

Addendum IV: Thesis Title Page

Thesis Title

The Drivers of Public Support for Military Withdrawal

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James C Summers II

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The Drivers of Public Support for Military Withdrawal

Abstract

There is extensive literature regarding how the American public forms their opinions about military interventions. However, there is not as much to be said with respect to how public support for military withdrawals is influenced. This thesis paper seeks to highlight how question framing surrounding the topic of U.S. military withdrawals affects the level of support for said withdrawals. Looking at a number of different explanatory variables, which ones are found to be the most important drivers of public support for military withdrawal? Utilizing a data set of 392 observations of aggregate survey data that spans from the years of 1950-2021, three linear regression models are developed to help predict how potential question framing affects impact public support for military withdrawal. The results indicate that survey questions regarding the post-9/11 conflicts in both Iraq and Afghanistan have very high levels of support for withdrawal. Contrary to the often-discussed casualties hypothesis, public support for withdrawal decreases when questions mention U.S. military casualties. Survey questions that provided additional response options indicating varying types of withdrawal also were found to have positive effects on overall public support for withdrawal.

Introduction

Public attitudes toward U.S. military conflicts have been mixed throughout our nation's history. Support for interventions such as the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars following the September 11, 2001, attacks were at about 70% and 85% respectively for each conflict.¹ However, in the context of these two specific military conflicts, support for them dwindled over the almost twenty years that they lasted. Public support for military withdrawals from these conflicts had begun to increase as military casualties increased and seemingly little progress within either conflict was being made. U.S. military operations in Syria garnered high levels of support but ultimately saw levels decrease over time and eventually an almost full-scale withdrawal took place during the Trump Administration. There is significant importance of attempting to understand the reasons as to why public support for withdrawals changes as doing so could potentially highlight how public opinion for military withdrawals may have impacts on decision makers.

Understanding what motivates public support for withdrawal is important for two key reasons. In the context of this field of work, the framing of survey questions is extremely important as survey questions with specific words can have significant effects on how a respondent is to answer.² As shown in the work of Borelli and Lockerbie (2008), survey questions that were framed in the context of the United States suffering casualties yielded significant decreases in the level of support for both of the Iraq Wars. The second reason why it is important to understand how question framing impacts public opinion support for withdrawal,

¹ Jacobson, Gary C. "A Tale of Two Wars: Public Opinion on the U.S. Military Interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq: Jacobson / A TALE OF TWO WARS." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 40, no. 4 (December 2010): 585–610. doi:10.1111/j.1741-5705.2010.03802.x.

² Borrelli, Stephen A., and Brad Lockerbie. "Framing Effects on Public Opinion During Prewar and Major Combat Phases of the U.S. Wars with Iraq." *Social Science Quarterly* 89, no. 2 (June 2008): 502–22. doi:10.1111/j.1540-6237.2008.00544.x.

is because public opinion is known to have a direct effect on decision makers.³ As will be discussed in the conclusion of this paper, how public opinion shifts regarding military withdrawals can have large implications for decision makers as they attempt to formulate policy.

This thesis paper seeks to analyze public opinion aggregate survey data in an attempt to yield insights as to what drives U.S. public support for military withdrawals. To do so, I draw upon scholarly literature, both recent and historical, focusing on public opinion and foreign policy, question framing, and elite cues. I utilize a data set created by Professor Daniel Silverman and Eunice Oh of Carnegie Mellon University and develop and test three different models to predict public support for U.S. military withdrawals.

My thesis proceeds as follows. First, I will discuss existing scholarly literature that relates to the topic of public opinion support for military withdrawals. There is little current literature focusing on the aspect of military withdrawals itself thus, much of the literature that will be discussed relates to military intervention. Additional scholarly literature touches on subjects such as elite cues and heuristics that influence public opinion as it relates to foreign policy attitudes. All of the literature that will be discussed is meant to assist with setting up the basis for my theoretical framework of public support for military withdrawals as the available literature allows me to begin drawing arguments as to what drives public support.

Second, I will highlight my theory on public support for military withdrawals. Drawing from the literature cited in the previous section of the paper, I will discuss the potential effects of elite cues, casualties, and principal policy objectives as outlined in Jason Brownlee's (2020) article discussing public support for military interventions.⁴ His article draws partially on the

³ Tomz, Michael, Jessica L.P. Weeks, and Keren Yarhi-Milo. "Public Opinion and Decisions About Military Force in Democracies." *International Organization* 74, no. 1 (2020): 119–43. doi:10.1017/S0020818319000341.

⁴ Brownlee, Jason. "Cognitive Shortcuts and Public Support for Intervention." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 64, no. 2–3 (February 2020): 261–89. doi:10.1177/0022002719854210.

work of Bruce Jentleson (1992) and I aim to expand upon his use of principal policy objectives to include counterterrorism.⁵ From the existing literature, I will highlight three hypotheses regarding potential drivers of public support for military withdrawal.

Third, I will introduce the data set that I used for this paper along with explaining my research design. Gathered from the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research of Cornell University, the data set being utilized contains 392 survey item observations regarding U.S. military withdrawals. The survey questions include seven different countries from 1950 to 2021, including both the First Gulf War and Iraq War. There are a number of different independent variables that were created that emphasize the framing of each survey question. In total, for my analysis, twenty independent variables are used, including four country variables for the four most prominent countries in the data set.

Lastly, I walk through the results of my three linear regression models. What the findings show is that while a more robust data set is needed for future work, there is sufficient evidence to highlight that there are some significant drivers of public support for military withdrawal. Specifically, questions that pertained to either Iraq or Afghanistan were found to have significantly greater levels of withdrawal support, likely indicating an overall shift in sentiment towards post-9/11 U.S. conflicts.

Existing Literature

The sea of scholarly literature is vast as it relates to the public's opinion toward war and other foreign policy issues. The existing literature highlights a number of key aspects and arguments that may help to indicate potential drivers of public support for military withdrawal. While much of the literature to be discussed focuses heavily on public support for sustaining military

⁵ Jentleson, Bruce W. "The Pretty Prudent Public: Post Post-Vietnam American Opinion on the Use of Military Force." *International Studies Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (March 1992): 49. doi:10.2307/2600916.

interventions, the conventional thinking can easily be flipped to consider public support for military withdrawals. Thus, while the literature is not explicitly focused on the topic of withdrawal, parallels from the existing literature can be drawn to the relevant topic of this research paper.

A conflict's stated principal policy objective (PPO) can be influential in helping the public come to their own sentiment regarding a conflict. As Jentleson (1992) noted in his work, the public was more in favor of supporting military conflicts in which the force being used was meant to restrain governments or adversaries as opposed to remaking governments or what we would consider as potential nation building today. Theory such as this could hold true as the public's attitude toward the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan over the past decade or so have shifted. Is the American public still less supportive of conflicts in which the U.S. policy objective is internal policy change, and thus, more likely to support withdrawal? The effort to nation-build in Afghanistan was largely seen as a spectacular failure and perhaps further solidified public feelings of support for withdrawal. Other scholarly works such as Hector Perla's (2011) paper on *Explaining Public Support for the Use of Military Force* further highlight the importance of the public's perception of the policy objective of a conflict.⁶ Perla goes on to argue that given the fact that the public is unable to gather direct information regarding what is taking place on the ground during a conflict with respect to the policy objective, they must rely on media coverage and other methods of information sharing to develop their opinions. Perla concludes by providing evidence that the public is more likely to support policy objectives that are seeking to avoid losses and will be less inclined to support policy objectives that pursue gains.

⁶ Perla, Héctor. "Explaining Public Support for the Use of Military Force: The Impact of Reference Point Framing and Prospective Decision Making." *International Organization* 65, no. 1 (January 2011): 139–67. doi:10.1017/S0020818310000330.

There is substantial existing literature on the impacts that elite cues have in relation to, or shaping, public opinion. Perhaps the most influential of the elite cues is that of the “rally-round-the-flag effect” or also known as the president cue.⁷ The president cue follows the logic that, following Mueller’s logic, the American public will support a given position that the president himself endorses. In the context of this research, the American public is more likely to support whatever stance the president supports whether it be military intervention or military withdrawal. Similar to the work done by Perla, but focusing on elite cues, Gelpi (2010) argues that because the public cannot derive personal experience regarding military operations, they must look for cues from the political elite to help formulate their opinions regarding foreign policy.⁸ Gelpi goes on to note how the media also has a significant influence with respect to the formulation of public support for military conflicts. Additionally, he does focus heavily on the partisan aspects of how elite cues affect public support.

The casualties hypothesis contends that the American public will not support the deployment of troops abroad if there are expected to be U.S. military casualties.⁹ This hypothesis, coined by James Burk (1999), has been the subject of heavy scrutiny and expansive study over the past few decades. Does the American public really hold such a strong opinion that they are unwilling to want to deploy troops to a conflict in which the U.S. will sustain casualties? As the field of literature developed, this topic has been fiercely discussed and debated over time. Questions related to casualty tolerance or intolerance have been raised and there is reasonable

⁷ Mueller, John E. *War, Presidents, and Public Opinion*. New York: Wiley, 1973.

⁸ Gelpi, Christopher. “Performing on Cue? The Formation of Public Opinion Toward War.” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 54, no. 1 (February 2010): 88–116. doi:10.1177/0022002709352845.

⁹ Burk, James. “Public Support for Peacekeeping in Lebanon and Somalia: Assessing the Casualties Hypothesis.” *Political Science Quarterly* 114, no. 1 (March 1999): 53–78. doi:10.2307/2657991.

evidence to suggest that, at times, the American public can be tolerant of military casualties.¹⁰ However, as noted in the Gelpi (2010) article just cited, the American public, as the research relates to the War in Iraq, will be tolerant of U.S. military casualties when they agree with the decision to go to war, and if they are of the opinion that the U.S. is likely to win the war. Myers and Hayes (2010) take a closer look at the casualties hypothesis.¹¹ They theorize that the public is more supportive of military withdrawals when the perceived number of casualties was higher than what was actually occurring on the ground. This study is extremely relevant to the focus of this paper as it directly looks at levels of support for withdrawal as they relate to military casualties. As will be further discussed, the purposes of this research paper are not to discern which groups of the public are misperceived in their estimations of military casualties. Rather, this paper is looking to establish the potential drivers, including questions regarding military casualties, of public support for military withdrawal.

There is a great amount of current literature focusing on public opinion towards war, how elites affect public sentiment, and the extent to which military casualties impact the public's opinion of a conflict. While there is less available literature that explicitly focuses on the research question being discussed in this paper of what drives public support for military withdrawals, I argue that many of the same variables, such as elite cues or military casualties, also have a significant effect on the public's opinion on support for withdrawal when questions are posed to the public.

¹⁰ Gelpi, Christopher, Peter D. Feaver, and Jason Reifler. "Success Matters: Casualty Sensitivity and the War in Iraq." *International Security* 30, no. 3 (December 1, 2005): 7–46. doi:10.1162/016228805775969573.

¹¹ Myers, T. A., and A. F. Hayes. "Reframing the Casualties Hypothesis: (Mis)Perceptions of Troop Loss and Public Opinion about War." *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 22, no. 2 (June 1, 2010): 256–75. doi:10.1093/ijpor/edp044.

Public Support for Military Withdrawals

Framing theory is essential to understand in relation to the focus of this paper. The literature review focused heavily on theories such as elite cues and the casualties hypothesis and their impacts in public opinion, how questions are framed is at the essence of this research study. In order to begin to understand how public opinion of support for military withdrawal is influenced, it is imperative to focus on the manner in which questions (in the context of this research, survey questions) are posed to respondents. Framing often refers to the process in which people establish their own opinions of a particular issue or change their minds about a given issue.¹² In the context of survey questioning, understanding how questions are framed is significant to understanding how public opinion surrounding a policy issue such as military withdrawals might develop. Depending on the focus of a question, whether it mentions consequences or benefits, can and most likely will have a direct effect on the outcome of public support for the issue of support for withdrawal.

From the theoretical framework of question framing, along with the theories and arguments mentioned in the existing literature, I establish three hypotheses. The first aims to address the potential implications of survey questions that frame the potential security consequences of a withdrawal. Drawing on a RAND report by Eric Larson (2005), the American public is likely to consider the stakes of a given conflict in their prospective analysis of supporting a conflict.¹³ Thus, the first hypothesis predicts that survey questions that mention significant security costs associated with military withdrawal should correspond with lower levels of support for withdrawal. The second hypothesis follows the conventional thinking

¹² Chong, Dennis, and James N. Druckman. "Framing Theory." *Annual Review of Political Science* 10, no. 1 (June 1, 2007): 103–26. doi:10.1146/annurev.polisci.10.072805.103054.

¹³ Larson, Eric V., and Bogdan Savych. *American Public Support for U.S. Military Operations from Mogadishu to Baghdad*. Santa Monica: RAND, 2005.

surrounding the casualties hypothesis with respect to question framing. Questions that mention U.S. military casualties should have higher levels of support for withdrawal. The final hypothesis is in regard to elite cues, specifically the “rally-around-the-flag” effect or president cue. Questions that indicate the president’s position as supporting withdrawal should have higher levels of support for military withdrawal.

While I do develop three distinct hypotheses focusing on specific variables, there are several additional variables that I test for as part of my research. As will be discussed in the following section, the data set being used codes for several explanatory variables, many of which I include in my regression models. The additional variables include analyzing congress cues, principal policy objectives (following Brownlee and Jentleson), and many others. The three hypotheses created were done so out of interest and their significance as they relate to existing literature. Some of the additional variables that are analyzed also produce interesting findings which will be further discussed.

Hypothesis 1 (Security Costs): Survey questions mentioning the potential security costs of withdrawing from a conflict will lead to lower levels of support for withdrawal.

Hypothesis 2: (Military Casualties): Survey questions mentioning or indicating an increase in U.S. military casualties will have higher levels of support for withdrawal.

Hypothesis 3 (Elite/President Cue): Survey questions that indicate the current president’s endorsement for military withdrawal will have higher levels of support for withdrawal as well.

Research Design

To test the above state hypotheses, a comprehensive data set containing aggregate survey data observations was required in which the dependent variable being analyzed was public support for

military withdrawal. The data set being used was developed as part of a larger academic study in the works by Professor Daniel Silverman of Carnegie Mellon University. As my thesis advisor, Professor Silverman recommended that I look to utilize his data set as it contains a number of significant independent variables related to my hypotheses and beyond. Following the required conditions of Jason Brownlee's (2020) study related to military intervention, each survey item, in order to be included into the data set, had to satisfy the following three conditions: (1) *the concept of* (2) *military withdrawal by* (3) *American forces*. Given that survey items were typically asked during the time of a conflict, the conditions required differ slightly from Brownlee. There are very few survey questions included within the data set that would be considered as "after-the-fact or retrospective", meaning survey questions asked when the U.S. had already withdrawn from a given conflict.

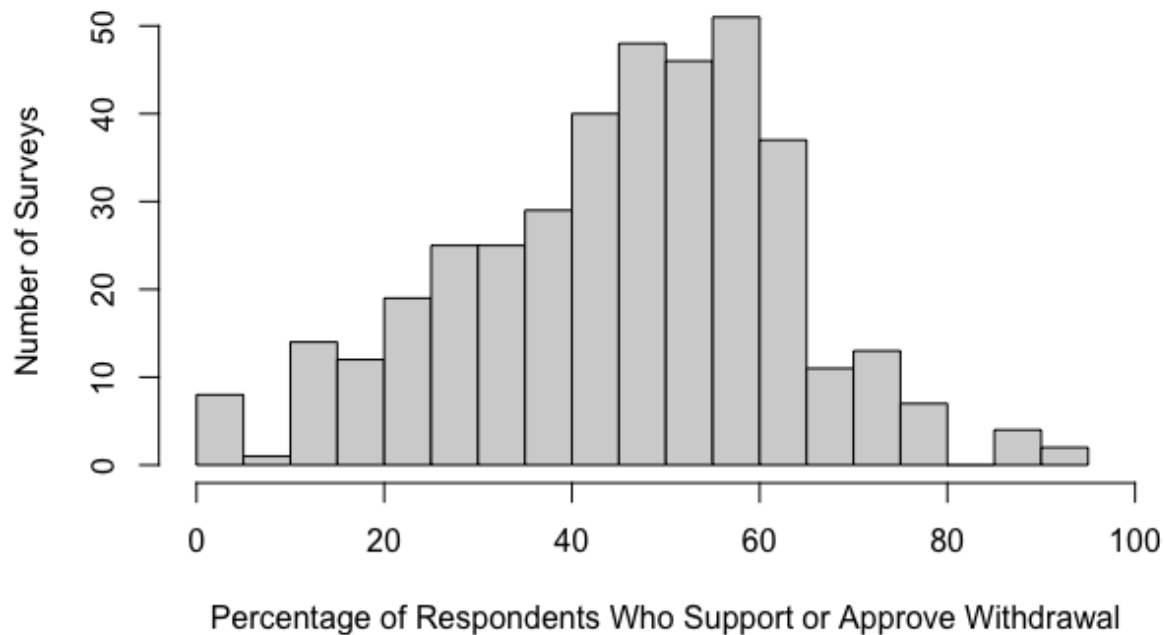
The second condition focusing on *military withdrawal* was the central focus of each survey question. Survey questions had to have the word withdrawal (or some variation or synonym) included within the question in order to be added to the data set. Withdraw was defined as being either a full-scale withdrawal from the conflict, or a partial withdrawal for which an independent binary variable was created for survey questions that discussed partial withdrawals.

Staying in line with Brownlee's work, no survey questions were included into the data set in which American forces were not the object of discussion. A separate independent variable regarding whether or not a conflict was considered as being multilateral if additional non-U.S. forces was created but the survey questions themselves had to explicitly pertain to American forces.

From the outlined conditions above, the resulting data set produced contained 392 observations ranging over seven countries. The years which were covered spanned from 1950 to 2021. It should be noted however, that some observations for the three regression models to later be discussed were omitted from these models. Countries such as South Korea (one observation), Somalia (three observations), and Syria (three observations) did not have a sufficient number of observations to warrant being included within the regression models. For the remaining country observations, the composition breakdown is as follows. Afghanistan has thirty-seven observations. Lebanon has sixteen. Vietnam has sixty. And Iraq has 272 (twenty-two pre-9/11 observations and 250 post-9/11 observations). Figure 1 below displays the distribution of the aggregate level of support for withdrawal across the entire data set.

The dependent variable being examined, conversely from Brownlee, is the level of support for withdrawal. The percentage of support for withdrawal is at the aggregate level as each survey item contains multiple respondents. For survey items that give respondents multiple options of support for withdrawal (i.e., partial withdrawal, strongly in favor of withdrawal) were combined to establish the overall level of support for withdrawal.

Figure 1: Support for Military Withdrawal, Number of Surveys



Silverman incorporates twenty-four binary independent variables into his data set. The independent variables are coded as “1” for the survey question having referenced or asking about a given important factor such as the prospects for an enemy victory (IV: Enemy Victory) and coded as a “0” if it does not mention a given explanatory variable. For the purposes of this paper and given data constraints, I utilize a total of sixteen independent variables. This does not include the four country dummy variables of Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon, or Vietnam. Nor does it include the three principal policy objective variables I created following the work of Brownlee. In Brownlee’s paper, he mentions following the work of Jentleson (1992) to include his three PPO variables of internal policy change (IPC), foreign policy restraint (FPR), and humanitarian intervention. Brownlee adds a fourth PPO, “Peacekeeping” from which he cites Eichenberg

(2005).¹⁴ I decided to develop my own principal policy objective noted as “Counterterrorism”. The rationale for this decision was in large part due to the feeling that although scholars like Brownlee or Jentleson may have opted to include counterterrorism operations under FPR, I felt that CT operations could constitute as its own PPO. The War in Afghanistan had significant counterterrorism aspects to it that it felt justifiable to create a separate PPO that did not fall under the umbrella of either FPR or IPC. Survey questions were coded as a “1” for Counterterrorism if it was deemed that the conflict’s PPO was Counterterrorism. The distribution of the PPO observations was FPR (83 observations), IPC (251 observations), and Counterterrorism (39 observations).

As mentioned, Silverman had twenty-four explanatory variables in his data set, and I decided to use sixteen of them. The rationale for this was due to the size of the data set as a whole. With only 392 total observations, not every independent variable had what would be considered a sufficient amount of variation in its respective data to warrant being used in my regression analysis. Thus, the sixteen explanatory variables used all had a variation of above 5%, meaning that for each chosen variable, they had at least 20 observations that were coded as a “1”, with four having a variation between five and ten percent, and the rest being above 10%.

For reference, each of the three hypotheses have their own corresponding explanatory variable. For hypothesis 1, relating to questions regarding the potential security costs of a withdrawal, survey questions that mentioned the potential security implications of leaving a conflict were coded as “1”. For example, if a question suggested that as a result of withdrawing from Afghanistan there could be an increase in terrorist attacks against the United States or allies, it would be coded a “1” for the security cost variable.

¹⁴ Eichenberg, Richard C. “Victory Has Many Friends: U.S. Public Opinion and the Use of Military Force, 1981–2005.” *International Security* 30, no. 1 (July 2005): 140–77. doi:10.1162/0162288054894616.

The casualties benefit variable is specific to survey questions that mention the number of troops killed or harmed during a conflict. Survey questions were also coded “1” for survey questions that mentioned the possibility of an increase in troop deaths or injuries. There was an attempt to gather actual on the ground data to supplement this variable however, for conflicts predating 9/11, it was too difficult to gather that information given the time constraints.

The final hypothesis focusing on elite cues, specifically the president cue coded survey questions as “1” when the question mentions the president’s endorsement or discussion of a plan for withdrawal. For example, survey questions that ask about support for withdrawal following President Obama’s explicit deadline for a withdrawal from Iraq would be coded as “1” under the president cue explanatory variable.

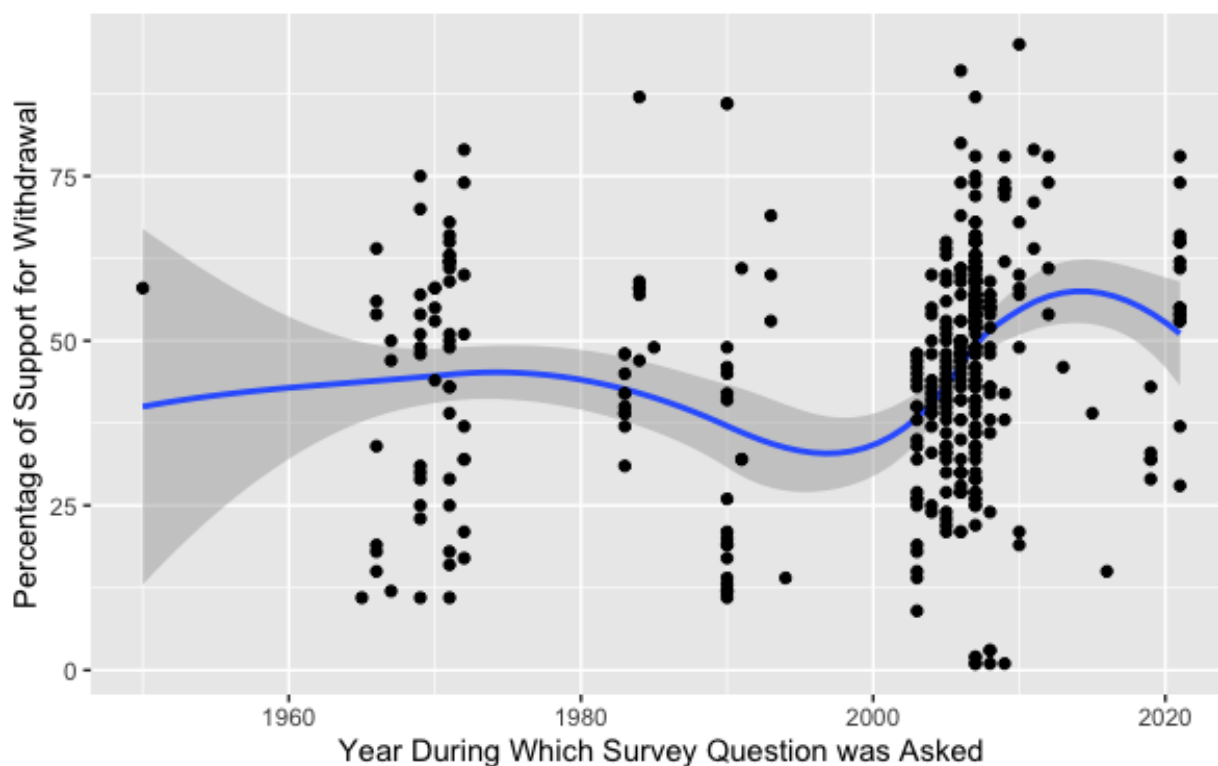
Results

From the 392 aggregate survey observations, I then looked to test potential predictors of public support for military withdrawal. The statistical method used was a linear regression analysis. Table 1 highlights the results from the three models that were developed. It should be noted that each variable’s coefficient indicates a percentage effect on the level of support for withdrawal. Thus, a coefficient of ten indicates an increase in the level of support for withdrawal by 10 percentage points and a negative ten indicates a 10-point decrease in support.

As can be seen in figure 2 below, the results of the aggregate level of support for withdrawal over time are quite varied. The plot roughly shows three distinct time periods in which the surveys were conducted. This corresponds to the conflicts of the Vietnam War, First Gulf War, and the post-9/11 wars of Iraq and Afghanistan. Throughout the entire plot, there is great variation among the level of support for withdrawal with percentages ranging from close to zero all the way to almost 100% support. However, it should be noted that the levels of support

for withdrawal do roughly average out between 40%-60% over the course of the time frame. The average level of public support for military withdrawal throughout the data set is 46%. I found this to be quite revealing given that at times there is seemingly very high levels of support for withdrawal and seldom seems to be high levels of support against withdrawal. What this average indicates is that, while the data set is not the most robust, the aggregate level of support is split relatively evenly among the population. With that being said, the plot below does indicate that in the post-9/11 era, public support for withdrawal seems to be more popular which may indicate that the public is less keen on remaining in conflicts.

Figure 2: Level of Support for Withdrawal Over Time



As previously mentioned, three linear regression models were developed to test the potential drivers of public support for military withdrawal. Model 1 includes all of the country dummy variables and independent variables. In relation to the three hypotheses, only the casualties benefit variable (questions mentioning U.S. military casualties) has any level of

significance with a coefficient of -4.599 percentage points. This result goes against my hypothesis of arguing that the mentioning of military casualties should see an increase in the level of support for withdrawal. While purely conjecture, perhaps this is due to a shift in sentiment that the public does not want those casualties to be in vain. Both the president cue and security cost variables are insignificant. Across all three models however, survey questions mentioning either a defeat or victory are heavily significant. With an R-squared value of just over .2, model 1 does not appear to be the best for explaining the variation among the data. However, considering the small number of observations compared to a study such as Brownlee's (2020), the model is not terribly off in explaining the data variation.

Table 1. Predictors of Public Support for Military Withdrawal

	Estimated Effect on Support for Withdrawal		
	Overall Model	Withdraw	
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Afghanistan	13.459 (8.915)		21.126** (9.384)
Iraq	-2.667 (12.753)	-21.692 (18.423)	36.856** (18.589)
Lebanon	-6.776 (10.106)	-8.133 (11.284)	
Vietnam	-0.084 (12.559)	-16.089 (17.771)	
Casualties Benefit	-4.599* (2.595)	-4.328 (5.648)	-5.753* (3.032)
President Cue	1.619 (2.720)		
Congress Cue	3.244 (2.801)		
Escalation Option	-8.600*** (2.619)	-5.878 (6.600)	-9.902*** (2.947)
De-escalation Option	-7.142** (3.421)	-12.954 (8.390)	-5.585 (3.791)
Fixed Deadline	3.113 (1.890)		
Condition Question	3.987* (2.160)	5.839 (4.440)	2.231 (2.521)
Partial Withdrawal	9.438** (3.653)		7.692** (3.850)
One Sided Question	6.282*** (2.328)	5.542 (5.950)	7.246*** (2.568)
Security Costs	-3.501 (3.733)		
Enemy Victory	-3.131 (4.015)		
General Defeat/Victory	17.767*** (3.488)	16.599*** (5.952)	17.674*** (4.748)
Candidate Cue	0.813 (3.480)		
Counterterrorism	-25.761** (12.635)		20.474 (16.278)
FPR	-26.939* (15.302)	-8.321 (20.399)	
IPC	-14.777 (15.739)	-6.094 (28.191)	
Constant	61.440*** (9.300)	60.779*** (10.759)	9.361 (18.641)
Observations	392	102	290
R ²	0.218	0.290	0.165
Adjusted R ²	0.176	0.203	0.135
Residual Std. Error	15.943 (df = 371)	17.457 (df = 90)	15.555 (df = 279)
F Statistic	5.185*** (df = 20; 371)	3.344*** (df = 11; 90)	5.504*** (df = 10; 279)

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Model 2 is a pre-9/11 regression model that includes the variables from model 1 that had any level of significance. There is no coefficient for Afghanistan as there are no data points for Afghanistan pre-9/11. Additionally, since all of the counterterrorism PPO observations are either Afghanistan or Syria (which is omitted due to lack of observations), there is not result for this model. What can be seen in this model is that the only significant variable is for survey questions that mention the prospects of defeat or victory, which is statistically significant across all three models. Survey questions were coded as “1” if they mentioned that withdrawing from a conflict would result in either a loss or a win. Upon reflection, a variable such as this should have been split into two separate variables, one focusing on defeat, and the other victory. This is because as survey questions are currently coded, there is no way to tell how many questions that have been already coded mention losing or how many mention winning as a result of withdrawal. However, to put forth a substantive argument based on the results of the data, it can be said that irrespective of whether or not the United States were to win or lose a conflict as a result of withdrawal, the public have higher levels of support for withdrawal, likely signifying their desire for conflict termination overall. Now model 2 only contains 102 observations so there is the concern regarding its robustness, but it does have the best r-squared value of any of the models indicating that its explanation of the variation across the data, while could certainly be better, is sufficient.

Model 3 is the exact same as model 2, simply looking at observations post-9/11. In this model, there are a number of significant variables such as partial withdrawal. This variable pertains to questions that provided additional options or forms of withdrawal that did not include full-scale withdrawals. However, responses that indicated support for partial withdrawals were coded as support for withdrawal which possibly helps to explain why the coefficient here is quite high and significant. Regardless, this helps to draw a conclusion that the public is more likely to

favor partial withdrawal options. What is quite interesting in this model is that both country variables for Afghanistan and Iraq have seriously large coefficients that are statistically significant. In line with what was seen in figure 2, this corresponds with the perceived shift in public opinion that at least for these two countries, the public is more likely to favor support for withdrawal in the post-9/11 era. Another significant variable within this model along with model 1 is that of a question being one-sided. Survey questions were coded as being one sided when respondents were given a statement or proposal and asked whether or not they supported it. An example would be, “President (George W.) Bush has said that withdrawing U.S. (United States) troops from Iraq now would be a recipe for disaster. Do you agree or disagree with that?”. Respondents are given only two options, to agree or disagree. Those agreeing with this prompt would signify that they are against withdrawal and those disagreeing would be in favor of withdrawal. While somewhat difficult to draw a conclusion from given that one-sided questions can have a multitude of other factors such as the president cue in the prompt above, there is a significant increase in public support for withdrawal when one-sided questions are posed to the public. Similarly, as seen in model 1, questions that mention U.S. military casualties also have a negative effect on support for withdrawal. While the significance is not the strongest, it is still somewhat surprising to see as it goes against the casualties hypothesis along with my second hypothesis. In reference to Brownlee’s work, he notes that U.S. military casualties decrease the level of support for military intervention, in essence displaying their support for withdrawal. This is why it is surprising to see such a negative effect on public support for withdrawal within my models as it goes against previously established work. Perhaps in a data set with more observations to draw from would put forth different results, at least for questions referring to military casualties.

Given the overall emphasis that both Brownlee (2020) and Jentleson (1992) had on my rationale for the creation of an additional PPO for counterterrorism, I wanted to highlight its predicted effect on support for withdrawal. Interestingly, in the overall model, counterterrorism is found to be significant and have a negative effect on support for withdrawal. However, in the post-9/11 model, it is not significant and has a positive effect on support for withdrawal. This makes it difficult to draw a conclusion as to why this is the case but perhaps it has to do with the models themselves and the associated variables included in each one. Both coefficients have somewhat large standard errors thus the argument can be made that the accuracy of these predictions is not that great. Another variable with some significance is that of FPR in model 1. Again, as defined by Jentleson, foreign policy restraint is the principal policy objective in which force is directed against an adversary who is engaged in confrontation with the United States or allies. Thus, within model 1, albeit with a large standard error, questions in which the conflict's PPO was FPR, there is a somewhat significant predicted decrease in the level of support for withdrawal. This potentially points to the public's placing of importance on preventing being against the option of military withdrawals in conflict in which the policy objective is to engage in the use of force against aggressive opponents who could impose negative consequences against the U.S.

Implications

As this body of research relates to implications, understanding how public opinion is affected by question framing can have significant impacts for decision makers. It was once thought that the public did not care deeply about foreign policy issues.¹⁵ However, as research

¹⁵ Aldrich, John H., Christopher Gelpi, Peter Feaver, Jason Reifler, and Kristin Thompson Sharp. "FOREIGN POLICY AND THE ELECTORAL CONNECTION." *Annual Review of Political Science* 9, no. 1 (June 1, 2006): 477–502. doi:10.1146/annurev.polisci.9.111605.105008.

has expanded, it is known that the public does indeed care about issues related to foreign policy and more importantly, the issues related to war. How the public feels about military conflicts can have a direct electoral impact for political officials as the work of Aldrich et al. (2006) points out. Thus, by beginning to understand the potential drivers of public support for withdrawal, decision makers can better understand just how public support is affected. In the context of Afghanistan for instance, the duration of the conflict eventually produced the sentiment that the conflict itself had lost its importance and there was no longer a significant threat to U.S. interests. This increased the level of support for withdrawal and toward the end of 2021, troops finally vacated the country. Whether or not the public's opinion was the primary reason for leaving Afghanistan is unknown however, it most certainly played a pivotal role.

Further potential implications of this study will require additional work to be conducted. I firmly hold that a more robust data set with a greatly increased number of observations will significantly add to the results of this area of study. Additional conclusions highlighting the effects of question framing with respect to additional hypotheses such as casualties could yield more significant results that better explain any potential shifts in the public's support for military withdrawals.

Conclusions

The American public's opinion with respect to supporting military withdrawals is rooted in multiple theories and frameworks such as question framing, elite cues, and the casualties hypothesis. Throughout this paper, I have attempted to highlight the potential drivers of public support for military withdrawal by utilizing a data set comprised of aggregate level survey data of questions pertaining to U.S. military withdrawal. 392 observations spanning over seventy

years were compiled and analyzed. The results of regression analysis on three individual models yielded some interesting potential drivers of public support for withdrawal.

As the results pertain to the three hypotheses laid out at the beginning of this paper, only hypothesis 2 (casualties hypothesis) had any level of significance in any of the three models. Furthermore, the direction in which the level of support for withdrawal went was in direct contrast to my hypothesis. This could be representative of the fact that perhaps, and following along with some literature regarding military casualties, the American public is willing to tolerate a given number or threshold of casualties during a conflict if the prospects of success are good and the importance of the conflict is high. Or perhaps, a greater number of observations is needed before drawing further conclusions regarding the potential effect of survey questions that mention military casualties on support for withdrawal.

Additionally, in the post-9/11 world, the American public is seemingly much more in favor of supporting military withdrawals. Specifically, from both Iraq and Afghanistan. As we saw toward the end of 2021, President Biden made it clear that the United States was finally going to leave Afghanistan. Was this simply a policy objective of the Administration, or had the increasing levels of public support for withdrawal influenced the leadership's decision to pull out in the manner in which they did? Attempting to answer questions such as these is why understanding how public support for military withdrawals can be influenced. As was previously mentioned, the public cares about foreign policy. Furthermore, political officials have electoral objectives they wish to obtain of which they rely on the American electorate to achieve. The public's potential influence on decision makers is crucial to understand and learning how the public's sentiment towards military withdrawals is affected is extremely important. The goal of this paper was to establish a basis for future work to expand upon. While the data set that was

used was far from sufficiently robust, the data does present some enlightening results. A more robust data set similar to the over 1,000 observations Brownlee had could further yield crucial insights into drivers of public support for military withdrawal.

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