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# **Losing on the Home Front?** Battlefield Casualties, Media, and Public Support for Foreign Interventions


**Abstract**

How domestic constituents respond to signals of weakness in foreign wars remains an important question in international relations. This paper studies the impact of battlefield casualties and media coverage on public demand for war termination. To identify the effect of troop fatalities, we leverage the timing of survey collection across respondents from nine members of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan. Quasi-experimental evidence demonstrates that battlefield casualties increase the news coverage of Afghanistan and the public demand for withdrawal. Evidence from a survey experiment replicates the main results. To shed light on the media mechanism, we leverage a news pressure design and find that major sporting matches occurring around the time of battlefield casualties drive down subsequent coverage, and significantly weaken the effect of casualties on support for war termination. These results highlight the role that media play in shaping public support for foreign military interventions.

Wars inherently involve the loss of life of soldiers in the battlefield. These casualties represent one of the most tangible costs of conflict. Concerns over casualties influence whether states start wars and whether wars, once they have begun, can be sustained (Weisiger, 2016). Democracies may be particularly averse to losing soldiers since constituents may voice demands for withdrawal through protest or support exit at the ballot boxes (Tomz, Weeks and Yarhi-Milo, 2020; McAlexander, Rubin and Williams, 2023). Recognizing the potential for political backlash, elites may try to reframe losses on foreign soil to avoid losing on the home front (Baum and Groeling, 2010; Perla, 2011).

The sensitivity of public support of war to battlefield casualties remains an important question in international relations. Battlefield losses may trigger demands for war termination from the mass public. Inferring weakness from casualties, public support for foreign wars may evaporate as losses of blood and treasure accumulate. We build on existing theories of wartime politics, developing a simple but useful theoretical argument about the varieties of battlefield losses. This argument separates three types of losses: own-country hostile casualties, own-country non-hostile casualties (e.g., accidents during deployment), and other-country hostile casualties. While the first two types represent direct costs of war to domestic populations, hostile casualties plausibly convey a stronger signal about deteriorating combat conditions and the prospects of victory. In wars fought through coalitions, hostile casualties experienced by military partners represent an indirect cost of war, potentially increasing the likelihood an impacted ally reneges on their deployment commitment and withdraws from the coalition. These signals are less certain and salient to domestic audiences, which should introduce attenuation in any casualty-induced shift in domestic media coverage and public support for withdrawal.

In this paper, we evaluate this argument using credibly causal evidence linking casualties to public sentiment. We also highlight and test a relevant theoretical mechanism through which signals of weakness shape demands for war termination: media coverage. By investigating the role of media coverage, we provide an important set of quantitative microfoundations for the study of wartime politics (Marinov, Nomikos and Robbins, 2015).

Our study focuses on a highly relevant context—the recent US-led military campaign in Afghanistan. A coalition of NATO[1] forces and their allies carried out operations in Afghanistan from 2001 to 2021. We begin by investigating whether country-specific casualty events are associated with a significant worsening of public support for continued engagement in the conflict. This analysis takes advantage of granular, nationally representative individual-level public opinion survey data collected from 2007-2011 across nine major troop-sending ISAF[2] countries: the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Australia, and Spain. The surveys cover a critical phase of coalition operations in Afghanistan, including the troop surge (Sexton, 2016). Taking advantage of the staggered timing of survey enumeration, we identify combat events involving casualties of a troop-sending nation around the interview date specific to each individual respondent and specific to the nationality of the respondent. This design follows recent innovations in the study of domestic politics of international issues, including Mikulaschek, Pant and Tesfaye (2020) and Solodoch (2021). Consistent with the theoretical argument, we document that own-country casualties are associated with a worsening of the support for continued military intervention, while non-combat troop deaths have no discernible impact on support. Fatalities tied to other coalition partners have a positive but attenuated impact on the support for withdrawal. We present evidence of these dynamics using two separate quasi-experimental approaches—an event study design as well as a cumulative shock-during-survey design. Using an original corpus of country-specific newspaper coverage of the Afghan conflict, we find consistent evidence that own-country casualties caused by insurgent violence boost the news coverage of Afghanistan in the

[1]NATO stands for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.
[2]ISAF stands for the International Security Assistance Force.

troop-sending country, while non-combat casualties and fatalities tied to other coalition partners have a weaker effect on coverage. These results—linking combat operations, media coverage, and public opinion—are robust to a range of sensitivity tests and novel validation exercises regarding media coverage.

In a third empirical exercise, we investigate the theoretical argument with an experimental design, fielded in 2020. We leverage information primes to study demand for withdrawal from Afghanistan in a United States survey sample. We find that priming subjects with information about American battlefield casualties sharply increases demand for troop withdrawal, while a comparable information prime about NATO coalition fatalities has a positive but attenuated and imprecise impact on support for withdrawal.

In a fourth empirical exercise, we assess how coverage of the Afghan conflict influenced public demands for withdrawal. Our design takes advantage of the exogenous timing of prominent events that crowd out coverage of troop casualties. To do this, we use country-specific major sports matches that occur around the survey dates in the countries of our survey sample. This approach is motivated by Durante and Zhuravskaya (2018), Jetter (2017), Djourelova and Durante (2022), and Anderson et al. (2022). We anticipate that these events will exert news pressure, marginally reducing media coverage of troop casualties that occur prior to each event. If public opinion is meaningfully influenced by this downward shift in media coverage, we expect demands for troop withdrawal will decline as well. We find compelling evidence that the otherwise robust link between casualties and conflict coverage breaks down when sporting events introduce news pressure. We also find that public support for withdrawal is unaffected by own-country casualties when news coverage has been crowded out by sport matches. The news pressure design is similarly robust to a variety of alternative specifications and validation tests.

Our paper makes several important contributions to the study of wartime politics in international relations. First, we provide novel causal evidence on the casualty aversion hypothesis. Mueller (1973) proposed that US casualties in the Korean and Vietnam wars were associated with a decline in domestic support for the war. Subsequent work, including Larson (1996); Gartner and Segura (1998); Gartner (2008); Segura and Gartner (2021); Karol and Miguel (2007); Hayes and Myers (2009) found additional evidence consistent with this argument. In contrast, Jentleson (1992); Larson (1996); Jentleson and Britton (1998); Burk (1999); Dauber (2001); Klarevas (2002); Feaver and Gelpi (2004); Gelpi, Feaver and Reifler (2009); Lacquement (2004) challenged these early findings, citing numerous cases where casualties and public support appear uncorrelated. Fazal (2021) finds no relationship between casualty numbers and sentiment in an experimental setting with a hypothetical deployment to Syria. The state of the literature on wartime politics is, indeed, more mixed than one might expect. Our project leverages a combination of quasi-experimental and survey experimental evidence to clarify this debate, including designs to disentangle the heterogeneous effects of own-country hostile, own-country accidental, and other-country hostile battlefield losses. We also implement designs to credibly isolate the underlying mechanisms linking combat events abroad and public opinion at home: media coverage. The results we present clarify the signals and salience of casualties during war, providing an important body of theoretically-motivated causal estimates that advance a literature that has been at the core of international relations and wartime politics for at least the last half century.

Second, our work clarifies how media coverage shapes public opinion during war, contributing to recent advances in the study of media and politics. The seminal paper by Eisensee and Strömberg (2007) highlights the important role that media coverage of natural disasters can play in shaping public responses. Manacorda and Tesei (2020) highlight the importance of social media and communications technology in enabling protest movements to organize, while Mitts (2019) links offline terrorist attacks to online social media content and radicalization. DellaVigna and Kaplan (2007) document how access to politically biased media reports can affect electoral outcomes. Durante and Zhuravskaya (2018), in a paper closely related to our evidence on news pressure, document how military actions by the Israeli government are timed to generate as little media coverage in the West as possible, reflecting a broader political economy of international public opinion.[3] Jetter (2017) similarly uses news pressure to estimate the impact of news coverage of political violence on subsequent terrorist activity. A number of studies focus directly on how media coverage affects war. Baum and Potter (2015) argues for the importance of the media as an independent strategic actor in the formation of foreign policy. Of particular interest has been the role of mass, real-time coverage, dubbed the "CNN effect" (Livingston, 2000). In contrast, Aday (2010) suggests a more limited scope for the power of the media to shape opinion. Our research extends this broadening research agenda on media and politics by underscoring media coverage's pivotal role as the link between on-the-ground events in foreign wars and public sentiment.

Third, this study highlights the sensitivity of coalitions to country-specific movements in public opinion. International cooperation can be destabilized by shifts in mass opinion (De Vries, Hobolt and Walter, 2021). Multilateral military interventions may be particularly sensitive to these constraints when battlefield casualties trigger partner-specific changes to rules of engagement–when soldiers are allowed to engage in offensive or defensive combat—and legal restrictions about troop movement, operational authority, and human and physical capital commitments. These changes shift the burden of fighting in a manner that can undermine battlefield efficiency and introduce frictions to cross-country coordination of medical evacuations (Kotwal et al., 2016) and development aid programs (Beath, Christia and Enikolopov, 2012). Casualty-induced withdrawals destabilize the coalition more broadly, with downstream consequences for international cooperation through

[3] Moving beyond the particular context of the Israel-Palestine conflict, Anderson et al. (2022) show that news pressure in donor countries influences the timing of protests and political violence in recipient countries. Besley, Fetzer and Mueller (2020) document that general amplification effect that media coverage can have and highlight the importance to understand the news selection function more generally.

collective national defense, a cornerstone of American and European security policy since the formation of NATO in 1949. By pointing out these frictions, our paper clarifies the conditions under which one of the most important international institutions of the last century can fracture militarily, with implications for collective defense during the reemergence of great power politics.

Lastly, we engage with the broader literature exploring how democratic leaders navigate wars. Public opinion is heavily influenced by several cost factors including casualties, fiscal implications (Flores-Macías and Kreps, 2017) and recruitment (Horowitz and Levendusky, 2011). As noted by Reiter and Stam (1998), democratic leaders' decisions about war have, historically, been shaped by these changes in sentiment. This behavior is in line with the theory of political survival proposed by Mesquita et al. (2005), but could also be explained by the efficacy of institutional constraints or a desire among leaders to accomplish more (Tomz and Weeks, 2013). This dynamic of accountability, which is underscored by Croco (2011), implies that deteriorating battlefield conditions could lead to a decline in public approval for the leaders. Such a relationship between public opinion and decision-making further compounds in election cycles, as demonstrated by Gaubatz (1991). We advance this literature by providing credible quantitative evidence for the theoretical microfoundations of broader arguments about how democratic leaders decide when and where to engage or disengage from conflict.

In the next section, we provide a succinct overview of the linkages between war-time losses and public opinion, clarifying the theoretical mechanisms we test in this paper. In the third and fourth sections, we introduce our data, research designs, and results. The final section concludes, providing a range of opportunities for future research motivated by insights from this study.

## War-time Losses and Public Opinion

Foreign wars—when they start, how they are fought, when they end—are often tied to domestic politics (Tomz, Weeks and Yarhi-Milo, 2020) and the attitudes of the mass public (Liberman, 2006). Canonical work on battlefield losses argues that public support for war is tied to performance, especially deteriorating conflict conditions. Mueller (1973) was a pioneering contribution to this field in international relations and foreign policy, noting that US casualties in the Korean and Vietnam wars were associated with a decline in domestic support for the war. Subsequent work, including Larson (1996), found additional evidence consistent with this argument, though Jentleson (1992) challenged these early findings, citing numerous cases where casualties and public support appear uncorrelated.

Research on war-time losses was significantly advanced by Gartner, Segura and Wilkening (1997), one of the first studies using fine-grained data to investigate how battlefield casualties affect public opinion on the home front. These authors focus on the Vietnam War, and find a relationship between county-level casualties and support for the US president's policy on Vietnam—especially at the start of the war. The key limitations of this study are that it is based on data from a single U.S. state (California) and that its empirical strategy does not isolate the effect of plausibly exogenous shocks to casualties. Karol and Miguel (2007) update these results, finding a robust negative association between casualty rates and support for George Bush's re-election bid in 2004. Using similar data, Christensen (2017) and Duncan, Mansour and Rintala (2019) find that war deaths in Iraq and Afghanistan reduce military recruitment in the deceased soldiers' home counties.

In terms of question and approach, Karol and Miguel (2007) is closest to our paper. There are, however, several important differences that clarify our contribution to the study of war-time politics. First, our paper uses a direct measure of the support for the war. In contrast, electoral support for President Bush may be capturing a host of other perceptions of the quality of his policies. Second, our paper includes data for a range of countries involved in the same military conflict. This helps improve on the external validity of their original results. Third, a cross-sectional analysis cannot rule out whether unobserved confounders drive the association between war casualties and the shifts in support for President Bush. In contrast, we can leverage high-frequency data to exploit the idiosyncratic timing of casualty events, which makes a causal interpretation of our effects more plausible. Fourth, while Karol and Miguel (2007) highlight the potential role of media coverage as a mechanism, our paper is the first in this literature to provide credible causal evidence linking news pressure, media content, and public support for war.

### The argument: battlefield losses and media coverage

Public support for war is driven by a multitude of considerations, including threat perceptions, the costs of war, the prospects of victory, and the morality of violence (Tomz and Weeks, 2013). Our argument focuses squarely on the second and third considerations. War casualties are just one salient dimension of the broader costs (Gartner and Segura, 1998; Gelpi, Reifler and Feaver, 2007). Principal policy objectives and likelihood of success play an important role in determining public willingness to tolerate casualties as a consequence of conflict (Eichenberg, 2005; Gelpi, Feaver and Reifler, 2005; Getmansky and Weiss, 2020).

Wars fought in coalitions—where the costs of war can create uneven burdens between allied military forces and the prospects of victory depend on the effectiveness of fighting as an alliance—offer an opportunity for theoretical progress. In these settings, casualties experienced by own-country forces represent a direct cost to fighting. These casualties also serve as markers of the prospects of victory, providing a blunt signal of whether the war effort is failing. The signal value of other types of losses during war—due, for example, to non-hostile accidents—is more limited. While these types of events impose a cost, they can occur haphazardly and are often a less informative signal about battlefield conditions. Accidents are costly but rarely, in the case we study, indicate a significant shift in the balance of capabilities. Casualties experienced by other-country forces represent an indirect cost of war, primarily through potential downstream effects on the commitment of coalition partners to maintain their military deployments, support critical infrastructure in the field, and coordinate joint operations. In this sense, other-country casualties yield less definitive but potentially informative signals about the prospects of victory, which may hinge on willingness of security partners to 'stay in the fight'.

Most wars fought with allies include each of these elements: hostile own-country casualties, non-hostile own-country accidents, and hostile other-country casualties. All represent direct or indirect costs of war, with variation in how informative each signal is about the costs of war, the stability of the coalition, and potential for a favorable outcome to the conflict. We anticipate that own-country casualties generate the clearest signal to citizens about the cost of war (high) from hostile engagements and prospects of peace (diminished), while own-country accidents provide a weaker signal on both dimensions. Other-country hostile casualties might negatively impact assessments of the broader war effort and trigger public concerns about stability of the war coalition (even though costs remain indirect), and these concerns might vary within the coalition.

Various forms of media are central to the relationship between battlefield losses and the support for war; they transmit information about casualties to the broader public. To internalize the considerations described above and respond politically, the public must have information about the state of war. Journalistic coverage of combat activity is an important theoretical microfoundation linking the conduct of foreign wars and shifts in domestic public opinion (Althaus, Bramlett and Gimpel, 2012). Prior work has demonstrated that media coverage shapes public responses to natural disasters (Eisensee and Strömberg, 2007), influences electoral outcomes (DellaVigna and Kaplan, 2007), and triggers political violence (Jetter, 2017). Media coverage is constrained along a variety of dimensions, including finite print space, journalist access, cyclical news pressures, and circulation-driven demand effects. In the context of this study, events that generate coverage may respond to consumer interest in own-country casualties and otherwise unexpected losses to other-country forces. Accidents are less likely to generate coverage if these events, for example, exhibit relatively weaker policy salience or reader engagement.

Media coverage of conflict is not the sole channel through which events abroad shape public sentiment. The public may be influenced by personal networks and political leaders without being exposed directly to information about the war. Military actors and political leaders may anticipate predictable gaps in media coverage, using new pressure caused by major public events to distract from otherwise unpopular actions (Durante and Zhuravskaya, 2018; Djourelova and Durante, 2022). Leadership consensus or dissension is a factor thought to affect the sensitivity of the general public to war casualties (Larson, 1996; Kriner and Wilson, 2016; Jakobsen and Ringsmose, 2015). One could expect political leaders to change their discourse in response to war casualties, a channel which does not require the broader public to be informed directly about casualties. The presence of multiple channels may make isolating the media mechanism difficult.

We combine these theoretical insights to generate testable implications. In particular, we anticipate that domestic coverage of hostile casualties will exceed non-hostile accidents and own-country casualty coverage will exceed other-country casualty reporting. For the domestic coverage of own-country events, we expect consumers have high demand and each casualty to carry more policy salience. We also anticipate that predictable events, including sporting events, generate news pressure, opening up a measurable wedge in media coverage. This news pressure crowds out coverage of other salient topics, including failed combat operations. This wedge allows us to study the extent to which public opinion is linked to media coverage, since news pressure disrupts the information mechanism linking on-the-ground combat conditions in foreign wars and public opinion.

# NATO in Afghanistan: Context and Data

## ISAF in Afghanistan

The NATO-led ISAF mission in Afghanistan started in 2001. The deployment of NATO troops peaked in 2011, with around 130,000 foreign soldiers stationed in Afghanistan around the official start of the security transition.[4] The multinational nature of the intervention is well-suited to study the link between combat casualties and public opinion. Since the start of the military engagement, more than 3,500 NATO troops have been killed during combat operations in Afghanistan. These casualties appeared to have had an impact on the domestic politics of the war in troop-sending countries. In early 2010, the Dutch government coalition collapsed over the issue of continued engagement in Afghanistan.[5] In the context of the international coalition, this event was seen as a turning point. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) was concerned that casualties could reach a tipping point for other European coalition partners, particularly France and Germany, destabilizing NATO's commitment to the ISAF mission in Afghanistan. The core of the coalition survived until the start of the security transition in 2011. However, the full withdrawal of French troops from Afghanistan became a key campaign promise by president Hollande, and almost all French troops operating in Afghanistan left shortly after his election.[6] In 2016, analysts highlighted how the war in Afghanistan was remarkably absent from the electoral campaigns of both Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump,[7] even if Donald Trump had repeatedly criticized the loss of soldiers' lives in Afghanistan before he entered his presidential campaign.[8] These anecdotes are suggestive, but they do not provide conclusive evidence on the political importance war deaths. Our paper contributes to our understanding of the political impacts of war deaths, by establishing credibly causal effects

[4] Fetzer et al. (2021) study the strategic response of the insurgency to the security transition in Afghanistan.
[5] The Guardian: `http://bit.ly/47lnOVe`).
[6] Le Journal du Dimanche: `https://bit.ly/40nFpJX`.
[7] The Guardian: `https://bit.ly/3soI35C`.
[8] ABC News: `https://abcn.ws/47mNuAE`.

of war deaths on public opinion during an ongoing war.

## Data

Our study combines three datasets. The first dataset contains information on the public support for military intervention (dependent variable) and comes from the annual Pew Global Attitudes survey. The survey was based on telephone and face-to-face interviews conducted under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. All surveys were based on representative national samples for the major troop-sending countries – Australia,[9] Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain, the UK, and the USA. The survey has the advantage of having consistently asked the same question for an extended time period 2007-2011 across a host of countries. The exact question asked was "Do you think the U.S. and NATO should keep military troops in Afghanistan until the situation has stabilized, or do you think the U.S. and NATO should remove their troops as soon as possible?" Respondents could choose between the following set of options: "Keep troops in Afghanistan" or "Remove their troops". Each survey wave contains approximately 1,000 observations for each country.[10] This individual-level data provides for detailed socio-demographic information that can be used in control variables. The richness of the respondent data enables us to address confounding sources of sensitivity to battlefield casualties.

The second data set measures each known individual casualty of the various troop-sending countries in the Afghanistan war. The data was built up from detailed official sources such as Pentagon briefings, information obtained through Freedom of Information requests, complemented with data from media sources. The underlying data provides detailed information of individual casualties providing the unit of affiliation, country, name, rank and location along with information about how the soldier died. Information on the cause of death has been classified into two categories

[9] Australia was one of the largest contributors of troops to the ISAF mission, without being a formal member of NATO.

[10] The survey has one wave a year, except in 2009, when two waves were conducted.

namely, hostile and non-hostile. Hostile casualties refer to the violent casualty events involving direct fire, indirect fire and IEDs, while non-hostile casualties occur due to accidents such as vehicle accidents and natural causes. This data was compiled by iCasualties and a comparable collection of data on Iraq casualties was used in Karol and Miguel (2007). In addition, we have information on the number of troops present on the ground at a particular time window for each troop-contributing country. This measure is based on official NATO placemats.[11]

The third main dataset we construct is media coverage of Afghanistan by major newspapers in troop-sending countries covering the period 2007-2011. The data was collected by classifying articles using keyword incidence within the LexisNexis news database. Our measure counts the number of articles containing the words "Afghanistan" or "Kabul".[12] This data is used to study to what extent newspaper coverage about the country to which coalition troops are deployed seems to be an important mechanism for linking combat events and shifts in public opinion. In validation exercises we describe below, we investigate this corpus using lexicons to detect changes in article valence (negative sentiment) and topic classification (i.e., detecting articles covering combat casualties specifically).

[Figure 1 about here.]

## Empirical Strategy and Results

This paper brings together several research designs to clarify the relationship between combat casualties, media coverage, and public opinion. We visualize three of the four research designs in Figure 1. Each of the quasi-experimental designs takes advantage of the otherwise random assignment to survey collection in time with respect to foreign combat casualties in Afghanistan.

[11] These deployment reports are archived by NATO and list all troop-contributing countries along with related details about leadership positions within regional and other military commands. For an example of these archived documents, see: https://bit.ly/2Z5aOBx.

[12] Table A2 shows the list of newspapers and the number of total articles on which our measure is based.

This allows us to leverage an event study design, to decompose the short-run timing of causal effects (Panel A), a cumulative shock design, which allows us to consider a range of simultaneous drivers of public opinion (Panel B), and the news pressure design, which leverages the otherwise exogenous timing of sports events, which can shift coverage away from combat activity (Panel C). The final design serves as an experimental investigation of the main design, disentangling own-country and other-country hostile casualties.

### Event studies

The first empirical specification we estimate is an event study in a time window around casualty events, exploiting the exogeneity of the timing of survey interviews to the violence in Afghanistan. Fixing a window of size $\tau$ around each casualty event, the corresponding specification is:

$$w_{i,c,t} = \delta_{t-t_c^*} + \epsilon_{i,c,t} \ ; \quad \text{for} \ -\tau \leq t - t_c^* \leq \tau \tag{1}$$

In this equation, $w_{i,c,t}$ is the public support for withdrawing troops from Afghanistan for an individual respondent $i$ interviewed on day $t$ in country $c$ around a casualty event that occurs at time $t_c^*$ in country $c$. The window of the event study is $[-\tau, \tau]$. We conduct a similar event study of media coverage at the country-day level. The advantage of this approach is that it relies on plausibly random variation due to the timing of the casualty event. However, the drawbacks of this approach are that it is not well-suited to deal with overlapping casualty events and that it does not use the full sample of survey responses.

Figure 2 shows event study results for a window of 21 days. In Panel A, we show the effect on public support for the withdrawal of NATO troops. The support for withdrawal clearly increases after casualty events. The small lead before the event is consistent with some fuzziness in the reporting date (e.g., when soldiers succumb due to earlier injuries). The effect is most marked in the 7 days immediately after the event. Panel B shows that newspaper coverage of Afghanistan similarly increases in the aftermath of combat casualties.[13] This result suggests that media coverage could be a channel through which casualties affect support for the war. We will investigate this channel more explicitly below.

For our main results, we leverage the entire Afghanistan article corpus, as it is a broad and easily interpretable measure of coverage that is precisely measured at high frequency. Naturally, measures of media content can be constructed in a variety of ways to capture different aspects of news coverage. In the online appendix, consider several informative refinements. To start, we use two different lexicons (*Bing* and *Afinn*) to classify words and expressions that are associated with negative valence. We then construct a valence measure *relative* to the number of news articles. Here, we intend to separate between two potential mechanisms: *i)* the use of negative words being driven by the increased number of articles about Afghanistan or *ii)* a change in the content or valence of those articles. We close out the newspaper content exploration using topic classification, where we isolate and quantify features of the corpus closely related to mortality themes (e.g., article references to death, killings, and casualties). In Figure A1 we show that the number of articles with negative valence increases in the aftermath of casualties (panels (a) and (b)), but not the number of negative words per article (panels (c) and (d)). This set of results suggests that the public is exposed to a large increase in negative valence through the intensity of coverage related to the Afghan conflict. We also find robust increases in coverage (in terms of article and topics volume) that explicitly reference topics related to mortality (death, killings, and fatalities) as well as injuries (panels (e) through (h)).

[Figure 2 about here.]

[13] To increase the statistical power of our analysis, the sample in Panel B includes all casualty events in 2007-2011 (including events that do not overlap with the survey periods). In the subsequent panel regression results, we will use a consistent sampling frame to ensure the comparability of results.

### The effect of casualties on public support and media coverage

We complement our event study with a cumulative shock during survey design that uses the full sample of survey responses. This approach builds on the design discussed in Muñoz, Falcó-Gimeno and Hernández (2020), which focuses on discrete events (usually a single event) that split enumerated individuals into pre/post clusters. In our case, these unexpected casualty events accumulate during a window prior to enumeration. We use exogenous variation in cumulative exposure (shock) as part of our identification strategy.[14] We relate troop-sending country casualties in the last 7 days to the public support for continued engagement in the war. The main specification is as follows:

$$w_{i,c,y,t} = \alpha CAS(Past7days)_{c,y,t} + \beta X_{i,c,y,t} + \gamma_{c,y} + \epsilon_{i,c,y,t} \tag{2}$$

In this equation, $w_{i,c,y,t}$ is the public support for withdrawing troops from Afghanistan for an individual respondent $i$ in a particular country $c$, in year $y$, and at a particular interview date $t$. $CAS(Past\ 7\ days)_{c,y,t}$ measures the hostile casualties of the troop-sending specific country in the last 7 days. $\gamma_{c,y}$ captures country-by-year fixed effects. The country-by-year effects could capture shifts in public opinion. As most respondents are interviewed in relatively small time windows, we rely on comparisons within country-years. In this setting, it is not necessary to include time-fixed effects, as we do not expect casualty shocks to be correlated with sudden changes in public opinion within a survey-year. In addition, the inclusion of date-of-interview-fixed effects would absorb most of the identifying variation, as the exact interview dates vary by country. As a result, our empirical designs (both the shock-in-survey and the event study designs) do not use two-way fixed effects models. The latter models have received much attention in the literature (e.g. de Chaisemartin and D'Haultfœuille, 2020; Sun and Abraham, 2021; Borusyak, Jaravel and Spiess, 2021), as their

[14] Figure 1 illustrates the difference between the two approaches.

estimated treatment effects can put negative weights on certain comparisons. Our within country by survey-year comparisons do not suffer from this problem. Finally, $X_{i,c,y,t}$ includes individual income group and education level fixed effects. It also includes gender and age as additional control variables.[15]

Table 1 Panel A confirms that casualties in the period prior to the interview boost the support for withdrawing troops from Afghanistan. As our main measure of casualty exposure, we use the number of hostile soldier deaths in the last 7 days (based on the iCasualties data described in the data section). The results we report in column 1 suggest an additional casualty in the last 7 days boosts the share of respondents supporting a withdrawal by 0.8 percentage points (from a baseline of around 54%). For the countries in our sample experiencing hostile casualties in the survey interview ranges, the number of casualties ranges from less than 50 (Poland) to more than 2,000 (USA). Hence, the effect we estimate of one additional casualty is sizable. Of course, the effects of exposure to an individual casualty are expected to decay (the event study graphs provide evidence of this). There could also be desensitization over time, which we investigate more explicitly later on. While we caution that our empirical strategy is not set up to estimate long-term effects of cumulative exposure to casualties, the magnitude of the effects suggests a large potential impact of casualties on public opinion and support for wars abroad. We next turn our attention to Panel B, where we investigate how casualty events shape newspaper coverage of Afghanistan. In column 1, consistent with the main result in Panel A, we find that own-country hostile casualties significantly increase the number of articles printed about Afghanistan. An additional casualty in the last 7 days increases the number of articles on Afghanistan by 0.1 standard deviations. Overall, these findings are suggestive of the role played by media in shaping public opinion, which we further validate in the final empirical section.

[15] A balance test between survey respondents who are and are not treated by a pre-interview causality can be found in Table A3.

Our theoretical argument also differentiates several signals the public receives about the direct and indirect costs of combat: own-country hostile casualties, own-country non-hostile casualties (accidents during deployment), and other-country hostile casualties. The argument anticipates that hostile casualties tied to domestic forces represent the most salient signal of direct costs of war and might reflect deteriorating battlefield conditions. While casualties tied to accidents are a direct cost of war, they are perhaps a less meaningful signal of diminished prospects of victory. It is also possible that, due in part to their weaker strategic relevance, non-hostile casualties are less likely to receive media attention in the first place. The argument we present also hypothesizes that other-country casualties might influence public support for continuing combat operations, especially when these casualties undermine the commitment of allies to the warfighting coalition. These strategic considerations, while potentially significant, may be attenuated by the fact that other-country casualties are, by definition, indirect costs of war and may also receive less coverage than own-country battlefield losses.

Details from the casualty records allow us to explore these theoretical implications further. We begin by focusing on column 2 of Table 1, which presents results for non-hostile casualties. Consistent with the argument, we find accidental battlefield losses neither shift public support for withdrawal nor influence newspaper coverage. We push this further in column 3, where we consider the role of other-country hostile casualties. Notice that these indirect costs of war increase support for withdrawal and media reporting. As the argument anticipates, the magnitude of these effects is significantly attenuated—approximately one-quarter to one-third of the main effect—and the statistical precision of these estimates is weaker. These empirical results, in scale and significance, are consistent with the theoretical claim that other-country casualties are a less salient, noisier signal about the prospects of victory.

**Robustness and Extensions** We introduce an important validation test in column 4 of Table 1, where we account for temporal leads in casualties. Reassuringly, evidence from this test confirms that future combat events do not shape public opinion. Column 4 of Panel B also passes the leads validation test. The magnitudes of these placebo estimates is also relevant, as each is approximately zero. We also note that our event study approach and the cumulative shock during survey design yield consistent estimates. In the online appendix, we introduce several robustness checks of the main results in Table 1. We begin by varying our measure of casualty exposure. In Table A4, we show results for a binary casualty measure (equal to 1 if the number of casualties in the 7-day window is above the country-specific median). In Table A5, we use a cumulative casualty measure normalized with respect to the country-specific troop contingent present in Afghanistan at the time of the survey. In both specifications, we observe similar effects of casualty events on support for withdrawal and media coverage. In Table A6, we also allow for the effect to be different in different windows, comparing casualties in 1-day and 2-to-7 day windows. The effect of immediate exposure on public opinion appears to be largest, but the effect remains substantively and statistically significant in the 2-to-7 day window around the event.[16] We then demonstrate robustness to list-wise exclusion of each troop-sending country from the sample in Figure A2.

In Table A7, we investigate the heterogeneity of the response to own-country hostile casualties further. We first find that the responsiveness is higher for other countries than the US and the UK (which experienced by far the most casualties), even if the difference is not significant. We also find evidence that the UK and US are more responsive to casualties from other countries than those other countries are to casualties from the US and UK. The news coverage results mimic these findings. These results point to coalition-specific pressures, making support of a broad international coalition more important in the UK and US, even if these leading countries absorb the brunt of the

[16] Since we are interested in the immediate effect of casualties in this test, we shift the newspaper coverage measure by 1 day to account for the lag in reporting (consistent with Figure 2). Even with this adjustment, the news coverage measure in Table A6 cannot be compared directly to the event study outcome from Figure 2, as it pools articles during a 7-day period. Hence, the immediate effect of casualty events on this outcome is expected to be small compared to the effect of casualties in the 2-7 day window, which is what we find.

casualties. These findings align with the theoretical argument we develop in Section 1.1. At the same time, we need to acknowledge that our ability to compare countries is somewhat limited by the relatively small number of casualty events outside of the US/UK (see table 4 below). In Table A8, we allow the effect of casualties to differ before and after the Afghan surge was announced in December 2009. We find evidence of lower responsiveness to own-country casualties in both support of the war and news coverage of the conflict during the surge period. This result is consistent with desensitization over time, even as troop deployments escalate. One potential explanation for this result is that, in the context of such a large increase in combat deployments, each additional casualty was a less salient signal about the direct costs of war. Finally, we consider an empirical extension of the theoretical argument regarding own-country and other-country hostile casualties. Overall, we find evidence that own-country casualties sharply increase support for withdrawal while the equivalent effects of other-country casualties is attenuated and less precise. But what if the public is treated simultaneously with a combination of these two signals? A combination of combat losses could amplify public concerns about coalition stability and diminishing prospects of victory. Alternatively, the public might internalize joint losses as a marker of burden-sharing across the coalition, which could enhance confidence in the commitment of military partners to fight together. In Table A9, we introduce an interaction between these two hostile casualty types. The interaction is significantly positive when we look at the support for withdrawal. That is, the joint effect of own-country and other-country casualties enhances support for withdrawal on the margin. Interestingly, the interaction is small and insignificant for the press coverage of Afghanistan. This suggests that these different types of hostile casualty events feed the news cycle independently, but there is an interaction in how the public processes information about joint combat losses. This is consistent with own-country and other-country casualties sending different and potentially cumulative signals about the costs of war and the prospects of victory. Finally, in table A10, we interact the main effect with respondent characteristics. The responsiveness does not differ by gender, but younger, less educated, and lower-income respondents appear to react more strongly to casualties. These groups may be more sensitive in their opinions to the short-run information shocks that our study focuses on, compared to higher-educated groups. In addition, the U.S. military often draws disproportionally from these groups (Teachman, Call and Segal, 1993; Bachman et al., 2000), which could make them more responsive to casualty events.

[Table 1 about here.]

## Evidence from a survey experiment

We validate our main result using a simple survey experiment that was conducted in the United States in 2020. The survey experiment was run in collaboration with Associated Press-NORC and contained one base condition and two randomized treatment arms. The experiment was executed using AmeriSpeak, a nationwide probability-based Panel Assembled by NORC. NORC also handled human subjects protocols in line with their standing IRB authorization for survey collection using the AmeriSpeak panel. Online and telephone interviews using landlines and cellphones surveyed 1029 experimental subjects. The base condition noted that the war in Afghanistan is now the longest war in modern American history. In addition to the base prime, the first arm contained information about the number of American troops killed in action during the Afghan war. The second arm provided the same information but for NATO ally troops. Subjects were then asked whether they support an increase in American troops, keeping the troop level the same, decreasing American troops, or withdrawing completely. These responses correspond to the 1-4 scale. The aim of the survey is two-fold: (1) assess whether priming subjects about American casualties increases demand for troop withdrawal, in line with the main results; (2) assess whether demand for withdrawal attenuates when subjects are primed about NATO ally casualties. Results are presented in Table 2. In columns 1 and 2, we use OLS and in columns 3 and 4 we use an order logit specification. Subjects primed with American casualties are up to 20% more likely to support withdrawal (as measured on a 1-4 scale, see column 2). When primed with NATO casualties, the response is positive but smaller in magnitude and imprecise.[17] This pattern is broadly consistent with our findings from Table 1, where we find that public opinion and news coverage are relatively more responsive to own-country casualties, though losses to the coalition may convey indirect costs and diminished prospects of victory.

[Table 2 about here.]

### Media coverage as a mechanism

Media coverage is a natural channel through which casualties affect public opinion. To identify a plausibly causal effect of media coverage more cleanly, we exploit exogenous shifts in media responses to casualties triggered by the timing of important sports matches. We focus on the most important team sport in each of the countries in our sample (basketball for the US,[18] hockey for Canada, and soccer for Europe) and we identify the key matches (finals in the primary league or in the European soccer league). We think it is plausible that these major sports events exert "news pressure" (Durante and Zhuravskaya, 2018), in the sense that they crowd out the coverage of other news. At the same time, we do not expect these sports events to change attitudes towards casualties in the conflict directly. Unlike (Durante and Zhuravskaya, 2018), we do not want to include domestic political shocks to news pressure, as these are likely to affect domestic attitudes to the war directly.[19]

[17] The $p$-value on the difference between the two treatments is 13% in column (2).

[18] While we collect information on match dates for baseball and American football, these dates do not overlap with the PEW surveys in any year. For the National Basketball Association (NBA) games, we include the dates of Eastern/Western Conference finals in addition to those of the national final. For Australia, there was no overlap between the survey and the National Rugby League finals.

[19] One could be concerned that sports events spur nationalism, as in Kikuta and Uesugi (2022). It is worth noting that the matches we incorporate in our measure only involve subnational teams, so we do not expect these events to

The original estimating equation (2) is now adjusted as follows:

$$w_{i,c,y,t} = \alpha CAS(Past7days)_{c,y,t} + \eta CAS(Past7days)_{c,y,t} \times Match_{c,y,t}$$
$$+\delta Match_{c,y,t} + \beta X_{i,c,y,t} + \gamma_{c,y} + \epsilon_{i,c,y,t} \quad (3)$$

As before, $w_{i,c,y,t}$ is the public support for withdrawing troops from Afghanistan for an individual respondent $i$ in a particular country $c$, in year $y$, and at a particular interview date $t$. $CAS(Past\ 7\ days)_{c,y,t}$ measures the hostile casualties of the troop-sending specific country in the last 7 days. We introduce a variable $Match_{c,y,t}$, which is a dummy variable equal to "1" on the day or the day after a major sports final. The main coefficient of interest is $\eta$, which captures the differential effect of casualties on public opinion when subjects are surveyed around a major sports event.

The results in Table 3 reveal that media coverage of Afghanistan increases with recent own-country hostile casualties in the absence of a major sports match. This base term closely mirrors the main specification in column 1 of Table 1 Panel B, which demonstrates the overall relationship between battlefield losses and media coverage. However, if these matches put pressure on news coverage by, for example, shifting newspaper coverage away from the Afghan conflict and towards sports-related articles, we would expect the interaction between match timing and casualties to be negative. Indeed, this is what we find. When we combine the base effect of own-country hostile casualties and the marginal effect of these casualties during matches, the total effect of casualties on newspaper coverage declines sharply and is no longer significant. Mirroring this finding, public support for the war is no longer responsive to casualties in the aftermath of a major sports event. This evidence helps clarify the importance of media in shaping how the home front reacts to war casualties. For both news coverage and public opinion, the base term on sports matches is

spur nationalism.

insignificant. The insignificance of the base term on matches suggest that sports matches do not significantly reduce the number of articles on Afghanistan in general (even though the effect is negative in sign), but specifically offset how media coverage responds to casualty events.[20]

[Table 3 about here.]

**Robustness and Extensions** In the online appendix, we consider several robustness checks. We show the robustness of the news pressure results to using an alternative news coverage window. Table A11 presents the news pressure results for a 2-day newspaper window. In Table A12, we collapse the survey data at the country-day level to mirror the newspaper analysis more closely. In Table A13, we confirm that the differential effect depending on sports matches is not confounded by differential effects of the country-year (column 2) or of the day of the week (column 3). In Table A14, we exclude late NBA games (beyond the third game) that cannot deliver a tournament winner. This robustness check addresses the concern that some games in the NBA finals may not be "newsworthy". We find consistent results across these additional checks. We also consider a placebo test, in which we randomly reassign match dates. Figure A3 generates the key interaction term for placebo match dates and compares the actual coefficient to these placebo coefficients. We find that the main quantity of interest from Table 3 is in the tail of the distribution of each placebo test. A natural question with respect to this research design concerns common support. That is, where the overlap occurs between survey sampling and casualty events, and separately, between these design features and sporting events.Table 4 shows the number of casualty events, sports matches, and their overlap, as well as the corresponding survey respondents, by country. Notice

[20]There are several factors that impact news coverage of the conflict. The primary driver of increased coverage are trigger events—namely casualty events that occur in Afghanistan. Given constraints on media coverage generally (e.g., finite space, journalist availability), a broad set of factors could drive coverage of the conflict downward through a news pressure effect, including otherwise exogenously timed sporting events. Given the otherwise unrelated timing of news cycles regarding Afghanistan and sports matches, we expect that any journalistic pressure could be attenuated towards zero and imprecise in the absence of another simultaneous shock driving coverage of Afghanistan upward (e.g., a trigger event). We anticipate that the combination of these factors—upward pressure from trigger events *and* downward pressure from other newsworthy events—will impose a more plausible binding constraint on coverage.

that there is a meaningful overlap between sampling and casualty events for most troop-sending countries. However, the overlap between design features for the news pressure mechanism is drawn from the two primary troop-sending countries: the United States and United Kingdom. In Figure A4, we extend the randomization inference tests above in Figure A3, restricting the sampling frame of respondents and news coverage to these primary troop-sending nations. Here we also find that the main effect observed in a corresponding regression specification is in the tail of the distribution of the restricted placebo tests.

[Table 4 about here.]

We also present a number of additional results that help validate the news pressure design. To do so, we supplement the corpus of newspaper articles related to Afghanistan with another corpus of 17,306 sports articles. This additional set of articles help us evaluate whether the volume and composition of newspaper coverage around matches shifts towards relevant sports-related content. In Table A15, we show that important sports events increase the number of sports articles,[21] which is consistent with sports events pulling newspaper content towards sports-related coverage. It is possible, however, that these sports events articles do not significantly shift the relative coverage of each newspaper. To evaluate this shift in topic-specific coverage around matches, we calculate the within-day difference in articles covering sports events and the Afghan conflict. This allows us to test whether the relative magnitude of coverage changes meaningfully around matches. In columns 2 and 4 of Table A15, this is what we find—sports-related content significantly increases relative to articles about Afghanistan.[22] These results provide an important quantitative microfoundation for the news pressure mechanism tested in Table 3: sports events change the composition of newspaper

[21]We count the number of articles mentioning the "title" or "finals" of the competition we consider in a given country.

[22]As an additional robustness check, we present a version of Table A15) that is based on observations from the US only (Table A16). As can be seen from these results, the effect of matches on sports coverage is higher in the US than in the overall sample. This table confirms that the news pressure mechanism is relevant for the US, where most of the overlap between match dates and casualty events is concentrated.

articles by pulling coverage towards these events. Article placement might also shift during matches, indicating that even if a combat casualty event breaks through during a news pressure cycle, it is buried deeper within the edition. Identifying article placement is complicated by a lack of standardization within and across newspapers in page segmentation and sequencing. However, we are able to calculate within-newspaper article position for a subset of newspapers for which we had reliable article position metrics. When we look at page numbers in Table A17, we see suggestive evidence of casualties making news on Afghanistan more prominent (by lowering the page number of the relevant articles), which is substantively offset during sports matches. While these effects are consistent with casualties and sports matches shifting the prominence of news on Afghanistan, we caution that these patterns are imprecise.[23]

## Conclusion

This study revisits the link between combat casualties abroad and public opinion at home. Relying on high-frequency survey data from the nine major troop-sending countries in ISAF, we find that casualties cause a decrease in public support for the war in Afghanistan. This article also highlights and investigates a prominent mechanism that helps situate how deteriorating conditions abroad affect demand for war termination at home: media coverage. Using a news pressure design, we find credible evidence that media coverage meaningfully influences public responsiveness to battlefield losses.

This paper demonstrates that foreign wars are to an important extent fought–and sometimes lost—on the home front, and that media coverage could have a profound impact on the public support of wars. These findings provide a novel, important quantitative microfoundation for prior work on the political economy of casualty aversion and help explain why many troop-sending

[23]This imprecision is likely due to a combination of measurement error in the calculation of article placement and a reduced corpus (with article position metrics).

countries sought to limit their involvement in combat operations, with important implications for collective security provision through coalition-based military interventions. Concerns over the domestic politics of war bind international institutions, especially those developed to engage in military interventions abroad.

Our results bring credible evidence and theoretical clarification to an otherwise unsettled literature on casualty aversion in international relations. Yet there remain a number of promising directions worth exploring in future research. We find that public opinion is particularly sensitive to own-country casualties experienced by government security forces. Does a similar result hold with respect to private security forces, including those sponsored by the United States—e.g., Blackwater—and other great powers—e.g., Wagner Group? Do members of the public differentiate who fights on behalf of their country? Do these divides, if they exist, map to beliefs about alternative motivations for joining the war—a sense of duty on the one hand, and warfighting as a mercenary occupation on the other?

This study also leaves open questions about how public opinion responds to episodes of excessive military force, human rights violations, and battlefield atrocities. During the Afghan war, counterinsurgency forces adopted a doctrine and various policies aimed at minimizing civilian harm. Yet unintended harm occurred throughout the war and the history of the conflict is marked with high profile cases of inhumane treatment. Do these events amplify the final pillar of Tomz and Weeks (2013)—moral concerns about the use of military force—and fracture public support for the broader war? Do members of the public distinguish excessive force by victim—civilian or combatant—or initiator—own-country or other-country forces?

We also find that, on average, non-hostile casualties linked to accidents do not impact public opinion. Importantly, we find that these accidents are unlikely to generate news coverage. Yet the scale of accidents can vary, conveying valuable signals about the prospects for victory. If, for example, large-scale or highly salient accidents are consistent with a failure of war planning, diminished sophistication of forces, poor technological assets, unexpected ground conditions, and other relevant dimensions of war, how might media coverage vary, in scope and sentiment, and with this coverage, how might the public's support for the war change? When these events provide clear information about preparations for war and the probability of success, our argument and body of evidence suggest coverage and support for war will likely change.

Finally, it is important to note that we have taken as given an idealized free press, which provides unbiased, informative signals about battlefield conditions to the public without political interference. Stepping back from this assumption reveals several wrinkles for future research to explore. Political capture of media organizations can undermine or exacerbate the public's response to battlefield events. This is relevant in democratic contexts, where slanted media coverage shapes whether an event is covered, how frequently it is covered, and with what framing. It is also relevant in authoritarian contexts, where unbiased media coverage can be more easily censored. Even an idealized free press is constrained by journalistic access, print space, the news cycle, news pressure, and, increasingly, budget considerations. These constraints create ample opportunities to which political actors can respond strategically even if they cannot directly influence—through slant or censorship—coverage. Holding traditional media to the side, governments and their rivals can also leverage social media platforms and online enclaves for information operations, misinformation missions, and disinformation campaigns to mobilize, distract, or disrupt public opinion during war. In the digital age, conflicts abroad will be increasingly shaped on the homefront, in an information war over bytes and bots.

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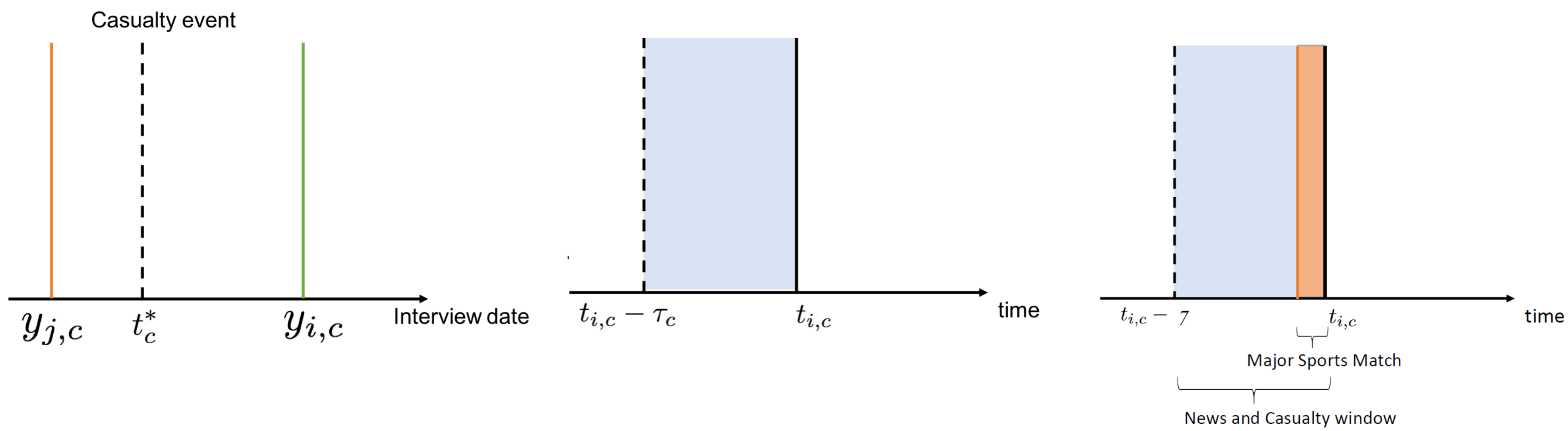
Figure 1: Schematic of empirical strategies

(A) Event study design

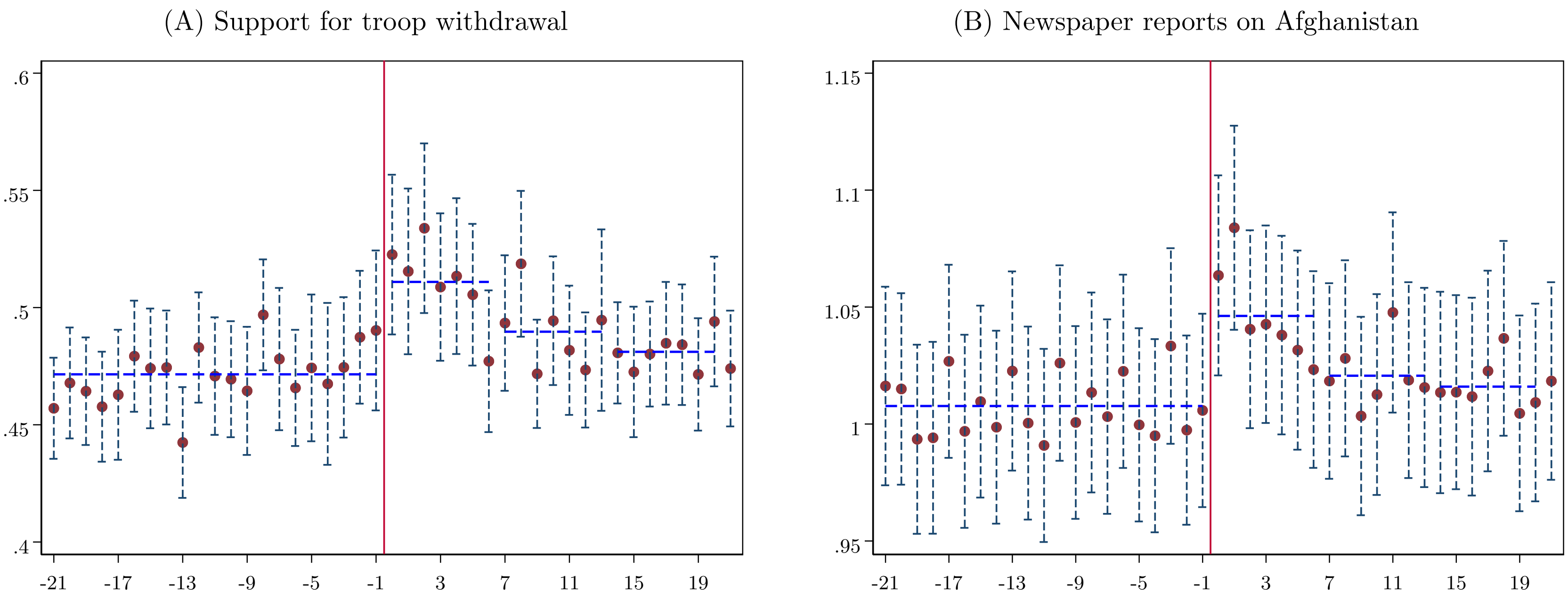
(B) Cumulative shock during survey design

(C) News pressure analysis




**Notes:** In the event study design (Panel A), $t_c^*$ refers to the date of the casualty incident in the event study design. Individuals $i$ and $j$ are interviewed at different times but within the window of the event study. $t_{i,c}$ refers to the interview date of individual $i$ in the shock during survey design (Panel B). The news pressure analysis (Panel C) uses a 7-day for press reports. Individuals are considered to be exposed to a major sports match if it took place on the day of or the day before the interview.

Figure 2: Impact of hostile events with casualties on media reporting and support for troop withdrawal from Afghanistan – evidence from event study design.




**Notes:** Coefficients are plotted from an event study exercise (see equation 1), and they correspond to the mean outcomes for each time-to-treatment bracket. Zero indicates the day a casualty is recorded in Panel A (which may be later than the exact day of the event), and the day after a casualty is recorded in Panel B (to account for the news cycle in the written press). The dependent variable in Panel B counts newspaper articles containing “Afghanistan” or “Kabul”, and this measure is normalized by the standard deviation in the relevant time window. Dashed lines represent the means in different time-to-treatment intervals. 90% confidence intervals are obtained from clustering standard errors at the event level.

Table 1: Impact of hostile events with casualties on media reporting and support for troop withdrawal from Afghanistan – evidence from cumulative shock during survey design

| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Supports withdrawal of NATO troops** | | | | |
| Own hostile casualties (7 days) | 0.008* | 0.008* | 0.008* | 0.008* |
| | (0.003) | (0.003) | (0.003) | (0.003) |
| Non-hostile own casualties (7 days) | | -0.006 | | |
| | | (0.008) | | |
| Other hostile casualties (7 days) | | | $0.002^{\dagger}$ | |
| | | | (0.001) | |
| Own hostile casualties (7 days lead) | | | | 0.000 |
| | | | | (0.002) |
| Mean DV | 0.544 | 0.544 | 0.544 | 0.544 |
| Observations | 26,690 | 26,690 | 26,690 | 26,690 |
| Clusters | 35 | 35 | 35 | 35 |
| **Article number (7 days)** | | | | |
| Own hostile casualties (7 days) | 0.108* | 0.107* | 0.104* | 0.108* |
| | (0.042) | (0.043) | (0.042) | (0.040) |
| Non-hostile own casualties (7 days) | | -0.039 | | |
| | | (0.064) | | |
| Other hostile casualties (7 days) | | | $0.034^{\dagger}$ | |
| | | | (0.017) | |
| Own hostile casualties (7 days lead) | | | | -0.002 |
| | | | | (0.041) |
| Mean DV | 1.226 | 1.226 | 1.226 | 1.226 |
| Observations | 597 | 597 | 597 | 597 |
| Clusters | 35 | 35 | 35 | 35 |

Notes: Observations are at the respondent level in the top panel and at the country by survey date level in the bottom panel. The dependent variable in the top panel is an indicator that takes the value 1 if the respondent expresses support for troop withdrawal from Afghanistan. The dependent variable in the bottom panel counts newspaper articles containing "Afghanistan" or "Kabul", and this measure is normalized by the standard deviation in the relevant time window. All regressions include country-by-year fixed effects. The regressions in the top panel include gender, age, education category, and income category as individual-level controls. Regressions are weighted to give equal weight to each country-wave; in the top panel, the survey weights are normalized accordingly. Standard errors are clustered at the country-by-year level with stars indicating $^{\dagger}$ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

Table 2: Impact of hostile events with casualties on support for troop withdrawal from Afghanistan – evidence from a survey experiment

| | Support for withdrawal of troops (scale: 1–4) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) |
| US casualties treatment | 0.133$^{\dagger}$ | 0.201* | 0.241$^{\dagger}$ | 0.246$^{\dagger}$ |
| | (0.068) | (0.090) | (0.136) | (0.145) |
| NATO casualties treatment | 0.029 | 0.070 | 0.054 | 0.093 |
| | (0.073) | (0.097) | (0.143) | (0.154) |
| Observations | 1,029 | 1,029 | 1,029 | 1,029 |
| Controls | No | Yes | No | Yes |
| Model | OLS | OLS | OLogit | OLogit |

Notes: Individual respondent level data from a survey experiment conducted in the US. The dependent variable measures the extent to which the respondent supports the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan, ranging from 1 to 4. The control set includes state dummies, age, gender, education level, and employment status. OLS and OLogit refer to ordinary least squares and ordered logit models, respectively. Standard errors are robust with stars indicating $^{\dagger}$ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

Table 3: Impact of hostile events with casualties on media reporting and support for troop withdrawal from Afghanistan – evidence from news pressure design.

| | Article number (7 days) | Supports troop withdrawal |
|---|---|---|
| Match | -0.057 | 0.006 |
| | (0.136) | (0.017) |
| Own hostile casualties (7 days) | 0.114* | $0.007^{\dagger}$ |
| | (0.056) | (0.004) |
| Own hostile casualties (7 days) $\times$ Match | -0.046* | $-0.010^{\dagger}$ |
| | (0.021) | (0.005) |
| P-value [Hostile casualties + Hostile casualties $\times$ Match=0] | 0.314 | 0.786 |
| Observations | 597 | 26,690 |
| Clusters | 35 | 35 |

Notes: Observations are at the country by survey date level in column (1). The dependent variable counts newspaper articles containing "Afghanistan" or "Kabul", and this measure is normalized by the standard deviation in the relevant time window. Observations are at the respondent level in column (2). The dependent variable is an indicator that takes the value 1 if the respondent expresses support for troop withdrawal from Afghanistan. Match is equal to "1" on the day of or the day after a major sports final. Casualty counts are demeaned in the interaction term. We consider basketball in the US, hockey in Canada, and soccer in European countries. The regression in column (2) includes gender, age, education category, and income category as individual-level controls. All regressions include country-by-year fixed effects. Regressions are weighted to give equal weight to each country-wave. All standard errors are clustered at the country-by-year level with stars indicating $^{\dagger}$ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

Table 4: Counts by country

| | Own hostile casualties in interview range | Any own hostile casualties in last 7 days | Sports finals | Any own hostile casualties × Sports final |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Australia | 0 | 0 [0] | 0 [0] | 0 [0] |
| Canada | 2 | 2 [143] | 0 [0] | 0 [0] |
| Germany | 4 | 6 [384] | 0 [0] | 0 [0] |
| Spain | 0 | 0 [0] | 3 [64] | 0 [0] |
| France | 2 | 5 [813] | 1 [36] | 0 [0] |
| United Kingdom | 21 | 51 [3,002] | 3 [75] | 2 [39] |
| Italy | 6 | 6 [548] | 2 [109] | 0 [0] |
| Poland | 4 | 19 [1,278] | 1 [16] | 0 [0] |
| United States | 81 | 78 [6,086] | 11 [771] | 11 [771] |

Notes: Based on our main sample in Table 1, column 1 shows the total number of own hostile casualties suffered in the interview range. In columns 2 through 4, we collapse the data at the country-day level and calculate country-specific total numbers of days affected. The number of underlying survey respondents corresponding to the relevant country-days is given in brackets.

# Supplemental Information for: **Losing on the Home Front?**

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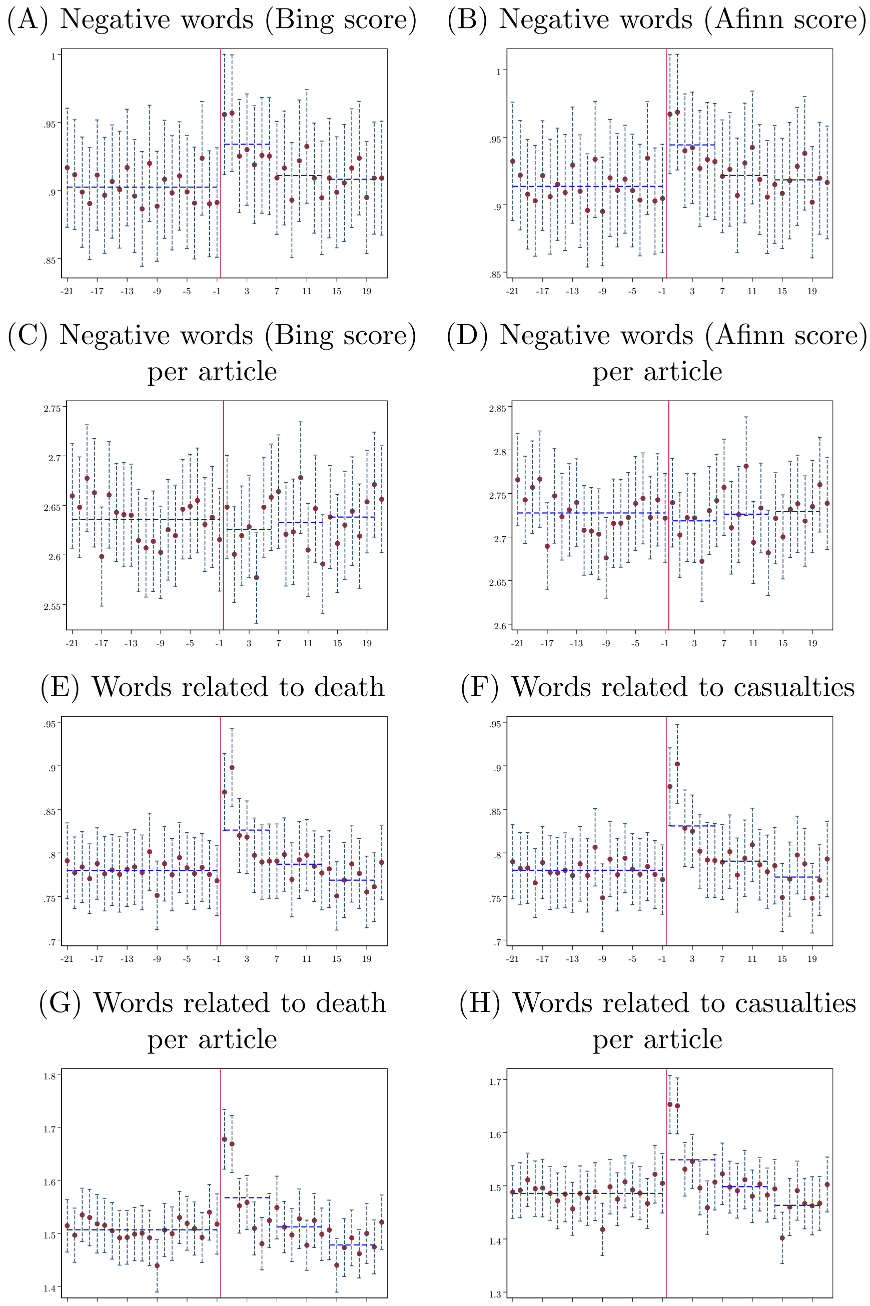
For Online Publication

# A. List of Figures



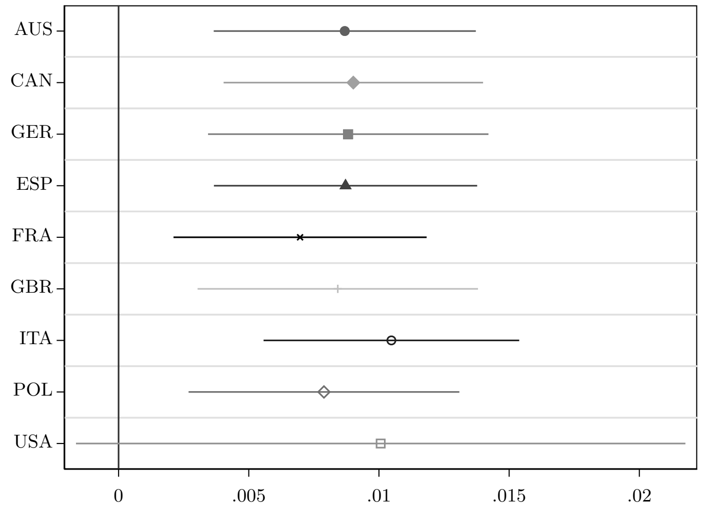
# B. List of Tables

Figure A1: Impact of hostile events with casualties on media reporting and support for troop withdrawal from Afghanistan: evidence from event study design.



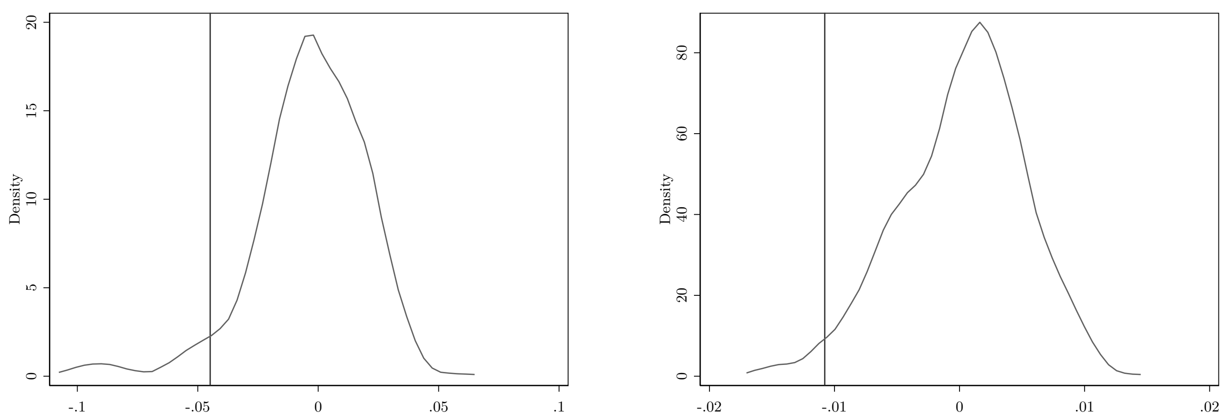

**Notes:** Coefficients are plotted from an event study exercise (see equation 1), and they correspond to the mean outcomes for each time-to-treatment bracket. Zero indicates the day after a casualty is recorded. The dependent variable in panels A and B count the number of negative words using the Bing and Afinn scores, respectively. Panels C and D show the same measure divided by the number of articles. Panels E and F count the number of words related to "death" and "casualties" (divided by the number of articles in panels G and H). Dashed lines represent the means in different time-to-treatment intervals. 90% confidence intervals are obtained from clustering standard errors at the event level.

Figure A2: Robustness to dropping each country in turn in last 7 days relative to interview date




Notes: Figure plots the distribution of point estimates and 90% confidence intervals obtained from dropping each country in turn from the analysis (as in column (1) of Panel A in Table 1). Coefficients are labeled indicating the country that was dropped.

Figure A3: Distribution of the differential effect of casualties for randomly assigned match dates

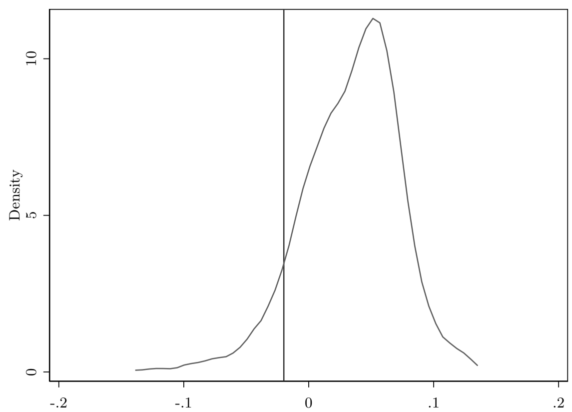



(a) Article number (7 days)

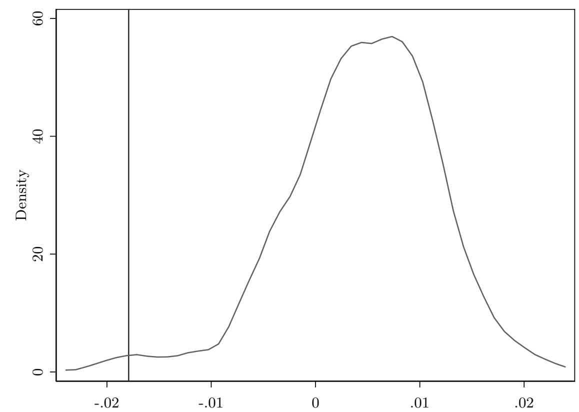
(b) Supports troop withdrawal

Notes: The model estimated corresponds to column (1) from Table 3 in Figure A, and column (2) from Table 3 in Figure B, and reported values are estimated coefficients on Own hostile casualties (7 days) × Match with randomly assigned match dates. The coefficient estimates from the main model with the corresponding sample restriction are shown by vertical lines. Match date events are reshuffled randomly 500 times (allowing for country-year clusters).

Figure A4: Distribution of the differential effect of casualties for randomly assigned match dates – UK and US only




(a) Article number (7 days)




(b) Supports troop withdrawal

Notes: The model estimated is analogous to column (1) from Table 3 in Figure A, and column (2) from Table 3 in Figure B, and reported values are estimated coefficients on Own hostile casualties (7 days) × Match with randomly assigned match dates (using only respondents in the United Kingdom and United States). The coefficient estimates from the main model with the corresponding sample restriction are shown by vertical lines. Match date events are reshuffled randomly 500 times (allowing for country-year clusters).

Table A1: Summary statistics

| | (1) | (2) | (3) |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Mean | Std Dev | N |
| **Panel A: Respondent level variables** | | | |
| Support for withdrawal of troops | 0.531 | 0.499 | 26,690 |
| Own hostile casualties (7 days) | 1.294 | 2.599 | 26,690 |
| Any own hostile casualty (7 days) | 0.321 | 0.467 | 26,690 |
| Own hostile casualty rate (7 days) | 0.139 | 0.353 | 26,690 |
| Own hostile casualties (14 days) | 1.217 | 2.292 | 26,690 |
| Age | 48.201 | 17.099 | 26,690 |
| Female | 0.514 | 0.500 | 26,690 |
| Grade 9-12 (or similar) | 0.418 | 0.493 | 26,690 |
| University degree | 0.408 | 0.491 | 26,690 |
| Low education | 0.592 | 0.491 | 26,690 |
| Low income | 0.520 | 0.500 | 26,690 |
| Sports final dummy (on day or day before) | 0.032 | 0.177 | 26,690 |
| **Panel B: Date-by-country level variables** | | | |
| Article number in newspaper (2 days) | 1.009 | 0.989 | 597 |
| Article number in newspaper (7 days) | 1.204 | 1.003 | 597 |

Notes: Summary statistics for our main sample in Table 1. 14-day window casualty counts are expressed per week. Article number measures are normalized by their standard deviation.

Table A2: Sample of newspapers and number of articles overall

| Newspaper | Country | Articles |
|---|---|---|
| Herald-Sun | Australia | 2,443 |
| The Toronto Star | Canada | 6,115 |
| Le Figaro | France | 4,410 |
| Die Welt | Germany | 3,963 |
| Süddeutsche Zeitung | Germany | 11,348 |
| El País | Italy | 5,661 |
| Gazeta Wyborcza | Poland | 373 |
| Corriere della Sera | Spain | 1,767 |
| The Daily Telegraph | United Kingdom | 6,738 |
| The Independent | United Kingdom | 4,920 |
| New York Times | United States | 10,027 |
| The Wall Street Journal | United States | 4,594 |

Notes: Newspaper articles mentioning “Afghanistan” or “Kabul”. Articles are retrieved from the LexisNexis newspaper archives and cover the period 2007-2011.

Table A3: Treatment balance

| Variable | (1) Pre-Casualty Mean/(SE) | (2) Post-Casualty Mean/(SE) | (1)-(2) Pairwise t-test P-value |
|---|---|---|---|
| Age | 46.248 | 47.369 | 0.577 |
| | (0.593) | (0.340) | |
| Female=1 | 0.498 | 0.506 | 0.734 |
| | (0.006) | (0.004) | |
| Low Income=1 | 0.506 | 0.568 | $0.081^{\dagger}$ |
| | (0.023) | (0.012) | |
| Low Education=1 | 0.534 | 0.695 | 0.354 |
| | (0.040) | (0.034) | |
| Observations | 8555 | 18135 | 26690 |
| Clusters | 16 | 32 | 35 |

Notes: Characteristics of survey respondents treated with a hostile casualty in the seven-day pre-interview window (column 1) versus those not (column 2). Sample restricted the observations used in estimating the main effects in, e.g., Table 1 column 1. T-tests for the difference in means between groups estimated by regressions, including country-by-year fixed effects and weights to give equal weight to each country-wave. Standard errors are clustered at the country-by-year level with stars indicating $^{\dagger}$ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

Table A4: Main results – dummy casualty measure

| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Panel A:* | Supports withdrawal of NATO troops | | | |
| Own hostile casualties (0/1, 7 days) | 0.045$^{\dagger}$ | 0.045$^{\dagger}$ | 0.044$^{\dagger}$ | 0.046$^{\dagger}$ |
| | (0.022) | (0.022) | (0.022) | (0.023) |
| Non-hostile own casualties (0/1, 7 days) | | 0.011 | | |
| | | (0.018) | | |
| Other hostile casualties (0/1, 7 days) | | | 0.008 | |
| | | | (0.010) | |
| Own hostile casualties (0/1, 7 days lead) | | | | 0.004 |
| | | | | (0.010) |
| Mean DV | 0.544 | 0.544 | 0.544 | 0.544 |
| Observations | 26,690 | 26,690 | 26,690 | 26,690 |
| Clusters | 35 | 35 | 35 | 35 |
| *Panel B:* | Article number (7 days) | | | |
| Own hostile casualties (0/1, 7 days) | 0.331$^{\dagger}$ | 0.326$^{\dagger}$ | 0.324$^{\dagger}$ | 0.339* |
| | (0.167) | (0.168) | (0.166) | (0.160) |
| Non-hostile own casualties (0/1, 7 days) | | -0.075 | | |
| | | (0.076) | | |
| Other hostile casualties (0/1, 7 days) | | | 0.116** | |
| | | | (0.042) | |
| Own hostile casualties (0/1, 7 days lead) | | | | 0.055 |
| | | | | (0.172) |
| Mean DV | 1.226 | 1.226 | 1.226 | 1.226 |
| Observations | 597 | 597 | 597 | 597 |
| Clusters | 35 | 35 | 35 | 35 |

Notes: Observations are at the respondent level in Panel A, and at the country by survey date level in Panel B. The independent variables are dummies coded to indicate an above-median number of casualties for each country. The dependent variable in Panel A is an indicator that takes the value 1 if the respondent expresses support for troop withdrawal from Afghanistan. The dependent variable in Panel B counts newspaper articles containing “Afghanistan” or “Kabul”, and this measure is normalized by the standard deviation in the relevant time window. All regressions include country-by-year fixed effects. Regressions in Panel A include gender, age, education category, and income category as individual-level controls. Regressions are weighted to give equal weight to each country-wave; in Panel A the survey weights are normalized accordingly. Standard errors are clustered at the country-by-year level with stars indicating $^{\dagger}$ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

Table A5: Main results – normalized casualty measure

| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Panel A:* | Supports withdrawal of NATO troops | | | |
| Own hostile casualties (normalized, 7 days) | 0.043$^{\dagger}$ | 0.042$^{\dagger}$ | 0.038* | 0.062* |
| | (0.022) | (0.022) | (0.019) | (0.028) |
| Non-hostile own casualties (normalized, 7 days) | | -0.026 | | |
| | | (0.105) | | |
| Other hostile casualties (normalized, 7 days) | | | 0.023$^{\dagger}$ | |
| | | | (0.013) | |
| Own hostile casualties (normalized, 7 days lead) | | | | 0.033 |
| | | | | (0.025) |
| Mean DV | 0.544 | 0.544 | 0.544 | 0.544 |
| Observations | 26,690 | 26,690 | 26,690 | 26,690 |
| Clusters | 35 | 35 | 35 | 35 |
| *Panel B:* | Article number (7 days) | | | |
| Own hostile casualties (normalized, 7 days) | 0.510* | 0.507* | 0.464$^{\dagger}$ | 0.401* |
| | (0.214) | (0.217) | (0.256) | (0.172) |
| Non-hostile own casualties (normalized, 7 days) | | -0.147 | | |
| | | (0.209) | | |
| Other hostile casualties (normalized, 7 days) | | | 0.340* | |
| | | | (0.145) | |
| Own hostile casualties (normalized, 7 days lead) | | | | -0.199 |
| | | | | (0.158) |
| Mean DV | 1.226 | 1.226 | 1.226 | 1.226 |
| Observations | 597 | 597 | 597 | 597 |
| Clusters | 35 | 35 | 35 | 35 |

Notes: Observations are at the respondent level in Panel A, and at the country by survey date level in Panel B. The dependent variable in Panel A is an indicator that takes the value 1 if the respondent expresses support for troop withdrawal from Afghanistan. The dependent variable in Panel B counts newspaper articles containing "Afghanistan" or "Kabul", and this measure is normalized by the standard deviation in the relevant time window. All regressions include country-by-year fixed effects. Regressions in Panel A include gender, age, education category, and income category as individual-level controls. Regressions are weighted to give equal weight to each country-wave; in Panel A the survey weights are normalized accordingly. Standard errors are clustered at the country-by-year level with stars indicating $^{\dagger}$ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

Table A6: Main results – different casualty lags

| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Panel A:* | Supports withdrawal of NATO troops | | | |
| Own hostile casualties (1 day) | 0.016** | 0.016** | 0.016** | 0.017** |
| | (0.003) | (0.003) | (0.004) | (0.004) |
| Own hostile casualties (between 2-7 days) | 0.006$^{\dagger}$ | 0.006$^{\dagger}$ | 0.006* | 0.006$^{\dagger}$ |
| | (0.003) | (0.003) | (0.003) | (0.003) |
| Non-hostile own casualties (1 day) | | -0.006 | | |
| | | (0.026) | | |
| Non-hostile own casualties (between 2-7 days) | | -0.007 | | |
| | | (0.009) | | |
| Other hostile casualties (1 day) | | | 0.003 | |
| | | | (0.003) | |
| Other hostile casualties (between 2-7 days) | | | 0.003* | |
| | | | (0.001) | |
| Own hostile casualties (1 day lead) | | | | 0.001 |
| | | | | (0.005) |
| Own hostile casualties (lead 2-7 days) | | | | 0.001 |
| | | | | (0.002) |
| Observations | 26,690 | 26,690 | 26,690 | 26,690 |
| Clusters | 35 | 35 | 35 | 35 |
| *Panel B:* | Article number (7 days) | | | |
| Own hostile casualties (1 day) | 0.056 | 0.056 | 0.053 | 0.037 |
| | (0.040) | (0.040) | (0.047) | (0.037) |
| Own hostile casualties (between 2-7 days) | 0.168* | 0.168* | 0.174* | 0.159** |
| | (0.072) | (0.073) | (0.074) | (0.054) |
| Non-hostile own casualties (1 day) | | 0.083$^{\dagger}$ | | |
| | | (0.049) | | |
| Non-hostile own casualties (between 2-7 days) | | -0.014 | | |
| | | (0.081) | | |
| Other hostile casualties (1 day) | | | 0.007 | |
| | | | (0.019) | |
| Other hostile casualties (between 2-7 days) | | | 0.028 | |
| | | | (0.024) | |
| Own hostile casualties (1 day lead) | | | | -0.038 |
| | | | | (0.064) |
| Own hostile casualties (lead 2-7 days) | | | | -0.047 |
| | | | | (0.055) |
| Observations | 515 | 515 | 515 | 515 |
| Clusters | 35 | 35 | 35 | 35 |

Notes: Observations are at the respondent level in Panel A, and at the country by survey date level in Panel B. The dependent variable in Panel A is an indicator that takes the value 1 if the respondent expresses support for troop withdrawal from Afghanistan. The dependent variable in Panel B counts newspaper articles containing "Afghanistan" or "Kabul", and this measure is normalized by the standard deviation in the relevant time window. As this table estimates the immediate effect of casualties, the article count starts on the day after the one-day casualty window to account for the publication lag of the print press. All regressions include country-by-year fixed effects. Regressions in Panel A include gender, age, education category, and income category as individual-level controls. Regressions are weighted to give equal weight to each country-wave; in Panel A the survey weights are normalized accordingly. Standard errors are clustered at the country-by-year level with stars indicating $^{\dagger}$ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

Table A7: Main results – US/UK versus other countries

| | (1) | (2) | (3) |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Panel A:* | Supports withdrawal of NATO troops | | |
| Own hostile casualties (7 days) | 0.006 | 0.006 | 0.006 |
| | (0.004) | (0.004) | (0.003) |
| Own hostile casualties (7 days) × other than UK/US | 0.007 | 0.007 | 0.006 |
| | (0.009) | (0.008) | (0.008) |
| Non-hostile own hostile casualties (7 days) | | -0.006 | |
| | | (0.008) | |
| Non-hostile own casualties (7 days) × other than UK/US | | 0.001 | |
| | | (0.043) | |
| Other hostile casualties (7 days) | | | 0.007* |
| | | | (0.003) |
| Other hostile casualties (7 days) × other than UK/US | | | -0.006$^{\dagger}$ |
| | | | (0.003) |
| P-value [Joint significance of own casualties and own casualties × other than UK/US] | 0.085 | 0.081 | 0.077 |
| Mean DV | 0.544 | 0.544 | 0.544 |
| Observations | 26,690 | 26,690 | 26,690 |
| Clusters | 35 | 35 | 35 |
| *Panel B:* | Article number (7 days) | | |
| Own hostile casualties (7 days) | 0.063 | 0.063 | 0.067* |
| | (0.038) | (0.038) | (0.028) |
| Own hostile casualties (7 days) × other than UK/US | 0.134 | 0.134 | 0.127 |
| | (0.091) | (0.092) | (0.092) |
| Non-hostile own casualties (7 days) | | -0.023 | |
| | | (0.083) | |
| Non-hostile own casualties (7 days) × other than UK/US | | -0.001 | |
| | | (0.098) | |
| Other hostile casualties (7 days) | | | 0.053** |
| | | | (0.017) |
| Other hostile casualties (7 days) × other than UK/US | | | -0.036 |
| | | | (0.024) |
| P-value [Joint significance of own casualties and own casualties × other than UK/US] | 0.022 | 0.025 | 0.010 |
| Mean DV | 1.189 | 1.189 | 1.189 |
| Observations | 597 | 597 | 597 |
| Clusters | 35 | 35 | 35 |

Notes: Observations are at the respondent level in Panel A, and at the country by survey date level in Panel B. The dependent variable in Panel A is an indicator that takes the value 1 if the respondent expresses support for troop withdrawal from Afghanistan. The dependent variable in Panel B counts newspaper articles containing "Afghanistan" or "Kabul", and this measure is normalized by the standard deviation in the relevant time window. The dummy variable "other than UK/US" indicates the survey respondent is not from the UK or US. All regressions include country-by-year fixed effects. Regressions in Panel A include gender, age, education category, and income category as individual-level controls. Regressions are weighted to give equal weight to each country-wave; in Panel A the survey weights are normalized accordingly. Joint significance tests are reported as referenced in the manuscript. Standard errors are clustered at the country-by-year level with stars indicating $^{\dagger}$ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

Table A8: Main results – heterogeneity in the surge period

| | (1) | (2) | (3) |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Panel A:* | Supports withdrawal of NATO troops | | |
| Own hostile casualties (7 days) | 0.012** | 0.012** | 0.011** |
| | (0.003) | (0.003) | (0.003) |
| Own hostile casualties (7 days) × Surge | -0.018** | -0.018** | -0.017* |
| | (0.007) | (0.006) | (0.006) |
| Non-hostile own casualties (7 days) | | -0.011 | |
| | | (0.007) | |
| Non-hostile own casualties (7 days) × Surge | | 0.017 | |
| | | (0.028) | |
| Other hostile casualties (7 days) | | | 0.003† |
| | | | (0.001) |
| Other hostile casualties (7 days) × Surge | | | -0.002 |
| | | | (0.002) |
| Mean DV | 0.544 | 0.544 | 0.544 |
| Observations | 26,690 | 26,690 | 26,690 |
| Clusters | 35 | 35 | 35 |
| *Panel B:* | Article number (7 days) | | |
| Own hostile casualties (7 days) | 0.123* | 0.123* | 0.117* |
| | (0.049) | (0.050) | (0.050) |
| Own hostile casualties (7 days) × Surge | -0.072 | -0.084 | -0.066 |
| | (0.061) | (0.063) | (0.062) |
| Non-hostile own casualties (7 days) | | -0.010 | |
| | | (0.065) | |
| Non-hostile own casualties (7 days) × Surge | | -0.186 | |
| | | (0.140) | |
| Own hostile casualties (7 days) | | | 0.040† |
| | | | (0.021) |
| Own hostile casualties (7 days) × Surge | | | -0.033 |
| | | | (0.024) |
| Mean DV | 1.226 | 1.226 | 1.226 |
| Observations | 597 | 597 | 597 |
| Clusters | 35 | 35 | 35 |

Notes: Observations are at the respondent level in Panel A, and at the country by survey date level in Panel B. The dependent variable in Panel A is an indicator that takes the value 1 if the respondent expresses support for troop withdrawal from Afghanistan. The dependent variable in Panel B counts newspaper articles containing "Afghanistan" or "Kabul", and this measure is normalized by the standard deviation in the relevant time window. The surge indicator switches on in 2010. All regressions include country-by-year fixed effects. Regressions in Panel A include gender, age, education category, and income category as individual-level controls. Regressions are weighted to give equal weight to each country-wave; in Panel A the survey weights are normalized accordingly. Standard errors are clustered at the country-by-year level with stars indicating † $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

Table A9: Main results – interaction effects

| | (1) | (2) | (3) |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Panel A:* | Supports withdrawal | | |
| Own hostile casualties (7 days) | 0.008* | 0.008* | 0.006* |
| | (0.003) | (0.003) | (0.003) |
| Other hostile casualties (7 days) | | $0.002^{\dagger}$ | $0.003^{\dagger}$ |
| | | (0.001) | (0.001) |
| Own and other hostile casualties interacted (7 days) | | | 0.002** |
| | | | (0.001) |
| Mean DV | 0.544 | 0.544 | 0.544 |
| Observations | 26,690 | 26,690 | 26,690 |
| Clusters | 35 | 35 | 35 |
| *Panel B:* | Article number (7 days) | | |
| Own hostile casualties (7 days) | 0.108* | 0.104* | 0.105* |
| | (0.042) | (0.042) | (0.044) |
| Other hostile casualties (7 days) | | $0.034^{\dagger}$ | $0.034^{\dagger}$ |
| | | (0.017) | (0.017) |
| Own and other hostile casualties interacted (7 days) | | | -0.000 |
| | | | (0.004) |
| Mean DV | 1.226 | 1.226 | 1.226 |
| Observations | 597 | 597 | 597 |
| Clusters | 35 | 35 | 35 |

Notes: Observations are at the respondent level in Panel A, and at the country by survey date level in Panel B. The dependent variable in Panel A is an indicator that takes the value 1 if the respondent expresses support for NATO troop withdrawal from Afghanistan. The dependent variable in Panel B counts newspaper articles containing "Afghanistan" or "Kabul", and this measure is normalized by the standard deviation in the relevant time window. Casualty counts are demeaned in the interaction term. All regressions include country-by-year fixed effects. Regressions in Panel A include gender, age, education category, and income category as individual-level controls. Regressions are weighted to give equal weight to each country-wave; in Panel A the survey weights are normalized accordingly. Standard errors are clustered at the country-by-year level with stars indicating $^{\dagger}$ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

Table A10: Main results – covariate interactions

| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Own hostile casualties (7 days) | 0.008* | 0.008* | 0.008* | 0.004 | 0.004 |
| | (0.003) | (0.003) | (0.003) | (0.003) | (0.003) |
| Age × Own hostile casualties (7 days) | | -0.000** | | | |
| | | (0.000) | | | |
| Female=1 × Own hostile casualties (7 days) | | | 0.001 | | |
| | | | (0.002) | | |
| Low income=1 × Own hostile casualties (7 days) | | | | 0.010** | |
| | | | | (0.003) | |
| Low education=1 × Own hostile casualties (7 days) | | | | | 0.008$^{\dagger}$ |
| | | | | | (0.004) |
| Mean DV | 0.544 | 0.544 | 0.544 | 0.544 | 0.544 |
| Observations | 26,690 | 26,690 | 26,690 | 26,690 | 26,690 |
| Clusters | 35 | 35 | 35 | 35 | 35 |

Notes: Observations are at the respondent level. The dependent variable is an indicator that takes the value 1 if the respondent expresses support for troop withdrawal from Afghanistan. All columns include fixed effects for the education category, income category, country-by-year, and control for age and gender. Regressions are weighted to give equal weight to each country-wave. Standard errors are clustered at the country-by-year level with stars indicating $^{\dagger}$ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

Table A11: News pressure results – 2-day news window

| | (1) | (2) |
|---|---|---|
| | Article number (2 days) | Supports troop withdrawal |
| Match | 0.005 | 0.006 |
| | (0.204) | (0.017) |
| Own hostile casualties (7 days) | 0.138$^{\dagger}$ | 0.007$^{\dagger}$ |
| | (0.079) | (0.004) |
| Own hostile casualties (7 days) × Match | -0.090** | -0.010$^{\dagger}$ |
| | (0.031) | (0.005) |
| P-value [Hostile casualties + Hostile casualties × Match=0] | 0.636 | 0.786 |
| Observations | 597 | 26,690 |
| Clusters | 35 | 35 |

Notes: Observations are at the country by survey date level in column (1). The dependent variable counts newspaper articles containing “Afghanistan” or “Kabul”, and this measure is normalized by the standard deviation in the relevant time window. Observations are at the individual respondent level in column (2). The dependent variable is an indicator that takes the value 1 if the respondent expresses support for troop withdrawal from Afghanistan. Match is equal to “1” on the day of or the day after a major sports final. Casualty counts are demeaned in the interaction term. We consider basketball in the US, hockey in Canada, and soccer in European countries. The regression in column (2) includes gender, age, education category, and income category as individual-level controls. All regressions include country-by-year fixed effects. Regressions are weighted to give equal weight to each country-wave. All standard errors are clustered at the country-by-year level with stars indicating $^{\dagger}$ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

Table A12: News pressure results – country × date panel

| | (1) | (2) |
|---|---|---|
| | Article number (7 days) | Supports troop withdrawal |
| Match | -0.097 | 0.010 |
| | (0.142) | (0.023) |
| Own hostile casualties (7 days) | $0.096^{\dagger}$ | 0.007* |
| | (0.049) | (0.003) |
| Own hostile casualties (7 days) × Match | $-0.051^{\dagger}$ | -0.013* |
| | (0.026) | (0.005) |
| P-value [Hostile casualty + Hostile casualty × Match=0] | 0.472 | 0.318 |
| Observations | 597 | 592 |
| Clusters | 35 | 35 |

Notes: The unit of analysis is a country by survey day. The dependent variable in column (1) is the number of newspaper articles mentioning "Afghanistan" or "Kabul", and this measure is normalized by the standard deviation in the relevant time window. The dependent variable in column (2) is the share of respondents expressing support for troop withdrawal from Afghanistan. Match is equal to "1" on the day of or the day after a major sports final. Casualty counts are demeaned in the interaction term. We consider basketball in the US, hockey in Canada, and soccer in European countries. Average age and the share of male respondents are included as controls. All regressions include country-by-year fixed effects. The number of respondents is used as an analytical weight in column (2). Standard errors are clustered at the country-by-year level with stars indicating $^{\dagger}$ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

Table A13: News pressure results – control interactions

| | (1) | (2) | (3) |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Panel A:* | Articles on Afghanistan (7 days) | | |
| Match | -0.057 | | |
| | (0.136) | | |
| Own hostile casualties (7 days) | 0.114* | | |
| | (0.056) | | |
| Own hostile casualties (7 days) × Match | -0.046* | -0.049** | -0.062** |
| | (0.021) | (0.003) | (0.017) |
| Observations | 597 | 593 | 591 |
| Clusters | 35 | 35 | 35 |
| *Panel B:* | Supports troop withdrawal | | |
| Match | 0.006 | | |
| | (0.017) | | |
| Own hostile casualties (7 days) | 0.007$^{\dagger}$ | | |
| | (0.004) | | |
| Own hostile casualties (7 days) × Match | -0.010$^{\dagger}$ | -0.027** | -0.020** |
| | (0.005) | (0.002) | (0.003) |
| Observations | 26,690 | 26,689 | 26,689 |
| Clusters | 35 | 35 | 35 |
| FE: Own hostile casualties (7 days) × country-year | | Y | Y |
| FE: Match × country-year | | Y | Y |
| FE: Own hostile casualties (7 days) × day of the week | | | Y |
| FE: Match × day of the week | | | Y |

Notes: Observations are at the country-survey date level in Panel A. The dependent variable in Panel A is the number of articles mentioning "Afghanistan", or "Kabul", and this measure is normalized by the standard deviation in the relevant time window. Observations are at the individual respondent level in Panel B. The dependent variable is an indicator that takes the value 1 if the respondent expresses support for troop withdrawal from Afghanistan. Match is equal to "1" on the day of or the day after a major sports final. Casualty counts are demeaned in the interaction term. We consider basketball in the US, hockey in Canada, and soccer in European countries. The regressions in Panel B includes gender, age, education category, and income category as individual-level controls. All regressions include country-by-year fixed effects. Regressions are weighted to give equal weight to each country-wave. Joint significance tests for Column 1 in Panels A and B are equivalent to the corresponding tests in Table 3 and not reported. Standard errors are clustered at the country-by-year level with stars indicating $^{\dagger}$ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

Table A14: News pressure results – excluding less important NBA matches

| | (1) | (2) |
|---|---|---|
| | Article number (7 days) | Supports troop withdrawal |
| Sports final dummy (on day or day before), restricted definition | -0.157 | 0.000 |
| | (0.139) | (0.015) |
| Own hostile casualties (7 days) | 0.097$^{\dagger}$ | 0.007$^{\dagger}$ |
| | (0.049) | (0.004) |
| Own hostile casualties (7 days) × Match | -0.048$^{\dagger}$ | -0.011* |
| | (0.026) | (0.005) |
| P-value [Hostile casualties + Hostile casualties × Match=0] | 0.465 | 0.611 |
| Observations | 597 | 26,690 |
| Clusters | 35 | 35 |

Notes: Observations are at the country by survey date level in column (1). The dependent variable counts newspaper articles containing "Afghanistan" or "Kabul", and this measure is normalized by the standard deviation in the relevant time window. Observations are at the individual respondent level in column (2). The dependent variable is an indicator that takes the value 1 if the respondent expresses support for troop withdrawal from Afghanistan. Match is equal to "1" on the day of or the day after a major sports final. Casualty counts are demeaned in the interaction term. We consider basketball in the US, hockey in Canada, and soccer in European countries. We do not include NBA matches beyond the third game – unless one team has already won three games and can win the competition. The regression in column (2) includes gender, age, education category, and income category as individual-level controls. All regressions include country-by-year fixed effects. Regressions are weighted to give equal weight to each country-wave. All standard errors are clustered at the country-by-year level with stars indicating $^{\dagger}$ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

Table A15: Additional news pressure results – news coverage

| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 7 days | | 2 days | |
| | Sports articles | Difference Sports - Afghanistan | Sports articles | Difference Sports - Afghanistan |
| Match | 0.420* | 0.539† | 0.562* | 0.590† |
| | (0.206) | (0.271) | (0.247) | (0.331) |
| Observations | 597 | 597 | 597 | 597 |
| Clusters | 35 | 35 | 35 | 35 |

Notes: Observations are at the country by survey date level. The dependent variable in columns (1) and (3) counts the number of articles mentioning the "title" or "finals" fixtures of the competition we consider in a given country. This measure is normalized to have a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1 in the relevant time window. In columns (2) and (4), the outcomes calculate the normalized difference between sports articles (as defined earlier) and articles mentioning "Afghanistan" or "Kabul" in the relevant time windows. Match is equal to "1" on the day of or the day after a major sports final. We consider basketball in the US, hockey in Canada, and soccer in European countries. All regressions include country-by-year fixed effects. Regressions are weighted to give equal weight to each country-wave. All standard errors are clustered at the country by year level with stars indicating † $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

Table A16: Additional news pressure results – US news coverage

| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 7 days | | 2 days | |
| | Sports articles | Difference Sports - Afghanistan | Sports articles | Difference Sports - Afghanistan |
| Match | 0.812** | 2.007** | 0.972** | 2.056** |
| | (0.265) | (0.509) | (0.283) | (0.364) |
| Observations | 86 | 86 | 86 | 86 |

Notes: Observations are at the survey date level. The dependent variable in columns (1) and (3) counts the number of articles mentioning the "title" or "finals" of basketball fixtures in the United States. This measure is normalized to have a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1 in the relevant time window. In columns (2) and (4), the outcomes calculate the normalized difference between sports articles (as defined earlier) and articles mentioning "Afghanistan" or "Kabul" in the relevant time windows. Match is equal to "1" on the day of or the day after a major sports final. All regressions include year-fixed effects. Regressions are weighted to give equal weight to each survey wave. Standard errors are robust with stars indicating † $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

Table A17: Additional news pressure results – page numbers

| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Lowest page (7 days average) | | Lowest page (2 days average) | |
| Match | | 1.107 | | -0.395 |
| | | (1.394) | | (1.559) |
| Own hostile casualties (7 days) | -0.328 | -0.267 | -0.379 | -0.379 |
| | (0.215) | (0.255) | (0.314) | (0.341) |
| Own hostile casualties (7 days) × Match | | 0.066 | | 0.145 |
| | | (0.128) | | (0.414) |
| P-value [Hostile casualties + Hostile casualties × Match=0] | | 0.559 | | 0.732 |
| Observations | 414 | 414 | 391 | 391 |
| Clusters | 26 | 26 | 25 | 25 |

Notes: Observations are at the country by survey date level. The dependent variable is the mean of the lowest page at which a news article on Afghanistan appears in a given time window. Match is equal to "1" on the day of or the day after a major sports final. Casualty counts are demeaned in the interaction term. We consider basketball in the US, hockey in Canada, and soccer in European countries. All regressions include country-by-year fixed effects. Regressions are weighted to give equal weight to each country-wave. All standard errors are clustered at the country-by-year level with stars indicating † $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.