

College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University

DigitalCommons@CSB/SJU

---

Honors Theses, 1963-2015

Honors Program

---

2013

## The Rally Around the Flag Effect: A Look at Former President George W. Bush and Current President Barack Obama

Jocelyn E. Norman

*College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.csbsju.edu/honors\\_theses](https://digitalcommons.csbsju.edu/honors_theses)



Part of the [International Relations Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Norman, Jocelyn E., "The Rally Around the Flag Effect: A Look at Former President George W. Bush and Current President Barack Obama" (2013). *Honors Theses, 1963-2015*. 15.

[https://digitalcommons.csbsju.edu/honors\\_theses/15](https://digitalcommons.csbsju.edu/honors_theses/15)

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@CSB/SJU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Theses, 1963-2015 by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@CSB/SJU. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@csbsju.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@csbsju.edu).

***The Rally Around the Flag Effect: A Look at Former President George W. Bush and Current President Barack Obama***

An Honors Thesis

College of St. Benedict/St. John's University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for Distinction

in the Departments of Political Science and Peace Studies

by

Jocelyn E. Norman

Advisor: Claire Haeg

April, 2012

## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Literature Review</b> .....	<b>1</b>
Presidential Approval and the “Rally-Round-the-Flag Effect” .....	5
Media, Elites, and Rhetoric .....	7
Who Rallies? .....	10
Casualty Hypothesis .....	11
<b>Hypotheses</b> .....	<b>15</b>
<b>Case Justification</b> .....	<b>16</b>
<b>Methods</b> .....	<b>17</b>
<i>Test of Hypothesis One: The Decay of the “Rally-Round-the-Flag Effect”</i> .....	20
<i>Test of Hypothesis Two: The Viability of Mueller’s Three Criteria for a Rally Event</i> .....	28
<i>Test of Hypothesis Three: Alternative Explanations Why Approval Rating did not Fluctuate</i> .....	31
Alternative Explanation One: The Economy .....	31
Alternative Explanation Two: The United States Military Intervention in the Middle East .....	35
Alternative Explanation Three: President Barack Obama’s High and Steady Approval Rating .....	38
Alternative Explanation Four: Lack of Media Coverage .....	40
<b>Discussion and Conclusion</b> .....	<b>42</b>
<b>References</b> .....	<b>49</b>

## Table of Figures

<b>Figure 1.</b> Decay of the Rally Effect (9/11 Terrorist Attacks vs. Killing Osama bin Laden) .....	21
<b>Figure 2.</b> Decay of the Rally Effect (Announcement of the Iraq War vs. Killing Osama bin Laden) .....	25
<b>Figure 3.</b> Decay of the Rally Effect (Capture of Saddam Hussein vs. Killing of Osama bin Laden) .....	27
<b>Figure 4.</b> Barack Obama Job Approval and Gallup Economic Confidence Index, 2009-2012...	32
<b>Figure 5.</b> Do you think the United States made a mistake in sending military forces to Afghanistan, or not?.....	35
<b>Figure 6.</b> Do you think the United States made a mistake in sending military forces to Iraq, or not?.....	36
<b>Figure 7.</b> President Barack Obama’s First Term Approval Trend.....	38

## Table of Tables

<b>Table 1.</b> Incidents that Ignited a Rally Event.....	28
<b>Table 2.</b> Incidents that did not Ignite a Rally Event.....	29
<b>Table 3.</b> Approval Ratings of the Events that did not Ignite a Rally Event.....	30
<b>Table 4.</b> Economic Confidence Indexes and Approval Ratings of the Non-Rally Inducing Events .....	33
<b>Table 5.</b> Appearance of the Non-Rally Inducing Events in Top Five Newspapers (Print or Online) .....	40
<b>Table 6.</b> Appearance of the Non-Rally Inducing Events on Top Five News Channels.....	41
<b>Table 7.</b> Supported/Unsupported Hypothesis .....	42

## **Abstract**

On September 11, 2001, New York City and Washington D.C. were devastated by terrorist attacks. Former President George W. Bush's approval rating surged, a textbook example of the "rally-round-the-flag effect". But why, when President Obama experienced five international events that fit John Mueller's criteria for a rally event, no substantial change in approval occurred? This is a question that previous research has failed to investigate. Employing data from Gallup, The Poynter Institute for Journalism, and *The Huffington Post*, I found that the "rally-round-the-flag effect" influenced Bush and Obama's approval ratings in a vastly different manner, John Mueller's criteria for a rally event are no longer viable, and alternative factors, specifically the economy, United States military intervention in the Middle East, Obama's already high and steady approval rating, and lack of media coverage did not play a significant role in Obama's absence of rally events. This research contributes to the already extensive scholarship on the "rally" effect and provides new insight into Obama's experience with rally events.

## **Introduction**

In the wake of the September 11<sup>th</sup> Terrorist Attacks, George W. Bush's approval rating spiked a staggering 35-points, but what provided him the ability to go from a meager 51% percent to a substantial 86% percent? The massive surge in support that Bush experienced can be attributed to the phenomenon called the "rally-round-the-flag effect." The "rally" effect is the sudden and substantial increase in public approval of the president that occurs in response to certain kinds of dramatic international events involving the United States. The phenomena was first examined by John E. Mueller and since the 1970s has been extensively researched. Despite the immense amount of exploration into the rally phenomenon, little subsequent scholarship has focused on examining the role the "rally" effect had on President Barack Obama's first term or comparing him with former President George W. Bush, who was the beneficiary of three rally events during his first four years in office.

## **Literature Review**

The phrase "rally-round-the-flag" was first used in the song "Battle Cry of Freedom" written in 1862 by American composer George Fredrick Root during the American Civil War. As time passed, the expression became much more significant to the study of political science and international relations. In the 1960's, Richard Neustadt (1960) and Kenneth Waltz (1967) were the first scholars to note the apparent relationship between presidential popularity and international events. In 1973, political scientist John E. Mueller further expanded on this relationship. In Mueller's book, *War, Presidents, and Public Opinion* (1973), he conceived the idea of the "rally-round-the-flag effect" and was the first person to operationalize the concept or express the "rally" effect quantitatively in his model of presidential popularity.

After Mueller introduced the theory and phrase “rally-round-the-flag effect” it has remained a fixture in literature, specifically on public opinion and foreign policy. Following his original theories, two schools of thought emerged concerning the causes of the rally phenomenon. “The Patriotism School of Thought” is embedded in Mueller’s term “rally-round-the-flag.” This school holds that in times of international crisis Americans rally to the president as the anthropomorphic symbol of national unity—a tangible entity that embodies the American flag (Hetherington and Nelson 2003, 37). “The Opinion Leadership School” holds that the rally emerges from a lack of criticism from members of the opposition party, specifically in Congress. If opposing party members appear to support the president, then media has no conflict to report, thus it appears to the public that there is no opposition to the president’s performance (Hetherington and Nelson 2003, 38). Both theories have received criticism, but “The Patriotism School of Thought” is generally accepted to explain causes of rallies, while “The Opinion Leadership School of Thought” is better to explain duration of rallies (Hetherington and Nelson 2003, 39).

After the emergence of these two schools of thought, a third theory about the cause of the phenomenon was developed. It states that the cause of the effect is embedded in the United States Constitution. Unlike in other countries, the Constitution makes the president both Head of Government and Head of State. Due to this, the president receives a temporary boost in popularity because his Head of State role gives him symbolic importance to the American people. However as time goes on, being Head of State requires partisan decisions that polarize opposition parties and diminish popularity. This theory falls closely in line with “The Opinion Leadership School of Thought” (Hetherington and Nelson 2003, 39).

With Mueller’s original claims still largely driving the intellectual agenda, a considerable amount of research has been conducted on the effects of international crises on public opinion of

the government, specifically the president in office (Gronke 2003, 504). The relationship between presidential popularity and international events has been examined within the context of nearly every major foreign policy crisis since World War II. Notable examples are the Cuban Missile Crisis (1962), Iran Hostage Crisis (1979), Operation Desert Storm (1990-91), September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks (2001), and the War in Iraq (2003).

Mueller (1973) utilized the “rally-round-the-flag effect” as one of the four independent or predictor variables of presidential popularity. Mueller defined the rally effect as “being associated with an event which (1) is international and (2) involves the United States and particularly the president directly; and it must be (3) specific, dramatic, and sharply focused” (Mueller 1973, 209). Using these three criteria, Mueller designated 34 rally points for the Truman-Johnson period, which all fell into one of the six categories of rally-inducing events:

- 1) Sudden United States military intervention (Lebanon (1958) and the Bay of Pigs (1961));
- 2) Major military developments in ongoing wars (Inchon landing and Vietnam);
- 3) Major diplomatic developments (U-2 and atomic testing);
- 4) Dramatic technological developments (Sputnik launch);
- 5) U.S-Soviet summit meetings (Potsdam (1945) and Geneva (1955));
- 6) Start of a presidential term, (Truman and Johnson) (Mueller 1973, 210-211).

Mueller’s “rally-round-the-flag” variable was measured by the length of time, in years, since the last rally point. He then separated the rally points into two groups: “good” rally points (for example, the Cuban Missile Crisis) in which the lasting effect on opinion was likely to be favorable to the president, and “bad” rally points (for example, the Bay of Pigs) in which the initial favorable surge could be expected to be rather transitory. However, Mueller found that the anticipated differences in the regression coefficients were small and inconsistent, which lead him



to conclude, “the public seems to react to ‘good’ and ‘bad’ international events in about the same way” (Mueller 1973, 212).

Mueller theorized that the public would support the president because they fear hurting the nation’s chances of success by opposing him, and that at such times the president has an opportunity to look powerful and induce patriotic responses among the populace. For Mueller, only international events were capable of uniting the nation as a whole and generating a rally effect; domestic crises were at least as likely to worsen divisions as improve them. His prediction was that the president’s popularity would continually decline over his term and that international crises and similar events would be able to explain short-term inconsistencies in the otherwise unavoidable decline of approval (Mueller 1973, 213).

In addition to analyzing rally events and the effect they have on presidential approval, Mueller also highlighted the relationship between cumulative casualties over time and inevitably declining support or the “casualty hypothesis”. He theorized that public support should wane in relation to steadily increasing casualties and argued that the public is most sensitive to casualties early in a conflict and decreases as casualties mount over time (Mueller 1973, 266). He also claimed that the mass public is rational and will support war if, and only if, the events of the war ensures that the costs of military actions are outweighed by the perceived benefits of a successful outcome. He concluded, specifically for the Korean and Vietnam Wars, “support for the wars was followed to a remarkable degree to the same trend pattern and was a function of the logarithm of the number of American casualties” (Mueller 1973, 266).

### ***Presidential Approval and the “Rally-Round-the-Flag Effect”***

Virtually all of the relevant research that followed Mueller (Lee 1977; Kernell 1978) found that “specific, dramatic, and sharply focused international events directly involving the United States do indeed redound to the benefit, albeit short-lived, of an incumbent president’s public approval rating” (Mueller 1973, 21). However, subsequent research (Edwards and Gallup 1990; Brody and Shapiro 1991; Lian and Oneal 1993) has cast doubt on the importance of the rally effect in explaining substantial variations in presidential popularity.

Unlike Mueller, Lee (1977) examined the major impact on international events have on presidential popularity case by case to enable him to illustrate patterns of the public’s reaction to the president (Lee 1977, 252). He applied a looser set of criteria for identifying major international events and with these criteria, identified 53 for the period from Roosevelt to Ford. Lee (1977) looked at both Gallup polls for popularity change and the duration of change before approval returned to the pre-event level. He, like Mueller (1973), believed that patriotism was the main cause for the surge in presidential approval, claiming “the president becomes the focus of national attention in times of crisis or other major international events, symbolizing national unity and power...The average man’s reaction will include a feeling of patriotism in supporting the presidential action” (Lee 1977, 253). He concluded that a president can count on an increase in presidential approval following a salient international event, but should not expect it to last for very long or the public to approve indiscriminately of his performance after the major crisis or event (Lee 1977, 256).

Also conflicting with Mueller (1973), Kernell (1978) excluded presidential inaugurations from his collection of rally events, ensuring that only the influence of foreign events on public perceptions of the president would be measured (Kernell 1978, 513). He also refined Mueller’s model, stating the issue with the model is the use of time as an explanatory variable to measure a

president's trend in popularity (Kernell 1978, 510). His rally variable was found to be particularly important in explaining public opinion shifts during the Truman, Kennedy, and Nixon administrations, with each president's approval ratings increasing by an average of five to seven points in the month immediately following a rally event (Kernell 1978, 519). In the end, congruent with Mueller (1973), Kernell (1978) found a substantial relationship between rally events and presidential approval, although the strengths of the relationships varied greatly depending on previous popularity and perceived political importance of the specific rally event.

Some studies have found only a small amount of rallies actually exist and reassess the efficacy of rally events (Edwards and Gallup 1990; Brody and Shapiro 1991; Lian and Oneal 1993). Edwards and Gallup (1990) adopted a broader definition of rally events than Mueller and found that, from 1953 through 1988, most uses of forces resulted in little or no consistent rally effect at all. Most of the rallies that did occur boosted presidential popularity by fewer than seven points and were frequently short lived (Edwards and Gallup 1990, 146). Brody and Shapiro (1991) claimed that Mueller (1973) and Kernell's (1978) criteria for selecting events did not give a significant basis for predicting which aspects would give rise to a rally event and which ones would not. They claimed that the rally phenomenon was far from automatic because a person could easily identify international crises that meet Mueller's criteria in which no significant positive rally took place (Brody and Shapiro 1991, 48).

Brody and Shapiro (1991) also discounted the hypothesis that an upwelling of patriotism in the face of some international threat causes the rally because the public, as Lee (1977) concluded, responds differently to similar international crises. They stated that the opposition leaders sometimes lose incentive to criticize presidential performance therefore the public rallies. The absence of critical opinion leadership can essentially outweigh even reasonably explicit evidence of policy failure (Brody and Shapiro 1991, 77).

Lastly, Lian and ONeal (1993) used a complete list of 102 major uses of force by the United States between 1950 and 1984, and then calculated the accompanying rally effects. Contrary to Mueller (1973), Lee (1977), and Kernell (1978), Lian and ONeal (1993) found no consistent rally effects following the use of military force. The use of regression analysis determined that rally effects were more likely to happen when the “United States was involved in a major crises, when the president’s actions were prominently reported, when the president’s initial popularity was low, and like Brody and Shapiro, there was bipartisan support for the use of force in question” (Lian and ONeal 1993, 296).

### ***Media, Elites, and Rhetoric***

During periods of international crisis, especially war, media, elites, and rhetoric have a substantial influence on public opinion during a rally event (Baker and ONeal 2001; Meernik 2001; Shubert 2002; Kull 2003; Berinsky 2007; Groeling 2008; Kam 2008; Aday 2010; Baum 2010; Gardarian 2010; Hayes 2010). These three factors have been examined in order to account for the variations in public responses to presidential foreign policy initiatives.

In times of crisis, elite rhetoric has the ability to shape and mold public opinion (Baker and ONeal 2001; Meernik 2001; Schubert 2002; Berinsky 2007; Kam 2008; Aday 2010; Gardarian 2010). Specifically, the president has the capability of emerging from the rally event with the ability to marshal support across partisan lines, like the boosted support that was garnered following former President George W. Bush’s defining presidential speech after the 9/11 terrorist attacks (Shubert 2002, 580; Meernik 2001). Also, those who pay little attention to international news are greatly affected by the rhetoric the White House uses to define and explain a military intervention (Drury, Overby, Ang, and Li 2010, 21). Drury, Overby, Ang, and Li (2010) define this portion of the public as “rhetorically responsive.” On the other hand, they

argue that for the smaller portion of the public that pays more attention to international events because their concern deals with policy, rhetoric matters less (Drury, Overby, Ang, and Li 2010, 21). In the end, however, they conclude that White House rhetoric matters. If the president has the ability to define the intervention in simple, compelling terms, he is likely to get a considerable amount of support from the public (Drury, Overby, Ang, and Li 2010, 21).

Although the more informed citizens are likely to evaluate the policy for what it is, a majority of the American public will buy whatever the White House is selling (Drury, Overby, Ang, and Li 2010, 22).

In addition, other political elites are able to emphasize or diminish the impact of partisan identities on approval based on their capability to activate social identities (Kam 2008) and persuade citizens (Gardarian 2010). In the early stages of an intervention, political elites, including media, are often in agreement about the legitimacy of the involvement, granting them great latitude when it comes to foreign policy (Berinsky 2007). When responding to terrorist attacks, Chowanietz (2011) examines political elites in the United States, Spain, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom. He finds that the “rallying-round-the-flag effect” following terrorist acts is common among the political elites of the five countries, prevalent more in Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States than France and Spain (Chowanietz 2011).

Furthermore, the magnitude of the act plays a crucial role in sparking the rally event, as larger attacks are more likely to result in the unification of political elites. In addition, when the attack originates from abroad, mainstream political elites are also more likely to rally behind the president. Chowanietz’s (2011) findings confirm that parties, when faced with a threat (conventional or unconventional) will tend to be less critical of the government at least in the early stages of a crisis (Chowanietz 2011, 21). However, when elites are in disagreement about the merits of the intervention, the public reframes media coverage through the prism of their

political partisanship (Aday 2010). Essentially, elite conflict shapes opinions especially in regards to war because if the political elites divide, the public will follow suit and diverge. Some research even suggests that it only takes a few prominent opposition cues from domestic political elites to induce dissent among ordinary citizens (Berinsky 2007).

Aside from providing a channel for elites to express their views, the role of media has a broader scope and is capable of influencing the public through their own means (Baker and Oneal 2001; Shubert 2002; Aday 2010; Gadarian 2010). The immense growth and use of media in the political sphere has led to the use of priming and framing effects when presenting issues to the public (Shubert 2002). In times of major crisis, the public turns to the government and more importantly to the media for answers, comfort, and protection. For example, after the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, the public was under conditions where they felt threatened and the mass media played on that and framed terrorism in a sensationalistic manner, increasing the likelihood of public approval of foreign policies that they may have otherwise disapproved of (Gadarian 2010).

In the early stages of an intervention, media coverage is typically bloodless and patriotic, aiding in the establishment of a consensus among elites. In addition, the press plays an important role in emphasizing pro-war voices early in the conflict regardless of its merits due to the systemic bias in the American media-political culture toward war (Aday 2010). For example:

News coverage after the September 11<sup>th</sup> Terrorist Attacks conformed in some ways to the conventional wisdom: Bush's administration were the most frequently quoted sources, the voices of anti-war groups and opposition Democrats were barely audible, and the overall thrust of coverage favored a pro-war perspective (Hayes 2010, 59).

Thus, the amount and type of information given to the public by the media will have an immense effect on not only policy attitudes but also the size of the rally itself since that depends on the how the crises is presented to the public (Baker and Oneal 2001).

### ***Who Rallies?***

In order to better understand the surge and decline of presidential approval during a rally event, recent studies have taken an in-depth look into the people who are more inclined to rally (Edwards 1997; Baum 2002; Ladd 2007; Sirin 2012). Research suggests that instead of the increase in support coming from within the president's partisan, the majority of the people that the rally composes of are weak disapprovers, who are found among the opposition identifiers, the less politically sophisticated, and Independents, due to the fact these groups of people are more disposed to support the president in the first place (Edwards 1997; Baum 2002; Brody 2008). They are disposed because they have the lowest threshold to overcome or are closest to the point of ambivalence between approval and disapproval, which makes them most likely to rally behind the president during an international crisis (Edwards 1997; Baum 2002; Ladd 2007; Sirin 2012). This is because "differences among citizens in their levels of political conceptualization and awareness are as consequential as differences in values and interests" (2007, 530).

On the other hand, the portion of the population that has a higher level of political awareness needs more priming, especially through the media and elite rhetoric, in order to stand behind the president (Edwards 1997; Ladd 2007). Unlike the politically unaware who respond to politics without using ideology, the more politically inclined are responsive to their beliefs, which makes priming a necessity (2007, 531). However, in the case of the Iraq War and the War on Terrorism, research suggests that those with high levels of political awareness demonstrated more stable levels of support throughout the course of the intervention in contrast to the less

politically sophisticated whose support decreased as the intervention proceeded and the amount of incurred casualties increased (Ladd 2007; Sirin 2012). This may have been due to that fact that the less politically sophisticated were more surprised by the war going badly. In the end, different levels of political awareness and party identification are important factors in determining the composition of the rally.

### ***Casualty Hypothesis***

Conventional wisdom regarding the United States' sensitivity to casualties emerged in the 1970's after two relatively unpopular wars, Korea and Vietnam (Boettcher 2006, 834). The "casualty hypothesis" grew out of Mueller's contention that public support for war is inversely related to the log of casualties, which remains a dominant view among academics and policy makers.

In subsequent articles, Mueller expands his hypothesis on the connection between casualties and support for a war or a president. In *The Iraq Syndrome* (2005), Mueller reiterates his point that as casualties mount, support decreases. He expands his initial claims about the Korean and Vietnam Wars and casualties by applying them to the Iraq War. He asserts that casualty for casualty, support declined far more quickly than it did during either the Korean or Vietnam War (Mueller 2005). He also found that in all cases, support decreases as casualties—whether draftees, volunteers, or reservists—mounted. In each case, the increase in the number of people who considered the venture to be a mistake was steep during the war's early stages, as reluctant supporters were rather quickly alienated. In Mueller's subsequent scholarship (Mueller 1994; 2005; Gelpi and Mueller 2006) about the casualty hypothesis, he focuses on the logarithm of cumulative casualties, which allows him to capture not only the monotonic decline in public



support over the course of the wars but also the fact that support declines quickly at the beginning of each conflict.

Following Mueller, the causality hypothesis has been examined extensively. A consensus among many scholars is clearly illustrated; public opinion during wartime is sensitive to the accumulation of casualties (Gartner and Segura 1998; Boettcher and Cobb 2006; Eichenberg, Stoll, and Lebo 2006; Klarevas, Gelpi, and Reifler 2006; Voeten and Brewer 2006; Kriner and Shen 2007; Brody 2008; Boettcher and Cobb 2009; Baum and Groeling 2010). The basic view is that as casualties are incurred throughout a military intervention, presidential popularity will decrease. However, there are discrepancies on how scholars examine the connection. According to some, the connection between the two variables is not as simple or direct as previously assumed by Mueller and others (Boettcher 2006; Eichenberg 2006; Voeten 2006). For example, the current War on Terrorism has had “highly politicized context with relatively low casualties, an all-volunteer force, lack of elite opposition (in the beginning), and little prospect of a military draft” causing casualty data to have a muted effect (Boettcher 2006, 849).

Elite rhetoric and media coverage or framing are also factors that are taken into account when determining casualty tolerance among the public (Boettcher 2009; Baum 2010). In reference to the Iraq War, variations in media coverage of casualties continued to influence public opinion, and over a year into the conflict this influence remained independent from the effects caused by the actual level of casualties (Boettcher 2009). In general, media and political elites have the ability to frame the discussion of casualties. They can utilize “investment frames,” which gives them the ability to justify the continuation of involvement and/or escalation. The amount of casualties suffered along with other aspects of war is considered a necessary investment in order to take down the enemy or have complete victory. However, exposure to

these types of frames is dependent on whether or not the individuals exposed to them are for or against the decision to go to war (Baum 2010).

When examining the effect of casualties on presidential approval, different factors were tested: cumulative casualties (Mueller 1973; Boettcher 2006; Baum 2010), marginal casualties (Gartner 2006), body count (Boettcher 2006), and casualty ratio (2006). Cumulative casualties and the casualty ratio put the fatalities into a larger context, which in the Iraq War softened the negative information being broadcasted (Boettcher 2006). “Marginal” casualties are defined as those casualties above and beyond what is experienced in normal operations, whether it be casualties from a single catastrophic event or higher than usual casualties suffered in an ordinary combat event. Gartner and Segura (1998) state that this manner of examining fatalities is critical in determining wartime opinion (1998, 278) and criticize the logged cumulative form utilized by Mueller (1973) because:

- (a) It cannot help but be correlated with time, (b) it homogenizes conflicts with very different patterns of casualty accumulation, and (c) it underestimates the importance of turning points, decisive events and exogenous shocks to opinion (1998, 280).

Lastly, body count frames refer to when the media solely reports on the number of American casualties, which during the Iraq War caused non-Bush voters to establish hardened attitudes toward President Bush and the war (Boettcher 2006).

In determining the public casualty tolerance, contextual factors or the level of importance of a war are also essential to look at (Boettcher 2006; Klarevas 2006). In other words, the more important the cause, the higher the threshold for incurring costs. For example, the nation-building mission in Somalia had a low casualty tolerance, while World War II had an extremely high one. In Iraq, former President George W. Bush lost a lot of support due to the fact that the public no longer perceived the cause at stake to be worth the costs incurred (Klarevas 2006).

Expanding the scholarship further, certain scholars have looked at the relationship between American wartime casualties and electoral outcomes (Kriner and Shen 2007). Kriner and Shen (2007) broaden their scope beyond the president to look at other political elites. They claim that county- and state- level casualties from the Iraq War, despite their small numbers, had a significant and negative effect on the electoral fate of Republican candidates for the United States Senate during the 2006 elections (Kriner and Shen 2007, 523). Results illustrate that voters are sensitive to casualties in their county and state even when the average casualty rates are “11 battle deaths per million residents” (Kriner and Shen 2007, 524). Their results also support the claim that senators incur political costs from deferring to the president in an unpopular war, even when the amount of casualties are significantly smaller in magnitude than those sustained in other wars, like Vietnam (Kriner and Shen 2007, 525).

There is also an argument that the loss of casualties is not the only characteristic affecting people’s opinion about the commander in chief (Geys 2010; Sidman and Norpoth 2012). According to Geys, when voters effectively care about war costs beyond human lives, a skewed focus on just casualties is unsatisfactory. Also, concentrating on one aspect of wars, like casualties, does not adequately explain variances in public opinion across conflicts (Geys 2010, 1). Geys argues that the financial costs of wars are substantial, publicly observed and understood, and can affect the president’s popularity, which is substantiated by data on the United States presidential approval ratings for the period of 1948 to 2008 (Geys 2010, 14). In addition, the presence of war’s financial costs affects how casualty variables are interpreted, such as in the Korean War and Afghanistan/Iraq Wars (Geys 2010, 15).

On the other hand, Sidman and Norpoth (2012) claim there is evidence that confirms the cumulative toll of casualties has no corrosive effect. They take an in-depth look at both the Korean and Vietnam Wars. They found that there was no indication it occurred during the

Korean War and only a small trace was found in the Vietnam War. As stated before, if the public believes that the United States is winning it will accept casualties as the price of victory in war, as the American public did in World War II, causing the rising toll of casualties to have no corrosive affect on morale. However, when the public determines that the war is unwinnable, confidence in the endeavor will collapse no matter the human toll that is incurred (Sidman and Norpoth 2012).

A significant portion of Mueller's original theory can be found in the subsequent theoretical and contemporary scholarship. This further emphasizes how influential a role his ideas play in the study of the "rally-round-the-flag effect" and the variables that cause the swell and decay of it to this day. A key observation that was made when looking at the scholarship was that a vast majority of it focused mainly on George W. Bush, the War in Iraq, or the War on Terrorism. There was a lack of research that focused on the rally phenomenon and current President Obama, especially in regards to the effect it had on his first term and why he only experienced one rally event over a four-year period.

## **Hypotheses**

This research addresses three questions:

- Were Bush and Obama's approval ratings affected by a rally event?
- Are John E. Mueller's three criteria for a rally event supported by the two cases?
- And, why, with a significant number of incidents that were classified as international, did President Obama only experience one rally event in the past four years?

Based on the extensive amount of information in the literature review, my hypotheses are as followed:

**H1:** The “rally-round-the-flag effect” that both former President George W. Bush and President Barack Obama experienced during their first term in office influenced their approval ratings in a vastly different manner.

**H2:** The three qualities that John E. Mueller proposed an international incident must satisfy to qualify as a rally event are no longer viable.

**H3:** Alternative factors, specifically the lack of media coverage, public approval of the post 9/11 Afghanistan and Iraq Wars, the economic confidence in the United States, and an already significant approval rating, played a crucial role in President Obama’s lack of rally events.

## **Case Justification**

Former President George W. Bush and President Barack Obama were selected as the two case studies because during Bush’s two terms and Obama’s first term, they worked in a similar historical and partisan environment. However, there were major differences in outcome after they experienced an international crisis and rally event. In Bush’s first four years in office, he experienced three rally events. His first was in 2001 when his approval rating increased by a staggering 35 points, the largest rally to occur to date, after the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks. The second occurred in March 2003 when his approval rating increased by thirteen points three days after Bush announced the “opening stages” of the war in Iraq. His third transpired in December 2003 when his approval rating increased by another seven or nine points, depending on which Gallup poll is used, after he announced U.S. forces in Iraq had captured former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein alive. In Obama’s first term, only one rally event occurred. His approval rating increased six points after the announcement that U.S. Navy SEALs had raided a compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan and killed al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden.

Comparing George W. Bush and Barack Obama, there is an obvious discrepancy of when rally events actually occur and to what magnitude. Remarkably, Obama has only been the beneficiary of one obvious rally event, even though he has had to deal with several other significant international events. No appreciable change in Obama's approval ratings occurred after Navy Seal snipers rescued a U.S merchant captain held hostage by Somali pirates in April 2009, the attempted bombing of a Detroit-bound flight coming from Amsterdam on Christmas Day 2009, the termination of combat operations in Iraq in August 2010, the United States' recent participation in a military coalition in Libya, and death of Muammar Gaddafi on October 20, 2011. In addition, even when the two presidents dealt with similar situations, the capture of Saddam Hussein and the killing of Osama bin Laden, Bush received a larger increase in his Gallup job approval rating than Obama did.

Descriptive statistical analysis is used to examine the three hypotheses. Descriptive statistics is the discipline of quantitatively describing the main features of a collection of data and aims to summarize the graphs and tables provided by the study. Using this type of research method provides valuable new insights into the "rally-round-the-flag effect" and an innovative comparison between two presidents who have both experienced rally events. In the end, this type of analysis permits the author to conduct the research.

## **Methods**

In this paper, three parts of research are conducted, which helps establish whether or not the three hypotheses are supported. A majority of the data is gathered from Gallup polls and additional information is from The Poynter Institute for Journalism and *The Huffington Post*.

For the first part of the study, Gallup polls for popularity change are used to determine how long it took for the "rally" effect to decay for former President George W. Bush and

President Barack Obama. Bush's three rally events, the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks, announcement of the "opening stages" of the Iraq War, and the capture of Saddam Hussein, are individually compared to Barack Obama's one rally event, the killing of al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden. The first two rally events Bush experienced are also compared to Obama's approval rating for the remainder of his first term in office. The graphs begin with the approval rating a week or so before the rally event and depict the duration of change before the approval rating returned to the pre-event level.

For the second portion of the study, Mueller's three criteria for a rally event are compared to the four rally events that occurred between Bush and Obama, in addition to the five international events that transpired during Obama's first four years that did not spark the "rally" effect. When choosing the five events, Mueller's criteria were used with additional factors such as the level of severity, a rise in approval that was 6-points or over, and were reported on by newspapers and news channels. The events receive check marks if they satisfy the criterion, which is decided by the author. Also, President Obama's Gallup approval ratings are looked at before, during, and after each non-rally inducing event took place to determine if an appreciable rise in approval had occurred.

For the third part of the research, four alternative factors are evaluated to determine whether or not they inhibited Obama from experiencing more than one rally event. The economy factor is assessed by a Gallup graph that compares Obama's presidential approval rating and the Economic Confidence Index (ECI) from 2009 to 2012 and a chart that compares Obama's Gallup approval rating and the ECI before, during, and after the five non-rally inducing events took place. To evaluate the United States intervention in the Middle East factor, two graphs that depict the changing trend of public opinion during the time when the five events took place are examined. The graphs are based on two Gallup polls that ask the questions "Do you think the

United States made a mistake in sending military forces to Afghanistan, or not?” and “Do you think the United States made a mistake in sending military forces to Iraq, or not?” President Obama’s already steady and high approval rating is assessed using a graph that illustrates Obama’s Gallup approval rating trend throughout his entire first term. In order to determine whether or not the non-rally inducing events are highly publicized, the top five newspapers in the United States and five most watched new channels in the United States are used. To establish the top five newspapers, total average circulation, print and digital, is used and to establish the top five most watched new channels, 2012 year-end ratings are used. The five events are then compared to the top five newspapers and top five news channels and receive a check mark if they appear two or more times in a specific newspaper or on a news channel.

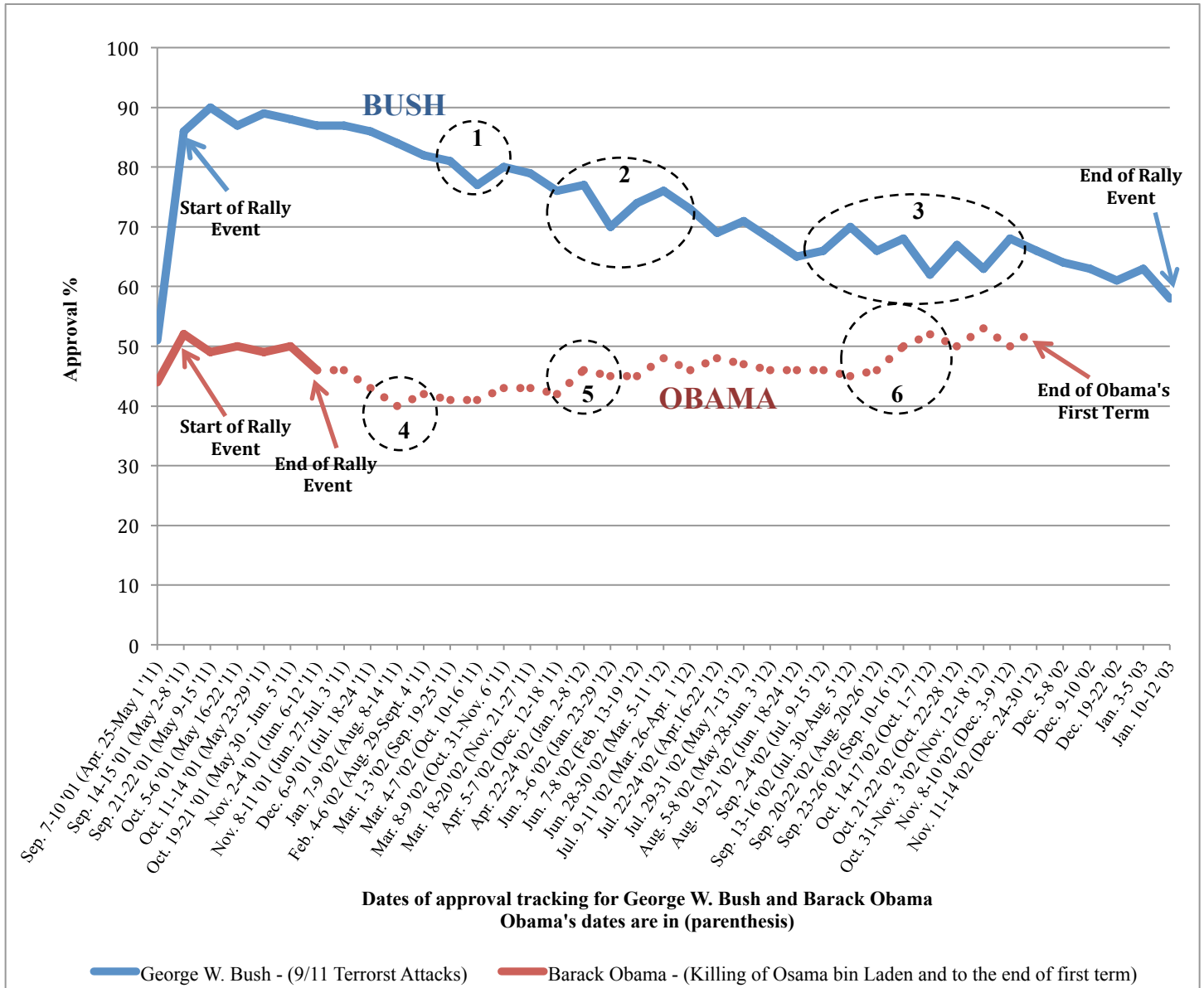
The subsequent section will test the three hypotheses that were presented. To test hypothesis one, the first section examines the decay of the “rally-round-the-flag effect” for former President George W. Bush and President Barack Obama and the effect it had on both the president’s approval ratings. To test hypothesis two, the second section assesses the viability of John Mueller’s three criteria for an international event to satisfy in order to give rise to a rally event. To test hypothesis three, four alternative factors, the economy, United States military intervention in the Middle East, Obama’s high and steady approval rating, and lack of media coverage are evaluated to determine whether or not they played a role in President Barack Obama’s absence of rally events. With all the evidence compiled from the three portions of the study, a discussion and conclusion section brings it all together and presents the implications the research has on the theory, limitations of the study, and the areas that are in need of further research.



*Test of Hypothesis One: The Decay of the “Rally-Round-the-Flag Effect”*

In order to test hypothesis one, which is that rally events affected Bush and Obama in a vastly different manner, three graphs are used. The three graphs depict George W. Bush’s three rally events, the 9/11 terrorist attacks, announcement of the “opening stages” of the Iraq War, and the capture of Saddam Hussein, individually compared to Barack Obama’s one rally event, the killing of al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden. Bush’s first two are also compared to the remainder of Obama’s first term approval rating trend. Each graph illustrates the duration of the effect and the inevitable decay that occurs after a rally event takes place.

**Figure 1. Decay of the Rally Effect – 9/11 Terrorist Attacks Compared With the Killing of Osama bin Laden**



\*Source: "Presidential Approval Ratings -- George W. Bush." Gallup. 2009. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/116500/presidential-approval-ratings-george-bush.aspx>.  
 "Presidential Approval Ratings -- Barack Obama." Gallup. 2013. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/116479/barack-obama-presidential-job-approval.aspx>. (Compiled by author)

Figure 1 shows George W. Bush's first rally event, the September 11th terrorist attacks, when compared with Barack Obama's only rally event, the death of Osama bin Laden, and the remainder of his first term. It is apparent that the "rally-around-the-flag effect" lasted considerably longer for Bush than for Obama. There may be several reasons for this outcome. Firstly, it could have been the specific incident that caused the people to rally: the terrorist bombings of several United States landmarks. Secondly, the staggering 35-point approval spike Bush experienced after the event occurred, which allows for the rally effect to linger longer because it takes awhile for approval to dissipate back to the original approval rating and thirdly, the American public feeling truly under attack and vulnerable.

For George W. Bush, the effect of the 9/11 terrorist attacks was substantial. It lasted for a year and a half before the approval rating declined to 58%, seven points higher than Bush's approval rating before the terrorist attacks, which was 51%. In comparison, the effect that was sparked by the death of Osama bin Laden lasted for only a month and a half before the approval rating decreased to 46%, the same exact approval rating that Obama had before the killing occurred. However, Bush announced the invasion of Iraq just as the effect from the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks was about to completely dissipate. It can be assumed that if the second rally event had not occurred, Bush's approval rating would have continued on the downward trend that John Mueller spoke about and reached 51%, the initial approval rating before the rally event was sparked. It is also important to note that President Obama's approval rating had an upward trend during the remainder of his first term, which cannot be said about Bush.

The events listed below are only correlated with the dates, indicated by the numbered circles on the graph, the dips and surges in approval occurred, they are by no means the cause of the rise or decline. The incidents are merely used to get a better understanding of what was going on in the United States during that specific portion of time. Circle #1 on the graph above marks

the first major dip in Bush's approval rating after the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks. This dip occurred after the United States and Afghanistan forces launched an offensive on al-Qaeda and the Taliban on March 2, 2002 called Operation Anaconda. In addition, on March 6, 2002, eight Americans and seven Afghan soldiers had been killed in Afghanistan. Nevertheless, directly after the dip, Bush's approval rose again around the same time Bush took broad federal action to protect a major American industry. He imposed tariffs of up to 30% on most types of steel imported into the United States from Europe, Asia, and South America. The tariffs gave the American steel producers time to consolidate operations and stem layoffs. It was also around the time when talks of invading Iraq were transpiring, leading to George W. Bush's declaration of war in Iraq.

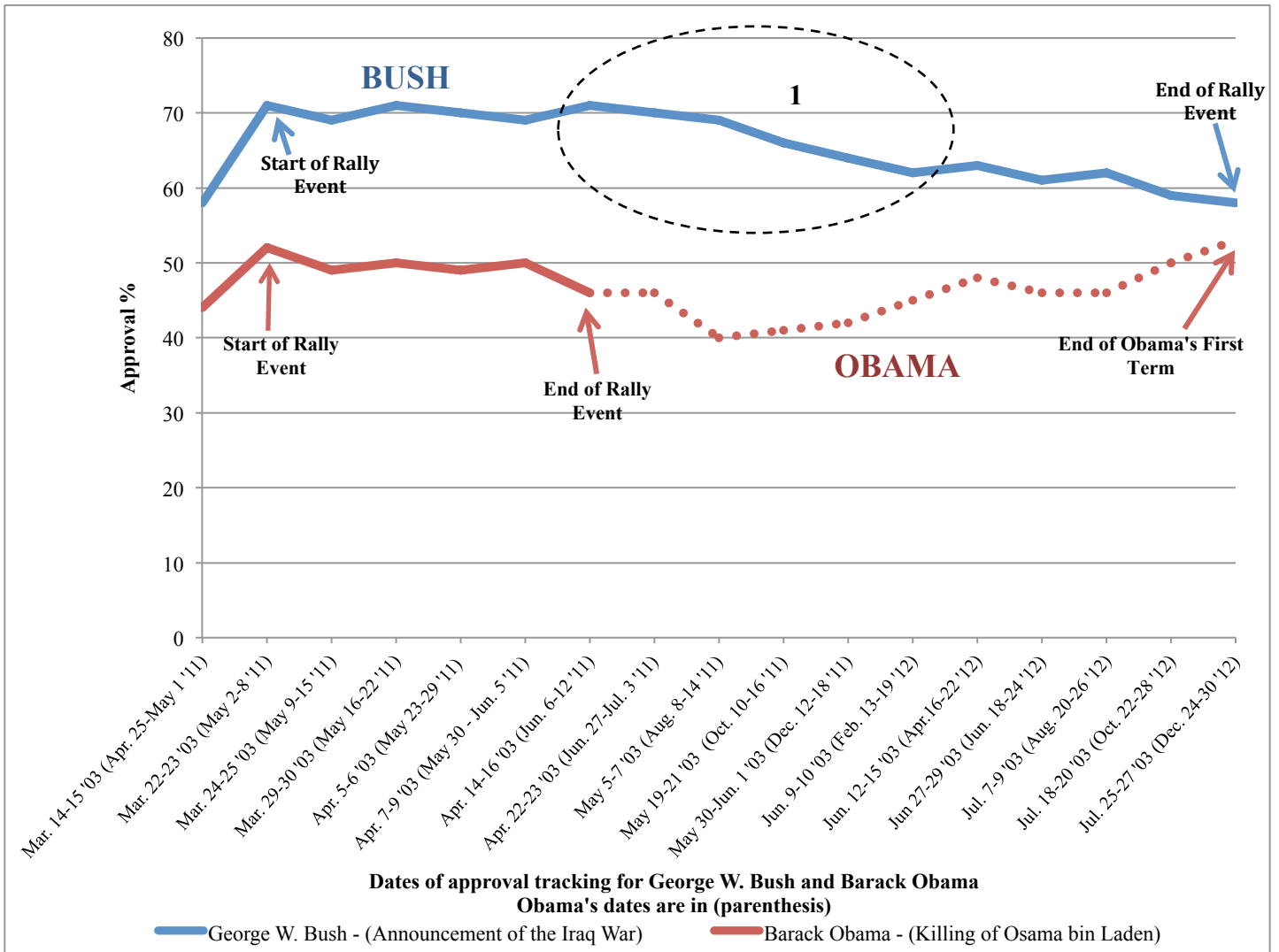
Circle #2 marks the second major dip in Bush's approval. The dip occurred shortly after a barge collided with the Interstate 40 Bridge across the Arkansas River in eastern Oklahoma, killing fourteen people on May 26, 2002. Similar to circle #1, Bush's approval rating rose again and it occurred around the same time former President George W. Bush made a speech that outlined his Middle East initiative, in which he called for "new and different Palestinian leadership" to head a provisional Palestinian state. This was a drastic and surprising departure in American foreign policy regarding the Middle East due to the fact Bush was the first American President to express strong support for Palestinian Statehood.

Several significant incidences took place during the time marked by circle #3 on the graph. On September 4, 2002, President Bush addressed Congress and identified Saddam Hussein as a "serious threat." He mentioned the concept of a regime change and announced the visit of British Prime Minister Tony Blair. On September 12, 2002, Bush addressed the United Nations' Security Council, making his case for military action to enforce UN resolutions in Iraq, which France and Russia, permanent members of the Security Council, and Germany, a member

at the time, voiced severe reservations about. On October 10, 2002, a bipartisan Senate vote of 77 to 23 gave authorization to Bush to use force against Iraq, which was followed by a similar vote of 296 to 133 in the House. In addition, on November 5, 2002, Republicans gained control of the Senate and maintained their edge in the House.

For Obama, circle #4 identifies his first major dip in approval. The dip occurred right after the United States Representatives passed legislation to raise the debt ceiling and avert the 2011 U.S. debt-ceiling crisis. In addition, the Syrian and Libyan Civil Wars continued to escalate and the United States credit rating was downgraded from AAA to AA+. Circle #5 indicates another rise in approval for Obama, which occurred after the United States ended U.S. military operations in Iraq following nearly nine years of the war, Obama signed a law providing for new sanctions against Iran, and during the Republican Party Primaries. Circle #6 illustrates yet another rise in approval for Obama. This happened after hurricane Isaac hit Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Arkansas, President Obama delivered a speech at the Democratic National Convention, and at the peak of the rise, partook in the first presidential debate with Mitt Romney.

**Figure 2. Decay of the Rally Effect – Announcement of the Iraq War Compared with the Killing of Osama bin Laden**



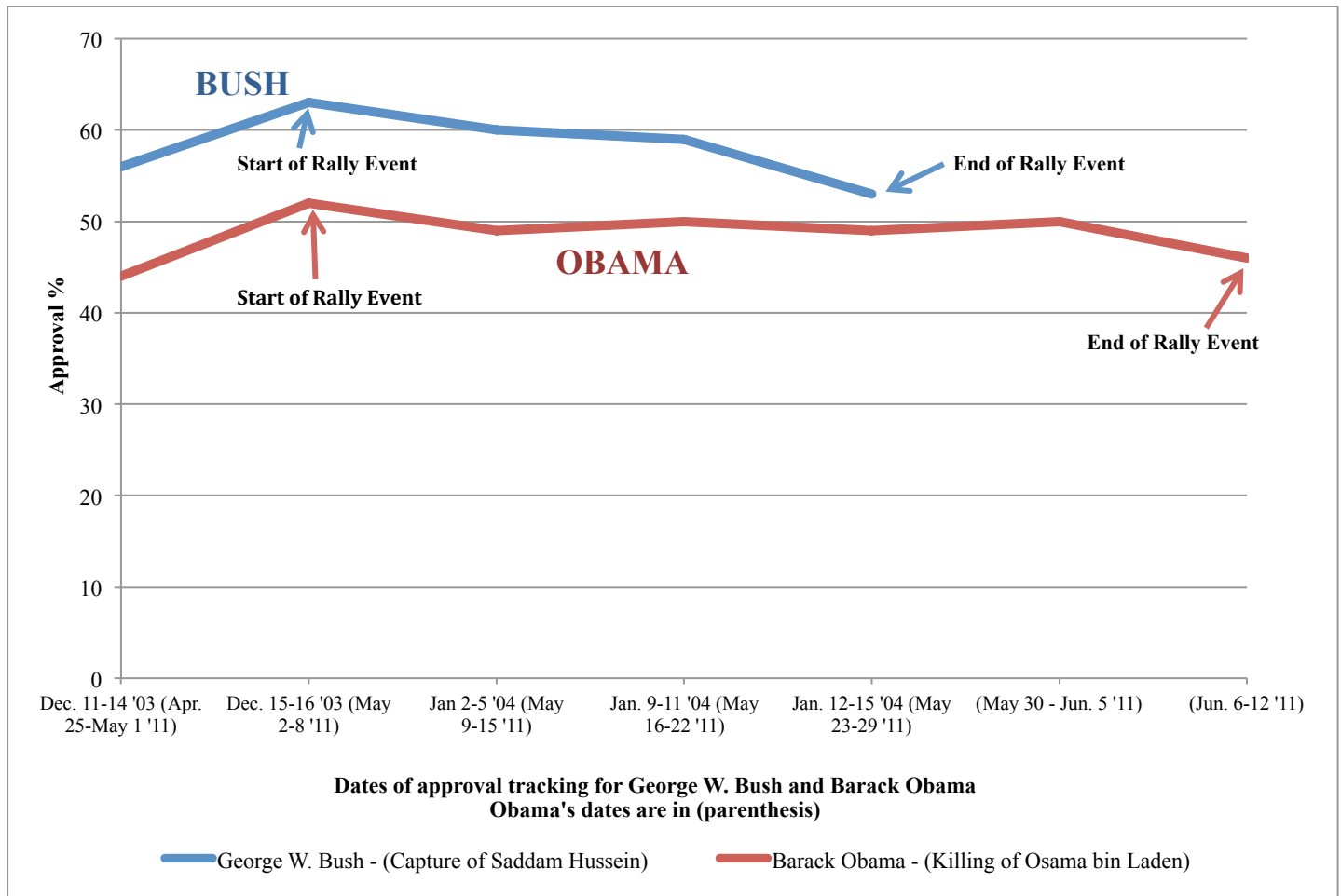
**\*Source:** "Presidential Approval Ratings -- George W. Bush." Gallup. 2009. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/116500/presidential-approval-ratings-george-bush.aspx>.  
 "Presidential Approval Ratings -- Barack Obama." Gallup. 2013. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/116479/barack-obama-presidential-job-approval.aspx>. (Compiled by author)

Figure 2 shows George W. Bush’s second rally event, the announcement of the “opening stages” of war in Iraq, when compared with Obama’s only rally event and the remainder of his first term. The rally effect caused by the announcement lasted for a little longer than five months until it reached 58%, the approval rating before the rally event occurred. Similar to Bush’s first

rally event, this one lasted quite a bit longer than the time it took for Obama's rally event to decay back to the pre-event level. However, Obama still had an upward trend to his approval rating while Bush had a slowly diminishing approval rating soon after the announcement occurred.

Like the first graph, the events listed below are only correlated with the dates, indicated by the circle on the graph, the dips and surges in approval occurred, they are by no means the cause of the rise or decline. Circle #1 illustrates the biggest decline in Bush's approval rating for the duration of the rally. On May 2, 2003, the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics announced that the unemployment rate rose from 5.8% to 6% as employers cut 48,000 jobs. On May 4, 2003, at least 19 people were killed in a series of tornadoes in Colorado, Kansas, and Missouri and on May 8 a F4 tornado hit Oklahoma City and became the 10<sup>th</sup> costliest tornado in United States history. On May 16, 2003, the United States and United Kingdom officials announced a change in policy concerning the redevelopment of Iraq and established that an Iraq-led national assembly would be put off indefinitely, and Allied commanders would remain in charge. On May 23, 2003, the United States Congress passed a \$350 billion tax cut plan, less than half the size of the President Bush's initial proposal and former Vice President Dick Cheney casted the deciding vote. On June 2, 2003, a US Department of Justice internal audit was released and it was asserted that the government systematically abused the civil rights of individuals detained after the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks. And lastly, on June 4, 2003, the United States House of Representative voted 282 to 139 to ban intact dilation and extraction, a process commonly referred to as partial-birth abortion.

**Figure 3. Decay of the Rally Effect – Capture of Saddam Hussein Compared with the Killing of Osama bin Laden**



**\*Source:** "Presidential Approval Ratings -- George W. Bush." Gallup. 2009. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/116500/presidential-approval-ratings-george-bush.aspx>.  
 "Presidential Approval Ratings -- Barack Obama." Gallup. 2013. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/116479/barack-obama-presidential-job-approval.aspx>. (Compiled by author)

Figure 3 shows George W. Bush’s third rally event, the capture of Saddam Hussein, when compared with Obama’s one rally event. This was the only one that did not outlast Barack Obama’s rally that occurred after the killing of Osama bin Laden. As shown by the graph, the effect on Obama lasted a notably longer time than it did for Bush, which could be due to the fact that the former president was already on a momentous downward trend. As stated before, it took the rally effect a month and a half to dissipate for Obama, while the rally effect for Bush took



only three weeks to completely disappear and allow for his approval trend to continue descending. In addition, instead of Obama’s approval rating decreasing immediately after the death of Osama bin Laden, it was relatively stable until right at the end when the effect completely disappeared. Bush’s approval rating during his rally events never remained stable, there were multiple ups and downs before the “rally” effect completely disappeared, especially after the capture of Saddam Hussein.

*Test of Hypothesis Two: The Viability of Mueller’s Three Criteria for a Rally Event*

John Mueller’s book *War, Presidents, and Public Opinion* was written in 1973. Although subsequent scholarship investigated the feasibility of the three criteria offered by Mueller, none of the scholars examined them in the relation to the five non-rally inducing events that occurred during Obama’s first term. Since Mueller’s three criteria: “(1) it must be international and (2) involve the United States and particularly the president directly; and it must be (3) specific, dramatic, and sharply focused” are a little outdated, they may no longer provide a significant basis for predicting the rise of a rally event, which is hypothesis two (Mueller 1973, 209).

**Table 1. Incidents that Ignited a Rally Event**

<b>John Mueller's Criteria</b>	<b>9/11 Terrorist Attacks</b>	<b>Announcement of the Iraq War</b>	<b>Capture of Saddam Hussein</b>	<b>Killing if Osama bin Laden</b>
International	✓	✓	✓	✓
United States involvement (particularly the president)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Specific, Dramatic, and Sharply focused	✓	✓	✓	✓

\*Source: Author

Table 1 shows the rally events experienced by both former President George W. Bush and President Barack Obama compared to John Mueller’s three criteria that an incident must satisfy in order to qualify as a rally event. All the rally events experienced by both presidents

meet the criteria Mueller proposed. Each of the events was international, had United States involvement, particularly the president, and was specific, dramatic, and sharply focused. The fact that each event satisfied the three criteria supports the notion that the points may still have some feasibility today. Unfortunately, there is substantial evidence against this notion and it is apparent when examining the five international events that Obama experienced during his first term as president. Each of these five events satisfied all three of Mueller’s criteria but the predicted outcome, a rally event, did not occur.

**Table 2. Incidents that did not Ignite a Rally Event**

<b>John Mueller's Criteria</b>	<b>Navy Seal snipers rescue U.S merchant captain held hostage by Somali pirates</b>	<b>Attempted bombing of a Detroit-bound flight coming from Amsterdam</b>	<b>Termination of combat operations in Iraq</b>	<b>United States participation in a military coalition in Libya</b>	<b>Death of Muammar Gaddafi</b>
International	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
United States involvement (particularly the president)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Specific, Dramatic, and Sharply focused	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

\*Source: Author

The five international events that President Obama experienced in his first term are as followed: the rescue of a U.S merchant captain held hostage by Somali pirates in April 2009 by Navy Seal snipers, the attempted bombing of a Detroit-bound flight coming from Amsterdam on Christmas Day 2009, the termination of combat operations in Iraq in August 2010, the United States’ recent participation in a military coalition in Libya, and death of Muammar Gaddafi on October 20, 2011. As shown in Table 2, all of the events satisfied Mueller’s criteria but no rally event occurred. This table provides evidence to the claim that Mueller’s criteria do not withstand strict scrutiny. In addition, it indicates that the phenomenon is not automatic, meaning even if an

incident fulfills all three of the requirements it does not necessarily mean that the event will spark a rally or have any substantial effect on the president's job approval rating.

**Table 3. Approval Ratings of the Events that did not Ignite a Rally Event**

	<b>Navy Seal snipers rescue U.S merchant captain held hostage by Somali pirates</b>	<b>Attempted bombing of a Detroit-bound flight coming from Amsterdam</b>	<b>Termination of combat operations in Iraq</b>	<b>United States participation in a military coalition in Libya</b>	<b>Death of Muammar Gaddafi</b>
<b>Approval Rating (%) before incident</b>	61	50	43	46	41
<b>Approval Rating (%) during incident</b>	62	51	45	46	41
<b>Approval Rating (%) after incident</b>	65	51	46	47	43

**\*Source:** "Presidential Approval Ratings -- Barack Obama." Gallup. 2013. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/116479/barack-obama-presidential-job-approval.aspx>. (Compiled by author)

Table 3 illustrates the approval ratings before, during, and after the five events occurred.

It also reiterates what Table 2 supports, that even if there is an incident that satisfies Mueller's three criteria, a president's approval rating will not necessarily change by a significant amount or at all. For each of the incidents, the biggest rise in approval happened after the Navy Seal snipers rescued U.S. merchant captain held hostage by Somali pirates with a rise of 3%. For the death of Muammar Gaddafi there was a 2% increase and a 1% rise following the termination of combat operations in Iraq and United States participation in a military coalition in Libya. However, after the attempted bombing of the Detroit-bound flight coming from Amsterdam there was no apparent rise in approval. Table 3 demonstrates that for four of the events rises in approval occurred but nothing that would constitute a positive rally event.

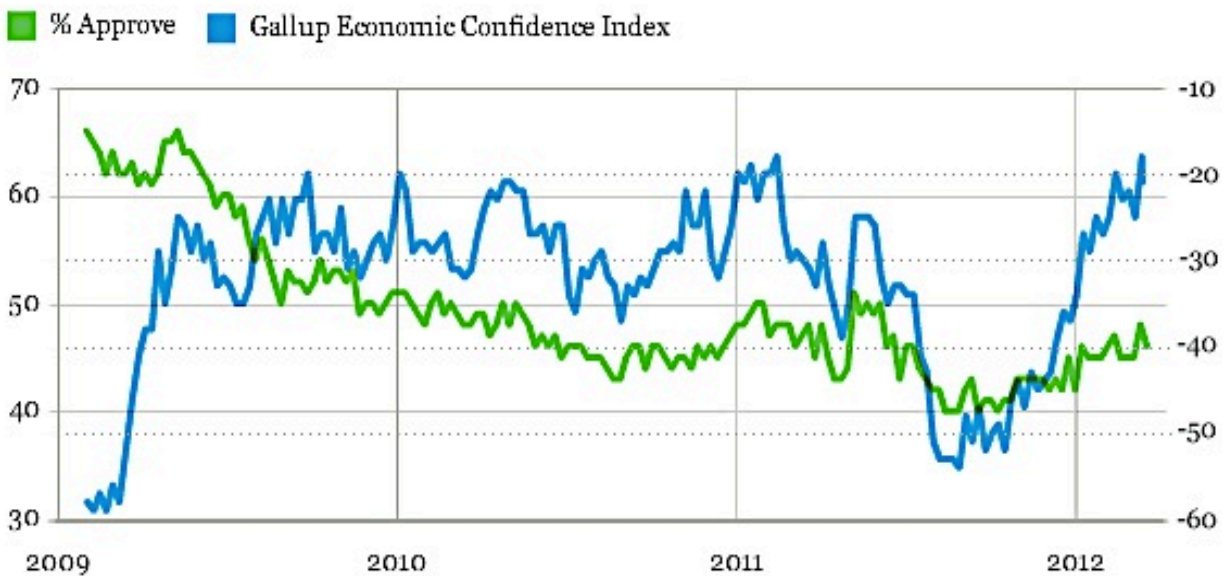
*Test of Hypothesis Three: Alternative Explanations Why Approval Rating did not Fluctuate*

There are several alternative factors that may have contributed to President Barack Obama's lack of rally events. These factors include but are not limited to: the economy, United States military intervention in the Middle East, Obama's already steady and high approval rating, and lack of media coverage, which are all listed in hypothesis three. Looking at each of the factors individually should provide a substantial amount of evidence to whether or not any of them played a crucial role in Obama's case.

***Alternative Explanation One: The Economy***

One of the factors that could have had a major impact on why Obama did not experience more rally events could be the tumultuous economy that the President had to deal with during his first term. In order to test this hypothesis, the Economic Confidence Index (ECI) was used. The ECI is based on the combined responses of two questions, the first asking Americans to rate economic conditions in this country today, and second, whether they think economic conditions in this country as a whole are getting better or getting worse. The results are based on telephone interviews with approximately 3,500 national adults. The index has a theoretical maximum of +100, attainable if all Americans were to say the economy is excellent or good and improving, and a theoretical minimum value of -100, if all Americans were to say the economy is poor and deteriorating (Economic Confidence Index). The similarity between approval and economic confidence along with comparing approval and economic confidence before, during, and after each of the five events that did not induce a rally event are looked at.

**Figure 4. Barack Obama Job Approval and Gallup Economic Confidence Index, 2009-2012**



^Trends are based on weekly averages of Gallup Daily tracking for weeks ending Feb. 1, 2009, through March 18, 2012.

#### GALLUP<sup>®</sup>

\***Source:** Saad, Lydia, and Frank Newport. "Obama's Job Approval Tied to Economic Confidence in 2012." Obama's Job Approval Tied to Economic Confidence in 2012. March 19, 2012. Accessed March 06, 2013. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/153335/obama-job-approval-tied-economic-confidence-2012.aspx>.

Figure 4 or the Gallup graph comparing Barack Obama's job approval and Gallup Economic Confidence Index (ECI) confirms that Obama's job rating does not always reflect consumer views of the economy. The two reasons for this may have been because for the first few years of Obama's first term, Americans still held former President George W. Bush highly accountable for the state of the economy and the historic relevance of his election into office. Since the transfer of blame did not occur yet there was a low correlation between Obama's approval rating and economic confidence from 2009 through 2011. This type of detachment was also apparent in 2009 and 2010, as the debate over healthcare reform was at its peak. Obama's job approval and the Economic Confidence Index began to show more of a connection in 2011,

but it was still relatively weak. However, in Obama’s fourth year as president, the relationship between consumer views of the economy and Obama’s approval rating looks to be quite strong. It is also apparent by Figure 4 that even though there is a general relationship between the confidence in the economy and presidential job approval, specific circumstances can override the basic relationship, like the healthcare debate.

**Table 4. Economic Confidence Indexes and Approval Ratings of the Non-Rally Inducing Events**

	Navy Seal snipers rescue U.S merchant captain held hostage by Somali pirates	Attempted bombing of a Detroit-bound flight coming from Amsterdam	Termination of combat operations in Iraq	United States participation in a military coalition in Libya	Death of Muammar Gaddafi
<b>Economic Confidence Index and Approval Rating (%) Before Incident</b>	(-)38 61%	(-)30 50%	(-)32 43%	(-)30 46%	(-)52 41%
<b>Economic Confidence Index and Approval Rating (%) During Incident</b>	(-)29 62%	(-)26 51%	(-)33 45%	(-)31 46%	(-)46 41%
<b>Economic Confidence Index and Approval Rating (%) After Incident</b>	(-)35 65%	(-)20 51%	(-)37 46%	(-)33 47%	(-)44 43%

\*Source: "Economic Confidence Index (Weekly)." Gallup. 2013. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/125735/economic-confidence-index.aspx>.

"Presidential Approval Ratings -- Barack Obama." Gallup. 2013. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/116479/barack-obama-presidential-job-approval.aspx>. (Compiled by author)

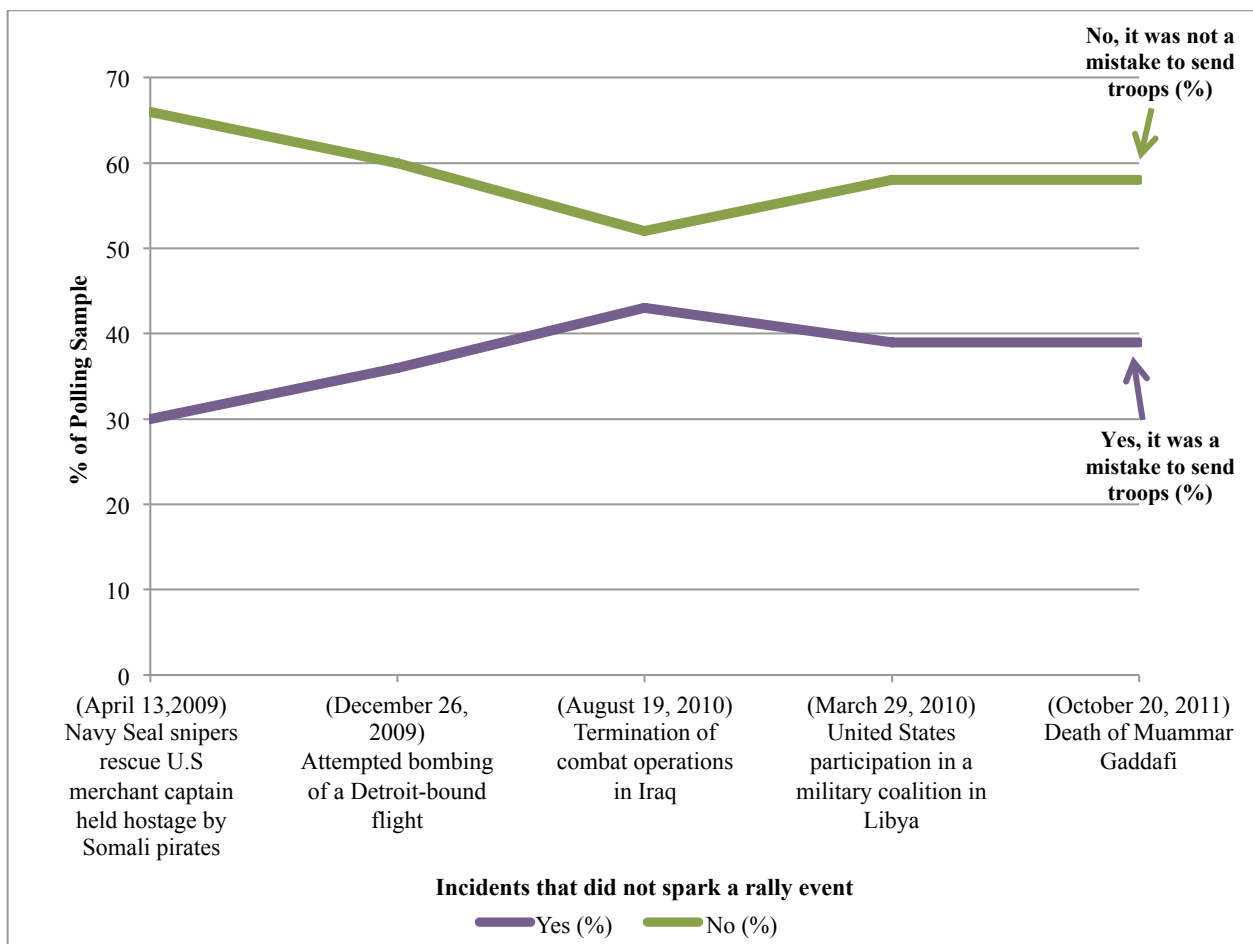
Table 4 illustrates each of the five events compared to Gallup’s Economic Confidence Index (ECI) and approval ratings before, during, and after the five incidences occurred. It also reiterates the point that job approval rating does not always coincide with consumer views of the economy. The chart demonstrates that when the first four events were taking place the people’s view of the economy was relatively steady for Obama, whose highest first term ECI was (-)18,

staying in the negative twenties and thirties. To put this into better perspective, President Obama's ECI before the killing of Osama bin Laden was (-)35, increased to (-)25, and then stayed at (-)25. His approval rating before the rally event was 44%, increased to 52%, and then decreased to 49%. Regarding when the Navy Seals rescued the U.S. merchant captain, the United States terminated combat operations in Iraq, and participated in a military coalition in Libya, the Economic Confidence Index (ECI) did not follow suit as approval increased. During the first event, approval rose as the index increased substantially from (-)38 to (-)29 then decreased back to (-)35. For the second and third event afore mentioned, as the approval rating increased the ECI decreased. The only time the Economic Confidence Index was particularly bad was around the time Muammar Gaddafi was killed. Before the death of Gaddafi, the ECI was (-)52 and subsequently increased to (-)46 and then (-)44. This is the only event when the confidence index was in the negative forties and fifties. It is also the only event where it is possible that the view of the economy was one of the reasons Obama did not experience a rally event. However, for the other four events, this chart discredits that claim that people's view of the economy had a direct correlation to why Obama did not benefit from a rally event.

**Alternative Explanation Two: The United States Military Intervention in the Middle East**

The longevity of the United States involvement in the Middle East, specifically in Iraq and Afghanistan after the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks, may have also had an impact on the lack of rally events experienced by Obama. In order to determine whether or not this had an influence, the public’s view of the Afghanistan and Iraq Wars are examined.

**Figure 5. Do you think the United States made a mistake in sending military forces to Afghanistan, or not?**



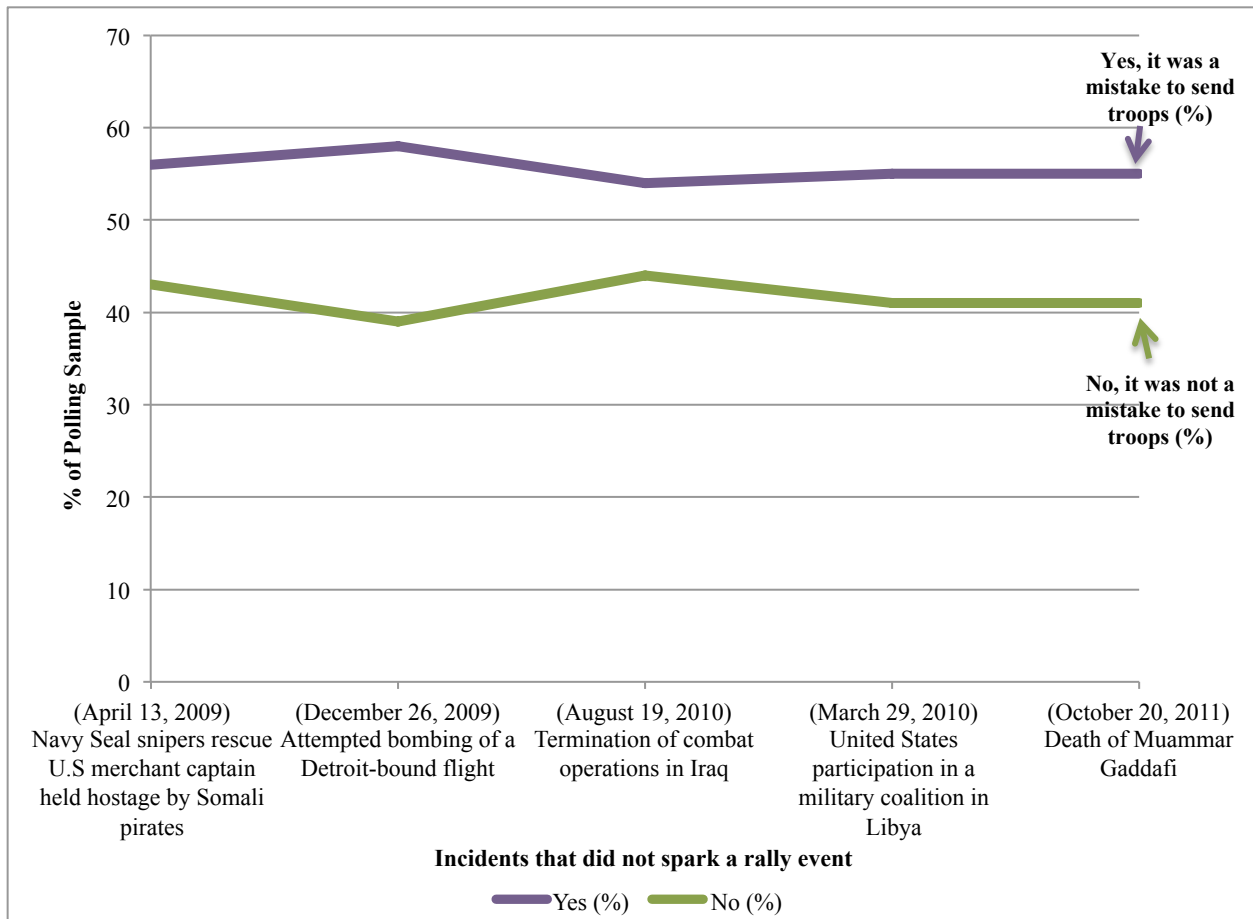
\*Source: "Afghanistan." Gallup. 2012. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/116233/afghanistan.aspx>. (Compiled by author)

Figure 5 depicts the changing trends of public opinion on the question, “Do you think the United States made a mistake in sending military forces to Afghanistan, or not?” The table



illustrates what the public view was on the war in Afghanistan during the time each of the non-rally inducing events occurred. In general, more than half the polling sample at all times thought it was not a mistake to send troops into Afghanistan than people who thought it was. During the time when the event with the Navy Seals occurred the opinion of the people was at its widest margin, with 66% answering no and only 30% answering yes. It steadily decreased until the time when the United States terminated combat operations in Iraq, when people's views were at the closest margins, with 52% answering no and 43% answering yes. After that, the percentage of people saying no increased to 58% and evened out with the people saying yes, which was 39%.

**Figure 6. Do you think the United States made a mistake in sending military forces to Iraq, or not?**



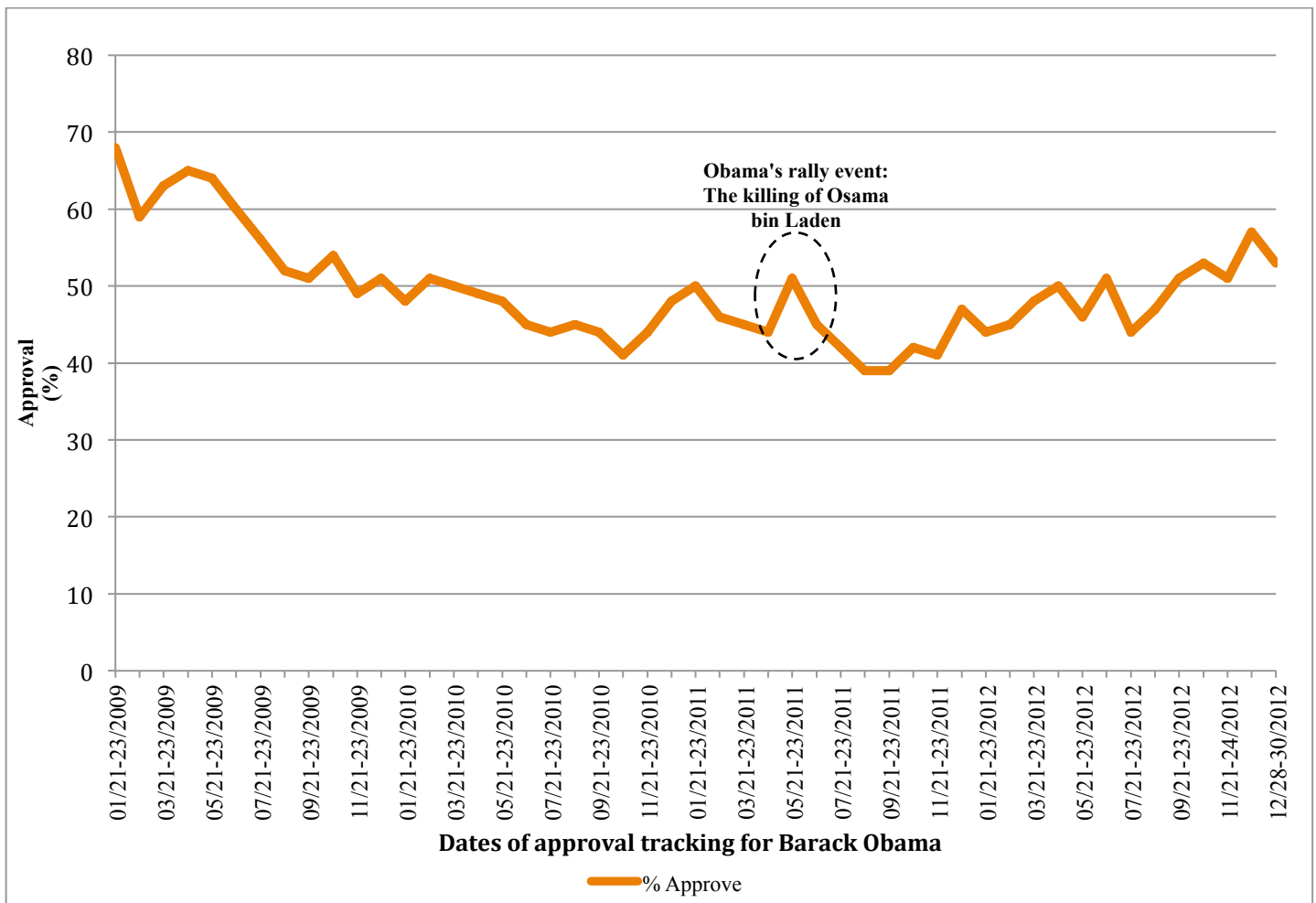
\*Source: "Iraq." Gallup. 2012. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/1633/iraq.aspx>. (Compiled by author)

Figure 6 depicts the changing trends of public opinion on the question, “Do you think the United States made a mistake in sending military forces to Iraq, or not?” The table illustrates what the public view was on the War in Iraq during the time each of the non-rally inducing events occurred. In general, more than half of the polling sample at all times thought that sending troops into Iraq was a mistake. This is completely contrary to the view that the polling sample had on Afghanistan. In addition, the view of Iraq was pretty steady; where as for Afghanistan the line was wavering. The widest margin occurred around the same time there was the attempted bombing of a Detroit-bound flight, with 58% answering yes and 39% answering no. The closest margin occurred around the time when the United States terminated combat operations in Iraq. Similar to Afghanistan around the time the United States participated in a military coalition in Libya and the death of Muammar Gaddafi, the lines are parallel to each other, with 55% answering yes and 41% answering no.

### *Alternative Explanation Three: President Barack Obama's High and Steady Approval Rating*

An already high and steady approval rating would have greatly affected whether or not President Obama experienced more rally events. If people already had high approval of Obama's job performance than it would be harder for a significant sudden spike in his approval rating to occur.

**Figure 7. President Barack Obama's First Term Approval Trend**



\*Source: "Presidential Approval Ratings -- Barack Obama." Gallup. 2013. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/116479/barack-obama-presidential-job-approval.aspx>. (Compiled by the author)

Figure 7 illustrates the tracking of President Obama's approval rating for his entire first-term. As it is shown, Obama's approval was not steady but he was able to maintain sufficient

public support throughout all four years. President Obama started his first term with an approval rating of 67% and remained above 40% except between the dates of August 21-23, 2011 and September 21-23, 2011 when the rating was 39%. Obama averaged 49.1% job approval during his first term in office, which is among the lowest for post-World War II presidents (Jones 2013). What is notable in President Barack Obama's first term was the lack of a major surge in support as occurred for George W. Bush after the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks. As stated before, Obama experienced only a modest and sustained increase in support after the death of Osama bin Laden, which is labeled on Figure 7 and is apparent due to the fact the rise in approval is sudden, substantial, and begins to decrease shortly after it occurs. Obama's job approval average was below the norm and among the lowest of his predecessors; therefore it can be assumed that an already stable and relatively high approval trend was not one of the factors to blame for Obama's lack of rally events.

***Alternative Explanation Four: Lack of Media Coverage***

Media coverage of the events that did not spark a rally event could have also played a major role. If people were not knowledgeable of the events taking place, the likelihood of a rally event would be nearly impossible. Today, a majority of the public receives their news from either a newspaper, print or online, or the television.

**Table 5. Appearance of the Non-Rally Inducing Events in Top Five Newspapers (Print or Online)**

	Navy Seal snipers rescue U.S merchant captain held hostage by Somali pirates	Attempted bombing of a Detroit-bound flight coming from Amsterdam	Termination of combat operations in Iraq	United States participation in a military coalition in Libya	Death of Muammar Gaddafi
Wall Street Journal	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
USA Today	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
New York Times	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Los Angeles Times	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
New York Daily News	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

*\*The event had to have two or more appearances (print or online) in the specified newspaper in order to get a check mark.*

**\*Source:** Beaujon, Andrew. "ABC: Newspaper Circulation Rose in Last Six Months, 5% on Sundays | Poynter." Poynter. July 23, 2012. Accessed February 25, 2013. <http://www.poynter.org/latest-news/mediawire/172294/abc-newspaper-circulation-rose-in-last-six-months-5-on-sundays/>. (Compiled by author)

Table 5 illustrates whether or not each individual event appeared in the top five newspapers in the United States, either in print or online. In all, the Wall Street Journal total average circulation was 2,118,315, USA Today was 1,817,446, The New York Times was 1,586,757, the Los Angeles Times was 616,575, and the New York Daily News was 579,636 (Beaujon 2012). The fact that each of these newspapers circulates to at least over half a million people constitutes the newspapers ability to determine whether or not these events were highly visible to a mass amount of the public. As it is shown, all of the events were present in at least

two articles of each newspaper, either in print or digital form. This ensures that people who utilize the newspaper to obtain their daily news were exposed to the events after they took place and were highly visible.

**Table 6. Appearance of the Non-Rally Inducing Events on Top Five News Channels**

	Navy Seal snipers rescue U.S merchant captain held hostage by Somali pirates	Attempted bombing of a Detroit-bound flight coming from Amsterdam	Termination of combat operations in Iraq	United States participation in a military coalition in Libya	Death of Muammar Gaddafi
Fox News	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
MSNBC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
CNN	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
NBC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
PBS	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

*\*The event had to have two or more appearances on the specified news channel in order to get a check mark.*

**\*Source:** Fung, Katherine. "ABC: Newspaper Circulation Rose in Last Six Months, 5% on Sundays." *Huffington Post*, December 14, 2012. Accessed February 25, 2013. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/12/14/cable-news-ratings-2012\\_n\\_2300780.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/12/14/cable-news-ratings-2012_n_2300780.html). (Compiled by author)

Table 6 illustrates whether or not each individual event appeared on the top five news channels in the United States. Fox News Channel (FNC) has been the most-watched cable news channel for eleven years with the Fox News prime time line up attracting 2,043,000 total viewers in 2012. MSNBC draws an average of 913,000 viewers while CNN's draws an average of 670,000 (Fung 2012). In order to encompass a larger majority of the population, PBS is included for those who do not have cable. As it is shown, all of the non-rally inducing events were talked about on each news channel at least twice. This ensures that for people who utilize the television to get the daily news, they were most likely exposed to these events by one of the news channels. It also proves, much like the Table 5, that all of the events were highly visible.

## Discussion and Conclusion

This study was designed to investigate how “rally” events affected both former President George W. Bush and President Barack Obama’s approval ratings, the viability of John E. Mueller’s three criteria for a rally event, and why Obama only experienced one rally event in the past four years even with the occurrence of five other international incidences. After conducting the research, the following was established:

**Table 7. Supported/Unsupported Hypothesis**

<b>Hypothesis</b>	<b>Supported/Unsupported</b>
<b>H1:</b> The rally effect influenced Bush and Obama’s approval ratings in a vastly different manner.	Supported
<b>H2:</b> Mueller's three criteria for a rally event are no longer viable.	Supported
<b>H3:</b> Four alternative factors played a crucial role in Obama's lack of rally events.	Unsupported

The research presented in this paper provided an insight into certain aspects of the “rally-round-the-flag effect” that have not been delved into. None of the previous research compared former President George W. Bush and President Barack Obama’s experience with the rally effect, investigated the feasibility of Mueller’s three criteria for a rally event by inspecting the five non-rally inducing incidences that occurred during Obama’s first term in office, or examined the alternative factors that may have inhibited the current president from experiencing more than one rally event. Based on the evidence presented and by completing all three parts of the research, the first two hypotheses were supported while the third was unsupported.

The following conclusion can be drawn from the present research: in the first portion the evidence illustrated that the experience former President George W. Bush had with the “rally-round-the-flag” phenomena was divergent from the experience that President Barack Obama had. Comparing each of Bush’s three rally events to Obama’s one rally event provided substantial

evidence to reject the null hypothesis and support the first proposed hypothesis. The “rally” effect that occurred after the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks and Bush’s announcement of the “opening stages” of the war in Iraq lasted a substantial amount of time longer than the effect that transpired for Obama after the death of Osama bin Laden. The only instance when the effect lasted longer for Obama was when it was compared to Bush’s third rally event that ensued after the capture of Saddam Hussein. Not only did the sheer number of rallies Bush experienced cause the effect to play a greater role in his approval ratings but the magnitude of the spikes also contributed to his approval ratings over time. During Bush’s first term, the largest rally event to date took place and gave the former president a 35-point increase in approval in addition to the 13 and 7-point increases from the other two rallies. The one rally event that occurred during Obama’s first term only offered the President a 6-point increase that quickly dissipated a month and a half later.

The killing of Osama bin Laden was a major milestone in Obama’s presidency and even though a majority of Americans approved of the job he was doing, his approval rating declined fairly quickly after the rally to the pre-event level. There are several reasons why this may have occurred. First, the increase in Obama’s approval rating came exclusively from Republicans and Independents, with a 12-point increase coming from Republicans and a 9-point rise from Independents (Jones 2011). However, during the same time Obama’s overall rating of how he was handling the economy was at an all time low, with only 34% of Americans approving (Jones 2011). Therefore, the Republicans and Independents that initially approved of Obama after the death of bin Laden could have changed their mind due to the state of the economy and how Obama was handling it. Second, the public may be experiencing “war fatigue.” The United States has been involved in two wars, Afghanistan and Iraq, for close to a decade and the mass



amount of incurred costs that have come with the wars may cause people to not rally at all or only rally for a very short period of time.

Besides the factors examined in this paper, there may be several other factors that caused Obama to only experience only rally event during his first term in office. Political partisanship has become stronger over the years and is evident in the severely polarized United States Congress. The fact that the people who make up a rally are becoming more partisan may have played a role in Obama's case. "War fatigue" may also be to blame, with the basic idea being that the United States has been in two wars for so long the American public doesn't want to rally for other international crises that the U.S. is getting involved in. In addition to partisanship and "war fatigue," it could be a more controversial factor, race. People's view of President Obama race was clearly evident when looking at change in vote from the 2004 to 2008 elections. In the Appalachian belt, white Democrats did not vote causing that area to seem more republican than it actually is. So even though people are not outwardly stating race as a problem they have with the president, they may be showing their dissent by not rallying and other means.

Unfortunately for presidents, the "rally-round-the-flag effect" is by definition a short lived, sudden, and substantial increase in public approval of the president so even though former President George W. Bush's approval rating was highly affected by the three rally events that occurred throughout his first term, he still experienced the downward trend that Mueller states happens to every president's approval rating. The rally events and similar incidences only create the "bumps and wiggles" presented in the perpetual descending slope of Bush's approval trend. The implications from this portion of the study are that first, based on the event the rally derived from and the magnitude of the surge that ensues, the "rally-round-the-flag" phenomena affects each president that experiences one or more differently, and second, rally events only prolong the inevitable, the decay in approval.

Another significant finding to emerge from this study was that John Mueller's three criteria might be necessary but insufficient conditions rather than predictive factors. So even though all rally events have these three conditions, just because an event conforms to those three criteria doesn't mean that there will be a rally. This was apparent when testing hypothesis two, when the three criteria were put under strict scrutiny and were not able to withstand it, therefore rejecting the null hypothesis and supporting the second proposed hypothesis. The four international crises that sparked a rally event all satisfied Mueller's criteria but so did all the five non-rally inducing events Obama dealt with during his first term. The evidence presented illustrated that the three criteria that were presented by Mueller are no longer predictive factors for when an event will spark the "rally-round-the-flag effect" due to the lack of five additional rally events that should have taken place in Obama's first term if the qualities were accurate. The evidence also suggested that the rally phenomena might not be as easy to predict or as automatic as Mueller proposed.

Another obvious finding to emerge from this study was that the tested alternative factors did not play a significant role in preventing Obama from having more than one rally event during his first term. The factors examined were economic confidence, United States military intervention in the Middle East, specifically Afghanistan and Iraq, Obama's already steady and high approval rating, and the complete lack of media coverage of the five non-rally inducing events. During the time of each event the Economic Confidence Index was fairly steady for Obama, a majority of people's view on military involvement in Afghanistan was positive although it was fairly low for Iraq, overall President Obama did not have a steady or high approval rating, and the five events were featured at least two times in both the top five newspapers and top five news channels in the United States. However, there is a possibility that people's negative view on the military involvement in Iraq and the economic confidence around

the time Muammar Gaddafi died may have played a role. The results fail to reject the null hypothesis and do not support the third proposed hypothesis. They are also congruent with the findings of Edwards and Gallup (1990), Brody and Shapiro (1991), and Lian and ONeal (1993).

Although the research presented in this paper was carefully prepared and achieved its objectives, there are still some unavoidable limitations or problems with the research. Due to a limited time frame, only two presidents that experienced the “rally-round-the-flag effect” were compared. By expanding the sample size examined, the effect rally events has on presidents could be better known as well as improving the measurement of viability for Mueller’s three criteria. Also due to the limited time frame, additional alternative factors could not be examined. If more time were available, supplementary influences could have been examined especially in regards to the economy, foreign affairs, and media coverage. The Economic Confidence Index (ECI) was the only factor of the economy that was compared to the five events that took place during President Obama’s first term; therefore, it would be valuable to expand to look at other economic factors. Although the public view of military involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq were examined it would be beneficial to investigate other foreign affairs that the United States was involved in. Also, in respects to media coverage the events only had to appear in the newspaper two times or more in order to receive a checkmark, which was the same for the television news channels. In addition, looking at just newspapers and news channels did not take into consideration people’s use of the Internet as their main source of news. It would be beneficial to examine the impact of social media due to the fact that in recent years more people have started using sites like Yahoo!, Facebook, and Twitter to obtain their daily dose of news. Even though the evidence provided by the third portion of the study was concrete, increasing the amount of times the event appears on paper, online, or television and examining social media sites may make the it sounder.

Recognizing the study's limitations affords the opportunity for further research. Overall, one could expand the study by comparing more presidents, like John F. Kennedy, Jimmy Carter, and George H.W. Bush, who all experienced rally events to former President George W. Bush and President Barack Obama. By comparing a larger sample size of presidents, the first portion of the study could be expanded and the second part of the study could be duplicated and provide further verification that John Mueller's three criteria no longer provide a significant basis for predicting the rise of a rally event. Using more than two presidents will also allow for a chance to look at how changing realities such as media and partisanship play a role in how a rally event affects a president. Nevertheless, the biggest question that needs further research is why President Obama had only one rally event. A possible approach to tackle this would be by examining additional alternative factors that may have inhibited the "rally-round-the-flag effect" from occurring. These factors include but are not limited to domestic and foreign affairs besides Afghanistan and Iraq, taxes, the accumulation of casualties in Afghanistan and Iraq, unemployment, social media, race, and partisanship. Race is an important factor because Obama is the United States first black president, in addition to partisanship because our government and public have become immensely more polarized. Along with the addition of new factors, developing the factors already examined in the paper is necessary as well. To test the third hypothesis, a multiple regression analysis could also be used to confirm concretely whether or not a factor played a role in Obama's lack of rally events.

The evidence provided in this study assists in our understanding of the "rally-round-the-flag effect", specifically the role it plays in influencing presidential approval for former President George W. Bush and President Barack Obama. The research also cast doubts on the accuracy of John Mueller's three criteria that a rally event must satisfy and tries to provide answers as to why Obama only experienced a rally event after the killing of Osama bin Laden. Further research is

needed to obtain a better understanding of the rally phenomena's current role, why Obama only experienced one rally event, and strengthen the evidence that was provided by the study.

## References

- Aday, S. "Leading the Charge: Media, Elites, and the Use of Emotion in Stimulating Rally Effects in Wartime." *Journal of Communication* 60, no. 3 (Sep 2010): 440-65.
- "Afghanistan." Gallup. 2012. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/116233/afghanistan.aspx>.
- Baker, W. D., and J. R. Oneal. "Patriotism or Opinion Leadership? The Nature and Origins of The "Rally 'Round the Flag" Effect." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 45, no. 5 (Oct 2001): 661-87.
- Baum, M. A. "The Constituent Foundations of the Rally-Round-the-Flag Phenomenon." *International Studies Quarterly* 46, no. 2 (Jun 2002): 263-98.
- Baum, M. A., and T. Groeling. "Reality Asserts Itself: Public Opinion on Iraq and the Elasticity of Reality." *International Organization* 64, no. 3 (Sum 2010): 443-79.
- Beaujon, Andrew. "ABC: Newspaper Circulation Rose in Last Six Months, 5% on Sundays | Poynter." Poynter. July 23, 2012. Accessed February 25, 2013. <http://www.poynter.org/latest-news/mediawire/172294/abc-newspaper-circulation-rose-in-last-six-months-5-on-sundays/>.
- Berinsky, A. J. "Assuming the Costs of War: Events, Elites, and American Public Support for Military Conflict." *Journal of Politics* 69, no. 4 (Nov 2007): 975-97.
- Boettcher, W. A., and M. D. Cobb. "'Don't Let Them Die in Vain' Casualty Frames and Public Tolerance for Escalating Commitment in Iraq." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 53, no. 5 (Oct 2009): 677-97.
- Boettcher, W.A., and M. D. Cobb. "Echoes of Vietnam? Casualty Framing and Public Perceptions of Success and Failure in Iraq." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 50, no. 6 (Dec 2006): 831-54.
- Brody, R. A. "The American People and President George W. Bush: The Fall, the Rise and Fall Again." *Forum-a Journal of Applied Research in Contemporary Politics* 6, no. 2 (2008).
- Brody, Richard A., and Catherin R. Shapiro. "The Rally Phenomenon in Public Opinion." *In Assessing the President: The Media, Elite Opinion, and Public Support*, by Brody. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991.
- Chowanietz, C. "Rallying around the Flag or Railing against the Government? Political Parties' Reactions to Terrorist Acts." *Party Politics* 17, no. 5 (Sep 2011): 673-98.
- Drury, A. C., L. M. Overby, A. Ang, and Y. T. Li. "'Pretty Prudent' Or Rhetorically Responsive? The American Public's Support for Military Action." *Political Research Quarterly* 63, no. 1 (Mar 2010): 83-96.

- "Economic Confidence Index (Weekly)." Gallup. 2013.  
<http://www.gallup.com/poll/125735/economic-confidence-index.aspx>.
- Edwards, G. C., W. Mitchell, and R. Welch. "Explaining Presidential Approval - the Significance of Issue Salience." *American Journal of Political Science* 39, no. 1 (Feb 1995): 108-34.
- Edwards, G. C., and A. Gallup. *Presidential Approval: A Sourcebook*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990.
- Edwards, G. C., and T. Swenson. "Who Rallies? The Anatomy of a Rally Event." *Journal of Politics* 59, no. 1 (Feb 1997): 200-12.
- Eichenberg, R. C., R. J. Stoll, and M. Lebo. "War President - the Approval Ratings of George W. Bush." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 50, no. 6 (Dec 2006): 783-808.
- Fung, Katherine. "ABC: Newspaper Circulation Rose in Last Six Months, 5% on Sundays." *Huffington Post*, December 14, 2012. Accessed February 25, 2013.  
[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/12/14/cable-news-ratings-2012\\_n\\_2300780.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/12/14/cable-news-ratings-2012_n_2300780.html).
- Gadarian, S. K. "The Politics of Threat: How Terrorism News Shapes Foreign Policy Attitudes." *Journal of Politics* 72, no. 2 (Apr 2010): 469-83.
- Gaines, Brian J. "Where's the rally? Approval and Trust of the President, Cabinet, Congress, and Government since September 11." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 35, no. 3 (2002): 531-6.
- Gartner, S. S., and G. M. Segura. "War, Casualties, and Public Opinion." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 42, no. 3 (Jun 1998): 278-300.
- Gelpi, C., and J. E. Mueller. "The Cost of War." *Foreign Affairs* (January/February 2006): 1-4.
- Geys, B. "Wars, Presidents, and Popularity the Political Cost(s) of War Re-Examined." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 74, no. 2 (Sum 2010): 357-74.
- Groeling, T., and M. A. Baum. "Crossing the Water's Edge: Elite Rhetoric, Media Coverage, and the Rally-Round-the-Flag Phenomenon." *Journal of Politics* 70, no. 4 (Oct 2008): 1065-85.
- Gronke, P., and B. Newman. FDR to Clinton, Mueller to? A Field Essay on Presidential Approval. *Political Research Quarterly*. 56, no 4 (2003): 501-512.
- Gross, K., P. R. Brewer, and S. Aday. "Confidence in Government and Emotional Responses to Terrorism after September 11, 2001." *American Politics Research* 37, no. 1 (Jan 2009): 107-28.

- Hayes, D., and M. Guardino. "Whose Views Made the News? Media Coverage and the March to War in Iraq." *Political Communication* 27, no. 1 (2010): 59-87.
- Hetherington, M. J., and M. Nelson. "Anatomy of a Rally Effect: George W. Bush and the War on Terrorism." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 36, no. 1 (2003): 37-42.
- "Iraq." Gallup. 2012. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/1633/iraq.aspx>.
- Jones, J. M. "Obama Approval Rallies Six Points to 52% After Bin Laden Death." May 5, 2011. Accessed October 01, 2012. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/147437/obama-approval-rallies-six-points-bin-laden-death.aspx>
- Jones, J. M. "Obama Averages 49% Approval in First Term." Gallup Politics. Accessed February 24, 2013. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/159965/obama-averages-approval-first-term.aspx>.
- Kam, C. D., and J. M. Ramos. "Joining and Leaving the Rally." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 72, no. 4 (Win 2008): 619-50.
- Kernell, S. H. "Explaining Presidential Popularity." *American Political Science Review*, 72 (1978): 506-22.
- Klarevas, L. J., C. Gelpi, and J. Reifler. "Casualties, Polls, and the Iraq War." *International Security* 31, no. 2 (Fal 2006): 186-94.
- Kriner, D. L., and F. X. Shen. "Iraq Casualties and the 2006 Senate Elections." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 32, no. 4 (Nov 2007): 507-30.
- Kull, S., C. Ramsay, and E. Lewis. "Misperceptions, the Media, and the Iraq War." *Political Science Quarterly* 118, no. 4 (Win 2003): 569-98.
- Ladd, J. M. "Predispositions and Public Support for the President During the War on Terrorism." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 71, no. 4 (Win 2007): 511-38.
- Lee, J. R. "Rallying around the flag: Foreign Policy Events and Presidential popularity." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 7, no. 4 (1977): 252-6.
- Lian, B., and J. R. Oneal. "Presidents, the Use of Military Force, and Public Opinion." *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 37 (1993): 277 – 300.
- Lindsey, J. M., C. Smith. "Rally 'Round the Flag: Opinion in the United States Before and After the Iraq War". *The Brookings Review* 21, no. 3 (2003): 20-23.
- Meernik, J., and M. Ault. "Public Opinion and Support for Us Presidents' Foreign Policies." *American Politics Research* 29, no. 4 (Jul 2001): 352-73.
- Mueller, J. E. *Policy and Opinion in the Gulf War*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994.



- Mueller, J. E. "The Iraq Syndrome." *Foreign Affairs* (November/December 2005): 1-4.
- Mueller, J. E. *War, Presidents, and Public Opinion*. New York: Wiley, 1973.
- "Presidential Approval Ratings -- Barack Obama." Gallup. 2013. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/116479/barack-obama-presidential-job-approval.aspx>.
- "Presidential Approval Ratings -- George W. Bush." Gallup. 2009. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/116500/presidential-approval-ratings-george-bush.aspx>.
- Saad, Lydia. "Obama Approval, Vote Support Both Reach 50% or Better." September 27, 2012. Accessed October 01, 2012. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/157709/obama-approval-vote-support-reach-better.aspx?version=print>.
- Saad, Lydia, and Frank Newport. "Obama's Job Approval Tied to Economic Confidence in 2012." *Obama's Job Approval Tied to Economic Confidence in 2012*. March 19, 2012. Accessed March 06, 2013. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/153335/obama-job-approval-tied-economic-confidence-2012.aspx>.
- Schubert, J. N., P. A. Stewart, and M. A. Curran. "A Defining Presidential Moment: 9/11 and the Rally Effect." *Political Psychology* 23, no. 3 (Sep 2002): 559-83.
- Sidman, A. H., and H. Norpoth. "Fighting to Win: Wartime Morale in the American Public." *Electoral Studies* 31, no. 2 (Jun 2012): 330-41.
- Sirin, C. V. "Public Support for Military Interventions across Levels of Political Information and Stages of Intervention: The Case of the Iraq War." *Armed Forces & Society* 38, no. 2 (Apr 2012): 252-72.
- Van Evera, S. *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*. London: Cornell University Press, 1997.
- Voeten, E., P. R. Brewer. "Public Opinion, the War in Iraq, and Presidential Accountability". *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 50, no. 6 (2006): 809-830.