

**Abstract:** In this paper, I examine the effect that American combat deaths in both the War in Iraq and the War in Afghanistan have on hate crimes committed in the United States. Using two types of paneled ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions, I find statistically significant results that more combat deaths lead to more generic hate crimes. Through a third, standard OLS regression, I find that each combat death has a statistically significant negative impact on hate crimes specifically targeting Arabs and Muslims. Better hate crime reporting is needed from the federal and state governments to allow for further study of hate crimes and their causes.

### **Introduction**

The conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan began in response to the terrorist attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>. President George W. Bush oversaw the invasion of Afghanistan shortly after 9/11 in October of 2001 and ordered the invasion of Iraq to remove dictator Saddam Hussein in 2003. Each conflict devolved into protracted, chaotic fighting, and US involvement in each country has persisted across three presidents and two decades. President Barack Obama ran on a platform that included leaving the Middle East. While he oversaw a large reduction in American presence in Iraq and Afghanistan, by the end of his second terms Americans were still present in both countries. Although US troops were transitioning largely to peacekeeping and training functions, combat deaths have continued through 2019. President Donald Trump has signaled to the public that he too wants to remove American forces from Iraq and Afghanistan, but his recent actions against Iranian military officers in Iraq seem to show otherwise. In 2002, the first full year of American combat in the Middle East, there were 47 casualties overseas. By 2005, there were 926 combat deaths reported.

Hate crimes were standardized at the federal level in 1990 by Congress, but the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) did not start compiling hate crime reports until 1996. In 2001 and 2002, hate crimes spiked, largely as a result of the events of 9/11. In 2001, there were 481 hate crimes against Muslims nationally, and 11,451 hate crimes reported overall. For comparison, in 2000 there were only 28 hate crimes against Muslims and 9,430 hate crimes total. While the total number of hate crimes would return to pre-9/11 levels, hovering between 5,000 and 8,000 after 2003, hate crimes against Muslims remained elevated. As recently as 2018, 148 hate crimes targeting Muslims were reported.

I performed three regressions to evaluate the effect of combat deaths on hate crimes. While difference-in-difference regressions are often helpful in economics, there was no clear point of change in either hate crime legislation or reporting of combat deaths during the time period I studied. I conducted a simple paneled regression and a time-lagged paneled regression to account for the fact that impact of a casualty may take time to sink into a community. The type of person who is willing to commit a hate crime may not be radicalized the day a loved one is killed overseas, but rather as the impact of their loss is felt over the ensuing weeks and months. I also conducted a standard linear regression on monthly combat death data using monthly news reports of hate crimes against Muslims and Arabs as a proxy for unreported monthly data on hate crimes against each specific demographic group.

After performing these regressions, the impact of a combat death on general hate crimes is positive and statistically significant. While the effect is relatively small, when taken across the hundreds of combat deaths annually at the peak of the war, and the thousands of hate crimes committed every year in America, it is fair to say that as deaths accumulated over time, more hate crimes can be attributed to American military casualties. The impact of combat deaths on

news reports of hate crimes against Muslims and/or Arabs is statistically significant and negative. The model laid out in this paper could be applied to any other country that both collects hate crime data and has experienced a military conflict in the same time. I also believe this model would be effective at evaluating hate crimes and other national trends that can be quantified, such as immigration or deaths from an illness that is made to seem ethnic in origin, such as the current coronavirus pandemic. Hopefully, better hate crime data keeping will develop at the state level, which will allow each state to better understand hate crime trends, rather than relying on national level aggregate data to evaluate trends.

## **Background**

### *The Iraq War*

The United States began the Iraq War on March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2003 (“Iraq War”). The airstrikes and subsequent invasion via Kuwait came after months of posturing from American President George Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair, who insisted that the Iraqi government was giving aid to terrorist groups like Al-Qaeda and producing weapons of mass destruction. Iraqi President Saddam Hussein had been in office since 1979 and ruled as a brutal strongman. Hussein refused to leave Iraq when Bush issued an ultimatum, leading to the war. Invading troops, consisting primarily of Americans, faced little Iraqi resistance and were able to capture Baghdad by April 9<sup>th</sup> and US leaders declared an end to major combat by May 1<sup>st</sup> (“Iraq War”).

Hussein was turned over to Iraqi authorities, convicted of crimes against humanity, and executed in December of 2006. His removal, however, proved problematic for Iraq. There was a massive power vacuum left behind and Iraq descended into near anarchy (“Iraq War”). While there were only about 150 coalition troop deaths prior to May 1<sup>st</sup>, the new guerilla warfare that

emerged as a consequence of the law and order campaign led to a rapid increase in casualties. By November 2004, 1,000 coalition troops had died in Iraq. By 2007, the number was over 3,000. Today, the number of American casualties is more than 4,500. The estimated number of dead Iraqis varies tremendously, but leaked US military cables confirmed the number to be over 100,000 in 2010 (“Iraq War”).

The Iraq War was controversial from the start, with few American allies willing to openly support the invasion. As the conflict drew on, support in the United States dwindled as well (“Iraq War”). Incidents such as the Abu Gharib prison photos and the conclusion of the 9/11 Commission that Hussein’s government did not sponsor the 9/11 attacks contributed to the decline in popular domestic support. Nonetheless, the war drew on, and in 2007 President Bush announced The Surge, a new strategy that involved sending an additional 20,000 troops to Iraq in 2007. That year went on to become the deadliest year for American forces since 2004. While The Surge did lead to a decline in violence in Iraq, there is debate over whether this process was naturally occurring or not. In 2008, the Iraqi Parliament announced an agreement with the United States to have all troops out of Iraq by 2011. Newly elected American President Barack Obama committed to withdrawing the last combat brigade by August of 2010, but 50,000 troops remained as a transitional force. The United States declared a formal end to operations in Iraq on December 15, 2011, when the remaining 39,000 transitional troops were called back to the United States (“Iraq War”). However, at present there are an estimated 5,200 American soldiers still operating in Iraq today.

### *The Afghanistan War*

The United States and Britain jointly invaded Afghanistan in September 2001, shortly following the terrorist attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup> (Witte). The US-backed Northern Alliance

captured Kabul and Kandahar by the end of 2001, which was seen as the end of formal Taliban power in the country. President Hamid Karzai was pushed by the US and selected to lead the country at a United Nations peace summit in Germany. Meanwhile, remnants of the Taliban slipped into Pakistan or fled to the harsh rural countryside of Afghanistan. The war appeared to be won in 2004, as Karzai was formally elected with over 80% of eligible voters turning out to cast their ballot (Witte). Only 8,000 US troops remained in the country. Karzai was however an ineffective leader and the Taliban resurgence started in 2005, as the organization adopted Al-Qaeda's strategies from Iraq such as suicide vests and the use of improvised explosive devices.

With stark parallels to the Iraq War, the fighting in Afghanistan slowly dragged on, casualties mounted, and domestic support for the conflict fell. By 2010, more than 1,000 American servicemen and women had died in Afghanistan. Southern Afghanistan was the most violent and deadly. After an American vehicle struck and killed multiple Afghans in 2006, anti-American riots shook Kabul. The North American Treaty Organization (NATO) took command of the war from the Americans but continued to ask for greater American resources as sectarian violence climbed. Meanwhile, in Washington D.C., the war was viewed as a relative success and discussion focused on withdrawing from Afghanistan completely (Witte). The Taliban turned again to the opium trade to fund their efforts, forcing Western forces to combat both terroristic violence and drug trafficking. Afghanistan became the supplier of an estimated 90% of the world's opium.

Once again mirroring the Iraq War, President Obama ordered a surge of 17,000 additional American troops in February of 2009 (Witte). President Karzai was reelected in 2009 despite multiple accusations of fraud and corruption. The commanding American officer, General Stanley McChrystal, wrote in a subsequently leaked report in 2009 that if there was not

a second surge, the entire war would be lost. President Obama then announced 30,000 additional troops were being sent to Afghanistan in the summer of 2010. This strategy led to an increase in American casualties in the Afghan theater, with deaths doubling in the first three months of 2010 compared to the same time period the year before (Witte). The United States also started relying more on drone strikes, including strikes in neighboring Pakistan, who had offered (despite their dubious stance toward the Taliban) to mediate peace talks between America, the Karzai-led government, and the Taliban itself. Osama bin Laden was finally killed in 2011 after he was found hiding in Pakistan. His capture or death was arguably the entire point of the war in Afghanistan, and in June of 2011 Obama announced an accelerated plan for the withdrawal of American forces. The Afghanistan War had its own controversies similar to Abu Gharib, including leaked documents from WikiLeaks showing the United States killing civilians as well as reports that American soldiers burned copies of the Qur'an. While both the US and NATO formally ended their combat operations in December of 2014, Karzai's successor President Ashraf Ghani signed the Bilateral Security Agreement allowing for 13,000 coalition troops to remain in the country (Witte). Since 2001, over 2,400 Americans have died fighting in the Afghanistan War. Again, it is unclear how many Afghani citizens have perished, but Brown University estimates over 150,000 deaths of civilians, security forces, and enemy combatants.

### *Hate Crimes*

Civil rights violations were made a federal crime with the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (United States Department of Justice). In April of 1990, Congress passed the Hate Crimes Statistics Act, requiring the attorney general to collect data on hate crimes committed nationally. This task was delegated to the FBI by Congress, so the Bureau started including hate crime statistics in their Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) program in 1996. Religion and

religious property were specifically enumerated as protected classes for the purpose of hate crimes by the Church Arson Prevention Act, also in 1996 (Faircloth). In 2009, the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act was signed into law by President Obama (Kennedy). This law added gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, and disability to the list of protected classes covered by hate crime laws.

Each state may opt to add their own protected classes to state level hate crime laws, but federal guidelines dictate which classes are protected by federal hate crime laws, and therefore a felony. Four states have no specific hate crime laws of their own, but they are still subject to federal hate crime guidelines. A regular crime can be made into a hate crime if federal investigators determine that even part of the crime was motivated by the victim's membership in a protected class, and 90% of hate crimes are violent in nature (Shanmugasundaram). However, hate speech is legally different from a hate crime. Hateful speech is often protected by the First Amendment. Such speech can trigger a hate crime if it is uttered during the act of committing a standalone crime. For example, using a racial slur during the course of a robbery can elevate that robbery into a federal hate crime. The Department of Justice (DOJ) estimates hate crimes are vastly underreported. A total of 8,819 hate crimes were officially reported in 2018, but the DOJ suspects over 200,000 hate crimes were actually committed between 2013 and 2017. This discrepancy can partially be explained because while the UCR data reported by the FBI is mandated by Congress, nearly 2,000 police agencies around the country did not submit their crime data to the FBI, as participation for individual police departments is not yet mandatory (Shanmugasundaram). The most common hate crime in 2018 was anti-black hate crimes. Motivation for hate crimes is typically one of four categories: thrill-seeking (victims unknown to perpetrator), defensive (crimes rationalized by hate), retaliatory (crimes committed in response to

some larger event), and career hate (membership in groups like the Ku Klux Klan or neo-Nazi organizations), with retaliatory and defensive hate crimes the primary focus of this paper.

Some clarity is needed on the legal distinction between hate speech and hate crimes. Hate crimes, which are the focus of this paper, are relatively well-defined thanks to federal legislation outlined above, such as the Civil Rights Act and Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act. Data on hate crimes is published by the FBI annually. Hate speech, however, is poorly understood in a legal context, and hate speech is not documented or collected in any reports by the federal government, which is why it was not included alongside hate crimes in the scope of this paper. Most legal scholars ascribe the lack of clear hate speech legislation to the First Amendment's broad protections of free speech. While other countries, such as Germany and France, have statutes in place criminalizing types of speech such as displaying Nazi propaganda or denial of the Holocaust as hate speech, American courts have routinely ruled that even the most offensive of political groups is protected by the First Amendment. The case of *Yahoo!, Inc v. La Ligue Contre Le Racisme et L'Antisemitisme* provides an excellent look at why hate speech is largely unregulated in the United States compared to hate crimes. In this case, French courts attempted to bar Yahoo! from allowing listings for Nazi memorabilia on its auction platform. While in France, the courts ruled against Yahoo!, the United States District Court for the Northern District of California found that complying with the French ruling would force Yahoo! to violate their First Amendment right to free speech. The US District Court found that "court made it clear that whilst hate speech is odious, it will be protected under the First Amendment unless it can be demonstrated that such speech contains a direct, credible 'true' threat against an identifiable individual, organisation or institution; it meets the legal test for harassment; or it constitutes incitement to imminent lawless action likely to occur" (Van



Blarcum). The strong culture of free speech in the United States has prevented any cohesive federal legislation on hate speech. Hate crime laws attempt to circumvent this barrier to an extent by making it clear that a regular crime can be elevated to a hate crime if slurs denigrating the victim are used during the crime. To date, no court cases have overturned this part of hate crime law. The strict legal definition of hate speech in the United States has prevented hate speech from being tracked similarly to hate crimes, which is why hate speech is not included in the research of this paper.

### **Literature Review**

My paper is designed to test the hypothesis that more American casualties in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan lead to more hate crimes against Muslims in the United States. There is not a large quantity of existing economics literature on the topic of hate crimes. Most academic literature on hate crimes takes a psychological approach, but there is some economic literature, both behavioral and empirical in nature. One area with somewhat extensive research is the connection between the terrorist attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup> and the ensuing increase in hate crimes toward Muslims. Byers and Jones (2007) used the Uniform Crime Reporting database from the Federal Bureau of Investigations and the Lexis/Nexis news database for reports of hate crimes. They were able to conclude that the eight weeks after 9/11 saw a sustained and dramatic increase in hate crimes against Muslims in every region of the country, except for Washington D.C. and New York City where the actual attacks occurred. The fact that an attack by obviously Islamic terrorists led to a drastic increase in hate crimes by Americans against Muslims is what gave me the idea to examine if combat deaths of Americans has the same impact on hate crimes.

There is a fair amount of academic literature from the United Kingdom about the impact of terrorist attacks on incidents of Islamophobia. While hate crimes are not classified in the exact same way, the fact that the United Kingdom was an active participant as a United States ally in the conflicts in the Middle East gives value to research conducted there as well. Additionally, the United Kingdom has experienced terror attacks from Islamic jihadists. Ivandic et al. (2019) used data from the Greater Manchester Police Department to find that after ten separate jihadist attacks, there was an immediate increase in Islamophobic crimes and incidents. They were able to empirically demonstrate that the level of hate crimes after a terror attack were significantly higher than prior to the attack. This conclusion is significant to me because while not the exact same as combat deaths, I am theorizing that people who are prone to committing a hate crime will respond similarly to the deaths of military men and women in the same way as those who experience civilian deaths due to terrorism. Awan (2014) also investigated Islamophobia in the United Kingdom. This paper focused on digital Islamophobia, specifically hate directed toward British Muslims on Twitter. While I am cognizant of the fact that digital hate speech is not the same as a hate crime in the United States unless a threat of violence or harassment of a minor is involved, the research's conclusion further bolstered my hypothesis. The paper's data showed that after a 2013 terrorist attack by Muslims in England, there was a dramatic increase in Twitter-based Islamophobia in England. This conclusion shows that people are more inclined to exhibit hateful behavior toward a group after an act of violence is attributed to that group.

There were two economics-focused papers that helped me greatly, as well as a book, that dealt specifically with hate crimes. Mirikitani (2010) demonstrated that when the American public perceives our country as "losing" a trade war to East Asia, especially China, Japan, and South Korea, hate crimes targeted toward Asians increase. This conclusion is perhaps the

strongest point in favor of my hypothesis that casualties will lead to more hate crimes because while the United States has not been formally involved with a military war in East Asia since the Vietnam War, the country has “fought trade wars” against the major exporters like China multiple times. Even before President Donald Trump’s trade war with China, America has been on the “losing end” of trade wars such as in the 1980s with Japan. In my opinion, a “real” war will have even greater impact on people who are inclined to commit a hate crime. If economic defeat is enough to motivate hate crimes toward Asians, then the deaths of American soldiers will motivate even more hate crimes toward Muslims. Dharmapala and Garoupa (2004) looked at the actual impact of hate crimes using empirical economic modeling. They found that hate crimes have much more drastic impacts on communities than typical crimes. Community impact is measured in terms of “social avoidance”. When a disadvantaged group fears victimization at the hands of a dominant group that is willing to perpetuate a hate crime, the paper found the disadvantaged group will seek to avoid all contact with members of the dominant group, which leads to negative social externalities by both displacing hate crimes onto other members of the disadvantaged group as well as reducing healthy social interactions within a community. For example, if a man was robbed, there is a small negative social impact on his immediate community. But if a man was robbed and it is proved that he was robbed specifically because he was gay or black or Jewish, there is a statistically significant larger negative impact on his community. While this conclusion does not relate directly to my hypothesis, it showed me that economic-style analysis of hate crimes is possible and important because of the damage these types of crimes do to their communities. Cameron’s 2009 book *The Economics of Hate* attempted to explain what attracts people to hate crimes in the first place. The author found that in certain scenarios, people attain more utility from hateful acts than kind acts. It is also

important to my research, as it validates my belief that someone angry about the death of a friend or family member in combat overseas may get utility from an act of hate toward someone they perceive as “responsible” for the death of their loved one.

Ryan and Leeson (2011) looked at six years of hate crime data in the United States to explore if there is a connection between hate groups present (as defined by the Southern Poverty Law Center) and crimes committed in a region. Surprisingly, they found little evidence that the presence of hate groups in a region coincides with increased instances of hate crimes. The biggest predictor they found was economic hardship of a region. Their research is important to me for multiple reasons. First off, it shows me that I do not have to focus on groups like the Aryan Brotherhood as the explanation for anti-Muslim hate crimes and can freely examine the country as a whole when investigating hate crime incidents. Secondly, it gives me further information as I attempt to conduct my secondary exploration, which is to see if there is a geographic component to the correlation between hate crimes and combat deaths. By tracking the home state of each soldier who died, I am able to group the casualties by location and run the regressions on groups of data at the same time.

Since economic research on hate crimes is in low supply, I expanded the scope of my literature to include circumstantially related research that I thought would support my hypothesis. In the 2009 book *Paying the Human Costs of War: American Public Opinion and Casualties in Military Conflict* from Gelni, Feaver & Reifler, the authors investigated public support in the United States for each armed conflict since the Vietnam War. The researchers found that since the Vietnam War, public opinion of armed conflict has declined steadily, with the exception of a brief period immediately following 9/11 where the public was in favor of invading Iraq. This information is important to my paper because I believe that as support for the

wars in Iraq and Afghanistan falls, each American casualty will inspire more and more anger domestically. The deaths of servicemen and women will start to feel more and more senseless, and therefore lead to more hate crimes being committed in response. Another paper that is related to my research while not dealing directly with hate crimes is the 1998 paper from Rasmusen. He looked at extreme acts of free speech, such as burning the flag in protest. In a certain sense, hate crimes can be viewed as the most extreme free speech of all, as in the United States uttering a racial slur while committing a crime elevates the act to a federal hate crime. The study's author found that even though those committing the extreme act of free speech, which in his paper was flag burning, derive utility from their action, the negative utility that those who are offended by the act take away is greater. This conclusion is important to me because it shows that even though, as shown in Cameron's book, hateful acts can still provide utility, the utility they provide to their perpetrators is not greater than the damage they cause overall. Rasmusen's findings line up well with the findings of Dharmapala and Garoupa and give further economic significance to my research.

### **Data**

Due to the highly public nature of my research topic, data sources were readily available. First, for combat death statistics, I used the website iCasualties. The site has tracked every death in Iraq and Afghanistan from Western forces since the wars started. It includes the name of the soldier, their rank, home state, cause of death, and approximate area of death. While iCasualties is not a government source, it has been cited by dozens of reputable organizations as the leading authority on casualty information in Iraq and Afghanistan, including CNN, *The New York Times*, and the university ETH Zürich in Switzerland. For my project I collected data on every death

from the start of the wars through December 2019. In Afghanistan, 2,429 Americans died in combat in that time period. America sustained 4,569 fatalities in Iraq during the same range. Besides the raw number of fatalities each month, I am also making use of the home state of each soldier who was killed in the Middle East. Having the location data for each casualty allows me to create unique observations for each state and the District of Columbia, as well as a national aggregate, for each year. This expands my dataset from 16 observations if combat deaths were only aggregated nationally, 866 observations from 2002, the first full year of American combat in the Middle East in either war, through 2018, the most recent year in which hate crime data was available. The state of Hawaii was omitted from this paper as it reported no hate crime data until 2018. Accurate casualty data was available from Hawaii. The five territories of the United States, such as Guam and Puerto Rico, were also omitted from this paper, despite their extraordinarily high rates of military service (“U.S. Citizens Defend Democracy, Can't Vote for President.”). None of the territories consistently submitted any crime data to the Federal Bureau of Investigations.

The Federal Bureau of Investigations’ Civil Rights branch is tasked with investigating hate crimes committed in the United States. The Bureau has issued an annual summary of hate crime data every year since. The data breaks down hate crimes in a few different ways. The two classifications I am using for this project are hate crimes at the national level and the state-wide total hate crimes by year. I tabulated the data starting with 2002, the first complete year in which America was fighting in the Middle East. The statewide data will be paired with the information on the home state of each casualty to attempt to parse if the effect of a soldier’s death is stronger in their more immediate community. There is no state level data available on specific types of hate crimes, such as hate crimes against Muslims. This level of detail is only available at the

national level, so aggregate total hate crimes has to suffice at the state level. Some states did not report hate crime data in time for the FBI to include their information in their Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) summary. Most states never missed a year, and those that did only missed once or twice, with the notable exception of Hawaii. The state of Hawaii only provided accurate hate crime data for the final year of the hate crime data set, 2018. None of the five United States territories reported hate crimes with consistency, with the even the largest territory, Puerto Rico, failing to submit crime reports most years. The nation's capital, referred to in the dataset as the District of Columbia, is included in the state-level analysis. The 2019 UCR has not been published by the FBI at the time of this paper. A summary of the data used in this study can be seen in Table One.

Due to the fact that no state level data on specific types of hate crimes is available, I am also using LexisNexis to track news reports of hate crimes against Muslims and/or Arabs by month. I tabulated the number of American news stories that mentioned hate crimes against Muslims and/or Arabs by domestic American news sources each month from 2002 to 2018 to match the crime data. In order to keep my search results as focused as possible, I am using a Boolean search for the exact phrase "*Hate crime*" *Muslim OR Arab*. This search phrase ensures that the query returns only documents that contain the words "hate crime" in that order, not an interview with a police chief talking about how much they hate people who do crime or other unrelated material. I included Arab because while the FBI does not include Arabic as an ethnicity in its UCR, I feel it is a weak assumption to make that the average person committing a hate crime assumes all Arabs are Muslims. The number of results each month for my search serves as a proxy for the number of hate crimes committed monthly against Muslims and/or Arabs and will allow me to roughly represent the data at the monthly level.

Table One

*A summary of key statistics*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Observations</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Dev.</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>	<b>Years of Data</b>
Hate Crimes	866	281.5716	1015.717	0	11909	2002 - 2018
Combat Deaths (annually per location)	866	15.69284	74.24973	0	995	2002 - 2018
Combat Deaths (monthly)	204	43.9902	54.02444	0	511	2002-2018
News Reports (monthly)	204	33.43627	33.13966	0	142	2002-2018

### **Methodology**

To test my theory, I used three types of ordinary least square (OLS) regressions. My dataset, with statistics on 49 states, Washington, D.C., and a national aggregate, was a natural fit for paneled regressions. To panel data, the `xtset` and `xtreg` commands are used in Stata. A dummy variable is generated with the `encode` function so that each location has a unique numerical string variable associated with it. After paneling my data, I was left with 51 statistical groups. For the majority of groups (states that did not fail to submit their crime data to the FBI during the scope of my study) I had 17 observations per group. One advantage of the `xtset` command is that Stata knows to group each data together even if some of the groups are missing observations. For my data, this means that I was able to create 51 panels despite some states failing to report hate crime data for one of the years between 2002 and 2018, and that Stata would still conduct the regression even with a missing year of data. An example panel can be seen in Table Two. Once the 51 groups, or panels, were compiled, the `xtreg` command was run to conduct the regression within each panel and determine the effect each additional casualty had on the number of hate crimes committed. The equation for this regression is represented by Equation One (1). Variable *hatecrimes* represents the number of hate crimes committed each



year in each location, as taken from the annual Unified Crime Report. Variable *combatdeaths* represents the number of military casualties reported per each location annually.

$$Y_{it} = \beta_1 \text{hatecrimes}_{it} + \beta_2 \text{combatdeaths}_{it} + \varepsilon_t \quad (1)$$

Table Two

*An example panel as seen for the first location in the data, the state of Alabama.*

<b>Observation</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Hate Crimes</b>	<b>Deaths</b>
1	Alabama	2002	2	2
2	Alabama	2003	36	14
3	Alabama	2004	3	10
4	Alabama	2005	32	14
5	Alabama	2006	1	14
6	Alabama	2007	6	18
7	Alabama	2008	11	4
8	Alabama	2009	9	11
9	Alabama	2010	19	7
10	Alabama	2011	83	7
11	Alabama	2012	6	2
12	Alabama	2013	6	1
13	Alabama	2014	9	0
14	Alabama	2015	3	1
15	Alabama	2016	14	0
16	Alabama	2017	9	0
17	Alabama	2018	0	0

After the simple regression, I also conducted a time-delayed regression using the lag feature within Stata, as shown Equation Two (2). By affixing “L.” to the front of a variable, Stata automatically lags the variable by one observation. I lagged the variable for combat deaths to account for the possibility that it may take time for the news of a region’s soldier’s death to pass, especially in the pre-social media age, or that the person committing the hate crime may need time to process the death of a loved one. Table Three shows how the lagged Alabama panel data can be compared to the standard data used in Table Two. The results of this lagged regression were then compared to the standard regression’s results.

$$Y_{it} = \beta_1 \text{hatecrimes}_{it} + \beta_2 \text{combatdeaths}_{it-1} + \varepsilon_t \quad (2)$$

In Equation Two, the variable *hatecrimes* still represents the panel’s hate crimes for each observation. Variable *combatdeaths* represents the total number of casualties in the observation immediately prior to the *hatecrimes* observation. Essentially, the previous year’s combat death total was used for the current year’s hate crimes statistics in each location.

Finally, I ran a simple linear regression on the monthly data to better understand how combat deaths impact hate crimes against Muslims and Arabs specifically, rather than the general hate crime data used in the first two regressions. This regression is shown in Equation Three (3).

$$Y_{it} = \beta_1 \text{newsreports}_{it} + \beta_2 \text{combatdeathsmoonthly}_{it} + \varepsilon_t \quad (3)$$

Table Three

*An example panel after combat deaths have been lagged.*

<b>Observation</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Hate Crimes</b>	<b>Deaths</b>	<b>L.deaths</b>
1	Alabama	2002	2	2	.
2	Alabama	2003	36	14	2
3	Alabama	2004	3	10	14
4	Alabama	2005	32	14	10
5	Alabama	2006	1	14	14
6	Alabama	2007	6	18	14
7	Alabama	2008	11	4	18
8	Alabama	2009	9	11	4
9	Alabama	2010	19	7	11
10	Alabama	2011	83	7	7
11	Alabama	2012	6	2	7
12	Alabama	2013	6	1	2
13	Alabama	2014	9	0	1
14	Alabama	2015	3	1	0
15	Alabama	2016	14	0	1
16	Alabama	2017	9	0	0
17	Alabama	2018	0	0	0

## Results

Table Four shows the results of Equation One, the standard paneled regression to estimate the impact of combat deaths on hate crimes. This regression shows that increases in combat deaths per year in a given location lead to an increase in hate crimes in the same year in the same location. The findings are statistically significant.

Table Four

*The results of the regression outlined in Equation One.*

-	<b>Coef.</b>	<b>Std. Err.</b>	<b>z</b>	<b>P&gt; z </b>	<b>95% Conf. Interval</b>	
combatdeaths	4.885717	0.2691086	18.16	0.000	4.358273	5.41316
_cons	205.1603	32.17521	6.38	0.000	142.0981	268.2226
sigma_u	103.15284					
sigma_e	228.30984					
rho	0.16952693					

Table Five shows the result of Equation Two, the lagged regression. This regression shows that greater combat deaths the year prior lead to increased hate crimes in the current year, but at a lower rate than in the current year, as shown in Table Four. There is however a slightly smaller confidence interval in Table Five. Both Table Four and Table Five show that each additional combat death leads to between four and five additional hate crimes being committed in the observed year. The similar results of the time lagged regression indicate that there is little chance that the impact of the death is not felt until after some time has passed.

Table Five

*The results of the regression outlined in Equation One.*

-	Coef.	Std. Err.	z	P> z	95% Conf. Interval	
combatdeaths.L1	4.646961	0.2894787	16.05	0.000	4.079594	5.214329
_cons	200.7082	33.08056	6.07	0.000	135.8715	265.5449
sigma_u	99.052382					
sigma_e	234.36949					
rho	0.15154941					

Table Six shows the results of Equation Three. In stark contrast to the first two equations, Equation Three returned a statistically significant negative result for the effect of a combat death on the number of news reports of hate crimes against Muslims and/or Arabs specifically.

Table Six

*The results of the regression outlined in Equation Three.*

-	Coef.	Std. Err.	z	P> z	95% Conf. Interval	
combatdeathsmonthly	-0.5317618	0.108427	-4.90	0.000	-0.7455558	-0.3179678
_cons	61.77033	5.098191	12.12	0.000	51.71783	71.82283

## **Conclusion**

The premise of this paper is to investigate whether American combat deaths in the Middle East lead to increased hate crimes against Muslims and Arabs in the United States. Each casualty hits its local community harder than the national American community, particularly in smaller states, so in an attempt to better answer this question national level data as well as state level data were both evaluated. I theorized that if a state lost more residents fighting overseas, then other residents would commit further hate crimes due to anger and grief over the death of a fellow American. I suspected these hate crimes would be targeted against Muslims and Arabs, for they represent the citizens of Iraq and Afghanistan in the minds of hateful Americans. I find that the relationship between combat deaths and hate crimes is a positive one, but inconclusive when referring specifically to Muslims and Arabs.

The primary limitations of this paper are the availability of data. The FBI reports hate crimes in a limited scope in their annual UCR summaries. There is no state by state data on the targets of hate crimes, nor is there total monthly hate crime data for each state, only annual. Acknowledging that combat casualty data is available in much greater detail, I believe that if the hate crime data was similarly abundant then I could have come to a stronger conclusion in favor of my theory that combat deaths in the Middle East lead to hate crimes against Americans of apparent Middle Eastern ethnicity.

I believe the overall conclusion that more combat deaths lead to more hate crimes is valid. Military deaths tend to dominate local reporting, especially in smaller towns and cities. The American culture of an all-voluntary military leads to the overwhelming majority of servicemen and women to be painted as heroes after their death in the line of duty. The death of a hero inspires

anger and may push those otherwise unlikely to commit a hate crime toward doing so, especially because all of the deaths happen overseas in foreign land.

Regarding the similarity of the results from Equation One and the lagged Equation Two, I believe that the process surrounding American military funerals explains the similar results. When a soldier is killed in the line of duty, the military funeral process begins almost instantly (Biggio). Dedicated Casualty Assistance Officers are dispatched to inform next of kin of the death of their loved one. The American military's formulaic process for each death appears to largely remove any cultural uniqueness surrounding the grief process, as regardless of ethnicity or religion, the armed forces handle notification of death the same for all soldiers. Anyone who is going to be radicalized into committing a hate crime due to the death of a soldier is going to find out about that soldier's death relatively quickly, enabling them to act on their anger by committing their hate crime in close proximity to the time of the death.

There are two possible ways to interpret the results of Equation Three, and this is where I most wish there was more granular data on hate crimes available. With news reports on hate crimes specifically against Muslims and/or Arabs serving as a proxy for data about monthly hate crimes against this population, I created the best representation I could for this unreported monthly data. One interpretation is that since hate crimes were not even reported until 1996, they slowly became relatively unexciting news. Each successive hate crime drew less coverage, just as I suspect each combat death during the wars became gradually less of a sensational media event. This would then mean that monthly news mentions of hate crimes stayed mostly constant unless some significant event occurred. The news data backs this conclusion. It is also possible that the conclusion drawn by Byers and Jones, where they showed that hate crimes targeting Muslims and Arabs in the New York City and Washington, D.C. metro areas decreased after

9/11 despite increasing nationwide, played out on a national scale. As the war fell in popularity, beginning around the second term of President George H. W. Bush, combat deaths no longer inspired anger against Muslims and Arabs, but anger toward the American government.

Americans no longer felt like their loved ones and community members were dying for a noble cause, similarly to what happened with the Vietnam War. The unpopular nature of the war muted would-be criminals desire to commit hate crimes against those who, in their minds, represented the Iraqi and Afghan militants who were responsible for the death of an American soldier.

I believe the relatively statistically small impact of each death on the increase in general hate crimes is due to the fact that a soldier's death may not resonate outside of his or her immediate network. In a small town, the entire area is likely to be made aware of the death of a community member in combat. But if the soldier was a resident of a city, especially a major urban area like Los Angeles or Chicago, their death is unlikely to be front page news. The impact of their death is then limited to those who are made aware of the death in combat in the first place. However, small town and rural communities are more likely to be culturally and racially homogenous (Murray). I suspect this means that these communities, which contain relatively fewer minorities than large urban areas where a soldier's death is not as likely to be the focus of local reporting, contain the types of people who are more likely to be severely impacted by the death of a soldier overseas. If large media markets reported on combat deaths to the extent that smaller media markets do, then I also suspect there would be greater increase in hate crimes as a result of each combat death, as there are more minorities in a geographically small area who could be victims of the hate crimes.

I also suspect that the limited impact of each death would have changed if the wars in the Middle East were either much larger or much smaller in scale. If they were full-scale wars, with tens of thousands of casualties in each state like in World War Two, then I believe the deaths



would have had more of an impact. While it would have been even easier to ignore specific casualties, the pervasive sense of loss would have hung over the American community as a whole. During World War Two, Japanese Americans were forcibly removed from their homes and made to live in internment camps for the duration of the war. This mistreatment was not the result of any specific American death at the hands of the Japanese, but rather the shock at the fact that America was hit by an opposing military force on domestic soil for the first time in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Pearl Harbor and the ensuing Japanese expansion into the Pacific island territories was impossible to ignore. The constant media coverage of Japan's actions during World War Two led to the development of a general anti-Japanese national sentiment. If the conflicts in the Middle East had approached this scale, or if 9/11 style terrorist attacks were conducted throughout the war, I believe the national racial climate would have been the same, except with anti-Arab sentiments instead of anti-Japanese.

Similarly, if the wars in the Middle East were extremely limited in scope, with very few casualties, each casualty would have grabbed the national attention. This is similar to what plays out with school shootings such as Sandy Hook and Columbine. There are limited victims compared to an event like the falling of the World Trade Center towers, so each victim receives personalized attention in the media. I believe that if each soldier who died was given the level of attention consistent with that of a victim of a mass shooting, there would have been more general awareness of each casualty. In turn, this increased awareness would have led to greater hostility toward Arab Americans, leading to more hate crimes being committed.

The fact that each state was reduced to annual data for its regression, rather than monthly data, is the fault of the hate crime data collected by the FBI each year. Preferably, the states would collect monthly data and categorize it by victim type, which would allow the states'

individual regressions to be as robust as the national news report regression. If the states were likely to all be statistically significant, I would have liked to control for racism in each state. Racism is a notoriously hard factor to measure but hate crimes per capita could be a potential control variable. Similarly, if the state data was bound to be statistically significant, controlling for the populations of each state could be important. Either that, or the military service per capita of each state. I believe that with this additional question, further research on whether hate crimes are inspired by the loss of servicemen and women or not could be conducted. I also think the current pandemic and quarantine, caused by the COVID-19 virus, presents a scenario where similar hate crime research could be conducted. Here the potential victims are Asian-Americans, and the variable in question would be the number of COVID-19 cases or deaths in each state. Once again, the lack of monthly hate crime data and specific state by state hate crime data limits the ability to study hate crimes targeting a specific demographic, but if a more accurate proxy than news reports about hate crimes is determined, then this research could help explain why hate crimes against the Asian-American community increased more in some areas rather than others.

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