

A NATION AT WAR: COMBAT CASUALTIES AND PUBLIC SUPPORT

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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by

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ABSTRACT

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The will of the American people throughout history to sustain support for our nation's leaders and their endeavors to further U.S. interests through military means has ebbed and flowed to both extremes. 11 September 2001 left the world in shock as it helplessly observed the events of that historical day take the hearts and minds of the American people to a height of patriotism never before seen in this country. However, many now wonder whether public support for the Global War on Terrorism can be sustained in the face of rising casualties among the men and women of our armed forces. This Strategic Research Project briefly reviews U.S. leaders' role in gaining support for its military actions then it examines Eric V. Larson's research on the impact of casualties in war. It then evaluates his findings by reviewing his hypothesis on an extended 1991 Gulf War against actual data from the second Gulf War—Operation Iraqi Freedom. It concludes with observations on Larson's theories and the role of U.S. leaders in sustaining support for the nation's military operations—especially potential wars.

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Future leaders of the Department of Defense—both military and civilian—are educated on various means available to our nation's leaders and how these means are utilized to promote and secure our national security interests. However, nations still often resort to war for settling international disputes and securing vital interests. Our strategic thinks tell us we have several other means at our disposal to settle international disputes, such as diplomatic, intelligence, informational, and economic means. However, it does not take a genius to determine where our leaders think our genuine power lies: Just one look at the 2008 Presidential budget makes this clear. The FY08 budget requests some \$481.4B in defense funding out of a total request of \$929.8B.¹ Thus the United States has developed a military capability second to none in the world. But when the going gets tough, will the American public support the use of this military force? Does it really matter to our nation's leaders if the public supports our military operations? There are many factors that influence public support of military

interventions. Certainly the public is concerned about actual threats to national interests, just cause of military interventions, cost in terms of life and money, and security of the homeland.

Not even three months after President George W. Bush declared the official end of major fighting in Iraq, questions concerning the will of the American public to support a continued presence of U.S. troops in Iraq began to surface. The question was not surprising to most; if anything, it was expected. An issue constantly discussed in the media and by political science theorists and analysts alike, U.S. casualties' factor largely in the willingness of the U.S. public to sustain their support for a military operation. There is no reason to doubt that casualties are the primary consideration for the public, but are casualties the real detractors of public support for military intervention?²

Using military force in the achievement of national security interests has been a difficult strategic option for American leaders since Vietnam. The American armed forces are without question the most powerful on the face of the earth—superbly trained, equipped, and poised for action. However, a sword in the hands of one unwilling to wield its might is nothing but a ritualistic symbol if it remains sheathed. General Colin Powell summed this up neatly: “Threats of military force will work only when U.S. leaders actually have decided that they are prepared to use force.”³

The very freedom of this great country is carried on the shoulders of the men and women who have fought the nation's wars and in many cases paid the ultimate sacrifice. It is difficult to image the heavy burden our leaders must carry when they decide to put these men and women on the first line of defense for this freedom we all

enjoy today and often take for granted. Let us first look at how theorists say our leaders view the role of public opinion in this war-making process.

Strategic Implications

Throughout the ages public support for their policy has been understood by American leaders to be important in policy establishment. Even the Prussian theorist Carl von Clausewitz recognized the importance of public support early in his treatise On War: “The passions that are kindled in war must already be inherent in the people.”⁴ However, the methods of raising public support have varied primarily between what theorists call the “delegate view” of democratic representation and the “trustee view” of democratic representation. Indeed public opinion is contingent on a leader’s own view of how public opinion guides policymaking at large.⁵

These views are then broken down into beliefs and variables in the decision-making context, theorists attempt to explain what the public witnesses on a daily basis amongst our elected officials. While interesting, their theories are more abstract than practicable. Suffice it to say that the impact of public opinion on the policies of our elected officials is dependent on the beliefs of that official. For example, President Ronald Reagan deployed U.S. troops in Feb 1984 in the face of strong public sentiment opposing further involvement after the U.S. Marine Barracks bombing in Beirut, Lebanon in Oct 1983, in which 241 marines were killed. But after 18 U.S. troops were killed and 78 were wounded in Somalia in 1993, President Bill Clinton quickly reversed his policy in the face of similar public sentiment. Even though public opinion strongly favored no further U.S. involvement in both cases, one president chose to ignore the public will while the other reacted quickly to it.

Both examples raise the issue of public opinion in the face of U.S. casualties. But are political leaders their own worst enemy when it comes to public support? Indeed, has the issue of casualties been wrongfully identified as the reason for lack of public support for U.S. military operations?

Casualty Aversion

Many analysts have discussed casualties and their effect on public opinion. A common consensus among most is that the Vietnam War has caused U.S. leaders to refuse to use the U.S. military because they fear an adverse political reaction to U.S. casualties in military operations. Even Army doctrine for operations declares that “the American people expect decisive victory and abhor unnecessary casualties.”⁶ But, why does Army doctrine include such a statement? It is common sense that the Army would want to retain and sustain its fighting forces, minimize casualties, and maintain superior battlefield numbers. However, a strategy that specifically cites casualty aversion would seem to reveal a center of gravity that is exceedingly vulnerable. Policymakers are even proposing to restrict the decision to employ troops by application of the low casualty/decisive victory requirement. But what has brought on this restrictive framework for employing American forces? Are casualties truly the reason for decreasing public support of U.S. military operations?

The RAND Corporation published its first reports on this subject in 1985; they focused primarily on Vietnam and based much of their research on this critical era. Then in 1994, as part of a broader study on regional deterrence, RAND published a report that addressed relationships between public support and casualties. The interest generated from this report paved the way for a more in-depth analysis of this issue. In

1997, RAND published the findings of this research. Although this 1997 study is built on research from previous studies, it revealed some interesting new insights.⁷

Eric V. Larson, a behavioral analyst and postdoctoral fellow at the RAND Corporation, believes that the American public will accept casualties that are considered contribution to U.S. interests. His conclusions are based on a comparison of public support for military action in six case studies—World War II; Korean, Vietnam, and Gulf wars; Panama; and Somalia. He accounts for four variables to explain the support or opposition to United States' interventions. The four variables include the perceived benefits, the prospects for success (or progress), the costs, and consensus support (or its absence) from political leaders.⁸

The end of the Cold War marked the end of the U.S. battle cry of “Defeat or Deter Communism.” This battle cry established purpose for the American public; it provided a clear strategic path for evaluating U.S. interests in troubling situations. It simplified public decision-making and rendered it comprehensible. Even more importantly, it made things much easier for our political leaders to package the complicated issues at hand.

We have now entered a new world, a world where we are learning to be the “super power.” Nowhere is this more apparent than in our ambivalence regarding use of military force in the protection and advancement of U.S national interests. Now our battle cries differ from day to day. Much of the public relies on our political leaders to vet the complex issues of foreign policy and the complex issues involved in prospective and ongoing military operations. The more complex the issues, the more heavily reliant the American people seem to become on leaders to guide their opinions.

Larson concludes that “the simplest explanation is that support for U.S. military operations and the willingness to tolerate casualties are based upon a sensible weighting of benefits and costs that is influenced heavily by consensus among political leaders.”⁹ In short, when political leaders fail to agree on the benefits and costs of a prospective or ongoing military operation, there should be little surprise that the public also becomes divided.¹⁰

In Larson’s research on the 1991 Gulf War, he speculates on what may have occurred if the war effort had not gone as expected or if the efforts had become drawn out over time. Interestingly enough the continuation of the Gulf War—or second Gulf War; or Operation Iraqi Freedom—allows us to examine Larson’s conclusions against this very scenario. The sections that follow review Larson’s theories, focusing specifically on the on-going war in Iraq.¹¹ While some may conclude that this evaluation is premature because the war continues, I believe there is more than enough data from the past five years to put Larson’s theories to the test of current affairs.

Gulf War Continuation

The Gulf War began in 1990 with Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait. The United Nations responded with the launch of Operation Desert Storm in February 1991, which effectively evicted Iraq from Kuwait. U.S. interests—both economic and humanitarian—in the region were seen by most Americans as important. During this phase of the war, President George H. W. Bush garnered strong bipartisan support for military intervention.¹² The next phase of the war saw President Bill Clinton at the helm. While a significant military effort persisted with the enforcement of the “No Fly Zones,” the extended Gulf War managed to stay just below the public radar screen. The United

States exercised other forms of diplomatic power throughout this period, to include economic sanctions and United Nations weapon inspections. In 1998, military efforts in Iraq rose again to the forefront when the United States executed a three-day bombing campaign known as Operation Desert Fox as a result of Iraq's eviction of United Nations weapons inspectors.¹³ This effort met with little U.S. public opposition due to its brevity and delicate handling. Indeed, President Clinton enjoyed good bipartisan support and a 79 percent approval of his decision to take military action.¹⁴

Following the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001 and on the wave of initial U.S. military success in Afghanistan, the United States and a coalition of the willing invaded Iraq on 19 March 2003. The second invasion was justified under the original 1990 United Nations resolutions 660 and 678, as well as resolution, 1441 which again was an enforcement of resolution 678. In January 2003, just two months prior to the invasion, polls showed modest support for a U.S. military initiative in Iraq.¹⁵

Interestingly, similar polls indicated decreasing support for an invasion, whereas the majority favored more time for weapons inspectors to complete their investigations.¹⁶ At this point, the Bush administration had reasonable bipartisan support for their policy to take action to disarm Iraq.¹⁷ On the eve of the operation, Iraq's refusal to cooperate with weapons inspectors and the belief of more than eight in 10 Americans that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction resulted in increased support for military intervention.¹⁸

Two weeks into the operation bipartisan support swelled around the administration's decision.¹⁹ Operation Iraqi Freedom, like its predecessor Operation Desert Storm, yielded swift military success as a U.S. strike force quickly occupied Baghdad. So, President Bush dramatically announced an official end to military operations on 1 May

2003. This phase of the operation enjoyed high levels of support from the public, peaking at 76 percent.²⁰ Figure 1 shows the path of public support for the war 3 January 2003 to 25 July 2003.²¹ These numbers are slightly higher than for a similar period surrounding the 1991 Gulf War initiative, which peaked at 71 percent.²²

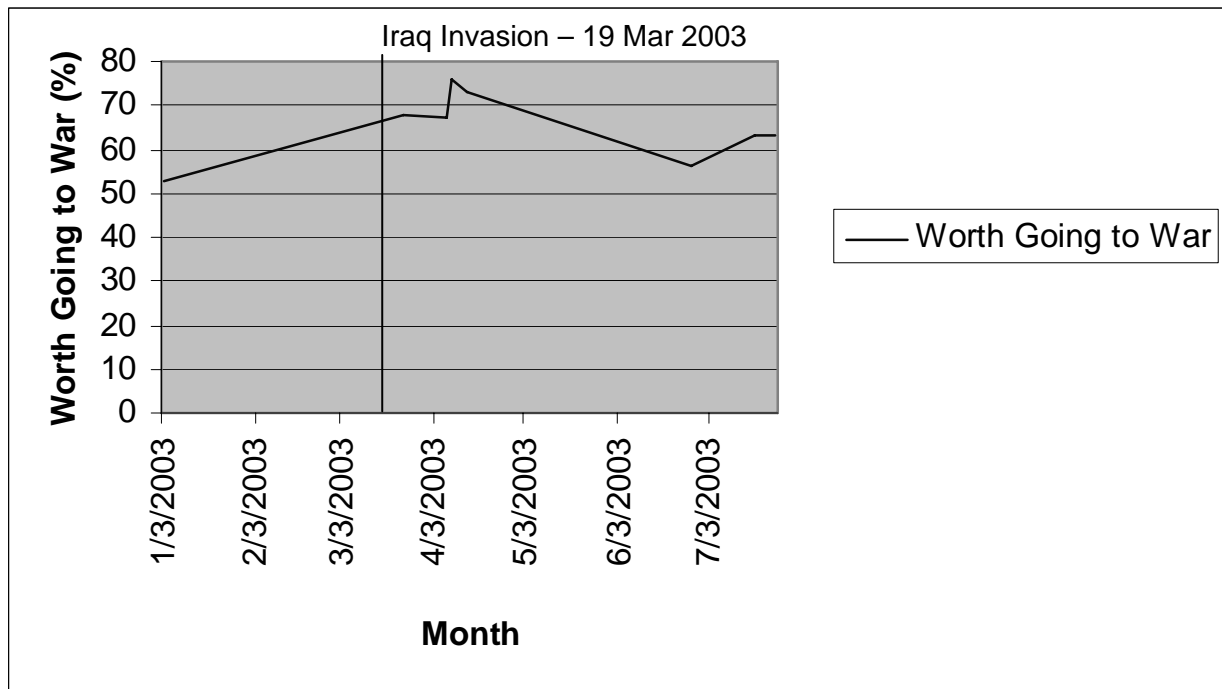


Figure 1: Support to War as a Function of Time Jan 2003 to July 2003

From this point in the Gulf War to the present, the United States had been in what the military refer to as phase IV, stability and peacekeeping operations. During the five years after the invasion of Iraq in what the Bush administration now calls the “Long War” on terrorism, public support has fallen sharply. Figure 2 depicts the decline of public support for the war 24 March 2003 to 6 July 2007.²³ Data from two national polls is included to illustrate the variations observed due to the specific questions asked of the public. The looming shadow of credibility cast over the administration in late 2003 dropped support drop to 59 percent. However, even with the ensuing investigations and

published findings, support for operations remained at 49 percent at roughly the same point in 2006. A December 2006 survey question asked, “What is your biggest concern about the war in Iraq?” The American public placed personal safety of troops/too many deaths/injuries at the top of the list, some 20 percent higher than its closest rival, which was “It’s a no win situation.” Yet more than four in 10 Americans continued to support the war.²⁴ The issues of the Bush administration’s credibility and the ensuing investigations quickly ignited partisan politics and the growing interest in campaign issues—specifically Iraq—heading toward the November 2008 elections. Harder lines separated supporters and opponents of the war. Despite falling support for the war, the Bush administration surged troop levels in mid-2007 to help secure key regions in Iraq when polls showed some 71 percent of Americans supported a proposal for withdrawal by April 2008.²⁵

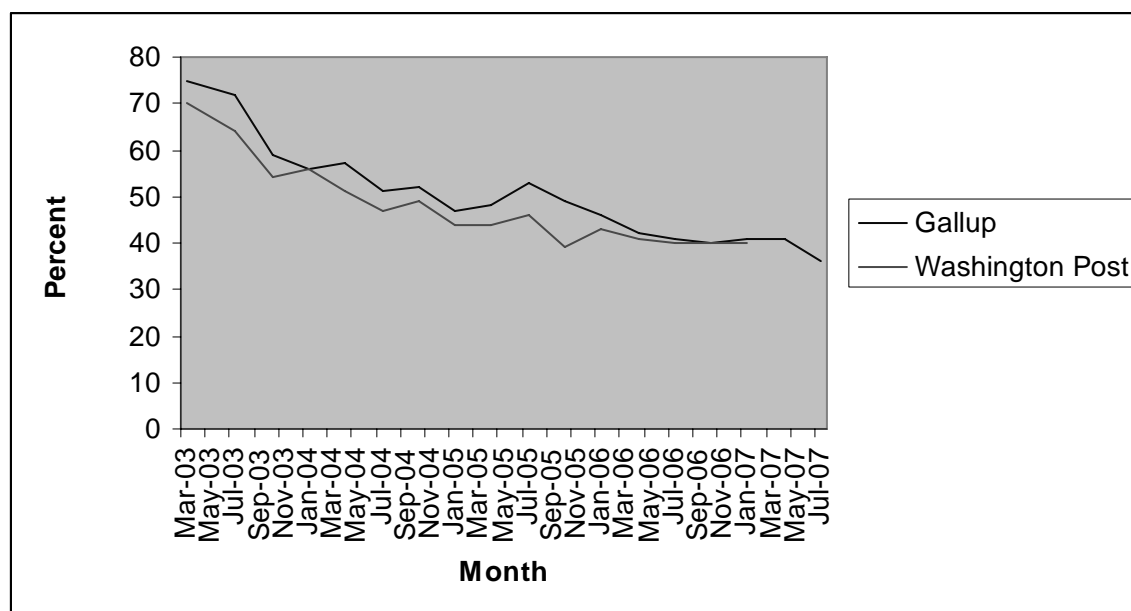


Figure 2: Support to War as a Function of Time March 2003 to July 2007

The following sections will discuss Larson’s factors— perceived benefits, the prospects for success (or progress), the costs, and consensus support (or its absence)

from political leaders—prescribed by Larson with respect to the second Gulf War. Has the evidence produced in the Long War validated Larson’s theories?

Perceived Stakes and Benefits

The Gulf War was the first since World War II where support did not originate from a U.S. stance against communism, but its continuation was launched on a new battle cry known as the “Global War on Terror.”²⁶ As in World War II, much of the support generated for the initiative came as a direct result of an attack on the United States homeland. But support for the Global War on Terror also derived from the shared perception of important stakes and concerns over future attacks that could employ weapons of mass destruction. In fact, prior to the invasion almost nine in 10 Americans believed very/somewhat strongly that the removal of Saddam Hussein from power was a very important foreign policy goal.²⁷ U.S. interests—security, energy, and democracy—in the region really had not changed from the onset of the Gulf War in 1991.²⁸ The continuing political momentum from the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks was enhanced because these attacks brought the war closer to home for many Americans. There was also optimism that swift, decisive victory, as was witnessed during Operation Desert Storm, would yield a favorable, comforting outcome. At the onset of the invasion, just over half of Americans polled believed that Saddam Hussein was directly or indirectly involved in the 11 September 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center.²⁹

President Bush justified the U.S. invasion of Iraq on the basis of its importance to ensuring the security of the homeland and the free world from terrorist attack and the deterrence of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Secretary of State Colin

Powell's presentation to the United Nations on 5 February 2003 rallied support at home, but did not sway traditional European allies such as Germany and France. Polls showed President Bush received initial widespread bipartisan support for his decision to invade Iraq, support that swelled immediately after the invasion.³⁰ The Bush administration would later come under fire from congress and the press over issues surrounding perceived falsification or exaggeration of the issues of weapons of mass destruction and of Saddam Hussein's involvement in the 11 September 2001 attack and associations with al-Qaeda. Even after no weapons of mass destruction were found most Americans still believed that the war was worth the effort.³¹

Prospects for Success

The swift decisive victory of the 1991 Operation Desert Storm left little doubt in the minds of the American public or world on the prospects for success in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Initially the American public remained confident its key goals—capture or kill Saddam Hussein, find weapons of mass destruction, and establish a stable democratic government— would be realized.³² There were, however, some differences in opinion between Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, GEN Eric Shinseki on the number of troops required too successfully conduct the operation and the monetary costs associated with the invasion and ensuing reconstruction. Expectations regarding the likely duration of the war were also somewhat unstable. Initial expectations expressed by the administration were projecting something on the order of two years, some as little as four to six months.

Major combat operations were concluded just 43 days after the initiation of the invasion of Iraq, once again portending a swift decisive victory.³³ With the end of major

combat operations, Multi-National Forces Iraq entered what is known as phase IV, stability and peacekeeping operations. At this point the likely duration of Operation Iraqi Freedom seemed contingent on events occurring in theater. Questions about the validity of intelligence utilized to justify the administration's decision surfaced in June 2003. By December 2003, no weapons of mass destruction had been found. Still a majority of the public felt going to war to deter terrorism was worth the sacrifice.³⁴ The capture of Saddam Hussein on 13 December 2004 reversed declining support for the war in Iraq, leaving the establishment of a stable Iraqi government as the sole remaining task. The establishment of an interim government and the holding of official elections on 30 January 2005, while delayed, led to a rise in support for the war. However, security problems and an unstable government continued to hamper reconstruction efforts. Eventually, the term "Long War" was coined by the administration, and the "War on Terrorism" soon became known as a "persistent conflict."

Costs

Projections for battle deaths leading up to the 1991 Gulf War reached as high as 30,000.³⁵ While the actual Gulf War battle deaths totaled only 147, projections for its continuation were more conservative but still anticipated to be in the thousands.³⁶ Interestingly on the tenth anniversary of the 1991 Gulf War only five in 10 Americans believed it was worth the loss of life and cost.³⁷ In the months leading up to the invasion of Iraq, seven in 10 Americans supported military action. Of those supporting military action, five in 10 supported this action with the understanding that thousands of American soldier's lives would be lost and the endeavor could last up to five years.³⁸ Despite these numbers, majorities supported the use of diplomacy, economic sanctions,

and United Nations weapons inspections until their effectiveness came into doubt. In June 2005 this number was up to almost six in 10 Americans who believed troops should remain until civil order was restored even if it meant additional casualties—which at this point stood at 1,079 battle deaths.³⁹

So there is no reason to doubt the American public still considers U.S. casualties their most important concern when it comes to military interventions.⁴⁰ Consider Larson's data on public support as a function of battle deaths. Replacing his prospective plots on the Gulf War with those of the actual data shown in Figure 3, we find that the actual decline is slightly steeper than projected.⁴¹ This comes as a result of the fact that the projected number of battle deaths is far fewer than anticipated by the prospective plot data, while support for the intervention has fallen pretty much as Larson hypothesized. Even with this difference the results do not look terribly different from the support observed for the Vietnam and Korean Wars. Based on the actual data, Larson's insights on support as a function of battle deaths seem valid.⁴²

Four months after the invasion of Iraq a CNN/USA Today/Gallup poll found that support for the war did in fact come with limits according to the American public. The poll revealed that almost four in 10 Americans felt the U.S. should continue regardless of troops killed, which is very consistent with earlier source data. However, just over three in 10 felt withdrawal would be necessary if troops killed became too high. Table 1 provides specific details on where the public actually set these limits.⁴³

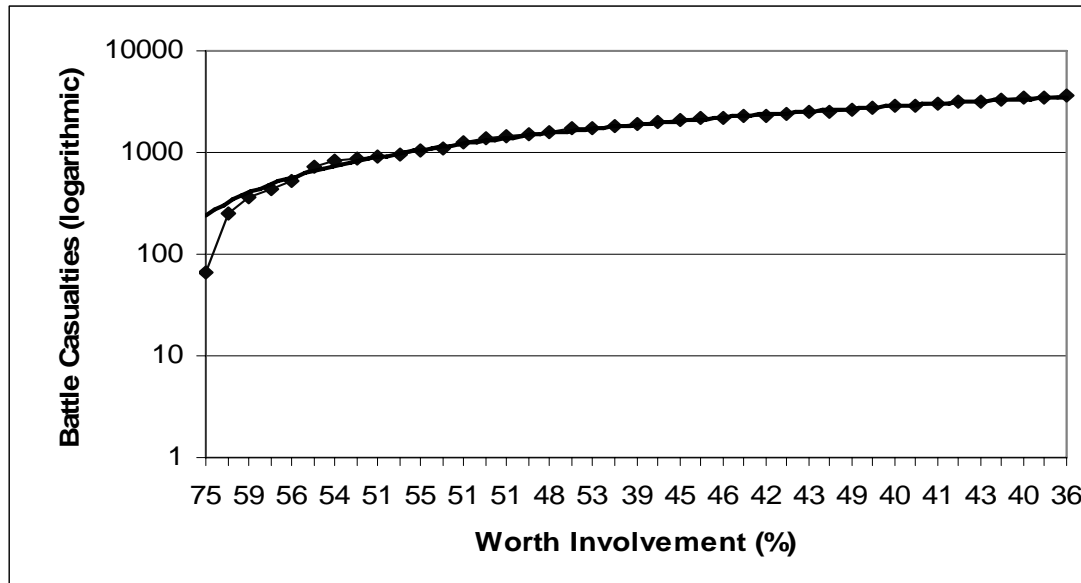


Figure 3: Support as a Function of U.S. Battle Deaths for the Case Analyzed

Continue to have a significant number of U.S. troops in Iraq regardless of the number of U.S. troops killed	37%
Withdraw U.S. troops from Iraq if the number of U.S. troops killed becomes to high	33%
<i>(Two hundred)</i>	12%
<i>(Five hundred)</i>	10%
<i>(One thousand)</i>	4%
<i>(Some higher number)</i>	5%
<i>(Unsure)</i>	2%
<u>Withdraw all U.S. troops from Iraq now</u>	<u>26%</u>

Table 1: How United States should Deal with Situation in Iraq

Some interesting insights can be drawn from Figure 4 when we consider these identified limits overlaid with a monthly support/battle death as a function of time chart.⁴⁴ The first limit identified—two hundred casualties— was breached in April 2003 at the

peak of public support for the war. As casualties reach the next limit—five hundred casualties—in January 2004, support for the war was definitely on the decline down some 19 percent since March 2003—exactly as predicted in Table 1 if we take into account the stated margin of error, plus or minus three. Interestingly, the next limit—one thousand casualties—and the subsequent limits—two thousand and three thousand casualties—were breached during periods of increasing support for the war. Yet, overall, exactly as predicted in Table 1, other factors clearly have come into play.

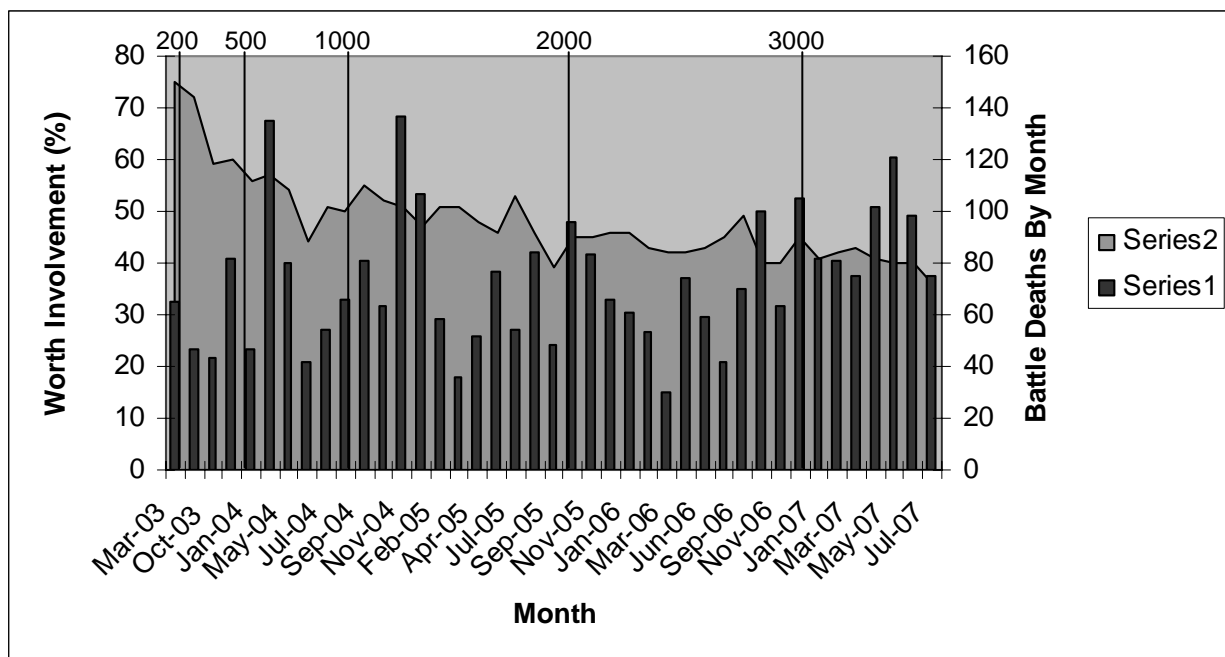


Figure 4: Support and Monthly Battle Deaths as a Function of Time

Section Conclusions

As observed in the 1991 Gulf War, through major combat operations the war was accorded high levels of support; most respondents found the costs incurred worth the sacrifices. However, when the war entered phase IV, stability and peacekeeping operations, support began almost immediately to decline, just as predicted by Larson. Larson's hypothesis on the acceptance of the political costs to continue to prosecute the

war, referring then to President George H. W. Bush, is exactly the position that has been taken by President George W. Bush. President Bush has remained steadfast in his prosecution of the war, even to the point of facing off against Congress on proposed supplemental budget cuts for war initiatives. He has in fact maintained grudging support for an orderly conclusion to the war and has avoided calls for a precipitous withdrawal, just as predicted by Larson. While President Bush's handling of the Iraq War did not prevent his re-election in 2004, his approval rating has currently plummeted to just less than three in 10 who approve of his handling of the situation in Iraq.⁴⁵ One area where Larson may have underestimated the situation is in his hypothesis that President George W. Bush would have had to minimize casualties until a negotiation settlement was reached. President Bush actually surged troops in the face of a 66 percent public opposition, exercising his genuine "trustee" view of his political position.⁴⁶ But what does such public sentiment really tell us?

Polarization over Commitment

Larson relies heavily on the exhaustive research of John Mueller in his assessment of public sentiment on escalation and withdrawal. His study included data only from the Korean and Vietnam Wars as well as Somalia. We will briefly look at various data to see if any new insights may be identified and if his position holds valid for the second Gulf War. Larson makes a strong argument that the conventional wisdom of the need for extreme support—immediate withdrawal or decisive victory—is inaccurate.⁴⁷ Let us examine aggregate trends in sentiment for increased and decreased commitment for the second Gulf War.

Mueller warns that the wording of questions can be quite misleading when pollsters attempt to draw conclusions on this subject.⁴⁸ We will stick as closely as possible to the question structure utilized by Mueller when evaluating the two choice and three choice questions.⁴⁹ When offered a choice between pulling out of the Gulf and continuing the fighting, support for continuation was clearly greater than support for withdrawal just as Larson found in both Vietnam and Korea. Support for pulling out ranged between 27 to 37 percent, while support for continuation ranged between 58 to 68 percent.⁵⁰ Significantly, when this question was asked in relation to casualties, support for continuation exceeded support for withdrawal until December 2006, at which point withdrawal was preferred over continuation. Support for continuation despite casualties ranged between 39 to 46 percent, while support for withdrawal ranged between 52 to 59 percent.⁵¹ Bipartisan support for the war up to this point was virtually non-existent; it hit an all-time low, with only eight percent of Democrats supporting President Bush's handling of the war.⁵² In fact, Democrats were 14 percent more likely than Republicans to mention Iraq as a campaign issue. Given the President's ratings, it is no surprise that he received a low rating for his handling of the war.⁵³

In reviewing this vast polling data, the wording, as emphasized by Mueller, seems treacherous. Most polls actually contained a four-way choice, offering options of a gradual decrease or graduated drawdown. When presented with the three-way choice of escalating (increase), continuing (same), or pulling-out (decrease), however, escalation sentiment ranged between nine to 21 percent, support for continuing the war ranged between 23 to 44 percent, and support for pulling out ranged between 23 to 44 percent. However, with the four way choice, escalation (send more troops) sentiment

ranged between six to 33 percent, support for continuing (keep as is) the war ranged between 21 to 40 percent, support for decreasing (withdraw some) ranged between 16 to 39 percent, and support for pulling out (withdraw all) ranged between 14 to 33 percent. Just as Larson had found with Vietnam and Korea, escalation and withdrawal could never really gain enough support to surpass those willing to see a middling solution to the conflict.

Public Sentiment

Escalation sentiment in the Gulf War peaked in April 2004, approximately one year after the end of major combat operations. Escalation sentiment rose again in January 2005 to 24 percent when Iraq held elections, but decreased quite rapidly thereafter dropping some 15 percent over the next year. Support for escalation never reached those of the Korean or Vietnam wars, which ranged between about 20 to 50 percent.⁵⁴ President George W. Bush did in fact surge some 22,000 troops in January 2007 when only six percent of those polled supported an increase.⁵⁵ In fact, when specifically asked, 67 percent of the American public disagreed with his decision.⁵⁶

As in the Korean War, various withdrawal options have been discussed, but presidential policy continues to dominate decisions for Iraq. The same evidence of gradually increasing sentiment for withdrawal found in both the Korean and Vietnam wars is seen here as well. The Bush administration seemed to utilize Congressional discussions on troop reductions as a tactic to buy time, much as President Nixon did for the Vietnam War.⁵⁷ Data indicates growing sentiment for the withdrawal of troops from Iraq, but, as in both the Vietnam and Korean Wars, it has not reached overwhelming numbers.

Section Conclusions

Just as Larson found in his evaluations of the Vietnam and Korean Wars, public sentiment for escalation or withdrawal in the second Gulf War was never able to exceed those supporting continuation or an orderly withdrawal with a favorable solution.⁵⁸ When major combat operations concluded just weeks after entering Iraq, expectations for the war's quick end seemed to be realized. However, when phase IV operations went from days to months and then to years, the public's support for the cause began to erode.⁵⁹ Now five years after the initiation of the second Gulf War, as in the Vietnam and Korean Wars, we have seen public opinion polarize over the administration's aims and policies. President Bush continues to secure enough support to strive for a favorable resolution to the situation in Iraq, lacing promises of troop withdrawal into fuzzy qualifying conditions for conflict termination. Popular support for President Bush sunk to all time lows, just as Larson witnessed in the presidencies during wars in both Vietnam and Korea.⁶⁰ In his second term, President Bush has been virtually impervious to the mounting political costs, seemingly in a situation to do exactly what he and his administration believe to be in the best interests of the United States. The political fallout however may jeopardize the Republicans' run for the White House in 2008. Indeed in the 2006 elections the Republicans may have paid a price for their support of the war—or of the War President. Partisan politics and rhetoric continue to overshadow and diminish any benefits of the war, even though most political leaders acknowledge that total withdrawal is not an option the United States can risk.

Leadership Consensus and Dissensus

Now we will look at the role of leadership and its effect on public opinion regarding the war. Larson spends considerable time laying out the dynamics of leadership among political leaders and the public; he also examines the influence of media reporting on public support for the war. This SRP does not purport to challenge Larson's theories; it seeks only to determine whether evidence from the second Gulf War validates his theories.

Support for the War

Early on the administration struggled to legitimize its decision to invade Iraq. While the flag waved over the new battle cry of terrorism, there was no evidence that Iraq had committed an overt act against the United States or its interests. A lack of initial support from the United Nations Security Council left the Bush administration in a preemptive position, justifying military action on the potential threat posed by Iraq. After some effort the administration was able to lead the public to believe that Iraq was in possession of or developing weapons of mass destruction and supporting al-Qaeda.⁶¹ Like the 1991 Gulf War, the second Gulf War enjoyed very high levels of support early on: Just three weeks into the conflict, bipartisan support swelled to 77 percent overall.⁶² However, this support began to fall prey to partisan criticisms shortly after the conclusion of major combat operations when the expected evidence of weapons of mass destruction that prompted the war could not be found.⁶³ Of particular interest, though, is the fact that the majority of the public continued to support the decision for the war even without such evidence.⁶⁴ It did not take long for the American public to realize the second Gulf War was not going to mirror the first. Stability operations quickly

overwhelmed U.S. forces: There simply were not enough forces to control the region, so the public felt things were getting bogged down. Support dropped nine percent over the next several months leading up to the 2004 Presidential election, but the American public put President Bush back in the White House. Public support then rallied with the capture of Saddam Hussein and the holding of open elections in Iraq, but a steady decline then set in up to the 2006 Congressional elections. Public support remained steady up to a point in mid-2007; it dropped sharply shortly after the Walter Reed Hospital scandal to its lowest point since initial combat operations. Figure 5 shows public support for the war as it aligned with key events from March 2003 to July 2007.

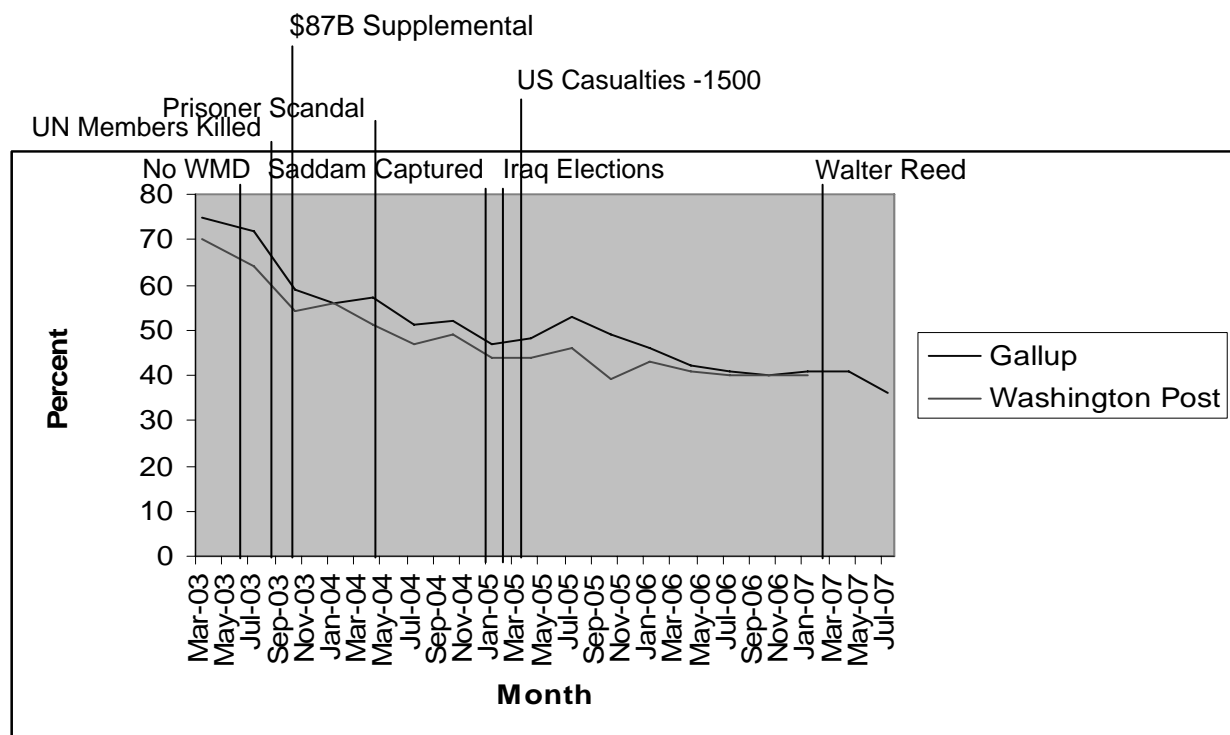


Figure 5: Key Events in Relation to War Support

Policy Preferences

In the months leading up to the 19 March 2003 invasion, bipartisan support sagged slightly then rose rapidly to its highest point anytime during the war on 2 April

2003. Republican support for President Bush never dropped below the 70 percent mark throughout this period reflecting strong party support. Figure 6 shows support across partisan lines leading up to the war. In May 2003 the polling questions quickly changed context as a result of accusations regarding the administration's use of bad intelligence information; a previously docile media began to probe the administration's conduct of the war. With the lack of evidence for weapons of mass destruction and accusations of exaggeration and falsification of intelligence, political leaders quickly dove for the cover of partisan positions.⁶⁵ President Bush successfully utilized issues surrounding the war to secure his re-election to the White House in November 2004, despite seeing his lowest approval rating for the handling of the war in October 2004 at just 37 percent.⁶⁶

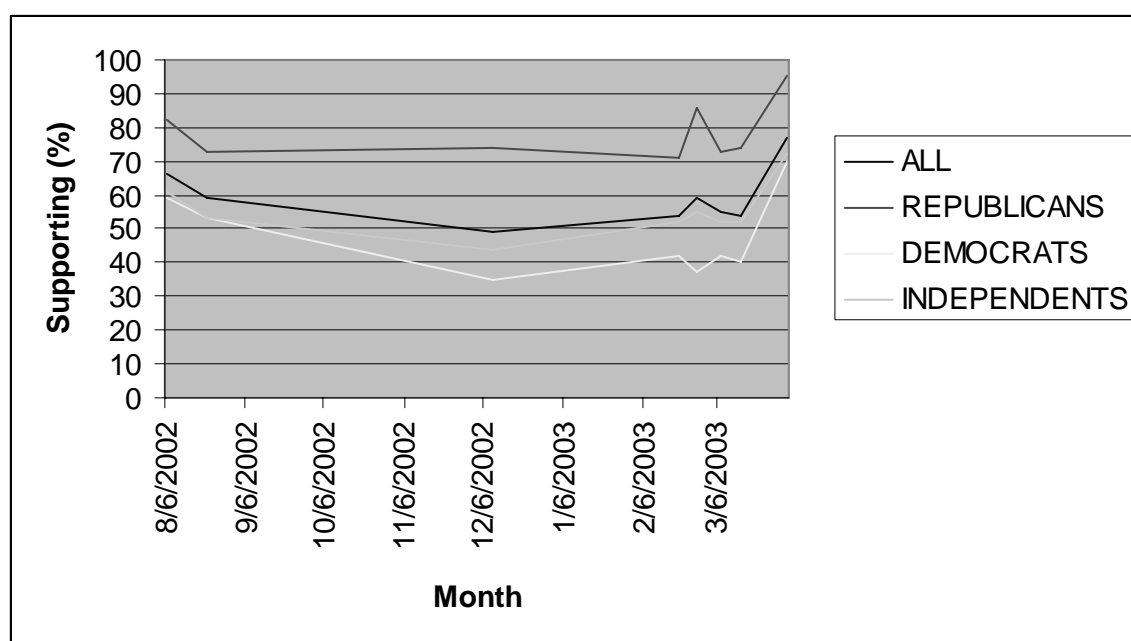


Figure 6: Partisan Support Leading Up to the War

In December 2004, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and the administration came under fire over the fact that our Soldiers lacked the necessary equipment to perform combat operations safely. Republicans, Democrats and Independents alike

walked under this cloud of public dissatisfaction. This issue was followed by criticisms from senior military leaders over the administrations rose-colored glasses view of phase IV operations.⁶⁷ In early 2006, these issues morphed on to the political stage, creating a deeper split along party lines in the run-up to the November 2006 Congressional elections. Democrats swept the elections and took control of both the House of Representatives and the Senate. The same rhetoric continued to engulf the public as the 2008 race for the White House kicked off in early 2007: The Iraq War seen as the most important issue facing candidates.⁶⁸ Figure 7 depicts which of the political parties the public thinks is best suited to run Iraq from May 2003 to July 2007.

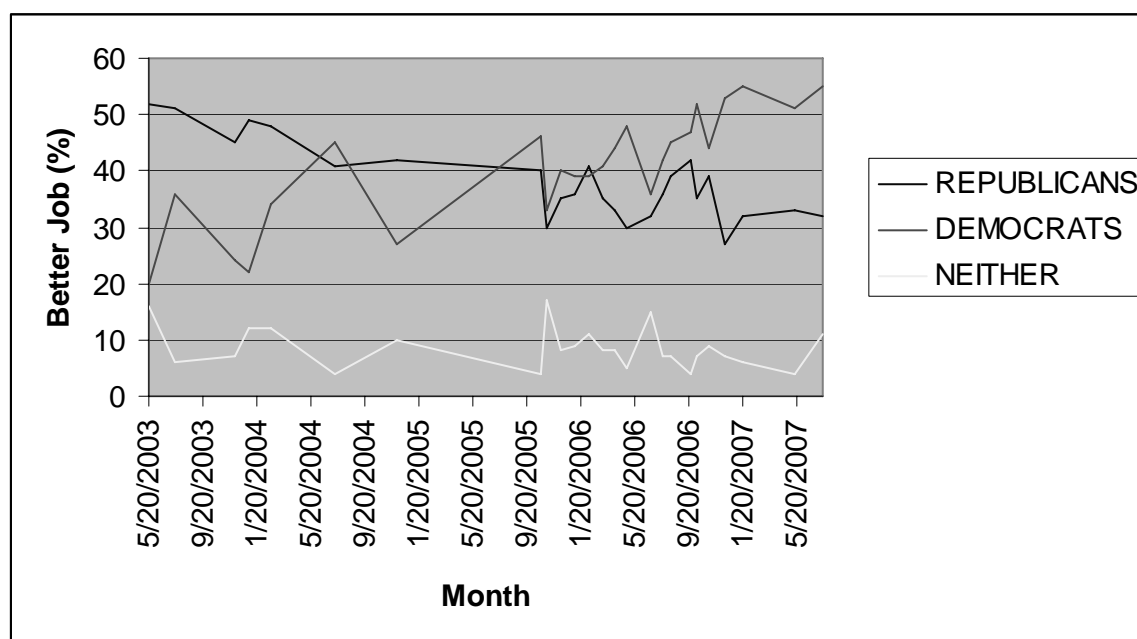


Figure 7: Party Best Suited to Handle Iraq

Section Conclusions

As we track American support throughout this period, we see that polarized leadership does appear to be mirrored by the public, supporting Larson's theory that partisan difference among leaders goes a long way in explaining tendencies in public

opinion.⁶⁹ In fact, looking at public support on 24 March 2003 we find it peaks at 75 percent (see Figure 1), which corresponds almost exactly with the peaking partisan support on 2 April 2003 at 77 percent. We can also see interesting corollaries: In July 2005 public support begins its slow steady downward glide, which corresponds exactly with the cross over point where partisan trends show, for the first time, that Democrats are most suited to handle the Iraq War.

Conclusions

After conducting a thorough review of data from the second Gulf War and looking at role of public support for our leaders, let us briefly review our stated intentions and summarize the findings of our analysis. This Strategic Research Project reviewed the U.S. leaders' role in gaining support for its military actions then examined Eric V. Larson's research on the impact of casualties in war. It then evaluated his findings by reviewing his hypothesis on an extended 1991 Gulf War against actual data from the second Gulf War—Operation Iraqi Freedom. We will now conclude with observations on Larson's theories and the role of U.S. leaders in sustaining support for the nation's military operations—especially potential wars.

We have used data from the second Gulf War to test Larson's theory that support for U.S. military operations and the willingness to tolerate casualties are more accurately based on the four variables of perceived benefits, prospects for success (or progress), costs, and consensus support (or its absence) from political leaders.⁷⁰

As we have seen, our evaluation of the evidence from the second Gulf War supports Larson's theory. All of Larson's proposed variables have in some way shaped the path of the second Gulf War. The American people quickly challenged the

administration's legitimacy agenda just after a consensus among political leaders rallied the public in the early stages of the war. The American people knew going in that the lives of U.S. Soldiers, while their biggest concern, would be a necessary cost to protect the American way of life. There was no doubt that the United States had the ability to bring a swift end to the conflict, but our planners failed to realize the magnitude of the task of stabilizing the region. The American public continues to be rather resilient regarding casualties even as the growing concerns have accumulated over the past five years. The war is costing some \$8B per week, and long-term success is hardly assured. The same political force that brought initial consensus is the very force driving dissent today. The winner of the presidential election will devise his or her strategy for Iraq. Clausewitz was more correct than he could have imagined: The Iraq War will truly be an extension of U.S. politics.

If there is anything that could be recommended as food for thought, it would be for strategist to look a little deeper into how the political leaders see themselves as servants of the public. Clearly, President George W. Bush, in his last term could exercise his "trustee view" of leadership without a second thought. Finally, we need to evaluate more closely the possible role of misperceptions in public support. If anything, the issues and remaining questions about the administration's use of misleading intelligence data and the fact that some 48 percent of the population felt that the administration had misled or provided false information is alarming.

Endnotes

¹ Budget of the United States Government, Summary Tables – Table S-2, President George W. Bush, February 5, 2007, 152.

² Eric V. Larson, *Casualties and Consensus, The Historical Role of Casualties in Domestic Support for U.S. Military Operations* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1996), 7. Table 2.1, Importance of Various Factors in the Use of U.S. Armed Forces, shows that 86 percent of the public believe the “Number of American lives that might be lost” is the most important concern.

³ Demetrious James Caraley, ed., *The New American Interventionism: Essays from Political Science Quarterly* (Columbia University Press, 1999). Referenced information came from Chapter 1, Defining Moment: The Threat and Use of Force in American Foreign Policy, written by Barry M. Blechman and Tamara Cofman Wittes.

⁴ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989), 89.

⁵ Douglas C. Foyle, *Counting the Public In: Presidents, Public Opinion, and Foreign Policy* (Columbia University Press, April 1999), 2-3. The “delegate view” of democratic representation suggests that our leaders should pursue the specific will of their constituents. Public opinion here plays a significant, if not critical role in all aspects of policy formulation and execution. Abraham Lincoln supported this view noting, “The primary, the cardinal, the one great living principle of all democratic representative government—the principle that the representative is bound to carry out the known will of his constituents”. This view suggests that the policymaker is bound to carry out the wishes of the public at large when formulating policy. This view is related to what international relations literature references as a “Wilsonian liberalist” view of the influence of public opinion on foreign policy.

The “trustee view” of democratic representation suggests that the constituents elect a representative who through their own judgment represents the interest of the public at large. In this view it is presumed that the public is for the most part uninformed on the day-to-day issues facing the government. Alexander Hamilton argued, “The republican principle demands that the deliberate sense of the community should govern the conduct of those whom they entrust the management of their affairs; but it does not require an unqualified complaisance to every sudden breeze or passion.” In this view the public’s responsibility lies primarily in selecting the best representative and then allowing that individual to determine what is in the best interest of the public at large. This view is related to what international relations literature references as a “realist” view of the influence of public opinion on foreign policy.

⁶ Michael P. Noonan, “The Illusion of Bloodless Victories, Michael P. Noonan,” *Orbis* (Philadelphia, PA), v41 (Spring 1997), 308-320.

⁷ Larson, iii-v.

⁸ *Ibid.*, xviii.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 10-11.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ The cut-off date for source data in this review and evaluation is 31 July 2007.

¹² *Ibid.*, 30.

¹³ Roger A. Lee, "The History Guy: The Third Persian Gulf War (2003)," 29 January 2008; available from <http://www.historyguy.com/GulfWar2.html>; Internet; accessed 12 February 2008.

¹⁴ CBS News Poll, December 16, 1998; Available from <http://www.pollingreport.com/iraq18.htm>; Internet; accessed 21 February 2008. N=413 adults nationwide. Question wording: Do you favor or oppose the United States using its Air Force to bomb targets in Iraq after Iraq failed to comply with its agreement for United Nations weapons inspections? Overall approval (favor) was at 79 percent and disapproval (oppose) was 16 percent. The party percentages were Republican 74 percent, Democrat 81 percent, and Independent 82 percent. NBC News Poll conducted by the polling organization of Peter Hart (D) and Robert Teeter (R), December 16, 1998; Available from <http://www.pollingreport.com/iraq18.htm>; Internet; accessed 21 February 2008. N=503 adults nationwide. Question wording: "As you may know, President Clinton today ordered military bombing strikes against Iraq. Do you approve or disapprove of President Clinton's decision to order military bombing strikes? Approve 75 percent, Disapprove 17 percent.

¹⁵ Gallup News Service, "Public Steady About Iraq, Could Waver as U.S. Casualties Increase," 29 July 2003; available from <http://www.gallup.com/poll/8929/Public-Steady-About-Iraq-Could-Waver-US-Casualties-Increase.html>, accessed 30 October 2007. Gallup Poll 8929. Question wording: "All in all, do you think the situation in Iraq is/was worth going to war over, or not?" The graph shows 53 percent, in January 2003, stating it is worth going to war while 42 percent state it is not worth going to war.

¹⁶ CNN/*USA Today*/Gallup Poll, 20-22 September 2002; available from <http://www.pollingreport.com/iraq18.htm>; Internet; accessed 11 February 2008. N=1,010 adults nationwide. MoE ± 3 (total sample). Question wording: "If Iraq agrees to let United Nations weapons inspectors back into the country, do you think the United States should hold off on attacking Iraq, or not? The polls show 77 percent that say the United States should hold off and 21 percent say they should not hold off.

¹⁷ ABC News/*Washington Post* Poll by TNS Intersearch, 26 February – 2 March 2003; available from <http://www.pollingreport.com/iraq17.htm>, accessed 21 February 2008. N=1,022 adults nationwide. MoE ± 3 (total sample). Question wording: "The Bush Administration says it will move soon to disarm and remove Saddam Hussein from power, by war if necessary, working with countries that are willing to assist, even without support of the United Nations. Overall, do you support or oppose this policy?" Overall the poll showed 59 percent in support and 37 percent who opposed. The party percentages in support were Republican 86 percent, Democrat 37 percent and Independent 55 percent.

¹⁸ Gallup News Service, "Public Steady About Iraq, Could Waver as U.S. Casualties Increase," 29 July 2003; available from <http://www.gallup.com/poll/8929/Public-Steady-About-Iraq-Could-Waver-US-Casualties-Increase.html>, accessed 30 October 2007. Gallup Poll 8929. Question wording: "How confident are you that the U.S. will – find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq?" The graph shows 84 percent, in March 2003, were very/somewhat confident that weapons of mass destruction would be found. Question wording: "All in all, do you think the situation in Iraq is/was worth going to war over, or not?" The graph shows support increasing from 53 percent in January 2003 to 68 percent in March 2003 stating it is worth going to war.

¹⁹ The *Los Angeles Times* Poll, 2-3 April 2003; available from <http://www.pollingreport.com/iraq17.htm>; Internet; accessed 21 February 2008. N=745 adults nationwide. MoE ± 4 (total

sample). Question wording: "Do you support or oppose the Bush Administration's decision to take military action against Iraq at this time?" Overall the poll showed 77 percent in support and 21 percent who opposed. The party percentages in support were Republican 95 percent, Democrat 70 percent and Independent 72 percent.

²⁰ Gallup News Service, "Public Steady About Iraq, Could Waver as U.S. Casualties Increase," 29 July 2003; available from <http://www.gallup.com/poll/8929/Public-Steady-About-Iraq-Could-Waver-US-Casualties-Increase.html>; Internet; accessed 30 October 2007. Gallup Poll 8929. Question wording: "All in all, do you think the situation in Iraq is/was worth going to war over, or not?" The graph shows support peaking in mid – April during major combat operations at 76 percent. The support still stood at 73 percent the later part of April just prior to a call to end of major combat operations by President Bush on 1 May 2003.

²¹ Gallup News Service, "Public Steady About Iraq, Could Waver as U.S. Casualties Increase," 29 July 2003; available from <http://www.gallup.com/poll/8929/Public-Steady-About-Iraq-Could-Waver-US-Casualties-Increase.html>; Internet; accessed 30 October 2007. Gallup Poll 8929. Question wording: "All in all, do you think the situation in the Middle East involving Iraq and Kuwait is worth going to war over, or not?" The graph shows support peaking in late January 1991 at 71 percent. The months leading up to Desert Storm saw support reach 51 percent, but for the most part hovered in the mid to high 40's.

²² Ibid.

²³ Jeffery M. Jones, "Latest Polls Shows High Point in Opposition to Iraq War," 11 July 2007; Gallup News Service available from <http://www.gallup.com/poll/28099/Iraq.aspx>; Internet; accessed 8 January 2008. Gallup Poll 28099. Question wording: "In view of the developments since we first sent troops to Iraq, do you think the United States made a mistake in sending troops to Iraq, or not?" *Washington Post-ABC News Poll, The Washington Post*, 27 February 2007; available from http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/polls/postpoll_022607.htm; Internet; accessed 11 February 2008. N=1082 random national sample. MoE ± 3 (total sample). Question wording: "All in all, considering the costs to the United States versus the benefits to the United States, do you think the war with Iraq was worth fighting or not? Do you feel that way strongly or somewhat?"

²⁴ Frank Newport, "Gallup News Service, American's Biggest Concern About Iraq: Lives and Safety of Those Fighting There," 4 January 2007; Gallup News Service available from <http://www.gallup.com/poll/28099/Iraq.aspx>; Internet; accessed 8 January 2008. Gallup Poll 26035. Question wording: "What is your biggest concern about the war in Iraq?" The response showed 34 percent believing personal safety of troops/too many deaths/injuries first, with it is a no win situation coming in second at 14 percent.

²⁵ Jeffery M. Jones, "Latest Polls Shows High Point in Opposition to Iraq War," 11 July 2007; Gallup News Service available from <http://www.gallup.com/poll/28099/Iraq.aspx>; Internet; accessed 8 January 2008. Gallup Poll 28099. Question wording: "Do you favor or oppose removing all U.S. troops from Iraq by April 1st of next year, except for a limited number that would be involved in counter-terrorism efforts? The response showed 71 percent in favor and 26 percent that oppose.

²⁶ Larson, 30.

²⁷ FOX News/Opinion Dynamics Poll, August 6-7, 2002; available from <http://www.pollingreport.com/iraq18>; Internet; accessed 11 February 2008. N=900 registered voters nationwide. MoE ± 3 . Question wording: "As far as you are concerned, should the removal of Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq be a very important foreign policy goal for the U.S., a somewhat important goal, not too important, or not at an important goal at all?" In March 2002 very/somewhat important was 88 percent, in April 2002 it was 83 percent and in June 2002 it remained at 83 percent.

²⁸ Ariel Cohen, "U.S. Interests and Central Asia Energy Security," Ariel Cohen, *Backgrounder* #1984 (15 Nov 2006).

²⁹ CNN/USA Today/Gallup Poll, 14-15 March 2003; available from <http://www.pollingreport.com/iraq16.htm>; Internet; accessed 11 February 2008. N=1,007 adults nationwide. MoE ± 3 (total sample). Question wording: "Do you think Saddam Hussein was personally involved in the September 11th terrorist attacks, or not?" The response showed 51 percent stating yes, involved while 41 percent stated no, not involved.

³⁰ The *Los Angeles Times* Poll, 2-3 April 2003; available from <http://www.pollingreport.com/iraq17.htm>; Internet; accessed 21 February 2008. N=745 adults nationwide. MoE ± 4 (total sample). Question wording: "Do you support or oppose the Bush Administration's decision to take military action against Iraq at this time?" Overall the poll showed 77 percent in support and 21 percent who opposed. The party percentages in support were Republican 95 percent, Democrat 70 percent and Independent 72 percent.

³¹ Time/CNN Poll by Harris Interactive, 5-6 February 2004; available from <http://www.pollingreport.com/iraq14.htm>; Internet; accessed 21 February 2008. N=1,000 adults nationwide. MoE ± 3.1 (total sample). Question wording: "Do you think the war in Iraq will have been worth it if weapons of mass destruction are never found, or don't you think it will have been worth it?" The response showed 53 percent feeling it was worth it while 41 percent felt it was not worth it.

³² Gallup News Service, "Public Steady About Iraq, Could Waver as U.S. Casualties Increase," 29 July 2003; available from <http://www.gallup.com/poll/8929/Public-Steady-About-Iraq-Could-Waver-US-Casualties-Increase.html>; Internet; accessed 30 October 2007. Gallup Poll 8929. Question wording: "How confident are you that the U.S. will – (RANDOM ORDER) – very confident, somewhat confident, not too confident, or not confident at all? Subordinate questions: A. Capture or kill Saddam Hussein – very/somewhat confident stood at 70 percent in March 2003 and 68 percent in July 2003; B. Find weapons of mass destruction – very/somewhat confident stood at 84 percent in March 2003 and 52 percent in July 2003; C. Establish a stable democratic government in Iraq – very/somewhat confident stood at 65 percent in March 2003 and 58 percent in July 2003.

³³ Number of days was determined simply by counting the number of days from the start of combat operations on 19 May 2003 to President Bush's declaration that major combat operations had been concluded on 1 May 2003.

³⁴ Jeffery M. Jones, "Latest Polls Shows High Point in Opposition to Iraq War," 11 July 2007; Gallup News Service available from <http://www.gallup.com/poll/28099/Iraq.aspx>; Internet; accessed 8 January 2008. Gallup Poll 28099. Question wording: "In view of the developments since we first sent troops to Iraq, do you think the United States made a mistake in sending

troops to Iraq, or not?" The polls showed 60 percent stating it was not a mistake in November 2003.

³⁵ Larson, 35.

³⁶ CBS News/*New York Times* Poll, 24 March 2003; available from <http://www.pollingreport.com/iraq16.htm>; Internet; accessed 11 February 2008. N=427 adults nationwide. MoE ± 5 . Question wording: In the war with Iraq, how many American soldiers do you expect to lose their lives: under one thousand, between one and five thousand, or more than that?" Polling data taken over the five subsequent days following the initiation of the war revealed that 58-67 percent believed the number to be under one thousand, 10-19 percent believed the number to be one thousand to five thousand, and 5-20 percent believed the number to be more than five thousand.

³⁷ CBS News Poll, 10-12 February 2001; available from <http://www.pollingreport.com/iraq18.htm>; Internet; accessed 11 February 2008. N=1124 adults nationwide. MoE ± 3 (total sample). Question wording: "This month marks the tenth anniversary of the Persian Gulf War against Iraq in 1991. Given the loss of life and costs of the war in the Persian Gulf, do you think the war to defeat Iraq was worth the cost, or not?" Poll results showed 51 percent stating, "yes, worth it" while 39 percent stated, "No, not worth it."

³⁸ FOX News/Opinion Dynamics Poll, 6-7 August 2002; available from <http://www.pollingreport.com/iraq18.htm>; Internet; accessed 11 February 2008. N=900 registered voters nationwide. MoE ± 3 . Question wording: "Do you support or oppose U.S. military action to remove Iraqi President Saddam Hussein?" Those supporting stood at 74 percent in January 2002 and remained at 69 percent in August 2002. Subordinate question wording: "Would you support or oppose the military action even if it means thousands of American soldiers' lives would be lost?...Would you support or oppose the military action even if it means a war lasting up to five years?" Of those supporting military action from the first question 52 percent supported knowing loss of life could be in the thousands and 49 percent supported knowing that the effort could take as many as five years.

³⁹ *Washington Post*/ABC News Poll, "Iraq: June 2005," 23-26 June 2005. N=1004 adults nationwide. MoE ± 3 . Question wording: "Do you think the (the United States should keep its military forces in Iraq until civil order is restored there, even if that means continued U.S. military casualties); OR, do you think (the United States should withdraw its military forces from Iraq in order to avoid further U.S. military casualties, even if that means civil order is not restored there)?" Polls showed 58 percent felt we should keep forces in Iraq, while 41 percent felt they should be withdrawn.

⁴⁰ Larson, 7. Table 2.1, Importance of Various Factors in the Use of U.S. Armed Forces, shows that 86 percent of the public believe the "Number of American lives that might be lost" is the most important concern.

⁴¹ Jeffery M. Jones, "Latest Polls Shows High Point in Opposition to Iraq War," 11 July 2007; Gallup News Service available from <http://www.gallup.com/poll/28099/Iraq.aspx>; Internet; accessed 8 January 2008. Gallup Poll 28099. Question wording: "In view of the developments since we first sent troops to Iraq, do you think the United States made a mistake in sending troops to Iraq, or not?" All source data for the graph pertaining to the percent supporting the Iraq War over time came from this source. Global Security Website, "Military, U.S. Casualties in

Iraq,” 21 February 2008; available from http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/iraq_casualties.htm; accessed 21 February 2008. Website provides a month to month breakout of U.S. casualties in Iraq. All casualty information was determined for the graph based on this source data.

⁴² Larson, 10-11. Mr. Larson observed two insights from the case data analyzed. First, the rate of decline as a function of casualties varies dramatically from operation to operation, and; secondly, the figure does not suggest a high tolerance for casualties in the past and a low tolerance in the present.

⁴³ Gallup News Service, “Public Steady About Iraq, Could Waver as U.S. Casualties Increase,” 29 July 2003; available from <http://www.gallup.com/poll/8929/Public-Steady-About-Iraq-Could-Waver-US-Casualties-Increase.html>; Internet; accessed 30 October 2007. Gallup Poll 8929. Question wording: “Thinking about how the U.S. should deal with the situation in Iraq in the future—which would you prefer - ?” a) continue regardless of troops killed; b) withdraw if number of troops killed becomes too high; c) withdraw all troops from Iraq now; d) no opinion.

⁴⁴ Jeffery M. Jones, “Latest Polls Shows High Point in Opposition to Iraq War,” 11 July 2007; Gallup News Service available from <http://www.gallup.com/poll/28099/Iraq.aspx>; Internet; accessed 8 January 2008. Gallup Poll 28099. Question wording: “In view of the developments since we first sent troops to Iraq, do you think the United States made a mistake in sending troops to Iraq, or not?” All source data for the graph pertaining to the percent supporting the Iraq War over time came from this source. Global Security Website, “Military, U.S. Casualties in Iraq,” 21 February 2008; available from http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/iraq_casualties.htm; accessed 21 February 2008. Website provides a month to month breakout of U.S. casualties in Iraq. All casualty information was determined for the graph based on this source data. This chart is simply a different graphical representation of the information presented in Table 1.0.

⁴⁵ ABC News/*Washington Post* Poll, 4-7 September 2007; available at <http://www.pollingreport.com/iraq2.htm>; Internet; accessed 11 February 2008. Question wording: “DO you approve/disapprove of the way Bush is handling the situation in Iraq?” The poll conducted 18-21 July 2007 showed only 31 percent that approved while 68 percent disapproved.

⁴⁶ CNN Poll by Opinion Research Corporation, 9-11 March 2007; available from <http://www.pollingreport.com/iraq6.htm>; Internet; accessed 11 February 2008. N=1,027 adults nationwide. Moe \pm 3. Question wording: “Regardless of how you feel about the war in general, do you favor President Bush’s plan to send about 20,000 more U.S. troops to Iraq in an attempt to stabilize the situation there?” The poll conducted 11 January 2007 showed 66 percent that oppose while 32 percent favored.

⁴⁷ Larson, 53.

⁴⁸ Larson, 54.

⁴⁹ Ibid. A two choice or three choice question references to the polling question options identified during the questioning. A two choice question simply asks do we continue or withdraw forces. A three choice question provides a third option of escalation.

⁵⁰ NBC News/*Wall Street Journal* Poll by Peter Hart (D) and Neil Newhouse (R), 8-10 June 2007; available from <http://www.pollingreport.com/iraq3.htm>; Internet; accessed 11 February 2008. N=1008 adults nationwide. MoE \pm 3. Question wording: "More specifically, do you think that we should have an immediate and orderly withdrawal of all troops from Iraq, or not?"

⁵¹ ABC News-*Washington Post* Poll, 18-21 July 2007; available from <http://www.pollingreport.com/iraq2.htm>; Internet; accessed 11 February 2008. N=1125 adults nationwide. MoE \pm 3. Question wording: "Do you think the United States should keep its military forces in Iraq until civil order is restored there, even if that means continued U.S. military casualties; or, do you think the United States should withdraw its military forces from Iraq in order to avoid further U.S. military casualties, even if that means civil order is not restored there)?"

⁵² Joseph Carroll, "Bush's Job Approval at 37%," 25 July 2006; Gallup News Service available from <http://www.gallup.com/poll/23872/Bush-Job-Approval-37.aspx>; Internet; accessed 11 February 2008. Gallup Poll 23872. Table – Bush Issues Approval by Partisan Groups. Shows partisan support on the issue of "The Situation in Iraq" at 77 percent for republicans, 27 percent for independents, and eight percent for democrats.

⁵³ Joseph Carroll, "Americans Continue to Put Iraq at Top of Government Agenda" 8 August 2006; Gallup News Service available from <http://www.gallup.com/poll/24034/Americans-Continue-Put-Iraq-Top-Governments-Agenda>; Internet; accessed 11 February 2008. Gallup Poll 24034.

⁵⁴ Larson, 61.

⁵⁵ CBS News Poll, 14-16 Sep 2007; available from <http://www.pollingreport.com/iraq.htm>; Internet; accessed 11 February 2008. N=706 adults nationwide. MoE \pm 3. Question wording: "From what you have seen or heard about the situation in Iraq, what should the United States do now? Should the U.S. increase the number of U.S. troops in Iraq, keep the same number of U.S. troops in Iraq as there are now, decrease the number of troops in Iraq, or remove all its troops from Iraq?" Poll showed six percent favoring increase, 21 percent favoring same number, 39 percent favoring decrease, and 13 percent favoring remove all.

⁵⁶ NBC News/*Wall Street Journal* Poll by TNS, 22-25 February 2007; available from <http://www.pollingreport.com/iraq6.htm>; Internet; accessed 11 February 2008. N=1082 adults nationwide. MoE \pm 3. Question wording: "Do you support or oppose Bush's proposal to send approximately 22,000 additional U.S. military forces to Iraq?" The response showed 67 percent who oppose and 32 percent that support.

⁵⁷ Larson, 63.

⁵⁸ Larson, 66.

⁵⁹ Jeffery M. Jones, "Latest Polls Shows High Point in Opposition to Iraq War," 11 July 2007; Gallup News Service available from <http://www.gallup.com/poll/28099/Iraq.aspx>; Internet; accessed 8 January 2008. Gallup Poll 28099. Question wording: "In view of the developments since we first sent troops to Iraq, do you think the United States made a mistake in sending troops to Iraq, or not?" The source data clearly shows over time rising number of the public thinking the United States made a mistake in sending troops into Iraq.

⁶⁰ Joseph Carroll, "Bush's Job Approval at 37%," 25 July 2006; Gallup News Service available from <http://www.gallup.com/poll/23872/Bush-Job-Approval-37.aspx>; Internet; accessed 11 February 2008. Gallup Poll 23872. Table – Bush Overall Job Approval Rating.

⁶¹ The Harris Poll, 8-15 April 2004; available from <http://www.pollingreport.com/iraq13.htm>; Internet; accessed 21 February 2008. N=979 adults nationwide. MoE ± 3 . Question wording: "Do you believe Iraq actually had weapons of mass destruction when the war began, or not?" The polling data between June 2003 and April 4 showed 51-69 percent believing they had them. Question wording: "Do you believe clear evidence that Iraq was supporting al Qaeda has been found in Iraq, or not?" The polling data between June 2003 and April 4 showed 47-53 percent believing they had found evidence.

⁶² The *Los Angeles Times* Poll, 2-3 April 2003; available from <http://www.pollingreport.com/iraq17.htm>; Internet; accessed 21 February 2008. N=745 adults nationwide. MoE ± 4 (total sample). Question wording: "Do you support or oppose the Bush Administration's decision to take military action against Iraq at this time?" Overall the poll showed 77 percent in support and 21 percent who opposed. The party percentages in support were Republican 95 percent, Democrat 70 percent and Independent 72 percent.

⁶³ Jonathan Karl, Steve Turnham, Ted Barrett, Pam Benson, Jamie McIntyre and Sean Loughlin, "War In Iraq, Some Lawmakers Seek Congressional Hearings on Iraqi Weapons," 3 June 2003; CNN.com/Inside Politics available from www.cnn.com/2003/ALLPOLITICS/06/03/sprj.irq.congress.wmd/index.html; Internet; accessed 1 March 2008. WASHINGTON (CNN) -- Amid mounting questions over pre-war claims by the Bush administration about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, some lawmakers on both sides of the aisle say they want congressional hearings to probe whether U.S. intelligence was accurate and whether it was manipulated to provide a rationale for invading the country. The Bush administration had cited Iraq's harboring and development of such weapons as the key reason for toppling the regime of Saddam Hussein. But more than one month after President Bush declared major combat over in Iraq, no such weapons have been found; many Democrats at home and critics abroad are challenging the administration's justification for taking military action against Iraq.

⁶⁴ Gallup News Service, "Public Steady About Iraq, Could Waver as U.S. Casualties Increase," 29 July 2003; available from <http://www.gallup.com/poll/8929/Public-Steady-About-Iraq-Could-Waver-US-Casualties-Increase.html>; Internet; accessed 30 October 2007. Gallup Poll 8929. Question wording: "All in all, do you think the situation in Iraq is/was worth going to war over, or not?" The polling data found a declining majority from 72 percent toward the end of combat operations to 60 percent in November 2003 saying the U.S. "did not make a mistake" in going to war with Iraq.

⁶⁵ Sean Loughlin, "Politics, Senate Committee to Hold Closed Hearings on U.S. Intelligence on Iraq," 11 June 2003; CNN.com/Inside Politics available from <http://www.cnn.com/2003/ALLPOLITICS/06/11/wmd.senate>; Internet; accessed 1 March 2008. WASHINGTON (CNN) -- The Senate Intelligence Committee will hold closed-door hearings as part of its ongoing review of U.S. intelligence on Iraq, the chairman of that panel announced Wednesday, but there will not be a formal, public inquiry as sought by Democrats. The move comes amid questions about whether the Bush administration manipulated intelligence data to bolster its case for war. The Bush administration has come under fire from some Democrats and critics abroad because no weapons of mass destruction have been found in Iraq, despite U.S. and British statements

before the war that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein was harboring and developing such banned weapons.

⁶⁶ Pew Research Center for the People & the Press Survey by Princeton Survey Research Associates International, 18-22 April 2007; available from <http://www.pollingreport.com/iraq5.htm>; Internet; accessed 11 February 2008. N=1508 adults nationwide. MoE ± 3 (for all adults). Question wording: "Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling the situation in Iraq?" The source data for 15-19 October 2004 shows only 37 percent who approve while 56 percent disapprove.

⁶⁷ Brad Knickerbocker, "Retired Generals Speak Out to Oppose Rumsfeld," *The Christian Science Monitor* (14 April 2006). Available from <http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/0414/p01s03-usmi.html>; Internet; accessed on 1 March 2008.

⁶⁸ L. Sandy Maisel, "Congressional Elections" e Journal USA, available from <http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/itdhr/1007/ijde/maisel.htm>; Internet; accessed 1 March 2008.

⁶⁹ Larson, 80.

⁷⁰ Ibid., xviii.