

The War, the President, and the 2006 Midterm Congressional Elections

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Abstract

The main reason Democrats won control of the Congress in the 2006 midterm elections was the electorate's unhappiness with the Iraq War and the president responsible for it. Midterm elections are always to some extent referendums on the administration's performance, but the degree to which opinions on George W. Bush's job performance and his decision to invade Iraq shaped individual voting choices in 2006 was exceptionally large by any standard. In this paper, I examine a variety of survey data to show just how extraordinarily central assessments of the president and the war were to individual voters' decisions in 2006 and how this centrality contributed to the Democrats' victory. I also consider why and how the president and the war emerged as such powerful and polarizing electoral forces.

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In the 2006 midterm elections, Democrats won control of Congress for the first time in twelve years. They picked up thirty seats in the House to win a 233-202 majority, one seat larger than held by the Republicans in the previous Congress. They also gained six Senate seats, all taken from Republican incumbents, to win a one-seat majority in the upper house. Remarkably, Democrats lost not a single seat in either chamber, the first election in U.S. history in which a party retained all of its congressional seats.

Although other factors clearly contributed to the pro-Democratic national tide—notably, scandals that weakened some Republican members and cast a negative light on the whole congressional party—its primary source was the electorate’s unhappiness with the Iraq War and the president responsible for it. Midterm elections are always to some extent referendums on the administration’s performance,¹ but the degree to which opinions on George W. Bush’s job performance and his decision to invade Iraq shaped individual voting in 2006 was exceptionally large by any standard. The unpopularity of Bush and the war were necessary but not sufficient to produce the Democrats’ victory; as always, taking seats from the opposition required qualified, well-financed challengers capable of exploiting a national tide locally and thus depended on the party’s effective recruitment of candidates and strategic distribution of campaign resources.² But the influx of candidates and resources on the Democratic side was also itself a reflection of the intense Democratic antipathy as well as the pro-Democratic political environment occasioned by the president and the war

In this paper, I examine a variety of survey data to show just how extraordinarily central assessments of the president and the war were to individual voters’ decisions in 2006 and how this centrality contributed to the Democrats’ victory. I also consider why and how the president and the war emerged as such powerful and polarizing electoral forces.

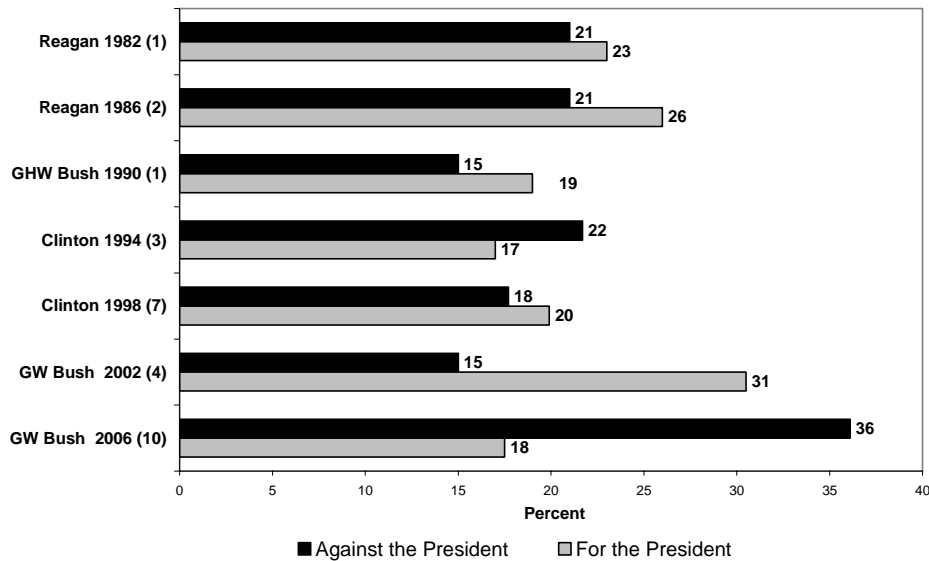
¹ Gary C. Jacobson, *The Politics of Congressional Elections*, 6th ed (New York: Longman, 2006), pp. 154-170.

² Gary C. Jacobson, “Referendum: The 2006 Midterm Congressional Elections.” *Political Science Quarterly* 122 (Spring, 2007), pp. 1-24.

I. The President, the War, and the Vote

Well before the election, surveys provided ample reason for believing that opinions of George W. Bush would have an unusually large effect on voters in 2006, especially among those holding negative views of his performance. Figure 1 shows that, compared to electorates in previous midterms going back to 1982, voters in 2006 were more likely to say that their congressional vote would be about the president (54 percent, compared to from 34 to 46 percent in the earlier midterms); more important, over one third said that their vote for Congress would be a vote *against* Bush, a noticeably larger proportion than for any of his three predecessors at midterm, including Bill Clinton in 1994. The reversal from 2002, when an unusually high proportion of voters said their vote would be an expression of support for President Bush, is especially striking.

Figure 1 Is Your Vote For Congress a Vote For or Against the President?



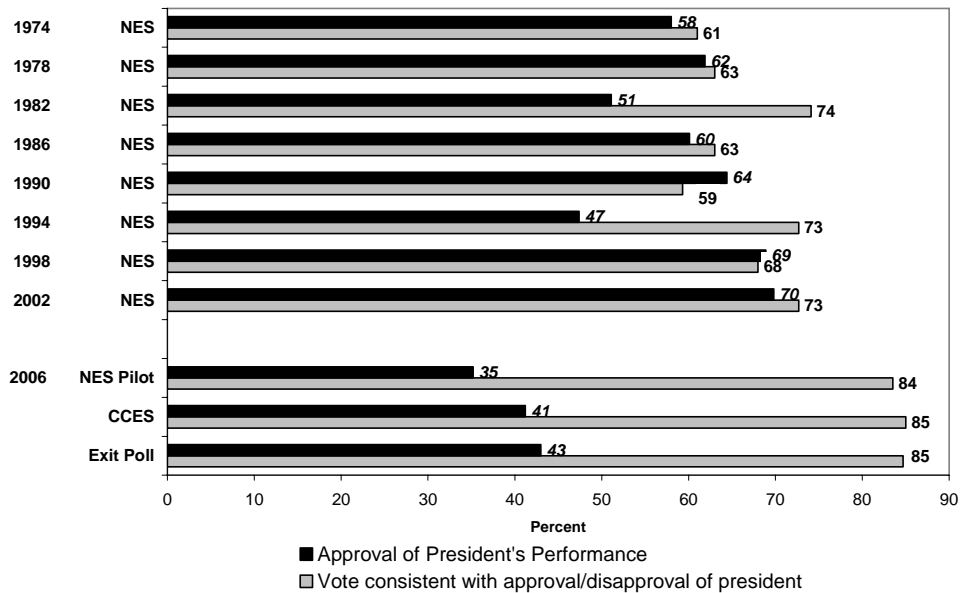
Note: the number of surveys averaged is in parentheses.

Source: Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, "October 2006 Survey on Electoral Competition: Final Topline," October 17-22, 2006, at <http://people-press.org/reports/questionnaires/293.pdf>, accessed November 15, 2006.

Post election surveys indicate that voters did what they said they would do; as Figure 2 shows, the proportion of the electorate whose House vote was consistent with their evaluations of Bush—voting Republican if they approved of his performance, voting Democrat if they disapproved—reached about 85 percent, more than 10 points

higher than in the earlier midterm elections for which data are available.³ The problem for Republican House candidates was that Bush was also considerably less popular than any of his midterm predecessors in this group (Clinton, who arguably cost the Democrats control of Congress in 1994,⁴ comes closest); indeed, Bush's 38 percent approval rating in the Gallup Poll taken just before the election was the lowest for any president at midterm since Harry Truman in 1950.

Figure 2 Consistency of Presidential Approval with the House Vote in Midterm Elections, 1974-2006



Source: See footnote 3.

Partisan Polarization

A major reason for the consonance between presidential approval and House (and Senate)⁵ voting in 2006 is the unprecedented degree of partisan polarization the Bush

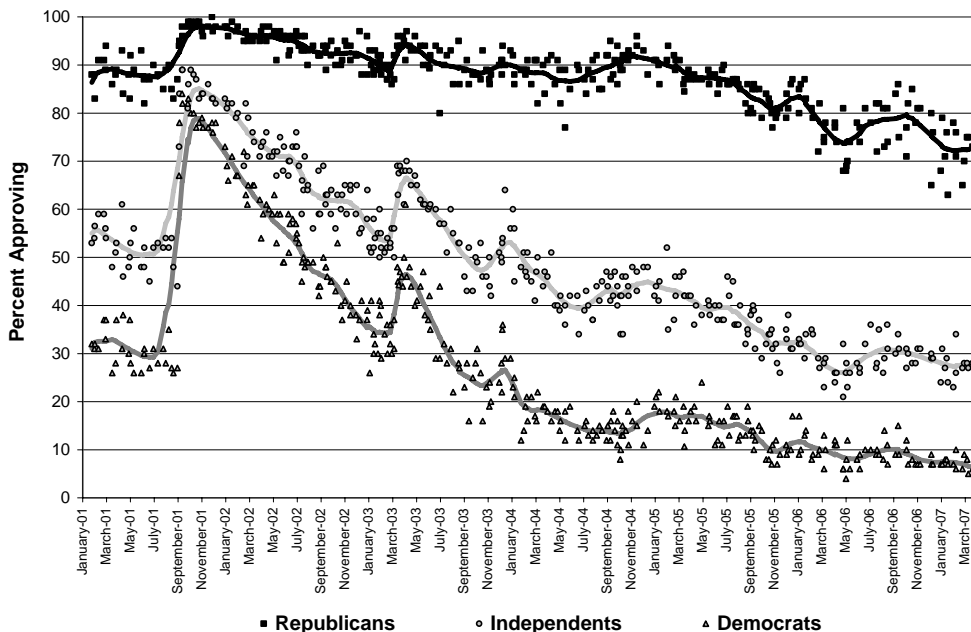
³ The data for 1974-2002 are from the National Election Studies cumulative data file; data for 2006 are from the small NES pilot study (which was not a midterm election study but included questions on presidential approval and the House vote), the Cooperative Congressional Election Study (see the Appendix for information on this study), and the National Exit Poll. Logit estimates also show that, controlling for party identification, presidential approval had a much larger impact on the House vote in 2006 than any of the other midterm elections in this series.

⁴ Gary C. Jacobson, "The 1994 House Elections in Perspective," *Political Science Quarterly* 111 (Summer 1996), pp. 207-209.

⁵ Presidential approval was also highly consonant with the vote for Senator in 2006; the consistency rates are 85 percent, 89 percent, and 84 percent, respectively, for the NES Pilot survey, CCES, and the Exit Poll.

presidency has provoked. The presidential approval ratings offered by ordinary Republicans and Democrats had, by 2006, become more widely divided for Bush than they have been for any president since modern polling began more than fifty years ago (Figure 3). Largely though not entirely because of his controversial route to the White House through Florida and the Supreme Court, Bush took office with the widest partisan difference in approval recorded for any newly elected president.⁶ After September 11, 2001 he received the highest ratings from the opposing party (and from independents) of any president ever. The subsequent trend in approval among Democrats and independents was downward, albeit with temporary reversals, to the point where, by the beginning of 2006, Bush was receiving the lowest ratings from the opposing party's identifiers ever recorded for any president. In a May 2006 Gallup Poll, only 4 percent of Democrats said they approved of his performance, 7 points worse than Richard Nixon's approval among Democrats just before he resigned in disgrace in 1974. No previous president had ever received single-digit ratings from the opposition in any Gallup Poll;

Figure 3 Approval of George W. Bush's Job Performance, 2001-2007, By Party Identification



Sources: 339 CBS News/ *New York Times* and Gallup polls.

⁶ Jacobson, *Divider*, p. 66.

Bush's ratings among Democrats were in single digits in twenty-three of the thirty-seven Gallup surveys taken between January 2006 and March 2007, averaging just 9 points.

Meanwhile, large majorities of Republicans have continued to approve of Bush's performance. Indeed, Bush has so far received the highest average approval ratings among his own partisans of any president since the question has been polled. Even after a decline in 2006, Bush's average level of approval among Republicans in the Gallup polls taken through March 2007 of 89.2 percent exceeds the next highest, that of Dwight D. Eisenhower (87.6 percent) by a statistically significant margin ($p=.002$). These high ratings combined with the historically low approval ratings offered by Democrats to produce the most polarized evaluations of a president ever recorded. Before Bush and going back to Eisenhower, the partisan difference in approval ratings had never exceeded 70 percentage points in any Gallup Poll and never averaged more than 66 points for any quarter. In the 116 Gallup Polls taken between January 2004 and March 2007, the gap exceeded 70 points 76 percent of the time, averaged 72 points, and reached as high as 83 points in a couple of surveys taken near the 2004 election.⁷

Bush's approval ratings among independents have moved considerably closer to those of Democrats than to those of Republicans, underling the tenacity with which ordinary Republicans have continued to support the president despite mounting problems in Iraq (not to mention diverse domestic setbacks—the handling of Hurricane Katrina, the whiffs of scandal, the Dubai Ports affair, spikes in gasoline prices, etc.). By comparison, Lyndon Johnson's approval ratings among Democrats dropped by 28 points (from an average of 85 percent to 57 percent) between 1965 and 1968 as the Vietnam War dragged on during his second term; Harry Truman's dropped by 27 points (from an average of 74 percent in 1949 to 47 percent in 1952) during his full term as the Korean War took its toll. In contrast, Bush's support within his own party during his second term started higher (averaging 90 percent in the first quarter of 2005) has fallen less (10 points), and thus remained at a substantially higher level (averaging 80 percent in the seven Gallup polls taken during the last quarter of 2006) than for these other wartime presidents.⁸

⁷ Evaluations of Bush's performance in different policy domains were also highly polarized along party lines during this period (Jacobson 2007, 10-13).

⁸ Author's analysis based on Gallup Poll data acquired from the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research at <http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu>.

The uniqueness of the partisan divide on Bush' performance in 2006 is clear from tables 1a and 1b. Table 1a presents data from the Gallup polls taken just before midterm elections from 1950 through 2006. Bush received the lowest ratings among opposition party identifiers (10 percent approving) and independents (31 percent) of any president in the series, while his rating among his own partisans (82 percent) was above the average

Table 1a. Partisan Differences in Presidential Approval at the Midterm, 1950-2006

	President's Party	Independents	Opposition Party	Difference
1950	57	34	17	40
1954	90	71	51	39
1958	83	57	39	44
1962	80	61	38	42
1966	62	41	26	36
1970	82	53	41	41
1974	72	59	37	35
1978	54	40	27	27
1982	77	44	21	56
1986	88	61	42	46
1990	86	59	53	33
1994	72	41	14	58
1998	87	64	36	51
2002	93	62	47	46
2006	82	31	10	72

Source: Gallup Polls, August-October of the election year.

Table 1b. Partisan Differences in Presidential Approval among Midterm Voters, 1974-2006

	President's Party	Independents	Opposition Party	Difference
1974 NES	76	59	44	32
1978 NES	79	64	31	48
1982 NES	89	61	24	65
1986 NES	90	64	38	52
1990 NES	88	71	46	42
1994 NES	83	43	16	67
1998 NES	94	66	39	55
2002 NES	96	71	38	58
2006 CCES	85	27	6	79
2006 Exit Poll	85	33	11	74
2006 NES Pilot	80	22	7	73

(78 percent) and the median. Thus the partisan gap for 2006, 72 points, was by a wide margin the largest yet recorded. Data based on self-reported voters from the National Election Studies (1974-2002) and three 2006 surveys (the NES Pilot Study, the CCES, and the national exit poll), reported in Table 1b, reinforces this point. The drop in approval from 2002 to 2006 among independents and Democrats is especially striking in both tables.

In light of these data and the unusually strong link between presidential approval and the vote choice in 2006, it is no surprise to find unusually high levels of party line voting and a substantial Democratic advantage among self-described independents. Table 2 displays the relevant data from midterms since 1974; comparisons between 2006 and elections during the recent period of Republican dominance (1994 onward) are the most informative, because prior to then, majority status and the incumbency advantage gave Democratic candidates a boost among Republicans and independents.⁹ According

**Table 2 Partisanship and Voting in Midterm House Elections, 1994-2006
(Percent Voting for the Republican)**

	<i>Republicans</i>	<i>Democrats</i>	<i>Independents</i>
1974 NES	77	14	37
1978 NES	72	17	48
1982 NES	84	17	46
1986 NES	72	16	45
1990 NES	71	12	41
1994 NES	88	18	54
1998 NES	86	24	53
2002 NES	84	16	52
2006 NES Pilot	88	4	41
2006 CCES	86	11	41
2006 Exit Poll	92	8	41

to these data, Republican House candidates did not lose more of their own partisans than usual (although some data suggest Republican turnout may have been slightly depressed),¹⁰ but they did notably worse than recent midterms among Democrats and independents.

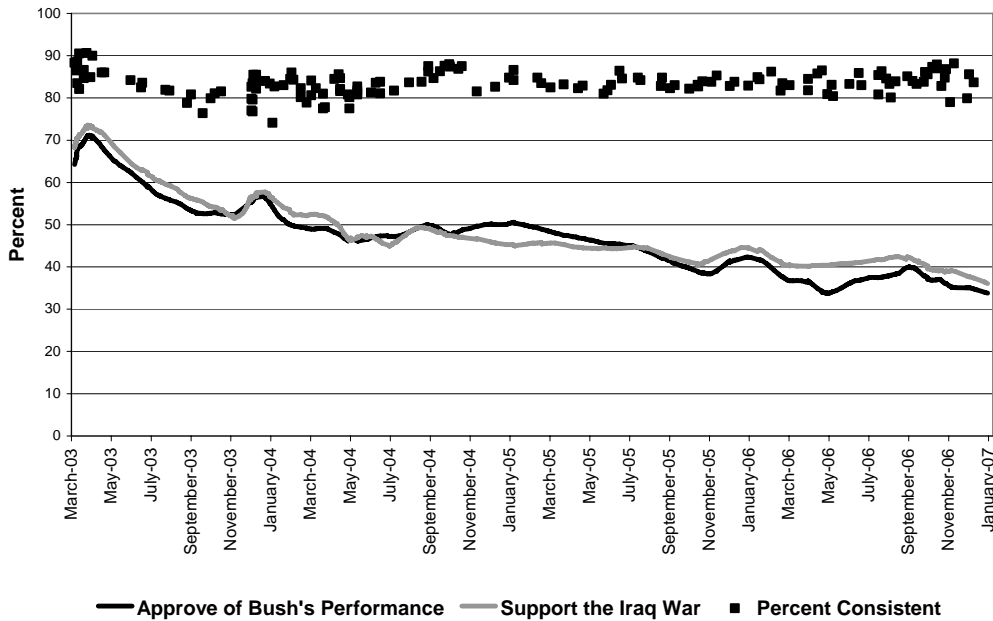
⁹ The independent category includes partisan leaners in these data to allow comparisons to the Exit Poll results.

¹⁰ Jacobson, "Referendum."

The Iraq War

Both the president's low overall approval ratings and the sharp partisan divisions on his performance are tightly linked to the public's reactions to the Iraq War. As popular support for the war has declined, so have the president's approval ratings. I will have more to say about the causal processes involved in the second section of this paper, but for now, Figure 4 makes the point clearly enough. While presidential approval and support for the war have declined in parallel, both going from above 70 percent to below 40 percent, the relationship between the two has remained strong and stable, with an

Figure 4 Support for the Iraq War and Approval of G.W. Bush's Job Performance

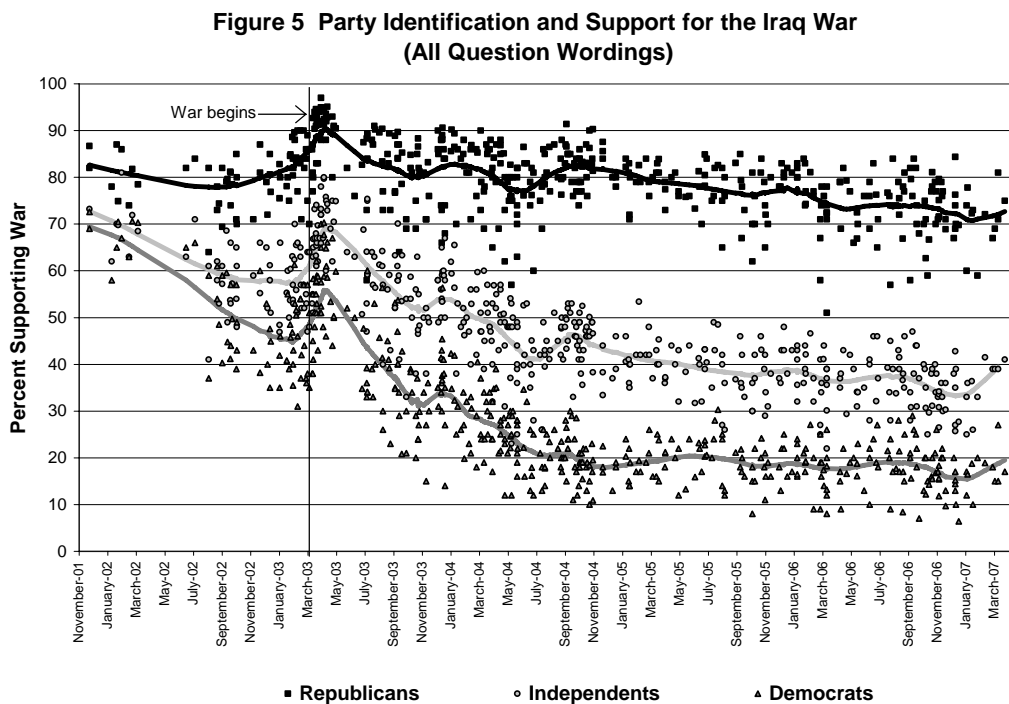


average of about 83 percent of respondents offering consistent evaluations—for the war and approving of Bush's performance, or opposing the war and disapproving of Bush's performance.¹¹ This level of consistency is far higher than it was for evaluations of

¹¹ The approval and war support trends are the Lowess-smoothed percentages of responses to the job approval question (N=560) and responses to four of the many variants of the war support question (war was not a mistake, the U.S. did the right thing in attacking Iraq, the war has been worth the cost, favor the war; N=503); the consistency measures come from the 149 surveys with which I have been able to do secondary analyses to produce the relevant crosstabs. Sources: sixteen national media and academic surveys, most reported at <http://www.pollingreport.com>, some supplied by the Roper Center and the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press. See Jacobson, *Divider*, p. 128, fn. 22.

Truman and the Korean War (averaging 60 percent) or Johnson and the Vietnam War (averaging 64 percent).¹²

Like assessments of Bush, opinions on the Iraq War are strongly shaped by partisanship. Figure 5, which displays the data points and Lowess-smoothed trends in support for the war (measured by more than 40 different question wordings, hence the noisiness of the data) disaggregated by party, shows that partisan assessments of the war have diverged from the beginning. The gap between Republicans and Democrats grew steadily wider leading up to the war and continued to expand afterward, with only a brief narrowing in during the first month or so of the conflict. It leveled out to an average of



Source: See Jacobson, *Divider*, p. 128.

about 62 percentage points from July 2004 through the end of 2005 before narrowing to about 57 points since the beginning of 2006.

These data stand in sharp contrast with comparable data from previous engagements in Korea, Vietnam, the Persian Gulf, Kosovo, and Afghanistan. For none is

¹² Gary C. Jacobson, “George W. Bush, Polarization, and the War in Iraq,” in *The George W. Bush Legacy*, ed. Colin Campbell, Bert A. Rockman, and Andrew Rudalevige (Congressional Quarterly Press, forthcoming), Table 3.

the partisan gap anywhere nearly as wide as it is for the Iraq War. Ironically, it is lowest in the most controversial of these engagements, Vietnam, averaging only 5 percentage points. Party differences over involvement in Korea, Kosovo, and Afghanistan averaged 11 to 12 points. Bush's father's Gulf War produced the widest partisan gap in this set, and it is also the only one for which the data suggest increasing divergence over time. Still, the party difference averaged only 21 points and peaked at 29 points, months after the fighting had concluded. Clearly, partisan differences on the Iraq war are in a class by themselves, three to ten times as large as for any comparable engagement.¹³

The connections between party, support for the war, approval of Bush's job performance, and voting behavior in 2006 are depicted in tables 3a and 3b. Seventy-three percent of Republican respondents to the CCES supported the war and approved of Bush's performance, and of this group, 92 voted for the Republican House candidate, 95 percent for the Republican Senate candidate. Among the small (9 percent) fraction of Republicans unhappy with both Bush and the War, more than half defected to the Democrat in these elections. Democrats were even more united, with 87 percent rejecting Bush and the war; among this group, only 7 percent voted for the Republican House candidate, 4 percent for the Republican Senate candidate. In contrast, more than half of the tiny fraction (3 percent) of Democratic voters who supported the president and the war voted for the Republican. The voting patterns of both sets of partisans with mixed views fell in between.

Notice that the gradients in the vote choice across these categories are steepest among independent voters; those independents who approved of Bush and the war voted Republican at rates 71 and 80 percentage points higher in, respectively, House and Senate races than those who rejected both. Thus it was greatly to the Republicans' disadvantage in 2006 that independents were more than twice common in the latter category than in the former. Notice also that only a small proportion of voters in this survey—around 6 percent overall—reported mixed views on the president and the war.

¹³ Jacobson, *Divider*, pp. 134-138.

Table 3a Presidential Approval, Support for the Iraq War, and the House Vote

	Approve of Bush, Support Iraq War	Approve of Bush, Oppose Iraq War	Disapprove of Bush, Support Iraq War	Disapprove of Bush, Oppose Iraq War
Republicans (N=7,747)				
Percent in category	72.8	3.4	3.7	9.2
Percent voting for Republican House candidate	92.1	83.0	74.5	43.9
Independents (N=8,520)				
Percent in category	26.7	2.3	3.8	57.8
Percent voting for Republican House candidate	86.8	54.6	55.2	15.7
Democrats (N=7,916)				
Percent in category	3.4	1.2	2.6	86.9
Percent voting for Republican House candidate	56.0	29.5	30.5	7.0
All Respondents (N=24,183)				
Percent in category	34.2	2.3	3.3	51.7
Percent voting for Republican House candidate	89.2	64.0	55.6	12.3

Table 3b Presidential Approval, Support for the Iraq War, and the Senate Vote

	Approve of Bush, Support Iraq War	Approve of Bush, Oppose Iraq War	Disapprove of Bush, Support Iraq War	Disapprove of Bush, Oppose Iraq War
Republicans (N=6,037)				
Percent in category	73.0	3.3	3.9	9.2
Percent voting for Republican Senate candidate	95.1	81.7	71.0	37.9
Independents (N=6,685)				
Percent in category	27.4	2.5	3.9	58.1
Percent voting for Republican Senate candidate	90.9	65.5	51.2	10.5
Democrats (N=6,037)				
Percent in category	3.3	0.9	2.6	87.5
Percent voting for Republican Senate candidate	59.6	26.6	14.8	3.7
All Respondents (N=18,841)				
Percent in category	33.8	2.2	3.4	52.4
Percent voting for Republican Senate candidate	92.8	67.6	49.2	8.1

Source: CCES

The Iraq War and Approval of House Incumbents

Congressional elections are by no means purely national affairs, of course; in 2006 as always, respondents' evaluations of the local candidates were also strongly

related to their vote choice. However, a notable feature of 2006 was that evaluations of candidates—at least of House incumbents pursuing reelection—were linked to opinions on the Iraq War. Overall, 81 percent of voters who believed that the war was not a mistake approved of their Republican incumbent’s performance, compared to a 22 of voters who thought the war was a mistake. For Democratic incumbents, the pattern is reversed, with 75 percent of their districts’ voters who opposed the war approving, compared with 33 percent of those supporting it. These evaluations are deeply colored by partisanship, to be sure, but even with the voter’s party, ideology, and assessments of Bush taken into account, opinions on the war still had a significant effect on evaluations of House incumbents (Table 4). Note that the effects are larger for Republican than for Democratic incumbents (as are the effects of presidential evaluations).¹⁴

Table 4. Party, Ideology, Bush Approval, and Approval of House Incumbents’ Job Performance (Regression Results)

	<i>Republican Incumbents</i>		<i>Democratic Incumbents</i>	
	<u>Coefficient</u>	<u>S.E.</u>	<u>Coefficient</u>	<u>S.E.</u>
Constant	-.12	.01	.34	.02
Party Identification (1, 0, -1)	.13	.01	-.16	.02
Ideology (2, 1, 0, -1, -2)	.14	.01	-.14	.01
Approve of Bush’s Performance (1,0)	.46	.02	-.24	.03
<i>Iraq War not a mistake (1,0,-1)</i>	.22	.01	-.16	.02
Adjusted R ²	.44		.27	
Number of cases	12,401		8,673	

Note: the dependent variable is 1 if the respondent approves of the incumbent’s performance, -1 if disapproves, 0 if neither; the independent variables are scored to be positive in the Republican direction; all of the coefficients are significant at p>.001.

Multivariate Models of the Vote Choice in 2006

Although voters’ party affiliation, ideological leanings, and attitudes toward the war, the president, and the candidates were tightly linked in 2006, each of these still had a large and separable impact on their reported choices for House and Senate. The logit

¹⁴ The results are substantively the same as in Table 4 if the relationships are estimated by ordered logit instead of OLS regression; I display the latter for ease of interpretation.

equations reported in tables 5a and 5b include all of these variables plus the incumbency status of the candidates and judgments of whether the economy was better, the same, or worse than a year earlier—judgments that are also related to evaluations of Bush, the war, party identification and ideology (correlations of .72, .69, .56, and .57, respectively). The first equation estimating the House vote omits the incumbent approval variable so it can be compared to the Senate vote equation.

The effect on the vote of opinions on the Iraq War remains substantial even under these controls; the probability of a Republican vote varies by between .27 and .32 in these equations depending on whether the respondent thought the war was a mistake. The other survey variables also show substantial effects, with the respondent's ideology having the largest estimated impact on the vote choice. The equations also indicate that value of incumbency status differed sharply by party and institution in 2006. The estimated benefit of House incumbency was only half as large for Republicans as for Democrats. In Senate elections, incumbency status was actually a negative for both parties' candidates, although in the Democrats' case, the effect is small and barely significant ($p=.051$) even with more than eighteen thousand observations. The negative coefficient for Republican Senate incumbents is no artifact: their vote share in the CCES survey was lower than for both Republican challengers and candidates for open seats among partisans in all categories.¹⁵ And it is consistent with the fact that all six of the Senate seats lost by Republicans in 2006 were defended by incumbents.

These equations do an impressive job of predicting the vote, but remember that predictions are almost as accurate when just one of the independent variables is employed: presidential approval alone predicts 85 percent of House votes and 89 percent of Senate votes correctly; opinion on the Iraq War by itself predicts 84 percent of House votes and 87 percent of Senate votes correctly.

¹⁵ Democratic voters gave Republican incumbents 4 percent of their vote, compared to 9 percent for other Republican Senate candidates; the comparable figures for independents were 36 and 44 percent, for Republican voters, 83 and 91 percent.

Table 5. Logit Model of House and Senate Voting in 2006

House Elections:	Equation 1			Equation 2		
	<u>Coefficient</u>	<u>S.E.</u>	<u>Effect</u> ^a	<u>Coefficient</u>	<u>S.E.</u>	<u>Effect</u>
Constant	-.50	.08		-.49	.08	
Democratic incumbent (1,0) ^b	-1.26	.00	.29	-1.01	.08	-.24
Republican incumbent (1,0)	.53	.08	.13	.49	.08	.12
Party Identification (1, 0, -1)	.68	.03	.32	.55	.04	.31
Ideology (2, 1, 0, -1, -2) ^c	.77	.03	.63	.66	.04	.56
Approve of Bush's Performance (1,0)	1.00	.07	.24	.94	.08	.23
Iraq War not a mistake (1,0,-1)	.67	.04	.32	.59	.04	.29
National Economy (2, 1, 0, -1, -2) ^d	.40	.02	.38	.30	.03	.29
Incumbent Approval (1, 0, -1)				1.50	.03	.63
Likelihood ratio chi square	17,706			20,636		
Percent correctly predicted (null=54.1)	88.2			90.2		
Pseudo R ²	.56			.65		
Number of Cases:	23,043			23,042		

Senate Elections:	<u>Coefficient</u>	<u>S.E.</u>	<u>Effect</u>
Constant	-.80	.10	
Democratic incumbent (1,0) ^b	.20	.10	.05
Republican incumbent (1,0)	-.54	.10	-.13
Party Identification (1, 0, -1)	.84	.04	.40
Ideology (2, 1, 0, -1, -2)	.96	.04	.72
Approve of Bush's Performance (1,0)	1.41	.08	.33
Iraq War not a mistake (1,0,-1)	.70	.04	.27
National Economy (2, 1, 0, -1, -2)	.50	.03	.45
Likelihood ratio chi square	16,160		
Percent correctly predicted (null=55.6)	91.5		
Pseudo R ²	.65		
Number of Cases:	18,181		

^a Estimated change in probability with the other variables set at their means.

^b Values of independent variable, scored to be positive in the Republican direction.

^c Categories: very liberal, liberal, moderate, conservative, very conservative

^d Categories: national economy in past year has gotten much better, better, same, worse, much worse.

Note: Dependent variable takes the value of 1 if respondent voted for Republican, 0 if for Democrat; all of the coefficients are significant at p<.001 except for Democratic Senate incumbency (p=.051).

II. George W. Bush, the Iraq War, and Partisan Polarization

How did the president and the Iraq War become so starkly and consequentially divisive in 2006? As a prelude to addressing this question, it is worth highlighting just how strongly partisanship had, by 2006, come to shape responses to virtually every survey question about the war. A sub sample of the CCES respondents were asked an extensive battery of questions relating to Iraq, and their responses suggest that ordinary Republicans and Democrats have come to live in separate, mutually irreconcilable cognitive worlds when it came to the war. As the entries in Table 6 demonstrate, partisans differ not only on the whether the war was a good idea, but on its consequences for U.S. security and the war on terrorism, how well the war is going, its likelihood of success, what the U.S. should do now, and the acceptability of U.S. casualties. They also differ sharply on the Bush administration's candor in making the case for war,

Table 6. Partisan Opinions on the Iraq War

	<i>Republicans</i>	<i>Independents</i>	<i>Democrats</i>	<i>Factor Loading</i>
Iraq War was worth the cost	69	26	2	.94
U.S. did the right thing in going to war	77	35	7	.94
The Iraq war was not a mistake	73	33	4	.93
Iraq War has contributed to U.S. security	80	40	12	.87
Iraq War has helped the war on terrorism	67	36	9	.79
Iraq War is going very or somewhat well	65	27	4	.80
U.S. will definitely or probably succeed in establishing democracy in Iraq	67	40	8	.84
U.S. should stay as long as it takes	72	38	10	.79
U.S should not set a timetable for withdrawal	71	38	8	.75
Number of casualties is acceptable	54	23	3	.80
Bush administration did not intentionally mislead the country into war	91	34	7	.88
Iraq War is part of the war on terrorism	79	32	12	.90
Approve of Bush's performance	82	4	3	.90
Eigenvalue				9.57
Number of cases				652

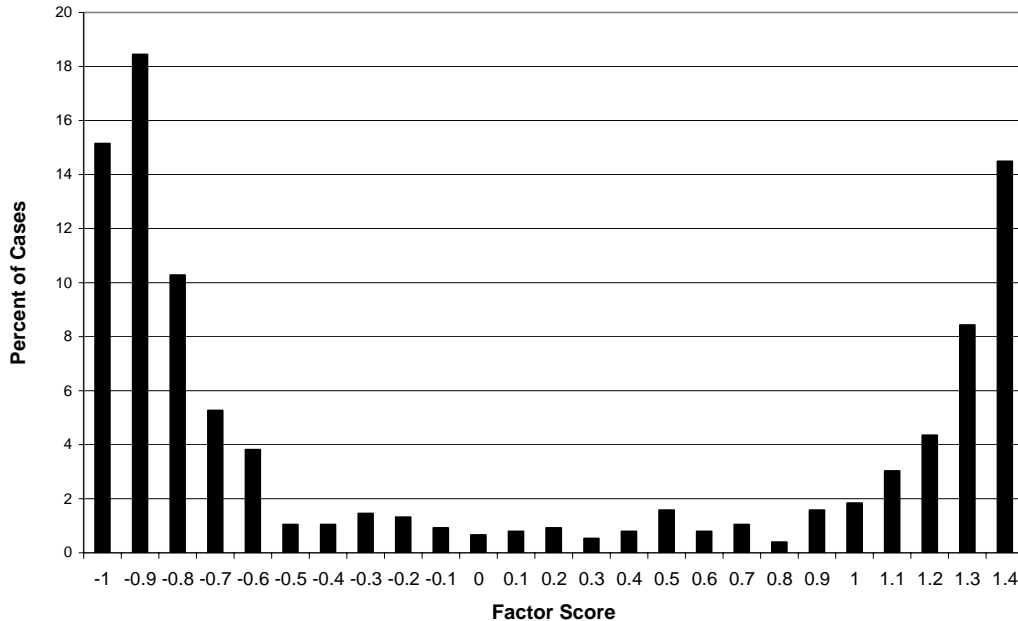
Note: Includes only respondents who reported voting in 2006.

Source: CCES, UCSD subsample

its current justification (it is part of the war on terrorism), and, of course, on the president himself.¹⁶

Views on all of these questions are highly constrained, as is evident from the results of a factor analysis of the responses (rightmost column in Table 6). All responses load very highly on a single factor (eigenvalue of 9.57; the eigenvalue of the second estimated factor is 0.26). The distribution of respondents' factor scores on this dimension provides a graphic display of the remarkable degree of polarization that has come to characterize opinions on this war and its initiator (Figure 6). The four columns on each of the extreme ends of the scale include 79 percent of the voters. A mere 1 percent of Democrats are at the pro-war end, whereas 83 percent are at the anti-war end. Only 9 percent of Republicans are at the anti-war end, while 67 percent are at the pro-war end. Even independents are consistently pro- or anti-war: 75 percent are found at one of the four extremities (51 percent on the left, 24 percent on the right).¹⁷

Figure 6 Distribution of Factor Scores on the Iraq War Dimension



¹⁶Similar differences appear when the same or related questions have been asked in the numerous commercial and media surveys of opinions on the war; see Jacobson, *Divider*, passim.

¹⁷ If analysis is confined to those independents say they lean toward neither party, 73 percent are found at the extremities, 54 percent on the left, 19 percent on the right.

The most straightforward interpretation of these patterns is that strongly-held prior attitudes, largely partisan in origin, now shape the responses of most Americans to anything connected to the war and the president. However, the question of just how they came to do so remains open. The connection between opinions on the Iraq War and the president, and the decline in support for both (illustrated in Figure 4), imply that that gradual disillusionment with the war bred gradual disillusionment with the president. But the huge partisan differences in evaluations of both the war and the president, and their distinct trajectories over time, suggest that a more complicated process was at work. Ordinary Republicans long remained loyal to the president and supportive of the Iraq war despite the collapse of its original justifications, its escalating costs, rising U.S. casualties, and the lack of visible progress in suppressing terrorist violence. Democrats and, to a lesser degree, independents, did not, and they are largely responsible for the trends in Figure 4.

Two different processes have, I think, been at work: Ordinary Republicans' loyalty to and faith in George Bush has been sufficiently powerful to induce most of them to interpret virtually every aspect of the war in a way that is consistent with this prior attitude; in short, their views on the war have been determined by their commitment to Bush. Democrats and, to a considerable extent, independents had no such commitment; indeed, their biases lie in the opposite direction. They were willing to support Bush and the war as long as they believed invading Iraq and deposing Saddam Hussein were necessary to remove a threat to the United States and would lead to peace and democracy in the Middle East.¹⁸ The failure to find weapons of mass destruction (WMD) or evidence of Saddam's involvement in September 11, and the continuing chaos and sectarian bloodshed in Iraq, removed the war's primary justifications in their minds. Only those who believed that, although the war was a mistake, it would compound the damage to leave Iraq in chaos and civil war, had reason to continue to support the venture. And even they would still take a jaundiced view of the president who had gotten us into this costly and unnecessary predicament on what turned out to be false premises. Thus for Democrats and independents, perceptions of the war shaped attitudes toward Bush, although once they had developed strongly negative views of the president, their

¹⁸ Jacobson, *Divider*, pp. 115-116.

beliefs about his Iraq policies probably became less subject to revision by any positive news that might come from the front.

Republican Identifiers

The idea that, among most Republican identifiers, a strong prior commitment to Bush induced positive views of virtually every aspect of the Iraq War is supported by several lines of evidence. First, neither the collapse of the administration’s original reason for going to war, nor the vast underestimate of its costs, nor the rise of criminal and sectarian as well as anti-U.S. violence, have had much effect on Republicans’ opinions on the war. In other words, new information that, at the very least, raised questions about the war’s wisdom, necessity, execution and prospects did not change many Republican minds. Indeed, information that might erode positive opinions on the war was often not even acknowledged. For example, most Republicans continued to believe that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction at the time the U.S. invaded long after the administration officially abandoned the claim and American forces in Iraq had given up looking for them. Nearly a third of the Republicans in the CCES survey said that WMD had actually been found, and an equal proportion thought they probably existed but had not yet been found (Table 7). Nearly a quarter thought Saddam had been personally involved in 9/11. Democrats and independents were far more likely to offer opinions consistent with the findings of well-publicized official reports that rejected both of these claims. Notice also that Republicans were more than twice as likely to say they did not know, another way to avoid acknowledging information that might bring support

Table 7. Belief in Iraq’s WMD and Saddam Hussein’s Involvement in 9/11

	<i>Republicans</i>	<i>Independents</i>	<i>Democrats</i>
U.S. has found WMD in Iraq	30	15	3
Iraq probably has WMD U.S. has not found	32	16	9
Iraq probably does not have WMD	17	59	78
Don’t know	21	11	11
Saddam was personally involved in 9/11	23	9	9
Saddam was not personally involved in 911	53	79	82
Don’t know	24	13	9

Source: CCES, UCSD subsample, voters only (N=667).

for the war (and therefore its architect) into question. It is worth pointing out that the proportion of Republicans believing Iraq had WMD and Saddam was involved in 9/11 is actually *smaller* in the CCES survey than in media surveys asking similar questions.¹⁹

Misperception is, of course, a standard psychological mechanism for avoiding cognitive dissonance,²⁰ and current beliefs about the war's original premises were strongly related to approval of the president and support for the war. Among Republican voters who thought Iraq possessed WMD or that Saddam was involved in 9/11, 92 percent approved of Bush's performance and 86 percent said the war was not a mistake; among Republican who held neither view, the respective figures were 63 percent and 45 percent.

A second line of evidence comes from examining the views of a crucial segment of the Republican coalition. The most tenacious Republican supporters of Bush and the war, and the most impervious to discordant information, have been the party's white, born again or evangelical Christians.²¹ After 9/11, the idea that God had chosen Bush to lead a global war of good against evil circulated in their communities²²; insofar as it was believed, it implied a religious duty to give the president and his policies unwavering, unquestioning support. The CCES survey posed a question designed to determine the extent to which this was the case. After responding to an initial question about belief in divine intervention in general,²³ respondents were asked, "Do you believe that George W. Bush was chosen by God to lead the United States in a global war on terrorism?" Table 8 shows how closely views of Bush and the war are related to opinions on this question. The 14 percent of respondents who believe in Bush's divine mission are overwhelmingly supportive of both the president and the war. Even the 15 percent who say they don't know are strongly supportive—indicating that most voters in this category evidently

¹⁹ Jacobson, "Bush, Polarization, and the War in Iraq," Figures 8 and 9.

²⁰ Leon Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (Evanston, IL: Row, Peterson, 1957), pp. 18-31

²¹ For detailed evidence, see Jacobson, *Divider*, pp. 153-162.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 91-94.

²³ The question was, "Do you believe that God intervenes in human affairs and shapes historical events?" with possible answers of "Yes, regularly; history is determined by God"; "Yes, but only rarely; history is mostly made by human beings and natural events"; "No. History is made by human beings without divine intervention." Among voters, 24 percent took the first option, 28 percent the second, and 40 percent the third (the remainder said they did not know).

believe that he *might* be God’s chosen instrument. The majority who reject the idea of divine selection, in contrast, oppose the president and the war by a ratio of about 4:1.

Views on this question are also strongly related to beliefs about the war’s original (and now discredited) main premise, Iraq’s WMD, and acceptance of the administration’s subsequent justification for continuing the war, that Iraq is now the central front in the war on terrorism in which, as Bush put it in a September 2006, address to the nation, “The safety of America depends on the outcome of the battle in the streets of Baghdad”²⁴ (see the fourth and fifth columns of Table 8). Evidently, conservative Christians, many of whom see the conflict as part of “a fundamental clash of world views . . . because they

Table 8. Belief in George Bush’s Divine Mission and Support for Him and the Iraq War

	<i>Percent in category</i>	<i>Approve of Bush’s Performance</i>	<i>Support Iraq War</i>	<i>Believe Iraq had WMD</i>	<i>Believe Iraq War is part of war on terrorism</i>
Republicans (N=219)					
Bush was chosen by God	29	97	89	87	99
Don’t know	28	82	72	61	83
Bush was not chosen by God	43	67	63	49	64
Independents (N=221)					
Bush was chosen by God	10	89	85	68	87
Don’t know	16	55	57	56	56
Bush was not chosen by God	74	18	20	19	19
Democrats (N=216)					
Bush was chosen by God	3	60	20	20	60
Don’t know	1	0	50	50	50
Bush was not chosen by God	96	1	3	8	9
All Respondents (N=656)					
Bush was chosen by God	14	92	81	76	93
Don’t know	15	72	69	61	74
Bush was not chosen by God	71	20	21	22	23

Source: CCES, UCSD Subsample.

²⁴“President’s Address to the Nation,” transcript of speech delivered September 9, 2006, accessed October 10, 2006 at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/09/20060911-3.html>.

operate from a biblically-centered worldview”²⁵ and who have recognized Bush as a like-minded believer since he first sought the White House, have maintained a faith in the president that has so far trumped any discordant information about his war. With 57 percent of Republicans believing that Bush is or might be God’s chosen agent, these attitudes go a long way toward explaining the persistence of Republican support for the president and the war. The 96 percent of the Democrats and 74 percent of independents who reject this proposition are under no religious obligation to downplay or ignore revelations about Iraq that would bring Bush’s performance as leader into question, and they therefore have shown no such persistence.

Democrats and Independents

Additional reason to believe that the dominant causal link between opinions on Bush and the Iraq War differs for Republicans and non-Republicans can be inferred from sequence alone. Before the war, in the wake of 9/11, Republicans gave Bush overwhelming approval; the war and its aftermath have been slow to diminish his standing among them, which has also largely withstood other shortcomings such as the administration’s slow and inept response to the Katrina disaster. After 9/11 Democrats and independents also gave Bush overwhelming approval (Figure 3). These approval ratings ebbed over the ensuing 15 months but then underwent a sharp upward spike during the first optimistic weeks of the war leading up to Bush’s “Mission Accomplished” moment in May 2003. Their subsequent decline tracked revelations and news coming out of Iraq, and it is no great stretch to infer that this information bred disillusionment with the war, thereby costing Bush support among those who had no psychological incentive to reject or downplay discordant information. The kind of pattern displayed in Figure 3—parallel declines in support for Bush and the War with a high, stable association between the two—has been characteristic of both Democrats and independents, and it makes much more intuitive sense to take it as evidence of disillusionment with the war leading to disapproval of the president than vice versa.

²⁵ The words are those of Tony Perkins, president of the conservative Family Research Council; see Dan Gilgoff, “A new Crusade within the GOP,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 25, 2007, p. M4.

Like Republicans, however, Democrats and independents express beliefs reflecting a psychological drive for cognitive consistency that has contributed to the polarization of opinions on the president and the war. For example, a huge majority of Democrats—93 percent of voters in the CCES, about 80 percent of adult Democrats in major media surveys taken during 2006²⁶—now say that, in making the case for war, Bush intentionally misled the American public. (A modest majority of independents take the same view, while the vast majority of Republicans continue to believe that the administration told the public what it believed to be true.) No one knows for sure how confident the president and his advisors were in their judgment that Iraq was making and hiding WMD, but their reactions suggest that they were as surprised as anyone when they could not find at least some hidden stashes or manufacturing facilities. The administration certainly cherry-picked evidence and hyped the case, but there is no solid indication that they actually knew how empty it would turn out to be (otherwise, they would have been better prepared to deal with the predictable repercussions).

The question of the administration's candor remains ambiguous, to be sure, and people naturally resolve ambiguity in the direction of their biases (for example, of the CCES respondents who opposed the war, more than 90 percent, including 97 percent of the Democrats, said the Bush administration's case for war had been deliberately misleading). Less ambiguous is the evidence that many of the war's opponents, primarily Democrats, have reconstructed their memories to match their current disenchantment with the war. The UCSD sub sample of the CCES was asked three retrospective questions about Iraq:

1. As you know, in March of 2003, the United States took military action in Iraq to depose Saddam Hussein. Do you remember whether you favored or opposed the U.S. taking action *at that time*? [if yes] Did you favor or oppose that decision?
2. Thinking back to just before the U.S. took military action in Iraq in March 2003, did you believe *at that time* that Saddam Hussein was personally involved in the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 on Washington D.C. and New York City?
3. Again, thinking back to just before the U.S. took military action in Iraq, did you believe *at that time* that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction that were a threat to the U.S. and its allies?

²⁶ Jacobson, "Bush, Polarization, and the War in Iraq," Figure 14.

On each of these questions, more than 90 percent of respondents claimed to recall their original opinions. Table 9 compares their remembered views with those expressed in national polls taken early in 2003 just before the invasion. The comparison suggests wholesale misremembering of earlier opinions on the war and its premises on the part of Democrats and, to a lesser degree, independents. For example, in polls taken just before the invasion, an average of 46 percent of Democrats supported going to war; only 21 percent of CCES Democrats remember having done so; just before the war, 72 percent of Democrats said they thought Iraq possessed WMD, but only 26 percent of CCES Democrats remember having believed this to be true. Memories are far more closely aligned with current opinions than with pre-war polling data; 88 percent of Democrats (as well as 86 percent of independents and 92 percent of Republicans) recall having held the same position on the war in 2003 as they did in 2006. Virtually every respondent (99 percent) who currently supports the war remembers having done so from the start; but of those who now oppose the war, only 21 percent of all respondents and only 12 percent of Democrats remember having initially supported it. These numbers are plainly inconsistent with other survey data, which show that support for the war among

Table 9. Reconstructed Memories of Past Opinions on the Iraq War

	<i>Republicans</i>	<i>Independents</i>	<i>Democrats</i>
Favor Iraq War			
Surveys just before invasion (12) ^a	85	59	46
Remember favoring the war (CCES)	94	51	21
Now support the war (CCES)	77	35	7
Did Iraq have WMD?			
Surveys just before invasion (3)	88	78	72
Remember believing Iraq had WMD (CCES)	85	50	26
Still believe Iraq had WMD (CCES)	63	30	11
Saddam personally involved in 9/11?			
Surveys just before invasion (3)	55	40	44
Remember believing Saddam involved in 9/11 (CCES)	32	15	14
Still believe Saddam involved (CCES)	23	9	9

^a Number of surveys averaged.

Democrats actually dropped about 30 points, not 12 points, over the period in question (Figure 5).

Only about 15 percent of respondents in each partisan category gave answers indicating that they had initially thought Iraq possessed WMD but no longer did so; more than 80 percent align their remembered with their current view. The 15-point shift for Republicans just about matches national surveys from 2003 and 2006, but the memories of independents and, to a much greater extent, Democrats conform to current opinions much more closely than the survey data make plausible and clearly understate the extent to which their beliefs about Iraq's WMD have changed. Regarding Saddam's personal complicity in 9/11, only about 5 percent of CCES voters in each partisan category give answers indicating that they once believed he was involved but now do not, again a substantial understatement of change as documented in national surveys.

Adapting memory to current views is another classic dissonance-reduction mechanism²⁷; Democrats in particular display this tendency in responding to questions about the Iraq War. That many Democrats and some independents were evidently no longer comfortable acknowledging that they had once accepted the Bush administration's arguments for going to war is a sign of how strongly sentiment among non-Republicans had turned against the venture by late 2006. It also arguably deepened displeasure with the president; of the CCES Democrats who said they had never believed that Iraq had WMD, no fewer than 99 percent disapproved of Bush job performance *strongly* (of those who did remember once believing that Iraq had WMD, 68 percent expressed strong disapproval). Independents in this category were also overwhelmingly critical of the president, with 87 percent disapproving strongly. In contrast, 56 percent of independents who remembered initially believing that Iraq had WMD approved of Bush's performance; only 26 expressed strong disapproval.

The News Media's Contribution

I have argued that the wide partisan divisions on the president and the Iraq War were so consequential in the 2006 midterm elections were generated by two distinct

²⁷ Robert A. Wicklund and Jack W. Brehm, *Perspectives on Cognitive Dissonance* (John Wiley and Sons, 1976), pp. 110-113.

causal processes: loyalty to Bush was the primary reason Republicans remained supportive of the war, while disillusionment with the war was the primary reason Democrats and, to a lesser extent, independents developed such strongly negative opinions of the president. Republicans tended to maintain their support for the war (and thus the president) by rejecting, ignoring, or downplaying discordant news from Iraq; among them, those who thought God had chosen Bush to lead a global war against terrorism were especially unreceptive to dissonant information. Many Democrats and some independents solidified their opposition to the war (and thus hostility to the president) by believing, falsely, that they had never favored the war or accepted its premises. Classic modes of dissonance reduction thus contributed to the unusually high correlation between voters' views of a president and a war and thus to the unusually strong influence opinions on both had on voting behavior in 2006.

Another classic mode of dissonance reduction is selective exposure to information.²⁸ Americans are now able to draw on ideologically diverse sources of news and information, and there is plenty of evidence they tend to choose sources more likely to confirm than challenge their political opinions.²⁹ Specifically regarding Iraq, Kull and his co authors found strong variation across users of different news sources in acceptance of the Bush administration's version of Iraqi realities and perceptions of established facts about the war, with the Fox News audience showing the highest levels of support for the war and misperception of facts might have undermined it.³⁰ The CCES also asked a subset of respondents where they got most of their national news and found even more striking differences between the viewers of Fox News and other news programs than had Kull, et al. Differences in evaluations of Bush and the war, and reported vote choice in House and Senate elections, across primary news sources are displayed in Figure 7.³¹

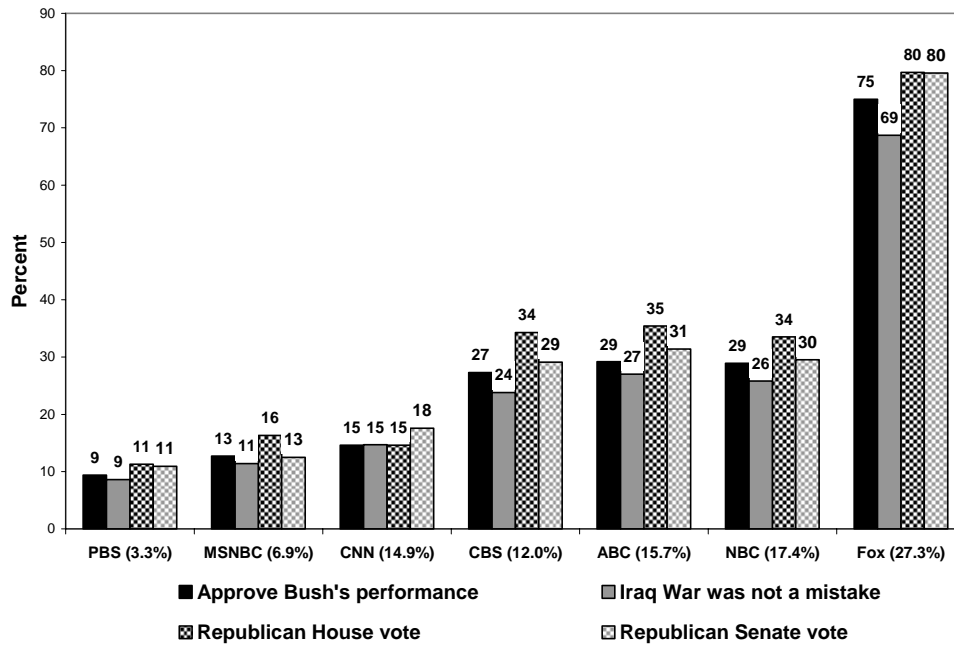
²⁸ Joseph T. Klapper, *The Effects of Mass Communication* (New York: The Free Press, 1960), pp. 19-21.

²⁹ "News Audiences Increasingly Polarized," Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, news release, June 8, 2004, 14-15 at <http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=215> (accessed July 7, 2005); "Fahrenheit 9/11 Viewers and Limbaugh Listeners About Equal in Size Even Though They Perceive Two Different Nations, Annenberg Data Show," National Annenberg Election Study, news release, August 3, 2004, at http://www.annenbergpublicpolicycenter.org/naes2004_03_fahrenheit_08-03_pt.pdf (accessed August 10, 2004).

³⁰ Steven Kull, Clay Ramsay, and Evan Lewis, "Misperceptions, the Media, and the Iraq War," *Political Science Quarterly* 118 (Winter, 2003-2004), p. 575-590.

³¹ Data are from the full CCES sample; N's range from 6,481 to 8,989 depending on the question.

Figure 7 Television News Source and Political Positions



Note: Proportion of respondents reporting the news source is in parentheses.

The Fox audience is, to put it mildly, distinctive; remaining news audiences fall into two subcategories based on the distributions of their responses to these questions: viewers of the three national networks' programs, and viewers of PBS and Fox's rival cable networks, CNN and MSMBC. The differences in Figure 7 are largely if not entirely the product of viewers' selecting news source in line with their partisan and ideological predispositions (Table 10). For example, 53 percent of Republicans and 59 percent of conservatives said they got their news from Fox, compared to 8 percent of Democrats and 7 percent of liberals. Only 10 percent of Republicans and 9 percent of

Table 10. Party, Ideology, and Choice of Television News Source

	PBS, CNN, MSNBC	ABC, CBS, NBC	Fox
Republicans	10	37	53
Independents	30	45	25
Democrats	33	58	8
Conservatives	9	33	59
Moderates	30	54	16
Liberals	40	53	7

Note: Percentages read across.

Source: CCES (Party ID N=8,999; ideology N=8,466)

conservatives said they watch PBS, CNN, or MSNBC, compared to 30 percent of Democrats and 40 percent of liberals. These patterns of usage are broadly consistent with the reputed political leanings of these various outlets and readily account for the results in Figure 7 and the variations in beliefs about justifications for the Iraq War and George Bush shown in Table 11. Fox News watchers are much more likely than others to believe the original and substitute justifications for the Iraq War and that Bush was chosen by God to lead the global war against terrorism. PBS, CNN, and MSMBC audiences are overwhelmingly skeptical about the war’s premises, old or new, and Bush’s standing with the Almighty. Viewers of the national networks fall in between but take positions more similar to those of the PBS, et al., audiences than to Fox audiences.

Table 11. Television News Source and Beliefs About Iraq and Bush

	PBS, CNN, MSNBC	ABC, CBS, NBC	Fox
U.S. has found WMD in Iraq	2	5	36
Iraq probably has WMD U.S. has not found	6	23	36
Iraq probably does not have WMD	83	48	13
Don't know	10	23	15
Iraq War is part of the war on terrorism.	9	27	79
Iraq War is separate from the war on terrorism	89	69	20
Was Bush chosen by God to lead a global war on terrorism?			
Yes	2	6	37
Don't know	5	11	22
No	93	83	40

Note: percentages read down.

Source: UCSD sub sample of the CCEs (voters only, N=292)

These results stand as clear evidence of widespread selective exposure and are consistent with other findings in the literature on party differences in the choice of news media. They do not, however, tell us if the news source itself has an independent effect on viewers’ beliefs and opinions. Kull and his colleagues offer evidence that it does, at least for Fox audiences, and Della Vigna and Kaplan have detected a “Fox effect” that

they contend has raised Republican vote totals significantly in recent years.³² The data in Figure 7 and Table 11 are certainly consistent with a substantial Fox effect and perhaps other news source effects on attitudes toward Bush and the war—and in regression equations controlling for party, ideology, and attitudes toward Bush, Fox watchers remain significantly more likely to believe Iraq had WMD and that Bush is God’s chosen instrument—but we cannot rule out the possibility that the results are entirely a consequence of people choosing information sources compatible with their existing beliefs and preconceptions. What does seem clear is that the availability of ideologically diverse news outlets—not just on television, but in newspapers and magazines and on the internet—gives Americans ample opportunity to select sources likely to confirm their preconceptions and to avoid political information that might bring them into question, facilitating the kind of partisan polarization that was so salient in the 2006 elections

Conclusion

American voters were sharply divided along party lines in their assessments President Bush and the Iraq War in 2006, and these assessments had an unusually large effect on their voting decisions in House and Senate races. Republicans remained overwhelmingly committed to the president and the war and by and large stuck with Republican congressional candidates. Democrats tended to hold intensely negative opinions of both the president and the war, and their rate of electoral defection was unusually low by historical standards. Most independents had developed opinions closer to those of Democrats than of Republicans, and they broke decisively for Democratic candidates. The combination of party loyalty among Democrats and the independents’ disproportionate opposition to Bush and the war produced a Democratic vote surge large enough to overcome the formidable structural advantages Republicans now enjoy in congressional elections (from the more efficient distribution of their usual supporters), giving Democrats control of the House and Senate.³³

³² Kull, Ramsay, and Lewis, “Misperceptions,” pp. 589-590; Stefano Della Vigna and Ethan Kaplan, “The Fox News Effect: Media Bias and Voting,” manuscript, Berkeley, California, March 30, 2003 at <http://elsa.berkeley.edu/~sdellavi/wp/foxxvote06-03-30.pdf> (accessed March 28, 2007).

³³ Jacobson, “Referendum.”

Polarized opinions on the Bush and the war emerged from the interaction of prior partisan commitments with revelations from, and developments in, Iraq. Divisions were sharpened by standard modes of dissonance reduction, including misperception, misremembering, and selective exposure to information sources on the part of many voters. The effects of these processes continue to register; Bush's decision in January 2007 to send more troops to Iraq rather than try to wind down the war (as recommended by the Baker-Hamilton commission) was supported by two-thirds of the Republicans but opposed by about 90 percent of Democrats, with about 70 percent opposing the escalation "strongly."³⁴ The unity House and Senate Democrats have shown in rejecting this approach and passing, despite vigorous protests and veto threats from the White House, war funding bills that include timetables for withdrawal from Iraq, reflects this consensus among their partisans. The Democrats' stance is also directly traceable to an election in which, according to the CCES survey, 81 percent of voters for the winning Democratic House candidates favored withdrawing U.S. troops from Iraq within a year, while only 11 percent opposed doing so.³⁵ The looming confrontation between congressional Democrats and Bush on this issue is likely to be protracted, for the Democrats are backed by a strong consensus within their electoral constituencies, and Bush has staked his presidency and historical legacy on achieving victory in Iraq.

³⁴ The January 11-14 Gallup Poll reported 66 percent of Republicans favoring sending more troops (40 percent "strongly") and 86 percent of Democrats opposing the move (71 percent "strongly"). The January 17-18 *Newsweek* Poll reported 66 percent of Republicans supporting Bush's decision (36 percent "strongly") and 93 percent of Democrats opposed (69 percent "strongly").

³⁵ Several months later, when Congress was debating setting a timetable, ordinary Democrats remained strongly supportive of the move; 82 percent favored a timetable in the March 23-25 Gallup Poll and 77 percent doing so in the March 26-27 CBS News poll; most Republicans (65 percent in the Gallup Poll, 63 percent in the CBS News Poll) backed the president's position, as had 72 percent of CCES respondents who had reported voting for winning Republican House candidates in 2006.

Appendix

Some of the data analyzed for this paper come from the 2006 Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES), a survey of 38,443 Americans conducted during October and November of 2006.³⁶ The survey had a pre/post design and was a cooperative venture of 39 Universities and more than 100 Political Scientists. CCES was completed on-line and fielded by the survey research firm Polimetrix, Inc., located in Palo Alto, CA. Steve Ansolabehere (MIT) was the Principal Investigator of the project and Lynn Vavreck (UCLA) served as the Study Director. A design committee consisting of Steve Ansolabehere, Lynn Vavreck, Doug Rivers (Stanford), Don Kinder (Michigan), Bob Erikson (Columbia), Wendy Rahn (Minnesota), Liz Gerber (Michigan), Jeremy Pope (Brigham Young), and John Sides (George Washington) collaborated to write the first 40 questions of the survey, called the Common Content. All 38,443 respondents completed this part of the survey. Each CCES team then drafted its own unique content that followed the Common Content. Each team received 1,000 unique respondents who completed both the Common Content and the Team Module. I designed the questionnaire for UCSD's sub sample.³⁷

The Common Content sample for CCES is a nationally representative sample. Interviewed respondents were selected from the Polimetrix PollingPoint Panel using sample matching. A random sub sample of size 36,501 was drawn from the 2004 American Community Study (ACS), conducted by the U.S. Bureau of the Census, which is a probability sample of size 1,194,354 with a response rate of 93.1% (participation in the ACS is mandatory). For each respondent in the selected ACS sub sample, the closest matching active PollingPoint panelist was selected using the following measure of distance: $d(x,y)$. Following matching, the sample marginals were raked to the ACS marginals for age, race, gender, and education. Raking was performed using iterative proportional fitting. The final weights were trimmed to lie between .33 and 3.³⁸

³⁶ Stephen Ansolabehere, Cooperative Congressional Election Study – Common Content. Palo Alto, CA: Polimetrix, Inc, 2006.

³⁷ Gary Jacobson, Cooperative Congressional Election Study – UCSD Module. Palo Alto, CA: Polimetrix, Inc, 2006.

³⁸ For more information on sample matching see Douglas Rivers, "Sample Matching: Representative Sampling from Internet Panels," Polimetrix White Paper Series, 2006.