

The Impact of The Iraq War on the 2004 Presidential Election

1612929

‘A dissertation undertaken as part of the BSc
(Hons) in Politics at Brunel University’;

Submitted: 6th May 2020

Acknowledgements

This Dissertation is the most explicit reflection of all my work as an undergraduate. Therefore, there are a few people I would like to pay my sincerest gratitude for their support during this time.

Firstly, I wish to thank my parents, Janine and Mark, for their unconditional support and love, without their constant advice and help, I would never have been able to complete my research.

Secondly, I wish to thank Kathy O'Connor; it has been because of her guidance and support even during the most unconventional of hours that (despite significant setbacks) has enabled me to stay the course, so thank you to her.

I thank the Politics and History department at Brunel for helping me during challenging times throughout this process, in particular, my thanks go to, Martin Hansen, Justin Fisher and Niall Palmer, it is because of your work and support that has enabled me to finish this Dissertation.

Finally, I wish to thank my good friend Roger Judd for his consistent advice and friendship, which equipped me with the means to complete my research.

go raibh maith agat

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Introduction

The 2004 Presidential election was unique in American politics because the United States was engaged in a large-scale military conflict during the re-election of its incumbent President George W Bush. This circumstance means that the 2004 election is part of the small number occurring during wartime (8) and thus has different elements than peacetime elections.¹ Furthermore, the 2004 election occurred following the largest terrorist attack on American soil since Pearl Harbour in 1941. The 2001 September 11th (9/11) terrorist attacks on New York and Washington meant that President Bush's re-election campaign was judged partly on his handling of this unique event which placed foreign affairs at the top of the issues concerning the electorate.² This dissertation will analyse the extent that the Iraq War and its subsequent domestic political repercussions influenced the 2004 Presidential Election. Moreover, the hypothesis for this Dissertation is that the Iraq War had a significant impact on the 2004 Presidential election; in spite of other domestic issues that occurred during the election.

This Dissertation aims to uncover the impact of the Iraq War on the 2004 Presidential election. This will be done by analysing some of the different factors of the election and considering the impact the conflict had on them.

¹ Helmut Norpoth and Andrew H. Sidman, 'Mission Accomplished: The Wartime Election of 2004', *Political Behavior* 29, no. 2 (11 May 2007): P.176

² Gallup Inc, 'Economy, Terrorism Top Issues in 2004 Election Vote', Gallup.com, 25 September 2003, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/9337/Economy-Terrorism-Top-Issues-2004-Election-Vote.aspx>.

This will be achieved by firstly reviewing the literature on this subject following this introduction. Chapter 1 will examine the broad political context of the 2004 election and the initial implications the Iraq War had on it. Additionally, Chapter 2, will examine how President Bush benefited from the effects of the Iraq War through the emergence of a rally around the flag effect as well as the divisions and mistakes of the Democratic Party. Chapter 3 will analyse the harmful political consequences the Iraq War had on President Bush's re-election campaign. Chapter 4 will look at the other political factors beyond the Iraq War. Specifically, this chapter will look at the existence of the anti-same-sex marriage constitutional amendments on the ballot paper in 11 crucial states, as well as considering the weakness of John Kerry as a political opponent to President Bush.

Literature Review

The Electoral Cost of War: Iraq Casualties and the 2004 U.S. Presidential Election

David Karol and Edward Miguel

The main argument from this paper is that President Bush endured an electoral depreciation during his re-election bid due to the casualties from the Iraq War. Through their analysis, Karol and Miguel surmise that Bush lost approximately 2% of the popular vote because of the high casualty rate.³ The Iraq conflict meant that America had suffered nearly 10,000 casualties by election day.⁴ Furthermore, they argue that the casualty sensitivity was more pronounced in those states won by the Democrats in 2000.⁵

³ David Karol and Edward Miguel, 'The Electoral Cost of War: Iraq Casualties and the 2004 U.S. Presidential Election', *The Journal of Politics* 69, no. 3 (August 2007): P.633

⁴ David Karol and Edward Miguel, 'The Electoral Cost of War: Iraq Casualties and the 2004 U.S. Presidential Election', *The Journal of Politics* 69, no. 3 (August 2007): P.633

⁵ David Karol and Edward Miguel, 'The Electoral Cost of War: Iraq Casualties and the 2004 U.S. Presidential Election', *The Journal of Politics* 69, no. 3 (August 2007): P.644

This is significant because one theory is that voters, who live where local casualties are higher, are more likely to believe the national losses greater than the actual statistics and thus react negatively to President Bush.⁶ Additionally, the authors agree with the theory that voters care about local casualties more than those casualties from other states.⁷

Karol and Miguel believe that this impact is so potent because no official plays a more significant role in the initiation and conduct of the war than the President who is seeking re-election.⁸ Therefore it can be expected that President Bush as the Commander in Chief would face electoral repercussions for a high casualty toll.

This paper fits in with other research by referring to other factors of the 2004 election, albeit briefly and makes a more significant reference to the historical comparison between the Iraq War and other conflicts. Specifically the James Madison re-election during the War of 1812 amongst others.⁹ This historical comparison is useful because it provides an insight into themes that have occurred in previous elections which could apply to the 2004 election.

Karol and Miguel's paper contributes to the overall debate by analysing a crucial element of the 2004 Presidential election, casualty sensitivity.

⁶ David Karol and Edward Miguel, 'The Electoral Cost of War: Iraq Casualties and the 2004 U.S. Presidential Election', *The Journal of Politics* 69, no. 3 (August 2007): P.635

⁷ David Karol and Edward Miguel, 'The Electoral Cost of War: Iraq Casualties and the 2004 U.S. Presidential Election', *The Journal of Politics* 69, no. 3 (August 2007): P.635

⁸ David Karol and Edward Miguel, 'The Electoral Cost of War: Iraq Casualties and the 2004 U.S. Presidential Election', *The Journal of Politics* 69, no. 3 (August 2007): P.633

⁹ David Karol and Edward Miguel, 'The Electoral Cost of War: Iraq Casualties and the 2004 U.S. Presidential Election', *The Journal of Politics* 69, no. 3 (August 2007): P.633

This work is particularly important because the majority of the literature focuses on the rally around the flag effect and the weakness of John Kerry as a political opponent. Therefore, when comparing this paper with the other literature, it is clear that this paper enhances the argument that the Iraq War had significant political consequences by widening the scope of electoral repercussions for President Bush.

This paper conducts its analysis by utilising a methodology which estimates casualties sensitivity on a localised basis and then considering their impact on the electorate's attitudes of the conflict as a whole.¹⁰ The methodology has some potential weaknesses. The first concern is that the methodology is not immune to time-varying state political factors that correlate with the war casualty rate.¹¹ This weakness means that their analysis cannot take into account how local political factors influenced voter opinion that happens to be the same as their feelings regarding high casualties.¹²

The authors rebuffed this concern by claiming that their system is robust, which contains political controls against this.¹³ Secondly, the methodology does not allow for the nationwide trends that support Bush which are related to the Iraq War.¹⁴

¹⁰ David Karol and Edward Miguel, 'The Electoral Cost of War: Iraq Casualties and the 2004 U.S. Presidential Election', *The Journal of Politics* 69, no. 3 (August 2007): P.633

¹¹ David Karol and Edward Miguel, 'The Electoral Cost of War: Iraq Casualties and the 2004 U.S. Presidential Election', *The Journal of Politics* 69, no. 3 (August 2007): P.635

¹² David Karol and Edward Miguel, 'The Electoral Cost of War: Iraq Casualties and the 2004 U.S. Presidential Election', *The Journal of Politics* 69, no. 3 (August 2007): P.635

¹³ David Karol and Edward Miguel, 'The Electoral Cost of War: Iraq Casualties and the 2004 U.S. Presidential Election', *The Journal of Politics* 69, no. 3 (August 2007): P.635

¹⁴ David Karol and Edward Miguel, 'The Electoral Cost of War: Iraq Casualties and the 2004 U.S. Presidential Election', *The Journal of Politics* 69, no. 3 (August 2007): P.635

Overall this paper is one of the leading pieces of research on the effects of casualties during the 2004 election.

Changing Horses in Wartime? The 2004 Presidential Election

Herbert F. Weisberg & Dino P. Christenson

The main argument from this paper is that the Iraq War was not a direct vote gainer for President Bush.¹⁵ This means that Bush was unable to benefit sufficiently from the electoral boost from the Iraq War alone. However, this paper believes that the War on Terror allowed President Bush to present to the electorate an image of himself as a strong leader which was to last long enough for him to win the election.¹⁶ According to the authors, it was the extended War on Terror rather than the Iraq War that provided the electoral victory for President Bush.

This image allowed him to counterbalance the losses incurred because of wartime casualties highlighted in a previous paper by Karol and Miguel. Also during the 2004 Presidential elections, the Democrats lost the advantage in partisanship.¹⁷

¹⁵ Herbert F. Weisberg and Dino P. Christenson, 'Changing Horses in Wartime? The 2004 Presidential Election', *Political Behavior* 29, no. 2 (11 May 2007):P. 279

¹⁶ Herbert F. Weisberg and Dino P. Christenson, 'Changing Horses in Wartime? The 2004 Presidential Election', *Political Behavior* 29, no. 2 (11 May 2007): P.279

¹⁷ Herbert F. Weisberg and Dino P. Christenson, 'Changing Horses in Wartime? The 2004 Presidential Election', *Political Behavior* 29, no. 2 (11 May 2007): P.288

The paper makes a similar comparison to the citing the rise in the Republican votes during the Civil War.¹⁸

This paper is trying to analyse how the Iraq War affected changes within partisanship. This paper conforms with the other research by analysing a segment of the debate, which is under-researched within the literature. However, it makes further steps by linking its results with the alternative political consequences of the Iraq War that other authors reference in their works, further demonstrating the wide-ranging effects the conflict had on American politics.

This paper uses an analysis of NES data as its methodology to ascertain how the Iraq War and the broader War on Terror affected respondents attitudes towards the main political parties during the election.¹⁹ However, the weakness of the methodology used in this paper is that given its originality, it is difficult to make comparisons to other studies within this specific area.

Another weakness of the methodology is that 1,212 people were interviewed face-to-face before the election, and only 811 voted for a major party.²⁰ Furthermore, 1,066 were re-interviewed after the election.²¹

¹⁸ Herbert F. Weisberg and Dino P. Christenson, 'Changing Horses in Wartime? The 2004 Presidential Election', *Political Behavior* 29, no. 2 (11 May 2007): P.283

¹⁹ Herbert F. Weisberg and Dino P. Christenson, 'Changing Horses in Wartime? The 2004 Presidential Election', *Political Behavior* 29, no. 2 (11 May 2007): P.279

²⁰ Herbert F. Weisberg and Dino P. Christenson, 'Changing Horses in Wartime? The 2004 Presidential Election', *Political Behavior* 29, no. 2 (11 May 2007): P.286

²¹ David Karol and Edward Miguel, 'The Electoral Cost of War: Iraq Casualties and the 2004 U.S. Presidential Election', *The Journal of Politics* 69, no. 3 (August 2007): P.286

The advantage of face-to-face interviews is that it allows for varied and unique answers which is valuable given the multi-layered elements of an election. However, the study does not isolate Iraq from the War on Terror as other research does, which leads to ambiguous analysis. In addition, 1212 interviewees (fewer interviewed post-election) is a tiny sample size and highlights the limitations of the methodology.

Ultimately this paper is useful for its originality, yet it suffers from clear limitations within its methodology.

Mission Accomplished: The Wartime Election of 2004

Helmut Norpoth & Andrew H. Sidman

This paper's main argument is that the Iraq War benefited President Bush and thus supported his re-election campaign. Furthermore, the authors surmise that Bush's victory fits within the historical context of American wartime elections.²²

Additionally, they argue that the benefits of the Iraq War for President Bush were prolonged due to a complex rally effect from 9/11.²³ This paper also argues that any diminishing effects from casualties as outlined in previous papers were mitigated by popular support for the War.²⁴

²² Helmut Norpoth and Andrew H. Sidman, 'Mission Accomplished: The Wartime Election of 2004', *Political Behavior* 29, no. 2 (11 May 2007): P.175

²³ Helmut Norpoth and Andrew H. Sidman, 'Mission Accomplished: The Wartime Election of 2004', *Political Behavior* 29, no. 2 (11 May 2007): P.175

²⁴ Helmut Norpoth and Andrew H. Sidman, 'Mission Accomplished: The Wartime Election of 2004', *Political Behavior* 29, no. 2 (11 May 2007): P.175

The paper is attempting to analyse the impact of the Iraq War in regards to the 2004 Presidential election, specifically looking at whether the Iraq conflict was a crucial concern in the minds of voters on Election Day. Additionally, it is analysing the historical political consequences of conflict during an election and seeing how they are applicable to the 2004 election.

This paper ties in with the other research by its recognition of the rally effect. Though, it dismisses the concerns made by Karol and Miguel regarding the casualties and argues that the rally effect mitigates any negatives.

In order to determine Presidential approval, this paper uses approval ratings from polls conducted before the election.²⁵ There is a weakness when using opinion polls as a methodology because voters do not always accurately record their true voting intentions; however, the use of multiple polls over time mitigates some of these limitations.

Overall this paper provides a precise analysis of the strength and political consequences of the rally around the flag effect, which is important given the significant role the Iraq War had on this election.

The existing literature makes clear several points on the elements of the 2004 Presidential election. Firstly, the paper by NorthPorth and Sidman show that a complex rally effect existed during the election. Secondly, there was a depreciation to this rally because of the impact of casualties from the conflict. However there remains a debate regarding how they impact the 2004 election. Finally, there is a fierce debate regarding the role of the War on Terror and whether any link to Iraq existed. Overall, the subject has multiple factors forming this scholarly debate.

²⁵ Helmut Norpoth and Andrew H. Sidman, 'Mission Accomplished: The Wartime Election of 2004', *Political Behavior* 29, no. 2 (11 May 2007): P.180

Chapter 1: Background

On March 19 2003, the United States Congress issued an authorisation for military action against Iraq.²⁶ This action had far-reaching political consequences which impacted on the 2004 Presidential election. The 2004 election was controversial for several reasons. Firstly, because it was the successor to the controversial election of 2000. Secondly, because the 2004 election occurred during the highly contentious Iraq War.

The 2000 election is described within the literature as at best a paradox and at worst a scandal.²⁷ This description is made because despite Al Gore winning the popular vote, the electoral college result (which decided the presidency) was determined by the case of *Bush vs Gore* over irregularities regarding results in Florida.²⁸ While Bush won this case, it destroyed any unambiguous political mandate for his first Presidential term.²⁹ This had an impact by setting the foundation for the subsequent election whereby President Bush had a political objective to establish a clear, unambiguous mandate from the electorate.

²⁶ Barbara Salazar Torreon, 'U.S. Periods of War and Dates of Recent Conflicts', n.d., 14.P.9

²⁷ Gerald M. Pomper, 'The 2000 Presidential Election: Why Gore Lost', *Political Science Quarterly* 116, no. 2 (2001): P.201.

²⁸ Gerald M. Pomper, 'The 2000 Presidential Election: Why Gore Lost', *Political Science Quarterly* 116, no. 2 (2001): P.201

²⁹ Gerald M. Pomper, 'The 2000 Presidential Election: Why Gore Lost', *Political Science Quarterly* 116, no. 2 (2001): P.201

Changes to the electoral college through population variations meant that Bush went into the election with his electoral votes worth seven more than before provided he retained them in 2004.³⁰ Compared to the 2000 election only three states changed hands in 2004.³¹ This change was broken down as such; George Bush lost New Hampshire (worth four electoral votes) and won two states, Iowa and New Mexico which combined equalled 15 electoral votes.³² The number of votes cast in the 2004 election was 17 million, this which was a 16% increase over 2000 the most significant increase since 1952.³³ Additionally, the 2004 Presidential election was the first time since 1928 that a Republican President was re-elected along with majorities in the House and the Senate.³⁴ Furthermore, George Bush won 50.7% of the popular vote and 286 electoral votes.³⁵ In comparison, his opponent John Kerry received 48.3% of the popular vote and 252 electoral votes.³⁶

³⁰ Barry C. Burden, 'An Alternative Account of the 2004 Presidential Election', *The Forum* 2, no. 4 (29 January 2004), P.2

³¹ Barry C. Burden, 'An Alternative Account of the 2004 Presidential Election', *The Forum* 2, no. 4 (29 January 2004),P.2.

³² Barry C. Burden, 'An Alternative Account of the 2004 Presidential Election', *The Forum* 2, no. 4 (29 January 2004),P.2.

³³ James E. Campbell, 'Why Bush Won the Presidential Election of 2004: Incumbency, Ideology, Terrorism, and Turnout', *Political Science Quarterly* 120, no. 2 (June 2005): P.219

³⁴ Alan Abramowitz, 'Terrorism, Gay Marriage, and Incumbency: Explaining the Republican Victory in the 2004 Presidential Election', *The Forum* 2, no. 4 (2004),P.1.

³⁵ Alan Abramowitz, 'Terrorism, Gay Marriage, and Incumbency: Explaining the Republican Victory in the 2004 Presidential Election', *The Forum* 2, no. 4 (2004),P.1.

³⁶ Alan Abramowitz, 'Terrorism, Gay Marriage, and Incumbency: Explaining the Republican Victory in the 2004 Presidential Election', *The Forum* 2, no. 4 (2004),P.1.

These figures mean that George Bush was re-elected with the smallest margin (in the popular vote) for an incumbent since Woodrow Wilson.³⁷

The 2004 Presidential election is a wartime election since it meets the criteria as outlined by NorthPorth and Sidman. NorthPorth and Sidman define 'War' in an electoral context when it passes one of the three following tests; firstly that an act of war has been declared by Congress, which applies to 5 previous conflicts.³⁸ Secondly, that a committed force of over 100,000 personnel have been deployed to a war zone, Thirdly, if there have been over 1000 casualties, it is evident that the Iraq War meets criteria two and three.³⁹

The Iraq War percolated into almost every area of this election. Therefore this was not a wartime election because it meets a scholarly criteria. Instead, it is because the Iraq War leeches into almost every policy area during the election. This meant political damage to those that failed to engage successfully with the Iraq War during the election.

The electorate was deciding whether the President was doing well enough in his handling of the Iraq War to continue leading the country during the conflict, thus deserving a second term.⁴⁰

³⁷ Helmut Norpoth and Andrew H. Sidman, 'Mission Accomplished: The Wartime Election of 2004', *Political Behavior* 29, no. 2 (11 May 2007): P.176

³⁸ Helmut Norpoth and Andrew H. Sidman, 'Mission Accomplished: The Wartime Election of 2004', *Political Behavior* 29, no. 2 (11 May 2007): P.176

³⁹ Helmut Norpoth and Andrew H. Sidman, 'Mission Accomplished: The Wartime Election of 2004', *Political Behavior* 29, no. 2 (11 May 2007): P.177

⁴⁰ Helmut Norpoth and Andrew H. Sidman, 'Mission Accomplished: The Wartime Election of 2004', *Political Behavior* 29, no. 2 (11 May 2007): P.281

When studying historical American Presidential elections, the literature makes several observations. Firstly Presidential elections are not typically close events.⁴¹ This fact is significant because it highlights the rarity of the 2000 election and therefore 2004 was set up to provide a definitive conclusion to the question over Bush's mandate. Furthermore, the significance of a close election like 2004 highlights the deep divisions in America which the Iraq War contributed to.

Historically during wartime elections, the President tends to perform very well electorally.⁴² The research points to the examples of Roosevelt in 1944 following the attacks of Pearl Harbour and Abraham Lincoln's re-election in 1864 during the Civil War amongst others.⁴³ Several factors explain this repeated electoral success.

Firstly in the majority of these examples, a rally effect exists during the conflict which boosts the re-election campaign of the incumbent.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Chandrakant Yatanoor, 'AMERICAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION-2004: POST ELECTION ANALYSIS', *The Indian Journal of Political Science* 66, no. 1 (2005): P135.

⁴² Herbert F. Weisberg, 'Electoral Democracy during Wartime: The 2004 U.S. Election', *Political Behavior* 29, no. 2 (2007): P144.

⁴³ Herbert F. Weisberg and Dino P. Christenson, 'Changing Horses in Wartime? The 2004 Presidential Election', *Political Behavior* 29, no. 2 (11 May 2007): P.280

⁴⁴ Helmut Norpoth and Andrew H. Sidman, 'Mission Accomplished: The Wartime Election of 2004', *Political Behavior* 29, no. 2 (11 May 2007): P.179

Secondly, the incumbent can claim that the country would be less safe without his leadership and that there is the danger of losing the ongoing conflict if there was to be a change in administration.⁴⁵ This argument has some basis with the American media, with one voter who supported Al Gore in the 2000 election saying ‘Any switch in office now would create turmoil.’⁴⁶ This voter went on to explain how America would be seen as weak if they switched leader during such a critical moment in the conflict⁴⁷.

This quote demonstrates the opportunity Bush had to explain to voters that the country needed to stick with him while the conflict was ongoing. However, given the small victory in the popular vote, it can be estimated that this argument did not translate into a broad endorsement for President Bush and that other reasons might have been behind his election victory. Despite this, it is clear that this strategy was extensively utilised by the Bush campaign as shown when Bush attacked Kerry by stating ‘The senator from Massachusetts has given us ample grounds to doubt the judgment and the attitude he brings to bear on vital issues of national security.’⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Peter F. Nardulli, ‘Handicapping the 2004 Presidential Election: A Normal Vote Approach’, *PS: Political Science and Politics* 37, no. 4 (2004): 813–20. Herbert F. Weisberg and Dino P. Christenson, ‘Changing Horses in Wartime? The 2004 Presidential Election’, *Political Behavior* 29, no. 2 (11 May 2007): P.279

⁴⁶ ‘4 Years Later, Some Voters Switch Sides - The New York Times’, accessed 23 April 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2004/10/30/politics/campaign/4-years-later-some-voters-switch-sides.html>.

⁴⁷ ‘4 Years Later, Some Voters Switch Sides - The New York Times’, accessed 23 April 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2004/10/30/politics/campaign/4-years-later-some-voters-switch-sides.html>.

⁴⁸ Conor O’Clery, ‘Bush Attacks Kerry on National Security’, *The Irish Times*, accessed 23 April 2020, <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/Bush-attacks-Kerry-on-national-security-1.1309765>.

This quote demonstrates the importance of national security to the campaign. Furthermore it provides an insight into the Bush strategy.

Nevertheless, a critical point is that wars during an election do not always benefit the incumbent. Instead, they can do severe damage, especially during unpopular wars such as Korea and Vietnam.⁴⁹

Despite being acknowledged as a wartime election within the literature, the 2004 election had some unique elements that separate it from previous wartime elections. History shows that even if a conflict is successful, it often damages the incumbent's re-election chances, the example of George Bush senior electoral defeat following the Gulf War demonstrates this.⁵⁰ This means that President Bush did not have an assured victory, even if the Iraq War was successful which by November 2004 was not the case.⁵¹

Furthermore, the 2004 election was unique among the existing wartime elections. Firstly because after the initial phase of Iraq; the conflict was fought in unconventional locations using different tactics, which lead to an unorthodox style of warfare.⁵² Additionally, following the initial invasion, the primary objective of the coalition forces was to lead a counter insurgency campaign within Iraq.⁵³

⁴⁹ Peter F. Nardulli, 'Handicapping the 2004 Presidential Election: A Normal Vote Approach', *PS: Political Science and Politics* 37, no. 4 (2004): P.814.

⁵⁰ Herbert F. Weisberg and Dino P. Christenson, 'Changing Horses in Wartime? The 2004 Presidential Election', *Political Behavior* 29, no. 2 (11 May 2007): P.279

⁵¹ Herbert F. Weisberg, 'Electoral Democracy during Wartime: The 2004 U.S. Election', *Political Behavior* 29, no. 2 (2007): P.146.

⁵² Herbert F. Weisberg and Dino P. Christenson, 'Changing Horses in Wartime? The 2004 Presidential Election', *Political Behavior* 29, no. 2 (11 May 2007): P.280

⁵³ Herbert F. Weisberg and Dino P. Christenson, 'Changing Horses in Wartime? The 2004 Presidential Election', *Political Behavior* 29, no. 2 (11 May 2007): P.282

This suggests that Iraq combined with the fact that the war occurred after 9/11 might have the possibility of provoking an unconventional reaction than expected from the electorate than previous conflicts.

In order to explain the rationale behind the Bush administration's decision to invade Iraq, the administration consistently connected the Iraq regime with the terrorist attack of 9/11 without directly placing blame.⁵⁴ This link is acknowledged by scholars who argue that Bush personally believed that the Iraq War was part of a broader War on Terror ignited by the attacks of 9/11.⁵⁵ It is clear that Bush was aware that the framing of the war would be crucial domestically to ensure continued support.

Kushner suggested support for the War was partly due to the Bush administration convincing the American people that Iraq and 9/11 were connected.⁵⁶ This connection indicates that in isolation, the invasion of Iraq would not have generated sufficient political support for Bush. However, by framing Iraq as an extension of the War on Terror and a response to 9/11, Bush was able to generate support for the conflict. Therefore the subsequent effects of 9/11 are linked to the invasion of Iraq and the 2004 Presidential elections, as agreed by scholars as a wartime election.

⁵⁴ Amy Gershkoff and Shana Kushner, 'Shaping Public Opinion: The 9/11-Iraq Connection in the Bush Administration's Rhetoric', *Perspectives on Politics* 3, no. 03 (September 2005),P.525.

⁵⁵ Amy Gershkoff and Shana Kushner, 'Shaping Public Opinion: The 9/11-Iraq Connection in the Bush Administration's Rhetoric', *Perspectives on Politics* 3, no. 03 (September 2005),P.526.

⁵⁶ Amy Gershkoff and Shana Kushner, 'Shaping Public Opinion: The 9/11-Iraq Connection in the Bush Administration's Rhetoric', *Perspectives on Politics* 3, no. 03 (September 2005),P.525.

Furthermore, initially, this linking was not challenged, thus leading to a one-sided information flow that leads to greater media coverage on the Iraq conflict which meant an increase in the exposure to the Bush rhetoric on Iraq.⁵⁷

This is supported by the evidence which shows that from September to 12th 2002 to May 2003 terrorism and Iraq were interwound regularly in the rhetoric used by the Bush administration.⁵⁸

The benefits of the Iraq War for Bush appear to be obvious this is shown when following the invasion of Iraq Bush gained personally. In the initial stages of the conflict Gallup reported a 20% approval rating increase for the President.⁵⁹ This demonstrates that Bush's initial invasion did yield a substantial political reward.⁶⁰ This increase in approval was from 51% *pre-war* and 71% *after the invasion*.⁶¹ However, Lindsay and Smith hypothesised (in 2003) that Bush might struggle with re-election as Bush senior did when despite having poll ratings in the high 80s he only managed to win 38% of the vote in 1992.⁶²

⁵⁷ Gershkoff and Kushner, 'Shaping Public Opinion'. P.526

⁵⁸ Amy Gershkoff and Shana Kushner, 'Shaping Public Opinion: The 9/11-Iraq Connection in the Bush Administration's Rhetoric', *Perspectives on Politics* 3, no. 03 (September 2005),P.525.

⁵⁹ Gallup Inc, 'Iraq War Triggers Major Rally Effect', Gallup.com, 25 March 2003, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/8074/Iraq-War-Triggers-Major-Rally-Effect.aspx>.

⁶⁰ Barbara Salazar Torreon, 'U.S. Periods of War and Dates of Recent Conflicts', n.d., 14.

⁶¹ Gallup Inc, 'Iraq War Triggers Major Rally Effect', Gallup.com, 25 March 2003, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/8074/Iraq-War-Triggers-Major-Rally-Effect.aspx>.

⁶² James M. Lindsay and Caroline Smith, 'Rally' Round the Flag: Opinion in the United States before and after the Iraq War', *The Brookings Review* 21, no. 3 (2003): P.23.

The political consequences for President Bush Sr are a reminder that wartime Presidents are not automatically re-elected and are still subject to the scrutiny of the electorate. This further demonstrates the political complexity the conflict brought to the 2004 election. To this end, it is essential to note that Presidential elections are not merely national events. The election is made up of 50 individual state races, each with unique political factors involved.⁶³ This becomes vital when considering the damaging impact of the Iraq War (*see Chapter 3*).

This background chapter highlights that the 2004 election was categorised as a wartime election fitting in with historical examples. Iraq was to play a significant albeit complex role in the election which subsequent chapters will analyse.

⁶³ David Karol and Edward Miguel, 'The Electoral Cost of War: Iraq Casualties and the 2004 U.S. Presidential Election', *The Journal of Politics* 69, no. 3 (2007): P.633.

Chapter 2: How the Iraq War Impacted on the 2004 Presidential Election by Benefiting President Bush's Re-Election Campaign.

This chapter will analyse the effects of two factors caused by the Iraq War that arguably benefited President Bush during his re-election of 2004. These factors were the extended rally around the flag effect following 9/11 and the divisions created within Bush's opponents, the Democratic Party that was caused by the Iraq War.

The Rally Around the Flag Effect

The rally round the flag effect was a vital factor that contributed to the 2004 Presidential election result. This phenomenon is defined within the literature as a sudden and substantial increase in public approval ratings for the President that occurs in response to dramatic events involving the United States of America.⁶⁴ An event such as this is subject to scholarly criteria as established by Muller in 1970. The criteria, according to Muller, is that the event is international, it involves the United States with a clear connection to the President and that it is a specific dramatic event with a sharp focus.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Marc J. Hetherington and Michael Nelson, 'Anatomy of a Rally Effect: George W. Bush and the War on Terrorism', *Political Science and Politics* 36, no. 01 (January 2003): 37–42, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096503001665>.

⁶⁵ Marc J. Hetherington and Michael Nelson, 'Anatomy of a Rally Effect: George W. Bush and the War on Terrorism', *Political Science and Politics* 36, no. 01 (January 2003): P.37

The events of 9/11 fulfil these criteria because the attacks were carried out by foreign nationals on American soil, The President was directly involved as one of the planes was believed to be targeting the White House and that the attacks were the single deadliest attacks of its kind in human history. With a clear objective to kill Americans, it was dramatic and focused. In this context, military action abroad such as the Iraq War could be expected to generate a domestic rally effect which benefits the President.⁶⁶

Furthermore, the Iraq War acted as a mechanism for the rally around the flag effect from 9/11 to be extended throughout the election.⁶⁷

One of the ways President Bush was able to extend the rally was through his rhetoric. Bush styled his rhetoric in such a way as to consistently link 9/11, the War on Terror and the Iraq War. Sources at the time in the American media claimed that ‘There was precious little political debate going on.’⁶⁸ This highlights the strategy of Bush to control the media narrative following 9/11 which can only be seen as a significant boost to his re-election campaign as his arguments received virtually no published opposition. Through this action, the link became embedded in the minds of the electorate during this period. This is important because it allowed Bush to benefit electorally through his responses to each of the events. This means a response on 9/11 would be seen as a response to the War on Terror, and the same is applicable to the Iraq War, with all the positive results benefiting Bush.

⁶⁶ Helmut Norpoth and Andrew H. Sidman, ‘Mission Accomplished: The Wartime Election of 2004’, *Political Behavior* 29, no. 2 (11 May 2007): P.180

⁶⁷ Helmut Norpoth and Andrew H. Sidman, ‘Mission Accomplished: The Wartime Election of 2004’, *Political Behavior* 29, no. 2 (11 May 2007): P.187

⁶⁸ Sue Lockett John et al., ‘Going Public, Crisis after Crisis: The Bush Administration and the Press from September 11 to Saddam’, *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 10, no. 2 (2007): 196.

The War on Terror was an essential issue for the electorate and by linking it to the Iraq War President Bush was able to present his actions as proactive to the War on Terror which was popular with the electorate. This reinforced to the electorate the idea that maintaining the incumbent was important in order to keep the country safe from the threats that the President was alluding to in his speeches.⁶⁹

As previously stated, President Bush carefully managed his speeches and those of his administration to link the events of 9/11 with the Iraq War consistently, and thus the rally effect was extended.⁷⁰ According to some scholars Bush framed the Iraq War as an intimate relation to the events of 9/11, and this resulted in initially high levels of support for the conflict.⁷¹ Furthermore, as Northporth and Sidman write, the Iraq War was part of the War on Terror, which was ignited following the attacks of 9/11.⁷² They argue that in the absence of the Iraq War the rally effect from 9/11 would have decayed by the 2004 election.⁷³ This suggests that the Iraq War helped Bush re-election by extending the rally effect which was delivering high approval ratings for as long as possible.

This gave Bush the opportunity to base his campaign around keeping the country safe and that changing course would result in a more dangerous situation for the country.

⁶⁹ Amy Gershkoff and Shana Kushner, 'Shaping Public Opinion: The 9/11-Iraq Connection in the Bush Administration's Rhetoric', *Perspectives on Politics* 3, no. 03. P.531

⁷⁰ C. D. Kam and J. M. Ramos, 'Joining and Leaving the Rally: Understanding the Surge and Decline in Presidential Approval Following 9/11', *Public Opinion Quarterly* 72, no. 4 (6 November 2008): P.643

⁷¹ Amy Gershkoff and Shana Kushner, 'Shaping Public Opinion: The 9/11-Iraq Connection in the Bush Administration's Rhetoric', *Perspectives on Politics* 3, no. 03. P.525

⁷² Helmut Norpoth and Andrew H. Sidman, 'Mission Accomplished: The Wartime Election of 2004', *Political Behavior* 29, no. 2 (11 May 2007): P.176

⁷³ Helmut Norpoth and Andrew H. Sidman, 'Mission Accomplished: The Wartime Election of 2004', *Political Behavior* 29, no. 2 (11 May 2007): P.194

This was a well established electoral strategy utilised by former wartime incumbents.⁷⁴ This strategy is the changing horse during the race concept whereby a President can argue to the country if they switch leader now it will lead to greater uncertainty than if they stick with the incumbent.⁷⁵ This approach would play into the fears that the electorate had. This is shown with fears of further terrorism being a big issue, as shown in polls at the time.⁷⁶

By late 2003 Iraq and Terrorism were among the top 4 issues in the minds of voters for the forthcoming Presidential election.⁷⁷ This shows that the Bush's strategy of Iraq being a key issue heading into the election was working. Therefore by extending the rally around the flag effect through the Iraq War President Bush was able to yield political rewards during his re-election bid. This is evidence in the post-election results which show that Bush did better in the states most directly affected by the terrorist attacks, in these states (New York, New Jersey and Connecticut) Bush increased his vote share by an average of 5.4 percentage points in comparison to 2.5 percentage points as an average for the rest of the country.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Herbert F. Weisberg and Dino P. Christenson, 'Changing Horses in Wartime? The 2004 Presidential Election', *Political Behavior* 29, no. 2 (11 May 2007): P.280.

⁷⁵ Herbert F. Weisberg and Dino P. Christenson, 'Changing Horses in Wartime? The 2004 Presidential Election', *Political Behavior* 29, no. 2 (11 May 2007): P.279.

⁷⁶ Gallup Inc, 'Economy, Terrorism Top Issues in 2004 Election Vote', Gallup.com, 25 September 2003, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/9337/Economy-Terrorism-Top-Issues-2004-Election-Vote.aspx>.

⁷⁷ Inc.

⁷⁸ Abramowitz, 'Terrorism, Gay Marriage, and Incumbency'. P.6

However, it is essential to note that this increase was smaller than the 24 point lead President Bush senior received at the start of the 1991 Gulf War.⁷⁹ The modest increase in President Bush's approval ratings following the invasion of Iraq reflects the divisions that existed within the American electorate about the Iraq War. Evidence suggests that the Rally was formed as a personal one to Bush rather than a political one.⁸⁰ Analysis of the composition of the rally shows that it leads to a small increase in Republican support which subsequently tailed off again.⁸¹

This suggests that towards the election, Democratic and independent voters who were supporting the President during the rally effect returned to their pre-rally position.⁸² This means that Bush approval growth hit a natural ceiling and could go no higher by the election whereby his increase amongst his own supporters was to be expected, and voters of different parties left to return to their pre-rally camp. The polls demonstrate that the rally effect during the early stages was a positive for the President.

One theory is that during a time of crisis, the electorate will rally to the President as the living symbol of national unity. In this situation, the President has been described as a living flag for the American people.⁸³

⁷⁹ James M. Lindsay and Caroline Smith, 'Rally' Round the Flag: Opinion in the United States before and after the Iraq War', *The Brookings Review* 21, no. 3 (2003): P.22.Lindsay and Smith.

⁸⁰ Marc J. Hetherington and Michael Nelson, 'Anatomy of a Rally Effect: George W. Bush and the War on Terrorism', *Political Science and Politics* 36, no. 01 (January 2003): P.41

⁸¹ Marc J. Hetherington and Michael Nelson, 'Anatomy of a Rally Effect: George W. Bush and the War on Terrorism', *Political Science and Politics* 36, no. 01 (January 2003): P.40

⁸² C. D. Kam and J. M. Ramos, 'Joining and Leaving the Rally: Understanding the Surge and Decline in Presidential Approval Following 9/11', *Public Opinion Quarterly* 72, no. 4 (6 November 2008): P.643

⁸³ Marc J. Hetherington and Michael Nelson, 'Anatomy of a Rally Effect: George W. Bush and the War on Terrorism', *Political Science and Politics* 36, no. 01 (January 2003): P.37.

Therefore, the American people rally around the flag, which is represented by the head of state (The President), thus dramatically increasing the approval rating for the incumbent during this period. This is shown between September 10th and September 15th 2001, where there was an increase of 35 points in George Bush's approval ratings.⁸⁴ This rally was caused by 9/11 and was extended to the 2004 Presidential elections. However, it is essential to note that when considering the case of Bush his rally effect is not a clear indicator of electoral success and other political factors interrupt and dilute such a rally effect during an election.

Additionally, the media also tend to rally around the flag during wartime.⁸⁵ This support from the media is crucial because it allows for the substantial growth of the rally round the flag across America bypassing geographical and political borders. President Bush was able to receive substantial levels of support during this time and highlights how significant the Iraq conflict was to the re-election strategy of President Bush. Therefore, Bush's victory was in part due to the electorate's belief that strong leadership was needed to counter-terrorism and see the country safe during the War.⁸⁶

Bowls note that the electorate felt that President Bush was better equipped at handling the terrorist threat than other politicians during that time.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Marc J. Hetherington and Michael Nelson, 'Anatomy of a Rally Effect: George W. Bush and the War on Terrorism', *Political Science and Politics* 36, no. 01 (January 2003): P.37

⁸⁵ Marc J. Hetherington and Michael Nelson, 'Anatomy of a Rally Effect: George W. Bush and the War on Terrorism', *Political Science and Politics* 36, no. 01 (January 2003): P.37.

⁸⁶ Alan Abramowitz, 'Terrorism, Gay Marriage, and Incumbency: Explaining the Republican Victory in the 2004 Presidential Election', *The Forum* 2, no. 4 (2004),P.1.

⁸⁷ Darren W Davis, 'The Threat of Terrorism, Presidential Approval, and the 2004 Election', P.1

Bush's victory can partly be attributed to the need of the American electorate to have strong leadership during this time in order to counter-terrorism and see the country through its War.

However, this is criticised by Brodi who believes that such a substantial increase in the President's approval rating only occurs when opposition leaders, namely Congress, refrain from comment.⁸⁸ This was not an issue for President Bush because following 9/11 the dominant right-wing political coverage was heavily in favour of President Bush.⁸⁹

As has already been stated, the media tends to support the President during this time, and this support appeared to have a significant effect on the level of political debate regarding the Bush administration.

Media analysis shows that President Bush enjoyed a cheerleading effect from the explosion of supportive coverage from the right-wing media Fox News.⁹⁰ Anchors and commentators were given more scope to editorialise on the air.⁹¹ This was apparent when Fox News took on a patriotic tone to the ongoing war using phrases such as 'Our troops.'⁹²

⁸⁸ Marc J. Hetherington and Michael Nelson, 'Anatomy of a Rally Effect: George W. Bush and the War on Terrorism', *Political Science and Politics* 36, no. 01 (January 2003): P.38.

⁸⁹ Jonathan S. Morris, 'The Fox News Factor', *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics* 10, no. 3 (1 July 2005): P.61,

⁹⁰ Jonathan S. Morris, 'The Fox News Factor', *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics* 10, no. 3 (1 July 2005): P.61,

⁹¹ Jonathan S. Morris, 'The Fox News Factor', *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics* 10, no. 3 (1 July 2005): P.64,

⁹² Jonathan S. Morris, 'The Fox News Factor', *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics* 10, no. 3 (1 July 2005): P.61,

The effect of this style of media was arguably twofold. Firstly it had the effect of stimulating the Republican voter base that Bush needed a high turnout from in such a tight election. Secondly, the patriotic tone marginalised those opposed to the war or who questioned its strategy as being unAmerican. This meant ever-increasing support for the war whilst dismantling Bush opponents who opposed the war. This would lead to a systematic personal attack on John Kerry (*see Chapter 4*).

It is clear that the right-wing media had an impact on the election whereby it formulated a style of media coverage on Iraq and Bush, that acquiesce to the wishes of Bush Administration to frame the Iraq War in a positive light with him as the infallible leader. As shown Bush benefited from high approvals and the support of the right-wing press would have added to this boost.

Therefore while President Bush received an increase through the rally effect voters will have judged his handling of the subsequent event. Therefore, any action that fell below the expectation of the electorate would result in diminishing gains for the President.⁹³ For President Bush's re-election, any casualties by polling day that were not foreseen by the electorate as reasonable would have significantly damaged President Bush (*see Chapter 3*). This shows that a rally effect is not bulletproof for the President, and he is still judged by the electorate on his response to the crisis.

Nevertheless, it can be argued that the rally round the flag impact is overstated by scholars. Firstly as Davis and Silver write in 2000 a rally effect is not an uninterrupted gain for the President.⁹⁴

⁹³ Christopher Gelpi, Jason Reifler, and Peter Feaver, 'Iraq the Vote: Retrospective and Prospective Foreign Policy Judgments on Candidate Choice and Casualty Tolerance', *Political Behavior* 29, no. 2 (11 May 2007): P.158

⁹⁴ Darren W Davis, 'The Threat of Terrorism, Presidential Approval, and the 2004 Election', n.d., 51. P.5

By June 2004 this rise had burnt out as war costs rose and Bush approval ratings fell in line.⁹⁵ This fact explains the theory that while the President can unite the country in the immediate aftermath of the crisis, such unity does not last forever and partisan lines return.⁹⁶ There is evidence of this occurring previously when, after 9/11 Democrat voters left the rally first followed by nonpartisan voters who remained slightly longer and that Bush gained additional support from his own party.⁹⁷

This suggests that whilst a rally effect can significantly benefit the President it is not indefinite, and in Bush case one of the rally's key benefits appeared to have disappeared by election day.

Furthermore, the President is not immune to criticism during the crisis; instead, as President, he could be viewed as responsible for the damage caused by terrorism and the casualties incurred by the subsequent military intervention.⁹⁸

The electorate believed that President Bush was partly to blame for the need to invade Iraq owing to the lack of pre-emptive measures.⁹⁹

⁹⁵ Richard C. Eichenberg, 'Victory Has Many Friends: U.S. Public Opinion and the Use of Military Force, 1981–2005', *International Security* 30, no. 1 (1 July 2005): P.788,

⁹⁶ C. D. Kam and J. M. Ramos, 'Joining and Leaving the Rally: Understanding the Surge and Decline in Presidential Approval Following 9/11', *Public Opinion Quarterly* 72, no. 4 (6 November 2008): P.630

⁹⁷ C. D. Kam and J. M. Ramos, 'Joining and Leaving the Rally: Understanding the Surge and Decline in Presidential Approval Following 9/11', *Public Opinion Quarterly* 72, no. 4 (6 November 2008): P.630

⁹⁸ Darren W Davis, 'The Threat of Terrorism, Presidential Approval, and the 2004 Election', n.d., 51. P.6

⁹⁹ Darren W Davis, 'The Threat of Terrorism, Presidential Approval, and the 2004 Election', n.d., 51.P.6

This is based on the fact that the intelligence system pre-empted an imminent attack on the USA weeks before the events of 9/11 however the intel was too vague to be considered actionable by the Bush Administration.¹⁰⁰ Therefore it is clear how some sections of the electorate could be critical of President Bush and not join the rally. This judgement by the electorate affected the President's approval ratings and showed that the rally was not universal. Therefore the evidence suggests that a rally round the flag effect is not without interruption from criticism and setbacks for the President during a re-election period and could be an indication for the closeness of the election.

A key criticism of President Bush from opponents and former members of his administration was his handling of the crisis. These concerns are demonstrated by the comments of the chief counter-terrorism adviser on the National Security Council.

Richard Clarke in March 2004 said that Bush did not do enough to pre-empt terrorism and thus was responsible for the costs of Iraq.¹⁰¹ These comments were further backed up by General Tony Zinni who declared on CBS News 60 Minutes that President Bush's foreign policy surrounding Iraq had and was continuing to weaken American national security.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Richard K. Betts, 'Two Faces of Intelligence Failure: September 11 and Iraq's Missing WMD', *Political Science Quarterly* 122, no. 4 (2007): P.587.

¹⁰¹ Darren W Davis, 'The Threat of Terrorism, Presidential Approval, and the 2004 Election', n.d., 51.P.26

¹⁰² Darren W Davis, 'The Threat of Terrorism, Presidential Approval, and the 2004 Election', n.d., 51.P.26

These interventions from key members linked to the crisis demonstrate that military action alone is not enough to secure re-election for the President and that voters consider the administration handling of the conflict as well as the decision to engage in the first place.

President Bush clearly enjoyed a significant boost to his approval ratings through the rally around the flag effect. This rally around the flag effect was complex in that by historical standards the political benefits should have depreciated by the time of the 2004 Presidential election. However, due to the invasion of Iraq and the sustained media strategy of the Bush administration, the rally round the flag effect was extended to throughout the 2004 campaign, and President Bush received significant political benefits for this rally effect being operational during his re-election. Moreover, the original bipartisanship had decayed, and Bush was under increasing scrutiny of his strategy for the Iraq War this demonstrating that a rally effect alone would not be sufficient to win re-election and other factors were applicable.

The Effects of Divisions and Mistakes Within The Democratic Party

One significant impact of the Iraq War on the 2004 Presidential election was the effect that the conflict had on the Democratic Party. Due to the Iraq War, the Democratic Party suffered from splits and inconsistencies in regards to its policy towards the conflict. These splits fundamentally weakened the Democratic Party on this issue prior to the election.¹⁰³ This split ultimately damaged the parties credibility on national security which would hurt the campaign mounted by John Kerry as the Democratic Party Presidential nominee.¹⁰⁴ Furthermore President Bush enjoyed an advantage in the domestic media space owing to his political position as President, which virtually paralysed the Democratic Party on this vital issue.¹⁰⁵ This section will examine the actions that the party took on the subject of Iraq during this period and will consider how these actions benefited President Bush's re-election bid.

¹⁰³ Adam Nagourney, 'THREATS AND RESPONSES: DEMOCRATS; Divided Democrats Concerned About 2004', *The New York Times*, 19 March 2003, sec. U.S., <https://www.nytimes.com/2003/03/19/us/threats-and-responses-Democrats-divided-Democrats-concerned-about-2004.html>.

¹⁰⁴ Helmut Norpoth and Andrew H. Sidman, 'Mission Accomplished: The Wartime Election of 2004', *Political Behavior* 29, no. 2 (11 May 2007): P.190.

¹⁰⁵ Ronald R. Krebs and Jennifer K. Lobasz, 'Fixing the Meaning of 9/11: Hegemony, Coercion, and the Road to War in Iraq', *Security Studies* 16, no. 3 (24 August 2007): P.412.

In October 2002 the House of Representatives voted in favour of military action in Iraq by 296 votes to 133.¹⁰⁶ This vote demonstrated significant bipartisan support for military intervention. However, a breakdown of the vote shows a clear split amongst Democrats. Amongst the Democrat party, 126 voted in favour of military action and 81 voted against such action.¹⁰⁷ This result shows a significant divide as early as 2002 within the party over the Iraq War.

Democratic candidates were split over Iraq. Eventual challenger to President Bush, John Kerry reversed his initial support for the War by coming out as an anti-war candidate along with Howard Dean two years after supporting military intervention.¹⁰⁸ This demonstrates how the Iraq War impacted the election by showing that the different positions which the main candidates took on this crucial issue meant that the party struggled to find a consistent position to take on Iraq. However, it is important to note that the Iraq War was not a trouble-free issue for the Republican party, as early as 2002 senior Republicans had broken rank to question the President's plans for the invasion of Iraq.

¹⁰⁶ Alison Mitchell and Carl Hulse, 'House Passes Iraq Resolution With 296 to 133 Vote', *The New York Times*, 10 October 2002, sec. World, <https://www.nytimes.com/2002/10/10/international/house-passes-iraq-resolution-with-296-to-133-vote.html>.

¹⁰⁷ Alison Mitchell and Carl Hulse, 'House Passes Iraq Resolution With 296 to 133 Vote', *The New York Times*, 10 October 2002, sec. World, <https://www.nytimes.com/2002/10/10/international/house-passes-iraq-resolution-with-296-to-133-vote.html>.

¹⁰⁸ Mitchell and Hulse. Judy Keen, 'Bush: Kerry Repeatedly Flip-Flops on Iraq War', *USA Today*, accessed 28March2020, <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,shib&db=a9h&AN=JOE177404038705&site=ehost-live&scope=site&custid=s1123049>.

The group published a statement saying ‘Mr Bush is proceeding in a way that risks alienating allies, creating greater instability in the Middle East, and harming long-term American interests.’¹⁰⁹ This shows that Iraq caused problems for the Republicans as well as the Democrats when it came to forming an united position. This problem demonstrates the complexity that the Iraq War posed for politicians, including the President at this time, as it contrasts to his electoral goals and strategy of being the leader that unites the country.

However, the splits during the nomination progress seemed to create a larger electoral problem for the Democratic Party than the splits the Republicans suffered. By the election, the President had enough time to utilise the right-wing media whilst formulating his own media strategy to position himself as the candidate with a clear plan and the stability to see the country through the crisis.¹¹⁰ The inconsistencies within the Democratic Party would have damaged the parties credibility over Iraq, thus becoming in danger of developing a softness on national security issues.¹¹¹ Moreover, this is a weakness that was to be exploited by Bush and be a constant issue for the future Kerry campaign. *This is to be discussed further in Chapter 4.*

¹⁰⁹ Todd S. Purdum and Patrick E. Tyler, ‘Top Republicans Break with Bush on Iraq Strategy’, *The New York Times*, 16 August 2002, sec. World, <https://www.nytimes.com/2002/08/16/world/top-republicans-break-with-Bush-on-iraq-strategy.html>.

¹¹⁰ Herbert F. Weisberg and Dino P. Christenson, ‘Changing Horses in Wartime? The 2004 Presidential Election’, *Political Behavior* 29, no. 2 (11 May 2007): P.299,.

¹¹¹ Ronald R. Krebs and Jennifer K. Lobasz, ‘Fixing the Meaning of 9/11: Hegemony, Coercion, and the Road to War in Iraq’, *Security Studies* 16, no. 3 (24 August 2007): P.417.

Despite this split senior figures within the party still pressed the Iraq issue when they felt that they could weaken the President.

One significant critic of the Iraq War Nancy Pelosi said ‘There are many costs associated with this War, one of the costs is at of the War on Terrorism.’¹¹² This quote highlights the key area of attack the Democrats deployed against Bush, specifically his strategy in Iraq. Moreover, the issue regarding the prioritising of Iraq over the War on Terror drew criticism from Democrats.

Nancy Pelosi highlights the finite resources that are available to a government and questions whether they have been deployed correctly. This criticism shows that the Democratic Party was able to challenge Bush in some important areas regarding Iraq. Additionally, the Democratic Party contenders utilised their nomination process to speak to the American electorate about how the President strategy was flawed. This is shown when contender General Clark said

“When the Bush administration came to office, the Bush administration was told the greatest threat to America is Osama bin Laden. However, almost nine months later, when the United States was struck, there was still no plan as to what to do with Osama bin Laden.”¹¹³

¹¹² Alison Mitchell and Carl Hulse, ‘House Passes Iraq Resolution With 296 to 133 Vote’, *The New York Times*, 10 October 2002, sec. World, <https://www.nytimes.com/2002/10/10/international/house-passes-iraq-resolution-with-296-to-133-vote.html>.

¹¹³ Katharine Q. Seelye and David M. Halbfinger, ‘Democratic Contenders Attack Bush on Iraq, Terrorism, Trade and Economy’, *The New York Times*, 30 January 2004, sec. U.S., <https://www.nytimes.com/2004/01/30/politics/campaign/democratic-contenders-attack-Bush-on-iraq-terrorism-trade.html>.

Comments like this are important as they provide a brief counter to the unprecedented wave of right-wing patriotic media that was supporting President Bush at the time and reaffirms how (whilst reflecting the mood of the electorate) prominent Iraq was for the politicians during the election.

This suggests that Iraq was not an antidote to Bush's re-election challenges. Additionally, this style of attack from a leading democrat injured Bushes image on Iraq by bringing into question his competency regarding strategy in carrying out the war. The evidence suggests that the public supported Bush through the rally effect because he was the incumbent at the time, thus keeping with expectations based on historical precedent. Despite this, Bush was not immune to criticism for his strategy of the war, and if such concerns penetrated the electorate, his approvals would fall.¹¹⁴ Thus the results of the conflict is a potential weakness, especially when considering the impact that casualties (which the President is deemed responsible for) have on the electorate *which is examined further in Chapter 3*.

Despite difficulties, the attacks the Democratic Party lead on Iraq whilst limited were not without potential impact on Bush's standing with the electorate. Furthermore, such attacks had the possibility of mobilising voters who were against the war but not registered Democrats to vote against President Bush in the 2004 election.

¹¹⁴ Christopher Gelpi, Jason Reifler, and Peter Feaver, 'Iraq the Vote: Retrospective and Prospective Foreign Policy Judgments on Candidate Choice and Casualty Tolerance', *Political Behavior* 29, no. 2 (11 May 2007):P.158

The Democratic Party were naturally concerned that they would repeat history whereby they were opposing a successful war as happened when they opposed the 1991 invasion lead by Bush senior.¹¹⁵ This highlights the challenging predicament of the opposition party and suggests a reason as to the struggle in their consistency.

There was a concern amongst Democrats that Iraq was causing tarnishing of the parties trust on national security. This was evident when Howard Wolfson said: ‘I do not think the public will vote for a Democratic President unless the party is trusted of foreign affairs and national security.’¹¹⁶ This highlights the clear challenges that the Democrats had over their reputation on national security policy. Without Iraq and national security being a clear priority for the electorate the party would arguably have been on a stronger electoral footing.

Given that Iraq was such a significant issue for the electorate this further highlights the weakened position the Democrats were heading into the 2004 election with the greatest impact being strengthening President Bush re-election bid ultimately.

¹¹⁵ Louis Fisher, ‘Deciding on War against Iraq: Institutional Failures’, *Political Science Quarterly* 118, no. 3 (2003): 389–410. Adam Nagourney, ‘THREATS AND RESPONSES: DEMOCRATS; Divided Democrats Concerned About 2004’, *The New York Times*, 19 March 2003, sec. U.S., <https://www.nytimes.com/2003/03/19/us/threats-and-responses-democrats-divided-democrats-concerned-about-2004.html>.

¹¹⁶ Adam Nagourney, ‘THREATS AND RESPONSES: DEMOCRATS; Divided Democrats Concerned About 2004’, *The New York Times*, 19 March 2003, sec. U.S., <https://www.nytimes.com/2003/03/19/us/threats-and-responses-Democrats-divided-Democrats-concerned-about-2004.html>.

The Iraq War proved to be an electoral challenge for the Democrat party, allowing the Republican campaign to benefit in this critical policy space.

However, it is important to note that while the Democratic Party had an issue regarding national security Bush and the Republicans suffered from flawed intelligence which was the foundation of the invasion of Iraq. The failure of the administration to base the invasion on sufficient evidence led to the Republican Party being on the defensive during the election on this issue.¹¹⁷ Furthermore, this prompted a further concern regarding the motivations of President when he said he would still have gone to war even if he knew that WMD's were not present in Iraq.¹¹⁸ This admission raises concern over the President's trustworthiness and whilst this usually would be a big political concern during an election, in the context of 2004 it does not appear to be a significant factor owing to other dominating concerns such as casualties (*see Chapter 3*).

The biggest concern from the Iraq Wars impact on the Democratic Party was that the party misjudged the importance the Iraq War would have to the electorate.

Governor Gary Davies demonstrated this when he was quoted 'Let us remember that this war is likely to be a distant memory by November 2004.'¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Robert Jervis 1, 'Reports, Politics, and Intelligence Failures: The Case of Iraq', *Journal of Strategic Studies* 29, no. 1 (1 February 2006): P.6

¹¹⁸ Robert Jervis 1, 'Reports, Politics, and Intelligence Failures: The Case of Iraq', *Journal of Strategic Studies* 29, no. 1 (1 February 2006): P.7

¹¹⁹ Adam Nagourney, 'THREATS AND RESPONSES: DEMOCRATS; Divided Democrats Concerned About 2004', *The New York Times*, 19 March 2003, sec. U.S., <https://www.nytimes.com/2003/03/19/us/threats-and-responses-Democrats-divided-Democrats-concerned-about-2004.html>.

It is clear post-election polls that Iraq was not a distant memory by the election. In fact, it was the leading issue for voters.¹²⁰

This demonstrates that for some in the Democratic Party Iraq was not part of the main electoral strategy against Bush. This could be a strong reason as to why the Democrats struggled against Bush in this area.

On the other hand, the Democratic Party was in a difficult position as individual Democrats were being criticised for supporting the President and working with Republicans on the legislation that enabled military action in Iraq, such as the House Minority Leader who supported the President while also acknowledging that his own party was divided on the Iraq issue.¹²¹

This demonstrates the extent of the advantage the Bush administration had as the incumbent regarding this issue. This led to the image of the Bush administration as a stable and robust presidency that could engage with the opposition when needed but with a clear strategy for handling the crisis. On the other hand, the Democrats were shown as divided as a political unit with only a few standout figures able to excel on this issue. This dynamic provides a reason behind the high approval ratings the administration enjoyed during this time. This further demonstrates how Iraq was beneficial for the President and thus significant to the 2004 election.

¹²⁰ Gallup Inc, 'Economy, Terrorism Top Issues in 2004 Election Vote', Gallup.com, 25 September 2003, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/9337/Economy-Terrorism-Top-Issues-2004-Election-Vote.aspx>.

¹²¹ Dan Balz, Jim V, and eHei, 'Democratic Hopefuls Back Bush on Iraq', *Washington Post*, 14 September 2002, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2002/09/14/democratic-hopefuls-back-Bush-on-Iraq/f31e72c6-7caa-44a6-b23a-b98ba1777f12/>.

This highlights the predicament that Iraq placed the Democratic Party. However, it could be argued that this predicament was not unique to Iraq and is simply the curse of being the party out of the precedence. Additionally, the Democratic Party had understandable problems in mounting a robust opposition to the Iraq War. The main problem it faced was that criticising the incumbency during a war can be seen as unpatriotic, which during a re-election cycle is politically risky.¹²² It appears, however, as the Democrats somewhat mitigated this concern by targeting the President over his strategy of Iraq, which appears to be a sound political move. However, it lacked the political strength needed to falter the President on this issue. Despite this, Iraq caused a significant political issue for the Democrats which allowed Bush to gain a much-needed advantage in the tight election, perhaps enough of one that leads to his victory.

However, one senior Democrat Nancy Pelosi was actively opposed to military intervention in Iraq. She was quoted ‘The President’s decision to invade Iraq has siphoned off resources away from the War on Terror.’¹²³ This is a clear indication that individual members of the Democrat party were opposing not merely the theory of war but also the logistical means by which President Bush had carried it out. This is because many people felt that the Iraq War did not contribute to the goal of bringing the terrorists to justice.

¹²² Helmut Norpoth and Andrew H. Sidman, ‘Mission Accomplished: The Wartime Election of 2004’, *Political Behavior* 29, no. 2 (11 May 2007): P.190

¹²³ ‘CNN.Com - Pelosi: Democrats Missed Chance to Turn Bush Away from War - Mar. 7, 2003’, accessed 18 March 2020, <https://edition.cnn.com/2003/ALLPOLITICS/03/07/sprj.irq.pelosi/index.html>.

Moreover, the attempts at a connection by the President were not strong enough (the connection between the events was ultimately dismissed in an inquiry) and the Iraq War was seen as a distraction for the War on Terror.¹²⁴

This argument does have merit because it was not until 2011 when the man who claimed responsibility for the attacks Osama bin Laden was killed in Pakistan under a different presidency and President Bush claim that the Iraq War and 9/11 were linked had already been dismissed in an inquiry.¹²⁵

The Republican party was able to press forward their advantage by attacking John Kerry (who was seen as a leading Democrat when he won his party's nomination) record on Iraq which became famous for its inconsistency (*see Chapter 4*). When asked why John Kerry had supported an \$87 billion military package, he replied: 'I actually did vote for the package before I voted against it.'¹²⁶ This change highlights the uncertainty and weak thought that damaged the Democrats credibility whilst enhancing President Bush's authority and providing strength for his re-election bid.

The rally around the flag effect and the division within the Democratic Party both influenced by the Iraq War, boosted President Bush re-election in different ways.

¹²⁴ Stephen Gorin, 'Why Kerry Lost and Where We Go from Here', *Health & Social Work* 30, no. 2 (May 2005): P.172

¹²⁵ Philip Shenon, '9/11 Report Is Said to Dismiss Iraq-Qaeda Alliance', *The New York Times*, 12 July 2004, sec. U.S., <https://www.nytimes.com/2004/07/12/us/9-11-report-is-said-to-dismiss-iraq-qaeda-alliance.html>.

¹²⁶ 'The Election of 2004 – Iraq War', accessed 28 March 2020, <https://cphcmp.smu.edu/2004election/Iraq-war/>.

The rally effect united voters behind the President and allowed him to present an image of the strong leader that was keeping the country safe and thus allowed him to argue against changing horses which were a powerful argument as evident by those Democratic voters backing Bush in 2004.¹²⁷ On the other hand, Iraq caused significant problems for the Democratic Party who had the objective to provide a credible challenge to Bush re-election. However, these divisions allowed Bush to point to the damages of electing an alternative President.

These factors show the importance of Iraq within the election through the advantage they gave Bush. It is important to note though that despite these seemingly monumental advantages for Bush he did not win the landslide that was predicted prior to the election and his re-election campaign was not as one-sided as he hoped to lead with divisions within his own party apparent early on and questions regarding his use of flawed intelligence interrupting his progress. The next chapter will examine some of the reasons why Bush failed to utilise the Iraq War solely to his advantage.

¹²⁷ '4 Years Later, Some Voters Switch Sides - The New York Times', accessed 23 April 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2004/10/30/politics/campaign/4-years-later-some-voters-switch-sides.html>.

Chapter 3: The Iraq War Impacted on the 2004 Presidential Election Through Damaging President Bush's Re-Election Bid.

Despite the appearance of a comfortable victory, It is clear that President Bush re-election in 2004 encouraged specific difficulties that can be attributed to the Iraq War. This chapter will analyse how the Iraq War hurt President Bush campaign because of the impact the war casualties had on the electorate attitude towards the President, which reinforces the widespread impact the conflict had over the election.

The Political Impact of the Iraq War Casualties

One of the most significant impacts that the Iraq War had over the 2004 Presidential election was the means that the casualties from the conflict affected the political attitudes and decisions of the electorate. The Iraq War had the largest and most sustained casualties that the American electorate had suffered since the Vietnam War.¹²⁸ This had an effect whereby the electorate questioned those who had taken the country to war and the worthwhileness of the conflict.¹²⁹ This somewhat shifted the question of Iraq from one of policy to one of performance which was a weakness for Bush.

¹²⁸ William A. Boettcher and Michael D. Cobb, 'Echoes of Vietnam?: Casualty Framing and Public Perceptions of Success and Failure in Iraq', *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 50, no. 6 (December 2006): P.837

¹²⁹ Erik Voeten and Paul R. Brewer, 'Public Opinion, the War in Iraq, and Presidential Accountability', *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 50, no. 6 (2006): 812

This resulted in a small majority of voters who believed the war was not going to be successful and that the campaign had done nothing to improve national security.¹³⁰ Additionally, critical sections of the electorate who had personally suffered from the Iraq War held strong views over the handling of the conflict during the 2004 Presidential election.

The argument that the casualties incurred by the Iraq War had such an impact on the 2004 election is made by scholars who argue the figure of 10,000 wounded and dead by polling day was an unavoidable factor for the electorate.¹³¹ This figure had many different elements. Firstly whilst it is common within this section of the debate to consider the effects on President Bush national campaign, some research proves the effect of casualties on the election had more to do with the localised political effects rather than the national one.¹³² It is important to note when considering the localised effects of the Iraq War that Presidential elections are not merely national contests; instead, they are 51 individual elections that form a national election result.¹³³ This is important because of the way that localised deaths impact on the political views of communities and states. It is clear from the research that this element has a greater focus on localised rather than national voting.

¹³⁰ Helmut Norpoth and Andrew H. Sidman, 'Mission Accomplished: The Wartime Election of 2004', *Political Behavior* 29, no. 2 (11 May 2007): P.191

¹³¹ David Karol and Edward Miguel, 'The Electoral Cost of War: Iraq Casualties and the 2004 U.S. Presidential Election', *The Journal of Politics* 69, no. 3 (2007): P.633

¹³² David Karol and Edward Miguel, 'The Electoral Cost of War: Iraq Casualties and the 2004 U.S. Presidential Election', *The Journal of Politics* 69, no. 3 (2007): P.633

¹³³ David Karol and Edward Miguel, 'The Electoral Cost of War: Iraq Casualties and the 2004 U.S. Presidential Election', *The Journal of Politics* 69, no. 3 (2007): P.633

The evidence to support this theory points to the belief that voters are more likely to be affected by war casualties occurring in their own states than the total number of national casualties.¹³⁴

Within such an election, there must be a consideration for how casualties impacted on the battleground states. These were the states that both campaigns had marked as one they needed to win in order to secure victory and thus channelled greater campaign resources and media attention to those states.¹³⁵

The evidence shows that casualties had a significant impact on a localised level within this election. However, what is not so clear is whether the increased campaign presence would have mitigated this negative feeling. Theoretically, the casualties factor was only appreciated within those states that felt left out of the campaign.¹³⁶ Miguel argues that it is possible for the campaign to mitigate or amplify the negative feelings of a local electorate by their campaign presence.¹³⁷ Whilst there is no direct evidence to suggest that the casualties were felt harder in battleground states than elsewhere there is evidence that suggests that these states did have a large impact on Bush vote share because of the high casualties.

¹³⁴ David Karol and Edward Miguel, 'The Electoral Cost of War: Iraq Casualties and the 2004 U.S. Presidential Election', *The Journal of Politics* 69, no. 3 (2007): P.635

¹³⁵ David Karol and Edward Miguel, 'The Electoral Cost of War: Iraq Casualties and the 2004 U.S. Presidential Election', *The Journal of Politics* 69, no. 3 (2007): P.642

¹³⁶ David Karol and Edward Miguel, 'The Electoral Cost of War: Iraq Casualties and the 2004 U.S. Presidential Election', *The Journal of Politics* 69, no. 3 (2007): P.642

¹³⁷ David Karol and Edward Miguel, 'The Electoral Cost of War: Iraq Casualties and the 2004 U.S. Presidential Election', *The Journal of Politics* 69, no. 3 (2007): P.642

Given that some of these battleground states had some of the largest populations in the election this could be a reason as to why President Bush had such a narrow margin of victory in the popular vote in the election. The localised impact of casualties re-enforces how the war pierced all areas of America during this election.

Some scholars argue that high casualties were such an important factor in the election that this was the reason that President Bush's victory was narrower than expected.¹³⁸ In Miguel's paper, he argues that the high casualty statistics depreciated President Bush's vote share by 2% as a national percentage.¹³⁹ This was calculated by taking the approximate death per 100,000, which equalled 3.39 and then calculated as follows.¹⁴⁰ $(3.39) \times (-.0060)$ which equals -0.20 or 2% points overall, and this was calculated by deaths per capita multiplied by vote share in the election.¹⁴¹ This figure was then placed within a simulation to determine (when combined with other factors); the depreciation could be replicated. In the simulation whereby casualties were not a factor, President Bush would have won an additional seven more states.¹⁴²

¹³⁸ David Karol and Edward Miguel, 'The Electoral Cost of War: Iraq Casualties and the 2004 U.S. Presidential Election', *The Journal of Politics* 69, no. 3 (2007): P.634

¹³⁹ David Karol and Edward Miguel, 'The Electoral Cost of War: Iraq Casualties and the 2004 U.S. Presidential Election', *The Journal of Politics* 69, no. 3 (2007): P.638

¹⁴⁰ David Karol and Edward Miguel, 'The Electoral Cost of War: Iraq Casualties and the 2004 U.S. Presidential Election', *The Journal of Politics* 69, no. 3 (2007): P.638

¹⁴¹ David Karol and Edward Miguel, 'The Electoral Cost of War: Iraq Casualties and the 2004 U.S. Presidential Election', *The Journal of Politics* 69, no. 3 (2007): P.638

¹⁴² David Karol and Edward Miguel, 'The Electoral Cost of War: Iraq Casualties and the 2004 U.S. Presidential Election', *The Journal of Politics* 69, no. 3 (2007): P.643

However, the overall conclusion from this study is that President Bush lost approximately 2% of the popular vote due to casualties, which demonstrates its significance.¹⁴³ This depreciation was not so high as to prevent President Bush from being re-elected. This calculation and simulation show that casualties were a significant factor that prevented a bigger victory for Bush, further reinforcing how critical the war was in the election.

Furthermore, another line of argument is that historical conflicts show that higher than expected casualties for the conflict during an election equals a decrease in public support for the incumbent.¹⁴⁴ The examples that support this claim include the high numbers of death during the presidencies of Harry Truman and Lyndon B. Johnson which leads to drops in their approval ratings.¹⁴⁵ It is a reasonable assumption given 2004's place within historical elections to assume a similar correlation and the evidence partially supports this theory.

¹⁴³ David Karol and Edward Miguel, 'The Electoral Cost of War: Iraq Casualties and the 2004 U.S. Presidential Election', *The Journal of Politics* 69, no. 3 (2007): P.633

¹⁴⁴ Helmut Norpoth and Andrew H. Sidman, 'Mission Accomplished: The Wartime Election of 2004', *Political Behavior* 29, no. 2 (11 May 2007): P.180

¹⁴⁵ Helmut Norpoth and Andrew H. Sidman, 'Mission Accomplished: The Wartime Election of 2004', *Political Behavior* 29, no. 2 (11 May 2007): P.181

Thirty years after the Vietnam conflict scholars agree that the American electorate had become sensitive to casualties.¹⁴⁶ However, it is important to note that it is a complicated comparison to make between the Iraq War and Vietnam.¹⁴⁷

Whilst both had significant initial public support, and both suffered a drop when casualties rose, the Iraq War had a much higher initial support from the electorate than Vietnam did.¹⁴⁸ This means that any examination on the impact of casualties must take into account the initial wave of support for war through the rally effect.

Furthermore, Vietnam has widely been considered within the literature to be the baseline for casualties within a foreign conflict involving the USA.¹⁴⁹ One argument is that Americans will endure war if they believe there is a high chance of victory and that they believe that the conflict is a righteous one.¹⁵⁰ However, scholars argue that the Iraq War had moved away from its righteousness as the public became disenfranchised with the progress of the war specifically the lack of WMD's which had been assured by the Bush administration prior to the conflict.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁶ Scott Sigmund Gartner, Gary M. Segura, and Bethany A. Barratt, 'War Casualties, Policy Positions, and the Fate of Legislators', *Political Research Quarterly* 57, no. 3 (1 September 2004): P.467

¹⁴⁷ Richard C. Eichenberg, 'Victory Has Many Friends: U.S. Public Opinion and the Use of Military Force, 1981–2005', *International Security* 30, no. 1 (1 July 2005): P.140

¹⁴⁸ Richard C. Eichenberg, 'Victory Has Many Friends: U.S. Public Opinion and the Use of Military Force, 1981–2005', *International Security* 30, no. 1 (1 July 2005): P.140

¹⁴⁹ Jason Reifler, Christopher Gelpi, and Peter Feaver, 'Success Matters: Casualty Sensitivity and the War in Iraq', P.7

¹⁵⁰ Jason Reifler, Christopher Gelpi, and Peter Feaver, 'Success Matters: Casualty Sensitivity and the War in Iraq', P.7

¹⁵¹ Jason Reifler, Christopher Gelpi, and Peter Feaver, 'Success Matters: Casualty Sensitivity and the War in Iraq', P.7

This theory is applicable when analysing some of the concerns over Bush's motivations for the war, especially when considering the flawed intelligence that formed the justification for the conflict.

Additionally, historical conflicts such as Vietnam and Korea demonstrate that public support for the war is correlated to the number of casualties incurred.¹⁵² The decreasing enthusiasm for the conflict by the election can be attributed to a number of potential factors. Firstly the Iraq War was being fought outside traditional geopolitical borders. Therefore with no tangible target, it was difficult for the electorate to see victory as being attainable during the Iraq War. Given that for the American electorate the country had been on a war footing since 2001, it is easy to see how a victory for the conflict was not in the immediate future by November 2004 thus creating a conflict weary electorate.¹⁵³ This is further evidenced by the reaction that the death of Osama Bin Laden provoked in 2011 and, it is understandable why many Americans would feel that the War was not won until his death. Therefore it is unmistakable that these feelings in 2004 would be recognised at the ballot box.

¹⁵² Jason Reifler, Christopher Gelpi, and Peter Feaver, "Success Matters: Casualty Sensitivity and the War in Iraq", P17

¹⁵³ Jason Reifler, Christopher Gelpi, and Peter Feaver, "Success Matters: Casualty Sensitivity and the War in Iraq", n.d., P.16

It is clear that Bush was held responsible for these feelings, and this prompts a debate regarding how much accountability the President should shoulder for the war.

If the electorate considers the role of the incumbent solely when considering the war, then he shall receive the greatest political boost or deprecation in accordance with the electorate's view.¹⁵⁴ American Presidents have considerable autonomy and power over the management of the war in regards to strategy.¹⁵⁵

Despite this, it is important to note that whilst the President does have ultimate authority; there are other players involved in the conflict such as; officials, foreign coalition partners and other political groups.¹⁵⁶ However, as Commander In Chief, the President is responsible for launching the war and thus must endure the largest share of the responsibility.

The two per cent estimated depreciation in the vote share for Bush demonstrates the sensitivity to casualties that the American electorate was feeling.¹⁵⁷ However, some argue that the impact of casualties should be offset by several factors. Firstly the deaths of the enemy should be a mitigating factor to the electorate.

¹⁵⁴ Erik Voeten and Paul R. Brewer, 'Public Opinion, the War in Iraq, and Presidential Accountability', *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 50, no. 6 (2006): 814

¹⁵⁵ Erik Voeten and Paul R. Brewer, 'Public Opinion, the War in Iraq, and Presidential Accountability', *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 50, no. 6 (2006): 812

¹⁵⁶ Erik Voeten and Paul R. Brewer, 'Public Opinion, the War in Iraq, and Presidential Accountability', *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 50, no. 6 (2006): 812

¹⁵⁷ Scott Sigmund Gartner, Gary M. Segura, and Bethany A. Barratt, 'War Casualties, Policy Positions, and the Fate of Legislators', *Political Research Quarterly* 57, no. 3 (1 September 2004): P.467

The public may be more likely to view the American casualty figures as acceptable (on a national scale not taking into account localised feelings) if the casualties are substantially higher for the enemy.¹⁵⁸ Furthermore, for the most patriotic of voters, they will continue to support the war despite the casualties because they believe that as long as the country is victorious, then those that died did not do so in vain.¹⁵⁹ It could be some of these factors did mitigate the depreciation in President Bush popular vote, and that had they not been in place it would have damaged his re-election to a greater extent. Due to this, the effects of casualties are a complex factor on the election with different attitudes throughout the electorate. This highlights the challenge that these high casualties had for Bush during the election.

The impact of casualties on the re-election of President Bush goes to a broader issue surrounding the competency of President Bush's strategy for the Iraq War. The analysis shows that by opening up a war on multiple fronts thus stretching resources thinner and an ever-increasing casualty statistic this led to President Bush being weak in certain areas and demonstrated Iraq was not an issue by which President Bush was immune to criticism.

Furthermore, this combined with the high casualty toll that has been examined suggests that President Bush weakness regarding the Iraq War was not the decision to go to war instead by 2004 questions had emerged regarding the strategy for the conflict.

¹⁵⁸ William A. Boettcher and Michael D. Cobb, 'Echoes of Vietnam?: Casualty Framing and Public Perceptions of Success and Failure in Iraq', *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 50, no. 6 (December 2006): P.833

¹⁵⁹ William A. Boettcher and Michael D. Cobb, 'Echoes of Vietnam?: Casualty Framing and Public Perceptions of Success and Failure in Iraq', *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 50, no. 6 (December 2006): P.840

The consequences of casualties had a significant impact on the re-election of Bush which shows that the Iraq War was not an uninterrupted vote winner for the President.¹⁶⁰ Post-election analysis suggests that Bush suffered a 2% deprecation to his national vote share and on a localised level suffered a loss in votes in areas that were most affected by the high death toll. However, when analysing the broader electoral situation, Bush was still elected President despite the high casualties although the evidence in this chapter suggests that with a lower death toll, a landslide for the President would have been available. It is clear from this chapter that the casualties from the Iraq War despite providing greater complexity to the debate had a big impact on the election, thus contributing to the conflict's overall significance to the election.

¹⁶⁰ Darren W Davis, 'The Threat of Terrorism, Presidential Approval, and the 2004 Election', P.5

Chapter 4: How The 2004 Presidential Election was Influenced by Factors besides the Iraq War.

Whilst there is a clear argument that the Iraq War was the primary factor, it would be remiss not to consider the existence of domestic issues which influenced the 2004 election. This chapter will examine two of the most prominent alternative factors that influenced the election. The first being the weakness of John Kerry as a political opponent which builds on the problems of the Democratic Party with some links to the Iraq War. Secondly the existence of an anti-same-sex marriage constitutional amendment on the ballot in 11 states on Election Day. This chapter will demonstrate the Iraq War was not the sole factor that influenced the election and that voters responded to domestic issues as well despite the conflict still subtly impacting those issues, specifically the campaign of Kerry.

The Weakness of John Kerry as a Political Opponent

One of the most significant factors of the 2004 Presidential election other than Iraq was the impact that John Kerry had as a weak political opponent to President Bush. Following the 2004 Presidential election, it was widely reported in the American media and the academic literature that John Kerry was perceived during the election to be a weaker political leader than President Bush.¹⁶¹

¹⁶¹ Stephen Gorin, 'Why Kerry Lost and Where We Go from Here', *Health & Social Work* 30, no. 2 (May 2005): P.172

It is argued that for a number of reasons this image impacted on John Kerry's ability to mount a competitive Presidential challenge to Bush.

There are a number of reasons to suggest why John Kerry was seen as a weaker political leader. Firstly John Kerry endured a sustained personal attack which systematically targeted his war record, his leadership capabilities and his own personal characteristics.¹⁶²

Kerry was also attacked as being soft on the War on Terror, playing into the fears of the electorate that the perpetrators of 9/11 would not be brought to justice under his presidency.¹⁶³

Given the polarised nature of the 2004 election and heightened tensions following the terrorist attacks and the ongoing conflict, it is understandable why such an attack against him would convince voters not to support John Kerry in the 2004 Presidential elections. This shows that not all the factors were directly caused by the Iraq War. However, upon closer inspection, it can be argued that the war contributed to the polarised environment that caused this attack to have such resonance with the electorate.

¹⁶² Anna Cornelia Fahey, 'French and Feminine: Hegemonic Masculinity and the Emasculation of John Kerry in the 2004 Presidential Race', *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 24, no. 2 (1 June 2007): P.141,

¹⁶³ Anna Cornelia Fahey, 'French and Feminine: Hegemonic Masculinity and the Emasculation of John Kerry in the 2004 Presidential Race', *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 24, no. 2 (1 June 2007): P.141,

This weakness of John Kerry continued right through the electoral campaign of 2004.. Only 37% of Americans thought that John Kerry would be able to make the country safer furthermore the New York Times and CBS poll found that a 26% thought that Kerry would make the right choices on terrorism.¹⁶⁴ Given President Bush was positioning himself as the continuity candidate who had provided the country with strength following 9/11, it is clear why Kerry's weakness would trouble the electorate.¹⁶⁵

One of the areas in which John Kerry was considered a weak political opponent which has a direct relation to the Iraq War and builds on the divisions and struggles within the Democratic Party was his inconsistency over policy regarding military intervention in Iraq. The Democratic Party had struggled in finding a clear position to the Iraq War in which to challenge the President.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ 'The New York Times > Magazine > Kerry's Undeclared War', n.d., 11.

¹⁶⁵ Peter F. Nardulli, 'Handicapping the 2004 Presidential Election: A Normal Vote Approach', *PS: Political Science and Politics* 37, no. 4 (2004): 813–20. Herbert F. Weisberg and Dino P. Christenson, 'Changing Horses in Wartime? The 2004 Presidential Election', *Political Behavior* 29, no. 2 (11 May 2007): P.279

¹⁶⁶ Adam Nagourney, 'THREATS AND RESPONSES: DEMOCRATS; Divided Democrats Concerned About 2004', *The New York Times*, 19 March 2003, sec. U.S., <https://www.nytimes.com/2003/03/19/us/threats-and-responses-Democrats-divided-Democrats-concerned-about-2004.html>.

Furthermore, it was clear that this challenge was benefiting President Bush re-election. As previously stated, John Kerry was heavily criticised and labelled as a flip-flop for reversing his position Iraq multiple times.¹⁶⁷ He initially supported military intervention in Iraq; however, during the Democratic primaries he reversed his position to brand himself as an anti-war candidate.¹⁶⁸ This inconsistency was in direct contrast to the stability that President Bush mounted and which was well received by the electorate. John Kerry's inconsistency over the Iraq War contributed to his trouble convincing the electorate that he had a clear justified policy on Iraq. Therefore without the Iraq War, John Kerry would not have faced these challenges in creating this consistent policy and would have been able to focus his campaign on more reliable policy areas potentially resulting in a more successful election.

John Kerry suffered from a sustained attack on his personal characteristics as well as his service in the USA army. This contributed to a judgement by the electorate that considered him a poor substitute to President Bush.¹⁶⁹

However, despite Bush's victory, the President won the smallest majority for an incumbent since Woodrow Wilson suggesting that the John Kerry achieved greater electoral success than initially thought, yet it was not enough to combat the significant perspective shortfall as judged by the electorate.

¹⁶⁷ Judy Keen, 'Bush: Kerry Repeatedly Flip-Flops on Iraq War', *USA Today*, accessed 5 May 2020, <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip.shib&db=a9h&AN=J0E177404038705&site=ehost-live&scope=site&custid=s1123049>.

¹⁶⁸ 'The Election of 2004 – Iraq War', accessed 28 March 2020, <https://cphcmp.smu.edu/2004election/Iraq-war/>.

¹⁶⁹ Stephen Gorin, 'Why Kerry Lost and Where We Go from Here', *Health & Social Work* 30, no. 2 (May 2005): P.172

The weakness of John Kerry as a political opponent highlights that there were some factors that impacted on the election outside the Iraq War, however as the evidence in the earlier chapters shows, the Iraq War penetrated almost every area of the election. In the case of Kerry, his inconsistencies and weakness of leadership (which acted as a big weakness during a wartime election) were directly linked to the Iraq War, and without the conflict, he would of arguably have seen greater electoral success. This clearly indicates the significant impact the Iraq War had on the election, including its impact on domestic and political elements.

The Impact of Same-Sex Marriage on the Ballot Paper

One of the factors that impacted on the 2004 Presidential election was the existence of a same-marriage constitutional amendment in 11 states on election day.¹⁷⁰ There was an argument in the American media and subsequently in the academic literature that George Bush won re-election because of the impact these ballots had on the election. This was shown when Tucker Carlson of CNN said three days after the election "it is clear that it was the war on moral values, not the War on Terror that drove Bush to victory this week".¹⁷¹

According to Monson, there were two ways in which these referendums would have impacted on the vote at the state level during the election these were persuasion and mobilisation.¹⁷² Persuasion regarding this issue involved convincing voters who would not have otherwise voted for President Bush to do so, this means that President Bush pitching himself as a Conservative voter on social issues allowed him to generate support amongst those voters who were not Republican party voters and in the absence of such a ballot would have been unlikely to vote for the President.¹⁷³

¹⁷⁰ Alan Abramowitz, 'Terrorism, Gay Marriage, and Incumbency: Explaining the Republican Victory in the 2004 Presidential Election', *The Forum* 2, no. 4 (29 January 2004), P.2

¹⁷¹ D. Sunshine Hillygus and Todd G. Shields, 'Moral Issues and Voter Decision Making in the 2004 Presidential Election', *PS: Political Science and Politics* 38, no. 2 (2005): P.201

¹⁷² David E. Campbell and J. Quin Monson, 'The Religion CardGay Marriage and the 2004 Presidential Election', *Public Opinion Quarterly* 72, no. 3 (1 January 2008): P.401

¹⁷³ David E. Campbell and J. Quin Monson, 'The Religion CardGay Marriage and the 2004 Presidential Election', *Public Opinion Quarterly* 72, no. 3 (1 January 2008): P.401

Mobilisation allowed President Bush to marshal his core vote to the polls especially in those states where he was already considered likely to win. There was a danger in these states that Bush supporters would have stayed home because they felt that the election in their state was a foregone conclusion.¹⁷⁴ In such a tight election this was a potential trap for the Bush campaign.

The argument behind George Bush's re-election victory because of the existence of these ballots was primarily due to the mobilisation of a core base of voters that would vote against same-sex marriage and at the same time vote for President Bush. It has been argued that the ballots on this issue acted as mobilises to conservative white evangelical voters who along with other churchgoers voted overwhelmingly for President Bush.¹⁷⁵ This was particularly true in key states that President Bush needed to win such as Ohio, and the argument is that as a necessary win in order to secure the presidency for President Bush this increase in turnout because of the mobilisation enabled President Bush to win the state and the presidency.¹⁷⁶

Some of the ballots were in states that President Bush was destined to win, such as Georgia and Utah. It is argued that had the same-sex marriage ballots been exclusive to those states then its impact would have been inconsequential.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁴ David E. Campbell and J. Quin Monson, 'The Religion CardGay Marriage and the 2004 Presidential Election', *Public Opinion Quarterly* 72, no. 3 (1 January 2008): P.401

¹⁷⁵ Edward Ashbee, 'The 2004 Presidential Election, "Moral Values", and the Democrats' Dilemma', *The Political Quarterly* 76, no. 2 (2005): P.212

¹⁷⁶ Edward Ashbee, 'The 2004 Presidential Election, "Moral Values", and the Democrats' Dilemma', *The Political Quarterly* 76, no. 2 (2005): P.212

¹⁷⁷ David E. Campbell and J. Quin Monson, 'The Religion CardGay Marriage and the 2004 Presidential Election', *Public Opinion Quarterly* 72, no. 3 (1 January 2008): P.400

However, because of the existence of the anti-same-sex marriage constitutional amendment in swing states such as Ohio where the election was to be decided its presence had a significantly greater impact.¹⁷⁸

The post-election analysis also shows that President Bush benefited in those states in which he was unlikely to win, such as Michigan.¹⁷⁹ Michigan is a curious case study because although it went to John Kerry heavy turnout in the Republican strongholds meant that President Bush came closer to winning the state than had been expected.¹⁸⁰ This suggests that on a state-by-state basis, the existence of same-sex marriage on the ballot paper generated additional support for the President. However, with regards to the electoral college, this had little impact on the national result of the election as he lost the state in question.

It is evident in the post-election media frenzy that moral values were hyped up to be a decisive factor as to President Bush's re-election. In some sections of the media, it was considered even more important than the Iraq War and terrorism.

However, this is generally criticised in the literature as unfounded and inaccurate when considering President Bush's election victory.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁸ David E. Campbell and J. Quin Monson, 'The Religion CardGay Marriage and the 2004 Presidential Election', *Public Opinion Quarterly* 72, no. 3 (1 January 2008): P.400

¹⁷⁹ James Dao, 'Same-Sex Marriage Issue Key to Some G.O.P. Races', *The New York Times*, 4 November 2004, sec. U.S., <https://www.nytimes.com/2004/11/04/politics/campaign/samesex-marriage-issue-key-to-some-gop-races.html>.

¹⁸⁰ James Dao, 'Same-Sex Marriage Issue Key to Some G.O.P. Races', *The New York Times*, 4 November 2004, sec. U.S., <https://www.nytimes.com/2004/11/04/politics/campaign/samesex-marriage-issue-key-to-some-gop-races.html>.

¹⁸¹ David E. Campbell and J. Quin Monson, 'The Religion CardGay Marriage and the 2004 Presidential Election', *Public Opinion Quarterly* 72, no. 3 (1 January 2008): P.400

Brooks observed that although 22% of respondents to the 2004 exit polls identified moral values as the most important issue during the election, this was an imprecise phrase which led to an imprecise result.¹⁸² This poorly worded question within the exit poll meant that moral values could mean anything to the respondents. It is argued that everyone votes on moral values and such an inept question will give a misleading result.¹⁸³ This means that it is possible that the true impact of moral values was overstated in the American press, especially those that based their reports on the exit polls.

Supporters of the belief that same-sex marriage had a big impact on the 2004 Presidential election site that the existence of the ballot acted as immobiliser for President Bush.

However, there are problems with claiming that same-sex married acted as a mobiliser to voters on a national level. President Bush won a 1.5% swing from the 2000 election; however, in the eleven states discussed, the results are mixed with no positive trend to speak of.¹⁸⁴ In five of the 11 states, President Bush's share was lower than he achieved in the 2000 election and in a further two states where the ballots existed President Bush increased his share albeit lower than the national average. It was only the state of Oklahoma that saw a substantial increase for President Bush.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸² Edward Ashbee, 'The 2004 Presidential Election, "Moral Values", and the Democrats' Dilemma', *The Political Quarterly* 76, no. 2 (2005): P.213

¹⁸³ Edward Ashbee, 'The 2004 Presidential Election, "Moral Values", and the Democrats' Dilemma', *The Political Quarterly* 76, no. 2 (2005): P.213

¹⁸⁴ Edward Ashbee, 'The 2004 Presidential Election, "Moral Values", and the Democrats' Dilemma', *The Political Quarterly* 76, no. 2 (2005): P.213

¹⁸⁵ Edward Ashbee, 'The 2004 Presidential Election, "Moral Values", and the Democrats' Dilemma', *The Political Quarterly* 76, no. 2 (2005): P.213

This means that the argument that same-sex marriage had a big impact on the Presidential campaign nationally, this is an inaccurate statement because when considering the results on a national level it is clear that there is no trend in favour of a significant impact for same-sex marriage. However, on a state level, there is some evidence to suggest yet same-sex marriage might have benefited President Bush that with the evidence only pointing to Oklahoma and potentially Ohio these states are not large enough in isolation to be seen to impact the election nationally in a significant way.

Furthermore, the evidence that the same-sex marriage constitutional amendments increased turnouts in states for President Bush is limited with only a small increase of 0.4% on average for those states that had the ballots.¹⁸⁶

Turnout on average for the states that had same-sex marriage on the ballot paper was 59.5%, and those without was 59.1%.¹⁸⁷ This is such a small increase that it is disproportionate to claim that the existence of same-sex marriage increased participation within those states.

A more prominent indication of the impact of turnout is the comparison between battleground states and safe states, as expected those states that were classed as a battleground, i.e. saw a bigger campaign presence by the two main campaigns saw a leading turnout of 7.5% than those less competitive states.¹⁸⁸ This suggests once again, that same-sex marriage was not an indicator in the 2004 election with regards to turnout.

¹⁸⁶ Paul Freedman, 'Terrorism, Not Values, Drove Bush's Re-Election.', Slate Magazine, 5 November 2004, <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2004/11/terrorism-not-values-drove-Bush-s-re-election.html>.

¹⁸⁷ Paul Freedman, 'Terrorism, Not Values, Drove Bush's Re-Election.', Slate Magazine, 5 November 2004, <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2004/11/terrorism-not-values-drove-Bush-s-re-election.html>.

¹⁸⁸ Paul Freedman, 'Terrorism, Not Values, Drove Bush's Re-Election.', Slate Magazine, 5 November 2004, <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2004/11/terrorism-not-values-drove-Bush-s-re-election.html>.

It appears that the implied significance of same-sex marriage ballots only occurred post-election as a way to explain Bush victory in a form other than Iraq. Whilst there is some evidence to suggest that the ballot papers acted as a mobiliser to evangelical voters this voting behaviour can mostly be attributed to a high number of voters who already supported Bush. Furthermore, despite some indication that Bush received a small boost in states like Michigan and Ohio, these did not prove to be electorally significant. This is because, despite a closer than expected result, Bush still lost Michigan. Furthermore, the result in Ohio was not replicated elsewhere. Therefore despite providing some impact on the 2004 election, this was mostly one-off localised effects, and thus other factors such as Iraq were more significant in this election.

Conclusion

This Dissertation has considered the impact the Iraq War had on the 2004 Presidential election. Furthermore, the Dissertation hypothesises the Iraq War had a significant impact on the 2004 Presidential election; in spite of other domestic issues that occurred during the election. One key topic that is not discussed is the role of the economy in the election and this should be the subject of further research, however whilst this would contribute to the scope of the debate it seems unlikely that it would challenge the Iraq War's significant impact on the election.

It is evidenced that the war provided a complex dynamic to the 2004 Presidential election which was already distinguished owing to the circumstances of the 2000 election. President Bush received a significant boost to his re-election because of the Iraq War. Chapter 2 analysis this and explains that the extended rally around the flag effect combined with the divisions that the Iraq War caused the Democratic Party provided a benefit to Bush in the election. Whilst there is some evidence that the casualties of the Iraq War caused a level of deprecation Bush's vote share this ultimately caused a smaller majority rather than a Bush defeat. Furthermore, it is evident in Chapter 4 that the Iraq War influenced almost every policy area in this election and despite there being a number of domestic issues during the election they did not have the same significance as the Iraq War did.

Overall the 2004 Presidential election status as a wartime election was not in doubt. From the consistent linking of 9/11 to the Iraq War, and the sustained cheerleading effect that the right-wing media delivered, the electorate was in no doubt that a vote for Bush was a vote to continue the war in Iraq and therefore it is reasonable to expect that the conflict was significant in the thought process of the majority of voters when voting in the 2004 Presidential election.

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