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To cite this article: Şule Yaylacı & Onur Bakiner (2019): Casualties and Support for Violent Conflict in Civil Wars, Civil Wars, DOI: [10.1080/13698249.2018.1558532](https://doi.org/10.1080/13698249.2018.1558532)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13698249.2018.1558532>



Published online: 10 Jan 2019.



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Casualties and Support for Violent Conflict in Civil Wars

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ABSTRACT

The casualty effect is a widely studied explanation of public support for war in the context of overseas military operations, yet work on the effect of casualties on support for intrastate war is scant. This paper examines the impact of local casualties on support for using military action as a conflict resolution method for intrastate war, using data from two public opinion surveys, collected in Turkey in the absence and presence of large-scale violence, and an original dataset for the local casualties. We find that local-level casualties on average increase the support for military action in ethnic wars.

Introduction

Scholarship on international war and public opinion has long disputed the extent to which battlefield casualties shape individual citizens' views on an ongoing military intervention, though a parallel discussion of similar scale is deficient in the literature on public opinion toward intrastate war. Using two nearly identical public opinion surveys that gauged the Turkish public's support for the military solution (i.e., support for violent counterinsurgency methods)¹ against the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK hereafter) in the absence (2014) and presence (2015) of large-scale violence, this paper investigates the impact of battlefield casualties on public support for military action in an ongoing ethnic intrastate war.²

The effect of casualties on the public's support for war has been theorised and assessed mostly in the context of US overseas military operations since the Vietnam War, and to a lesser extent on studies of the Israel-Palestine conflict (Mueller 1973, Gartner *et al.* 1997, Gartner and Segura 1998, Feaver and Gelpi 2004, Althaus *et al.* 2012, Kriner and Shen 2014). Recently, empirical evidence from other contexts that focus more on public opinion during internal armed conflict has started to develop (Gerber and Mendelson 2008,

Kıbrıs 2011, Jaeger *et al.* 2012, Beber *et al.* 2014, Canetti *et al.* 2017, Lacina 2016). Our paper contributes to this rather nascent literature.

Our theoretical framework revises the scholarship on the US with respect to the direction of the casualty effect and builds on the growing literature on public opinion in intrastate war. The general finding of the US literature is that battlefield casualties in overseas military operations produce somewhere between zero and negative effect on the public's support for war. Instead, we argue that increasing casualties may lead to increasing support for war in the context of internal armed conflict, by pivoting our theory around the perception of casualties as investment. Our findings also go against the conventional wisdom in the civil war literature regarding the negative effect of casualties on public support for war, extend the literature on effects of casualties in civil wars, and confirm some of the recent findings indicating a positive effect of casualties on support for war.

The data come from surveys conducted in a year of peace and a year of war in Turkey. The failure of peace talks with the PKK in mid-2015, a process that was underway since early 2013, resulted in the quick escalation of violence, in contrast to the exceptionally peaceful 2014. We leverage this contrast, and look at the casualty effect in two ways: (1) by calculating the average treatment effect of casualties to identify its impact, and (2) by specifying a hierarchical model to examine the robustness of the finding and to test for additional hypotheses. The *average treatment effect* captures the difference in opinion between respondents who expressed their degree of support for a military intervention in 2014, when a peace process was underway in Turkey, and those who answered the same question in 2015, when what the government called its counterterrorism campaign³ was in full swing. The *cross-sectional analysis* uses the 2015 data only and employs a hierarchical logistic regression model to examine the effect of local-level casualties on citizens, as well as the effect of citizens' individual characteristics.

Our data show that the overall support for the military solution to the Kurdish conflict decreased from 38 to 31% between 2014 and 2015, but the aggregate decline cannot be attributed to the effect of casualties. To the contrary, individuals living in provinces with the highest per capita casualty figures are more likely to support the military campaign than individuals living in provinces with relatively low per capita casualties. However, this effect is not linear: one observes a mixed effect in low or moderate levels of local-level casualties, while at high levels of local-level casualties, there is a clear positive trend in support for military action. Thus, local-level casualties do not reduce the support for military action, and even increase that support at relatively high levels. The discrepancy between the positive casualty effect and the aggregate decline in support for military action may be indicating that the effect of renewal in violence on the general public is distinct from the effect stemming from living in a province that had casualties.

Casualties and Public Support for the Military

Battlefield casualties stand out as the most analysed variable in research on public opinion during war. Using the cost-benefit framework, scholars conceptualised in-group casualties as the primary cost, which would shape a democratic public's view of war. Analysing the human cost of the Korean and Vietnam wars, Mueller (1973) pioneers this line of research and finds that casualties (measured in cumulative form) decrease the US public's support for war, using aggregated survey data. His work has initiated a long line of discussions as to the validity of his claim. Scholars have debated whether democratic publics (and the American public in particular) are highly casualty-averse (Luttwak 1994, Klarevas 2000; for a critique of this position, see: Burk 1999) or relatively casualty-insensitive (Feaver and Gelpi 2004; for a critique of the casualty-insensitive argument, see: Karol and Miguel 2007).⁴

Many scholars find support for Mueller's argument of negative effect of casualties on public support for conflict but challenge his operationalisation of casualties. Larson (1996), for example, questions Mueller's choice of measuring casualties as logged cumulative number of losses, for this obscures the effect of pivotal shocks. Gartner and Segura (1998) show that marginal casualties are better at capturing the negative response to war losses, especially when those marginal casualties are increasing.⁵ Althaus *et al.* (2012) argue that local losses have a greater negative effect on the support for war than national ones – a finding corroborated through experiments, too (Kriner and Shen 2012). Hayes and Myers (2009) suggest that local casualties are not only *more* influential than national ones, but they produce negative effects on the support for war *regardless* of the effect of cumulative or recent national casualties. Local casualties influence not only citizens' views on war, but also politicians' strategies: US Members of Congress from high-casualty constituencies are more likely to criticise a war during campaigns (Kriner and Shen 2014).⁶

Building on this scholarship, this paper presumes that marginal local casualties tell a more accurate story in terms of the casualty effect on support for war. A number of causal mechanisms are suggested to explain the effect of local-level casualties on individuals' opinion of an ongoing war. People may be better informed about local-level losses through community-based information networks (Gartner *et al.* 1997) or through local news outlets (Gartner *et al.* 2004, Hayes and Myers 2009). Local connection increases the salience of information via attachment of personal information to casualties, which converts an abstract cost to a more identifiable one (Gartner and Segura 2008). It is also possible that local casualties produce a greater emotional impact, as people process them differently from national-level ones (Gartner *et al.* 1997, Kriner and Shen 2012).⁷ Finally, it may be the case that high-casualty communities receive a greater number of elite cues that are critical of the war than low-casualty ones (Kriner and

Shen 2010). Drawing on these explanations, we operate with the assumption that local casualties have stronger effect on people's opinions.

Effects of Casualties in Intrastate War: Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses

Given the scarcity of non-US research, the casualty-averse vs. casualty-insensitive debate is at a nascent stage in other contexts. One recent study finds that support for the domestic counterinsurgency campaign declines among the out-of-theatre public in Thailand as the costs of conflict (especially casualties) increase (Lacina 2016). A cross-national study also finds that higher casualties increase the likelihood of negotiations for civil war conflict resolution (Urlacher 2011).

Inasmuch as a negative casualty effect on support for military action is plausible, we argue that local casualties could also increase this support in protracted ethnic intrastate wars, assuming that there is no prevalent personal security threat directed to civilians. We borrow from the investment model of commitment in psychology to build our theory, which is similar to the cost-benefit framework, and also draw on mortality salience hypothesis as a mechanism. The investment model (Koch 2011) explains the role of casualties in incumbent support (also see Hoffman *et al.* 2009). When defining commitment, the investment model considers satisfaction (the relative value assigned to the outcome), the costs incurred i.e. investment already placed in a relationship (both intrinsic – prior costs incurred, and extrinsic-tangible costs for maintenance), and available alternatives to the relationship. Applying this framework to our paper, where commitment is to the conflict, casualties would affect two of the considerations: satisfaction with the management of conflict and the investment in a conflict, and in different ways. As Koch (2011) suggests, increasing casualties would decrease satisfaction, however casualties are also perceived as investment. That is to say, in ongoing conflicts, marginal casualties would signify increase in the resources expended toward the conflict. Particularly when individuals believe in the 'rightness of the conflict,' and believe in the power of the military to defeat (though dissatisfied with performance at times) (Gelpi *et al.* 2007), rising casualties would not necessarily result in general withdrawal of support for military action. The 'rightness of the conflict' is usually not as contested in intrastate wars as it is in overseas military operations, because the war is inside a state's territory and options are to fight or to give in, whereas in overseas operations, passive stance is an option.

Available alternatives to support for military action should be taken into consideration, too. Nonviolent resolution of protracted ethnic conflicts often requires compromises, and in the case of secessionist conflicts, autonomy or sovereignty over a territory is at stake. Hence alternative to staying in

conflict is perceived costly as loss of territory is equated with loss of national identity for many. For example, examining the Chechen war, a case of separatist intrastate war, Gerber and Mendelson (2008) show that tolerance of casualties was high because of public fear of defeat which would mean losing a territory that is integral to the country.

Fear of defeat is corollary to perceived threat, which, in and of itself, could induce violent responses to attacks that bring about casualties. Scholarship on international wars finds that the higher the threat posed by the foreign aggressor, the more citizens support military force (e.g., Jentleson and Britton 1998, Herrmann *et al.* 1999, Huddy *et al.* 2005). Analogously, the literature on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict reports suggests that Israelis tend to support military action more at increasing levels of threat perception (Friedland and Merari 1985, Arian 1989). Other scholars also contend that perceived collective threat erodes support for moderate, non-violent solutions to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Bar-Tal 2001, Gordon and Arian 2001), or compromise with Palestinians (Maoz and McCauley 2009, also see Arian 1989).

Another likely mechanism at work behind the positive effect of casualties is mortality salience. Casualties evoke mortality-related cognitions, and research shows that heightening salience of death brings out aggression (e.g., McGregor *et al.* 1998). Rising mortality salience as a result of casualties elevates national identities (Koch and Nicholson 2016), which would manifest themselves in the form of aggression i.e., support for military action.

The hypothesised positive effect of casualties on support for military action has been empirically supported in some other work. Jaeger *et al.* (2012) find that increase in Palestinian fatalities significantly diminishes support for negotiations with Israel among the Palestinian population, though the significance of this negative effect fades away after two months.⁸ Analogously, testing the effect of local casualties on province-level voting behaviour between 1991 and 1995 in Turkey, Kibris (2011) finds that local-level military casualties increase a province's support for right-wing parties (parties known for supporting the military solution to the conflict), while parties in government see a declining share of the vote in those same provinces. These findings imply increase in public support for military action.

Based on this review of the existing literature, we state our main hypothesis below:

Hypothesis 1: Marginal local military casualties increase support for military action in ethnic intrastate wars on average.

Scholarship on US overseas wars and other contexts suggests that the effect of casualties on public opinion is contingent on the magnitude of marginal casualties (Gartner *et al.* 1997); how they process information regarding casualties (Gerber and Mendelson 2008, Kriner and Shen 2010);

perceptions about the justifiability of the war (Jentleson 1992, Gelpi *et al.* 2006); the expectation that the war will end in victory (Eichenberg 2005, Gelpi *et al.* 2006); elite consensus around the war (Larson 1996, Berinsky 2007)⁹ and the framing of in-group casualties in comparison to enemy casualties (Boettcher and Cobb 2006).¹⁰ This article takes its cue from the multiplicity of context-dependent effects described above and contends that the effect of casualties could vary among the public, so we do not expect the expected positive effect of casualties to be linear or homogeneous across the board.

Research Design

One goal of this paper is to gauge the average causal effect of casualties by leveraging the contrast between Turkey in 2014 and in 2015 in terms of intrastate violence, and by identifying the effect of local-level casualties. The research design makes use of Turkey's abrupt shift to violent conflict after a peaceful period in 2014 and assumes that casualties act as a continuous treatment in 2015, varying across the provinces, where the year 2014 serves as the control.

Case Selection: Renewed Three-Decade Long Kurdish Insurgency in Turkey

Three characteristics make contemporary Turkey an ideal case study for the hypotheses assessed in this paper: (1) The violent conflict in question is intrastate in nature, and has started as an ethnic secessionist war; (2) the variation in violence between 2014 and 2015 is binary, which enables a study of the effect recent marginal casualties in an ongoing war; and (3) casualties are spatially dispersed, that is to say there is considerable geographic variation with respect to the birthplace of soldiers killed in combat, which is likely to translate into local-level variation regarding views on the conflict.

The recent history of the violent conflict between the Turkish state and the PKK, which began in 1984 and has continued intermittently ever since, provides insights into the transformation of public opinion during periods of renewed violence. While the paper focuses in particular on the renewal of violence after a peaceful period between 2013 and mid-2015, this section provides historical context on the conflict and the most recent peace process.

Following a three-decade-long conflict, the latest round of peace talks, called the 'peace process' or 'solution process' (*çözüm süreci* in Turkish), began in 2013.¹¹ The Justice and Development Party (the AKP hereafter), which has been in power since 2002, presented the peace process as the culmination of its broader Kurdish initiative, which claimed to extend civic

and cultural rights for Kurds, and deepen the country's overall democratisation process. Peace-promoting gestures on the part of AKP leaders and the PKK's imprisoned leader Abdullah Öcalan resulted in the quick de-escalation of violence in early 2013. On 25 April 2013, several hundred PKK members withdrew to Northern Iraq and a cease-fire was announced. As a result of these early steps, the casualties came to a halt, and the public in the country's mostly Kurdish southeast region was reportedly optimistic about the prospects for peace.

However, the period 2013–2015 witnessed the absence of further steps to reach a negotiated peace. Mutual mistrust between the negotiating parties, the vagueness and opaqueness of the peace process, and the overall deterioration of the political situation in a context dominated by former prime minister and current president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's attempts to transform himself into a strong president resulted in renewed fighting in July 2015. As the Turkish Air Force began to launch air strikes against PKK camps in Northern Iraq, the peace process came to an abrupt end. Since then, special army and police units have been engaged in intense fighting with PKK rebels in city and town centres of the Kurdish region. Renewed fighting has led to a sharp rise in battlefield deaths of soldiers, police officers, and PKK fighters, as well as the killing and displacement of civilians.¹² The human toll of the renewed violence is comparable to the mid-1990s, when the Turkish state undertook a campaign to kill, disappear or displace Kurdish civilians with suspected sympathies for the PKK.¹³

While the period since mid-2015 has been exceptionally violent for Turkey as a whole, it is worth mentioning for the purposes of this paper that the geographic distribution of violence is uneven. The conflict between the Turkish state and the PKK poses significant security risks to civilians only in the country's southeastern Kurdish region.¹⁴ Another set of risks for individuals across Turkey is associated with military service in the conflict region. Given that the Turkish military relies on a mixture of conscripts and professional recruits, and given that security forces and PKK fighters have constituted the majority, but by no means all,¹⁵ of the fatalities since the 1990s, young men and their families all around the country face individual security risks under conditions of renewed violence. The public is well aware of this risk, as the media cover clashes and the resulting casualties.

Data and Methods

The individual-level data to compare public support for war come from nearly identical questions from two public opinion surveys, one conducted in the absence of large-scale violence and one during violent conflict. The survey data come from the research study titled 'Social and Political Values in Turkey', conducted annually by Kadir Has University, Istanbul. The two

surveys this paper employs were conducted in December of 2014 and December of 2015, using face-to-face interviews with 1,000 individuals each year. The sampling strategy involves clustered individual sampling. The sample in each survey is randomly selected and equally representative of the Turkish population, selected from adult population in 26 of Turkey's 81 provinces. The provinces are selected from seven geographic regions in light of the guideline prepared by the Turkish Statistical Institute, classifying Turkey into 12 homogeneous regions based on summary statistics (see Figure 1 for representativeness of the selected provinces, highlighted in blue).¹⁶ The sample size of each province is proportional to the population of each province, calculated in accordance with the annual Address-based Population Registration System of the Turkish Statistical Institute.¹⁷

The casualty data are original and cover the period between 2 July 2015 (the date of the renewal of the attacks) and 9 December 2015 (onset of the survey). We coded casualties at the province level, drawing on the information from major national and local newspapers, and crosschecked with online media outlets. Casualties encompass security force casualties (SFC hereafter), which are coded by their province of birth (the location of funeral), and civilians.¹⁸

Average Treatment Effect

We use a dose-response (also called exposure or treatment-response) model with continuous treatment (Cerulli 2015) to parse out the impact of casualties. In this model, renewal of conflict with the PKK in the 2015 survey sample is the treatment group, where the provinces were exposed to



Figure 1. Provinces included in the survey.

Note: The map is produced by Tableau and the provinces highlighted by light blue are the ones included in the survey.

different levels of treatment (casualties), while 2014 survey sample is the control ('untreated') group i.e., when no violence and no casualties were observed. We treat the casualties as exogenous to the model because the province-level distribution of casualties is completely independent from the support for military response in that province.

In our models, we omitted two provinces from the analysis: Kırıkkale, for having high leverage on the results because of inordinately high SFC per capita, and Diyarbakır, for having unusually high in-province violence. In the second half of 2015, some predominantly Kurdish provinces (e.g., Diyarbakır, Hakkari, Şırnak) were subject to excessive state violence, curfews and PKK attacks, which introduced new risks. Our theory assumes absence of prevalent personal security risks, which limit its applicability to out-of-theatre populations while the residents of Diyarbakır were in-theatre in 2015 (see Lacina 2016). To avoid confounding the effect of in-province violence on public opinion for war, we omit Diyarbakır from our analysis. Other such cities were not included in our survey.

The Model and Preliminary Analysis

Figure 2 shows the aggregate-level changes in support for war by province as a function of change in casualties between 2014 and 2015. The trend is upward, that is as the number of casualties increases average support for war in a province increases, notwithstanding the variation in slope at the province level. However, reading the casualty effect at the province level is misleading, as individual-level factors are important both in explaining the change in support for war and understanding the conditional effect of casualties as casualty effect may not operate homogeneously on every resident of a province.

As a first step, we estimate the average treatment effect of casualties while controlling for some basic individual-level factors.

The model equation is:

$$y = \mu_0 + x\delta_0 + wATE + w[x - \bar{x}]\delta + w[h(t) - \bar{h}] + e_0 + w[e_1 - e_0]$$

where

- w is the treatment indicator, taking value 1 for treated (2015) and 0 for untreated (2014) units;
- x is the vector of some individual – level independent variables (ethnicity, gender, age and education – see Table 1 for summary statistics);
- ATE is the average treatment effect calculated as $(\mu_1 - \mu_0) + \bar{x}\delta + \bar{h}$, and μ_1 and μ_0 are two scalars;
- $e_1 - e_0$ are two random variables with zero unconditional mean and constant variance;

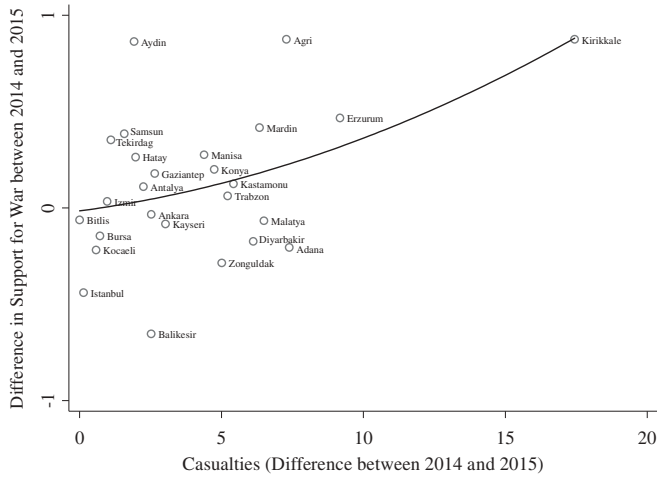


Figure 2. Plot of change in support for military response and casualties at the province-level.

Table 1. Summary statistics.

Variable	2014		2015		Min	Max
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.		
Military means	0.397	0.489	0.321	0.467	0	1
Total Casualties	0	0	2.377	2.668	0	17.44
Party ID						
AKP	0.364	0.481	0.489	0.501	0	1
CHP	0.175	0.380	0.250	0.433	0	1
MHP	0.104	0.305	0.128	0.334	0	1
HDP	0.067	0.250	0.111	0.314	0	1
Abstain	0.081	0.273	0.022	0.147	0	1
Others	0.209	0.407			0	1
Ethnicity						
Turkish	0.597	0.491	0.657	0.475	0	1
Kurdish	0.104	0.305	0.111	0.314	0	1
Others	0.299	0.458	0.232	0.422	0	1
Female	0.500	0.500	0.499	0.500	0	1
Education_mean centered	0.037	3.682	-0.038	3.606	-8.606	7.395
Age_mean centered	0.063	14.797	-0.064	14.778	-22.921	42.080

Mean = 40.9

Mean Education = 9.6 years

N = 986 in 2014, 983 in 2015.

- $h(t)$ is the response function to the level of treatment t , and it is equal to 0 when $w = 0$;
- t is the continuous measure of casualties.

In the model, w and t are assumed to be exogenous, and the response function is a three-order polynomial to enable flexibility to the model: $h(t) = at + bt^2 + ct^3$.

Variables

Dependent Variable

'Support for military solution to the internal armed conflict' is the dependent variable. We measure it using the responses to the question: 'which of the following is the most effective method to resolve the issue of terror?' In the context of Turkey, 'the issue of terror' specifically denotes the conflict with the PKK, labelled a terrorist organisation by the Turkish government, the NATO, the US and the EU. Given the widespread use of the term 'terrorism' in official state discourse to denote the civil conflict between the Turkish state and the PKK, this wording captures the majority views of the conflict, and avoids response bias.¹⁹

The response options to the question are: 'Military methods', 'Political-diplomatic methods', 'Economic methods', 'Social policies' and 'Cultural policies.' The response categories are mutually exclusive. We generate a binary variable for 'Military methods,' where all other methods are coded as zero. Military methods comprise 39.66% of the responses in 2014, which drops to 32.15% in 2015.

Main Independent Variables

Casualties

Casualties are the sum of security force funerals held in a province after July 2015, and civilians. SFCs are actually the most visible cost of the civil conflict, at least in the last decade or so, because of media coverage, as explained above.²⁰ Kibris (2011, p. 224) argues:

The security force terror casualties from their hometowns constitute the most tangible and important cost of terrorism for the Turkish people living outside the terror-stricken south-eastern parts of the country and the funeral ceremonies are the occasions when they really feel this cost.²¹

As the impact is probably greatest in the home province, we coded by province of birth, also the location of the funeral in most cases. Attacks by the PKK also caused civilian casualties during the same period (even if smaller in numbers), and are also added as casualties, and coded with respect to the place of their death. These casualties were recent, i.e., occurred at most 5 months before the survey, and thus have 'a greater affect on people's perceptions' than past casualties (Gartner and Segura 2008, 96).

Instead of raw numbers, we use per capita casualties per province. Raw numbers may not measure the intensity of impact, as there is a considerable variation in the size of provinces in Turkey. Hence, we weigh the measure

inversely with the population of each province. Population figures are obtained from the Turkish Statistical Institute's website.

Year 2015

This variable is intended to indicate the presence (2015) or absence (2014) of violent clashes between the PKK and the government. It is the binary treatment variable (w) in the continuous treatment model. 2015 is coded as 1, and 2014 is coded as 0. It captures the effect of the remaining difference between 2014 and 2015 with respect to renewed violence that is not explained by the casualties.

Findings: Average Treatment Effect of Casualties

The Average Treatment Effect of casualties appears to be positive though in a nonlinear fashion (Table 2-Model 1). Even though the effect of province-level casualties on individual responses is negative at medium casualty levels (i.e., decreases the average support levels below the 2014 score), the average treatment effect at all positive levels of casualties in comparison to the zero-casualty cases is positive (Figure 3), confirming *Hypothesis 1*.²²

The non-linearity of the response function is important because it reveals that the responses are heterogeneous; in other words, being treated with the same level of casualties does not necessarily induce the same type of response. Context, individual-level characteristics and

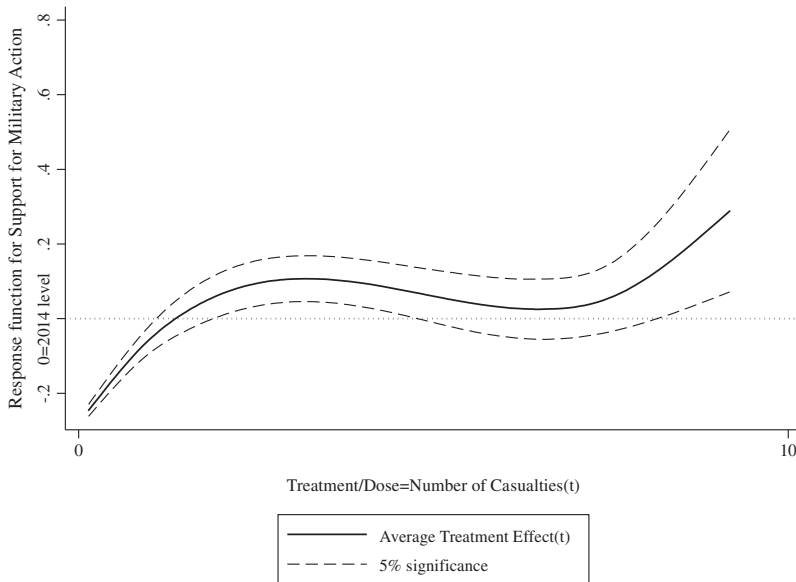


Figure 3. Treatment response function.

attitudes play a major role in conditioning or aggravating the role of casualties. This reasoning is in the same line as that of Gartner, Segura and Wilkening's (1997), who argue that the individual experiences with casualties are different.

In what follows, we build further models of support for war, pooling the data from 2014 and 2015 and employing hierarchical models to account for the variance at the province-level and to test our additional and hypotheses, when controlling for the time effect.

Hierarchical Logistic Regression Model Specifications

We build a full model using the cross-sectional data from 2014 and 2015. The dataset is naturally clustered, as individuals are randomly selected from provinces. It is very likely that individual responses from the same province have correlated errors.²³ The province-level observations vary from 8 individuals to 271, proportional to the size of provinces. When the number of individuals within a cluster is low, multilevel models are known to outperform the standard clustering correction (Cheah 2009). Therefore, we use a two-level model where individuals are nested in provinces.

We first fit a random intercept model, allowing the intercepts to vary at the province-level, and then fit a random slope model to factor in the different effects the year 2015 could have on each province.

The random intercept model is as follows:

$$Y_{ij} = \ln\left(\frac{\pi_{ij}}{1 - \pi_{ij}}\right) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Casualties}_j + \lambda \chi_j + M \kappa_{ij} + u_j$$

where u_j is the province-level error term.

Y_{ij} is the log odds of the support for war, π_{ij} is the probability of supporting a war.

χ_j is a vector of province-level control variables including cumulative casualties.

κ_{ij} is a vector of other individual-level characteristics including education, and ethnicity.

Control Variables

Ethnicity

Because the case at hand is an ongoing separatist ethnic war, ethnicity is a fundamental variable to include in the model. Lacina (2016) shows that ethnicity matters in explaining support for the government's violent response to insurgency in Thailand. Some seminal studies on

reconciliation in post-conflict contexts emphasise the role of ethnicity on individual support for peace (Dyrstad *et al.* 2011). Examining the case of the Kurdish conflict in Turkey, Uluğ and Cohrs (2017) underscore that views on the causes and potential solutions on the Kurdish conflict vary with respect to the ethos of conflict, which reflects the ethnic dividing lines. Also, the literature on public support for combatants shows that group identities are significant covariates (e.g., Lyall *et al.* 2013). The question we use for measuring ethnicity is ‘How would you define yourself in ethnic terms?’ The answers are recoded into three categories: Turkish, Kurdish, Others. Those who do not want to respond, and those who do not know their ethnic origins are classified under ‘Others’ for purposes of brevity.²⁴

Party Affiliation

Parties loom large in attitude formation, especially in polarised political environments (Druckman *et al.* 2013; see also Lodge and Taber 2013). The public opinion and war literature, starting with Mueller (1973), has long debated the role of partisan cues in structuring wartime opinion or attitudes toward war (Berinsky 2007, Jacobson 2007). Other scholars also suggest that ideology may frame individuals’ responses to a violent conflict (Bar-Tal *et al.* 2010). It is possible that the degree of ideological commitment, rather than the content of the ideology itself, matters insofar as it shapes the degree to which individuals identify information about the war and casualties accurately (Myers and Hayes 2010). Koch and Nicholson (2016) also argue that the death-related cognitions induced by casualties could invoke worldview defense, i.e., possibly leading to opposing effects. Worldviews can be operationalised with party affiliation. Especially given the rising rhetoric of the ruling party in Turkey and the pro-war discourse of Erdoğan, starting from mid-2015, partialing out the role party identification plays in support for military response as a conflict resolution method is essential. Furthermore, expected military success correlates strongly with party affiliation or ideology (Berinsky and Druckman 2007), and party leaders’ rhetoric on that front could in response to renewal of the conflict may explain the changes in public support for military response rather than casualties. Hence, in order to avoid any such potential bias in our estimations, we control for the effect of party identification.

There are four major parties in contemporary Turkey: the Justice and Development Party (AKP) representing moderate centrists, social conservatives, and Islamists; Republican People’s Party (CHP), a mixture of social democrats and secular nationalists; the Nationalist Action Party (MHP), which portrays itself as a Turkish-nationalist party; and the Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP), which has grown out of the leftist wing of the

Kurdish political movement. While the AKP and the CHP leaders have held variable positions on the Kurdish conflict over time, the MHP has held an intransigently militaristic attitude, and the HDP has been the chief political movement that has supported non-military mechanisms to end the conflict. The classic vote choice question is used in 2014: 'If there was an election today, whom would you vote for?'²⁵

Other Controls

We control for respondents' gender, education and age because some studies find that gender and the level of education are correlated with the perceived risk of terrorism (Arian and Gordon 1993, Skitka *et al.* 2004). Also, Boucher (2010) finds that Canadian women are less supportive of overseas military operations than their male counterparts on average, although increasing casualties do not impose a differential gender effect on the support for war (for a review of the gendered effect of terrorism on public opinion, see: Poloni-Staudinger and Ortbal 2013, Chapter 6). We code gender as a binary variable.

For Education, the survey data include a ten-category variable asking about the length of schooling,²⁶ which we convert to a numeric variable for the analysis. We also mean-center it for an easier interpretation. Summary statistics are presented in Table 1.

Findings

The findings in these models confirm the overall positive effect of casualties observed in the average treatment model (Model 2 and 3 in Table 2 – see Table 3 for Marginal Effects on Probability of Support). When we try to fit quadratic terms to capture the non-linearity, the multi-level models did not indicate any need to keep them in the model, as they were not significant. This may be because the non-linearity found in the treatment/dose response model captures the province-level differences, and because multi-level models builds in these level-2 variances, the need for including quadratic terms disappears. We control for the effect of the variable 'year' in Model 2 and 3, which is intended to partial out the effects of all other changes that occurred in between 2014 and 2015. One interpretation of the variable 'year,' at least partly, could be the general impact of renewed violence, as arguably renewal of the violence is a major difference between the two years. The effect of casualties is robust to such inclusions.

Model 3 adds the year variable as a random slope variable at the province-level, as the difference between 2014 and 2015 may vary at the province-level; some aggregate province-level attributes such as general level of security (due to proximity to clash zone) that also could explain

Table 2. Models.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
	Dose-Response Model	Random Intercept Model	Random Slope Model	2015 only
Year2015 (binary treatment_w)	-0.168*** (0.02)	-1.295*** (0.15)	-0.751 (0.63)	
Casualties*w_1	0.293*** (0.04)			
Casualties*w_2	-0.068*** (0.01)			
Casualties*w_3	0.005*** (0.00)			
Casualties		0.341*** (0.05)	0.289* (0.15)	0.271** (0.13)
Ethnicity (Turkish)				
Kurdish	-0.259*** (0.04)	-1.304*** (0.26)	-1.455*** (0.28)	-1.118*** (0.39)
Others	-0.110*** (0.02)	-0.578*** (0.13)	-0.475*** (0.14)	-0.442* (0.23)
Female	-0.041* (0.02)	-0.203* (0.10)	-0.233** (0.11)	-0.488*** (0.17)
Age	0.001 (0.00)	0.006 (0.00)	0.007 (0.00)	0.011* (0.01)
Education	-0.002 (0.00)	-0.001 (0.02)	-0.004 (0.02)	-0.004 (0.02)
		(0.04)	(0.15)	(0.15)
Party (AKP)				
CHP		0.041 (0.14)	0.217 (0.15)	-0.009 (0.22)
MHP		0.528*** (0.17)	0.674*** (0.18)	0.780*** (0.26)
HDP		-0.183 (0.24)	-0.132 (0.26)	0.310 (0.30)
Abstain		-0.319 (0.27)	-0.262 (0.28)	
Others		-0.495*** (0.18)	-0.398** (0.19)	0.075 (0.60)
Constant	0.480*** (0.02)	0.032 (0.21)	-0.225 (0.22)	-0.850 (0.56)
Random Effects Parameters				
Var (province)		0.601*** (0.22)	0.669** (0.27)	2.112** (0.83)
Var (violence)			2.727** (1.09)	
Estimation Method	OLS	Logistic Reg	Logistic Reg	Logistic Reg

(In parentheses) = left-out category. Casualties*w_* in Model 1 are polynomial factors of the Dose-Response function. In multilevel logistic regression models (Model 2, 3, and 4), the level 1 residual variance, $\text{var}(e_{ij})$, is fixed at 3.29. The coefficients are log-odds. N = 1979. Standard errors in parentheses. *** p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05, * p < 0.1.

the change in attitudes toward conflict resolution methods may have changed in different ways. The results show that even when such differences are allowed in the model, the positive effect of casualties remains, though at a lower significance level.

Among demographic factors, gender and ethnicity stand out as statistically significant: confirming findings on US wars, we find that women are

Table 3. Marginal predicted probabilities.

	Coefficients	SE
Year 2015	-0.246***	(0.027)
Casualties	0.065***	(0.008)
Party_base = AKP		
CHP	0.008	(0.028)
MHP	0.105***	(0.034)
HDP	-0.034	(0.045)
Abstain	-0.059	(0.048)
Others	-0.090***	(0.032)
Ethnicity_Base = Turkish		
Kurdish	-0.226***	(0.039)
Others	-0.111***	(0.024)
Education	-0.002	(0.003)
Age	0.001	(0.001)
Female	-0.039*	(0.021)
Observations	1916	

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.010$

less likely to support the military solution. Also, self-identified ethnic Kurds are less likely to support the military solution than ethnic Turks *ceteris paribus*, which makes intuitive sense in the context of an internal armed conflict in which ethnic identity plays an important role.²⁷ Age and education do not appear to have a statistically significant main effect.

Party affiliation yields a complicated picture. Taking the ruling AKP's voters as the baseline and controlling for all other variables, we show that average CHP voters (secularist) or average HDP voters (Kurdish political movement) are not more or less likely to increase their support for the military solution as casualties increase than AKP voters. Only the nationalist MHP voters, on average, are more likely to support the military solution than AKP voters (Table 2). In other words, an unwavering nationalist orientation affects the support for military solution positively, but given the fluidity of party positions on the Kurdish conflict over time, party affiliation does not drive variation in opinion among the voters of other parties.

We also run interaction between party variable and casualties, to further examine the possibly confounding effect of party identification (see Model I2 in Table A1 in Appendix). As the ruling AKP has the largest support base, AKP supporters may be driving the average effects of casualties, and if that is the case, one would observe a significant difference in terms of the effect of casualties on individuals' support for military action by their party affiliation. The results, however, show positive effect across the party spectrum (Figure 4). This finding indicates that what drives the story observed here is not just the underlying nationalism because all the parties show an upward trend (not just the nationalist MHP party supporters) even though nationalism may be a factor affecting the magnitude of responses.

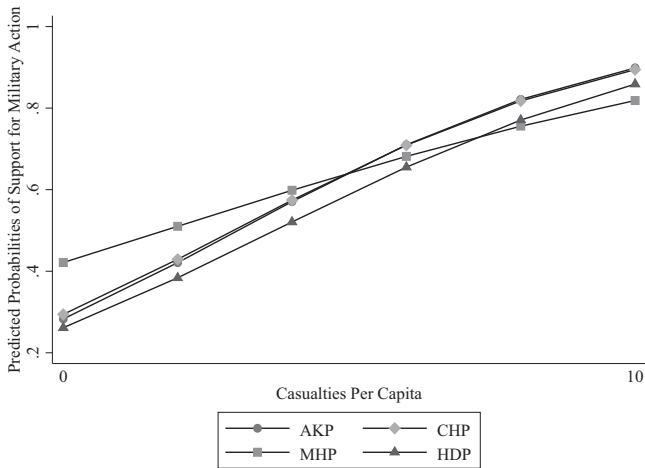


Figure 4. Plot of Marginal Effects of Casualties#Party Affiliation on Support for Military Action.

Finally, we ran robustness checks by including additional variables on perceived threat and policy attitudes, and the positive casualty effect persisted (see Appendix Section B).

Discussion and Limitations

Our findings show that recent marginal local casualties in ethnic intrastate wars do not result in declining public's support for military action, as often is the case in overseas military operations. In contrast, marginal local casualties increase such support, which supports our hypothesis, but this effect is heterogeneous as we expected and context-dependent: average levels of support depend on a host of personal attributes (like ideology and ethnicity).

The paper makes important contributions to the literature in part because casualty hypothesis has not been much researched in the cases of intrastate conflict, and in part because the geography the evidence comes from (case of Turkey) is of critical importance. Turkey hosts one of the longest running civil wars in modern world, and it is a context where not only getting political information has become ever more difficult but also civil war outcomes are ever more obscure. Besides providing insights into the repercussions of the ongoing civil war in Turkey, the paper articulates and theorises how casualty effect could operate differently in intrastate wars than they do in cases of overseas military operations in shaping public's attitude toward using military response.

The data and the design have limitations, however. The contrast between 2014 and 2015 in terms of recent marginal casualties forms the ground of the causality test for casualty hypothesis. Yet, one year may be too long to attribute the difference between the two surveys to a single factor. For example, two

general elections took place in 2015. If the elections affect individuals' support for war, they may be considered a potential confounding variable,²⁸ especially given that the June 2015 election may have triggered violence through its consequences on the distribution of seats in the parliament (see the section on the historical context in Turkey). However, there is no indication that the elections have had an effect on public opinion toward conflict resolution methods independently of the effects of renewed violence. In other words, even if elections may have affected one of the independent variables by triggering renewed violence, they are exogenous to the model insofar as they cannot be said to have a direct effect on the dependent variable. Also, both the Model 1 and Model 2 controls for the effects of general differences between 2014 and 2015 with the variable 'year,' and the casualties variable remains significant and positive. In Model 3, we fit a random slope model where the slope of the variable 'year' is allowed to vary from province to province, and the fact that casualties continues to be significant, we conclude that there are some meaningful effects we can attribute to the casualties in shaping individuals' support for military response as a conflict resolution method in intrastate wars.

Another mechanism through which elections may have caused a change in support for war could be through introducing a change in the executive branch that makes war decisions. One may suspect that changes in support for war may simply be due to the differences between the pre-election and post-election executive choices, as the new government may have embarked on a new conflict resolution strategy. However, the AKP government has been in power since 2002 as a single-party government, and has not lost that status throughout 2015. Even when it lost parliamentary majority between June and November, the AKP managed to hold on to single-party government as an interim government. Furthermore, the political stance of the government has been established over the years. It is also functioning practically as the party of its highly powerful and strong-handed founding leader, Erdoğan, who persists as the *de facto* ruler despite his limited *de jure* powers as president. It is true that 11 of the 21 ministers changed between 2014 and 2015.²⁹ However, most of those did not concern positions of high importance, especially with respect to war and peace decisions. Ministers running major policy areas such as Justice, Interior and Foreign Affairs, Education, Health and Development stayed the same. The personnel change in Ministry of National Defence did not introduce a major shift of policy, due to the reasons discussed above. Therefore, the changes in the Cabinet of Ministers did not translate into change in policies.

Our findings shed light onto an area in civil literature that needs more exploration. Inasmuch as our findings are generalisable to other ongoing conflict contexts, our results indicate rather short-term effects; whether or not changes in war attitudes are long-lasting requires a different research design (See Jaeger *et al.* 2012). For future studies, a panel data with shorter time lags that with a larger sample would be ideal.

Conclusion

For all its critics, the casualty hypothesis remains a powerful explanation of public opinion during violent conflict. In this paper, we capture the shift in public opinion between a non-violent and violent period, as well as the sources of variation during the violent period, using two public opinion surveys from Turkey. Our findings reveal that the average impact of local-level military casualties on public opinion in the context of an internal ethnic armed conflict does not conform to conventional wisdom: individuals from provinces with higher per-capita province-level casualties are more likely to support a violent solution to the conflict. The theory we propose highlights perceiving casualties as an investment in ongoing intrastate conflicts, and predicts a positive response to casualties regarding support for military action. Our findings provide empirical support for this theory. The findings, which indicate a positive casualty effect on attitudes toward the military solution to the conflict across the ideological spectrum, reveal that what drives the story is not underlying nationalism, even though it may be a factor affecting the magnitude of responses.

This paper invites scholars to further explore the heterogeneous positive effect of casualties at the local level in the case of civil wars. As our theory indicates, responses to casualties in civil wars fare quite differently from responses to casualties in overseas military operations. Future studies should parse out the effect induced by the collective threat of violence and the casualty effect when possible, as these are distinct dimensions and may have opposing effects. Along the same lines, the literature could benefit from studies that factor in the role of threat perceptions (at the individual and collective-level) and elite rhetoric in the analysis of casualty effect in intrastate wars. Finally, disaggregating the security force casualties and examining whether death of professional forces have a stronger effect than the conscripted ones is worth exploring.

The findings provide insights into the highly volatile and increasingly violent politics in Turkey specifically, and also contribute to a growing literature on the casualty effect in civil wars generally. We believe these results are generalisable to other ongoing ethnic intrastate war contexts where an insurgent group is fighting against a strong state, especially in divided societies.

Future research should also incorporate the effects of the magnitude of local-level violence on public opinion. Almost all violent confrontations between the Turkish state and the PKK rebels take place in the country's predominantly Kurdish southeast. Likewise, the majority of the civilian victims of the conflict are Kurdish citizens living in this region. This paper's conceptual focus and data challenges privilege military casualties as the main independent variable, but rebel casualties as well as civilian victimisation should be taken into consideration in future analyses of public opinion.

Notes

1. 'Military solution' refers to the use of all kinds of violence to terminate a conflict, and it is the term used in public discussions as well as in the surveys used. We use 'support for military solution,' 'support for military intervention,' and 'support for war' interchangeably for the purposes of this paper.
2. The conflict between the Turkish state and the PKK rebels has continued since 1984, with two major periods of ceasefire in between (1999–2004 and 2013–2015). Important definitional differences notwithstanding, we use 'intrastate war,' 'internal armed conflict,' and 'civil war' interchangeably for the purposes of this paper. The Turkish government's use of violence is referred to as 'counterinsurgency' in academic and journalistic literature, which is why we use the same concept in identifying the use of violence by the state's security forces.
3. For the purposes of this paper, we use the general public's and the mentioned surveys' characterization of military actions by state agents as 'counterterrorism' or 'counterinsurgency.'
4. For studies of public opinion on overseas military operations in Great Britain and Canada, see: Boucher (2010), Gribble *et al.* (2015).
5. They also show that temporally and spatially proximate casualties provide additional explanation over and above cumulative casualties. More recently, reporting results from six experiments, Gartner (2008) argues that support for war is affected by recent casualties, overall casualty trends and the interaction of the two.
6. In addition to the disaggregated effect of local-level casualties, Karol and Miguel (2007) suggest that national-level casualties have a localized effect, i.e., US states respond differently to news of casualties.
7. Kriner and Shen (2010) take into consideration the possibility that local casualty news produce greater impact as a result of emotionally charged local news reporting, but the local effect is found significant even when they provide the respondents in their experiments with identically worded local and national news.
8. They find the overall effect of a permanent increase in Palestinian fatalities on the preference for moderate attitudes negative but not statistically significant (Jaeger *et al.* 2012).
9. It is worth noting that while most of these works operate within the cost-benefit analysis, Berinsky (2007) puts into question the validity of the cost-benefit paradigm, suggesting that citizens often have limited information about the costs of war, and consequently, elite cues are a much more important determinant of citizens' views than their own estimations of the costs. For instance, the American public is casualty-insensitive in the Afghanistan conflict, but elite division may be reason for this insensitivity (Wells 2015).
10. For studies of public opinion on overseas military operations in Great Britain and Canada, see: Boucher (2010), Gribble (2015).
11. The three-decade-long conflict remains the longest-lasting Kurdish uprising in the history of the Republic of Turkey, but the state's failure to recognize the Kurdish language and culture, as well as Kurdish demands for local autonomy have fueled violent conflict since the 1920s. While official figures on combatant and civilian casualties are sketchy, it is estimated that at least 30,000 people were killed between 1984 and 2015, not to mention the conflict's enormous

human rights toll (Bozarslan 2001). The Turkish state managed to weaken the PKK in the late 1990s and capture its leader in 1999, but the absence of a political settlement resulted in the reinvigoration of the PKK in 2004. Peace proposals accompanied fighting in the 1990s and 2000s, to no avail.

12. Political elites' and ordinary citizens' narratives on the renewed violence provide clues on the country's ideological polarization. Pro-government circles and Turkish nationalists blame the PKK for using the ceasefire to pursue a strategy of expanding its power in cities and town centers, in preparation for renewed fighting and an eventual declaration of local autonomy. Critics of the government point to the AKP government's increasingly indifferent attitude toward the peaceful resolution of the Kurdish conflict and Kurdish demands, especially in the wake of the June 2015 elections in which the political party representing the Kurdish political movement, called Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP in Turkish acronym), effectively denied the AKP a parliamentary majority for the first time in its 13-year rule. In addition, the HDP's campaign promise to never let Erdoğan introduce a presidential system earned them the president's hostility. According to the government's critics, Erdoğan and the AKP leadership reignited the war with the PKK to force the voters to choose stability and security by associating the absence of one-party AKP government with instability and war. Added to these domestic factors, the resurgence of violence is often attributed to the spill-over effects of the Syrian civil war, especially the Turkish government's unwillingness to cooperate with the PKK-affiliate PYD in northern Syria.
13. Between the 7 June 2015 general election and October 11 (when the PKK declared a three-week ceasefire before the November 1 general election), a total of 694 casualties was reported; more than 200 were noncombatant civilians. In addition, bomb attacks against rallies and activities organized by the HDP and HDP affiliates in Diyarbakır, Suruç and Ankara resulted in over 140 deaths and many wounded.
14. Individuals in other urban areas face the risk of suicide bombings, most of which come from Islamist groups like ISIS rather than the PKK and its affiliates (though PKK affiliates claimed responsibility for one suicide bombing that took place in Ankara in early 2016).
15. According to a report prepared by the Grand National Assembly of Turkey Human Rights Investigation Commission, the total number of civilian casualties in the fight with the PKK between 1984 and 2012 amounts to 5,557, with additional disappearances estimated to be more than 1,000 individuals (TBMM Human Rights Investigation Commission 2013).
16. The sample is representative of Turkish population, and the survey is conducted on adults residing in the city centers İstanbul, Ankara, Konya, Bursa, Kocaeli, İzmir, Aydın, Manisa, Tekirdağ, Balıkesir, Adana, Antalya, Hatay, Zonguldak, Samsun, Kastamonu, Kayseri, Kırıkkale, Trabzon, Gaziantep, Diyarbakır, Mardin, Malatya, Bitlis, Erzurum ve Ağrı.
17. The data has limitations as it was collected only from a select number of provinces, and the two waves were conducted one year apart on different samples though comparable. However, we believe that the data is still highly precious given the scarcity of studies of similar nature from Turkey and given the significance of the context. The political developments in Turkey in the recent years could help political science to explore intricate matters as Turkey hosts extremely complex and intertwined political issues. So, every reliable

data from the Turkish context is valuable, and inheres in critical stories, which could contribute to myriad literatures within political science. Hence, we trust that the data is reliable and instrumental for our purpose. Bearing in mind its limitations we resort to complex statistical tools to overcome some of the limitations and to extract solid answers.

18. We believe funerals are the strongest media to move people's sentiments. As the impact is probably greatest in the home province, we coded SFCs by province of birth.
19. It is indeed common in the literature to encounter conflation of insurgency with terrorism. Terrorism is laden with political undertones, and is usually opted for by the governments. Quite a few insurgent groups often studied in the civil war literature such as the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in Turkey, Shining Path (PCP-SL) in Peru, National Liberation Army (ELN) or the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC_EP) in Colombia, and Tamil Tigers (LTTE) in Sri Lanka are all listed as terrorist groups by the EU and the US due to their strategies of combat and record of targeting civilians (Stanton 2013).
20. We do not include the rebel force casualties in our analysis as it may confound the mechanism. Security force casualties will certainly influence the majority in-group members yet the report of guerilla fighters, may be equated with the idea of 'success over the enemy' (for the majority group members) rather than with human cost of the war. Also dehumanization of the rebel fighters is an oft-encountered psychological process, hence the death of an 'enemy' may not fuel any attitudinal reaction. We added ethnicity of the respondents as a covariate to capture any possible different reaction from the minority group.
21. This paper does not claim to adjudicate the debate on the validity of all these causal mechanisms across all types of war and in all context. Nonetheless, it cautions against the portrayal of (national or local) casualties as producing non-positive effects on the support for war *only*. Recent local-level casualties heighten individuals' awareness of, and/or reactions to, a conflict, but this reaction may take the form of seeking a military solution to the conflict at hand.
22. We ran the model with province-level fixed effects, and the results are similar.
23. Ideological divisions across provinces are easy to encounter: certain provinces are known for having population majorities that are Turkish nationalists, or sympathetic to the PKK insurgency. Likewise, support for war or non-violent resolution of conflict may vary across geography. Therefore, there is a strong theoretical rationale to address the multilevel nature of the data.
24. In any case, this category does not alter the results. Results with the full nominal categories are available upon request.
25. Since 2015 was general election year, the survey uses a more straightforward question compared to the 2014 survey: 'who did you vote for in the previous election?' The discrepancy in the distribution of party choice also stems from this fact (Table 1). Because the survey is conducted in December, the 2015 survey responses are for the November election where the AKP gained 49% of the votes (rather than %40 in June). In the 2014 sample, the AKP has only 36.5% but it is very close to the estimations back then, and it is closer to the June election results. The 2015 survey captures the switch of the votes after the June election, and hence the AKP voter base is more diluted as compared to the 2014 sample, which only shows the hardcore supporters. We need to keep this in mind when interpreting the results.

26. The options for the length of school years are: 1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 13, 15, and 17. Since 1997, eight years of education is compulsory in Turkey, but those who were schooled before then may have dropped out earlier. The first four categories capture such drop-outs.
27. Gartner and Segura (2000) suggest that the race and ethnicity of citizens might affect their casualty sensitivity. We examined whether there is an interaction between ethnicity and casualties yet did not find any evidence for it. Casualties affect both ethnicities (Turks and Kurds) in the same way (see Model I1 in Table A1 in Appendix).
28. The effect of elections could be confounding mostly for the casualty effect because it is operationalized as a binary variable, indicating its absence in 2014, and its presence in 2015.
29. The ministries that are assigned a different minister are: Ministry of Labor and Social Security, Ministry of Family and Social Policies, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of National Defense, Ministry of Agriculture and Village Affairs, Ministry of Customs and Trade, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Transportation and Communication, Ministry of Environment and Forestry, Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources.
30. Because the Kurdish conflict started out as an ethnic secessionist war, conventional wisdom may suggest that the minorities would not perceive secession as a threat and this question would only capture the Turkish majority's attitudes. However 34.42% of ethnic Kurds answered this question 'Yes', and this ratio is 50.80% for ethnic Turks. Hence, not every Kurd perceives secession favorably, and a sizeable portion of them associates it with threat to the nation.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank Prof. Banu Baybars Hawks, Prof. Mustafa Aydın, Prof. Hasan Bülent Kahraman and Prof. Osman Zaim at Kadir Has University for allowing us to use the dataset from the research titled 'Social and Political Values in Turkey,' and Lerna Yanık for helping us get access to the dataset. The two anonymous reviewers provided us with very useful input, and we acknowledge their guidance and contributions. The data can be requested from the authors but its release is subject to approval by the researchers who managed the survey study.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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Appendix

Table A1. Interaction models.

	Model 11	Model 12
Year 2015	-1.301*** (0.15)	-1.331*** (0.15)
Casualties	0.287*** (0.05)	0.376*** (0.05)
Ethnicity_base = Turkish		
Kurdish	-1.735*** (0.33)	-1.321*** (0.26)
Others	-0.722*** (0.15)	-0.582*** (0.13)
Kurdish # Casualties	0.255*** (0.09)	
Others # Casualties	0.152* (0.08)	
Party ID_base = AKP		
CHP	-0.008 (0.14)	0.066 (0.16)
MHP	0.507*** (0.17)	0.755*** (0.20)
HDP	-0.155 (0.25)	-0.132 (0.31)
CHP # casualties		-0.012 (0.08)
MHP # casualties		-0.153** (0.07)
HDP # casualties		-0.030 (0.13)
Education	-0.005 (0.02)	-0.004 (0.02)
Age	0.005 (0.00)	0.006 (0.00)
Female	-0.194* (0.10)	-0.200* (0.10)
Constant	0.107 (0.21)	-0.008 (0.21)
Random Effects Parameters		
Variance (Province)	0.635*** (0.23)	0.589*** (0.22)

Estimation Method: Logistic Regression. N = 1916. In multilevel logistic regression models, the level 1 residual variance, $\text{var}(e_{ij})$, is fixed, and assumed to be 3.29. In the party variable, 'Others', and 'Abstain' categories are omitted for more concise presentation. Standard errors in parentheses *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

Section B. Robustness Checks

In this section, we present our robustness check analysis, starting with the justification for the variables we employed in this analysis. First, collective threat perception stands out as an important factor that may influence public opinion directly in the literature. Scholarship on international wars finds that the higher the threat posed by the foreign aggressor, the more citizens support military force (e.g., Jentleson and Britton 1998, Herrmann *et al.* 1999, Huddy *et al.* 2005). Maoz and McCauley (2009) find that those who perceive high levels of collective threat and zero-sum relations with Palestinians are less supportive of compromise with Palestinians (also see: Arian 1989, Huddy *et al.* 2005).

In addition, some approaches in the literature on support for war consider expectations of success in a military campaign to be the most important variable determining public support for war. Voeten and Brewer (2006), for instance, argue that casualties do not influence support for war by themselves, but casualty reports contribute to the public's perception of military success or failure. Gelpi *et al.* (2006), in the same vein, suggest that casualties per se do not explain or always lead to decline in public support; instead, expectations of success matter more.

For Robustness Checks, we added new variables – 'threat of secession,' 'perception of success for Kurdish policy,' and 'perception of success for counterinsurgency policy' – that capture the other explanatory factors mentioned above to sidestep any potential bias induced by omitted variables. The secondary function of these variables is to allow us to test for the role of attitudes where party variable fails. Due to the overlap between attitudes and the party identification, we omitted party id variable from the analysis below. Below, we describe how we went about operationalizing these variables.

Threat of Secession: This variable is intended to capture the perceived collective threat. We operationalize this variable using the question: 'Do you think Turkey is under the threat of secession?' The response categories are: 'Yes,' 'No,' and 'I don't have an opinion.' The question captures the perception of collective threat because its association of secession with a threat taps into respondents' normative evaluations.³⁰

Perceived Kurdish Policy Success: We measure perceived policy success with a survey question asking the respondents' opinion about the perceived success of the government's counterterrorism policy. It asks: 'How successful do you think the counterterrorism policy of the government is?' The responses are on a 5-point likert scale ranging from 'Definitely unsuccessful (1)' to 'Definitely successful (5)'.

Perceived counterinsurgency policy success: We measure perceived policy success with a survey question asking the respondents' opinion about the perceived success of the government's counterterrorism policy. It asks: 'How successful do you think the counterterrorism policy of the government is?' The responses are on a 5-point likert scale ranging from 'Definitely unsuccessful (1)' to 'Definitely successful (5)'.

The summary statistics of the additional variables are in [Table A1](#). In [Table A2](#), Model 1 adds threat of secession, Model 2 adds perception of success for the Kurdish policy and Model 3 adds perception of success for counterinsurgency policy, and Model 4 adds threat of secession and Kurdish policy together.

Table A2. Summary statistics of the additional variables for robustness checks.

	2014		2015		Min	Max
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.		
Threat of Secession						
Yes	0.462	0.499	0.542	0.498	0	1
No	0.437	0.499	0.375	0.484		
I don't know	0.101	0.301	0.083	0.276	0	1
Kurdish Policy						
Definitely Unsuccessful	0.116	0.320	0.186	0.389	0	1
Unsuccessful	0.361	0.481	0.214	0.410	0	1
Neutral	0.273	0.446	0.301	0.459	0	1
Successful	0.222	0.416	0.255	0.436	0	1
Definitely Successful	0.028	0.165	0.044	0.205	0	1
Counterinsurgency Policy						
Definitely Unsuccessful	0.119	0.324	0.243	0.429	0	1
Unsuccessful	0.317	0.466	0.215	0.411	0	1
Neutral	0.308	0.462	0.262	0.440	0	1
Successful	0.228	0.420	0.226	0.418	0	1
Definitely Successful	0.028	0.165	0.054	0.226	0	1

Table A3. Robustness checks.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Year 2015	-0.532*** (0.08)	-0.541*** (0.08)	-0.595*** (0.08)	-0.517*** (0.08)
Casualties	0.156*** (0.02)	0.165*** (0.02)	0.166*** (0.03)	0.160*** (0.03)
Ethnicity_base=Turkish				
Kurdish	-0.842*** (0.14)	-0.846*** (0.14)	-0.852*** (0.14)	-0.857*** (0.14)
Others	-0.351*** (0.07)	-0.355*** (0.07)	-0.370*** (0.07)	-0.352*** (0.07)
Threat of Secession				
Yes	-0.002 (0.07)			-0.116 (0.07)
I don't know	0.067 (0.11)			0.014 (0.11)
Kurdish Policy Success				
Unsuccessful		-0.114 (0.10)		-0.119 (0.10)
Neutral		-0.244** (0.10)		-0.272*** (0.10)
Successful		-0.327*** (0.10)		-0.374*** (0.11)
Definitely Successful		-0.685*** (0.20)		-0.750*** (0.20)
Counterinsurgency Success				
Unsuccessful			-0.337*** (0.10)	
Neutral			-0.458*** (0.10)	
Successful			-0.443*** (0.10)	
Definitely Successful			-0.744*** (0.18)	
Female	-0.113* (0.06)	-0.114* (0.06)	-0.105* (0.06)	-0.105* (0.06)
Education	-0.002 (0.01)	-0.004 (0.01)	-0.006 (0.01)	-0.003 (0.01)
Age	0.004* (0.00)	0.004* (0.00)	0.004 (0.00)	0.004* (0.00)
Constant	-0.008 (0.12)	0.181 (0.14)	0.353*** (0.14)	0.251* (0.15)
Random Effects Parameters				
Variance (Province)	0.215*** (0.08)	0.223*** (0.08)	0.216*** (0.08)	0.229*** (0.08)

The baseline for the variables on policy success is 'Very unsuccessful.'

In multilevel logistic regression models, the level 1 residual variance, $\text{var}(e_{ij})$, is fixed, and assumed to be 3.29.

The coefficients are log-odds. N = 1979 Standard errors in parentheses. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

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