

# Drafting Support for War: Conscription and Mass Support for Warfare

**Michael C. Horowitz** University of Pennsylvania  
**Matthew S. Levendusky** University of Pennsylvania

*How does a military's recruitment policy—whether a country has a draft or conscript army—influence mass support for war? We investigate how military recruitment affects the way the American public evaluates whether a war is worth fighting. While some argue that conscription decreases support for war by making its costs more salient, others argue that it increases support by signaling the importance of the conflict. Existing evidence is inconclusive, with data limited to one particular conflict. Using an original survey experiment, we find strong support for the argument that conscription decreases mass support for war, a finding that replicates in several different settings. We also show that these findings are driven by concerns about self-interest, consistent with our theory. We conclude by discussing the relevance of these findings for debates about how domestic political conditions influence when states go to war.*

Are citizens in nations with standing conscription armies less willing to go to war than citizens in nations with all-volunteer forces? Research on domestic political regimes and military action highlights the centrality of mass support in the decision to go to war (Bueno de Mesquita 2003; Reiter and Stam 2002). A long line of both military and political discourse argues that conscription, by more equitably distributing the costs of war, makes the public more sensitive to sending troops into harm's way (Ricks 1998). Historical examples from World War I (Rowe 2002) and the U.S. Civil War (McPherson 1988) support this argument, suggesting that when societies conscript, the mass public becomes more skeptical of the decision to use force. Yet other scholars challenge this conclusion, claiming that a fair draft increases mass support for war by signaling the importance of the conflict (Moskos 2001).

This debate has taken on renewed significance in recent years. Given the increasing strains on the U.S. military from the conflicts in Iraq, Afghanistan, and around the globe, numerous political leaders have called for a reintroduction of the draft (Crabtree 2009; Hagel 2004). Indeed, some military leaders have even speculated that current deployments could necessitate a return to the draft. In 2007, Lieutenant

General Douglas Lute, special assistant to the president and “war czar” for Iraq and Afghanistan, stated that a return to the draft “has always been an option on the table.” While he stated that the United States’ all volunteer force currently satisfied its military requirements, he discussed the strains to the military from so many deployments (All Things Considered 2007).<sup>1</sup> More recently, retired Marine Major General Arnold Punaro argued that the rising cost of the all-volunteer force would force the United States to consider returning to a conscription system (Wilson 2009).

Recent political events illustrate the continued political sensitivity of the draft. Stephen Paglicua, a Democratic primary candidate for the U.S. Senate in Massachusetts in 2009, announced he supported reinstating the draft. The resulting political uproar was sufficiently loud that he reversed course within a day (Johnson 2009). Though this is only one example, it suggests that how the United States staffs its armed forces remains a divisive issue and has important consequences for how ordinary citizens weigh the costs of conflict.

Direct causal evidence about the influence of conscription on mass support for war, however, remains relatively elusive. Previous efforts to estimate the causal effect of conscription on support for war have focused primarily on the effects of the Vietnam draft

<sup>1</sup>Though most military and civilian leaders oppose reinstating the draft, the Selective Service System announced in 2006 that it was preparing a precautionary readiness exercise to test the “draft machinery” (Hunt 2006).

lottery (Bergan 2009; Erikson and Stoker 2009). While important, these studies only yield estimates of the effects of conscription for a subset of the population (namely, draft-eligible males) at a particular moment in American history (when the draft lottery was imposed in the midst of the Vietnam War). We build on this research by utilizing a new research design that looks at how conscription affects attitudes towards war in the broader population in a number of different scenarios.

We use original experiments to directly test the linkage between conscription and support for war, and find that mass support falls by 17% when there is a draft (relative to when there is an all-volunteer force), a finding that replicates in a number of different settings and scenarios. Further, we also provide evidence that this shift is driven by self-interest: support falls most sharply among those who would most directly shoulder the burden of a draft (the young, who would themselves be drafted, and parents, who would see their children drafted). This provides the microfoundations for some of the effects of conscription previously hypothesized—but never empirically verified—by earlier works.

The effect of the draft on attitudes toward conflict raises profound normative questions about the public's role in the decision to go to war. Because the draft changes the public's attitudes toward conflict, draft militaries in democracies present leaders with a different set of constraints when they consider going to war than those presented by an all-volunteer force. It could influence when the public is willing to go to war and the way leaders have to sell the decision to go to war, meaning draft militaries may end up fighting different wars or entering wars at different points than their volunteer military counterparts. The decision to use a conscript or volunteer military also influences the credibility of the signals sent when a democracy attempts to commit to escalation through activities like troop mobilizations in a crisis (Schultz 2001; Slantchev 2005). Conscription changes the degree to which the mass public constrains leaders, which has important implications for our understanding not only of war and peace (Bueno de Mesquita 2003; Reiter and Stam 2002), but, more generally, about when the mass public can constrain elites' foreign policy decisions (Feldman, Huddy, and Marcus 2008).

## Does Conscription Change Support for War?

What factors determine public support for war? In existential wars, where the survival of the nation is at

risk, democratic publics (and often even nondemocratic ones) will rally and support a war. American support for World War II, from public opinion data, is the prototypical example of such a conflict, though there were many reasons for its popularity (Mueller 1973; for a more nuanced account see Berinsky 2009). Yet in recent American history, most wars have not been perceived as all out struggles for the future of the nation. This paper focuses on less severe conflicts, the ones more typical in American foreign policy and in the world as a whole.

Democratic leaders that seek to go to war have to build at least some degree of public support for their actions, especially if the war is potentially costly. The conventional wisdom is that casualties drive war support: as casualties mount, support for war wanes (Mueller 1973, 2005). Others, however, have argued that the context matters as much as the raw casualty levels (Gartner 2008a). Context can take a number of forms, including whether or not the public perceives that they are winning the conflict (Gelpi et al. 2009), elite rhetoric (Berinsky and Druckman 2007), or the degree to which national interests are at stake (e.g., the argument that the public is “pretty prudent”; see Jentleson 1992).

In this paper, we address a related but distinct question—how would a move to reinstate a draft influence support for going to war? Does having a conscript army (vs. an all-volunteer force) shape attitudes toward conflict? While there is a scholarly debate about the *effects* of conscription on military outcomes (Horowitz, Simpson, and Stam 2011; Vasquez 2005), less is known systematically about how conscription affects public support for war.

We argue that a conscript military makes the public more hesitant to send troops into harm's way. When soldiers are conscripted in a fair draft, a larger segment of the population is called to serve in the military, and the military looks more like society at large (Moskos 1970). This broadens the number of citizens engaged with and interested in whether or not the country should go to war and shifts the way they evaluate the costs and benefits of casualties (Gartner 2008a). As a result, more voters have a direct stake in the decision to go to war: they know that their children (or they themselves) could be sent into harm's way, so they more carefully weigh the potential costs and benefits of armed conflict. When a broader swath of the population must bear the heavy costs of war via a fair draft, support for war declines (Vasquez 2005).

This logic has propelled a number of U.S. political elites to call for a reintroduction of a military

draft system (e.g., Crabtree 2009; Heilprin 2006; Holmes 2003; Rangel 2002). In a congressional hearing on the Iraq war in 2004, Senator Chuck Hagel (R, NE) posited that returning to a draft military would be beneficial because it would force more Americans to confront the costs of war personally by directly bearing and observing the costs of war themselves (Hagel 2004).<sup>2</sup>

The role of self-interest in politics provides the rationale for this argument. While symbolic factors often outweigh self-interest (Sears, Hensler, and Speer 1979), when the stakes are high, self-interest drives citizens' behavior (Citrin and Green 1990). Indeed, studies of self-interest in the Vietnam War show that self-interest (in the form of the draft lottery) has a significant impact on attitudes toward the war (Bergan 2009; Erikson and Stoker 2009).

We expect to find that self-interest operates in a similar way with respect to conscription, especially when combined with the power of social ties. With a volunteer military, much of the population will have no direct ties to those fighting overseas. But with a conscript army, average citizens are more likely to have friends and loved ones fighting. This gives them a powerful self-interest reason to be wary of sending troops into harm's way; a finding borne out by previous empirical research. For example, local experiences with casualties predicted support in the early years of the Vietnam War: counties that experienced higher casualty rates featured lower support for the war (Gartner Segura, and Wilkening 1997), a finding that also replicates in the Iraq war (Grose and Oppenheimer 2007; Karol and Miguel 2007). Experimental research reinforces the negative relationship between social ties with the military and casualty sensitivity. When respondents were asked about potential contingencies that could involve U.S. forces, those with close ties to members of the military proved significantly more sensitive to the possibility of U.S. casualties (Feaver and Gelpi 2004, 164–65). In short, stronger ties to personnel in harm's way make citizens more cautious about the use of force.

Greater personal connections to a war become a frame through which someone filters information about that war. The greater the personal connection, the greater the risk perceived by an individual, and the more real that risk seems, making disapproval of the conflict more likely (Gartner 2008a; Gartner 2008b, 690). Conscription forces a broader swath of society pay the costs of war, making the mass public

as a whole more aware and concerned about the costs of war and more likely to scrutinize the potential benefits.<sup>3</sup> This leads us to state our first hypothesis:

*H1: A shift to a conscript military will decrease public support for war.*

While we expect that conscription will decrease support for war in the population as a whole, we expect there to be a particularly large drop in support among those most likely to be affected by the conflict. Given our self-interest mechanism, those with the most at stake should respond the most strongly. Those who are most likely to be drafted—young people—should be especially opposed to a draft war. Further, parents of draft-age children, who would also see their children drafted and sent to war, should also be more opposed. We state this as:

*H1A: Reintroducing the draft should particularly decrease support for war among those most likely to be affected by the draft (young people and parents with children).*

An alternative perspective, however, suggests that reinstating a draft might actually lead to *increased* support for military campaigns, given what it might signal about the importance of the war. With a broad swath of society in the military, more citizens might identify with the conflict and rally behind it. As described above, the decision to shift to a conscript military would broaden the segment of the population engaged in the decision to go to war. Rather than making people aware of the costs of war (as H1 argues), conscript may give a broad swath of society a stronger rationale for supporting the war effort because they feel they too have a direct stake in the outcome. A conscript military therefore becomes a political force that leads citizens to support the military (Althusser 2006, 219; see also Machiavelli 1985, chapters 12–13).<sup>4</sup> As a result, citizens rally to support the war.

The potential deployment of a conscript army, if the draft is fair, also sends a powerful signal about the importance of the conflict to ordinary voters (Hermann, Tetlock, and Visser 1999). Prominent military sociologist Charles Moskos argues that that casualty tolerance in the United States public has declined during the last several decades due to

<sup>3</sup>Another possible reason subjects might oppose a draft war is that they might feel it is unfair to send conscripted soldiers into battle against their will. That possibility provides an interesting opportunity for future work. We thank a reader for suggesting this possibility.

<sup>4</sup>This mechanism is why conscription can increase support despite the knowledge that some are being “forced” into the military.

<sup>2</sup>Whether the draft would actually achieve this goal is beyond the scope of this paper (Greenberg 2004).

reduced elite participation in the military. Beginning with the Vietnam War, the children of elites could dodge the draft without penalty. Paradoxically, the subsequent end of the draft actually led to *decreased* support for American involvement in wars since elite participation is a critical signal or cue of war importance for the general public (Moskos 2001).

Moskos then argues that a decision to reinstate a fair draft (where even the children of elites would be asked to serve) would increase casualty tolerance (Moskos 2001, 46). This is related to, though not exactly the same as, support for a war. If the public is more willing to accept casualties, it should make them more risk tolerant about the deployment of troops abroad, given that potential casualties always loom large in discussions about the costs and benefits of military action. A conscript military, in other words, shapes the public's willingness to go to war in a positive direction because the country will be confident that the burden of casualties will be borne fairly. Based on this line of thinking, we would expect that a reversion to a draft military, which would implicitly include political and economic elites, would increase support for going to war, all else equal.

*H2: A shift to a conscript military will increase public support for war.*

## Testing the Link between Conscription and Support for War

While there is a voluminous literature on what shapes mass attitudes toward conflict (e.g., elite rhetoric, casualties, and so forth), comparatively little work directly assesses the effects of conscription on attitudes. Much of what does exist focuses on the Vietnam draft lottery. Beginning in 1969, the U.S. government randomly assigned lottery numbers to every day of the year. Those who were born on that day were assigned the corresponding lottery number, and draft-age males with low numbers were asked to serve first (e.g., those whose birthday was assigned the number one were called first, those whose birthday was assigned the number two were called second, and so forth). Having a low lottery number meant an individual would be called to serve with high probability, while those with high numbers would be unlikely to be called to serve. Lottery number serves as a randomization mechanism for the probability of service, allowing scholars to estimate the effect of conscription on attitudes. Consistent with a self-interest logic, those with lower draft numbers were

more likely to strongly oppose the Vietnam War (Bergan 2009; Erikson and Stoker 2009).

This is strong and important evidence that conscription can influence support for war. However, because draft-eligible males were the only citizens assigned lottery numbers, we only have a way of assessing the effects of conscription on attitudes for these individuals (i.e., using their lottery number to gauge the likelihood they would be called to serve). For other citizens not eligible for the draft (such as men older than the draft cut-off or any women), we have no way of assessing how the draft influenced their support for the war. The reintroduction of the draft might also change attitudes toward the war for reasons unrelated to self-interest (making the Vietnam draft lottery system an incomplete mechanism for uncovering the effects of conscription on support for war). Further, if we want to estimate the effects of conscription on attitudes for a war other than Vietnam, we cannot use these estimates (unless we assume that the effects of the Vietnam draft lottery directly translate into other conflicts). While any study will necessarily be time bound (i.e., any study in the current context will be influenced by Iraq and Afghanistan), given the divisiveness and social discord caused by Vietnam, there is good reason to reexamine how conscription changes support for war in another setting. We need a new approach to test the more general link between conscription and support for war.

## Experimental Design

To test the hypotheses we outline above, we turn to experiments embedded within a (U.S.) nationally representative survey. The experiments described below were included in a survey fielded by Knowledge Networks from December 17 to December 30, 2008. Knowledge Networks uses random-digit-dialing methods to generate a true probability sample of U.S. households, but then administers the questionnaires over the Internet. Data from Knowledge Networks compare favorably to other probability samples (Chang and Krosnick 2009) and have been widely used in political science (Clinton 2006).

While we acknowledge that experiments have some disadvantages, in this instance, the benefits outweigh these costs. In particular, an experiment (unlike other methodologies) allows us to assess the causal effect of draft reintroduction in a setting other than the Vietnam War draft lottery. Even in an experimental setting, however, how does one estimate

the effect of conscription on mass attitudes? Because we cannot actually change whether or not any nation has mandatory military service, we have to manipulate citizens' *beliefs* about conscription. In our experiment, we do this by discussing a news story about members of Congress who called for the reintroduction of the military draft to distribute the burdens of military service more equally throughout society (e.g., Rangel 2002). Treated subjects are told about these efforts to reintroduce a draft and are told that such changes would be made prior to the next conflict (so the military that went to war would be a conscripted military, not a volunteer one). Control subjects are simply told that there have recently been stories about the U.S. armed forces in the news, but are not given any information about calls to reinstate the draft (for exact question wordings, see the online appendix). So here, the treatment is exposing citizens to information about the potential reintroduction of the draft, which (if our experimental manipulation succeeds) should alter citizens' beliefs about the likelihood of a draft being introduced (for a related design, see Gilens 2001).<sup>5</sup>

We first expose subjects to this information about the draft and then present them with a scenario where one country has invaded its neighbor and the invaded nation asks the United States to intervene on its behalf. Subjects in the draft condition are reminded that the military that would be sent into harm's way would be a draft military. We then ask subjects whether or not the United States should send troops to defend the invaded nation.

Obviously, factors other than the military labor policy (whether the United States has a conscript or a volunteer armed forces) shape mass support for war: perceptions of success (Gelpi, Feaver, and Reifler 2005), casualties (Mueller 1973), elite rhetoric (Berinsky 2009), geopolitics (Jentleson and Britton 1998), and a host of other factors also matter. For now, we keep our focus on conscription and set aside most of these other factors. We do so in the interest of focusing on our theoretical quantity of interest and maintaining statistical power given the sample size.

<sup>5</sup>There are many different types of draft systems, ranging from conscription based on geography (by town or district), to lotteries based on birthday, to compulsory military service. We specify in our survey (see the online appendix) a system designed to be as clear to respondents as possible, but other systems might have different effects. It is also possible that cultural memory of the Vietnam War-era draft, which was perceived as unfair, negatively influenced our respondents despite our specification of the details of the draft. This is an important caveat to the results that follow. We thank an anonymous reviewer for this suggestion.

We want to establish a baseline effect of conscription on support for war in this study. The online appendix details additional experiments that allow us to determine how some of these variables (such as the nations involved or the primary policy objective of the mission) shape support for war. In order to interpret those supplemental results, we need the baseline results established in the body of the paper.

The one additional factor we do consider here is the expected casualty level. One concern with simply manipulating beliefs about the draft is that respondents may make assumptions about the nature of the conflict. For example, some might assume that the reintroduction of a draft means that the conflict is a major one where the survival of the nation is at stake.<sup>6</sup> To explicitly control for this sort of effect, we introduce a second experimental factor: the level of anticipated U.S. casualties (either high or low).<sup>7</sup> We acknowledge that the casualty sensitivity literature discusses how other factors beyond raw casualty levels shape mass support for war. For now, we focus simply on raw casualties as a first step, and leave for future work the more complicated question of how these other factors interact with casualties to shape war support.

The obvious trade-off with this sort of experimental approach, however, is external validity: Do the experiments actually tell us something about the way actual citizens make judgments about the decision to send troops to battle? How generalizable are our results beyond this specific experimental setting? There are two relevant issues here. First, because our sample consists solely of U.S. residents, we cannot generalize our findings beyond the United States. However, given the importance of the United States in the international security environment and the international economy, understanding American behavior is a vital task.

Beyond the sample, there is also the question of the generalizability of our experimental setup. Like nearly all experimental designs, ours is necessarily artificial. But this does not mean our scenarios are

<sup>6</sup>The concern here is that a selection effect might exist. The country would only select into very popular wars in a world with a conscript military due to the larger engaged population, meaning those wars would be disproportionately popular.

<sup>7</sup>We do not specify the specific number of casualties, since different respondents might read specific numbers differently, e.g., 1,000 casualties might seem high to one respondent but might seem low to another. We assess respondents' reactions to the general categories "high" and "low" for now and leave further specification for future studies, though see the online appendix for additional experiments regarding the casualties factor.

without merit, nor does it mean they necessarily lack external validity. External validity does not hinge on the experiment actually mimicking a real-world scenario (Anderson and Bushman 1997). Instead, the issue is whether we can actually test the underlying causal mechanism we think links our theoretical variables of interest (here, conscription and support for war). If we can, then our results tell us something about the real-world process of interest (Anderson and Bushman 1997). The manipulation check we included in our results (see below) suggests that we can, so our results offer an important insight into how conscription changes attitudes toward conflict.

To gauge the effectiveness of our treatment at altering subjects' beliefs, we included a manipulation check in our instrument. Subjects were asked to assess the likelihood that the draft will be reintroduced using a 5-point ordered response scale ranging from "very unlikely" to "very likely." We do not expect many respondents (even in the treatment condition) to think that it is "very likely" that the draft will be reinstated. However, on average, subjects shown the information about the draft being reinstated (treatment subjects) should think that draft reintroduction is more likely than control subjects. Our data confirms that this is the case: treated subjects are significantly more likely to believe that the draft will be reintroduced ( $t_{2073} = 3.02$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).<sup>8</sup> This suggests that any results we find are the results of our manipulations and not some other factor.

## Experimental Results

To begin, we consider how support for war changes under different experimental conditions. Figure 1 below shows how public support for going to war varies depending on the experimental conditions—conscription versus volunteer army and low versus high expectations of casualties.<sup>9</sup>

Here, we see a very large effect of conscription: averaging across expected casualty levels, moving from an all-volunteer to a conscript army decreases support by 17% (from 54% to 37%). This

<sup>8</sup>We report results based on unweighted data throughout the paper. We have reanalyzed our data using poststratification weights and none of our substantive conclusions change.

<sup>9</sup>Our survey item measuring support for sending troops into battle uses a 4-point ordinal response scale (strongly support to strongly oppose). Here, we simply compare a binary support/oppose coding, though moving to the full 4-point scale would not change the substantive conclusions we present.

provides initial support for Hypothesis 1: conscription, by increasing the perceived costs of war, decreases mass support for war. Further, note the similarity between public support for a volunteer army expected to take high casualties (46%) and a conscript army expected to take low numbers of casualties (41%). The similarity between these figures strongly suggests that the decision to conscript, rather than just variations in the level of expected casualties, drives the results. While these results are preliminary, they strongly support the argument that conscription has a major effect on how citizens view the decision to go to war.

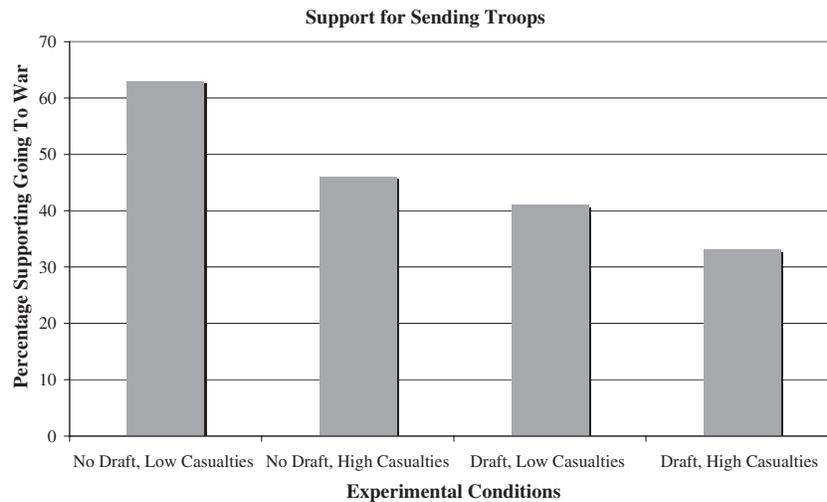
To more formally test our hypothesis, we use regression to analyze the data from our experiment. We model support for sending troops into conflict as a function of the experimental factors and a series of control variables. The control variables include whether the respondent has any prior service in the military (Feaver and Gelpi 2004, 58), the respondent's gender (Conover and Sapiro 1993),<sup>10</sup> the respondent's hawkishness (given that hawkish respondents should be more likely to approve sending troops, Wittkopf 1990), partisanship, and the respondent's age and income (see the online appendix for variable coding rules).<sup>11</sup> Table 1 gives the results of a probit regression predicting willingness to commit troops (1=support sending troops; 0=oppose) as a function of our experimental manipulations and the associated control variables.

Table 1 demonstrates that both the reintroduction of the draft and expected casualties influence support for going to war. Consistent with Hypothesis 1, reintroducing the draft decreases support for war. Likewise, Americans are also more opposed to conflicts with higher expected casualties. The positive and statistically significant coefficient on the interaction term demonstrates that when respondents expect high casualties, the composition of the military has a smaller effect on attitudes. The difference

<sup>10</sup>We also estimated a model controlling for race to examine if either (1) attitudes toward conscription are a function of race or (2) if minorities are more/less sensitive to the reintroduction of a draft (perhaps because they feel they pay a disproportionate cost in the all-volunteer army). Our data supports neither of these hypotheses.

<sup>11</sup>Another possibility is that perceptions of the Afghanistan and/or Iraq wars conditioned survey respondent's perceptions, with like or dislike of the war influencing the results. Additionally, as an anonymous reviewer suggested, it is plausible that the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have increased support and respect for volunteer troops in the population, lowering the willingness of the population to accept any draft. This could potentially inflate opposition to conscription and limit the extent to which our results are generalizable.

FIGURE 1 Support for Sending Troops into Battle by Experimental Condition



between the draft/volunteer conditions is only 12% when casualties are high, but is 22% when casualties are low (all calculations in this section are based on model predictions, holding all other variables at their mean/median values). While the draft always has a large and significant effect on attitudes toward conflict, it has a smaller effect when subjects expect high casualties due to the increased resistance of all subjects to sustain high U.S. losses. All other things being equal, when many troops might die, Americans are opposed to committing both volunteer and conscripted troops.

The subjects' attitudinal and demographic factors also shape their willingness to send troops into harm's way, though to a much smaller extent than our experimental manipulations. Four of our control variables reach statistical significance at conventional levels: gender, age, partisanship, and hawkish attitudes. None of these variables, however, has a substantively large effect on support for war. For example, partisanship has the largest effect: moving from being a leaning Democrat (the median category) to being an Independent increases the probability of support by 4%, all else equal. These findings suggest that it is our experimental manipulations, rather than these demographic attributes, that drives support for sending troops into harm's way.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup>We also investigated the possibility of interactions between hawkishness, the draft, and casualty sensitivity (i.e., perhaps hawks are not especially casualty sensitive or draft sensitive). Our data suggest that hawks, much like doves, respond to both the draft and the expected level of casualties; see the online appendix for more details.

We can also test the underlying self-interest mechanism driving our theory, which argues that support falls in the draft condition because individuals realize they or their loved ones could be sent into harm's way. While we cannot test this argument for all subjects in our sample, we can test it for two groups of individuals. First, Hypothesis 1A states that young people (here, those ages 18–40)—the prime targets of any reinstated draft—should be especially opposed to war in the draft condition. Our draft question is worded broadly and does not specifically exclude women, since women are now integrated into much of the military, so we test our argument on both men and women.<sup>13</sup> Second, we also argue that parents of children should be especially resistant to the draft, given that their children could then be sent into harm's way. Table 2 below reestimates the model from Table 1, but examines whether these groups are especially sensitive to draft information.

Our results strongly support the self-interest mechanism underlying H1 and H1A. Young people become much more strongly opposed to the conflict when the draft is reinstated. Take, for example, the effect on the young, who would be called to serve in the draft. Reintroducing the draft decreases the probability of support for a young respondent by 23%, whereas that shift only decreases support by 11% among older respondents. In the draft condition, draft-eligible respondents are approximately 9% less

<sup>13</sup>We wrote the draft question to cover all citizens, not just men, to keep with contemporary discussions of the draft; see the online appendix for more details. Rerunning the analyses separately by sex does not change our conclusions.

TABLE 1 Conscription and Mass Support for War

Variable	Model 1 β/(SE)	Model 2 β/(SE)
Intercept	<b>0.33(0.06)</b>	<b>-0.47(0.16)</b>
<b>Experimental Manipulations:</b>		
High Expected Casualties	<b>-0.44(0.08)</b>	<b>-0.46(0.08)</b>
Draft Reintroduced	<b>-0.57(0.08)</b>	<b>-0.60(0.08)</b>
High Expected Casualties *Draft Reintroduced	<b>0.23(0.11)</b>	<b>0.27(0.12)</b>
<b>Control Variables:</b>		
Military Service		0.11(0.09)
Female		<b>-0.22(0.06)</b>
Age		<b>0.05(0.02)</b>
Income		-0.004(0.01)
College Educated		0.06(0.07)
Partisanship		<b>0.11(0.01)</b>
Hawkish Attitudes		<b>0.09(0.02)</b>
N	2053	2029
ROC	0.62	0.70
ROC (Null Model)	0.50	0.50

Note: Cell entries are probit coefficients (with associated standard errors) predicting willingness to send troops into combat as a function of the experimental manipulations and various control variables. Statistically significant results ( $\alpha < 0.10$ , two-tailed) are given in bold.

supportive than their older counterparts, all else equal. This is an effect of the draft itself, and not simply pacifism among this group: young respondents are actually slightly *more supportive* of deploying troops in the all-volunteer condition than other respondents, though the effect is not statistically significant. Our results show that young people become relatively more opposed to war only when they will have to shoulder the costs of fighting that war, exactly in line with the prediction of our self-interest model.

For the parents of children that could eventually become eligible for a draft, we see a similar but slightly weaker story. Here, parents are more opposed in the draft condition (as we would expect), but the effect is only marginally statistically significant ( $p=0.09$ , one-tailed). The draft may have a weaker effect on parents since only some of them may have draft-eligible children, though we leave it for future analyses to explore this in more detail.

As a whole, Table 2 strongly supports our theoretical argument. Not only does the draft decrease public support for war, it does so for the reason we articulated: self-interest. Those who would most directly bear the costs of a draft war (young people) are much more sensitive to the reintroduction of the draft than other respondents are, and

TABLE 2 Conscription and Self-Interest

Variable	Model 1 β/(SE)	Model 2 β/(SE)
Intercept	<b>-0.29(0.13)</b>	<b>-0.48(0.17)</b>
<b>Experimental Manipulations:</b>		
High Expected Casualties	<b>-0.46(0.08)</b>	<b>-0.46(0.08)</b>
Draft Reintroduced	<b>-0.42(0.09)</b>	<b>-0.55(0.09)</b>
High Expected Casualties* Draft Reintroduced	<b>0.28(0.12)</b>	<b>0.26(0.12)</b>
<b>Control Variables:</b>		
Military Service	<b>0.16(0.09)</b>	0.11(0.09)
Female	<b>-0.20(0.06)</b>	<b>-0.21(0.06)</b>
Age		<b>0.04(0.02)</b>
Income	-0.005(0.008)	-0.004(0.008)
College-Educated	0.07(0.07)	0.06(0.07)
Partisanship	<b>0.11(0.02)</b>	0.11(0.02)
Hawkish Attitudes	<b>0.09(0.02)</b>	0.09(0.02)
<b>Self-Interested Group:</b>		
Young Person	0.13(0.09)	
Young Person *Draft Reintroduced	<b>-0.53(0.12)</b>	
Parents with Children *Draft Reintroduced		0.07(0.10)
Parents with Children *Draft Reintroduced		<b>-0.18(0.14)</b>
N	2029	2029
ROC	0.70	0.70
ROC (Null Model)	0.50	0.50

Note: See Table 1 for additional details.

those who would indirectly bear that cost (parents) are somewhat more sensitive as well. When subjects believe a draft system will be put in place, self-interest weighs more heavily on their decision to support or oppose war.

One limitation of the findings in Tables 1 and 2, however, is that they are based on a hypothetical scenario. As we discussed above, this sort of scenario is needed to establish a baseline relationship between conscription and support for war. What happens, however, in more realistic settings? To test the robustness of our findings, we conducted three independent follow-up experiments measuring public support for war over a range of contingencies involving China, Iran, and Yemen, drawing on the setup used in Hermann, Tetlock, and Visser (1999) and Gelpi et al. (2009; for full details, see the online appendix). The scenarios also varied the principle policy objective (PPO) of the mission to add another layer of realism to our setup. As we would expect, introducing specific scenarios and different PPOs does influence public support, but in a way that bolsters our claims. Given

space constraints, we cannot fully discuss these results here and refer the reader to the online appendix for a complete discussion of them. We simply note here that these follow-up experiments demonstrate that across every scenario, condition, and casualty level, the prospect of reintroducing the draft significantly decreases public support for going to war. These results demonstrate that our findings replicate in a variety of different settings and are not simply limited to one abstract scenario.

## Conclusion and Broader Implications

Every time the United States goes to war, questions arise about both the sustainability and the desirability of the all-volunteer force. From a sustainability perspective, many question whether the all-volunteer army can effectively meet the U.S.'s needs, given deployments in Iraq, Afghanistan, and around the globe. Even if it can, others question whether this produces beneficial outcomes for society. For example, many bemoan the passing of the "Greatest Generation" from the American political scene: because many of these leaders were drafted into World War II, they had valuable insights into conflict that helped shape post-War American foreign policy (Ambrose 1997). Others call into question the fairness of the all-volunteer force given the distribution of who serves in the military (Kreiner and Shen 2010). With the U.S. military currently deployed around the world, questions about the draft and mass support for conflict are unlikely to disappear anytime soon.

At the most basic level, our results provide the microfoundations for arguments linking conscription and mass support for war. While many scholars, politicians, and popular analysts have argued that conscription decreases mass support for war by spreading the costs of war more evenly throughout society, there was very little evidence supporting this viewpoint (outside of studies of the effect of the Vietnam War draft lottery for draft-age males). Using original experiments, we find strong support for this hypothesis: all else equal, reintroducing a draft decreases public support for war across a variety of different conditions (relative to an all-volunteer force). Further, our results show that this is likely because of self-interest: those with the most at stake in a draft war (young people) are the most sensitive to reintroducing the draft.

Our results also shed important light on the broader question of the domestic determinants of foreign policy, especially in democracies. A shift back to a draft military might influence the willingness of the American public to support military action abroad in limited wars. While all leaders have to appeal to their selectorates to build support for going to war, democratic leaders generally have to appeal to wider audiences due to the nature of the political system (Bueno de Mesquita 2003). Our results show that decisions about military labor policy influence when governments can expect to receive support.

Conscription makes the mass public more involved in foreign policy decisions in a more subtle way as well. While the all-volunteer army is not as biased toward the "have nots" as is commonly assumed,<sup>14</sup> it is true that elites—those at the top of the distribution of economic and political power—are underrepresented in the all-volunteer force. Fair and equitable conscription would bring more elite members of society into the military, people who have a large and disproportionate voice in the governmental system. They will ensure their voices are heard by government leaders, so if their sons and daughters were likely to be drafted, their skepticism about the use of force would likely increase considerably, which provides a potential argument in favor of the draft for those wishing to restrain the use of force.

However, conscription does not just make it harder for leaders to go to war; it also might change the wars a country fights. All leaders have to be sensitive to popular sentiment. To the extent that a conscript military raises the level of scrutiny on potential military campaigns, it makes countries less likely to engage in some types of military action. However, conscript also means that when public support exists for going to war, that support is likely to be broad based, giving a leader more of a mandate to fight. One potential consequence of these dynamics, though more research is necessary, might be to increase the credibility of signals sent by conscript militaries in a crisis. Since there are higher domestic political costs to mobilizing a conscript military—ranging from potential domestic opposition to a heightened risk of audience costs—when mobilization occurs during a crisis situation, other actors on the international stage should view it as especially credible (Fearon 1994).

<sup>14</sup>For example, 98% of the officer corps in the military has a college degree, and troops routinely outperform their civilian peers on the Armed Forces Qualifying Test, which includes measures of cognitive ability (U.S. Department of Defense 2008, Appendix B).

Finally, our findings also underline the critical role elite rhetoric plays in debates about going to war. It is important to remember that our experimental scenario does not test the way national interests might influence citizens' attitudes toward war. If all elites agree that a war is necessary for our vital national interests (e.g., World War II post-Pearl Harbor), then voters will use national interest, not self-interest, to evaluate war. So elite framing, which we downplayed in our experiment, is crucial. If the President and other key elites successfully frame the decision to go to war as part of a shared national sacrifice (as they did in World War II) or due to a severe threat to the country (such as the threat of WMDs utilized in elite rhetoric after 9/11), then our results might not hold. When people criticized George W. Bush's failure to invoke an ethic of national sacrifice after the events of September 11, 2001, instead telling Americans to go shopping, they were tapping into a link between support for war and a sense of shared sacrifice. If the president can build such a belief and coalition, support is likely to last much longer than it otherwise would.

In a world without this type of rhetoric, however, a return to a draft army would cause people to view the decision to go to war in terms of self-interest, making them less likely to support military interventions.<sup>15</sup> Though we ignored it here in the interest of simplicity, future work will need to explore how elite positions shape citizens' views toward conscription. More generally, our results show that the way the United States recruits its soldiers substantively influences public support for war in some situations. While it is far from the only factor, it is a significant factor, and one that must be taken into account in explanations of mass support for war. But beyond even the U.S. case, our results establish that how democracies staff their militaries has important implications for how the mass public supports wars.

## Acknowledgments

This is one of several joint papers by the authors; the ordering of their names reflects the principle of rotation. NSF Grant 0094964 partially funded for this research. The online appendix for this paper is available on the Cambridge University Press website at <http://journals.cambridge.org/JOP>. Data and syn-

<sup>15</sup>One could argue that such language would accompany any attempt to return to a draft, and there is some truth to that, but in the condition currently discussed, essentially the status quo plus a draft, it would be difficult to "sell" the draft on that basis.

tax to replicate these analyses will also be made available at <http://dvn.iq.harvard.edu/dvn/dv/mleven> by the date of publication. The authors thank Adam Berinsky, Scott Gartner, Jeffrey Green, Diana Mutz, and Alex Weisiger for helpful comments on this paper.

## References

- All Things Considered. 2007. "War Czar' Concerned over Stress of War on Troops." *National Public Radio*, August 10, : <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=12688693>.
- Althusser, Louis. 2006. *Politique et Histoire, de Machiavel à Marx: Cours à l'École Normale Supérieure de 1955 à 1972*. Paris: Éditions de Seuil.
- Ambrose, Stephen. 1997. *Citizen soldiers: The U.S. Army from the Normandy Beaches to the Bulge to the Surrender of Germany, June 7, 1944-May 7, 1945*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Anderson, Carl, and Brad Bushman. 1997. "External Validity of "Trivial" Experiments: The case of laboratory aggression." *Review of General Psychology* 1 (1): 19–41.
- Bergan, Daniel. 2009. "The Draft Lottery and Attitudes Towards the Vietnam War." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 73 (2): 379–84.
- Berinsky, Adam. 2009. *In Time of War: Understanding American Public Opinion from World War II to Iraq*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Berinsky, Adam, and James Druckman. 2007. "The Polls—Review: Public Opinion Research and Support for the Iraq War." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 71 (1): 126–41.
- Bueno de Mesquita, Bruce. 2003. *The Logic of Political Survival*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Chang, Linchiat, and Jon Krosnick. 2009. "Nation Surveys via RDD Telephone Interviewing Versus the Internet: Comparing Sample Representativeness and Response Quality." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 73 (4): 641–78.
- Citrin, Jack, and Donald Philip Green. 1990. "The Self-Interest Motive in American Public Opinion." In *Research in Micro-politics*, Vol. 3, ed. S. Long Greenwich: JAI Press: 1–28.
- Clinton, Joshua. 2006. "Representation in Congress: Constituents and Roll Calls in the 106th House." *The Journal of Politics* 68 (02): 397–409.
- Conover, Pamela Johnston, and Virginia Sapiro. 1993. "Gender, Feminist Consciousness and War." *American Journal of Political Science* 37 (4): 1079–99.
- Crabtree, Susan. 2009. "Rangel to Reintroduce Military Draft measure." *The Hill*, January 14.
- Erikson, Robert, and Laura Stoker. 2009. "Vietnam Draft Lottery Status and Political Attitudes." Paper Presented at the annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association.
- Fearon, James. 1994. "Domestic Political Audiences and the Escalation of International Disputes." *American Political Science Review* 88 (3): 577–92.
- Feaver, Peter and Christopher Gelpi. 2004. *Choosing your Battles: American Civil-Military Relations and the Use of Force*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Feldman, Stanley, Leonie Huddy, and George Marcus. 2008. "Going to War: When Citizens Matter." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association.
- Gartner, Scott. 2008a. "The Multiple Effects of Casualties on Public Support for War: An Experimental Approach." *American Political Science Review* 102 (01): 95–106.

- Gartner, Scott. 2008b. "Ties to the Dead: Connections to Iraq War and 9/11 Casualties and Disapproval of the President." *American Sociological Review* 73 (4): 690–95.
- Gartner, Scott, Gary Segura, and Michael Wilkening. 1997. "All Politics are Local: Local Losses and Individual Attitudes toward the Vietnam War." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 41 (5): 669–94.
- Gelpi, Christopher, Peter Feaver, and Jason Reifler. 2005. "Success Matters: Casualty Sensitivity and the War in Iraq." *International Security* 30 (3): 7–46.
- Gelpi, Christopher, Peter Feaver, and Jason Reifler. 2009. *Paying the Human Costs of War: American Public Opinion and Casualties in Military Conflicts*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Gilens, Martin. 2001. "Political Ignorance and Collective Policy Preferences." *American Political Science Review* 95 (2): 379–96.
- Greenberg, David. 2004. "Calls for Military Draft Promote Illusion of Equality." *Christian Science Monitor* April, 26, 9.
- Grose, Christian, and Bruce Oppenheimer. 2007. "The Iraq War, Partisanship, and Candidate Attributes: Explaining Variation in Partisan Swing in the 2006 U.S. House Elections." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 32 (4): 531–57.
- Hagel, Chuck. 2004. "Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearing on Iraq Transition (Part I)." *FDCH Political Transcripts* April 20.
- Heilprin, John. 2006. "Rep. Rangel Will Seek to Reinstate Draft." *Washington Post*, November 19.
- Hermann, Richard, Philip Tetlock, and Penny Visser. 1999. "Mass Public Decisions to Go to War: A Cognitive-Interactionist Framework." *American Political Science Review* 93 (3): 553–73.
- Holmes, Steven A. 2003. "The Nation: For Job and Country; Is This Really An All Volunteer Army." *New York Times*, April 6, D1.
- Horowitz, Michael, Erin Simpson, and Allan Stam. 2011. "Domestic Institutions and Wartime Casualties." *International Studies Quarterly*. Forthcoming.
- Hunt, Kasie. 2006. "Selective Service to Test Draft Machinery." *Washington Post*, December 22.
- Jentleson, Bruce. 1992. "The Pretty Prudent Public: Post-Vietnam American Opinion on the use of Military Force." *International Studies Quarterly* 36 (1): 46–74.
- Jentleson, Bruce, and Rebecca Britton. 1998. "Still Pretty Prudent: Post-Cold War American Public Opinion on the Use of Military Force." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 42 (4): 395–417.
- Johnson, Glen. 2009. "Pagliuca says he supports draft, then reverses." *Cape Cod Times*, November 12.
- Karol, David, and Edward Miguel. 2007. "The Electoral Cost of War: Iraq Casualties and the 2004 U.S. Presidential Election." *The Journal of Politics* 69 (03): 633–48.
- Kreiner, Douglas, and Francis Shen. 2010. *The Casualty Gap: The Causes of Consequences of American Wartime Inequality*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Machiavelli, Niccolo. 1985. *The Prince*. Trans. H. Mansfield. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- McPherson, James. 1988. *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Moskos, Charles. 1970. *The American Enlisted Man: The Rank and File in Today's Military*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Moskos, Charles. 2001. "What Ails the All-Volunteer Force: An Institutional Perspective." *Parameters* 31 (2): 29–47.
- Mueller, John E. 1973. *War, presidents, and public opinion*. New York: Wiley.
- Mueller, John E. 2005. "The Iraq Syndrome." *Foreign Affairs* 86 (4): 44–54.
- Rangel, Charles. 2002. "Bring Back the Draft." *New York Times*, December 31, A19.
- Reiter, Dan, and Allan Stam. 2002. *Democracies at War*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Ricks, Thomas. 1998. *Making the Corps*. New York: Scribner.
- Rowe, David. 2002. "Globalization, Conscription, and Anti-Militarism in Pre-World War I Europe." In *The Comparative Study of Conscription in the Armed Forces*, eds. L. Mjoset and S. van Holde. New York: JAI, 145–70.
- Schultz, Kenneth. 2001. "Looking for Audience Costs." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 45 (1): 32–60.
- Sears, David, Carl Hensler, and Leslie Speer. 1979. "Whites' Opposition to 'Busing': Self-Interest or Symbolic Politics?" *American Political Science Review* 73 (2): 369–84.
- Slantchev, Branislav. 2005. "Military Coercion in Interstate Crises." *American Political Science Review* 99 (4): 533–47.
- U.S. Department of Defense. 2008. Office of the Undersecretary of Defense, Personnel, and Readiness. 2008. "Population Representation in the Military Services: Fiscal Year 2007." Washington, DC: Department of Defense.
- Vasquez, Joseph. 2005. "Shouldering the Soldiering: Democracy, Conscription, and Military Casualties." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49 (6): 849–73.
- Wilson, George. 2009. "Forward Observer: Another Looming Disaster." *Government Executive.com*, November 9, <http://tinyurl.com/2bzy6oa>.
- Wittkopf, Eugene. 1990. *Faces of Internationalism: Public Opinion and American Foreign Policy*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Michael C. Horowitz is Assistant Professor of Political Science at University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA 19104-6215.

Matthew Levendusky is Assistant Professor of Political Science at University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA 19104-6215.