>
<td>2.148***</td>
<td>1.383***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nay Vote (+)</td>
<td>(0.416)</td>
<td>(0.383)</td>
<td>(0.358)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War Resolution</td>
<td>1.126**</td>
<td>1.411***</td>
<td>0.706**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did Note Vote (+)</td>
<td>(0.529)</td>
<td>(0.403)</td>
<td>(0.347)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran (+)</td>
<td>0.162</td>
<td>0.181</td>
<td>0.219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.424)</td>
<td>(0.427)</td>
<td>(0.400)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combat Veteran (+)</td>
<td>−1.472</td>
<td>−1.373</td>
<td>−1.300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.197)</td>
<td>(1.179)</td>
<td>(1.280)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female (+)</td>
<td>1.136***</td>
<td>1.016***</td>
<td>0.965**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.409)</td>
<td>(0.385)</td>
<td>(0.387)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American (+)</td>
<td>0.292</td>
<td>0.218</td>
<td>−0.085</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.426)</td>
<td>(0.420)</td>
<td>(0.409)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino (+)</td>
<td>−1.729***</td>
<td>−1.719***</td>
<td>−1.937***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.644)</td>
<td>(0.637)</td>
<td>(0.694)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party Leadership (+)</td>
<td>−0.103</td>
<td>0.054</td>
<td>0.945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.897)</td>
<td>(0.930)</td>
<td>(1.367)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee (+)</td>
<td>0.134</td>
<td>0.188</td>
<td>0.299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.313)</td>
<td>(0.310)</td>
<td>(0.307)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seniority (−)</td>
<td>−0.008</td>
<td>−0.015</td>
<td>−0.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.019)</td>
<td>(0.018)</td>
<td>(0.022)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>−2.424***</td>
<td>−1.677***</td>
<td>−2.748***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.345)</td>
<td>(0.299)</td>
<td>(0.404)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wald X²</td>
<td>39.48</td>
<td>37.92</td>
<td>59.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P &gt; X²</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo R²</td>
<td>0.077</td>
<td>0.082</td>
<td>0.128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log pseudo-likelihood</td>
<td>−221.7558</td>
<td>−220.6542</td>
<td>−209.4190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Observations</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>430</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses. Models estimated with negative binomial regression. ***p < .01; **p < .05; *p < .10. Symbols in brackets represent the expected direction of the coefficient.
Table 3.3 Marginal Effects for Key Independent Variables: Predicted Number of Civilian Casualty Speeches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Marginal Effects</th>
<th>% Diff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>108th House (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat (+)</td>
<td>0.307</td>
<td>+ 10.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female (+)</td>
<td>0.426</td>
<td>+ 14.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino (+)</td>
<td>0.030</td>
<td>- 7.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108th House (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology Increase (+)</td>
<td>0.349</td>
<td>+ 8.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology Max (+)</td>
<td>0.535</td>
<td>+ 17.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female (+)</td>
<td>0.374</td>
<td>+ 11.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino (+)</td>
<td>0.050</td>
<td>- 6.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108th House (3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War Resolution &quot;Nay Vote&quot; (+)</td>
<td>0.438</td>
<td>+ 18.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War Resolution &quot;Did Not Vote&quot; (+)</td>
<td>0.195</td>
<td>+ 6.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female (+)</td>
<td>0.286</td>
<td>+ 8.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino (+)</td>
<td>0.019</td>
<td>- 5.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>109th House (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat (+)</td>
<td>0.735</td>
<td>+ 23.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran (+)</td>
<td>0.898</td>
<td>+ 27.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combat Veteran (+)</td>
<td>0.683</td>
<td>+ 17.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female (+)</td>
<td>1.397</td>
<td>+ 32.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino (+)</td>
<td>0.218</td>
<td>- 11.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seniority Decrease (+)</td>
<td>0.719</td>
<td>+ 6.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seniority Min (+)</td>
<td>0.753</td>
<td>+ 8.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>109th House (2)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology Increase (+)</td>
<td>0.823</td>
<td>+ 35.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology Max (+)</td>
<td>1.127</td>
<td>+ 50.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran (+)</td>
<td>0.926</td>
<td>+ 29.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combat Veteran (+)</td>
<td>0.706</td>
<td>+ 18.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female (+)</td>
<td>1.302</td>
<td>+ 47.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seniority Decrease (-)</td>
<td>0.719</td>
<td>+ 7.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seniority Min (-)</td>
<td>0.766</td>
<td>+ 9.89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

109th House (3) | | |
| War Resolution "Nay Vote" (+) | 1.139 | + 50.32 |
| War Resolution "Did Not Vote" (+) | 0.545 | + 20.61 |
| Veteran (+) | 0.515 | + 12.55 |
| Combat Veteran (+) | 0.733 | + 23.46 |
| Female (+) | 0.857 | + 20.44 |

110th House (1) | | |
Negative binomial regression results suggest that strategic ownership variables had a significant impact on the number civilian casualty speeches made by Representatives. Table 3.2 shows that Party ID was statistically significant and in the expected direction in model 1 in each congress. The marginal effect of Party ID in table 3.3 indicates that moving from a Republican to Democratic Representative is estimated to lead to an increase between ~11% (108th Congress) and ~23% (109th Congress) of civilian casualty speeches. These results support H1.

The results suggest that Representatives’ voting records on H.J. Res. 114 also significantly affected civilian casualty speechmaking in the House, even more so than Party ID. This variable was statistically significant in model 3 in each congress. Even controlling for ideology, a Representative’s vote on H.J. Res. 114 was highly influential on his or her number of civilian casualty speeches. The marginal effect of this vote in

### Table 3.3 Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Margin (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Democrat (+)</td>
<td>0.784</td>
<td>+ 20.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female (+)</td>
<td>1.314</td>
<td>+ 41.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino (+)</td>
<td>0.052</td>
<td>− 28.32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>110th House (2)</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ideology O Increase (+)</td>
<td>0.942</td>
<td>+ 16.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology Max (+)</td>
<td>1.251</td>
<td>+ 32.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female (+)</td>
<td>1.166</td>
<td>+ 34.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino (+)</td>
<td>0.080</td>
<td>− 27.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>110th House (3)</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>War Resolution &quot;Nay Vote&quot; (+)</td>
<td>1.112</td>
<td>+ 41.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War Resolution &quot;Dil Nase Vote&quot; (+)</td>
<td>0.565</td>
<td>+ 14.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female (+)</td>
<td>0.907</td>
<td>+ 23.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino (+)</td>
<td>0.044</td>
<td>− 25.99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Marginal effects are based on all statistically significant variables from the corresponding models in table 2. For each categorical variable, the percentage difference is calculated using the baseline category. The percentage difference for "Ideology O Increase" is calculated using the mean ideology score in the House. The increase is in the liberal direction. The percentage difference for "Ideology Max" is calculated using the mean ideology score in each House. "Ideology Max" corresponds to the lowest (most liberal) DW-Nominate score. The percentage difference for "Seniority O Decrease" is calculated using the mean seniority number in the House. "Seniority Min" corresponds to the lowest seniority number in the House. Symbols in brackets represent the expected direction of the percent difference.
Table 3.3 reveals that moving from a Representative who voted in favor of the resolution to a Representative who voted against the resolution is estimated to lead to an increase of between ~19% (108th Congress) and ~50% (109th Congress) civilian casualty speeches. These results support H2.

There is mixed support for the personal characteristics variables. Military service is only statistically significant in the 109th Congress. Table 3.3 shows that moving from a nonveteran Representative to a combat veteran Representative is estimated to lead to an increase in ~17% (109th House model 1) to ~24% (109th House model 3). Table 3.3 reveals that moving from a nonveteran Representative to a veteran Representative is estimated to lead to an increase in ~13% (109th House model 3) to ~30% (109th House model 2). The effect of military service was therefore limited to the 109th Congress, though the impact was relatively strong. For instance, in model 1 in the 109th Congress, we see that a shift from civilian status to veteran status has a larger estimated increase on civilian casualty speeches than the shift from Republican to Democrat Party ID (~28% compared to 23%). Because military service reaches statistically significance only in the 109th Congress, there is only ambiguous support for Hypothesis 4.

Turning to the impact of gender, the results provide strong support for hypothesis 5. The results illustrate prominent and statistically significant differences among male and female legislators in every model in each congress (Table 3.2). Table 3.3 shows that switching from a male Representative to a female Representative is estimated to have some of the largest marginal effects. For instance, if we compare the marginal effects (Table 3.3) of gender with Party ID (model 1 for each congress), we see that the moving from a female to male Representative is estimated to have a larger impact than switching
from a Republican to Democrat. A clear gender gap exists in civilian casualty rhetoric in the House, indicating that the distinctive reactions to civilian casualties by men and women in the general public also occur in public office.

There are mixed results for the impact of ideology on civilian casualty rhetoric. In the second model in each congress, we see a strong and statistically significant impact of ideology (table 3.2). If we explore the marginal effects of ideology in Table 3.3, the results reveal in the second model for each congress that moving from the mean ideology score to the maximum liberal ideology score is associated with an increase between a ~17% (108th Congress) and ~51% (109th Congress) in civilian casualty speeches. However, when we include ideology and the vote on H.J. Res. 114 (model 3 in each congress), the impact of ideology dramatically decreases, and is no longer statistically significant.

When we examine the impact of race, the category of Latino was statistically significant in every model in the 108th and 110th Congresses, but not in any of the models in the 109th Congress. The direction of this coefficient, however, was in the opposite direction than expected. Latino legislators and civilian casualty speeches are negatively associated. These results are unsurprising when examining the descriptive data; Latino legislators gave very few civilian casualty speeches. Though African-American Representatives appeared to give a high number of civilian casualty speeches relative to their presence in the House, this racial category never reached statistical significance in any of the regression models.
The controls perform somewhat as expected, though most fail to reach statistical significance. With regard to the institutional controls, seniority is statistically significant, though only in the first two models in the 109th Congress.

These results provide evidence that strategic ownership and some personal characteristics help explain the civilian casualty rhetoric in the U.S. House of Representatives. In particular, female legislators and representatives who voted against authorizing the use of force are likely to give a higher number of civilian casualty speeches. Because the chapter examines only the U.S. House and not the U.S. Senate, the results cannot necessarily speak to all nationally elected U.S. politicians. Furthermore, because the chapter examines only the Iraq War, it is unclear how these strategic ownership variables and personal characteristics would affect civilian casualty speechmaking in other wars. The statistical results, however, represent an important first cut analysis of civilian casualty rhetoric.

CONSTRUCTING IRAQI CIVILIAN DEATH

Though I have established patterns of civilian casualty rhetoric among politicians in the U.S. House, we still do not know how members spoke about fallen Iraqi citizens. In this section I explore different interpretive frameworks through which Iraqi deaths emerged. For interpretive purposes, I primarily examine differences between Democrats and Republicans. The section explores civilian casualties as normative constructs. By this I mean that the ontological status of the civilian dead is contingent upon interpretive frameworks that allow for their emergence. They remain an invisible presence until the living speak of them. This idea stems from Jacques Derrida’s (1995: 45) claim that,
“Every relation to death is an interpretative apprehension and a representative approach to death.” As such, civilian dead remain unreal insofar as they are unable to speak through the representative language of the living. Moreover, the emergence of the dead in war narratives is generally tied up in normative expressions of war positions. Hence, civilian casualties may be considered normative constructs.

**REPUBLICANS AND CIVILIAN DEATH**

Unsurprisingly, many Republicans brought up civilian casualties in relation to their support for the president and the war in Iraq. Beyond this broader narrative of support for the president’s war strategies and overall support for war, there were four common interpretive frameworks in which Iraqi civilian death emerged. In the first framework, which I refer to as the *minimalist framework*, civilian death was articulated as either as a marginal ramification of war, or as a problem in decline. In minimalizing civilian deaths in this way, the war would more easily be constituted as neatly executed or even successful. The second framework juxtaposed Iraqi civilian death with killed insurgents, killed Americans, and hypothetical killed Iraqis under a perpetual Hussein regime. I refer to this framework as the *juxtaposition framework*. The third framework—the *democratization framework*—envelops civilian death within a celebratory vision of democratization. Here, civilian deaths are acceptable costs of a future democratic Iraq. The fourth framework, *the common enemy framework*, attributes the loss of innocent Iraqi lives to insurgents, jihadists, and terrorists. In this framework, the killers of Iraqi civilians are the same as those seeking to harm and kill Americans and American

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6 Exceptions were John Duncan (R-TN) and Ron Paul (R-TX). Duncan and Paul were critical of the President’s conduct of war, and both discussed civilian casualties as reasons to withdraw from Iraq.
soldiers. This framework draws attention away from direct connections between the U.S. military and civilian death, and highlights how the United States should remain in Iraq to defeat common enemies of the Iraqi and American people. To parsimoniously clarify these interpretive frameworks, I will discuss each in turn and provide two or three excerpts from speeches for each framework.

**Minimalist Framework**

Constructing civilian deaths as either minimal or in decline served to strengthen or sustain a narrative of progress in Iraq, often locating the few or declining innocent fatalities within the language of victory, progress, and success. For instance, toward the end of 2007, the year of the Bush administration’s “surge” policy, Representative Duncan Hunter (R-CA), the ranking member of the House Armed Services Committee, argued that, “We are winning. We are going to leave Iraq in victory. . . . We have seen a drop in attacks and a drop in American casualties and civilian casualties across Iraq. . . . To everyone who cares about an American victory in Iraq, we will have victory in Iraq if we maintain our strength.” The suggestion that civilian casualties were dwindling helped to define success in Iraq and provide a rationale for the continuation of funding the war. Indeed, Representative Hunter’s comments were part of a debate about H.R. 1585, which was about further appropriations for the war in Iraq. Hunter equated “maintaining our strength” with “continuing to fund this [Iraq War] operation.” If civilian casualties were declining, then war supporters, which included many conservative legislators, had incentives to speak about these deaths, and construct them as a reason to push forward in the war.

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In the early stages of war some Republicans tended to suggest that victory had been achieved in Iraq with very few civilian deaths. For instance, Michael Burgess (R-TX) noted how “The American soldiers who fought in Iraq did so with skill, determination and bravery in the face of grave dangers. Their conquest of Iraq was rapid, overwhelming, and the victory was obtained with relatively limited civilian casualties.”

This idea of limited casualties, however, became less common as casualties mounted. Civilian deaths in Iraq did decline during the 110th Congress, which suggests one possibility for why Republicans would be increasingly likely to deliver a civilian casualty speech, and attempt to construct the Iraqi civilian casualty debate in more encouraging terms.

Republicans also countered the practice of war critics citing raw civilian death numbers by downplaying the meaning of these numbers. In response to Democratic legislators’ discussions of civilian death in Iraq, Representative Steve King (R-IA) had “a different opinion and . . . a different viewpoint on a number of the statistics.” Representative King did not “take issue with the specificity of that number of 27,000 civilians killed” but rather contextualized that number with violent death rates from other countries around the world and cities in the United States. King first used that 27,000 number of civilian deaths and transformed it into a rate of 27.51 innocent deaths per 100,000 per year. He then argued that Venezuela, Jamaica, South Africa, and Colombia were more dangerous places than Iraq: “It is more than twice as dangerous to be a civilian living supposedly in peace and harmony in Colombia than it is to be a civilian living in the middle of this chaos in Iraq that I hear is intolerable.” Then, looking at cities in the United States, he argued that, “it is far more dangerous for my wife to live here in

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Washington, D.C.” King concluded, then, “that this [Iraq War civilian casualty rate] is a manageable violence rate.” This example, while illustrating another way in which civilian death emerged in a minimalist discursive framework, also highlights how statistical data about casualties may be constructed in different ways for antithetical purposes.

**Juxtaposition Framework**

Another framework of civilian death employed by Republicans was to contrast fallen Iraqi citizens with insurgents killed, Americans killed, or hypothetical civilian deaths under Saddam Hussein in a counterfactual scenario in which the United States did not go to war. Again, remarks that followed this pattern were linked to ideas of progress, success, and victory in Iraq. Representative Pete Hoekstra (R-MI), for instance, argued that “There have been a lot more Iraqi troops, police and citizens that have been killed over the last number of months than U.S. soldiers. . . . But it is clearly a war against radical Islam that is moving forward, that needs to be completed.” Here, the loss of more Iraqi citizens than U.S. soldiers was evidence that Iraqis were bearing the brunt of violence. Representative Hoekstra interpreted this as progress in the U.S. war in Iraq, and saw it as a reason to sustain combat operations.

In another case of employing this framework, in early stages of the Iraq War, Representative Dana Rohrabacher (R-CA) argued that civilian lives were saved because of U.S. intervention in Iraq:

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9 Representative Steve King, *Congressional Record*, May 3, 2006, H2089-H2090
11 This progress was often about Iraqis taking more responsibility. Indeed, a discursive theme not discussed in this paper but relevant to this remark, is that there was contestation over whether Iraqis were taking enough responsibility for curbing violence, and that it should be Iraqis dying for their country instead of U.S. soldiers.
We see that throughout the Islamic world that there is a possibility now because of America's increase in prestige that we can actually step in and do some good and we can be proud that with only a minor loss of civilian life we actually achieved our goal of eliminating Saddam Hussein's monstrous regime. In fact, more civilians would be dead, Iraqi civilians would be dead today, had we left Saddam Hussein in power and he killed the number of civilians that he was killing, that his rate of massacre of his own people would have continued unabated by American troops.12

As initial justification for war in Iraq, and as a defense of the war throughout, members of the House frequently discussed how Saddam Hussein’s regime was responsible for the deaths of many Iraqis. Proponents of war therefore argued that regime change might save future lives that Hussein’s regime would have otherwise claimed. And, as the previous example illustrates, some Republican members of the House sought to construct Iraqi civilian death as numerically less than if Hussein had remained in power. While such speeches could also fall under the previous minimalist framework, the inclusion of other types of death in relation to innocent Iraqi deaths under the U.S. occupation suggests a distinct interpretive framework.

**Common Enemy Framework**

Many Republicans attributed the cause of civilian death in Iraq to terrorists, jihadists, and insurgents. In doing so, they typically linked the killers of innocent Iraqis to those who have already killed or wish to kill U.S. civilians and soldiers. For example, in a speech on terrorism, Representative Geoff Davis (R-KY), argued that:

> We are fighting an enemy who has proven it will use whatever violent means necessary to further its cause. Indeed, we are not going to lose because of military strength, but we would lose only if the people of the United States have a loss of resolve. My encouragement is to stay the course. . . . We recoil in horror at the report of suicide bombers strolling into crowded markets or onto packed buses and detonating themselves. Are they primarily focusing on our soldiers? No. The preponderance of causalities are attacks on their own people. . . . this . . . insurgency . . . is led by frankly a group of thugs, people filled with hatred, bitterness, criminals by any measure of merit, killing innocent men, women and children.13

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Similarly, Representative Louie Gohmert (R-TX) argued that

> These people who are bent on our destruction are so consumed with evil and hatred that they would blow up sweet little innocent Iraqi children. They are not just killing Americans, they will kill anybody that stands in their way. . . . they are so consumed with hatred they would blow those innocent people up, Muslims themselves.\(^\text{14}\)

In this framework, Iraqi civilian deaths and U.S. civilian and soldier deaths in the war on terror result from the same or similar malevolent source. Iraqis are dying because terrorists and insurgents are filled with hatred, which manifests in violence toward innocent Americans and Iraqis.

\textit{Democratization Framework}

Some Republicans constructed civilian deaths in Iraq as serving a greater good of democratization. In such arguments, civilian deaths, much like U.S. combat deaths, were construed as part of a shared sacrifice for a brighter, democratic future in Iraq. Such discussions were part of a larger discourse of success and victory in the war on terrorism. For instance, Representative Phil Gingrey (R-GA), while celebrating elections in Iraq, concluded that civilian fatalities were not in vain but rather served to advance democracy in Iraq:

> It is the dawn of a new day in Iraq. . . . and I raise my hand and my index finger in symbolic fashion to salute the 10.5 million people who went to the polls in that historic election on December 15. . . . This is also a great day for those 2,175 soldiers, men and women, who have given their lives . . . and 30,000 or more innocent Iraqi people, many of them women and children, who have given their lives for this cause. This is a great day.\(^\text{15}\)

Similar discussions were intertwined with criticism of Democratic politicians and liberals in the United States. Representative Tom Tancredo (R-CO) postulated that the political left in the United States “cannot really get over the fact that the seeds of democracy were planted in Iraq. They were even nourished by the blood of many wonderful American


\(^{15}\) Representative Phil Gingrey, \textit{Congressional Record}, December 15, 2005, H11875.
servicemen and women and certainly by the blood of thousands and thousands of Iraqi citizens. They were hopeful that, in fact, we would fail, that the whole experiment would fail.”  

Likewise, Representative Marsha Blackburn (R-TN) argued that “Liberals like to say that Iraq was out of control and that the terrorists would destroy the election, and America was losing and that we should postpone the elections. . . . They wanted us to tell the world that the United States did not have the strength and the determination to defeat terrorism, and they were wrong in every instance.”  

She then proceeded to quote Iraqi women whom she had encountered in Iraq and had since been in correspondence with, who thanked her for the United States’ perseverance in Iraq:

> Dear American Friends, a warm hug of appreciation from Iraq to the good hearts in the United States. Congratulations for us and for you on Iraqi Elections Day. Today we are not only free but we have stood united in democracy. . . .Thank you on behalf of all Iraqi innocents who have given their lives for the freedom price.

Republicans therefore constructed a sharp nexus between the normative value of democratization in Iraq and civilian deaths, suggesting the latter were either needed for the former to materialize, or that these deaths should be celebrated as an unfortunate though essential part of the establishment of Iraq’s new democratic future.

**DEMOCRATS AND CIVILIAN DEATH**

Just as many Republicans’ Iraqi casualty speeches were ultimately about support for the President and the war in Iraq, Democrats often remarked on Iraqi death as a means to criticize the president and the war. Beyond this intuitive finding, these deaths emerged in four unique interpretive frameworks: *Concern/lack of concern, destabilization, Soldier sympathy,* and *democratization.*

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16 Representative Tom Tancredo, *Congressional Record,* February 1, 2005, H276.
17 Representative Marsha Blackburn, *Congressional Record,* February 1, 2005, H273.
18 Ibid., H274.
Concern/Lack of Concern

Many Democrats discussed Iraqi civilians within a framework of concern about innocent Iraqi deaths or, alternatively, the Bush administration’s lack of concern with these deaths. With regard to the former, it was common for Democrats to talk about the tragic deaths of Iraqis within a framework of criticism of war. For example, Representative Elijah Cummings (D-MD) argued that, “There has been a tragic loss of life—both among our American troops and among Iraq's civilian population. I knew the human losses would be too great and I did not want our families—or the Iraqi people—to experience the overwhelming grief and remorse that accompanies waging war unnecessarily.”

Many Democrats commented on the estimated number of Iraqi deaths, and often argued that the Bush administration (and people in general) tended not to care. For example, Representative Dennis Kucinich (D-OH) argued that a supplemental vote on the Iraq War was “Mass death on the installment plan,” and followed this critique by noting how “Iraqi civilian casualties number well over 100,000. Iraqi civilian injuries could be over 1 million, but who is keeping track? Some act as though the Iraqis are not real people with real families, real hopes and real dreams and loves of their own.”

Representative Jim McDermott (D-WA) argued that the United States has “killed I do not know how many thousand because no one will count the number of Iraqis. It is as though they do not matter. Nor do we talk about the number of them that are injured. . . . how much longer can we persist in staying there [Iraq]?”

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19 Representative Elijah Cummings, Congressional Record, May 20, 2004, H3499.
20 Representative Dennis Kucinich, Congressional Record, June 12, 2006, H3769.
21 Representative Jim McDermott, Congressional Record, September 22, 2005, H8332.
Similarly, Representatives Jane Harman (D-CA) and Jim McDermott (D-WA) argued that the Bush administration was constructing an overly optimistic image of Iraq by refusing to announce civilian casualty numbers or by manipulating these figures. Representative Harman argued that the Bush administration was painting “a rosy picture of the situation in Iraq” by inaccurately counting civilian deaths.\(^\text{22}\) She argued that the only reason the administration could claim progress was by excluding “people killed by bombs, mortars, rockets, and other mass attacks” in recent reports, and chastised the administration by noting that “I do not think policymakers should engage in creative accounting when it comes to the lives of our sons and daughters or the lives of innocent Iraqis.”\(^\text{23}\) Relatedly, and in a twist to the juxtaposition interpretive framework employed by Republicans, Representative McDermott suggested that:

> The Rumsfeld command is happy to announce the number of insurgents killed or captured, but they do not talk much about the innocent Iraqi civilians killed or wounded. They are not announcing those numbers every day. Why not? If they killed or captured 80 insurgents, how many civilians were injured or wounded in the process? Why do they not tell us the whole story?\(^\text{24}\)

**Destabilization Framework**

Some Democrats discussed civilian casualties as evidence of the United States as a destabilizing force. For instance, Representative Marty Meehan (D-MA) argued that:

> Every time Iraqi bystanders are killed in coalition actions, it further erodes the goodwill we earned by ridding them of Saddam Hussein. And even when innocent Iraqis are murdered by insurgents, the United States is blamed for failing to provide security. If the world's most potent Army cannot make the streets safe, Iraqis are asking, what is it that they are really here for? So the first step in achieving stability in Iraq is recognizing that the United States presence there has become inherently destabilizing.\(^\text{25}\)

\(^{22}\) Representative Jane Harman, *Congressional Record*, September 13, 2006, H6475.

\(^{23}\) Ibid., H6475

\(^{24}\) Representative Jim McDermott, *Congressional Record*, November 16, 2005, H10361.

Similarly, another Massachusetts Democrat, Representative James McGovern (D-MA), ultimately constructed the killing of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi as a failure because the United States created the conditions of his emergence, creating an environment in which an al-Zarqawi may materialize, slay Iraqis, and destabilize Iraq: “Certainly the death of terrorist Abu Musab al Zarqawi is welcome news. We did not create Zarqawi, but it was the war in Iraq that offered him the opportunity to kill American soldiers and innocent Iraqi civilians and to inflame sectarian hatreds.”

While many Democrats were quick to praise the death of al-Zarqawi, and use his death to construe a vision of progress in Iraq, many Democrats used al-Zarqawi’s death to bring light to civilian death and Iraqi destabilization.

Soldier Sympathy Framework

Democrats also constructed lost Iraqi lives by bringing attention to the impact of civilian death on the lives of U.S. soldiers. In particular, Democrats articulated the trauma that may result from either the accidental killing of innocents or exposure to civilian death, and employed this trauma to criticize the war. Maxine Waters (D-CA), for instance, noted that:

> We know that, yes, thousands of Iraqis have died because we have young people in these special operations . . . who were told to shoot anything that moves. Many of them cannot live with the psychological damage that is fostered upon them because they are shooting and they are killing and they do not have all of the answers. So today we focus on our soldiers. . . . Our prayers go out to them. We want them to be returned home. We want them to realize their dreams and their hopes and their aspirations.  

Another California Democrat, Lynn Woolsey (D-CA) made a related point in her remarks about the film “The Ground Truth.” She argued that:

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They [U.S. soldiers] found themselves killing children, running over them with their vehicles, on command firing on children, burning children. And women, one Marine told the story of mistakenly shooting a woman just before she waved a white handkerchief to show that she was not an enemy. And men, men who could have been, or not, part of the insurgency. Never clear if they were killing innocents or if they were fighting the enemy. Their eyes became confused. Their voices became uncertain. Their resolve questioning. And while they were moving through these emotions from certainty to uncertainty, they and their buddies were being physically and mentally wounded. Those who were not killed or injured were likely to become victims of PTSD, posttraumatic stress disorder. But they did come home if they were not killed. They came home with sad, sad eyes. 28

Commenting on the lives and desires of U.S. combat soldiers appeared to be quite common in House war debates, and Democrats attempted to critique the war by positing that the war had traumatic effects on soldiers. Democratic members of the House therefore highlighted how one aspect of this trauma was the result of U.S. soldiers killing innocent Iraqis. Even though U.S. soldiers were rarely responsible for close-encounter killing of Iraqis—most civilian death in Iraq that was directly the result of U.S. and coalition troops was aerial bombing—Democrats posited civilian-death induced trauma to U.S. soldiers as a means to configure the Iraq War as a tragedy that should be terminated (Hicks et al. 2011).

Democratization Framework

Just as Iraqi civilian deaths emerged in Republican narratives of democratization, they also manifested within Democrats’ speeches about democratization in Iraq. Democrats, however, argued against the impulse to celebrate Iraqi elections, suggesting that the cost to innocent lives was not worth the benefit of nascent democracy. For instance, Representative Steve Cohen (D-TN) argued that, “In bringing democracy to these people we have killed tens of thousands of Iraqis, we have destroyed their nation, and we have

28 Representative Lynn Woolsey, Congressional Record, July 26, 2006, H5941.
put casualties among tens of thousands of Iraqis. What a price to pay to bring democracy
to a country, to destroy the country.”

Other Democrats argued that since the United States helped establish democracy
in Iraq, it would be unwise for U.S. troops to remain in Iraq as more American and Iraqi
lives were lost. Representative Tom Udall (D-NM), for example, noted how “We have
lost thousands of American and Iraqi lives,” and argued that violence has undermined the
success of Iraqi election: “Sectarian violence and civil strife have eclipsed the progress of
free elections . . . . We have helped sow the seeds of democracy, but now the people of
Iraq must take charge and bring about their own destiny.”

The meaning of elections in Iraq, therefore, was quite fluid. Whereas many
Republicans saw elections as legitimating the war in Iraq, Democrats either sought to
dampen triumphal visions of a democratic Iraq by highlighting civilian deaths, or by
using civilian deaths to support the idea that the United States’ job in Iraq was complete
because Iraq had held free and fair democratic elections.

Spectral Security
This section moves beyond how civilian death manifested in the interpretive frameworks
of Democrats and Republicans, and asks how Iraqi civilian deaths informed House
members’ conception of U.S. security. While the previously discussed interpretive
frameworks of Iraqi civilian casualty speechmaking discussed some interesting and
common modes of constructing fallen Iraqi citizens, we have yet to examine one of the
most important components of wartime rhetoric: national security. In this section, I

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29 Representative Steve Cohen, Congressional Record, January 22, 2008, H1476.
30 Representative Tom Udall, Congressional Record, June 16, 2006, H4180.
briefly sketch out ways in which members of the House linked Iraqi civilian deaths to U.S. national security. This section focuses primarily on critics of the Iraq War, since supporters tended not to link civilians deaths with U.S. security. I refer to the inclusion of civilian dead in national security rhetoric as the spectralization of security. Spectral security, therefore, refers to the ways in which the dead and death inform the conceptualization of security.

*War Critics and Spectral Security*

One manner in which war critics spectralized U.S. national security was by connecting the killing of innocent civilians with the creation of more terrorism. Representative Charlie Rangel (D-NY), for instance, claimed that, “a life is a life, whether it is an American, whether it is an Iraqi, in the tens of thousands and sometimes the hundreds of thousands.” In this speech on Iraqi civilian death and terrorism, Representative Rangel, a former Korean War combat veteran, commented on Donald Rumsfeld’s admission of not knowing “whether we were creating more terrorists than we were killing.”

Representative Rangel then asked the public to:

> Imagine how many terrorists we create when these cowardly people go to a school, go to a hospital, go to a mosque and fire at our troops? And those who have served would know, you have no option except to destroy where that fire is coming from. And if you destroy innocent people, we no longer call that human life. You know what we call it? Collateral damage.

During debates over H. Res. 63—a nonbinding resolution opposing the surge—Representative Carol Shea-Porter (D-NH) argued that the war in Iraq was neither in the “best interests of the United States” nor “essential to the security of the United States and

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32 Ibid., H4886.
the freedom of the world.” She continued that, given the costs to Americans, Iraqis, and because the war has made the world less safe, the U.S. should begin to withdraw troops from Iraq:

The Iraqis had no weapons of mass destruction. And they never asked us to come to their country. They do ask us to leave, though. And yet we will not leave. What is this talk I have heard tonight about freedom and liberty? This talk of glory that I heard on the floor. This romanticized language, this talk about Davy Crockett. There is no Davy Crockett in Iraq. . . . Our brave soldiers have died or they have been injured. The Iraqis have lost their lives. They have lost their society. They have lost their infrastructure. They are losing their middle class who are moving to other countries to keep their children safe. Their people are fleeing from their own country. We are wary, they are wary, the world is now more dangerous.

In this speech, Representative Shea-Porter (D-NH) takes the usual representation of danger that is used to reproduce state identities and produces boundaries, and instead employs a strategy implicating the United States in the production of vulnerability and death in Iraq. Wartime rhetoric that includes remarks on freedom, liberty, and danger are criticized directly in order to connect the war in Iraq with Iraqi and global insecurity.

Another war critic, Ron Paul (R-TX), argued that the killing of civilians in Iraq increased animosity toward the United States, and left Israel and the Middle East in a more precarious position:

We refuse to acknowledge the hatred generated by the deaths of tens of thousands of Iraqi citizens who are written off as collateral damage. Are the Middle East and Israel better off with the turmoil our occupation has generated? Hardly! Honesty would have us conclude that conditions in the Middle East are worse since the war started.

The killing of innocent civilians for Representative Paul (R-TX) provided another means in which to redefine a strategy of security for the United States that recommended a more isolationist foreign policy. This strategy was in part based on the idea that the deaths of foreign civilians decrease the security of the United States. Hence, this form of spectral security suggests that the insecurity and deaths of foreign civilians is closely linked to the

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33 Representative Carol Shea-Porter, Congressional Record, February 13, 2007, H1556.
34 Ibid., H1556
35 Representative Ron Paul, Congressional Record, December 7, 2005, H11188.
U.S. security, regardless of the value placed on others’ lives. Such rhetoric reinforced Representative Paul’s longstanding desire to restrain the United States from costly foreign involvements.

Other war critics constructed civilian casualties in Iraq as motivating resistance to the U.S. occupation, and claimed that reputation of the United States in the world suffered because of the deaths of civilians. Representative Cynthia McKinney (D-GA) argued that, “We must be willing to acknowledge that the forces attacking our troops are able to recruit suicide attackers because suicide attacks are largely motivated by revenge for the loss of loved ones. And Iraqis have lost so many loved ones as a result of America's two wars against Iraq.” She then asked:

What kind of an occupier have we been? . . . . A recent video documentary confirms that U.S. forces used white phosphorous against civilian neighborhoods in the U.S. attack on Fallujah. Civilians and insurgents were burned alive by these weapons. We also now know that U.S. forces have used MK77, a napalm-like incendiary weapon, even though napalm has been outlawed by the United Nations. With the images of tortured detainees, and the images of Iraqi civilians burned alive by U.S. incendiary weapons now circulating the globe, our reputation on the world stage has been severely damaged.

Representative McKinney’s remarks did not only focus on how civilian deaths motivated violent resistance to U.S. troops in Iraq, but also on these deaths’ reputational effects, which might have security implications (Pape 2005). Representative McKinney’s remarks on revenge, violence, and security also echo research on the role of revenge and desires for violent behavior among groups and states in global affairs (Löwenheim and Heimann 2008). This linkage between U.S. national security and civilian deaths also marks a shift in concern with civilian death in Iraq from largely an emotional issue to the realm of national security. By suggesting that these deaths negatively impacted U.S.

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36 Representative Cynthia McKinney, Congressional Record, November 18, 2005, H11005.
37 Ibid., H11005
national security, war critics—Republican and Democrat—hoped to persuade the other politicians, the public, and the president to end U.S. involvement in Iraq.

*War Supporters and Spectral Security*

War supporters generally refrained from linking civilian deaths in Iraq to either U.S. security or Iraqi security. Some war supporters did, however, suggest that civilian casualties were simply part of war, and that an increase in U.S. troops, while leading to more deaths, would offer Iraqis more security. Representative John Shimkus (R-IL) noted that, “This is war . . . . The U.S. and Iraqi governments must expect civilian casualties and collateral damage. It's unavoidable. The irony in this matter is that most Iraqi people would welcome the increased security.”

Representative Shimkus’ discussion of civilian casualties as improving Iraqis’ security echoed President Bush’s announcement of the surge decision, during which the president acknowledged that the surge would likely increase civilian casualties but would improve security in and around Baghdad:

> The most urgent priority for success in Iraq is security . . . . The changes I have outlined tonight are aimed at ensuring the survival of a young democracy that is fighting for its life in a part of the world of enormous importance to American security. . . . Even if our new strategy works exactly as planned, deadly acts of violence will continue -- and we must expect more Iraqi and American casualties. The question is whether our new strategy will bring us closer to success. I believe that it will.\

In a related fashion, Representative Rodney Frelinghuysen (R-NJ) weaved together the war on terror, the war in Iraq, and civilian casualties:

Our success in Iraq is hugely important. Our enemies in Iraq . . . would like nothing better than to see us withdraw prematurely. . . . Of course, the loss of any young soldier is heartbreaking; so are the deaths of innocent civilians killed by roadside and vehicle-borne bombs, or suicide bombers. We are dealing with Saddam loyalists, jihadists, imported terrorists, and domestic criminals who

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38 Representative John Shimkus *Congressional Record*, February 15, 2007, H1690.
play by no rules and do not hesitate to bomb Iraqi weddings, mosques, funerals, and gatherings of children, school children as a common tactic. . . . The global war on terror will not be short. It will require deep and enduring commitment. . . . This appropriations bill will give us the resources to do the job and to support our young men and women who do that job of liberty each and every day.  

War supporters, while more limited in making connections between civilian death and security, did occasionally posit that such deaths were part of an important war in which failing to succeed would have national security implications.

We know a good deal about various narratives of U.S. security rhetoric leading up to and during war, but very little about the deaths of U.S. soldiers and foreign civilians in security rhetoric (Ivie and Giner 2007; Krebs and Lobasz 2007). This is an important gap, because these deaths may be used to hinder the impulse to sustain combat operations in the name of security—if these deaths are assembled as evidence of insecurity.

Numerous scholars have already discussed relationships among war, rhetoric, identity, and security. Indeed, within any realm of violent security practices there are matters of discourse, otherness, and securitization. What IR scholars have not weighed in on is the matter of the deaths of Others—as they pertain to national security rhetoric. This section offered a brief overview of what spectral security looks like. While wartime rhetoric involves many layers of securitization of the living, this section hoped to shed light on where the innocent dead victims of war fit into the language of security.

Conclusions

The impulse animating this chapter was a normative argument about the value of publicly speaking about killed foreign civilians in democratic deliberations. Even with numerous

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40 Representative Rodney Frelinghuysen, Congressional Record, June 20, 2006, H4242.
ethical concerns with speaking about killed civilians, I argued that civilian casualty rhetoric is an important normative component to deliberations on war. Even casualty rhetoric used purely to advance political interests still allows the dead to be restrictively present during war deliberations. Their presence fosters a more ethical debate, even if political desires and interests of representatives are mapped onto dead civilians. The inclusion of the dead during public deliberations is beneficial as it provides the conditions of quasi-agency for dead civilians, providing opportunities for the meaning of these killed civilians to be negotiated.

This chapter used statistical techniques to model civilian casualty speechmaking, which is useful in interpreting the justness of Iraq War debates among U.S. politicians. The results revealed that strategic ownership and some personal incentives structured the emergence of civilian casualty rhetoric in the U.S. House of Representatives. Partisanship afforded Democrats reasons to discuss civilian costs of war more than Republicans, and Democrats did indeed speak of these innocent losses more than Republicans. More important than partisanship was how representatives voted on authorizing President Bush to wage war in Iraq. Voting against H.J. Res. 114 provided credible opportunities to speak of civilian deaths in Iraq, since those who voted against this legislation likely felt less responsible for deaths in Iraq. It is also likely that those who voted against H.J. Res. 114 considered these human costs of war when casting their votes, and felt compelled to bring civilian casualties into House war deliberations after war commenced. Being a female representative was also strongly associated with civilian casualty rhetoric, even while controlling for ideology, party affiliation, and war resolution vote. One may conclude that Democrats, those who voted against authorizing
the Iraq War, and women contributed more to an ethical debate about the Iraq War than Republican, men, and H.J. 114 supporters.

I would caution against such an interpretation, however, since discussing civilian casualties is only part of what could be considered an ethical debate. Furthermore, it is unlikely that civilian casualty rhetoric was rooted in moral motivations. The findings suggest strong partisan and strategic determinants of civilian casualty rhetoric. Still, those who engaged the issue of civilian deaths, whether as part of supportive or critical war rhetoric, for moral or strategic reasons, were involved in normatively beneficial behavior within the U.S. House of Representatives. Even though certain categories of representatives were more engaged in civilian casualty rhetoric, there was some convergence on this issue, and the discussion of the different interpretive frameworks show that a limited form of dialogue transpired between war critics and war supporters about the meaning of these deaths. Republicans did indeed trespass on this issue in order to resist claims that the loss of life in Iraq implied a basis to withdrawal from combat operations.

Another reason for caution in interpreting the findings of this chapter is that the statistical results show the substantive meaning of variation in civilian casualty speechmaking is small, since these speeches were rather rare. A more acceptable inference is that, overall, there was little debate over civilian casualties, which is unfortunate given the massive loss of innocent life in Iraq. If the inclusion of civilian casualties in congressional speeches contributes to a more just or ethical debate on war, then it is difficult to say just how much House deliberations on war were “just” in this regard. There are, of course, no standards that guide our understanding of how much
elected officials should speak about civilian deaths. From the perspective of this
dissertation, increased inclusion of the dead in congressional debates is normatively
valuable.

U.S. wars have resulted in the losses of thousands of American soldiers and even
more innocent civilians. If speaking about these losses is important to war debates, then it
is useful for scholars to assess whether elected officials discuss these deaths, who speaks
about them, and how they do so. This chapter advances our understanding of the
determinants of civilian casualty speechmaking and the construction of Iraqi civilian
death in the U.S. House of Representatives.
Chapter 4
Casualty Contextualization and Congressional Rhetoric in the Media

The economy always . . . takes precedence, except for when there's a war going on. You know, people's children are being killed, people's husbands, people's wives. So that always takes precedence.¹

—Candy Crowley

Introduction

Since the United States initiated “Operation Iraqi Freedom” in order to remove Saddam Hussein from power, 6,648 U.S. service members have died in in Iraq (Washington Post, “Faces of the Fallen”). Throughout the war, politicians and the public disagreed about the legitimacy of invading Iraq, and mounting human costs heightened the stakes of this debate. Lost lives and the legitimacy of the Iraq War were central to war debates in the years following initial combat operations, particularly in the months leading up to the 2004 presidential and 2006 midterm elections. Many of these debates played out among politicians on TV news shows on CNN, Fox, and MSNBC.

While several studies indicate that U.S. combat casualties impact voting behavior among the U.S. public and the fate of U.S. politicians (Karol and Miguel 2007; Kriner and Shen 2007; Kriner and Shen 2010), other research suggests that other factors were relatively more salient to the U.S. public. Gelpi (2005) and Gelpi, Feaver, and Reifler (2006; 2009) find that perceptions of eventual success in Iraq were relatively more important than casualties to the public, and that perceptions of future victory modified the impact of casualty sensitivity on the public’s support for war. While these findings have been criticized on a number of grounds (see Mueller 2005; Berinsky and Druckman 2007), most studies seem to agree that the impact of casualties on wartime public opinion is contingent on the perceived circumstances of war and the informational context of

¹ CNN November 5, 2006.
combat casualties (Boettcher and Cobb 2006; 2009). Gelpi (2010: 88), for example, notes that citizens “must inevitably construct their attitudes toward war in response to information provided by elite sources such as the news media and partisan politicians.”

To my knowledge, there exists no study that assesses how U.S. politicians contextualize U.S. combat casualties in the news media. In this chapter I explore the issue of casualties and contextual information from the perspective of elite casualty rhetoric. In particular, I examine how members of the U.S. Congress (MCs) contextualize U.S. combat casualties during appearances in the TV news media in the months leading up to elections. While numerous studies find that elite rhetoric—particularly by MCs—shape the public’s perceptions of the justifiability and appropriateness of war (Berinsky 2007; Gelpi et al. 2009), there has been virtually no research on how MCs contextualize wartime death in the news media. If perceptions of future success and justifiability are central to structuring the impact of casualties on the public, do MCs contextualize their statements about casualties in these terms? Do MCs contextualize casualties in ways that align with the findings of experimental studies?

In addition to questions concerning the contextualization of casualties, I also seek to determine the degree of issue convergence between partisan MCs and the valence of casualty statements. Unlike on the House and Senate floors, MCs in TV interviews need to respond to questions from journalists, which might include questions about casualties. For politicians hoping to avoid speaking about the human costs of war, the media environment should make issue avoidance difficult. Consequently, I expect issue convergence on casualties, though I also anticipate a difference in casualty statement valence among members of opposite parties. If the TV news media seeks out MCs from
the president’s party who are critical of the president and MCs from the nonpresidential party who are supportive, will we see extensive critical presidential-party casualty rhetoric and widespread supportive nonpresidential party casualty rhetoric (Groeling and Baum 2008)?

I find that Democrats and Republicans uniformly discuss war casualties in critical and supportive terms, respectively. Contrary to the findings of Groeling and Baum (2008), it is exceptionally rare for Democrats to support the Iraq War when discussing war deaths, and unusual for Republicans to criticize the Iraq War when commenting on the Iraq War. This partisan uniformity in casualty rhetoric has implications for the finding that cross-party criticism and support influences public opinion on war. If partisans are guided by congressional elites, they are unlikely to find intraparty divergence in congressional casualty rhetoric, and are likely to be unchallenged in their views. I also find that many measures of support for war and experimental casualty frames rarely appear in elite rhetoric. I suggest that researchers measuring the effects of casualty framing, congressional rhetoric, and casualties, should consider actual congressional rhetoric about meanings of fallen soldiers.

These findings build on a growing body of work on the effects of U.S. combat casualties in U.S. politics. Existing research has examined the significant effects of congressional rhetoric, perceptions of success and justifiability during war, and casualties on public views on war and voting behavior, but researchers have yet to explore precisely how MCs debate wartime death in the media. Such debates might impact the public’s perceptions of war success/failure, and could influence the impact of casualties on the public through structuring the meaning of these deaths. Questions about the independent
effects of variables on casualty sensitivity and support for war among the public could include questions about how trusted partisan elites actually contextualize casualties during key periods. This chapter therefore explores the occurrence of casualty contextualization by MCs during interviews in the TV news media in the months leading up to elections in 2004 and 2006. Because Americans are generally relatively uninformed about foreign affairs (see, for example, Baum 2003), and because many Americans get their information from TV news, the voices of congressional elites in the TV news media are a central means of knowledge and accountability (Baum and Groeling 2008).

Understanding congressional casualty rhetoric in the TV news media extends casualty effects arguments developed in experimental and voting behavior research as they relate to the relationship between perceptions of wartime information and the meaning of U.S. losses in Iraq. Research on casualty effects on American public opinion has been conducted largely with experimental studies and public opinion data. Such research has made important progress, but fails to account for how casualties are discussed by trusted elites in one of the central means of news information in U.S. political culture—TV News. Though Gelpi et al. (2006) find that expectations of war success, and to a lesser extent beliefs in the rightness of war, shape the public’s sensitivity to combat deaths and support for war, we have little information about how elites debate legitimacy, loss of life, and the likelihood of eventual success. In an experimental study related to the findings of Gelpi et al. (2006), Boettcher and Cobb (2006) found that individuals presented with information on American military deaths in the context of Iraqi insurgent deaths were more likely to judge a military operation as successful as well as to support war more than those presented only with information on
American military deaths. Yet it is unclear how and the extent to which information about killed insurgents is part of elite debates about the conduct of war. In order to better understand casualty effects, it is important to possess an understanding of the range and texture of casualty rhetoric in the public sphere.

There are a number of implications of this chapter for research on domestic politics and the conduct of war. Congressional criticism affects the capacity of presidents to rally the public to continue the use of force abroad (Kriner 2010). For example, if MCs—particularly members of the president’s party—discuss combat casualties in critical terms such as failure or inability to achieve a military victory during interviews on TV, then perhaps congressional casualty rhetoric in the media serves as an important mechanism of a “democratic brake on military adventurism” (Kriner and Shen 2007: 507). Alternately, if politicians are able to configure war casualties as part of a successful war or as “noble sacrifices,” or contextualize these deaths with information about killed insurgents, then combat casualties may be less of a restraint on sustaining aggressive military action abroad. In either case, this chapter hopes to provide an empirical basis of casualty contextualization among MCs in the TV media to better understand how the rhetoric of combat casualties might serve as a restraining or supporting mechanism for how casualties influence public opinion and voting behavior.

This chapter is therefore relevant to arguments about democratic leaders’ capacity to continue waging war. Sensitivity to casualties among citizens in democracies is one of the purported mechanisms for why it may be difficult not only for democratic leaders to use force, but sustain support for the use of force (Ray 1995; Smith 2005). Indeed, scholars argue that leaders in democracies pick wars that preferably cost relatively few
lives (Reiter and Stam 2002). While it has been suggested that the public does not comprise a formidable constraint on the use of force because, as Rosato (2003 594-595) notes, “the costs of war typically fall on a small subset of the population that will likely be unwilling to protest government policy,” recent research indicates that far more Americans are connected in some way to combat casualties (Kriner and Shen 2010). It is not only the dead and their immediate families that are impacted by the lethality of combat; rather, broad segments of the American public are connected to the dead and exhibit various degrees of sensitivity to the human toll of war (Kriner and Shen 2010). Congressional statements about these human costs in the TV news media is an important part of public debates about war and the consequences of sending troops to battle. MCs provide information and context about these consequences, and publicly challenge or support the president’s narrative of wartime success.

The chapter proceeds as follows. The first section links my study of casualty contextualization to relevant research on casualty framing effects and public perceptions of war success/failure. The second section discusses the data and methods to be used in this chapter. The third section examines the “valence” of U.S. death and Iraqi civilian death statements. The fourth section examines the extent to which U.S. combat casualties are contextualized in two “price” contexts: “consumer” and “investment.” In the fifth section I explore the cost/benefit contextualization of casualties mentioned earlier, conceptualized in terms of Iraqi and U.S. benefits. In the sixth section I assess the extent to which MCs spoke about the legitimacy/illegitimacy of the Iraq War. The seventh and final section concludes the chapter and suggests avenues for future research.
Casualty Contextualization

The primary contribution of this chapter is to determine how MCs contextualize U.S. combat casualties in Iraq. My exploration of congressional casualty rhetoric in the TV media is informed by previous studies that indicate particular contextual information that is relevant to individuals’ support for war and casualty sensitivity (Boettcher and Cobb 2006, 2009; Federico, Golec, and Dial 2005; Gelpi et al. 2006, 2009). These studies, while largely experimental, suggest different types of casualty and other forms of war contextualization that serve as a basis for the types of contextualization I will look for in U.S. politicians’ rhetoric.

The forms of casualty contextualization in these studies are principally about costs and benefits of war. Though not identified in their studies as such, they may be understood in terms of Iraqi or American costs and benefits. These costs and benefits are often conceptualized in terms of metrics of success or failure. Federico et al. (2005: 625), for example, created an indexed measure of support for war that included several questions pertaining to the perception of success in Iraq. These included whether the Iraq War would stabilize or destabilize the Middle East, whether it would reduce or increase the threat of terrorism, and whether it would further U.S. interests in the Middle East or create more problems for the United States in the region (Federico et al.: 625). While not directly testing the impact of casualty contextualization, the three measures of success and failure, which Federico et al. (2005) use as part of a broader measure of support for war, serve as a starting point for the type of rhetoric I should expect to see from MCs.

I also draw on the measures of success in Gelpi et al. (2006; 2009). While their research distinguished the public’s definition of success from the public’s measurement
of future success, I rely on both in my exploration of cost/benefit contextualization of congressional casualty rhetoric. In their studies, Gelpi et al. sought to determine how individuals understood success in Iraq as well as the meaning of future success. Their findings suggest a modest divergence in the two. The top three definitions of success include “An Iraqi government that is stable and democratic is established,” “Iraqis are able to live peaceful, normal, everyday lives,” and “Iraqis provide for their own security and maintain order” (Gelpi et al. 2009: 196). Their studies also found that the three most important metrics of eventual success in Iraq to the U.S. public were whether “services, such as education, health care, and utilities, [were] being provided to Iraqis,” whether “Iraqis [were] cooperating with U.S. authorities and not protecting terrorists or insurgents,” and “how soon Iraq [could] hold free elections” Gelpi et al. (2009: 198). It is unclear why there is a slight divergence in the public’s definition of success and measurement of future success. For example, it is hard to understand why Iraqis’ ability to live peaceful, normal, everyday lives is not part of the measurement of future success while the provision of public services is. Some authors have criticized the question wording in their studies, suggesting that, among other problems, the order of questions may have biased the results in favor of certain responses over others (Berinsky and Druckman 2007). I take into account each of these measures, while combining some of them into single measures.

Boettcher and Cobb (2006) suggest further means in which the contextualization of casualties shapes individuals’ support for war. They find that information about killed Iraqi insurgents increased support for the Iraq war in the context of U.S. combat
casualties (Boettcher and Cobb 2006). They refer to this contextualization of American
death with enemy death as a type of “casualty ratio.” They find that, particularly among
Republicans, the public saw the Iraq War as more successful when given information
about insurgent deaths alongside U.S. combat deaths. Additionally, they suggest that,
“casualty ratio data appear to soften (for everyone) the negative effect of information
about American casualties by placing those casualties in a larger context. . . . While body
counts of enemy dead remain a discredited metric for expert assessments of
success/failure, the public information value of casualty ratio data remains strong (if only
occasionally deployed).” If, however, this form of casualty contextualization is “only
occasionally deployed,” then their findings may not be fully relevant to non-experimental
settings. This chapter therefore hopes to build upon their study by exploring how
applicable their findings are to congressional rhetoric in the media.

In a subsequent study, Boettcher and Cobb (2009) analyze the impact of another
rhetorical context for casualties during wartime—the trope of “dying in vain” or
“honoring the dead.” The authors refer to such an argument as an “investment frame”
because the underlying logic is that the United States has “invested” soldiers in a war and
should seek a future return on their investment. In particular, their study included the
framing statement, “Some people say we need to stay and complete the mission in Iraq to
honor the dead and make sure they did not die in vain” (Boettcher and Cobb 2009: 685).
Their study finds that individuals who believed that the United States “did the right thing
in Iraq” are willing to tolerate increased casualties when presented with arguments calling
for escalating war in order to “honor the dead,” (i.e. an investment frame). For

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2 Interestingly, Gelpi et al. (2006; 2009) did not find that killing insurgents in Iraq mattered much for public
opinion. Given Boettcher and Cobb’s strong findings, however, I include it in this study.
individuals who believed invading Iraq was wrong, the investment frame decreased support for the escalation of war.

In the same study, Boettcher and Cobb (2009) also examine the opposite frame, which they refer to as a “consumer frame.” For this frame, the authors’ study included the statement, “staying will not bring them back and will only result in more loss of life” (Boettcher and Cobb 2009: 685). This frame did not yield any statistically significant results, though their testing of this frame was admittedly problematic (Boettcher and Cobb 2009: 693, fn. 12).

In addition to the contextual information about success/failure surrounding U.S. combat casualties, all of these studies suggest that beliefs in the legitimacy or “rightness” of the Iraq War played a large factor in explaining individuals’ support for war. Thus, the extent to which individuals and the public believed that the Bush administration had good cause for invading Iraq, or that it was the right thing to do, structured the impact of casualties on the public’s sensitivity to casualties and the public’s support for war.

Again, this chapter hopes to extend these and other related findings to real world rhetoric by MCs in the television media. Though Boettcher and Cobb (2009: 692) call for “subtle and sophisticated experiments” to “disentangle framing effects in the real world,” it is important to determine the extent to which such framing occurs in the real world. Additionally, subtle differences in casualty contextualization in the real world may not be easily captured in experimental studies. For example, the authors refer to investment frames as irrational because “Completing the mission in Iraq will not bring U.S. troops back to life and will not restore limbs lost as a result of combat” (Boettcher 2009: 678). Yet they somehow neglect the logic of giving meaning to death through
victory that is the basis of the investment argument. The investment claim is intended to suggest that the United States should continue to pursue military action in order to *win*, and through winning the United States imbues meaning to those who have fallen on the path to victory. Eventual victory, according to this logic, links the fallen soldier as an important sacrifice for the greater good of wartime success. The language used in their framing experiment neglects the victory component to the investment frame. More problematic, their study may therefore not capture the way in which politicians actually employ the investment frame. Exploring how, and the extent to which, elites contextualize casualties therefore improves our understanding of experimental research findings on the effects of combat casualties.

The studies examined here all highlight the importance of contextual information surrounding facts and arguments about U.S. combat casualties. It is not simply knowledge of casualties that matters; rather, it is how casualties are contextualized that imbues the human costs of war with information suggestive of different ways of understanding war. In this chapter, I examine how contextual information which has been suggestive of important effects on how individuals and the public view war are part of the real-world debates among MCs in the TV news media. I present this contextual information, which has been drawn from the previously mentioned studies, in table 4.1.
Table 4.1 Casualty Contextualization

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Price Context</th>
<th>Benefit Context</th>
<th>Cost Context</th>
<th>Legitimacy Context</th>
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<tr>
<td>Investment</td>
<td>Iraqi Benefits</td>
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<td>Consumer</td>
<td>Public Services</td>
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<td>Illegitimate</td>
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<td>Elections/Democracy</td>
<td>Inadequate Iraqi</td>
<td>Doesn't Matter</td>
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<td>Political Reconciliation</td>
<td>Elections/Democracy</td>
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<td>Police/Military Force/Security</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Decreased Violence</td>
<td>Violence in Iraq</td>
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<td>US Benefits</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Cooperation with US Authorities</td>
<td>Destabilization of the ME</td>
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<td>Stabilization of the ME</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Reduction of Terrorism Threat</td>
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<td>Furtherring of interests in the Middle East</td>
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<td>Killed Insurgents</td>
<td>Distraction</td>
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<td>Hurting interests in the Middle East</td>
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<td>Lack of Cooperation with U.S. Authorities</td>
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Data and Methods

The primary objective of U.S. politicians is reelection (Mayhew 1974). Regular elections allow citizens to hold their politicians accountable, and a healthy democracy provides relevant information to citizens, often through news coverage, so that elected representatives can be held accountable (Druckman 2005; Baker 2007). Because of the importance of elections, I restrict my analysis to the five months preceding elections in 2004 and 2006. For politicians, there are added incentives to shape public evaluations in favor of their party and policies in the months leading up to elections (Foster 2006).
I collected data on every congressional statement during an interview that included a comment on U.S. combat deaths or Iraqi civilian deaths in the five months preceding elections in 2004 (1 June – 1 November) and 2006 (6 June – 7 November). Interviews with multiple statements about casualties were considered as one statement. Though it would be useful to also include interviews in which casualties were not part of the dialogue in order to measure the relative importance of casualty rhetoric during interviews, such an undertaking is beyond the scope of this chapter. Focusing solely on interviews during which casualties are discussed allows for a more direct approach to the question pertaining to the contextualization of casualties.

I searched LexisNexis Academic to locate each appearance by a representative or senator on ABC, CBS, CNN, MSNBC, NBC, and Fox News. Specific key words that I searched for are the same as those in the previous chapters, found in appendix A. For example, I searched for the words “Iraq” “Iraqi,” or “War” along with “congressman,” “congresswoman,” “Senator,” “Sen.,” “Representative,” or “Rep.,” along with key words such as “casualty,” “die,” “ultimate price,” etc. Unique methods of coding for each component to the study in this chapter are detailed in each section.

There are a number of important limitations to this analysis. Many Americans get their news from their local media outlets (Gilliam and Iyengar 2000). Indeed, in 2006, 54% of Americans regularly watched their local TV news, while 34%, 28%, and 23% regularly watched cable TV news, nightly network news, and network morning news, respectively (Pew Research 2006). Ideally, one could examine how U.S. politicians speak about war casualties on local TV news. Unfortunately, such a task is not possible.

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There are no databases of local TV news transcripts or videos. National TV news transcripts are available, however. Also, the study conducted in this chapter relates more reliably to similar studies examining congressional rhetoric in the national TV news media (Groeling and Baum 2008; Groeling and Baum 2009).

**Casualty Rhetoric Valence**

For each identified MC interview with [a] casualty statement[s], I assessed the “valence” of each casualty remark. The valence of each statement refers to whether the statement was unambiguously “supportive” or “critical” of the war in Iraq. A statement was considered “ambiguous” if a position on the Iraq War was neither explicitly supportive nor critical of the war.

Table 4.2 shows the results of the valence of Democratic and Republican statements on U.S. combat and Iraqi civilian deaths in Iraq. There was a significant difference in the valence of these statements. In a basic cross-tabulation of U.S. combat death valence by party affiliation, the chi-square value was 119.563, and the p-value was .000. While not controlling for other variables, this simple statistical test suggests a statistically significant valence difference between Democrats and Republicans.
Democratic rhetoric was overwhelmingly critical. In the five months preceding the 2004 and 2006 national elections, Democrats discussed U.S. combat deaths in Iraq 54 times and 40 times respectively. During the run-up to each election, the vast majority of U.S. combat casualty rhetoric among Democrats was critical of the Iraq War. Approximately 95% of their U.S. combat casualty statements were critical. The two supportive U.S. combat casualty speeches were made by Evan Bayh (D-IN) in 2004 and Joseph Lieberman (D-CT) in 2006.

Republicans discussed U.S. combat deaths less than Democrats, and their statements were marginally more mixed in tone. In 2004, 84% of Republicans’ U.S. combat casualty statements were supportive of the war. The percentage of supportive U.S. casualty statements dipped to 58% in 2006; however, there were only 19 Republican U.S. combat casualty statements in 2006, down from 37 in 2004. Republicans gave no critical U.S. casualty statements in 2004, and gave three in 2006. The number of ambiguous speeches slightly increased from 16% in 2004 to 19% in 2006.
Iraqi civilian casualty statements followed a similar pattern to U.S. combat casualty rhetoric. In a cross-tabulation of valence by party affiliation, the chi-square value was 32.00, and the p-value was .000. This test reveals a statistically significant difference in the way Democrats and Republicans speak about Iraqi civilian deaths. Republicans include these deaths in their remarks to support the Iraq War, while Democrats engage in civilian casualty rhetoric to criticize the war.

Somewhat unexpectedly, Democrats and Republicans each discussed Iraqi civilian casualties sixteen times each. The timing of the statements, however, differed. The vast majority of Republicans’ Iraqi casualty statements occurred in the months leading up to the 2004 elections. 88% (14) of Republican Iraqi death statements were in 2004, and only 12% (2) occurred in 2006. 69% (11) of Democrats’ statements were in the months leading up to the 2006 elections, while only 31% (5) were in 2004. Hence, while Republicans largely ceased speaking about Iraqi civilian deaths in 2006, they spoke about them more often than Democrats in 2004.

In exploring Republicans’ Iraqi civilian casualty statements in 2004, it appears that they were attempting to acknowledge the unfortunate toll on Iraqis while advancing the claim that these losses were simply part of war or part of the war on terrorism. For example, Sen. George Allen (R-VA) argued that:

The terrorists and the Saddam loyalists who want him to come back into power are now resorting to killing children, 34, 35 children were killed today in an attack. But Iraq is moving towards elections. Is it going to be easy? No, it's not going to be easy. It's going to be a challenge. But, we need to persevere, we need to adapt. (Allen 2004)

Sen. Allen’s argument also serves to justify the Iraq War by linking Saddam Hussein’s regime to killed Iraqis. In a related statement, Sen. Saxby Chambliss (R-GA) suggested that killed civilians were essentially indicators of U.S. military success in Iraq:
We are having innocent civilians, Iraqis, as well as other contract workers, who are innocent victims of this war. And the terrorists have no conscience about them. They don't care who they kill. They just want to disrupt the country over there. And it also means that we are winning. If we weren't winning, they wouldn't be carrying out attacks like this. They're horrible. They're horrendous acts of violence on the part of the terrorists, but I think the president will -- will allude to the fact that we are winning the war and we've got to continue the course. We've got to move towards the elections. And we're going to continue to see that that happen because we're winning (Chambliss 2004b).

By 2006, Republicans scarcely spoke about civilian deaths in Iraq. While more statistics about the number of killed civilians became increasingly prominent in the news, it appeared to be an issue Republicans preferred to avoid. In both years, Republicans never gave any remarks about U.S. culpability in regard to civilians killed in Iraq.

Democrats increased their civilian casualty rhetoric in 2006, and the tone was always highly critical of the war. Sen. Chris Dodd (D-CT), for instance, argued that the U.S. should not “play referee” in Iraq, and remarked that:

> It's awfully difficult to have much optimism about this situation. You're looking at 100 deaths a day, violent deaths a day, in— in Iraq. You've had now some 10,000 people who have lost their lives in Iraq in the last four months, 182,000 people have moved out of areas, moving out of Iraq, and moving out of areas where the conflict is most severe and intense. This is a civil war. (Dodd 2006b)

Sen. Dodd’s comments implicitly contend that the U.S. war in Iraq has been a failure, and the massive losses in Iraq are not random deaths but part of a systematic civil war.

Like their Republican counterparts, Democrats rarely engaged in the issue of U.S. responsibility for Iraqi civilian deaths, even with events such as the Haditha massacre. While it is true that the majority of civilian deaths were the result of sectarian violence, it appears that accusing soldiers or the military of misdeeds, accidental or purposeful, was generally off limits for members of both parties.

If we examine the ratio of speaking about killed U.S. combat soldiers to killed Iraqi civilians, we see a much higher rate for both parties in favor of speaking about American combat deaths. The Democratic ratio of U.S. combat deaths to Iraqi civilian
deaths rhetoric was 5.9:1, while the Republican ratio was 3.6:1. This imbalance is unsurprising, though unfortunate. Using the conservative estimate from Burnham et al. (2006), the Iraqi civilian dead outnumbered killed American soldiers 601,027 to 2,647 by June 2006, or 227.1:1.

From a normative perspective, it would be valuable for elected officials to speak in more equivalent rates about the U.S. dead and Iraqi civilian dead, regardless of the valence of such rhetoric. Of course, there is no ideal ratio.

In a recent public discussion, Tim O’Brien (2011) responded to a question about dealing with wartime trauma by arguing for an acknowledgment of the suffering of the other during war:

I feel that one of the ways to deal with trauma is to be traumatized, to acknowledge that I was hurt, and am still hurting. And to acknowledge what I did to hurt other people. There’s three million Vietnamese that we haven’t even mentioned tonight that suffered a little bit too, that aren’t part of our discourse when we talk about our own veterans having their troubles. The Iraqis got their troubles too . . . and it feels so self-centered, and complacent, and egocentric to focus on only our own concerns, that bothers me. At least widen it, beyond that discussion.

As I have argued elsewhere in the dissertation, speaking of the civilian dead could be considered a responsibility for U.S. politicians who have participated in the process of generating the conditions for the deaths of innocent Iraqis.

**Price Contextualization**

Having established the valence of war death rhetoric by Democrats and Republicans, I now examine whether these deaths were contextualized in terms of consumer or investment language. As previously discussed, Boettcher and Cobb (2009) define investment language as statements about staying and completing a war in order to “honor” the dead so that they did not “die in vain.” The authors understand consumer
language to be remarks suggesting that continuing to fight will not bring back the dead and will produce more deaths. Did U.S. politicians in the TV news media employ consumer and investment language running up to elections in 2004 and 2006? This question is important because experimental research suggests that these frames might influence the public. Yet previous studies have not examined the extent to which elites use consumer and investment language when speaking about U.S. combat deaths.

There is a difficulty, however in attempting to see precisely whether language used in experimental research is used in the real world. More specifically, there is likely much more variety in real world rhetoric. To account for this, I coded as “consumer” statements those remarks claiming that U.S. deaths were “not worth it,” that U.S. soldiers died for a “mistake” or because of “misleading” arguments by the Bush administration, or that “too many” soldiers have unnecessarily died because of “poor strategy/planning.” I included an additional coding category of “withdraw/redeploy” or “change course/strategy” if statements argued for exiting Iraq or changing policy/strategy in Iraq. I coded as “investment” statements those comments declaring that U.S. deaths were “investments” in democracy, winning the war on terrorism, or some other beneficial return. In coding these statements, I only included the direct context of the casualty statement. The results for this section are in table 4.3.
As expected, Democrats gave many more consumer statements than Republicans. As the war continued into the 2006 elections, a higher proportion of Democratic statements involved consumer language. Somewhat surprisingly, relatively few consumer statements included the additional claim of needing to exit or change course in Iraq. Most consumer statements among Democrats therefore suggested that lost U.S. lives in Iraq were generally not worth the cost, but did not suggest leaving or specifically changing the conduct of war. This speaks to the difficult position of Democratic politicians who were critical of the war, but leery of pulling out troops or putting forth ideas for a different strategy given the precarious situation in Iraq.

There were, however, still forceful advocates of pulling out of Iraq or beginning to redeploy soon. Some, like Rep. Albert Wynn (D-MD) argued that the U.S. needed to get out of Iraq to “stop the senseless death of American soldiers,” claiming that “we’ve accomplished nothing, so it is senseless” (Wynn 2006). Others, like Sen. Carl Levin (D-MI) argued for announcing to the Iraqis that the United States would begin redeploying at the end of 2006:

We have been there now longer than the Korean War lasted. This is three years-plus. We don’t have to prove our credibility in Iraq any longer. We have lost 2,500-plus troops, 17,000 wounded. They need to take responsibility for this. And this over-reliance on American troops, when there are political decisions the Iraqis must be making to share power and to share resources, which is
the only way they're going to end this insurgency, we have got to prod them to take this responsibility. They either want a nation or they want a civil war. And we have given more than enough, more than our share. Should we now just precipitously leave tomorrow? No. But should we give them notice that, by the end of this year, we are going to begin phased redeployments? Yes. (Levin 2006b).

Unlike the consumer frame employed in the study of Boettcher and Cobb (2009), there was not a single case of an MC claiming that, “staying will not bring them [U.S. soldiers] back.” Such a claim is obvious, and the fact no elected U.S. politician advanced this claim suggests that Boettcher and Cobb’s frame could have excluded the statement.

Investment language was extremely rare in Democratic U.S. death statements (only one statement), but somewhat common in Republican statements. About 33% of all Republican U.S. death statements used investment language. What is interesting is that Republican politicians were not arguing to stay the course in Iraq to “honor the dead,” as was the investment frame employed by Boettcher and Cobb (2009). Rather, Republican MCs suggested that the investment of U.S. lives in Iraq was meaningful, noble, and serving to advance U.S. and Iraqi interests. Take, for example, this statement by Sen. Lindsay Graham (R-SC):

This is not a factional war in Iraq. This is terrorism against democracy. Democracy will prevail, if we send a strong signal to the terrorists that we're not going to cut and run, we're going to spend the resources, the blood and treasure to win this. Losing is not an option for the world, not just the United States. (Graham 2004d)

Similarly, Rep. Dana Rohrabacher (R-CA) argued that:

Our president and those of us who believe that the national security of this country is the number-one responsibility of those of us who are elected officials know that we have got to have the courage to see things through, and -- and it’s not easy. National security is not easy. Our hearts go out every time there is a casualty. But we know that, if we back away now, things are going to get worse. Our country is going to be less secure. (Rohrabacher 2006)

As these statements illustrate, many Republicans argued that the expenditure of soldiers’ lives would provide a favorable return in the form of national security and democracy in Iraq. Republicans did not engage in what Boettcher and Cobb (2009) argued was a
flawed logic of the investment claim, namely, that it is illogical to invest more lives because others have died. What is interesting is that the investment frame employed in Boettcher and Cobb’s 2009 study had the greatest impact, but the investment language used in real world politics differs from that used in the study. Politicians never argued that more lives had to be lost to bring honor to those already dead; rather, they argued that the investment of American lives would yield necessary returns.

**Combat Deaths and Cost/Benefit Contextualization**

This section examines how discussions of U.S. combat deaths by MCs during TV News interviews were contextualized with certain costs and benefits of war. Again, a list of these costs and benefits are provided in table 4.1

Each interview including U.S. combat casualties was examined in two levels for cost/benefit information. First, I examined the “direct” context, which refers specifically to the paragraph including [the] casualty statement[s]. I also examined the entire interview to see which cost/benefit information was mentioned by the MC not in the immediate paragraph[s] where the casualty statement occurs. I refer to the non-immediate paragraphs of the interview as the “full” context. I conceptualize these two contexts because it might be that the direct context is most relevant, seeing that it provides the immediate context of MC death rhetoric. However, the full context is undoubtedly appropriate to include, since MCs might discuss relevant cost/benefit information shortly before or after they discuss U.S. deaths in Iraq. The full context of casualty rhetoric is dramatically different than experimental research on casualty
contextualization, since respondents generally are not subjected to multiple paragraphs of information.

I begin this section by examining how discussions of U.S. combat deaths by MCs during TV News interviews were contextualized with costs of war information. I then proceed to explore the benefit contextualization of U.S. deaths in Iraq.

**U.S. Combat Deaths and War Cost Contextualization**

**Iraqi Costs**

In examining speeches where MCs discussed U.S. combat deaths, the data suggests that only certain types of Iraqi costs were used to contextualize these deaths. In this section I will first discuss Democratic contextualization of U.S. deaths in Iraq and then assess Republican contextualization of these deaths.

**Democratic Contextualization**

The data reveals that Democratic contextualization of U.S. combat deaths with Iraqi costs differed dramatically in 2004 and 2006. There was very little contextualization of U.S. deaths in Iraq with Iraqi costs in 2004 compared to 2006. Most remarks in 2004 were not accompanied by any mention of Iraqi costs. Only 8% of Democratic statements included comments on violence in Iraq, and only 6% included observations on killed Iraqi civilians. These were the most frequent Iraqi costs mentioned by Democrats in 2004.

Contextualizing U.S. death in Iraq with Iraqi costs of war rose sharply in 2006. Table 4.4 shows that commentary on violence in Iraq increased from 8% to 63% of all statements. The second highest Iraqi cost mentioned was lack of political reconciliation, which was never mentioned in any statement in 2004, and increased to 20% of all
statements in 2006. The third most repeated Iraqi cost of war among Democratic statements was killed Iraqi civilians. This cost increased from 6% of all speeches to 15%. The fourth and fifth most mentioned Iraqi costs in 2006 were lack of police/military/security and lack of public services, respectively.

Remarks on U.S. costs of war were generally more common among Democrats. The top three most frequent U.S. costs in 2004 were “war on terrorism distraction” (30%), “wounded soldiers” (30%), and “treasure” (28%). In 2006, they were “treasure” (50%), war on terrorism distraction” (33%), and “wounded soldiers” (30%). In 2006, “increased terrorism threat” was a close fourth, appearing in 28% of all U.S. combat casualty statements. Though U.S. costs of war appeared in more Democratic statements, the most frequent overall cost of war in any year was “violence in Iraq” in 2006. This cost could also be conceptualized as a cost to the United States, however. Violence in Iraq meant risks to soldiers and U.S. success in Iraq.
Many of the changes in casualty rhetoric from 2004 to 2006 make common sense. The longer the United States was involved in Iraq, the greater the financial costs to U.S. taxpayers. Hence, the increase of “treasure” in U.S. combat casualty statements in 2006,
from 28% to 50%, appears to be a logical rhetorical move by Democrats. Rep. Barney Frank (D-MA), for instance, argued that “If you look now as to this great disaster that Iraq has been for the American people in terms of lives lost, destabilization politically in the Middle East, the opposite of what the administration predicted, hundreds of billions of dollars spent, that it has simply not been worth what it has cost us.” (Frank 2006).

Some Democrats, like Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-CA), were more specific in estimating the cost of the war and alternative projects that could be funded with that money:

> We have to stop wasting the money that we are wasting right now, over $300 billion dollars on the war in Iraq. We’re approaching very high numbers of dead, 2,600, we’ve passed that number, 20,000 wounded. The Treasury is just an open book, and we’re going broke here at home. It’s a wrong policy. Let’s bring that to a close, concentrate on the war on terror. There’s one more point I would make. I heard an expert say that just one or two days of the cost of Iraq, we could inspect all the cargo coming into our ports.” (Boxer 2006c)

**Republican Contextualization**

Overall, the data reveals that Republicans rarely contextualized U.S. combat deaths in Iraq with Iraqi or U.S. costs. The most commonly cited U.S. cost was “wounded soldiers” in 2004 (16%), and Republicans did not mention this cost again in 2006. The most common cost Republicans mentioned alongside U.S. combat deaths was “violence in Iraq,” which appeared in 16% and 26% of Republican U.S. combat casualty statements in 2004 and 2006, respectively.

If we look closely at Republican “violence in Iraq” comments, however, most are not necessarily critical of the war in Iraq. For example, Sen. Bill Frist (R-TN), when prompted in an interview, acknowledged an increase in violence, but also suggested that such violence did not define failure or lack of progress in Iraq: “Yes, violence has increased there on the ground against Iraqis, but at the same time, the Iraqi security forces are being increased by the hundreds, indeed, every week, and we've seen progress.
represented by the fact that we have Prime Minister Maliki here today” (Frist 2006). In the same paragraph, he prefaced his remark with beliefs about success in Iraq:

You know, you can't say they're not improving when today in about 15 minutes I'm going to be welcoming to the United States Capitol where I am meeting a leader from a sovereign country today that was democratically elected for first time in decades, that we are moving towards a more prosperous, a more open, a more transparent government there, now just –now I guess about two or three months –two months ago, for the first time a fully appointed cabinet. So you can't say we're not making progress (Frist 2006).

**Implications**

A number of experimental studies have shown which costs and benefits of war matter to the U.S. public. With regard to the costs of war, this section is particularly relevant to studies on perceptions of success/failure in the context of mounting U.S. combat casualties. Experimental studies by Gelpi et al. (2006; 2009) argue that the U.S. public was relatively unmoved by U.S. deaths in Iraq as long as the war was seen as “successful.” If the public begins to lose hope in a war’s success, combat deaths shift the public against involvement in war. However, the public relies on elite cues, and generally bank on their fellow partisan elected leaders to offer them with trustworthy commentary (Berinsky 2009; Groeling 2001; Groeling and Baum 2008). But what if their fellow partisan elected officials provide them with only a modicum of commentary on the costs of war when speaking about U.S. deaths? While individuals in experimental studies may be moved by remarks on the costs of war by their fellow partisan politicians, if their fellow partisan politicians are not actually remarking on these costs, then effects on respondents in such studies may not easily translate into the real world.

While this issue is more acute for Republicans than Democrats, at least with regard to the Iraq War, there are undesirable implications for Democratic partisans within the public too. Democratic MCs rarely contextualized U.S. combat casualties with Iraqi
costs of war in 2004, and U.S. costs never exceeded 30% of statements in 2004 and 50% in 2006. In the study by Federico et al. (2005), support and opposition to involvement in the Iraq War was measured with answers to questions pertaining to whether the war was stabilizing or destabilizing the Middle East, whether it was reducing or increasing the threat of terrorism, and whether it was furthering U.S. interests in the Middle East or creating more problems for the United States in the region. Central to answering these questions in the general public is partisan affiliation and how partisan elected leaders discuss such benefits and costs. When speaking about U.S. combat casualties, Democrats gave zero statements suggesting the war was destabilizing the Middle East and only one statement in 2006. Respectively, in 2004 and 2006, U.S. combat death statements by Democrats included the argument that the war was hurting U.S. interests in the Middle East 4% and 8% of the time.

If, for instance, perceptions of such issues comprise the meaning of support for war, and may impact the effects of combat casualties on the public, then Democratic politicians did not always contextualize U.S. combat casualties with important reasons to support or oppose the Iraq War. Though I do not mean to suggest that doing so would create large effects among the public, it is worth noting that many academic ways of measuring support for war are not used rhetorically by elected officials during public interviews on national TV news outlets.

**U.S. Combat Deaths and War Benefit Contextualization**

*Democratic Contextualization*
As shown in table 4.5, Democrats almost never contextualized U.S. combat deaths with benefits—either Iraqi or American—from war. To some extent, the result is expected, but the near absence of benefits contextualization is somewhat surprising. Particularly, some studies suggest that journalists in the media seek out not only same-party criticism of the president, but also opposite party support of the president (Groeling and Baum 2008).

The result in this study may indicate the reality of increased party polarization; even if journalists seek out opposite party support because of its newsworthiness, they might not find much of it (Garand 2010). In interviews where Democrats spoke about casualties, they rarely admitted or acknowledged any positive benefits for the United States or Iraq.

This is not to say that benefits not examined in this study were not present. For instance many Democrats did concede the benefit of Saddam Hussein’s removal from power. Such benefits, while not included in this chapter or previous experimental studies, might be incorporated in future studies. At the same time, such admissions of benefits were generally immediately followed by criticisms of the war. Take for example, the following exchange between Rep. Ed Markey (D-MA) and CNN’s Robert Novak:

*Robert Novak*: Ed Markey, since you think it was such a bad idea to invade Iraq, do you think the world would be better off if we still had Saddam Hussein as a brutal dictator in Baghdad?

*Rep. Ed Markey*: Well, the world is a better place without Saddam Hussein. But if Saddam Hussein did not have a nuclear weapons program, then we could have contained him and we would not have to have lost a single. . .

*Robert Novak*: You would rather have him in Baghdad, contained?

*Rep. Ed Markey*: He was not a threat to the United States without nuclear weapons. And that's the only reason that we went in to fight. (Markey 2004).

It is also surprising to see that more Democrats did not discuss the positive benefits of Iraqi democracy. Though it was discussed, it was generally done so in vague terms such as hoping that elections would occur or that democracy would take hold in Iraq.
Republican Contextualization: Iraqi Benefits

The most common Iraqi benefits contextualization of U.S. deaths in Iraq by Republicans was “elections/democracy” in Iraq. 30% of 2004 statements included positive descriptions of democracy or elections in Iraq, and this number increased to 37% in 2006. In 2004, Republicans linked U.S. deaths to the prospect of successful democracy. For example, Lindsay Graham (R-SC) argued that, “optimism has to be defined in terms of what is your goal? If your goal is to have 140,000 Americans out by next year, no, I'm not optimistic. If your goal is eventually working hard, spending money and more blood
and treasure from America and the world, the Iraqi people can live free” (Graham 2004a).

In 2006, elections in Iraq enabled Republicans to contextualize U.S. losses in Iraq with the benefits of democratization. For example, in 2006 Bill Frist (R-TN) suggested that U.S. “lives that have been lost and sacrificed in support of a safe, and prosperous and a democratic Iraq” (Frist 2006).

The second most common Iraqi benefits contextualization was “police/military/security.” Though Republicans never contextualized U.S. deaths with this benefit in 2004, 21% of Republican speeches in 2006 included this context. For instance, shortly after discussing a funeral for a Private killed in Iraq in which the killed soldier’s mother told him that, “We can't quit, we can't give up,” Sen. George Allen (R-VA) argued that Iraqis were increasingly able to provide for their own security:

Every single week you see more and more Iraqis and their military taking control. And many of the--now it's probably about a third of the military options are being--military operations--are being led by Iraqis with the U.S. in a supportive role. And as more and more Iraqis take over those military operations, it'll be ultimately up to them, their backbone, their minds, and their hands to build that free and just society that is safe and an ally in the war on terror rather than, than an enemy. . . . there's two or three key issues of matrixes of, of where you can see advances in Iraq. Number one is the training of Iraqis, their military forces and their police forces. The military forces are getting stronger every single day. And in fact the Iraqis, again, are leading those forces, not the U.S., and leading operational endeavors. (Allen 2006c)

It is somewhat surprising to note that Republicans did not contextualize U.S. deaths in Iraq with other Iraqi benefits. As previously mentioned, in research by Gelpi et al. (2006: 2009), respondents noted how Iraqis’ ability to live normal, peaceful lives was central to their understanding of success in Iraq. The provision of public services such as education and healthcare was the most important indicator of eventual success in Iraq among respondents in their studies. Yet we see very little mention of these indicators, at least in statements where Republicans discussed U.S. combat casualties. For instance, Orrin
Hatch (R-UT), after discussing Americans killed in Iraq by terrorists, proceeded to note that:

There's 2,200 schools that have been rehabilitated; 120 hospitals up and running; 1,200 medical centers going. The Iraqi currency is the most widely traded currency in the Middle East. The oil wells are up and running, except for some of the sabotage that's occurring. The country has potable water in places they never had it before. There are so many changes for the better. (Hatch 2004)

Though such indicators of success were important to the public, Republicans generally failed to contextualize U.S. deaths with such metrics. Perhaps Republican politicians spoke about these indicators of success more regularly when not discussing U.S. combat deaths, though it would seem even more rhetorically advantageous to include these benefits in discussions of human losses.

**Republican Contextualization: U.S. Benefits**

Republicans generally did not contextualize U.S. deaths in Iraq with the U.S. benefits examined in this chapter. The most common U.S. benefit was the “reduction of terrorism threat.” To illustrate this contextualization, take, for example, this statement from Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-KY):

I think most Americans are grateful that we haven't been attacked again here at home. Sure, they would love for our troops to come home. We all would. But by staying on offense and cleaning out Afghanistan and cleaning out Iraq, we've protected ourselves here at home. And we've done it with a minuscule number of casualties compared to any war in American history that's lasted this long. (McConnell 2006)

This metric of success was only used to contextualize U.S. deaths in 8% of statements in 2004 and 16% in 2006.

Interestingly, Republicans only contextualized U.S. combat casualties with killed insurgents once. Again, Boettcher and Cobb’s 2006 study found that contextualizing U.S. deaths with a casualty ratio inclusive of killed insurgents boosted respondents’
support for war in Iraq. While perhaps different types of elites employed this contextual frame, it was extremely rare among Republicans. The finding here suggests that the experimental research may be utilizing frames rarely employed in the real world.

It was also surprising to find that Republicans rarely contextualized U.S. deaths in Iraq with claims that the war was furthering U.S. interests in the Middle East or stabilizing the region. This also suggests that measures of war support employed in previous studies may fail to capture how politicians discuss the meaning of war success.

**Legitimacy Contextualization**

For this final section, I examined whether U.S. deaths were contextualized with arguments suggesting that the war in Iraq was “legitimate” or the “right thing to do.” The results are presented in table 4.6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Legitimacy</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Direct Context</td>
<td>Full Context</td>
<td>Total Context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrats</td>
<td>Legitimate</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>1 1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Illegitimate</td>
<td>22 41%</td>
<td>4 26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Doesn't Matter</td>
<td>1 2%</td>
<td>2 3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republicans</td>
<td>Legitimate</td>
<td>1 3%</td>
<td>10 27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Illegitimate</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Doesn't Matter</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For Democrats, we see somewhat of a decline from 2004 to 2006 in contextualizing U.S. deaths in Iraq with claims that the war was “illegitimate” or the “right thing to do.” In 2004, 48% of Democratic casualty statements included assertions of the war’s
illegitimacy, while only 25% did so in 2006. We see a similar trend among Republicans; 30% of Republican interviews included arguments about the legitimacy of the Iraq War in 2004, and only 5% of these interviews included these arguments in 2006. This suggests the possibility that this question became less relevant to the Iraq War debates leading up to the 2006 elections. For example, Rep. Fattah (D-PA), in discussing anti-war protesters remarked on how citizens were misinformed by the president, linking perceived deception by the Bush administration with the human costs of war:

Part of the reason why you see people protesting is they disagree with the policies. They are tired of seeing Americans die in Iraq or in Afghanistan. They're concerned about some of the questions about why we went off to war in Iraq in the first place and being misled. (Fattah 2004b)

While Democrats could have continued making the same critique to the same extent in 2006, it seems plausible that arguments over Iraq turned more to questions about how to proceed or progress in Iraq rather than how the United States became involved in the war to begin with.

Conclusions

This study has a number of implications for studies on Congress and the public’s support for war, as well as normative studies on the role of rhetoric and dialogue in U.S. democracy.

A significant implication emerges for studies on biased congressional war rhetoric. Groeling and Baum (2008; 2009) argue that TV news exhibits a biased sample of congressional rhetoric. In their 2008 study, the authors argue that during “rally periods” (the month following a major use of military force by the United States), criticism by MCs of the president’s party increases while their praise decreases during appearances in the evening news. They also find that the presence of casualties is
associated with a significant decline in praise by members of either party. They find that presidential party criticism decreases approval of the president among the public that identifies with the president’s party. They also find that increased presidential party criticism during casualty periods is associated with larger negative effects on presidential approval among presidential party identifiers during casualty periods. Their study also suggests that among independents, increases in criticism by presidential party MCs or praise by nonpresidential party MCs leads to equivalent decreases and increases in presidential approval.

While this chapter is not comparable in many respects, it does suggest that members of the president’s party are unlikely to contextualize U.S. combat deaths with criticism of the war. At least in the months leading up to elections in 2004 and 2006, Republicans rarely contextualized their discussions of fallen U.S. soldiers in Iraq with criticism. With regard to Iraq, the TV news media, and elections in the United States, it would be somewhat improbable for Republican identifiers to observe critical war commentary about Iraq war casualties by their Republican elected officials in the TV news. It is unclear whether these findings would hold if extended to other uses of military force by the United States overseas.

By examining congressional casualty rhetoric in the TV news media, this chapter provides useful evidence about the informational context of casualty rhetoric by elites during critical election months. As I have noted, some of the most-cited literature on U.S. combat casualties largely deals with effects of broader rhetoric, effects of casualties on voting, and experimental effects of framing rather than the content of real elite casualty rhetoric. Many of the measures of support for war and experimental frames in
such studies often do not appear in elite rhetoric, while other forms of rhetoric may be more common. Researchers hoping to understand the effects of casualty framing, congressional rhetoric, and casualties may wish to consider how actual congressional rhetoric emerges to structure the meanings of fallen soldiers in the public sphere. Future experimental research could explore different forms of casualty contextualization that transpire among elites in media. For instance, researchers study the effects of casualty rhetoric pertaining to responsibility, indifference, or familial impacts discussed in previous chapters.

Future studies could also broaden the sphere of elite casualty rhetoric in the TV news media. For example, former politicians, military officers, party strategists, and foreign politicians in occupied countries also appear in the news, and attempt to provide meaning to the loss of life during war. How do different types of elites debate about war death? And are such persons more trustworthy and influential for the U.S. public than elected officials? Experimental research could compare different types of casualty contextualization with a broader array of elite rhetoric to explore possible framing effects on casualty sensitivity and support for war. Some progress has been made in this area (see Boettcher and Cobb 2009), but future research could enable a deeper understanding of who speaks about combat deaths and how different types of elites influence public perceptions differently.

Future studies might also explore in greater depth how the dynamics of debates in the media impacts citizens’ views on casualties and war. Experimental studies often apply different frames to see how they produce different effects. Quite often, however, there are multiple and likely contradictory frames within a few seconds or minutes during
actual debates in the TV news media. How do overlapping frames and excitable partisan
contestation about these frames impact citizens’ attitudes about war, death, and the
relationship between war and death?

The informational context of combat casualties raises concerns because these
deaths may take on a variety of meanings within the public sphere. No meanings are
“true” in the sense that these deaths are highly interpretable events, though certain truths
may prevail over others. I have argued elsewhere in the dissertation for the normative
value of elected officials speaking about war death. The normative stakes are higher for
politicians’ death rhetoric in the media, since the public is much more in tune with what
politicians say in the TV news compared with what they argue on the House or Senate
floor.4 Leading up to elections, the numerous truths about casualties and war that emerge
within elite rhetoric in the TV news have consequences for voters’ knowledge, the
meaning of that knowledge, and electoral accountability for politicians who send or
attempt to bring back troops from combat operations abroad.

This chapter likely raises as many questions as it resolves, though it does offer
certain conclusions about congressional casualty rhetoric in the TV news media. Much
work remains to be done in examining the myriad ways in which the deaths of soldiers
and foreign civilians enter into political conversations in the public sphere, and how their
emergence in political discourse may or may not impact citizens’ views on war. This
chapter hopes to provide an additional step toward a better grasp of the functions of lost
lives during wartime in the United States.

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4 It should be noted, however, that video clips from congressional speeches are regularly played during TV news shows.
Chapter 5
Discourse Ethics, Drones, and the Future of U.S. Military Adventurism

The casualties in Iraq are a bitter reminder of the truth and consequences of war whether you oppose it, as I do, or wage it, as the President has. –Jim McDermott (D-WA)¹

Introduction

Buddhist scholar Stephen Batchelor (1984: 7) writes that, “Death is a constantly present possibility. Our life is inescapably a movement towards death.” For soldiers and civilians in combat zones, this inevitable advancement toward death is often accelerated. Thousands of U.S. soldiers were killed in Iraq. They were killed in Baghdad, Basra, Mosul, Fallujah and elsewhere in Iraq fulfilling the strategic objectives of generals implementing the ideas of politicians. Many more thousands of innocent Iraqis were killed in and around these cities, many slain by stray U.S. bullets and mortar rounds. Iraqi militants seeking to gain power in a chaotic, post-Saddam Hussein environment killed countless more innocent Iraqis. The circumstances of these soldiers and Iraqis’ deaths were partly set in motion by politicians supporting, or opting not to challenge, the idea of waging war in Iraq. Regardless of whether the Iraq War was justified or ultimately the right thing to do, the movement toward death for many U.S. soldiers and Iraqi civilians was quickened by political choices.

War death is but one cost of war, though perhaps the most devastating cost. This project was dedicated to exploring empirically why and how politicians spoke about war death, and the normative value of speaking about this cost. I conducted studies on (1) U.S. combat and (2) Iraqi civilian death rhetoric within the U.S. House of Representatives, as well as (3) casualty rhetoric among members of Congress (MCs) in

the TV news media. In this final chapter, I compare and tie together the findings of these three studies, and consider extensions of my results and arguments to other contemporary and future combat contexts. Thus, the dissertation concludes in two steps: First, I provide a comparative overview of the findings of the previous chapters. Second, I explore the implications of my results and arguments for recent and future U.S. combat operations, civil wars, mass killings, and drone strikes.

**Main Findings and Arguments**

The second and third chapters examined the issue of U.S. combat and Iraqi civilian casualty rhetoric, respectively, within the U.S. House of Representatives. The dependent variable in these chapters was the number of U.S. combat death and Iraqi civilian death speeches, respectively. I used negative binomial regression to estimate the effects of independent variables on the number of casualty speeches by members in the U.S. House. For both chapters, I tested hypotheses derived from strategic ownership and personal characteristics theoretical perspectives. Chapter two also included hypotheses concerning constituency characteristics.

Table 5.1 shows how well hypotheses from these theoretical perspectives fared, for both combat casualty rhetoric and Iraqi civilian casualty rhetoric. The results reveal a number of similarities and a few differences between combat casualty rhetoric and civilian casualty rhetoric.
The strategic ownership perspective suggests that legislators should speak about issues that they credibly own or issues that are perceived to be strategically beneficial. In both chapters, strategic ownership variables were highly predictive of casualty rhetoric. For
both combat and civilian casualty rhetoric, I hypothesized that Democrats, those who voted against the Iraq War Resolution (H.J. 114), and those who did not vote on H.J. 114 would give more casualty speeches than Republicans and those who supported H.J. 114. The results reveal that Democrats gave more casualty speeches than Republicans, and a vote against H.J. Res. 114 was strongly associated with more casualty speeches. Not voting on the resolution was positively related to civilian casualty rhetoric but not U.S. combat casualty rhetoric.

These findings confirm that congressional casualty rhetoric is rooted in strategic and credibility incentives. Yet “trespassing,” which refers to the practice of speaking about issues that may not necessarily be strategically advantageous, repeatedly occurred. Chapters two and three demonstrated how many Republicans and legislators who voted in favor of H.J. 114 framed war deaths in ways that justified support for combat operations in Iraq. Still, congressional conversations about death in Iraq were mostly one-sided. Democrats used floor speeches to attack the president and his policies in Iraq by speaking about killed soldiers in their districts and in their states, as well as the climbing total tally of war dead. Republicans occasionally spoke of war deaths in order to support war.

Constituency characteristic hypotheses were only tested in chapter two. District casualties had a very strong relationship to casualty rhetoric, while the proportion of veterans within a district had no statistically significant impact. I also tested for the impact of district-level casualties on speeches about district-level combat deaths, seeking to determine if representatives were more likely to speak about combat deaths from their own congressional districts as the number of combat deaths from their districts increased.
I therefore conducted a logit regression where the dependent variable was “1” if the representative spoke about combat death[s] from their own district one or more times, and “0” if the representative never spoke about combat death[s] from their district. The logit regression indicated a strong statistically significant relationship between district-level casualties and constituent casualty rhetoric. Hence, district deaths increased casualty rhetoric in general as well as district-level casualty rhetoric. Holding all other factors constant, representatives were rhetorically responsive to deaths in their districts.

Table 5.1 also reveals similarities and differences in the impact of personal characteristics on casualty rhetoric between chapters two and three. The table shows that conservative ideology was negatively associated with casualty rhetoric in both chapters. Regarding military service, combat veteran status was positively related to U.S. combat casualty rhetoric, but this finding was mixed for civilian casualty rhetoric. Noncombat veteran status did not have any influence on U.S. combat casualty rhetoric but was positively related to civilian casualty rhetoric in some of the models in chapter three. Unexpectedly, the Latino variable was negatively associated with U.S. combat casualty rhetoric, and this finding held in some of the models of civilian casualty rhetoric. Being a woman was positively associated with civilian casualty rhetoric and U.S. combat casualty rhetoric, but this relationship was only statistically significant for civilian casualty rhetoric.

Chapter four explored casualty rhetoric among U.S. representatives and senators in TV media in the months leading up to the 2004 and 2006 national elections. The chapter built on a body of literature examining the effects of U.S. combat casualties in U.S. politics. This literature has been comprised largely of experimental studies and
public opinion data, and has not accounted for how casualties are debated by elites in the TV News. I argued that in order to fully appreciate casualty effects, it is important to acquire an understanding of casualty rhetoric among elites in the public sphere.

The chapter was informed by studies demonstrating certain contextual information that is relevant to individuals’ support for war and casualty sensitivity (Boettcher and Cobb 2006, 2009; Federico, Golec, and Dial 2005; Gelpi et al. 2006, 2009). These studies, while largely experimental, suggest different types of casualty and war contextualization that should be observable in U.S. politicians’ rhetoric. While chapter two and three employed inductive coding strategies, chapter four used these studies as a basis to deductively code particular types of contextual information surrounding casualty rhetoric.

Chapter four found that many of the measures of support for war and frames used in experimental studies generally did not appear in elite rhetoric. It also found that, contrary to findings on oversampled presidential party criticism (Groeling and Baum 2008, 2009), Republicans were very unlikely to criticize the president or the Iraq War in their discussions of U.S. combat casualties. It was therefore improbable for citizens identifying with the Republican Party to come across negative constructions of U.S. combat deaths in Iraq in TV news.

Together, chapters two, three, and four advance our understanding of how politicians debate wartime deaths within Congress and in TV news media. They provide tentative answers to the questions specified in the first chapter: What explains variation in speaking about wartime deaths among U.S. politicians within Congress? How do politicians debate wartime death within Congress? How do politicians debate these lost
lives in TV news media? Why should it matter whether and how elected officials speak about these wartimes losses? In the following section, I explore the relevance of these findings and arguments for contemporary and future conflicts.

**Casualty Rhetoric and the Future of U.S. War**

As noted in the introductory chapter, warfare has been a perpetual characteristic of human history. The use of force abroad also appears to be an enduring feature of U.S. politics. It is unclear, however, whether the United States will wage major wars in the future. Clausewitz of course famously conceptualized war as the continuation of politics by other means, suggesting that war is closely connected to politics and politicians. This may be particularly true for politicians from powerful states, perhaps tragically governed by structural incentives of the international system (Mearsheimer 2001). War may not easily fade away as long as U.S. politicians see bullets and bombs as either necessary or expedient means to political ends abroad.

Recent arguments, however, suggest that the United States is unlikely to become involved in large-scale wars for a considerable period of time. For example, John Negroponte, former U.S. Deputy Secretary of State and Director of National Intelligence, imagines it will be one or two generations until the United States engages in a war like Iraq again. Negroponte (2012: 2) suggests that, “While the costs in terms of blood and treasure are probably decisive factors in making this a likely eventuality, there are a number of other important factors mitigating against large deployments for combat abroad, many of which have to do with the questionable long-term effectiveness of external military interventions.” He therefore deems the considerable human and
financial costs of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars as having lingering effects far into the future, preventing major deployments of force overseas.

Others are not so certain about this conclusion. Sterling-Folker (2008: 322) observes that using coercive force overseas is the United States’ “favored modus operandi, even when the use of military force or personnel makes less than efficient sense for its long-term, strategic goals and interests.” Citing Michael Ignatieff, she notes that “interventions are popular and they remain popular even if American soldiers die” (p. 322). Though war, particularly interstate war has been declining (e.g. Mueller 2007), there are current and likely unknown future state and non-state threats to the United States that could compel future politicians to resort to coercive force abroad. Retired U.S. Army Lieutenant General and former U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan Karl Eikenberry (2013) recently argued that U.S. foreign policy is increasingly (and disproportionately) dependent on using its military might overseas. He contends that one of several reasons for this overreliance on armed forces was the switch from a conscript to an all-volunteer military force. Eikenberry (2013: 2-3) maintains that this shift “opened the door to military adventurism,” and that “overseas conflict-related military deployments since the mid-1970s has been at unprecedented levels for the United States, and the rate has actually risen over the last two decades. The increased use of coercive power by our country in recent times is an empirical fact.” He elaborates:

Consider the two post-1973 All-Volunteer Force interventions unique in breadth and scope: Afghanistan and Iraq II. Together they are: the longest in duration of any American war (the Afghanistan conflict alone enjoys this distinction); the seventh most lethal American conflict measured in fatalities; second in fatalities (after the Mexican-American War) of those conflicts fought entirely with volunteer forces; and second only to World War II in expense (and perhaps yet to become the most costly armed intervention in U.S. history). A reasonable argument can be made that the absence of those domestic political constraints inherent in a draft force may have freed otherwise cautious U.S. government decision makers to carry out large-scale extended military operations in both Iraq and Afghanistan (Eikenberry 2013: 3-4)
Regardless of whether increased military adventurism is rooted in, or partially the result of, the transition to an all-voluntary military force, it is clear that U.S. leaders are quite willing to send soldiers abroad to die and kill for their political objectives.

The U.S. public often is just as willing to wage war as its leaders, even if Americans maintain rather paradoxical anti-war attitudes. Lebow (2010: 7) notes that, “American opinion has consistently been strongly anti-war, yet the majority supported intervention in Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq. Many proponents of these interventions described themselves as strongly anti-war but considered war necessary on the ground of national security.” Gelpi et al. (2009) similarly find that Americans desire winning wars, and will back combat operations as long as they imagine that the United States will be successful. Bacevich (2005:1) goes further in arguing that the U.S. public does not just desire combat success but also that “Americans are enthralled with military power . . . the nation’s arsenal of high-tech weaponry and the soldiers who employ that arsenal have come to signify who we are what we stand for.” Certainly many members of Congress (MCs) and the U.S. public are fascinated with military power and would have scarce reservations shipping soldiers off to major combat operations. Undoubtedly many factors structure willingness to support the use of force among the American public. The literature thus suggests that many Americans would likely not stand in the way of politicians eager to use force abroad.

If the United States becomes involved in large-scale wars in the future, this dissertation provides some clues to which MCs will speak of the future losses of soldiers and civilians. If casualty rhetoric is driven by strategic ownership incentives, opponents of providing presidents authorization to wage war will criticize an ongoing war, and will
likely speak of the human costs of war to pressure the president and congressional colleagues to consider ending combat operations. It is unclear if Democrats would still speak so frequently about human losses if a Democratic president waged war. Berinsky (2009) provides some evidence suggesting that Democrats and Republicans reverse their wartime rhetoric depending on the partisan affiliation of the president. Perhaps casualty rhetoric is more the result of partisan opportunities to attack the opposition president’s war and less a genuine division between Democrats and Republicans in their concern about casualties. Future studies could examine previous wars to see if casualty rhetoric follows this pattern more than party affiliation.

Since casualty rhetoric is also driven by personal characteristics, we would also expect to see legislators’ ideology impacting future casualty rhetoric. Liberals would be expected to speak much more about U.S. combat and foreign civilian deaths. However, we might also see a reverse trend if a liberal president waged a major war. Female legislators would be expected to speak more about civilian deaths, but not necessarily more about U.S. combat deaths.

Regardless of whether or not Negroponte’s prediction that the United States will not become engaged in another major military endeavor like Iraq or Afghanistan for one or more generations proves correct, I argue that congressional casualty rhetoric is normatively valuable, and relevant in other contexts. Even if future U.S. soldiers are protected from the dangers of IEDs and insurgent bullets that claimed the lives of soldiers in Iraq, innocent civilians will continue to be killed. Genocide and mass killings persist throughout the world, killing countless innocents. Civilians lose their lives in civil wars and other conflicts where the United States is not involved. Innocent noncombatants are
killed by U.S. drone strikes. The normative logic of congressional civilian casualty rhetoric put forth in chapter three is germane to these grim events.

I have argued that the normative value of civilian casualty rhetoric stems from an understanding of inclusion and public reasoning as central to rhetorical ethics within political institutions (Habermas 1990). I suggested that inclusion and public reasoning are the two most central components to ethical deliberation in democracies (Bohman 1996; Gutmann and Thompson 2004; Schneiderhan and Khan 2008). Including the dead in congressional debates does not undo the violence done to the departed or bring them back, but it does provide the dead with quasi-agency to impact public debates on what their deaths mean and how their deaths should affect decisions on the conduct of war. The dead are able to, albeit restrictively, recover their voices through the rhetorical moves of politicians, even in highly politically managed articulations of war support and war criticism. The dead soldiers and civilians, emerging as agents within congressional rhetoric, are able to make “demands on the living” (Sophocles 2002: 192). Their demands consequently manifest as part of the public reasoning process.

Additionally, I claimed that MCs were partially responsible for the deaths of innocent civilians in Iraq, and this responsibility generates an obligation to speak of these deaths. Is there still an obligation to speak about civilian deaths around the world where the United States is not involved? No, but there is value in speaking of civilian deaths even in cases where the United States has no commitments. Take, for instance, the issue of genocide in Darfur. In 2006, Congress passed H.R. 3127, the Darfur Genocide Accountability Act. This legislation defined the violence in Darfur as genocide, and implored the U.S. government to support the African Union peacekeeping forces and aid
in the criminal prosecution of those responsible for war crimes. Such legislation has practical value in helping to stop violence, and public rhetoric about the massive deaths was valuable in promoting congressional legislation and public awareness. As Rep. Frank Wolf (R-VA) argued, “The Janjaweed militia has continued to rape and kill, wiping out generations of people in Darfur. It is unacceptable, and the world must act.” When the United States is not involved, promoting preventive action and calling attention to mass killings is not an ethical obligation, but it is valuable to those dying. Such rhetoric and legislation is also less likely to be susceptible to partisan politics, though Democrats were more likely than Republicans to support Darfur legislation (Uscinski et al. 2009).

The issue of drone strikes is perhaps more relevant in considering when congressional casualty rhetoric serves an important purpose, since the United States is directly responsible for the loss of innocent civilians killed by these strikes. In this case, rhetorical responsiveness is ethically obligated by MCs. Since 2004, the United States has employed predator drones in its fight against terrorism. While first acknowledged in April 2012, the Obama administration has accelerated the drone program to conduct targeted killings of suspected terrorists over the last few years (Washington Post, April 30, 2012). These strikes have occurred largely in Yemen and Pakistan. The International Human Rights and Conflict Resolution Clinic at Stanford Law School and the Global Justice Clinic at New York University School of Law reports that between 474-881 Pakistani civilians have been killed by Drone strikes since 2004 (p. vi), but also notes the “militants” killed by these strikes were not necessarily “legitimate targets” (p. 30).

Congress has held a number of oversight committee meetings, though the first major

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Congressional session on the drone program occurred in 2013 (*LA Times*, June 25, 2012; *PBS*, April 25, 2013).

While it may be difficult for Congress to curb the drone program, MCs might publicly criticize the president and the program in Congress and in TV news media. Two of the most vocal critics of President George W. Bush and the Iraq War frequently challenged the policy of drone strikes in 2012. Rep. Lynn Woolsey (D-CA) argued, “Instead of military force, instead of unmanned, amoral drones that don’t know the difference between killing an insurgent and killing a child, how about we send American compassion to Afghanistan? How about we send our very best experts in education, health care, energy, agriculture, legal reform, government transparency . . .?” 3 Likewise, Rep. Dennis Kucinich (D-OH) observed that:

American drones in Pakistan have killed as many as 3,378 people. Drones in Yemen have killed as many as 1,952 people. Drones in Somalia have killed as many as 170 people. We've not declared war on any of these nations, but *our weapons have killed innocent civilians in all of them*. Highly reputable research shows that the number of high-level targets killed as a percentage of total casualties is estimated at about 2 percent. According to The Washington Post, the Obama administration is working on efforts to institutionalize the practice of targeted killings by unmanned drones abroad. The volume of these killings challenges the morality and the legality of the attacks. We are creating a precedent for other nations that are developing the same technology. China has just unveiled a new drone. The drone program has thus far been conducted with no oversight from Congress or any judicial body. *Congress has a constitutional responsibility to ensure that programs that are being conducted in the name of our Nation are legal, transparent, and accountable* (emphasis added). 4

Rep. Kucinich makes a case for congressional responsibility to question the drone program, and he presents the deaths of innocent civilians as a major factor in questioning not only the legality of drone strikes but also the morality of these targeted killings. These types of speeches are necessary to healthy democratic debate about the conduct of war in a highly technical age. Referencing the death toll, a form of numerical casualty recognition, is one way to integrate discussion about the loss of innocent lives into the

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public reasoning process of elected officials, who have the potential and the platform to consider these deaths.

Public speeches by MCs over the use of drone strikes and the innocent human costs that result from them are a responsibility of members of Congress. While the examples above illustrate forms of casualty rhetoric that denounce the Obama administration’s use of drones, the claim for obligatory casualty rhetoric also holds for supporters of the program. Rep. Dan Burton (R-IN), for instance, recently applauded the drone program because it avoids the necessity of sending soldiers into dangerous combat missions, in which they could die or be wounded:

The reason I took 5 minutes to speak today is . . . because I was shaving the other day before I came into work and I heard the newshman talking about a young family and a young man that was in the military. I came out while I was shaving and I looked at the television. It was a beautiful family—young man and a woman and their child. And they announced that he had just been hit with an IED and lost both arms and both legs, and I was thinking what a tragedy for this young man and for his family and the horrible things they’re going to have to endure throughout the rest of their lives. I started thinking about all the technology we have. We have satellites that can pinpoint a pack of cigarettes on the ground, and we have drones that can fly over enemy territory and pick out a target and hit somebody with a Hellfire missile and blow them to smithereens. And somebody from a thousand miles away sitting at a computer with a television screen can direct that drone and that Hellfire missile. And I started wondering to myself: Why in the world don't we use more of those instead of sending young American men and women into harm's way day in and day out like we do? We have the technology to knock out anybody anywhere in the world that we want to. . . . We have to go into certain spots and knock out bad guys. We've got to do that. But . . . instead of sending our young men and women in there, why don't we send a drone over to a site that we've discovered from a satellite and blow the hell out of those people? Don't send our young men and women into that kind of a situation where they're going to lose their arms and their legs when we've spent all the money on this technology to stop the enemy. . . . I don't want to turn on the television next week or next month and see more young men and women who have suffered this way. I've been out to Bethesda and Walter Reed and I've seen the damage that war does. And so if we're going to go to war—and we have to go to war, only when we have to. But if we do, let's use the technology we have and defeat the enemy and minimize the loss of life that our young men and women are experiencing.5

Rep. Burton’s support of the drone program illustrates one of its chief benefits: minimizing the human costs to U.S. soldiers. From the normative perspective of this dissertation, Rep. Burton ideally would have acknowledged the deaths of innocent civilians in his remarks; dead innocents deserve—perhaps demand—recognition by

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elected U.S. officials. However, the concern for the lives of U.S. soldiers is valid given the context of substantial losses of U.S. soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan over the last decade.

Rep. Burton echoes arguments put forth during the Vietnam War. As the Vietnam War continued and grew increasingly unpopular, many MCs and citizens pushed for the unrestricted aerial bombing of North Vietnam, largely to save the lives of American troops. For example, U.S. combat deaths were central to Sen. John Stennis’s (D-MS) 1966-1967 public arguments with J. William Fulbright (D-AR) about escalating the war in Vietnam. Sen. Stennis and his supporters argued that massive bombing in North Vietnam would obviate the need for U.S. ground soldiers and prevent U.S. deaths, though this would come at the expense of Vietnamese lives. Critics of U.S. involvement in Vietnam saw a massive bombing campaign as key to saving American lives by winning the war more quickly and thus allowing the United States to withdrawal from Vietnam. Constituent letters to senators included arguments such as “The American people—the vast majority at any rate—want to see maximum force brought to bear to win the war at minimum cost to our boys in the field” and “We ought to get out of South Vietnam, but if we don’t we should blow North Vietnam off the face of the map with hydrogen bombs after giving them thirty days advance notice to come to terms or else” (Fry 2010: 525).

While Rep. Burton’s argument neglects the cost to innocent civilians, one could claim that Rep. Woolsey and Rep. Kucinich’s speeches could consider the reduced possible harm to U.S. soldiers. Including the dead, and perhaps the future possible dead, contributes to vigorous democratic debate about the costs and conduct of war.
Conclusion

Jean-Paul Sartre (2001: 519) noted that, “death alienates us wholly in our own life to the advantage of the Other. To be dead is to be prey for the living.” Many legislators never spoke about the war dead; when killed U.S. soldiers and Iraqi civilians did emerge within congressional debates, they did so as contested subjects, as effects of framing techniques determining their relevance and meaning. This dissertation has attempted to shift our appreciation of the dead from purely independent variables causing political effects to an understanding of why and how the dead become part of political debates about war. Soldiers and civilians are important for their effects on political outcomes, but they are also important because they are humans who died for a discretionary war. These deaths should disturb war critics and war supporters alike, and ought to pervade debates among U.S. politicians.

Indeed, the ghosts of American wars should haunt the democratic decision-making process when it comes to the issue of sending soldiers abroad to kill and be killed. Comparative literature specialist Jeffrey Weinstock (2004: 5) recently suggested that “ghosts” haunt the present, and their presence “indicates that, beneath the surface of received history, there lurks another narrative, an untold story that calls into question the veracity of the authorized version of events.” Yet even ghosts need ghost stories to materialize and have effects in the present. Though dead soldiers and civilians are unable to speak during legislative and other debates, elected officials may speak about these ghosts and interpret their deaths within the public sphere. The ghosts of Iraq—killed soldiers and civilians—haunted congressional debates about Iraq, but only through the
stories told by politicians. Enabling the dead to emerge in war rhetoric fosters a public debate on the value of life and death, and how these relate to victory, defeat, and the challenge of global threats. In *The Prophet*, Khalil Gibran (1923/2004: 81) wrote that “If you would indeed behold the spirit of death, open your heart wide unto the body of life.” Exercising and contesting power lies at the heart of politics, and the dead deserve a proper place in these contestations. Considerations of the human costs of war in democratic debates not only enhance our decisions about war, but facilitate reflection on how we might protect and enhance the lives of those exposed to global violence on a daily basis.
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