Article

A Tale of Two Surges: Comparing the Politics of the 2007 Iraq Surge and the 2009 Afghanistan Surge

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Abstract

This manuscript compares and contrasts the political obstacles faced by Bush and Obama when they sought to deepen U.S. involvement in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. I compare their efforts in three areas. First, I examine their attempts to rally public support for a surge by "going public" and making high-profile policy speeches. Second, I examine their attempts to silence congressional critics, by framing the choice as averting defeat. Finally, I examine each president's attempt to quell a rebellion inside his administration. Although Bush failed to rally public support, he was able to implement the surge because he succeeded in unifying Republicans in support of his policy, and dividing and silencing congressional Democrats. Obama succeeded because he was able to successfully shape public opinion. This, in turn, allowed him to withstand criticism from hawkish Republicans in Congress and also rally the support of dovish Democratic elites.

Introduction

In early 2007, the term *surge* entered the American political lexicon. Specifically, in a January address, President George W. Bush announced that in an attempt to stave off defeat, he was sending an additional 20,000 soldiers to fight in Iraq. In his speech, the president indicated that the additional soldiers would have a new mission, focusing on population security. At the time, Illinois Senator Barack Obama, along with most members of the Democratic Party, indicated opposition to the plan; after Bush's speech, Obama introduced the "Iraq War De-Escalation Act," designed to force the president to abandon the surge, and instead implement the recommendations of the Iraq Study Group ("Text of the Iraq War De-Escalation Act of 2007," 2007).

Despite his vocal opposition to Bush's policy, in December 2009, President Obama announced his own surge, making a nationally televised address in which he outlined a plan to send additional soldiers to Afghanistan, to focus on counterinsurgency.

This project examines how two presidents each managed to escalate an unpopular conflict. More precisely, both the War in Afghanistan and the War in Iraq enjoyed public support when they were initiated in 2001 and 2003, respectively. However, as the costs of each conflict rose, and success appeared elusive, public support dropped; concomitantly, congressional opinion leaders and members of the president's inner circle

began to call for a withdrawal. Explaining how Bush and Obama managed to implement their surges requires examining how each president overcame three possible domestic impediments to policy change: negative public opinion, congressional opposition, and bureaucratic divisions.

To analyze the conditions under which a president can overcome these obstacles, I employ insights from framing theory. More precisely, framing theory focuses on the manner in which the strategic presentation of information influences public opinion, and by extension, the outcomes of policy debates. Here, I define a frame as a justification for continued involvement in a war; reciprocally, I define a counterframe as a justification for abandoning involvement in a war.

I argue that when faced with a failing and unpopular war, a popular president can attempt to win support for an escalation by reshaping the public's perception of the stakes on the conflict. Alternately, if a president is unpopular with the public, and unable to persuade them of the wisdom of his policy preference, he can attempt to discredit and silence members

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of Congress or dissidents inside the administration who promote a counterframe calling for withdrawal. Absent a coherent alternative policy approach, the president will be able to implement his preferred policy.

The remainder of the analysis will proceed as follows. I first detail the research question, outlining the challenges a president faces when seeking to implement an unpopular foreign policy. Following this, I use framing theory to specify the conditions under which a president can overcome these obstacles and implement his preferred policy. Using case studies of the War in Iraq and the War in Afghanistan, I find that although each president faced a different set of domestic political challenges, both succeeded in using framing to reshape the political landscape. Specifically, although Bush failed to rally public support for the troop surge, he was able to implement this policy for two reasons. First, he succeeded in unifying congressional Republicans in support of his policy; moreover, he divided and silenced congressional Democrats by arguing that their opposition to the surge was harming U.S. soldiers already fighting in Iraq. Second, he achieved internal unity by replacing dissidents in his administration and among the military leadership.

Obama faced a different set of challenges when seeking to escalate the War in Afghanistan. Specifically, Obama anticipated that he was likely to face criticism from hawks in Congress and the military, as well as pushback from congressional Democrats who favored winding down the War in Afghanistan. To navigate this complex political terrain, the president first worked to win over the surge skeptics inside his administration. This, in turn, allowed him to rally the support of dovish Democratic elites. By the time of his policy announcement in December of 2009, the president was able to promote the idea of a surge with a fixed end date as a consensus policy arrived at after careful deliberation. Ultimately, the absence of any counterframes, as well as his credibility with Democratic voters, allowed him to rally public support for a controversial policy.

The Politics of Unpopular Wars

Within the literature on U.S. foreign policy, there is a general consensus that in the post–World War II era, the president possesses an outsized influence, especially in matters of war and peace (Rudalevige, 2005; Schlesinger, 2004). In a democratic system, however, the executive is never omnipotent in this realm. Specifically, although the public pays little attention to foreign policy, and Congress is usually deferential to the executive, in rare cases, a foreign policy issue becomes highly salient, with elites and the public holding well-formed views on a policy question; these views may be counter to the policy goals of the president. In this section, I outline three types of obstacles that could impede the president's ability to make a major policy change, such as increasing the number of soldiers fighting in a war.

Public Opinion

Despite the considerable literature on public opinion and policymaking, there is no scholarly consensus regarding what triggers a shift in public opinion during the course of a war; moreover, there is no clear answer regarding precisely how shifts in public opinion impact elite decision-making (Foyle, 1999, pp. 4-9). Logically, however, it is possible to generalize about the consequences a president would face should he choose to ignore public opinion on a highly salient issue, such as involvement in a war. Specifically, and most severely, absent public support for a policy, the president faces the possibility of electoral sanction for his policy choice and the loss of his office. Alternately, even if the president is not up for reelection, implementing an unpopular war policy could have spillover effects; ignoring public opinion on a major policy issue is likely to diminish the president's approval ratings. This drop in support for the president will make it difficult for him to rally public and elite support for his other legislative initiatives. As Bruce Russett notes, although presidents are unlikely to reflexively follow public opinion, public preferences do set "broad limits of constraint, identifying a range of policies in which decision makers can choose . . . if they are not to face rejection in the voting booth" (Foyle, 1999, p. 7).

Congressional Support

Another potential obstacle to change is the opposition of the U.S. Congress. Although the U.S. president is the face of U.S. foreign policy, meeting with world leaders, assembling a national security team, and announcing major policy decisions, the Constitution affords members of Congress a significant role in U.S. foreign relations. Specifically, the Constitution grants the Congress the ability to declare war; moreover, the Congress' control over appropriations, as outlined in Article 1, would allow the legislature to terminate funding for an ongoing war, effectively forcing the president to end combat operations. Alternately, Congress could attempt to limit the scope of a war, by continuing to fund the conflict, but placing conditions on the funding, such as limiting the geographic scope of combat operations or restricting American forces to non-combat activities. As Congressional scholar Edwin Corwin famously noted, the Constitution is essentially an "invitation to struggle for the privilege of directing American foreign policy" (Hook & Jones, 2012, p. 152).

Despite their Constitutional mandate, the most potent weapon possessed by members of Congress may be their ability to challenge the executive's framing of policy issues. Specifically, some legislators, such as party leaders and committee chairs, gain a level of public prestige that offers them access to the media; this allows select members of Congress to act as policy entrepreneurs who "initiate action on the issues they care about rather than await administrative action

on them" (Carter & Scott, 2004, p. 35). In this capacity, legislators have the ability to challenge the president's arguments about the necessity of escalating a war. Specifically, if members of Congress can unify around a cogent exit strategy, they have the ability to "[change] the climate of opinion surrounding that policy" and prevent the president from dominating public discussion of foreign policy (Ripley & Lindsay, 1993, p. 32).

Bureaucratic Politics

A final potential obstacle to policy change stems from bureaucratic opposition, namely, the opposition of major policy stakeholders inside the executive branch and military. Theories of bureaucratic politics hold that policy "results from compromise, coalition, competition and confusion among government officials who see different faces of an issue" (Allison, 1969, p. 708). As such, policy should be viewed as a "political resultant—the product of compromise and bargaining among individual participants" (Clifford, 1990, p. 162). Bargaining occurs among "senior players in the national security game," and the interests of these players are determined by the organizations that they represent (Allison & Halperin, 1972, p. 47).

In accordance with this, during a policy debate, bureaucratic actors who support a particular policy option will use various methods to win over the president. As detailed by Nixon officials Morton Halperin and Henry Kissinger in their "Ten Commandments of Bureaucratic Maneuvering," stakeholders can employ an array of subtle and overt means to shape the policy debate so as to secure a decision favorable to their agency; this includes actions such as manipulating information and excluding dissidents from deliberation. Although Halperin and Kissinger primarily focus on how bureaucratic actors can attempt to sway the president before a decision is made, they do suggest that bureaucratic actors still have the capability to thwart a policy change even after the president has reached a preliminary decision. For example, Halperin and Kissinger note that a bureaucratic stakeholder can attempt to discredit a policy that the president supports, by "leak[ing] damaging information to . . . supporters in the press or in Congress, and count[ing] on 'public opposition' to build" (Dye, Schubert, & Zeigler, 2011, p. 276).

For the purposes of this analysis, the role of the military as a potential impediment to policy change is of particular importance. In the U.S. tradition of civil-military relations, the military is expected to remain aloof from politics; unlike other bureaucratic actors, "the soldier is a fighter and an adviser, not a policy maker" (Owens, 2006, p. 77). Despite this ostensible separation from politics, like a cabinet secretary, the leadership in the military has a variety of means to impede the selection and implementation of a policy with which they disagree. Specifically, Peter Feaver notes that high-ranking military officials often employ more subtle means to shift the political climate in favor of their preferred policies; he terms these behaviors "shirking" actions (Feaver, 2005, pp. 128-129).

For example, military officials who dislike the president's policy can make an "end run" to the legislature, seeking to "mobilize sympathetic members of Congress" to challenge the president (Feaver, 2005, p. 131). Attempts to rally congressional support may also be coupled with direct appeals to the public, using congressional testimony or media appearances as a "bully pulpit" to advocate for a particular policy (Feaver, 2005, p. 130). Feaver notes that in this capacity, the military is not merely providing information and expertise to Congress and the public, but is instead engaging in "an attempt to overturn a civilian decision" (Feaver, 2005, p. 131).

In this view, the presence of divisions between the president and prominent stakeholders such as the secretary of defense, the secretary of state, and top military commanders can embolden critics outside of the administration. More precisely, a policy disagreement so sharp that it triggers a public dispute or a high-level resignation provides a dissident figure around which members of the public and Congress can unify. Overall, the presence of a credible, high-level dissident makes it more difficult for the president to build support for a change in policy. The inverse is also true; in implementing a controversial policy, unity inside the administration and among the military buttresses the president's credibility when trying to sway the public, as well as members of Congress.

Reshaping the Political Landscape

Overall, I argue that the ability of each president to implement a policy that was unpopular with some combination of the public, Congress, and members of his administration can be explained using insights from strategic framing theory. As defined by Robert Entman, one the most prominent scholars of framing theory, a frame simplifies a complex issue, by "selecting and highlighting some facets of events or issues, and making connections among them so as to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation, and/or solution" (Entman, 2010, p. 412). When deployed by elected officials, frames are an attempt to "mobilize voters behind their policies by encouraging them to think about those policies along particular lines" (Chong & Druckman, 2007, p. 106). In some cases, an executive's frame may be "hegemonic"; here, it stands as the unchallenged interpretation of a policy problem, and is adapted by other elites and transmitted to the public via the media. In other instances, however, there may be a "framing contest," with some elites promoting a counterframe; as defined by Entman, a counterframe "puts together a complete alternative narrative, a tale of problem, cause, remedy, and moral judgment possessing as much magnitude and resonance as the administration's [frame]" (Entman, 2010, p. 418).

For the purposes of this research, I define a frame as a justification for involvement in a war. In this context, a frame must explain why a particular war is worth fighting—whether it is to protect the security of the homeland, defend an ally, or forestall a humanitarian catastrophe. Stated simply, an elected official seeking to initiate a war must convince the public that the costs of fighting the war will be offset by its benefits. Reciprocally, I define a counterframe as an argument for withdrawal; here, opponents of the conflict outline an argument explaining why the war is not worth fighting. For example, proponents of an antiwar counterframe often assert that a war is simply unwinnable, and, thus, it is impudent to commit more resources to an unattainable goal.

During a protracted military conflict, public support for an initial frame is likely to slip. As the two case studies show, this will occur when the public believes that the war has become too costly, or when the public believes that the war is no longer winnable. At this point, a leader who favors continued involvement in the conflict could try to revive public support for the war; he can accomplish this by reframing the debate, and underscoring the high costs of withdrawal. For example, a leader will make loss aversion arguments, warning that a precipitous withdrawal will make the country appear weak, damaging its credibility with its allies, and inviting future challenges to its security. In essence, if the population has come to the conclusion that it is too costly to stay involved in a war, a leader must convince them that it is, in fact, too costly to leave.

Although I argue that leaders have the ability to shape public opinion and prolong an unpopular war, leaders will only succeed in reframing the debate if two additional conditions are met. First, to win public support for a new frame, a leader must be well liked by his target audience, whether this is the entire public, or members of his own party; second, a leader must face no unified domestic opposition that outlines a counterframe calling for withdrawal. In this section, I will briefly detail the theoretical unpinning of these two assumptions.

Presidents and the Power of Persuasion

In the American political system, the U.S. president has an inherent advantage in any framing contest. Specifically, when U.S. presidents want to build support for their policies, they rarely begin by lobbying individual members of Congress, and building an elite consensus. Instead, presidential scholar Samuel Kernell argues that presidents prefer to "go public," by making high-profile policy speeches; in these speeches, an executive urges the public to press their representatives to support his agenda.

Kernell notes, however, that only popular presidents succeed by "going public"; specifically, he argues that the public's response to presidential appeals is governed by "consistency theory," based on insights from social psychology. According to this theory, when individuals are exposed to new information, such as a speech from a political leader, they seek to integrate this information with their existing beliefs and values; as a result, "citizens . . . will be inclined to adopt a position consistent with their evaluation of [the] president" (Kernell, 1997, p. 188). "Specifically, when assessing a policy, individuals are likely to support a policy outlined by a president they support, and oppose a policy advocated by a president they dislike" (Kernell, 1997, pp. 188-189).

Elite Competition and Framing

A further qualification is in order; specifically, in examining the success of opinion leadership, it is necessary to consider that presidents are rarely the only elites taking a stand on a major policy issue. As such, it is necessary to predict how the public responds when they are faced with competing elite messages. Here, I rely on the notion of a "rational public," outlined by Benjamin Page and Robert Shapiro, to derive predictions about public opinion in a context where elites are divided.

In asserting that the public is rational, Page and Shapiro argue that public opinion behaves in predictable and sensible ways, the public is rational in that "it uses whatever information it is given in ways that are consistent with reasonable, efficient decision-making in light of existing beliefs and values" (Page & Shapiro, 1999, p. 108). They identify two sources of information crucial to shaping public preferences. The first type of information is reality as experienced by individual citizens; this refers to major events in the world, such as wars or terrorist attacks, which focus public attention, and challenge prevailing beliefs. They generally argue, however, that the public does not expend much energy gathering independent information about the costs and benefits of various policy options (Page & Shapiro, 1999, pp. 332-336, 339-341).

As a result, the second type of information, elite interpretations, is crucial to understanding public opinion. More precisely, Page and Shapiro note that when forming policy preferences, the public relies heavily on the information disseminated to them by elites; the public is most likely to listen to the views of major political figures and trusted members of the media. Page and Shapiro, however, make an important qualification regarding the persuasive abilities of leaders. Specifically, they note that although public opinion is malleable, "the presence of an opposition voice can help immunize the public against persuasive efforts by the president and administration" (Page & Shapiro, 1992, pp. 344, 381-382). Overall, this adds a qualification to the conclusion discussed above; specifically, a leader, no matter how popular, is far less likely to win public support for a war policy if his opposition outlines a counterframe that actively rebuts his claims about the benefits of that policy.

In sum, when faced with a war that has lost public support, a president who favors escalating that conflict must

attempt to reshape the policy debate. The most direct way to do this is by going public, and outlining a new frame underscoring the high costs of withdrawal. To sway public opinion, however, the leader must be well liked by his target audience, and face no other credible antiwar counterframes. To be considered credible, a counterframe must not only have a compelling logic but also be articulated by a respected, nationally known figure, or a major political party.

An unpopular president, however, can still manage to dominate the policy debate; although this leader lacks credibility with the public, and will be unlike to directly shape opinion, he can still attempt to divide and silence opponents who promote a counterframe. If a leader succeeds in doing this, his frame becomes the only prominent policy opinion and, in essence, wins by default. Only in cases where the president is unpopular, and challenged by an opposition that has steadfastly unified around a counterframe, would we expect to see the president concede defeat and abandon plans for an escalation.

In the following sections, I examine Bush's 2006 to 2007 deliberations over the Iraq War, and Obama's 2009 deliberations over the War in Afghanistan, assessing the degree to which each president succeeded in reframing the policy debate, and forestalling the emergence of a credible counterframe.

The Iraq War

Background on U.S. Involvement in Iraq, 2003 to 2006

Prior to the start of Operation Iraqi Freedom on March 19, 2003, the Bush administration engaged in an extensive campaign to rally domestic and international support for the war. The frame used to justify the 2003 invasion was based on the idea that Iraq posed a concrete threat to U.S. national security, with the president warning that Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein sought nuclear weapons, and could give these weapons to terrorists. In October of 2002, the U.S. Congress authorized the use of force against Iraq; in the House, the vote was 296 to 133 in favor, and in the Senate, the vote was 77 to 23 in favor (Defronzo, 2010, pp. 143-150). The public also supported the proposed regime change; according to a Gallup poll taken immediately before the start of the war, 66% of the public approved of the proposed invasion. Once the invasion commenced, support climbed to 76% ("Seventy-Two Percent," 2003).

Initially, the war appeared to be an overwhelming success. The Iraqi army quickly collapsed, and on April 10, Iraq's capital fell to U.S. forces. This rapid conventional victory, however, masked the deep sectarian divide in Iraq, and by 2006, the country was in the midst of a civil war, with Sunni and Shia militias vying for control of territory. At this point, there were approximately 1,000 insurgent attacks per week inside of Iraq, with a concomitant increase in fatalities among U.S. soldiers ("Iraq: Empirical Studies of Conflict," 2014).

Support for a continued U.S. presence in Iraq had been declining since 2004, and the spate of ethnic violence only increased the American public's dissatisfaction with the war. In a Pew poll taken in March of 2006, only 43% of the public believed that the war was going "very or fairly well" while 51% indicated that they believed the war was "not going well." In accordance with this, there was now majority support for a drawdown; in the same poll, 50% of the public favored "bring[ing] troops home as soon as possible" ("Public Attitudes Toward the War in Iraq: 2003-2008," 2008).

Despite the slide in public support, in the summer and fall of 2006, Bush and his advisors rejected calls by some members of the Congress to change strategy; administration officials argued that the situation in Iraq was actually improving, and cautioned that a premature exit would endanger U.S. security. For example, in a CNN interview on June 22, Vice President Dick Cheney offered an upbeat assessment, asserting that the United States had made "significant progress" in Iraq ("Cheney," 2006).

In contrast, in the months preceding the 2006 midterm election, congressional Democrats consistently emphasized the failure of U.S. strategy in Iraq and called for an end to the U.S. presence. Specifically, they began outlining a "civil war" counterframe, arguing that the war in Iraq was unwinnable, owing to the country's ethnic divisions, as well as the administration's failure to adequately plan for the postwar occupation. Typical of this was a July statement by Harry Reid, leader of the Senate Democrats. On the Senate floor, he noted that he had been "somewhat gingerly approaching this" but with the spike in violence could no longer deny that Iraq had devolved into civil war. As such, he asserted it was time for a serious policy debate (Bash, 2006). Reid was hardly the only critic. In an analysis of campaign advertising in competitive House and Senate races, David A. Dulio and Peter F. Trumbore found that the Iraq War was mentioned in 40.7% of campaign ads; this made it the second most frequent topic of issues ads, behind taxes (Dulio & Trumbore, 2009, p. 234). Democrats challenging Republican incumbents were especially likely to mention the Iraq War in their advertising (Dulio & Trumbore, 2009, p. 240).

The results of the 2006 election constituted a rejection of both the Iraq War and the president's policy. Democrats gained six seats in the Senate; all were captured from Republican incumbents. In the House, Democrats gained 30 seats, giving the party control of the chamber for the first time in 12 years (Jacobson, 2007, p. 1). After the election, Democratic congressional leaders publicly stated their intention to challenge the administration's Iraq policy. More specifically, in a victory speech on election night, Nancy Pelosi, the presumptive Speaker of the House, argued that the United States "couldn't continue down this catastrophic path" in Iraq. Reid made a similar point, noting, "There is in

the air a wind of change" ("Democrats Take Majority in House," 2006).

Compounding this, in December of 2006, the Iraq Study Group (ISG) released a report containing its much anticipated policy recommendations. The bipartisan group, co-chaired by James Baker, who served as secretary of state during the George H. W. Bush administration, and Lee Hamilton, a former Democratic congressman from Indiana, released a report describing the situation in Iraq as "grave and deteriorating." To avoid a disaster, the group recommended that the United States begin a gradual military draw-down, turning over combat responsibility to the Iraqis. In addition, the report's authors argued that the administration should pursue regional diplomacy, enlisting Iran and Syria to help quell the sectarian violence in Iraq. The report generated considerable media attention, and represented yet another challenge to the president's advocacy of an outright military victory (Tama, 2011).

Unbeknown to critics, however, the Bush administration was preparing to announce a major policy change, albeit one that would deepen rather than reduce U.S. involvement in Iraq. On January 10, 2007, Bush made a nationally televised speech in which he announced a plan to add 20,000 more soldiers to Iraq in an attempt to quell the ethnic violence plaguing the country. Although he acknowledged that current U.S. strategy in Iraq was failing, he employed a loss aversion argument, warning that if the United States were to prematurely withdraw from Iraq, the country would become a haven for al Qaeda ("Bush," 2007).

The Debate Over the Iraq Surge

At this point, the president faced three obstacles to implementing his new strategy. First, the public no longer accepted his framing of the Iraq war, and rejected the idea that the outcome of the conflict had an impact on U.S. security. Second, the Democratic Congress was hostile to the plan and began to unify around a counterframe challenging the administration's interpretation of the stakes in the conflict. Finally, there was divided opinion inside the administration and the military regarding the wisdom of modifying policy and implementing a counterinsurgency strategy. If this internal opposition spilled over into the public, this could serve to further discredit the Bush administration's approach.

Public Opinion

As noted, despite support for the initial invasion, by 2006, the public had a strongly unfavorable opinion of the war. As the public opposed the war, there was little support for the idea of sending additional soldiers to Iraq; in a poll in early January of 2007, only 36% of the public favored sending additional troops, while 61% opposed it. The partisan breakdown of the poll data showed that the bulk of support for a troop increase came from Republicans, with 67% of this group favoring an increase. In contrast, only 35% of Independents and 12% of Democrats supported a troop increase (Newport, 2007).

In fact, a majority of the public favored a withdrawal. In another poll, respondents were offered four options; 15% favored an immediate withdrawal from Iraq, while 39% favored withdrawing within 12 months. Another 31% favored withdrawing, but "[taking] as many years as needed," and 12% supported a troop increase (Newport, 2007).

Congressional Opposition

In addition to being an unpopular president, in 2007, Bush faced a hostile Congress, with both chambers controlled by an energized opposition. Although their majorities in the House and Senate technically gave the Democrats the ability to pass legislation curtailing funding for the war, the party lacked a veto-proof majority in the Senate; this meant that even if the Democrats were unified in opposing the war, the support of Senate Republicans was a prerequisite for the passage of any funding restriction. This offered the administration an opening; if Bush was able to maintain Republican support of the surge, he could thwart Democratic attempts to pass a funding cutoff.

The Internal Debate

The public and members of Congress were not the only groups eager to end the war. Inside the administration and the military, many officials were strongly wedded to the existing Iraq policy, colloquially referred to as the "Stand Up/Stand Down" approach; this policy was aimed at quickly minimizing the U.S. presence in Iraq. To understand the logic that guided the administration's Iraq policy until 2007, it is necessary to examine the vision of Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. Specifically, the 2003 invasion of Iraq was designed by Rumsfeld, and was predicated upon his belief that the U.S. military was in need of a fundamental transformation. Specially, he sought to develop a small, streamlined force that utilized advanced technology (Herspring, 2006, pp. 381-383). The Iraq War was to serve as a prototype of this; the initial ground invasion relied on only 145,000 troops, including those from allies. In addition, the war plan anticipated that after toppling Hussein's regime, the United States could rapidly reduce its presence, turning combat responsibilities over to the Iraqis (Ricks, 2006, pp. 116-117).

Even after the chaos in postwar Iraq, Rumsfeld, as well as U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) Commander General John Abizaid, and George Casey, commander of Multinational Forces in Iraq, remained committed to the original plans and resisted an increase in U.S. soldiers. In part, Casey and Abizaid agreed with Rumsfeld's assertion that it was necessary to remove soldiers, so as to motivate Iraqis to take responsibility for their own security. As such, in late 2005,

Casey offered an upbeat assessment of the current strategy, and presented the president with a plan to reduce the U.S. presence from its current 15 brigades to only five brigades by 2007 (Dyson, 2010-2011, pp. 563-565).

At the time, Bush appeared to be in full support of the Rumsfeld-Casey policy; in the 2005 "National Strategy for Victory in Iraq," the administration trumpeted its success in handing over territory to newly trained Iraqi forces. Moreover, he noted that this view was endorsed by the military, saying,

> If our commanders on the ground say we need more troops, I will send them. But our commanders tell me they have the number of troops they need to do their job. Sending more Americans would undermine our strategy of encouraging Iraqis to take the lead in this fight. (Dyson, 2010-2011, p. 561)

Despite the ostensible policy consensus, there were dissidents inside and outside the administration who began to promote the idea of a troop increase and a counterinsurgency strategy. The idea first emerged in 2006, when the administration was in the midst of a comprehensive, interagency review process of Iraq policy. Although most agencies endorsed the Rumsfeld-Casey plan, or suggested only moderate adjustments, several National Security Council (NSC) staffers proposed a radical shift in focus. Instead of accelerating troop withdrawals, they proposed a troop increase, and a new focus on population security (Dyson, 2010-2011, p. 561). A group of outside defense scholars, including Fredrick Kagan, Stephen Biddle, and Elliot Cohen, also advocated the idea of a counterinsurgency approach. In fact, in June of 2006, at the urging of the NSC, Cohen and Kagan met with the president to lobby for the policy. Finally, a group of military officers emerged as advocates of a surge; chief among these was General David Petraeus, an expert on counterinsurgency (Dyson, 2010-2011, p. 570).

Despite the fact that none of the proponents of the surge held cabinet rank, and in fact faced outright opposition from the secretary of defense, and skepticism from the secretary of state, they eventually managed to sway the president. In a December 11, 2006 meeting, the president effectively committed to a policy shift, based on the principles of the surge (Dyson, 2010-2011, p. 572). At this point, he not only faced the task of convincing members of his administration and the military to support the surge, but he also needed to persuade the public and the Democratic Congress of the wisdom of escalating a deeply unpopular war.

In light of this unfavorable political landscape, in the next section, I assess Bush's partially successful attempts to overcome these obstacles. His unpopularity made it impossible for him to reframe the policy debate and win public support for the surge; however, by unifying congressional Republicans and his administration around his policy, Bush did manage to discredit the Democratic proponents of a counterframe calling for withdrawal. Ultimately, this allowed him to weather public opposition, and implement the surge.

A Failure to Reframe

Bush's January address was clearly an attempt at "going public," with the president seeking to reframe the stakes in the war, and convince Americans that however costly the war, the costs of defeat were even higher. Specifically, Bush warned that if the United States were to withdraw, "Radical Islamic extremists would grow in strength and gain new recruits. They would be in a better position to topple moderate governments, create chaos in the region and use oil revenues to fund their ambitions" ("Bush," 2007).

As noted, before the speech, a majority of the public opposed the surge, with the only support coming from Republicans. After his speech, poll data were virtually unchanged; a Gallup poll found only 29% in favor of the proposed troop surge, and 58% opposed (Newport & Carroll, 2007). This outcome is unsurprising, since at the time he was attempting to sway public opinion, Bush was very unpopular; in an early January poll, his approval rating stood at 37%. Although the president remained popular with Republicans, enjoying a 79% approval rating with this group, Democrats and Independents had a highly negative view of Bush. Among Democrats, his approval rating was only 7%, and among Independents, 31% approved of him (Jones, 2007).

Democratic reaction to the speech was swift and overwhelmingly negative; many high-profile Democrats appeared to have unified around the "civil war" counterframe, arguing that it would be imprudent to commit any more resources to an unwinnable war. As such, they pressed the president to devise plans for an orderly withdrawal from the war, or face funding cutoffs.

Eliminating Internal Dissent

Even before the public announcement of the surge, the administration sought to present a unified front in support of the new policy; Bush's political advisors believed this would allow the president to shore up Republican support in Congress and ultimately stave off Democratic attempts to defund the surge. In fact, Bush's senior political advisor, Karl Rove, believed that if any generals were to resign in protest of the surge, this would have triggered a rebellion inside the Republican Party and the formation of a bipartisan antiwar alliance in Congress (Feaver, 2011, pp. 120-122).

To forestall this outcome, the president achieved unity through both persuasion and personnel shakeups. Most basically, even before his decision to adopt a counterinsurgency strategy, the president had replaced one of its main opponents, Rumsfeld. Although Bush announced Rumsfeld's resignation the day after the midterm elections, the decision had been in the works for several months, and thus was not a direct response to the Democratic sweep (Woodward, 2008, p. 196). Nonetheless, his resignation allowed Bush to appoint Robert Gates as the new secretary of defense; Gates was a politically popular veteran of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and NSC, and also a supporter of the surge (Woodward,

2008, pp. 201-203). In addition, Secretary of State Rice, who had initially been skeptical of the surge, decided to fully endorse it once it had the support of both Gates and Ray Odernio, the commander of the Multinational Corps in Iraq (Rice, 2011, pp. 538-545).

Subsequently, Bush also replaced surge skeptics inside the military, namely Casey and Abizaid. By December of 2006, both men had indicated to the president that they doubted the efficacy of adding more U.S. soldiers. The administration sought to replace them with surge proponents, but do so with minimal disruption, thus avoiding the appearance of a division between the White House and the military. As such, Bush promoted Casey to the position of Amy Chief of Staff; he was then replaced with Petraeus, who endorsed the surge, and who was also enormously popular with the public. Similarly, Abizaid was slated to retire in early 2007, and at that point, the president replaced him with Admiral William J. Fallon, who was amenable to the administration's approach (Wood, 2007). As a result of these personnel changes, the administration was able to present the policy as a sound strategy, endorsed by all the principals, as well as top military commanders.

Rallying Republican Support

During the public debate over the funding of the surge, the Bush administration expected opposition not only from Democrats, but also from many Republicans in Congress who feared that the party's future electoral prospects were being harmed by their association with an increasingly unpopular war. In this period, Republicans aired these concerns about the administration's Iraq strategy in private, as well as in the media. During an early 2007 meeting with Bush and Rice, a member of the Grand Old Party (GOP) leadership warned that by pushing an unpopular troop increase, the administration was "endangering the future of the Republican Party" (Rice, 2011, p. 590). In addition, after the announcement of the surge, several Republican senators, including Chuck Hagel of Nebraska, Susan Collins of Maine, Norm Coleman of Minnesota, Gordon Smith of Oregon, and John Warner of Virginia publicly stated that that were inclined to oppose the plan (Morgan, 2007; Weisman, 2007b).

Other top Republicans were more equivocal, refusing to rebuke the president but expressing the need for congressional oversight. For example, in January, House Minority Leader John Boehner stated, "I support the president's plan . . . but we have a duty to candidly and honestly assess whether the new strategy will be effective and ultimately successful" (Weisman, 2007a).

To unify congressional Republicans in support of the surge, and also fracture the Democratic opposition, the administration pursued a two-pronged approach. First, Bush engaged in an intensive persuasion campaign to win over Republicans who were skeptical of the surge, using many of the same arguments he deployed in his nationally televised address. In addition, the president tasked some of the well-respected members of his national security team with persuading individual members of Congress; many of these individuals had far greater credibility with the Republican Congress than did the president. Specifically, Bush requested that Rice cancel her global travel plans so that she and Gates could lobby reluctant members of the Republican caucus. As Bush explained, he needed his advisors on Capitol Hill "defending the policy and buying time" (Rice, 2011, p. 590). In addition, Petraeus made frequent appearances before Congress and in the political media, becoming the military "face" of the surge; this was crucial, as he was enormously popular with Republicans, commanding a 67% approval rating in the party in an August 2007 poll (Carroll, 2007).

In his memoir, Gates describes the strategic nature of the administration's appeals to Republicans who were wavering on the surge. First, the administration publicly suggested the surge would be a short-term approach, and asserted that the United States could possibly begin a drawdown at the end of 2007; privately, however, Bush and his advisors deemed this timetable improbable. Second, the administration promised that it would engage in a comprehensive review of the surge in September of 2007, allowing Republicans the opportunity to reassess their support of the strategy. Finally, Bush and his advisors elected to treat all Republican criticism of the administration's Iraq policy respectfully, acknowledging that the president shared Congress's concerns about the ability of the Iraqi government to be a reliable partner (Gates, 2014, pp. 50-52).

Dividing and Discrediting Antiwar Democrats

In addition to wooing Republicans in support of the surge, the second part of the administration's approach to Congress involved a concerted campaign to rebut the emergent "civil war" counterframe in the Democratic Party. This counterframe was predicated on the idea that however well intended U.S. efforts in Iraq may have been, it was impossible to build a democracy in a war-torn country with unreliable leadership.

In response, the president, members of his cabinet, and the Republican leadership in Congress attempted to silence Democratic opponents by portraying attempts to stop the surge as irresponsible, charging that funding cutoffs would harm the soldiers who were already deployed to Iraq. Overall, this rhetorical move was designed to fracture the seemingly unified Democratic opposition to the surge, and ultimately prevent a majority in either chamber from coalescing in support of binding restrictions on the president's ability to fund the war. For example, in early February, during debate over a non-binding, anti-surge resolution sponsored by Republican John Warner and Democrat Carl Levin, Gates asserted that if the Democrats did not support the surge, they would "embolden the enemy" to step up attacks (Hill, 2010, pp. 69-72).

Prominent Congress Republicans joined the administration in echoing this sentiment. Arizona Senator John McCain argued that any funding bill that contained benchmarks for withdrawal was a "date for certain surrender act" while his fellow Arizona Senator John Kyle argued, "the worst thing would be for the Senate to by 60 votes to express disapproval of a mission we are sending people to lay their lives down for" (Hill, 2010, pp. 69-72). In addition, according to a report in the *Washington Post*, House Republicans went so far as to create a "rapid response team" to counter anti-surge statements by Democrats. This team was equipped with data and talking points to provide to the media, as well as "visual aids" to use for floor speeches (Layton & Weisman, 2007). Public opinion polls indicated that although the public opposed the war, they were receptive to the Republican argument that Democrats were precipitously conceding defeat. Specifically, a Gallup poll taken in July found that by a 55 to 40 margin, the public wanted Congress to wait until Petraeus's September progress report before trying to develop an exit strategy (Newport, Jones, & Carroll, 2007).

Overall, although the 110th Congress succeeded in passing several symbolic measures opposing the surge, a combination of Republican unity and Democratic disunity prevented Congress from limiting the president's ability to implement and fund the surge. First, in February, Reid attempted to open debate in the Senate on the Warner-Levin resolution, but this was successfully blocked by several Republican filibusters over a period of two and half weeks. Although all Senate Democrats voted in favor of ending the filibuster and opening debate, only seven Republicans joined them. When Reid attempted to reintroduce the resolution, Minority Leader Mitch McConnell insisted that any further debate on the Warner-Levin resolution be accompanied by a debate on two pro-surge resolutions. At this point, recognizing that he would fall short of the 60-vote threshold, Reid declined to reintroduce the resolution ("GOP Blocks Senate Debate on Iraq Resolution," 2007).

In March, Senate Republicans also successfully defeated a joint resolution calling for the "redeployment" of U.S. troops from Iraq ("S J Res 9," 2007). Prior to the debate, the administration released a statement charging that the measure would "hobble American commanders in the field" (Toner & Zeleny, 2007). Ultimately, the resolution garnered 48 votes in favor, only one of which came from a Republican Senator. In total, 50 Senators voted against the proposal, including an Independent and two Democrats (Branigin, 2007).

In the House, without the possibility of a filibuster, the Democratic majority was able to pass a non-binding resolution opposing the surge; the measure, sponsored by Missouri Democrat Ike Skelton, passed on February 16, by a vote of 246 to 182. Only two House Democrats voted against the resolution, while 17 House Republicans joined in support. Boehner, now a vocal supporter of the surge, framed the resolution as a sign of weakness, arguing that it was "the first step

down a very treacherous path, a path that if followed will endanger Americans for decades to come" (Weisman, 2007a).

Subsequently, congressional Democrats used a debate over a supplemental war-funding bill to make their most direct challenge to the troop surge. In mid-March, on a virtual party-line vote, both the House and the Senate passed a spending bill that funded the war but called for a withdrawal of U.S. soldiers to begin in October of 2007 (Baker & Murray, 2007). Specifically, in the House, the vote was 218 to 212, with only two Republicans voting in favor; in the Senate, the vote was 51 to 46, with one Independent and two Republicans joining 48 Democrats ("President Prevails on Iraq War Policy," 2008).

On May 1, Bush vetoed the spending bill. By a vote of 222 to 203, the House failed to override the president's veto, with only two Republicans opposing the White House ("House Fails to Override Bush Veto of Iraq War Spending Bill," 2007). Later that month, congressional Democrats declined to mount another high-risk challenge to the surge, and authored another funding bill with no mention of a withdrawal timetable. Bush signed this version on May 25, 2007 ("H.R. 2206-U.S.," 2007). In accordance with the wishes of many GOP senators, the funding request did require the Iraqis to meet 18 political, economic, and military benchmarks; the benchmarks, however, were flexible, and could be waived by the president ("House Passes New War Funding Measure," 2007).

During the following months, although Democrats remained vocally opposed to the surge, using frequent hearings to challenge the president and his national security team, Democrats never mounted another sustained challenge to Bush's Iraq policy. Notably, their public statements indicated that the Republicans had succeed in redefining the terms of the debate, making opposition to the surge synonymous with harming the troops. For example, then-Senator Barack Obama, a vocal opponent of the war, was hesitant to support future funding restrictions, noting that no one in the Party "wants to play chicken with our troops" ("Congress Will Fund Iraq War If Bush Uses Veto," 2007). Another outspoken critic of the war, Democrat Carl Levin, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, supported funding of the surge; as he explained, "I don't want to send a message that we are not going to provide funding for the troops" (Hulse & Zeleny, 2007).

Conclusion on Iraq

Bush's ability to escalate a deeply unpopular war in the face of a Congress controlled by antiwar Democrats is puzzling. This outcome, however, is explicable when looking at Bush's ability to shift the political dynamics in his favor. Consistent with the expectations of framing theory, Bush's unpopularity made it impossible for him to reframe the debate, and convince a majority of the public that a withdrawal from Iraq would have dire national security consequences.

Absent this public support, the president worked assiduously to unify his administration, so that he could discredit congressional Democrats promoting a counterframe calling for a withdrawal. To accomplish this, the president pursued a two-part approach. First, he deployed credible figures such as Petraeus, Rice, and Gates to persuade congressional Republicans to resist legislative efforts to defund the surge. This, in turn, allowed him to enlist the same reluctant members of the Congress to assist his administration in discrediting and dividing the antiwar Democrats. Specifically, Republican leaders generally bypassed a substantive discussion of war policy, and instead charged that Democratic attempts to place conditions on war funding would serve to harm American soldiers in combat, and doom the mission. This was a potent charge, and by mid-2008, Democrats abandoned legislative attempts to end the war. In essence, skittish congressional Democrats forfeited participation in the framing contest, allowing Bush to control the policy debate.

The War in Afghanistan

During the period of 2003 to 2007, the debate over the War in Afghanistan was supplanted by debates over the War in Iraq. Owing to the 2008 presidential election, however, Afghanistan again became a central focus of political debate. At this point, the Democratic candidate, Barack Obama, argued that if elected, he would devote more resources to the war in Afghanistan. He criticized the Bush administration's failure to focus on that conflict, arguing, "It is unacceptable that almost seven years after nearly 3,000 Americans were killed on our soil, the terrorists who attacked us on 9/11 are still at large" ("Obama's Remarks on Iraq and Afghanistan," 2008). During a campaign visit to Afghanistan, Obama informed General McKiernan, commander of International Security Assistance Forces in Afghanistan, that as president, he would provide him with "the troops he needed" (Hastings, 2012, p. 10).

In accordance with his campaign promise, once in office, Obama commenced a series of reviews of war policy. In February of 2009, after an initial round of reviews, the president decided to send 17,000 additional soldiers to Afghanistan; this reflected the fulfillment of a policy request the military had made during the Bush administration (Hastings, 2012, p. 22). Later, at a March 27, 2009 North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) summit, Obama announced his intention to add 4,000 additional U.S. soldiers, to focus on training the Afghan army. This brought the total number of U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan to 32,000 (Alter, 2010, p. 133).

These decisions, however, represented the beginning, not the end, of the administration's review of Afghan policy. After his March decision to commit additional soldiers, Obama indicated that he wanted to revisit this decision after the Afghan elections in the fall. In fact, the president stated that he wanted to consider the possibility of reducing the U.S. presence (Alter, 2010, p. 133).

The Debate Over the Surge

In this section, I detail the public and private debate over policy that took place in the spring, summer, and fall of 2009. At this point, although there was general—albeit tepid—support among the public for a troop increase, the president encountered resistance from key members of his own administration, as well as the members of the Democratic Congress, who favored ending the war. Compounding this, the president was facing pressure from hawks inside and outside of his administration to defer to the military and announce a major escalation of the war. Overall, I examine how Obama managed to reframe the debate, levering his popularity with the public to silence surge critics on both the left and the right.

Public Opinion

Unlike the Iraq War, support for the War in Afghanistan as an act of self-defense had proved durable for more than seven years; by mid-2009, however, there was an uptick in opposition to the war. More precisely, by the fall, the public appeared to be evenly divided between those who favored increasing and those who favored decreasing the number of soldiers in Afghanistan. This was much in evidence in a late September Gallup poll; in the poll, 50% of respondents opposed sending more soldiers to Afghanistan, while 41% supported a surge. The remaining 9% had no opinion. As Gallup noted, the poll revealed "an unusual set of political cross-currents," since support for a troop surge came primarily from Republicans. The poll showed that 63% of Republicans supported a possible surge; in contrast, only 30% of Democrats and 38% of Independents favored that policy (Newport, 2009a).

Congressional Attitudes

In contrast to Bush, who was facing bipartisan pressure to scale down U.S. involvement in Iraq, Obama was facing countervailing pressures: the president was cognizant that members of his own party were hesitant about any further escalation of the war. During one strategy meeting, Obama noted that it would be difficult to gain support from the Democratic Congress, unless he was able to include a withdrawal timetable in the plan (Woodward, 2010, p. 232). Obama received a preview of this dissatisfaction in April of 2009 when he requested $83 billion in supplemental appropriations for the war. After vigorous debate, congressional Democrats supported his request; however, the man responsible for shepherding the bill through the House, David Obey, the chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, informed the president that he was unwilling to aid him in securing any further war funding (Alter, 2010, pp. 365-366).

During the following months, top Democrats confirmed their opposition to any escalation of the war. During the fall,

Speaker Pelosi noted that there was "serious unrest" among Democrats about the war in Afghanistan (Woodward, 2010, p. 307). Specifically, many congressional Democrats were concerned about the dependability of the Karzai government in Afghanistan. As Pelosi told reporters, "I don't think there is a great deal of support for sending more troops to Afghanistan in the country or in Congress" (Schmitt & Sanger, 2009). Antiwar Congressman John Murtha echoed these views; in November 2009, he noted that any spending bill that called for an increased troop presence in Afghanistan would be rejected by a majority of Democrats. He argued that the passage of such a bill "depends on the Republicans" (Drew, 2009).

Conversely, many Republican members of Congress continued to strongly support the war, and pressured Obama to make an unqualified commitment to securing victory. For example, Senator Lindsey Graham warned Obama that although Senate Republicans would support a troop increase, a plan that included a timeline for withdrawal would be met with disapproval inside the party (Woodward, 2010, p. 336). Other hawks, including McCain and Independent Connecticut Senator Joseph Lieberman, preemptively praised the president for his decision to follow military recommendations and increase the troop presence in Afghanistan (Alter, 2010, p. 381).

Conflict Inside the Administration

Perhaps the most contentious part of the policy debate occurred within the administration. During the course of the spring and fall policy review, two distinct factions emerged, advocating diametrically opposed policy options.

The first group, which one journalist dubbed "Team Pentagon," was comprised of Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen, and Stanley McChrystal, the newly appointed commander of the International Security Assistance Forces. This group proceeded from the assumption that the United States' goal in Afghanistan was not only to target members of al Qaeda but also defeat the Taliban and build a stable Afghanistan. In accordance with this, these officials favored a comprehensive, countrywide counterinsurgency strategy, requiring a massive new commitment of troops (Alter, 2010, pp. 363-394; Hastings, 2012, pp. 129-136). Moreover, members of this group were skeptical about announcing a timeline for the surge, instead preferring that any U.S. withdrawals be tied to conditions on the ground (Woodward, 2010, pp. 294, 299).

Another group was centered around Vice President Joe Biden and was comprised of many of Obama's political advisors, including Rahm Emanuel and David Axelrod. Top diplomats Richard Holbrook, the U.S. special envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, and Karl Eikenberry, U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan, also shared these views. This group was concerned about the capacity of the Karzai government, and remained skeptical about the possibility of political progress in Afghanistan; as such, they thought the United States should confine itself to a limited, counterterrorism mission with a strict timeline for withdrawals. In this view, the United States' goal was to kill members of al Qaeda, not eradicate the Taliban (Alter, 2010, pp. 363-394; Hastings, 2012, pp. 129-136).

In addition, these individuals did not believe that the president could maintain domestic support for an escalation of the war. During a meeting on June 9, Biden and Emanuel questioned whether Democrats would support an extension of the U.S. mission in Afghanistan (Gates, 2014, p. 349). Again, during a meeting on August 4, Emanuel cautioned that the only reason the congressional Democrats continued to fund the war was due to personal respect for the president; he believed that future support was not guaranteed (Gates, 2014, p. 357).

Initially, the outcome of the debate seemed a forgone conclusion, as Obama was predisposed to agree with the views of the vice president. As he noted at one point, unlike Bush, he was disinclined to reflexively support the military's recommendations for an escalation, arguing, "My job was to slow things down" (Alter, 2010, p. 373). In accordance with this, in the summer of 2009, the president dispatched National Security Adviser Jim Jones to Afghanistan, to inform McChrystal that the administration opposed adding any more troops. In Obama's view, the 21,000 already added would be sufficient to combat the resurgent Taliban (Hastings, 2012, p. 82).

Despite the president's ostensible decision, the hawks in the administration were working to gradually push the president toward the more expansive counterinsurgency strategy they favored. For example, in a mid-July "Strategic Implementation Plan," the president wanted the draft to indicate that the United States' goal in Afghanistan was to "disrupt" the Taliban. Jones, Mullen, and Gates, however, changed the wording so that the plan called on the United States to "defeat" the Taliban (Broadwell & Loeb, 2012, p. 115).

McChrystal was also lobbying for a similar plan; in August, as requested by the president, he submitted a set of policy recommendations to Gates. Overall, the options outlined by McChrystal—all of which involved a troop increase—were a rebuke to the approach favored by Biden. The general pressed Obama to adopt a comprehensive political and military strategy involving nation building and extensive counterinsurgency operations. To accomplish this, McChrystal suggested adding 80,000 more soldiers, with a commitment of as long as a decade (Alter, 2010 p. 372). Obama indicated that, increasingly, he felt trapped by the military, whose leaders structured the policy debate around the number of troops to add, rather than considering the more fundamental question of whether or not the United States should add troops at all. After reviewing the three surge options proposed by the military, Obama told the Joint

Chiefs, "I have one option, that was framed as three options . . . I want real options" (Woodward, 2010, pp. 257-258).

This debate between the White House and Team Pentagon soon became public, with McChrystal engaging in various types of shirking, designed to curry public and congressional support for his approach. The first signs of friction between the president and McChrystal emerged on September 21, when McChrystal's Afghanistan strategy memo was leaked to the *Washington Post*; the memo warned that Obama's failure to drastically increase the number of soldiers would result in a "mission failure" (Hastings, 2012, p. 130). In addition, during a subsequent interview on *60 Minutes*, McChrystal insinuated that the new president was ignoring him; he stated that since assuming command of the War in Afghanistan, Obama had only spoken to him once (Hastings, 2012, p. 130).

McChrystal's most direct public advocacy for counterinsurgency came on October 1, when he castigated the Biden approach during a speech at the Strategic Studies Institute in London. At this time, McChrystal argued that a plan focused solely on counterterrorism and not counterinsurgency was "short sighted." He alleged that adopting the Biden approach would turn Afghanistan into "Chaosistan" (Hastings, 2012, p. 53). Even more telling, when asked if he could support a presidential decision to adopt a counterterrorism approach, McChrystal replied, "The short, glib answer is no" (Alter, 2010, p. 378).

Although the approach favored by McChrystal is not technically a counterframe, as he and the hawks in the administration did not advocate for a withdrawal, the public articulation of Pentagon's preferred policy posed a serious challenge to the president's ability to reframe the debate. Specifically, the hawks' call for a comprehensive counterinsurgency policy made the president's approach appear to be a thoroughly political policy; in essence, McChrystal's criticism implied that Obama favored a set of half-measures that would ultimately fail to combat a resurgent al Qaeda. If this narrative were to gain traction, it would severely undercut Obama's ability to garner Republican support for a more modest surge proposal.

Overcoming Policy Obstacles

In the following sections, I explain how Obama was able to implement a hybrid plan that failed to fully please either of the factions inside and outside his administration. As noted, Obama faced a particularly challenging set of political pressures. On one hand, the hawkish faction, favoring a large troop increase, was well represented inside his administration; Obama also had to contend with an assertive Afghanistan commander who made his disagreements with the president public. On the other hand, the president also faced significant pressure to scale down U.S. objectives in Afghanistan; both Democratic voters and members of Congress favored a withdrawal, rather than an escalation.

Obama was able to execute a complex political balancing act, announcing a plan that incorporated both hawkish and dovish preferences, and ultimately building sufficient public and elite support for this policy. Specifically, I find that even before the announcement of the policy, the administration expended considerable effort to create support for his surge inside his administration and within the military establishment. This required him to silence the hawkish faction inside his administration, by privately asserting his authority, and tamping down on public challenges to his policy.

Moreover, to win over reluctant Democrats, Obama framed the surge as necessary for national security, by outlining limited, short-term goals. This, combined with Obama's ability to rally public support for the surge, allowed him to implement a policy that had been deeply unpopular within his party.

Silencing the Hawks

The first way Obama quelled dissent was by privately rebuking Pentagon officials and military officers who attempted to use leaks and public statements to circumvent the internal debate and limit the president's options. After McChrystal's intemperate remarks about the "Biden Plan," during his London speech, the president began to tamp down on the Pentagon's activism. According to Gates, Obama suspected that Petraeus, McMullan, and McChrystal had orchestrated a public campaign to rally congressional support for a larger troop commitment (Gates, 2014, p. 369).

Obama eventually met privately with McChrystal; he was convinced that McChrystal had become a pawn in the policy debate, and had made his statements at the behest of "Team Pentagon" (Alter, 2010, pp. 378-379; Gates, 2014, pp. 381-382). In accordance with this, during the first week of October, the president summoned Gates and Mullen to his office for a reprimand. Obama indicated to the two men that he was "exceedingly unhappy" that the debate had spilled into the public domain, and accused them of being "disrespectful of the process." This meeting seemed to quell the two men's public activism; Mullen described himself as "chagrined," and both men pledged to support the president's final decision. Publicly, in an October 5 address, Gates stated that although military advice was crucial, it should be delivered to the president "candidly but privately" (Alter, 2010, pp. 379-380).

Moreover, after making his decision, the president sought to ensure that there would be no defections from this policy. To this end, he had the military and civilian principals endorse a "terms sheet." This document stated, "This approach is not a fully resourced counterinsurgency or nation building, but a narrower approach . . .." This confidential document also reaffirmed Obama's intention to begin withdrawing forces in July 2011. At the president's insistence, McChrystal, Petraeus, Mullen, and Gates endorsed it (Broadwell & Loeb, 2012, p. 119). Publicly, in testimony

before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, both McChrystal and Petraeus endorsed and defended Obama's plan (Jaffe & Kessler, 2009; Lander, 2009). The president, however, had made a concession to this group. Privately, he indicated that although a firm withdrawal date was key to winning Democratic support for a surge, at the request of Gates, in his speech, he indicated that withdrawals would be linked to "conditions on the ground." This ambiguous statement left open the possibility of a U.S. military presence past the July 2011 drawdown date (Woodward, 2010, p. 331).

Although the president did manage to win McChrystal's support for the surge decision, in July of 2010, the general resumed his political activism. Specifically, in an interview in *Rolling Stone*, McChrystal emphasized the continuing tension between himself and Obama and derided various members of the national security team. In response, Obama relieved McChrystal of duty, replacing him with Petraeus (Ulrich, 2011).

Winning Over "Team Biden"

To placate the surge skeptics inside his administration, the president's plan did contain significant concessions to Biden and the proponents of a more limited effort in Afghanistan. Specifically, in accordance with the wishes of the Biden group, the final plan contained a drawdown date of July 2011; to Democrats, this indicated that the president did not support an open-ended commitment to rebuilding Afghanistan.

Winning the support of Biden was key, as this aided the president in convincing congressional Democrats to refrain from publicly opposing the surge. Specifically, the day before Obama's speech, he and Biden met with congressional leaders to explain the policy decision. Democrats were not pleased with a plan that deepened the U.S. commitment; however, as the third ranking House Democrat Jim Clyburn noted, although the meeting was "civil and somber," there was little outright opposition to the plan (Newton-Small, 2009). Notably, during the meeting, Biden pledged his support for the president's plan, stating, "Just so everyone knows, I'm not for drawing down the troops" (Wolffe, 2010, pp. 243-244).

A Successful Reframe

By the time the president publicly announced the policy change, he had created virtually ideal conditions for shaping public opinion. As described above, the president successfully curbed attempts by hawks in the administration and military to make an "end run" to Congress and rally Republican support for a more open-ended commitment to Afghanistan. Moreover, the surge skeptics inside the administration publicly backed the president, leaving Democrats in Congress with no high-level figure around which to rally in opposition to the president's proposal.

Subsequently in his speech on December 10, the president outlined plans to send 30,000 additional troops to Afghanistan, to focus on counterinsurgency. The president made clear, however, that the military surge was only one aspect of his new Afghan policy. Obama also proposed a "civilian surge," promising the Afghan government additional funding in return for rooting out corruption and practicing good governance. In addition, he made a renewed commitment to working with the government of Pakistan to combat a common enemy. In making the case for the deepened commitment, Obama echoed Bush's loss aversion arguments from 2007; specifically, the president identified Afghanistan as the "epicenter of violent extremism practiced by al Qaeda," and warned, "the danger will only grow if the region slides backwards, and al Qaeda can operate with impunity" ("Remarks by the President," 2009).

Notably, in the speech, Obama explicitly rejected nation building as the goal of the United States; in his address, he argued that rebuilding Afghanistan is "beyond what we can achieve at a reasonable cost" (Mann, 2012, p. 139). The president reiterated that although he was increasing the American presence in Afghanistan, the commitment was not open-ended. To this end, Obama asserted, "The days of providing a blank check [to the Karzai government] are over" ("Remarks by the President," 2009).

This decision to publicly focus on the limited nature of the mission was a deliberate political maneuver designed to secure Democratic support. More precisely, during the final stages of the policy debate, Obama and his advisors considered how to best frame the surge. They considered—and rejected—the idea that the president should focus on humanitarian concerns, emphasizing the development of an impoverished country and the advancement of women's rights. Ultimately, the president and his advisers feared this would risk blurring the limited mission in Afghanistan that enjoyed support from his base (Mann, 2012, pp. 137-138).

The speech succeeded in winning over Democrats; this stemmed from the fact that even though his overall approval rating was lagging, Obama remained extremely popular with members of his own party. As such, they were receptive to the arguments in his December speech, and there was a discernible shift in opinion after the speech. In a poll taken on December 2, 2009, 51% of the public supported Obama's plan, while 40% opposed it. Importantly, a partisan breakdown of the poll data showed that the plan enjoyed the support of 58% of Democratic respondents; this was a drastic change from a late-November Gallup poll, which found only 27% of Democrats endorsing an increase (Newport, 2009b). In addition, 45% of Independents and 55% of Republicans endorsed the plan Obama outlined in the speech. Notably, among the Republicans opposing the plan, most supported the troop increase but disapproved of the July 2011 drawdown date (Newport, 2009c).

Congress's Reaction

Although the speech did not receive glowing praise from Democrats, it largely succeeded in staving off active opposition.

Afterward, Pelosi appeared satisfied; in a statement, she argued that Obama had "articulated a way out of this war." She added, "The President has offered President Karzai a chance to prove that he is a reliable partner" ("Pelosi Statement on President Obama's Speech on Afghanistan," 2009). Subsequently, in February of 2010, the President requested $31.5 billion in funds to pay for the troop increase. The funding request, which was part of the 2010 Supplemental Appropriations Act, passed Congress on July 27 ("H.R. 4899 (111th)," 2010). During the four month debate over the measure, some Democratic doves pushed for the addition of a timetable with a more rapid withdraw deadline. Specifically, the Senate rejected an amendment from Russ Feingold, an antiwar Wisconsin Democrat, which would have required the president to make a "plan for the safe, orderly, and expeditious redeployment" of U.S. soldiers; only 18 senators supported the policy ("S Amdt 4204," 2010). The House rejected two similar Democratic amendments that sought to incorporate shorter timelines into the funding bill (Belasco, 2011, p. 42). Overall, despite considerable Democratic skepticism about the war in Afghanistan, the president managed to prevent an open challenge to his policy among members of his own party.

Conclusion on Afghanistan

After Obama's December 2009 address on Afghanistan, many commentators derided it as a thoroughly "political" plan that was designed to appease his party rather than achieve success in Afghanistan. Whatever the motives behind Obama's plan, implementing it still required considerable presidential leadership. In reframing the debate, the president's greatest challenge was in preventing competing policy proposals from gaining political traction, and ensuring that his frame was hegemonic. First, this required preventing the formation of an alliance between congressional hawks and "Team Pentagon" in favor of a broader military mission. In addition, the president had to craft his policy in a way that made it palatable to surge skeptics inside his administration, as well as congressional Democrats. As a result, the president was able to articulate his policy without having to contend with a credible antiwar counterframe.

In advocating for the Afghan surge, Obama enjoyed a distinct advantage over Bush; more precisely, his popularity with members of the Democratic Party gave his frame far more credibility, and ultimately his speech succeeded in reframing the debate and rallying public support for his plan. Although many Democratic members of Congress remained concerned with the policy, they abandoned their public advocacy for policy change; absent a coherent antiwar counterframe with a credible advocate, Obama's plan becomes the only viable option.

Conclusion

Since the beginning of the War on Terror in 2001, scholars have raised concerns about a "new" imperial presidency, suggesting that in the realm of foreign affairs, the executive's influence is now so great that he is able to trample on congressional prerogatives and ignore public opinion. This research, however, paints a different picture of presidential power. Specifically, I find that although a president may be able to implement a policy that is unpopular with the public and opposed by members of Congress, the executive is able to do so only after considerable political maneuvering. Framing theory provides a way to analyze this process, and helps explain how two presidents, faced with different political landscapes, managed a similar feat.

More specifically, framing theory expects that a popular president, such as Obama, should be able to sway public opinion in favor of his new frame. During the 2009 debate over the War in Afghanistan, however, Obama also had to contend with emergent challenges to his reframe, in the form of criticism from hawks seeking an outright military victory, as well as Democratic doves whose frustration with the Afghan government could have resulted in the party unifying around an antiwar counterframe. Silencing these critics was another key to his success.

In attempting to rally support for the Iraq surge in 2007, Bush faced a far more precarious political situation. He was not only unpopular, but faced an emergent, credible counterframe promoted by congressional Democrats. His unexpected success in convincing Congress to fund his surge can be explained by his ability to undercut this Democratic counterframe.

One theme emerging from the case studies was the highly partisan nature of the policy debates. More specifically, both wars, although popular at their onset, eventually split the American political spectrum, with those on the right generally favoring robust military action and those on the left expressing skepticism about deepening American involvement overseas. In an era of increasing partisan polarization in Congress, as well as among the public, we should expect more such contentious foreign policy debates, whether they be over military interventions, treaty ratifications, or foreign aid requests. Ultimately, the outcome of these deliberations will depend upon the degree to which the president succeeds in controlling the framing of the issue.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

Funding

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