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

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Abstract

We study the impact of battlefield casualties and media coverage on public demand for war termination. To identify the effect of troop fatalities, we leverage the otherwise exogenous timing of survey collection across 26,218 respondents from eight members of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan. Quasi-experimental evidence demonstrates that fatalities increase coverage of the Afghan conflict and public demand for withdrawal. Evidence from a survey experiment replicates the main results. To estimate the media mechanism, we leverage a news pressure design and find that major sporting matches occurring around the time of battlefield casualties drive down subsequent coverage and significantly weaken the effect of casualties on support for war termination. These results highlight the crucial role that media play in shaping public support for foreign military interventions.

Keywords: conflict, public opinion, political economy, Afghanistan, NATO

JEL Codes: Q33, O13, N52, R11, L71

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1 Introduction

Wars inherently involve the loss of life of soldiers in the battlefield. These casualties represent one of the most tangible costs of conflict. Concerns over casualties influence whether states start wars and whether wars, once they have begun, can be sustained. Democracies may be particularly averse to losing soldiers since constituents may voice demands for withdrawal through protest or support exit at the ballot boxes.

Understanding how wartime casualties influence public support for withdrawal and which mechanisms underlie this relationship remains an important challenge, especially in the context of conflicts fought through military coalitions. In these coalitions, the political costs of losses can induce free-riding, where some coalition partners limit the combat operations of their troops– under-providing security in areas of operation– to avoid political backlash at home. As such, military coalitions are subject to moral hazard in teams, as studied in Holmstrom (1982), which can lead to operational inefficiencies. These frictions were anticipated as early as Olson and Zeckhauser (1966) and persist in modern warfare in teams (Auerswald and Saideman, 2014). We study these dynamics in a highly relevant context– the ongoing military campaign in Afghanistan– where North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) affiliated forces have conducted operations since 2001. Using a series of quasi-experimental designs, we provide novel and compelling causal evidence linking battlefield losses to public demand for withdrawal in troop-sending countries and demonstrate the role of media coverage in shaping civilian attitudes towards the war.

Taking advantage of granular, nationally representative individual-level public opinion survey data collected across eight major troop-sending NATO countries from 2007-2011, we document that country-specific casualty events are associated with a significant worsening of public support for continued engagement in the conflict. We leverage staggered data collection from six survey waves covering the most important troop-contributing coalition partners: the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany and Italy, Poland, and Spain. These surveys cover a critical phase of NATO operations in Afghanistan, including the troop surge (Sexton, 2016). Taking advantage of the staggered timing of survey enumeration, we identify combat events involving casualties of a troop-sending nation around the interview date specific to each individual respondent and specific to the nationality of the respondent. We document that own-country casualties are associated with a worsening of the support for continued military intervention, while

non-combat troop deaths and fatalities tied to other coalition partners have no discernible impact on support. We present evidence of these dynamics using two separate quasi-experimental approaches– an event study design as well as a cumulative shock during survey design. We also replicate these results using a survey experiment run in the United States, where priming subjects with information about American battlefield casualties sharply increases demand for troop withdrawal while a comparable prime about NATO coalition fatalities has no impact on support for a military exit.

We argue that media reporting on events involving troop fatalities is a central driver of these effects. Using a newspaper article database for the countries in our sample, we document that own-country casualties caused by insurgent violence boost the news coverage of Afghanistan in the troop-sending country, while non-combat casualties and fatalities tied to other coalition partners have a much weaker effect on coverage.

To assess how coverage of the conflict influences public demands for withdrawal, we take advantage of the otherwise exogenous timing of prominent events that crowd out coverage of troop fatalities. To do this, we use country-specific major sports matches that occur during each of the survey waves. This approach is motivated by Durante and Zhuravskaya (2018) and Jetter (2017). We anticipate that these events will exert news pressure, marginally reducing media coverage of troop fatalities that occur prior to each event. If public opinion is meaningfully influenced by this shift in media coverage, we expect demands for troop withdrawal will decline as well. We find compelling evidence that the elasticity of conflict coverage on own-country casualties diminishes significantly when sporting events introduce news pressure. We also find that public support for the war is unaffected by own-country casualties when news coverage has been crowded out by sport matches.

Taken together, we provide credibly causal evidence that public demands for withdrawal increase with war-related casualties and demonstrate that media coverage is likely a central driver of these changes in sentiment. These results are important and relevant to our understanding of the economics of conflict and the policy implications of battlefield dynamics. When democratic countries participate in a foreign military intervention, public support for the war is a key constraint. Multilateral military interventions may be particularly sensitive to these constraints when battlefield casualties trigger partner-specific changes to rules of engagement– when soldiers are allowed to engage in offensive or defensive combat– and legal caveats about troop movement, operational authority, and human and physical capital commitments. These changes

shift the burden of fighting in a manner that can undermine battlefield efficiency and introduce frictions to cross-country coordination of medical evacuations (Kotwal et al., 2016) and development aid programs (Beath et al., 2012). Casualty-induced withdrawals destabilize the coalition more broadly, with downstream consequences for international cooperation through collective national defense, a cornerstone of American and European security policy since the formation of NATO in 1949.

This paper contributes to the literature that has studied how war violence affects public opinion at the home front. Early work by Mueller (1973) argues that US casualties in the Korean and Vietnam wars are associated with a decline in domestic support for the war. This work is extended by Larson (1996), who explores World War II and the Gulf War. His findings also suggest that cumulative casualties are systematically correlated with declining support for military intervention. However, this early literature relies on empirical methods that are not well suited to the estimation of causal effects. Jentleson (1992) argues indeed that these early results are not robust. He cites numerous cases where casualties and public support appear uncorrelated.[1] Karol and Miguel (2007) revisit the relationship between casualties and public opinion with more granular data than previous studies. Using state-level casualty data in a cross-section, they document a robust negative association between casualty rates and support for George Bush's in his re-election bid in 2004. Their study is close in terms of research question and approach to our current paper. However, there are key differences. First, our paper uses a direct measure of the support for the war. In contrast, electoral support for President Bush may be capturing a host of other perceptions of the quality of his policies. Second, our paper includes data for a range of countries involved in the same military conflict. This helps improve on the external validity of their original results. Third, a cross-sectional analysis cannot rule out that unobserved confounders drive the association between war casualties and the shifts in support for President Bush. In contrast, we can leverage high-frequency data to exploit the idiosyncratic timing of casualty events, which makes a causal interpretation of our effects more plausible. Fourth, while Karol and Miguel (2007) highlight the potential role of media coverage as a mechanism, our paper is the first in this literature to provide credible causal evidence linking news pressure, media content, and public

[1] Theoretically, support for the war could result from a cost-benefit calculation in which war casualties are just one salient dimension of the broader costs (Gartner and Segura, 1998; Gelpi et al., 2007). Principal policy objectives and likelihood of success play an important role in determining public willingness to tolerate casualties as a consequence of conflict (Eichenberg, 2005; Gelpi et al., 2005) (see also Getmansky and Weiss (2020)). Leadership consensus or dissension is another factor thought to affect the sensitivity of the general public to war casualties (Larson, 1996; Kriner and Wilson, 2016; Jakobsen and Ringsmose, 2015).

support for war.[2] In a recent article, Marinov et al. (2015) show that troop contributions of NATO allies to the war in Afghanistan decrease in the run-up to elections.[3] Our paper clarifies how media coverage influences public demands for war termination, providing a novel quantitative microfoundation for the political economy mechanisms that drive troop contributions around elections.

Our paper also fits in a broader literature that studies how civilians engage with the conflict process. Insurgents in asymmetric conflicts crucially depend on civilian support, and many recent papers study the drivers of this civilian support for insurgents (e.g. Berman et al., 2011; Matanock and García-Sánchez, 2018; Vanden Eynde, 2016). These papers are part of a wealth of recent studies that use micro-level conflict data to understand how different parties in conflict interact and to identify causal drivers of the intensity of violence (e.g. Fetzer, 2020; Shapiro and Vanden Eynde, 2021; Wright, 2016). Particularly relevant for our paper is the work of Condra and Shapiro (2012), who study how civilian victimization affects insurgent violence in Iraq, as well as Dell and Querubin (2018), who argue that bombing campaigns in Vietnam increased support for insurgents. However, support in this literature is typically analysed indirectly based on patterns of violence or observable activities of insurgents. Direct measurement of civilian support in conflict zones is rarer in the literature. In the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Gould and Klor (2010) and Berrebi and Klor (2008) find that terrorism is effective in shaping the political preferences of civilians in terrorism-affected areas. Jaeger and Paserman (2008) show that terrorism may be an effective technology to shift outcomes and perceptions about a conflict in the terrorized population. In the context of Afghanistan, Condra et al. (2018) find that violence around elections effectively deters voting. Like these recent papers, we use microdata and plausibly exogenous variation to study the role of civilians in the conflict process. In contrast to these papers, we focus on the effect of casualties on public support at home in the context of a foreign military intervention.

This study also relates to work evaluating the role of media as a transmission vector. The seminal paper by Eisensee and Strömberg (2007) highlights the important role that media cov-

[2] Althaus et al. (2012) also discuss the role of information access. Their analysis focuses on cross-sectional television consumption patterns and self-reported newspaper use. Our analysis takes this intuition further, focusing on how high frequency, country-specific exogenous shifts in media coverage are linked to public demand for troop withdrawal following battlefield losses.

[3] While it is not part of their core argument, these authors report a negative relationship between war casualties and public support for the war based on survey evidence from a variety of countries. Our paper presents crucial robustness checks and supporting evidence for the identification assumptions that underlie a causal interpretation of the negative relationship between war casualties and public support for the war in Afghanistan. Importantly, our paper also studies how the media shapes this relationship.

erage of natural disasters can play in shaping public responses. Manacorda and Tesei (2020) highlight the importance of social media and communications technology in enabling protest movements to organize, while Mitts (2019) links offline terrorist attacks to online social media content and radicalization. DellaVigna and Kaplan (2007) document how access to politically biased media reports can affect electoral outcomes. Durante and Zhuravskaya (2018), in a paper closely related to our evidence on news pressure, document how military actions by the Israeli government are timed to generate as little media coverage in the West as possible, reflecting a broader political economy of international public opinion. Jetter (2017) similarly uses news pressure to estimate the impact of news coverage of political violence on subsequent terrorist activity. Our paper presents novel evidence that media influences public demand for troop withdrawal, with profound consequences for how states manage and terminate foreign interventions.

2 NATO in Afghanistan: Context and Data

2.1 NATO in Afghanistan

NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission in Afghanistan started in 2001. The deployment of NATO troops peaked in 2011, with around 130,000 foreign soldiers stationed in Afghanistan around the official start of the security transition.[4] The multinational nature of the intervention is well-suited to study the link between combat casualties and public opinion. Since the start of the military engagement, more than 3,500 NATO troops have been killed during combat operations in Afghanistan. Figure A1 shows time series of deployment and casualties for the US, UK, France, and Germany. Casualties had significant impacts on the domestic politics of the war in troop-sending countries. The collapse of the coalition government in the Netherlands in early 2010 over the issue of continued engagement in Afghanistan and the subsequent withdrawal from Afghanistan marked an important turning point. This change in troop contributions worried the United States. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) was concerned that casualties could reach a tipping point for other European coalition partners, particularly France and Germany, destabilizing NATO's commitment to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission in Afghanistan.

[4] In a related paper, we study the strategic response of the insurgency to the security transition in Afghanistan (Fetzer et al., 2021).

2.2 Data

Out study combines three datasets. The first dataset contains information on the public support for military intervention (dependent variable) and comes from the annual Pew Global Attitudes survey. The survey was based on telephone and face-to-face interviews conducted under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. All surveys were based on representative national samples for the major troop-sending countries - Canada, Italy, France, Germany, Poland, Spain, the UK, and the USA.[5] The survey has the advantage of having consistently asked the same question for an extended time period 2007-2011 across a host of countries. The exact question asked was "Do you think the U.S. and NATO should keep military troops in Afghanistan until the situation has stabilized, or do you think the U.S. and NATO should remove their troops as soon as possible?" Respondents could choose between the following set of options: "Keep troops in Afghanistan" or "Remove their troops". Each survey wave contains approximately 1,000 observations for each country. This individual-level data provides for detailed socio-demographic information that can be used in control variables. The richness of the respondent data enables us to address confounding sources of sensitivity to battlefield casualties.

The second dataset measures each known individual casualty of the various troop-sending countries in the Afghanistan war. The data was built up from detailed official sources such as Pentagon briefings, information obtained through Freedom of Information requests, complemented with data from media sources. The underlying data provides detailed information of individual casualties providing the unit of affiliation, country, name, rank and location along with information about how the soldier died. Information on the cause of death has been classified into two categories namely, hostile and non-hostile. Hostile casualties refer to the violent casualty events involving direct fire, indirect fire and IEDs, while non-hostile casualties occur due to accidents such as vehicle accidents and natural causes. This data was compiled by iCasualties and a comparable collection of data on Iraq casualties was used in Karol and Miguel (2007). In addition, we have information of number of troops present on the ground at a particular time window for each troop-contributing country. This measure is based on official NATO placemats.[6]

The third main dataset we construct is media coverage on Afghanistan by major newspapers in troop-sending countries covering the period 2007-2011. The data was collected counting key-

[5] We do not include Australia, as it had only one survey wave in the time period we consider.

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

word incidence using the LexisNexis news database. Our measure counts the number of articles containing the words "Afghanistan" or "Kabul".[7] This data is used to study to what extent newspaper coverage of casualties seems to be an important mechanism for transmission.

3 Empirical Strategy and Results

3.1 Event studies

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

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

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

Figure 2 shows event study results for a window of 21 days. In Panel A, we show the effect on public support for the withdrawal of NATO troops. The support for withdrawal clearly increases after casualty events. The small lead before the event is consistent with some fuzziness in the reporting date (e.g., when soldiers succumb due to earlier injuries). The effect is most marked in the 7 days immediately following the event. Panel B shows that newspaper coverage of Afghanistan similarly increases in the aftermath of fatal casualties.[8] This result suggests that media coverage could be a channel through which casualties affect support for the war. We will investigate this channel more explicitly below.

[7] Table A1 shows the list of newspapers and the number of total articles on which our measure is based.

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

3.2 The effect of casualties on public support

We complement our event study with a cumulative shock during survey design that uses the full sample of survey responses. This approach builds on the design discussed in Muñoz et al. (2020), which focuses on discrete events (usually a single event) that splits enumerated individuals into pre/post clusters. In our case, these unexpected casualty events accumulate during a window prior to enumerate. We use exogenous variation in cumulative exposure (shock) as part of our identification strategy.[9] We relate troop-sending country casualties in the last 7 days to the public support for continued engagement in the war. The main specification is as follows:

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

In this equation, $w_{i,c,y,t}$ is the public support for withdrawing troops from Afghanistan for an individual respondent i in a particular country c, in year y, and at a particular interview date t. $CAS(Past\ 7\ days)_{c,y,t}$ measures the hostile casualties of the troop-sending specific country in the last 7 days. $\gamma_{y,t}$ captures country by year fixed effects. The country-by-year effects could capture shifts in public opinion.[10] Finally, $X_{i,c,y,t}$ includes individual income group and education level fixed effects. It also includes gender and age as additional control variables.

Table 1 confirms that casualties in the period prior to the interview boost the support for withdrawing troops from Afghanistan. As our main measure of casualty exposure, we use the number of casualties in the last 7 days. We find that an additional casualty in the last 7 days boosts the share of respondents supporting a withdrawal by 0.9 percentage points. Our empirical design allows for a range of robustness checks and additional results that shed light on the underlying mechanism. First, we note that our event study approach and the cumulative shock during survey design yield consistent estimates. Second, we confirm in panel A of Table 1 that leads in casualties do not explain support for the war (column 4). Third, accidents make up a non-negligible share of the overall casualties in Afghanistan. This provides for a natural placebo test, as accidents are likely to receive less public attention in the troop-sending countries. In column (2) of Table 1, we confirm that the relationship between withdrawal preferences and casualties is much weaker for non-hostile casualties. In the same Table, we check if casualties

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

[10] Given that the surveys are conducted in a small time window within each year, it is not necessary to include date of interview fixed effects.

from other countries affect support for the war. The effect of casualties in other countries is smaller than our main effects for own-country casualties (column 3).

In Panel B of Table 1, we present evidence that is suggestive of the role played by media in shaping public opinion. Column 1 shows that own country casualties boost press reports on Afghanistan. However, there is no such effect for non-hostile casualties (e.g. accidents) and the effect is much weaker for other country casualties.[11] These patterns mirror those reported in panel A, which uses support for withdrawal as the outcome. The one exception is that the media response to other country casualties is significant. The close similarity of patterns across these two outcomes is consistent with media coverage being an important channel of influence.

Robustness In the online appendix, we consider several robustness checks. We begin by varying our measure of casualty exposure. In Table A3, we show results for a binary casualty measure (=1 if a casualty occurred in the corresponding time window). In Table A4, we use a cumulative casualty measure normalized with respect to the country-specific troop contingent present in Afghanistan at the time of the survey. In both specifications, we observe similar effects of casualty events on support for withdrawal and media coverage. Next, we present results for a 14-day casualty window in Table A5. The main results remain consistent. We then demonstrate robustness to list-wise exclusion of each troop-sending country from the sample in Figure A2.

3.3 Validation through a survey experiment

We validate our main result using a simple survey experiment that was conducted in the United States in 2020. The survey experiment was run in collaboration with Associated Press-NORC and contained one base condition and two randomized treatment arms. The experiment was executed using AmeriSpeak, a nationwide probability-based panel assembled by NORC. Online and telephone interviews using landlines and cellphones surveyed 1029 experimental subjects. The base condition noted that the war in Afghanistan is now the longest war in modern American history. In addition to the base prime, the first arm contained information about the number of American troops killed in action during the Afghan war. The second arm provided the same information, but for NATO ally troops. Subjects were then asked whether they support an increase in American troops, keeping the troop level the same, decreasing American troops, or withdrawing completely. These responses correspond to the 1-4 scale. The aim of the survey

[11] The media analysis is conducted at the country-day level using country-specific enumeration dates to ensure consistency and comparability with the main results on public opinion.

is two-fold: (1) assess whether priming subjects about American casualties increases demand for troop withdrawal, in line with the main results; (2) assess whether demand for withdrawal attenuates when subjects are primed about NATO ally casualties. Results are presented in Table 2. In columns 1 and 2, we use OLS and in columns 3 and 4 we use an order logit specification. Subjects primed with American casualties are up to 20% more likely to support withdrawal (as measured on a 1-4 scale, see column 2). When primed with NATO casualties, the response is small and insignificant.[12] This difference confirms our findings from Table 1: even if media coverage of Afghanistan seems responsive to other country casualties (albeit much smaller than for own country casualties), the effect on public opinion is close to zero for such casualties.

3.4 Media Coverage as a mechanism

Media coverage is a natural channel through which casualties affect public opinion. Our event study evidence and the results of Table 1 already showed that media reports on Afghanistan increase in the wake of fatal incidents.

To identify a plausibly causal effect of media coverage more tightly, we exploit exogenous shifts in media responses to casualties by exploiting the timing of important sports matches. We focus on the most important team sport in each of the countries in our sample (basketball for the US,[13] hockey for Canada, and soccer for Europe) and we identify the key matches (finals in the first league or in the European soccer league). We think it is plausible that these major sports events exert "news pressure" (as in Durante and Zhuravskaya (2018)), in the sense that they crowd out the coverage of other news. At the same time, we do not expect these sports events to change attitudes towards casualties in the conflict directly.[14] In Table 3, we find that media coverage of Afghanistan rises when war casualties in the previous 7 days go up. Our article measure captures the number of articles on Afghanistan in a particular country in the 7 previous days. However, around these major sports events, the response of articles to casualties in the press is weaker and no longer significant. Mirroring this finding, public support for the war is no longer responsive to casualties in the aftermath of a major sports event. This evidence underlines the importance of media in shaping how the home front reacts to war casualties.

[12] The p-value on the difference between the "US" and "NATO" treatments is 13% in column (2).

[13] While we collect information on match dates for baseball and American football, these dates do not overlap with the PEW surveys in any year. For the National Basketball Association (NBA) games, we include the dates of Eastern/Western conference finals in addition to those of the national Final.

[14] One could be concerned that sports events spur nationalism. It is worth noting that the matches we incorporate in our measure only involve subnational teams, so we do not expect these events to spur nationalism.

Robustness In the online appendix, we consider several robustness checks. We begin by showing robustness to an alternative news pressure window. Table A8 presents the news pressure results for a 2-day newspaper window. We then collapse the survey respondent data into a corresponding country-day panel in Table A7. In Table A6, we confirm that the differential effect depending on sports matches is not confounded by differential effects of the country-year (column 2) or of the day of the week (column 3). We also consider a placebo test, in which we randomly reassign match dates. Figure A3 generates the key interaction term for placebo match dates and compares the actual coefficient to these placebo coefficients. We find consistent results across these additional checks.

4 Conclusion

Our paper revisits the effect of war casualties on public opinion. Relying on high-frequency survey data from seven major troop-sending countries, we find that casualties cause a decrease in public support for the war in Afghanistan. We find that casualties also boost media coverage of the war in the home country of these casualties, which suggests that media plays an important role in informing the public about the costs of the war. When media coverage of the war is less important– following a major sports events, for example– the public's response to casualties becomes much weaker. These results confirm that wars are to an important extent fought–and sometimes lost– on the home front and that media coverage could have profound impact on the public support of wars. These findings provide a novel, important quantitative microfoundation for prior work on the political economy of casualty aversion and helps explain why many ISAF countries sought to limit their involvement in combat operations, with important implications for collective security provision through coalition-based military interventions.

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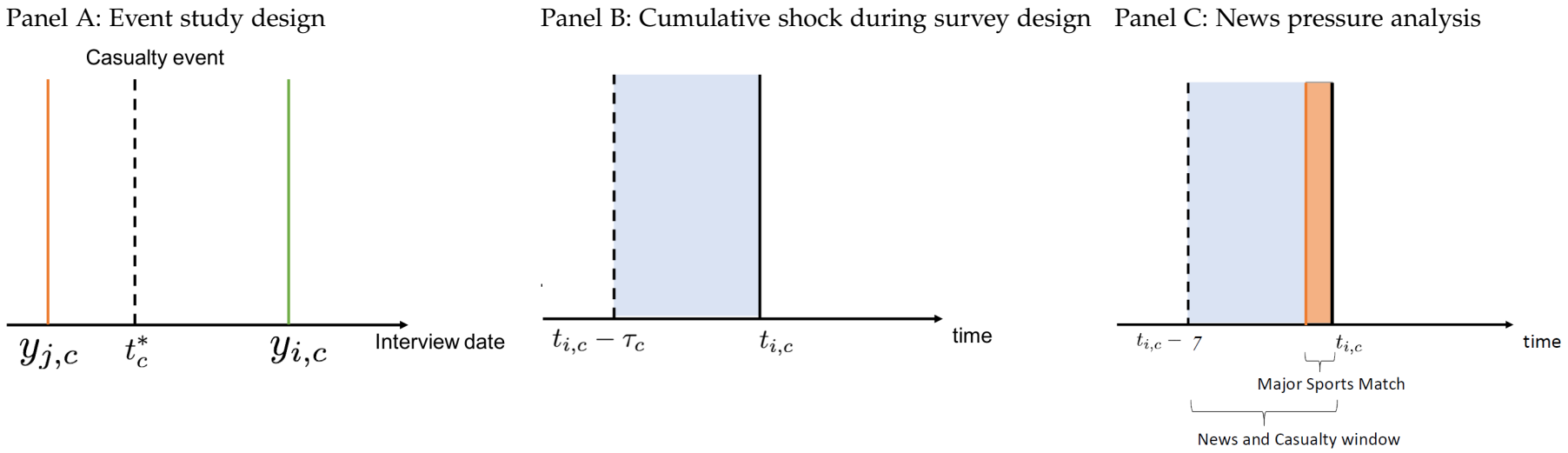
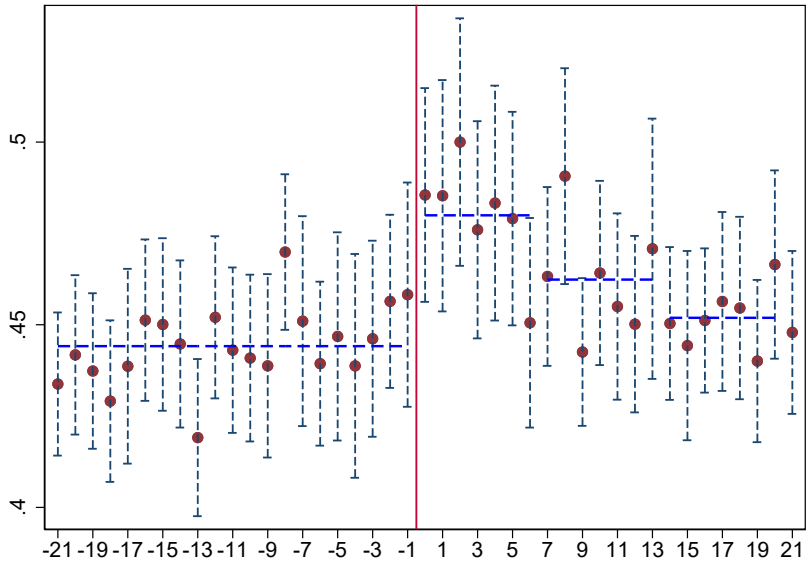
Figure 1: Schematic of empirical strategies:



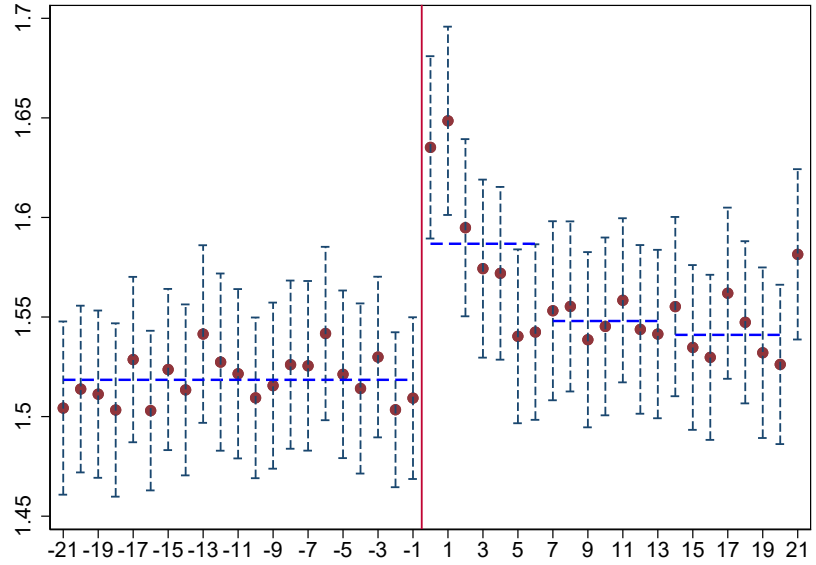
Notes: In the event study design (Panel A), t_c^* refers to the date of the casualty incident in the event study design. Individuals i and j are interviewed at different times but within the window of the event study. $t_{i,c}$ refers to the interview date of individual i in the shock during survey design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

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

Panel A: Support for troop withdrawal



Panel B: Newspaper reports on Afghanistan



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

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

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Panel A:	Supports withdrawal of NATO troops			
Own hostile casualties (7 days)	0.009***	0.009***	0.009***	0.009***
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Non-hostile own casualties (7 days)		-0.006		
		(0.008)		
Other hostile casualties (7 days)			0.000	
			(0.001)	
Own hostile casualties (7 days lead)				-0.000
				(0.002)
Mean DV	.55	.55	.55	.55
Observations	26218	26218	26218	26218
Clusters	34	34	34	34
Panel B:	Article number (7 days)			
Own hostile casualties (7 days)	0.124***	0.123***	0.123***	0.126***
	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.028)	(0.030)
Non-hostile own casualties (7 days)		-0.027		
		(0.094)		
Other hostile casualties (7 days)			0.040**	
			(0.017)	
Own hostile casualties (7 days lead)				0.035
				(0.029)
Mean DV	1.53	1.53	1.53	1.53
Observations	584	584	584	584
Clusters	34	34	34	34

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

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

	Support for withdrawal of troops (scale: 1-4)			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
US casualties treatment	0.133*	0.201**	0.241*	0.246*
	(0.068)	(0.090)	(0.136)	(0.145)
NATO casualties treatment	0.029	0.070	0.054	0.093
	(0.073)	(0.097)	(0.143)	(0.154)
Observations	1029	1029	1029	1029
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes
Model	OLS		Ordered Logit	

Notes: Individual respondent level data from a survey experiment conducted in the US. The dependent variable measures the extent to which the respondent supports the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan, ranging from 1 to 4. The control set includes State dummies, age, gender, education level, and employment status. Standard errors are clustered at the country by year level with stars indicating *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

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

	Article number (7 days)	Supports troop withdrawal
	(1)	(2)
Match	-0.094	0.020
	(0.169)	(0.021)
Own hostile casualties (7 days)	0.104***	0.008**
	(0.037)	(0.004)
Own hostile casualties (7 days) x Match	-0.091**	-0.010*
	(0.035)	(0.006)
P-value [Hostile casualties+ Hostile casualties x Match=0]	.832	.768
Observations	584	26218
Clusters	34	34

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

Appendix to *Losing on the Home Front?*

For Online Publication

Table A1: Sample of Newspapers and number of articles overall

Newspaper	Country	Articles
Ottawa Citizen	Canada	7767
Le Figaro	France	3464
Die tageszeitung	Germany	5657
Die Welt	Germany	5980
La Stampa	Italy	3527
Gazeta Wyborcza	Poland	363
El Mundo	Spain	3562
El Pais	Spain	6970
The daily telegraph	United Kingdom	6745
The Independent	United Kingdom	7387
New York Times	United States	12987

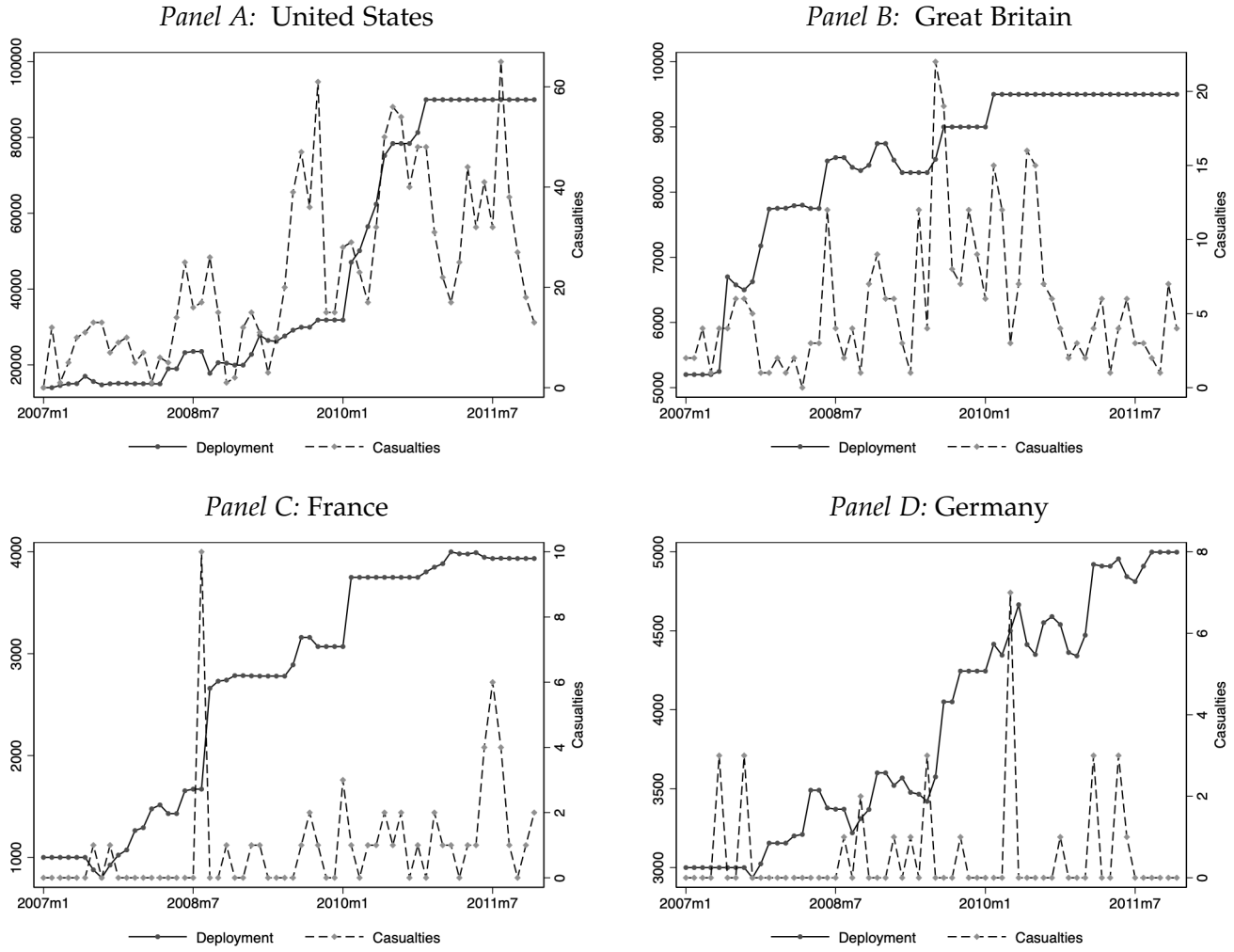
Notes: Newspaper articles mentioning ”Afghanistan” or ”Kabul”. Articles are retrieved from the LexisNexis newspaper archives and cover the period 2007-2011.

Table A2: Summary Statistics

	Mean (1)	Standard Deviation (2)	N (3)
Panel A: Respondent level variables			
Support for withdrawal of troops	0.535	0.499	26218
Own hostile casualties (7 days)	1.301	2.629	26218
Any own hostile casualty (7 days)	0.315	0.464	26218
Own hostile casualty rate (7 days)	0.139	0.356	26218
Own hostile casualties (14 days)	1.234	2.321	26218
Age	48.410	17.320	26218
Male	1.515	0.500	26218
Grade 9-12 (or similar)	0.420	0.494	26218
University degree	0.407	0.491	26218
Sports final dummy (on day or day before)	0.033	0.179	26218
Panel B: Date-by-country level variables			
Article number in newspaper (2 days)	1.229	1.034	584
Article number in newspaper (7 days)	1.496	1.052	584

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

Figure A1: Country specific deployments and casualties over time



Notes: Monthly deployment and casualty date for the four largest countries in our sample.

Table A3: Main Results for casualty dummy

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Panel A:	Supports withdrawal of NATO troops			
Own hostile casualties (0/1, 7 days)	0.042*	0.043*	0.041*	0.042*
	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.023)	(0.024)
Non-hostile own casualties (0/1, 7 days)		0.017		
		(0.018)		
Other hostile casualties (0/1, 7 days)			0.008	
			(0.008)	
Own hostile casualties (0/1, 7 days lead)				-0.003
				(0.010)
Mean DV	.55	.55	.55	.55
Observations	26218	26218	26218	26218
Clusters	34	34	34	34
Panel B:	Article number (7 days)			
Own hostile casualties (0/1, 7 days)	0.384***	0.381**	0.380**	0.396**
	(0.140)	(0.139)	(0.140)	(0.145)
Non-hostile own casualties (0/1, 7 days)		-0.034		
		(0.101)		
Other hostile casualties (0/1, 7 days)			0.145**	
			(0.071)	
Own hostile casualties (0/1, 7 days lead)				0.079
				(0.156)
Mean DV	1.53	1.53	1.53	1.53
Observations	584	584	584	584
Clusters	34	34	34	34

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

Table A4: Main Results for normalized casualty measure

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Panel A:	Supports withdrawal of NATO troops			
Own hostile casualties (normalized, 7 days)	0.044*	0.044*	0.043**	0.062**
	(0.023)	(0.022)	(0.021)	(0.029)
Non-hostile own casualties (normalized, 7 days)		-0.021		
		(0.107)		
Other hostile casualties (normalized, 7 days)			0.007	
			(0.004)	
Own hostile casualties (normalized, 7 days lead)				0.030
				(0.025)
Mean DV	.55	.55	.55	.55
Observations	26218	26218	26218	26218
Clusters	34	34	34	34
Panel B:	Article number (7 days)			
Own hostile casualties (normalized, 7 days)	0.472***	0.463***	0.476***	0.512**
	(0.130)	(0.131)	(0.137)	(0.219)
Non-hostile own casualties (normalized, 7 days)		-0.389		
		(0.311)		
Other hostile casualties (normalized, 7 days)			0.150***	
			(0.048)	
Own hostile casualties (normalized, 7 days lead)				0.074
				(0.182)
Mean DV	1.53	1.53	1.53	1.53
Observations	584	584	584	584
Clusters	34	34	34	34

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

Table A5: Main Results for 14 casualty lag

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Panel A:	Supports withdrawal of NATO troops			
Own hostile casualties (14 days)	0.014***	0.014***	0.013***	0.014***
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Non-hostile own casualties (14 days)		-0.019		
		(0.015)		
Other hostile casualties (14 days)			0.002*	
			(0.001)	
Own hostile casualties (14 days lead)				-0.001
				(0.002)
Mean DV	.55	.55	.55	.55
Observations	26218	26218	26218	26218
Clusters	34	34	34	34
Panel B:	Article number (7 days)			
Own hostile casualties (14 days)	0.180***	0.175***	0.175***	0.174***
	(0.030)	(0.031)	(0.030)	(0.039)
Non-hostile own casualties (14 days)		-0.102		
		(0.164)		
Other hostile casualties (14 days)			0.023	
			(0.014)	
Own hostile casualties (14 days lead)				0.021
				(0.040)
Mean DV	1.53	1.53	1.53	1.53
Observations	584	584	584	584
Clusters	34	34	34	34

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

Table A6: News pressure results - Control interactions

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Panel A: Articles on Afghanistan (7 days)			
Match	-0.094		
	(0.169)		
Own hostile casualties (7 days)	0.104***		
	(0.037)		
Own hostile casualties (7 days) x Match	-0.091**	-0.119***	-0.095**
	(0.035)	(0.004)	(0.036)
Observations	584	580	584
Clusters	34	34	34
Panel B: Supports troop withdrawal			
Match	0.020		
	(0.021)		
Own hostile casualties (7 days)	0.008**		
	(0.004)		
Own hostile casualties (7 days) x Match	-0.010*	-0.028***	-0.008
	(0.006)	(0.002)	(0.006)
Observations	26218	26217	26218
Clusters	34	34	34
Additional fixed effects:		Own hostile casualties (7 days) × Country-year Match × Country-year	Own hostile casualties (7 days) × Day of the week Match × Day of the week

Notes: Observations are at the country-survey date level in column (1). The dependent variable in column (1) is the number of articles mentioning "Afghanistan", "kabul", "NATO" or "ISAF", and this measure is normalized by the standard deviation in the relevant time window. The regression is weighted to give equal weight to each country-wave. Observations are at the individual respondent level in column (2). The dependent variable is an indicator that takes the value 1 if the respondent expresses support for troop withdrawal from Afghanistan. All regressions include country by year fixed effects. Match is equal to "1" on the day of or the day after a major sports final. We consider basketball in the US, hockey in Canada, and soccer in European countries. The regression in column (2) include gender, age, education category and income category as individual level controls. This regression also includes survey weights which are standardized to give equal weight to every country-wave. Standard errors are clustered at the country by year level with stars indicating *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

Table A7: News pressure results - Country × date panel

	Article number (7 days) (1)	Supports troop withdrawal (2)
Match	-0.002	0.024
	(0.195)	(0.027)
Own hostile casualties (7 days)	0.104***	0.007**
	(0.037)	(0.003)
Own hostile casualties (7 days) x Match	-0.094**	-0.013**
	(0.039)	(0.005)
P-value [Hostile casualty+ Hostile casualty x Match=0]	.862	.379
Observations	584	579
Clusters	34	34

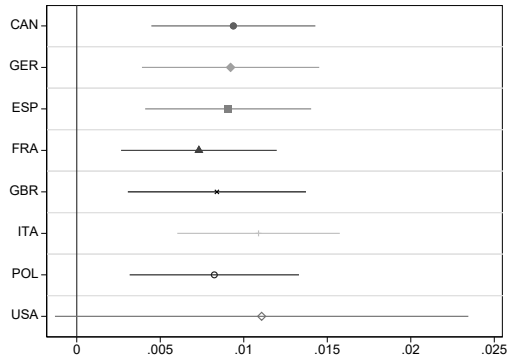
Notes: The unit of analysis is a country by survey day. The dependent variable in column (1) is the number of newspaper articles mentioning "Afghanistan", "kabul", "NATO" or "ISAF", and this measure is normalized by the standard deviation in the relevant time window. The dependent variable in column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

Table A8: News pressure results - 2-day news window

	Article number (2 days) (1)	Supports troop withdrawal (2)
Match	0.105	0.020
	(0.227)	(0.021)
Own hostile casualties (7 days)	0.157**	0.008**
	(0.062)	(0.004)
Own hostile casualties (7 days) x Match	-0.102**	-0.010*
	(0.040)	(0.006)
P-value [Hostile casualties+ Hostile casualties x Match=0]	.522	.768
Observations	584	26218
Clusters	34	34

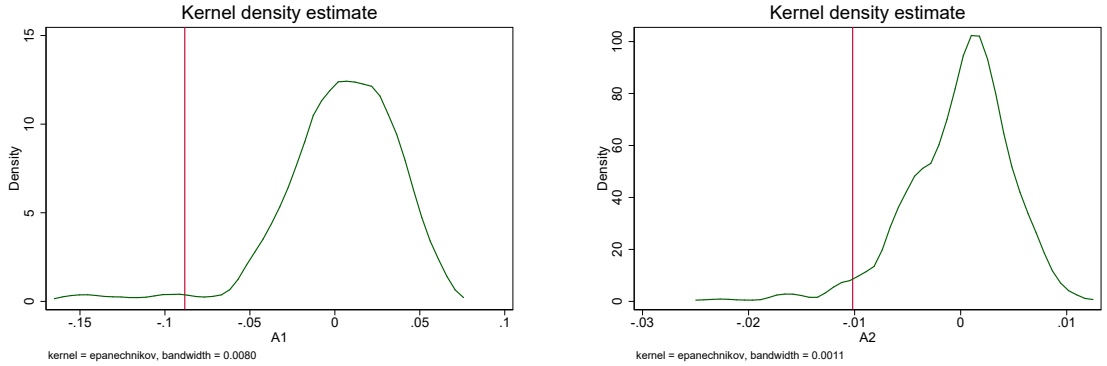
Notes: Observations are at the country by survey date level in column (1). The dependent variable counts newspaper articles containing "Afghanistan" or "kabul", and this measure is normalized by the standard deviation in the relevant time window. The regression is weighted to give equal weight to each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

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



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

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



(a) Article number (7 days)

(b) Supports troop withdrawal

Notes: The model estimated corresponds to column (1) in table 3 in panel A, and column (2) in table 3, and reported values are estimated coefficients on Own hostile casualties (7 days) $\times$ Match with randomly assigned match dates. The coefficient estimate from the main model is shown by vertical lines. Match date events are reshuffled randomly 500 times (allowing for country-year clusters). The share of coefficients that have a higher absolute value than the actual estimate is 0.03 in panel A and 0.04 in panel B.