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War Casualties, Policy Positions, and the Fate of Legislators

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Politicians appear to anticipate that the public will hold them accountable for war deaths. Yet, little is known about why some politicians openly oppose costly conflicts while others do not and the difference this makes to their electoral fortunes. Examining U.S. Senate elections from 1966-1972, we find that state-level casualties, military experience, and a variety of other factors affect candidate positions on the Vietnam War. Challenger and incumbent positions are negatively related, suggesting that strategic considerations play a role in wartime policy formation. We also find that war plays a role in elections. Incumbents from states that experience higher casualties receive a smaller percentage of the vote, an effect ameliorated when the incumbent opposes the war and his or her opponent does not. Wartime casualties, we conclude, influence both the perceived cost of the war and its salience, affecting both candidate positions and elections, suggesting that selectorate/electorate-type arguments about war and domestic politics can apply to the US system.

Nearly 30 years after the conclusion of the Vietnam War, it has become conventional wisdom that the U.S. population remains extremely sensitive to wartime casualties, and that this sensitivity serves as a check on the behavior of decisionmakers. That casualties matter to citizens and leaders alike appears obvious, but what is less clear is the process that connects the two. Specifically, politicians act as if they might be held accountable for war deaths, yet little is known of the process that makes this possible. What evidence is there that the public is willing or capable of holding decisionmakers accountable for the human costs of war?

Virtually all analyses of war and domestic politics focus on presidents, prime ministers, or states as unitary actors. On one hand, this makes sense, as foreign policy operates primarily at the national level. Yet there are a number of reasons to explore the effects of war at sub-national levels of aggregation. First, democratic leaders with sub-national constituencies frequently influence foreign policy, and some systems, such as the U.S., have a disaggregated policy process that includes politicians with sub-national constituencies—e.g., U.S. Senators. Second, arguments about the electoral accountability of leaders to policy outcomes are not theoretically bound to operate exclusively at the national level, and testing these arguments on a population of sub-national actors helps to determine better the penetration of international affairs into domestic politics. Finally, the domestic effects of international politics, and in particular wartime casualties, dramatically vary both geographically and temporally within a single conflict. An advantage

of disaggregating the political processes of nation states to explore the effects of war on politics is that it allows us to capture this variation.

We argue that wartime deaths, which vary considerably across space and over time, represent a, if not *the*, most visible cost of a nation's involvement in war and serve to highlight both the relative importance of the conflict to its citizenry, as well as the successfulness of the effort. As casualties increase, *ceteris paribus*, voters are less satisfied with the status quo. As approval declines, incumbents seeking reelection are more likely to pay a price if they are perceived to be responsible for, or continue to support, the current war policy. Candidates openly opposed to current policy may reap electoral benefit, particularly as costs mount. During periods of international conflict, proximate casualties and candidates' positions on the conflict augment previously established domestic political variables in predicting electoral outcomes.

Casualties also influence the wartime positions of both incumbents and challengers. Challengers might choose to differentiate themselves by articulating opposition to a status quo policy, particularly one perceived as increasingly costly. They might, however, be constrained in this strategy if they perceive that the incumbent holds the median voter's position on the war. Similarly, incumbents are somewhat constrained by previous policy positions they might have taken, but may change their position if the costs of the war become unpalatably high.

This perspective differs sharply from that of early scholars of political representation, who maintained that foreign policy issues are of low salience, do not correspond well to a unidimensional ideological classification, and are part of the 'high politics' of national unity (Miller and Stokes 1963, Converse 1964). This view was challenged by studies that demonstrate the influence of foreign policy on public opinion (Cook 1979; Markus 1979; Hurwitz and Peffley 1987;

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Page and Shapiro 1992; Niemi and Weisberg 1993; Zaller 1991, 1992) and new studies of representation that incorporate the impact of low information and low salience issues (Carmines and Kuklinski 1990; Gerber and Jackson 1993; Wood and Andersson 1998).

Recent analyses find that casualties play a critical role in the interaction of domestic and international politics—especially the democratic peace (DeRouen 2000; Fordham 1998; Gartzke 2001; Gelpi and Feaver 2002; Holsti 1996). Ray (1995: 203) writes that the pacifying effect of publics caused by wartime casualties represents a critical point in democratic peace arguments. Research suggests that for democracies, concerns about casualties influence the likelihood of conflict (Morgan and Campbell 1991), the cost of fighting (Siverson 1995), the likelihood of victory (Reiter and Stam 2002), and post-war leader tenure (Bueno de Mesquita and Siverson 1995).

Yet, because the U.S. political system disaggregates decisionmaking across two elected branches not bound by responsible party government, the public is able to assess blame across multiple decisionmakers (Nicholson and Segura 1999; Nicholson, Segura, and Woods 2002). Thus, applications of democratic peace arguments and selectorate/electorate arguments (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 1999; Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003) to U.S. politics necessitate a research design that moves beyond a unitary actor approach and establishes this process across branches.

We estimate the role casualties played during the Vietnam War in both the policy preferences of U.S. Senators and their subsequent electoral fortunes. We find that international affairs influence sub-national domestic politics, suggesting that arguments about democratic electoral accountability and war apply beyond a nation's leader.

THEORY

Research suggests that proximate or “local” casualties influence the formation of attitudes towards the conflict by both individuals (Gartner and Segura 2000; Gartner, Segura and Wilkening 1997) and mass publics (Gartner and Segura 1998). Carson et al. (2001) find that a measure of likely Civil War district casualties helps to explain the mid-term House election of 1862-63. For Senate elections, the critical unit of analysis is the state. If casualty rates were spatially uniform, then analysis at the national level would capture all casualty-based effects (Mueller 1973, 1994). National casualties hold only four different values during Senate election years in the Vietnam War, 1966, 1968, 1970, and 1972 and thus provide insufficient temporal and geographic variation to be meaningful beyond simply representing year identifiers.¹

There is, however, wide variance in both annual and cumulative state-level war dead per-capita. During the Vietnam War, annual per-capita casualty rates varied by over 11,000 percent in states holding Senate elections, from a low in New Jersey in 1972 of 1.116 persons killed in action per one million residents to a high in Oklahoma in 1968 of 123.877. Even within the same year, variation was quite large. For example, New Mexico's 1972 killed in action rate per one million residents (8.850) was over 793 percent higher than that of New Jersey's (1.116).

While exact estimations of per-capita casualties are not necessary for casualties to convey information, a number of mechanisms facilitate perceptions of state-wide casualties. Government figures are broken down by state and the announcement of individual casualties almost always is accompanied by a state reference. Gravestones in national and foreign military cemeteries include state identifiers and obviously are clear in state-specific military cemeteries. Local and national media, as well as anti-war protestors, provide information on state-level casualties. For example, *Life* magazine published the names, state, and pictures of 242 American soldiers who died in Vietnam between May 28 and June 3, 1969 (*Life* June 27, 1969). Anti-war protestors took out an ad in the April 12, 1970 issue of the *Des Moines Register* with crosses representing each of the 714 Iowan deaths that had accumulated to date (Bryan 1976). Newspaper stories frequently emphasize the local aspect of casualties and research suggests that local casualties positively affect a conflict's coverage by local media (Gartner 2004). These examples represent a variety of formal and informal processes that facilitate state-based casualty assessments.

Position Formation

When do candidates speak out against a conflict? While previous research largely treated political positions as exogenous, particularly those dealing with foreign policy (Murray 1996), recent research argues that candidates' positions in elections are moderated by information on policy costs and salience (Alvarez 1997; Franklin 1991). Local casualties are the costs of war most salient to citizens in the formation of attitudes. Elites respond to these local attitudes, which for senators revolve around the state as the unit of analysis. As a result, Senate candidates will see state-level deaths as more costly than those that occurred from other states. By capturing the state-level costs of the war, per-capita casualties are likely to increase elite opposition to the war in a manner similar to their well-documented influence on individual and aggregate opinion.

H₁: Candidates from states that experience higher levels of casualties are more likely to oppose a conflict.

Since opinion effects are of interest to both challengers and incumbents, we need to consider circumstances under which these two similarly motivated people will choose opposite positions. Challengers are strategic (Jacobson and

¹ Recent work raises doubts about the explanatory power of logged national casualties, as used by Mueller (1973) and others, showing that when temporal auto-correlation concerns are controlled for, coefficients on this measure lose statistical significance (Gartner and Segura 1998).

Kernell 1981) and need to provide voters with a reason to vote for them and, hence, have an incentive to select positions that differentiate them from incumbents. At the same time, challengers and incumbents are each more likely to be elected if they support the median policy position of the voters. An incumbent sensitive to casualties likely already occupies the median voter position. This creates what we call the *Challenger's Dilemma*: how do challengers differentiate themselves from incumbents without sacrificing the advantage of holding the median voter position?

A quick glance at the data suggests that the urge to differentiate is the stronger of the two effects. In 76 of the 127 contested Senate elections during Vietnam, the challenger and incumbent-party candidate held different positions on the war. Of course, this could have been the result of party politics or other electoral forces. And while we might be correct in conceptualizing the candidates' positions as the product of individual policy judgment or political strategy, there is an entire selection process—particularly primary campaigns—which may well have played a role in the positions held by the eventual nominees of each party. Though we believe that wartime variables including casualties are one component of this process, by no means are they the only relevant factors. For us, then, the test would be to hold these other factors constant to assess if *ceteris paribus*, candidate positions are really inversely related.

H₂: Challengers will take positions contrary to that held by incumbents.²

In a democracy, wars largely start with strong legislative support. Even if not formally required, legislative approval is frequently sought out. For example, in Vietnam, the 1964 Gulf of Tonkin Resolution was opposed by only two senators and unanimously approved by the House of Representatives (Karnow 1991: 391-92). For most incumbents, speaking out against the war means moving from a position of support to opposition. Reversals of position may be politically costly. Acting strategically, however, we think incumbents switch positions when a position becomes too costly or when changing circumstances legitimately change an incumbent's perception of the issue. And there is a large and well-developed literature on strategic reelection seeking behavior and shirking (Kuklinski 1978; Thomas 1984; Bernstein 1991).

Changing positions may entail political costs, but it does happen. During the Vietnam War, a number of incumbents changed positions between elections. For example, in 1966 Senators McClellan (Arkansas) and Spong (Virginia) were hawks, while in 1972 they were doves. Some incumbents even changed positions within an election. For example, in 1970 Senators Stennis (Mississippi) and Montoya (New Mexico) both changed from hawkish to dovish positions during the course of the campaign (*Congressional Quarterly*

Weekly Report 1970: 945, 25-S). Looking at the data, in 46 percent of the elections we study, the incumbent party's candidate was opposed to the conflict, despite near unanimous support at the outset. Interestingly, challengers were less likely to hold dovish positions (only 34 percent of the cases).

We predict that the costs incumbents face for altering their positions decreases the effect of casualties on policy formation when compared to challengers. We do not anticipate that these differences are sufficient to alter the directional relationship between variables, but we do anticipate that the intensity of those relationships—the size of coefficients and the degree of statistical significance—varies between incumbents and challengers.

H₃: The magnitude and significance of the relationships between casualties and candidate position are weaker for incumbents than for challengers.

Elections

Since earlier research has shown that costly conflicts are likely to suffer diminishing public support, we would expect to see the effects of this opinion change manifested in the electoral arena. Variations in cost and in the relative positions of the candidates seeking election should both have a bearing on the outcome. State-level casualties, we argue, best represent wartime costs to their specific audiences. Other things equal, incumbents, particularly those who hold office in institutions such as Congress, which can be seen as having responsibility for the prosecution of the war (Fiorina 1981), will fare worse in states with high state-based casualties compared with states suffering comparatively fewer losses.

H₄: The vote share of the incumbent candidate will be negatively related to state per-capita casualties.

We believe the influence that incumbent and challenger positions on a war have on election outcomes depend on their pair-wise interactions. Shared positions are less useful as a voting cue. When opposing candidates hold the same position, we would expect the increasing costs of the war to have less of an effect. For example, Page and Brody (1972: 982, 984) found that, "Vietnam policy preferences did not have a great effect on voting for the major party candidates in 1968," because there was, "... rather little difference between Nixon's and Humphrey's stated positions on Vietnam policy."

H₅: The vote share for those opposing the war will increase while the vote share for those not opposing the war will decrease, if the two major party candidates hold different positions.

In Senate elections, when candidates disagree and human costs of the war are high, those openly opposing the conflict are likely to be rewarded with additional votes.

² When we refer to incumbents, we mean both incumbent candidates and those representing the incumbent party should the seat be open, unless specified otherwise.

DATA AND VARIABLES

The universe of analysis is *all* regularly scheduled, two-party Senate elections between 1966 and 1972 inclusive. Because of the difficulty of partisan interpretation represented by Harry Byrd (I-VA), his re-election is dropped as are five uncontested elections ($N = 127$).³

Positions

We identify challengers and incumbents as *Hawks*, *Administration Supporters*, *Doves*, or *No Position* each coded 1 or 0.⁴ We create two sets of dependent variables. First, *Incumbent Dove* and *Challenger Dove* are coded 1 if the relevant candidate is a dove and 0 otherwise. Second, we generate two ordinal variables, *Challenger Position* and *Incumbent Position*, coding doves as 3, administration supporters and those with no position 2 (since both represent explicit or implicit supporters of the status quo), and hawks 1.⁵

Capturing the relationship between casualties and their domestic political effects is complicated by findings that demonstrate that different casualty measures are more appropriate under different circumstances (Gartner and Segura 1998). This is because of the fundamental differences between marginal casualties, which increase and decrease, cumulative casualties that monotonically increase, and opinion change—which is generally unidirectional, moving from support to opposition. When costs increase, marginal casualties better capture temporal and spatial variation and should be associated with opposition. By contrast,

when marginal casualties decrease, we would not expect a concomitant decline in opposition because, of course, total casualties continue to climb, albeit at a slower rate. Mueller (1973) shows this uneven sensitivity to casualty experiences. We create casualty variables that combine three measures: marginal casualties, direction of change in marginal casualties, and cumulative casualties.

To determine marginal casualties, we count the number of KIA from each state for one year prior to the election. Since this number will vary in part as a consequence of state population, we divide this number by the state's population (taken from the 1970 Census and measured in thousands). The result, *State Marginal Casualties*, is a per-capita measure of a state's recent sacrifices and a salient indicator of the overall costliness of the conflict. We also measure *State Cumulative Casualties*, which represent the total number of KIA from a state since the onset of hostilities in the conflict, again divided by state population in thousands. We determine *Direction of State Marginal Casualties* by comparing the marginal casualty rate for the most recent 12-month period before the election ($time_t$), with the 12-month period a year earlier ($time_{t-1}$). When the most recent year's casualties are greater—costs are getting worse—we code *Direction of State Marginal Casualties* as 1, and code it 0 when costs are decreasing.⁶ We capture state casualties with *State Marginal Casualties* when costs increase (*Direction of State Marginal Casualties* = 1) and *State Cumulative Casualties* when marginal casualties are declining (*Direction of State Marginal Casualties* = 0). Values of each variable are otherwise coded to zero. *Direction of Marginal Casualties* itself is not directly included in the analyses. We expect that both casualty measures will be positively associated with *Incumbent Dove* and *Challenger Dove*, and *Challenger* and *Incumbent Position*, because higher casualty levels shift the opinion of the median voter towards opposition to the conflict, and provide the candidates with electoral incentives to be more dovish.

Military service also likely influences a candidate's position (Gelpi and Feaver 2002). There are two contrasting arguments. First, those who served are better able, politically, to take dovish positions (the only-Nixon-could-go-to-China claim). Second, military service socializes those who serve to be more hawkish. Candidates can also react to their adversary's military experience, again in two ways. Candidates facing opponents with military experience may be more likely to take hawkish positions in order to neutralize a possible opponent advantage. Second, candidates—especially challengers—facing opponents who served in the military, and are thus perceived to be more hawkish, may distinguish themselves by being doves. We create the variables *Incumbent* and *Challenger Military Service* (coded 0 or 1).

We include seven contextual factors that we think are critical to predicting candidate choice of position. *Open Seat* indi-

³ We think strategic choice is critical to position formation. We could include and control for unopposed cases. These outliers (percent of vote = 100) likely contaminate the other relationships while artificially increasing explained variance (R^2).

⁴ If multiple positions exist, we use the position that was articulated closest to the election.

⁵ About half of our position data came from *Congressional Quarterly*. Other sources included anthologies of congressional biographies and *Facts on File* (Cook 2000) and Nader's *Congress Project* (1972). Remaining positions were obtained from candidate and war histories and, as a last resort, the largest daily in the state's largest city or the state's capital city was examined for each of two two-week periods preceding and immediately following the election. A complete list of candidate positions and the sources from which they were obtained is available from the authors. Candidates are coded as "doves" when they endorse less aggressive policies than those in effect or espoused by the administration. These include: (1) terms such as "dove," (2) a preference for early or aggressively seeking an end to the war or (3) criticism of the president or of the candidate's opponent for being too hawkish. Candidates are coded as "hawk" when they endorse more aggressive policies than those in effect or put forward by the administration. These include: (1) terms such as "hawk," (2) support for more aggressive pursuit of the war or (3) criticism of the president or of the candidate's opponent as being too restrained in the pursuit of victory. Candidates are coded as "supports administration" when they are consistently described as echoing or following the lead of the administration or, for incumbents, if there is no textual reference to a candidate's position, and their votes conform to the administration's current preferences. For 29 challengers and 8 incumbents we found no information regarding their thoughts on the war and identify them as holding "no position."

⁶ This divides the Vietnam War sample almost exactly in two, with 63 elections occurring when marginal casualties are increasing or unchanging in a particular state and 64 when they decrease.

cates that the incumbent party candidate is not actually the current occupant of the seat—who has retired or been defeated in the primary. *State Partisanship* measures the Democratic Party's state strength, and is the share of the two party vote received by LBJ in the 1964 presidential election (standardized). We expect this measure to be positively associated with the probability that the candidate chooses a dove position. Because candidates who take no position give opponents greater strategic latitude, we include *Opponent No Position* (coded 1 or 0). *Party* is coded 1 for Democrats and 0 for Republicans. We include *Population* (in millions) because we adjust the casualty figures for state-population. In order to determine the source of any effect in a ratio variable, the denominator needs to be included separately. Only then, can we isolate the effect of casualties without fearing that the coefficient is driven by the effect across population size.

Presidential popularity has often been found to affect the likelihood of legislators supporting the policies of the current administration. We include *Presidential Approval*, the percent of support expressed nationally for the president in the fall immediately preceding the election.⁷ When the administrations managing the War are more popular nationally, we expect support of the war effort to be higher, and opposition lower, than when those same administrations attract less overall approval. The coefficient, then, should be positive.

Defense Personnel Per Capita represents the number of people in a state actively working in the military or defense industries divided by state population. It is reasonable to expect a higher degree of vigilance to the progress of the war among those with more at stake—especially since we control for state casualties, for which we anticipate opposite effects.

Southerners have repeatedly been found to be more supportive of military activity, “representatives from the South [are] most hawkish, followed by those of the West, with those of the North last” (Nisbett and Cohen 1996: 64). We hypothesize that in Southern states the effect that war deaths have on the likelihood of candidates opposing the conflict and the electoral effect of opposition, or will be dampened, missing, or even present in the reverse—that is, increasing support for hawks rather than doves. Though doves can be hurt outside the South as well, the distribution of hawks and doves by region suggests that the opinion dynamics in the South are different. Given the relative non-competitiveness of southern elections in this era, we also anticipate that southern incumbents will do better than other incumbents. The variable *South* is coded 1 if the election occurs in a Southern or border state and 0 otherwise.⁸ Our expectation is that the *South* will have a negative effect on the probability of either candidate being a dove and a positive effect on incumbent party vote share.

Elections

We analyze the share of the two-party vote received in the general election by the incumbent senator (or the candidate of the incumbent party in open seats) which we call *Incumbent Percent*. We expect both *Marginal Casualties* and *Cumulative Casualties* to be negatively associated with *Incumbent Percent*.

Using *Challenger Dove* and *Incumbent Dove*, we include three variables to represent joint position dynamics: *Dove_p, Not Dove_c*; *Not Dove_p, Dove_c*; *Dove_p, Dove_c*. The unexpressed category is *Not Dove_p, Not Dove_c*.⁹ We think that each pair will have a different effect on election outcomes, and that these effects are moderated by the state's region. We expect an incumbent who speaks out against Vietnam is rewarded if the opponent does not follow suit, such that *Dove_p, Not Dove_c* will have a positive coefficient. Similarly, we expect that *Not Dove_p, Dove_c* will have a negative coefficient, indicating that incumbents that support the status quo policy or are openly hawkish, can be hurt if the challenger stakes out an anti-war position. In this case, challengers may select positions with some beliefs about what the effect will be at the polls. We anticipate that *Dove_p, Dove_c* will have little effect given the candidates' agreement.

Second, our expectation is that the control dummy *South* will have a positive coefficient given the dominance of the Democratic Party in that region during this period, resulting in members from the South being routinely reelected with large margins. We think that in the South, the negative effect anticipated for *Not Dove_p, Dove_c* will be weaker or perhaps reversed. We check this by including the interactive term *South × Not Dove_p, Dove_c*. A significant and positive effect would be an indication that those more supportive of the conflict were punished less or even—should the coefficient be larger in magnitude than the one on the main-effects position variable—rewarded for that position in the South.

We control for *Open Seat*, *South*, *Incumbent Party*, *Population* as described above. *Open Seat* indicates the absence of an actual incumbent and likely leads to lower vote shares for the incumbent party. *Incumbent Party* simply controls for the difference between Democrats and Republicans. *Population* is included for two reasons. First, as suggested above, its presence as a denominator in the per-capita casualty measure requires that we include it as a main effect. Second, some have suggested that *Population* will have a direct effect on the quality of representation and, by extension, the popularity of incumbents (Lee 1998; Oppenheimer 1996).

The literature on Senate elections suggests that we need to control for additional factors (Abramowitz 1981; Abramowitz and Segal 1986; Abramowitz and Segal 1992; Segura

⁷ Gallup Polls, quarterly percent in support of the president, fourth quarter.

⁸ This includes the 11 states of the Confederacy plus Missouri and Kentucky.

⁹ An additional factor to consider might be whether an incumbent's position has changed. A recent change of position should dampen the hypothesized relationship between position and performance. This is untestable because it is essentially impossible to identify exactly and under what conditions the candidates change their preferences prior to an election.

and Nicholson 1995; Squire 1995; Westlye 1991). *Electoral Cycle* is coded 1 if the presidential and midterm cycle favors the incumbent's party and 0 otherwise. That is, Republican incumbents receive more votes in presidential years when the GOP wins the White House and in midterm years when the White House is in Democratic hands, and vice versa (Campbell 1960; Campbell 1997). *Incumbent Party Advantage* controls for the degree of partisan dominance of the incumbent's political party in that state. To assess this, we standardized the mean Democratic vote shares in two presidential elections—1964 and 1972—in each state. For Democratic incumbents, the *Incumbent Party Advantage* is this standard score (with negative numbers indicating that Democrats do less well on average in Presidential elections). For Republicans, *Incumbent Party Advantage* represents the standard score multiplied by negative one.¹⁰

Finally, we include a modified measure of presidential approval, since same party candidates generally do better as approval increases. *Presidential Approval Advantage* is coded as the *Presidential Approval* variable for the president's co-partisans, and recoded as 100 minus *Presidential Approval* for incumbents of the opposition party. We expect a positive coefficient here, indicating that incumbent co-partisans do better when the president is more popular, while incumbents from the opposition do better when the president's popularity is suffering.

RESULTS

Positions

We analyze separately four dependent variables representing candidates' positions: *Challenger Dove* and *Incumbent Dove* (using logit analyses), and *Challenger Position* and *Incumbent Position* (using ordered logit estimations).¹¹ In all cases, a positive coefficient suggests that an independent variable makes a candidate more likely to hold a dovish position.

The logit results for the likelihood that candidates hold dovish positions are shown in Table 1. Models for both incumbent party candidates and challengers are both highly significant and predict between 75.6 percent and 78 percent of the cases correctly, reducing the proportional error between 35 percent and 48 percent (using Lambda-p calculation for Proportional Reduction of Error). *State Marginal Casualties* has a significant effect on both challenger and incumbent position taking, making each more likely to hold dovish positions. Challengers from states with increasing *State Cumulative Casualties* are also more likely to be doves, though the effect of this variable is zero for incumbents. These results are supportive of Hypothesis 1; higher state casualties increase the probability that candidates oppose the conflict.

For challengers and incumbents there also appears to be an inverse relationship between the positions of candidates, as opposition from one candidate lowers the probability of opposition by the other. The likelihood of taking a dovish position is decreased when faced with a dovish opponent (*Opponent Dove* has a negative and significant coefficient in both models), which supports our contention in H₂ that positiontaking includes strategic considerations.

Incumbents are also less likely to be doves when they face challengers with no stated position on the conflict. Similarly, incumbent party candidates running for open seats previously held by their party are less likely to be doves. Democratic incumbents, incumbents from more Democratic states, and those running in periods of relatively high presidential popularity are more likely to be doves. The military service records of neither the incumbents nor their opponents appear to have an appreciable effect on incumbent position.

As we have indicated, both measures of casualties significantly shape challenger opinion, as does the position of their opponent. In addition, challengers are less likely to be doves when they have military experience. Challengers are more likely to hold positions in opposition to the war if they are Democrats and if their opponent has a record of military service. Unlike the model of incumbent party candidate position, challenger positions appear unaffected by the presence of an open seat, the popularity of the president, or state-level partisanship. The last result should not be surprising given the strategic fix presented by the challenger's dilemma, i.e., choosing a position in opposition to someone already elected by this specific electorate.

For both challengers and incumbents, being from the South does appear to have the effect we anticipated. Southern challengers are significantly more hawkish than others, while southern incumbents also appear to be more hawkish, though the coefficient is marginally insignificant.

The changes in predicted probabilities for significant variables are reported in the columns adjoining the coefficients. Changes reported represent the net change in the probability that the dependent variable equals one (Dove) given a shift in the predictor variable holding all other predictors constant at their means. The change in value for dichotomous variables is 0 to 1, while the change for continuous variables is a single standard deviation change from .5 standard deviations below the mean to .5 standard deviations above. In each case, the estimated effects of casualties are substantial. Controlling for other effects, when marginal casualties are increasing, the shift in the marginal casualty value of one standard deviation around the mean raises the likelihood of the incumbent opposing the war by .23, and among challengers by .18. Challengers also appear to be affected by the cumulative loss (when marginal casualties are declining), with a one standard deviation shift raising the probability of opposition by .22. Looking at the effects of strategic considerations, we also see a sizable impact. Incumbents facing dovish challengers have a .41 lower probability of themselves being in opposition, while challengers facing dovish incumbents have a .21 lower probability

¹⁰ Campaign spending, a key variable in earlier studies, is not applicable here because those data were not available prior to the formation of the Federal Elections Commission in 1971.

¹¹ All analyses are conducted in Stata™.

≡ TABLE 1
 LOGIT ESTIMATES FOR DICHOTOMOUS MEASURE OF CANDIDATE OPPOSITION TO THE VIETNAM WAR IN U.S. SENATE ELECTIONS,
 1966-1972

Variables	Incumbents		Challengers	
	Model 1 Coefficients, (Std. Errors)	Model 1 Changes in Predicted Probability y=1	Model 2 Coefficients, (Std. Errors)	Model 2 Changes in Predicted Probability y=1
State Marginal Casualties	.027* (.015)	.234	.026* (.014)	.178
State Cumulative Casualties	-.003 (.004)		.008* (.005)	.215
South	-1.071† (.657)	-.247	-2.356** (.796)	-.334
Party	2.402*** (.581)	.518	1.534** (.618)	.308
Defense Personnel Per Capita	.008 (.031)		.039 (.032)	
Population	.092† (.062)	.092	.059 (.061)	
State Partisanship	.055* (.031)	.155	.006 (.033)	
Incumbent Military Service	.837 (.589)		1.059* (.584)	.180
Challenger Military Service	-.807 (.611)		-1.095* (.553)	-.236
Presidential Approval	.308* (.153)	.076	-.066 (.158)	
Opponent Dove	-1.873** (.652)	-.412	-1.115* (.617)	-.210
Opponent No Position	-1.845** (.763)	-.378	1.394 (1.033)	
Open Seat	-1.270* (.580)	-.287	-.432 (.587)	
Constant	-20.942** (8.760)		1.847 (8.793)	
Chi-Square	57.860		44.740	
Chi-Square Significance	.000		.000	
Pseudo R-Square	.330		.275	
% Predicted Correctly	75.590		77.950	
PRE Lambda-p	.475		.349	
N (Sample Size)	127		127	

One Tailed Significance: † $p < .075$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

of being openly opposed to the conflict. We can fairly conclude that opposition to the Vietnam War among members of, and candidates for, the U.S. Senate is significantly driven, at least in part, by both casualty rates in their respective states and strategic considerations in their specific races.

We replicate the previous analysis, this time using an ordinal variable separating those who were hawks from those who simply articulated support for the current administration's policies, something of a middle position. Again, open opposition is coded as the highest values. Table 2

≡ TABLE 2

ORDERED LOGIT ESTIMATES FOR TRICHOTOMOUS CANDIDATE POSITION ON THE VIETNAM WAR IN U.S. SENATE ELECTIONS 1966-1972

Variables	Incumbents		Challengers	
	Model 1 Coefficients, (Std. Errors)	Model 1 Changes in Predicted Probability y=1	Model 2 Coefficients, (Std. Errors)	Model 2 Changes in Predicted Probability y=1
State Marginal Casualties	.026* (.013)	.231	.020* (.011)	.138
State Cumulative Casualties	-.002 (.003)		.007* (.003)	.202
South	-1.157* (.574)	-.268	-1.694** (.570)	-.266
Party	2.089*** (.456)	.467	-1.814*** (.501)	-.369
Defense Personnel Per Capita	.004 (.026)		.025 (.026)	
Population	.016 (.052)		.058 (.053)	
State Partisanship	.038* (.022)	.108	-.026 (.020)	
Incumbent Military Service	.673 (.480)		.760* (.446)	.136
Challenger Military Service	-.926* (.500)	-.227	-1.209** (.467)	-.265
Presidential Approval	.307* (.133)	.386	-.030 (.118)	
Opponent Dove	-1.599*** (.523)	-.365	-1.009* (.464)	-.194
Opponent No Position	-1.710** (.609)	-.364	1.591* (.842)	.371
Open Seat	-.673† (.458)	-.162	-.165 (.436)	
Cut point 1	17.982 (7.389)		-4.670 (6.581)	
Cut point 2	19.420 (7.427)		-2.448 (6.569)	
Chi-Square	60.770		59.680	
Chi-SquareProb.	.000		0.000	
Pseudo R-Square	.227		0.215	
N (Sample Size)	127		127	

One Tailed Significance: † p < .075, * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

shows the results of the ordered logit analyses of *Incumbent Position* and *Challenger Position*. The results from this approach are remarkably similar to those using the dichotomous version of the dependent variable. With only minor variation on control variables, the direction and significance of predictors is the same as before. Most importantly, the

effect of casualties on opposing the war remains. When marginal casualties are increasing, variation in these increases is directly related to the likelihood of challengers and incumbents opposing the conflict. Challengers from states with higher *State Cumulative Casualties* are also more likely to oppose the war. Similarly, the strategic effects

remain, with the positions of two candidates in the same race consistently inversely related, and southerners remain more hawkish, with significant coefficients for both challengers and incumbents. Using dichotomous or trichotomous measures of candidate position, the effects we anticipated with our first two hypotheses are persistent.

And what of our third hypothesis? We argue that incumbents and challengers face somewhat different strategic circumstances when selecting a position. We suggest that the sensitivity of incumbent position to external forces, particularly casualties, would be circumscribed by past positions and the fear of political costs from switching sides. Similarly, in our discussion of the challenger's dilemma, we suggest that challengers are constrained in their desire to differentiate themselves from incumbents by the simultaneous urge to adopt the position of the median voter in their state, a position the incumbent may already occupy.

In both specifications, casualties appear to have a more powerful effect on the challenger position, with both variables reaching significance. By comparison, only one of the two variables reach significance for incumbents. These results support both H_3 and, more generally, our argument that incumbents face more structural constraints in choosing policy positions.

Elections

In order to assess whether these positions have meaningful political effects, we examine their impact on vote shares. We conduct an OLS regression on the incumbent party candidate's share of the two-party vote. As suggested by H_4 , *State Marginal Casualties* and *State Cumulative Casualties* have significant, negative effects on incumbent's share of the two-party vote. Without respect to their positions and holding other factors constant, both higher rates of marginal casualties (when casualties increase) and higher total accumulated war dead (when casualties decrease) cost incumbents votes.

Population and *Open Seat* also have significant, negative effects. Incumbent party candidates defending open seats, or incumbents from more populous states, receive a smaller percentage of the vote. As expected, incumbents are impacted from the well-recognized effects of the electoral cycle, doing well with co-partisans winning the White House, doing poorly in mid-terms if a co-partisan holds the White House, and vice versa for opposition party members. With regard to the strategic considerations we offer in H_5 , the results are supportive if somewhat more mixed. Dovish incumbents facing non-dove challengers appear to benefit from the difference, whereas challenger doves do not appear to be helped in facing non-dove incumbents. As we anticipated, there is no meaningful effect when both candidates oppose the war. And again, southerners differentiate themselves. Southern non-dove incumbents facing dovish challengers receive a higher percentage of the vote, suggesting that more hawkish stands remained relatively popular in the South, controlling for other factors. Model fit statistics suggest the model does reasonably well.

≡ TABLE 3
OLS ESTIMATES OF CASUALTIES, POSITIONS AND DOMESTIC
POLITICS ON INCUMBENT PERCENT OF VOTE,
U.S. SENATE ELECTIONS, 1966-1972

Variables	Coefficients (Std. Errors)	Betas
State Marginal Casualties	-.068* (.035)	-.251
State Cumulative Casualties	-.020* (.009)	-.296
South	2.649 (2.277)	.118
Incumbent Party	-.313 (2.883)	-.016
Defense Personnel Per Capita	-.064 (.102)	-.051
Population	-.454* (.200)	-.189
Electoral Cycle	2.806* (1.991)	.143
Presidential Approval Advantage	-.221 (.168)	-.160
Dove _I , Not Dove _C	3.795* (2.137)	.187
Not Dove _I , Dove _C	2.561 (2.488)	.111
Open Seat	-7.941*** (1.868)	-.353
South X Not Dove _I , Dove _C	11.093* (5.904)	.172
Dove _I , Dove _C	3.708 (3.089)	.115
Incumbent Party Advantage	-1.071 (.943)	-.102
Constant	70.992*** (10.256)	—
N	127	
R ²	0.3180	
Adj. R ²	0.2327	
F	3.73	
Significance	.0000	

One Tailed Significance: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Looking at the standardized coefficients reported in the second column, we see that the absence of a true incumbent has the most substantial impact on the incumbent party's vote share, and this is not surprising. After *Open Seat*, however, the two most powerful predictors of incumbent vote share are our two casualty measures.

CONCLUSION

War can be costly to leaders of democratic societies even when decisionmaking is divided across multiple institutions. We examine whether the costs of war had political consequences for holders of and aspirants to U.S. Senate seats during the Vietnam War. We show that state-level per-capita killed in action levels, which vary significantly across states and over time, had effects on the positions candidates chose to articulate and shaped the electoral prospects of incumbents, particularly in elections where candidates hold contrary positions.

Casualties affect elections in two ways. First, wartime variables affected position formation, where higher state casualties increased the likelihood that incumbents and challengers alike openly opposed the War. Second, casualties influence Senate elections directly. Incumbents are held responsible for the conduct of the war, and their vote share is adversely affected by higher casualty rates in their states. These results are consistent with earlier research demonstrating similar casualty-driven effects in mass publics, at both the individual and aggregate levels (Gartner and Segura 1998, 2000; Gartner, Segura, and Wilkening 1997).

Challengers face a wartime bind. If they come out against the war and the incumbent does not, they will not benefit; yet if they fail to differentiate themselves, they are unlikely, at least on the basis of this issue, to present the voters in their state with a compelling reason to elect them, a result consistent with earlier work on information, salience and strategic considerations in elections (Alvarez 1997; Franklin 1991).

Although both incumbents and challengers face constraints, our findings suggest that their behavior is endogenous to casualties. Candidates react strategically to the information provided to them by their state-level casualties, suggesting strategy is not reserved to the battlefield. Candidates behave strategically when formulating wartime positions, rightly perceiving that electorates respond to candidate position differences when voting.

What are the larger implications of these results for the relationship between international and domestic politics? War profoundly affects domestic politics through the instrument of casualties. We argue here that citizens are well informed of local costs and sensitive to the positions of locally elected leaders. If the effects of war extend beyond national executives to legislative politics, then selectorate/electorate-type arguments about war and domestic politics, when properly operationalized, can apply to the U.S. system. Furthermore, it is not just the existence of war but its conduct that exerts a domestic political influence. In particular, the distribution of casualties across space and time provides elites and constituents with highly varied and critical information. Envisioning casualties as information begins to provide a process model for the democratic peace as it operates in the U.S. Wars and their attendant costs are directly tied to the fates of legislators, as they influence both the perceived cost of the war and its salience, affecting candidate positions, elections, and ultimately, we suspect, policy.

As a result, leaders, or those who aspire to become leaders, are correct in interpreting that the costs of international conflict—and their reactions to the same—have tremendous importance to their electoral future. The costs of their foreign policy actions will influence the political fortunes of sub-national leaders. Just as the casualties of a conflict are not uniformly distributed within the country, neither are the political consequences resulting from foreign policy actions.

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