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Partisanship and Foreign Policy

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Introduction to Research

▪This study explores how partisanship affects attitudes towards foreign policy. In particular how it impacts views on defense spending, whether the war on terror was worth the cost, and the approval of the President handling of the war in Afghanistan.

▪Throughout much of the Cold War period there has been strong bipartisanship amongst the two political parties. Due to the looming threat of a potential all out war with the Soviet Union the cooperation between the two parties was necessary to insure the security of the nation. Congress seemed to take a step back and allowed the executive branch to assume a leading role on matters of foreign. Following the end of the Cold War, Congress began to regain its clout over foreign policy affairs. With this came an increasing divergence within Congress specifically towards foreign policy.

- More recently in a post 9/11 context partisanship discrepancy between Republicans and Democrats has increased even more. .
- Republicans perceive foreign policy in terms of military threats especially from terrorist networks and state regimes that sponsor them.
- While Democrats focus on economic and humanitarian issues.
- Attitudes towards defense spending have fluctuated throughout the course of the Cold war.
- In the beginning Democrats favored increasing military defense spending while Republicans were opposed to it.
- In the mid 1960’ s the party attitudes had switched and Republicans became more supportive of increasing the funds for defense spending while the Democrats became more opposed.

Theory

In the post 9/11 climate Republicans have taken a more interventionist approach on matters of foreign policy while Democrats are represented to be more dovish and isolationist. Because of this Republicans would lean towards increasing defense spending more than Democrats.

Result

Quantitative data revealed no significant difference between Republican and Democrat attitudes towards increasing defense spending. Data showed that Democrats much more supportive of decreasing defense spending or keeping it as it is.

Hypotheses:

H 1: Republicans are more likely to be in favor of increasing defense spending more than Democrats.

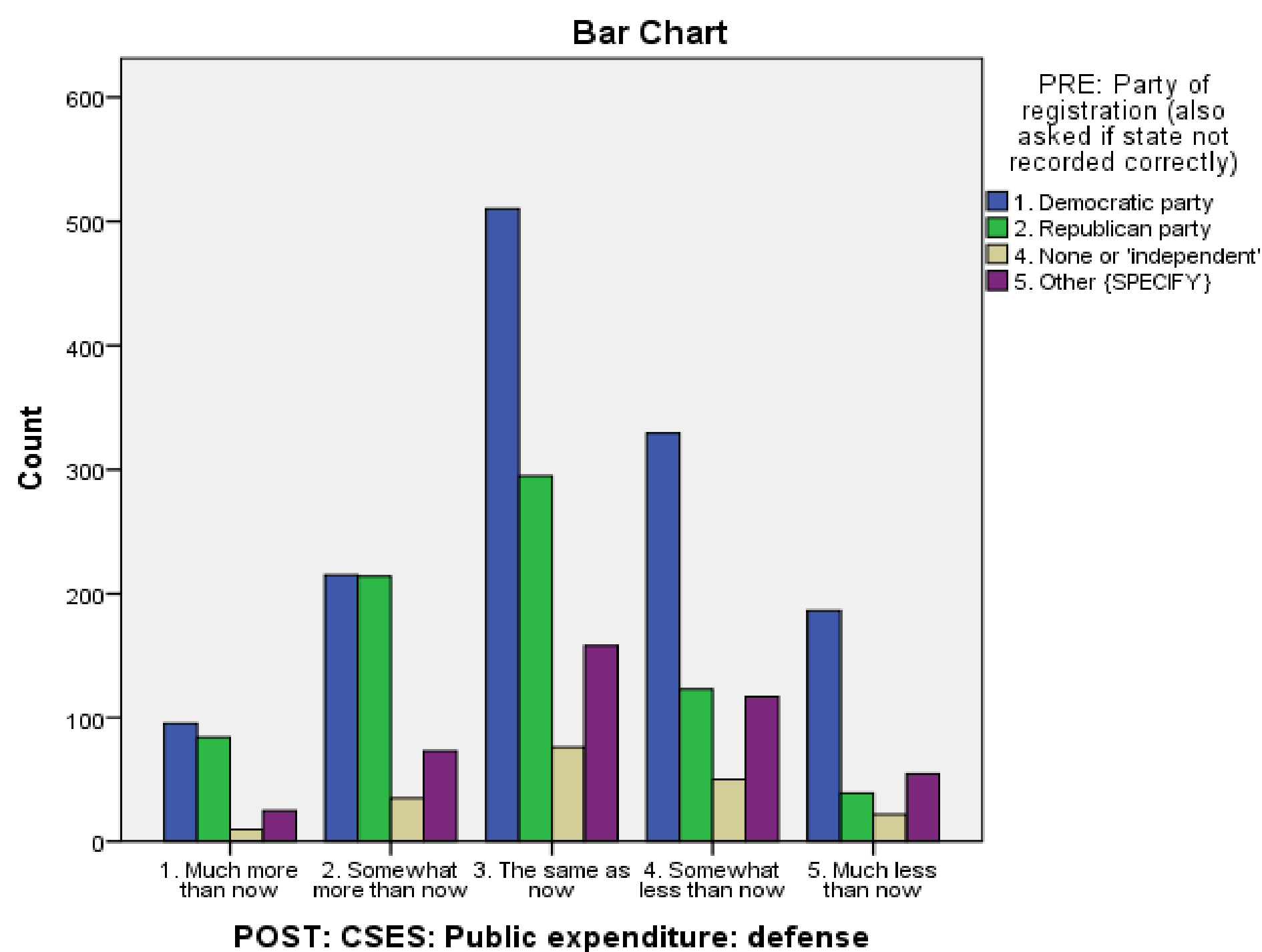
H 2: Democrats will be more likely than Republicans to approve the Presidents handling of the war in Afghanistan.

H 3: Republicans will be more likely than Democrats to believe that the War on Terror was worth the cost.

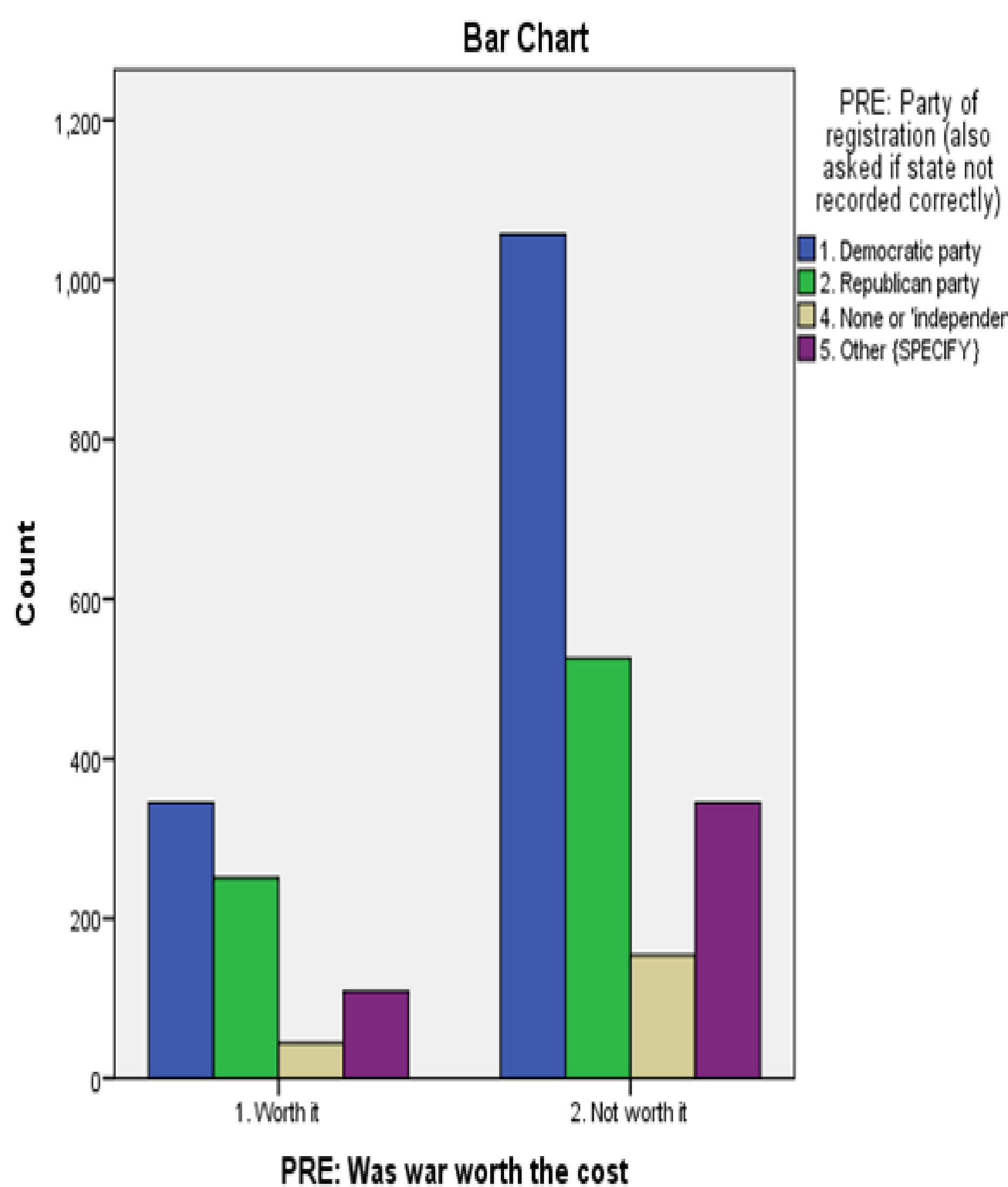
Data

H 1: Partisanship and Defense Spending

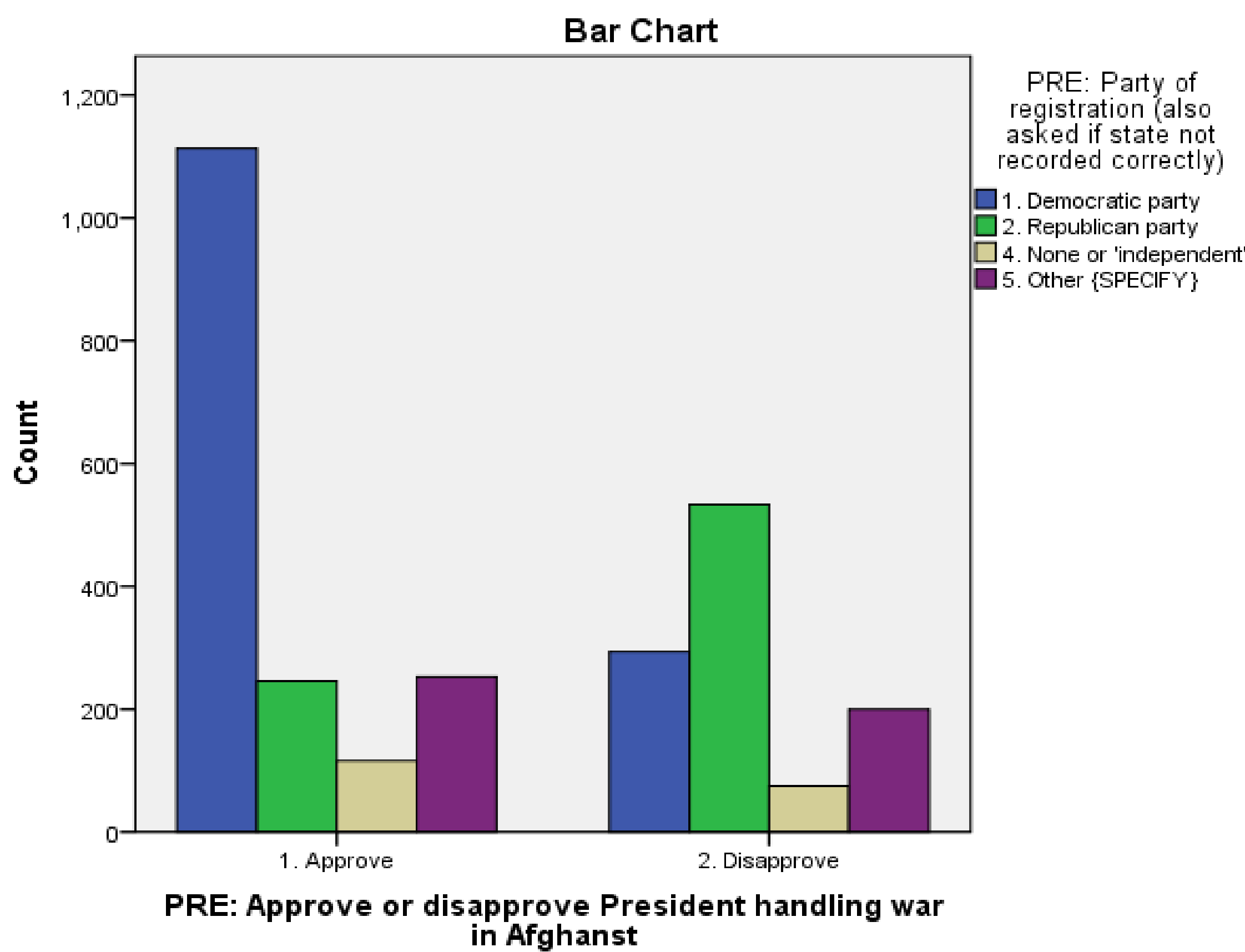
Cross Tabulation Results:



H 3: Partisanship and the War on Terror



H 2: Partisanship and War in Afghanistan



Cross Tab Interpretation

- The first chart demonstrates that there is no significant difference between Republicans and Democrats in their attitude towards increasing defense spending. When asked the question whether defense ending should be increased somewhat more than now, both Republicans and Democrats are nearly tied in their opinion. When asked whether defense spending should be increased much more than now, Democrats show to be more in favor than Republicans. On the opposite end of the spectrum, the chart reveals that Democrats also favor decreasing defense spending or keeping it as it is now more than Republics.
- The second chart shows how the relationship between partisanship and the approval or disapproval of the Presidents handling of the war in Afghanistan. Democrats show a much higher approval for the Presidents handling of the war, while Republicans show a higher disapproval for the handling of the war.
- Lastly the third chart shows the relationship between partisanship and the cost of the War on Terror. Democrats slightly exceed the Republicans in believing that the war was worth it, however they significantly outweigh the Republicans in believing that the War on Terror was not worth the cost.

Findings

H 1: Defense Spending

The results showed that there is nearly the same amount of Democrats and Republicans that believe that defense spending should be increased. Democrats were 4.1% more likely to be in favor of increasing defense spending much more than now compared to 3.6% of Democrats. However Democrats were found to be 22.3% more likely to be in favor of keeping defense spending same as it is now compared to 12.9% of Republicans. Lastly Democrats were 8.1% more likely to support decreasing defense spending much more than now compared to only 1.7% of Republicans.

H 2: Partisanship and War in Afghanistan

Democrats were found to be 51% more likely than 8.5% of Republicans to approve the Presidents handling of the War in Afghanistan. Republicans were 27.3% more likely to disapprove of the Presidents handling of the war in Afghanistan compared to 12.1% of Democrats.

H 3: Partisanship and the cost of the War on Terror.

Democrats are 15.8% more likely to believe that the War on Terror was worth it compared to 11,5% of Republicans. However the big discrepancy is revealed between the two parties in regards to this issue with 48.5% of Democrats are more likely to believe that the war was not worth it, compared to 24.1% of Republicans.

Conclusions

- There isn't a big enough difference between Republicans and Democrats in their attitude towards increasing defense spending.
- Democrats are more likely to be in favor of maintaining defense spending as it is or reducing it.
- People are more likely to approve policies of a President who is a member of their own party.

References

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