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■ **Abstract**   Public opinion is central to representation, democratic accountability, and decision making. Yet, the public was long believed to be relatively uninterested in foreign affairs, absent an immediate threat to safety and welfare. It had become conventional to say that "voting ends at water's edge." We start the examination of the scholarly understanding of the role of foreign affairs in public opinion and voting at that low point of view. Much subsequent development saw an increasing degree of holding and using of attitudes and beliefs about foreign affairs among the public. Moving in parallel with developments in political psychology, theoretical and methodological advances led to an increasingly widely shared view that the public holds reasonably sensible and nuanced views, that these help shape their political behaviors, and that these, in turn, help shape and constrain foreign policy making.

> *"War is much too serious a matter to be entrusted to the military."*
>
> *–Georges Clemenceau*

> *"[Clemenceau] once said that war is too important to be left to the generals. When he said that, 50 years ago, he may have been right. . .but now, war is too important to be left to the politicians. They have neither the time, the training, nor the inclination for strategic thought. . . . And I can no longer sit around and allow Communist subversion, Communist corruption, and Communist infiltration of our precious bodily fluids."*
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> *–Col. Jack D. Ripper in* Dr. Strangelove

INTRODUCTION

Threats to our precious bodily fluids notwithstanding, is war too serious a matter to be entrusted to the public? In this article, we examine whether the public is capable of making sufficiently informed evaluations of international affairs, so that these views can lead to reasonable policy-based electoral choices and thus influence foreign policy. We examine how individuals' foreign policy attitudes might translate into electoral choices. Following Aldrich et al. (1989), we suggest that three important conditions need to be met if public opinion regarding foreign policy is to influence electoral outcomes. First, the public must actually possess coherent beliefs or attitudes (called "available" attitudes in the political psychology literature) about foreign policy. Second, voters must be able to access these attitudes in the context of an election. Third, the major party candidates must offer sufficiently distinct foreign policy alternatives so that voters who have accessed their available attitudes have a basis on which to make a choice.

In a review of more than 50 years of research, we find reason to believe that the public does have coherent foreign policy attitudes and is capable of addressing serious issues such as the tolerance of casualties in military operations. Moreover, we find that members of the public can and do use these attitudes to make voting choices when events and candidates make foreign policies salient to the public and when political parties provide them with distinctive platforms so that voters face "a choice and not an echo" on foreign policy.[1] Finally, we find evidence that this electoral connection leads policy makers to consider public opinion consequences as they shape their foreign policies. In sum, the public can influence foreign policy.

THE STRUCTURE OF AMERICAN ATTITUDES TOWARD FOREIGN POLICY

The first question, of course, is whether the American public has anything consistent and coherent enough to be called "attitudes" toward foreign policy. The early work on this issue was decidedly pessimistic. Following World War II, assessments of the public's grasp of foreign affairs were quite skeptical. Experts such as Almond (1950) and Lippmann (1955) found the public's views on such matters capricious, unstructured, and even dangerous.[2] Looking at Gallup's biennial "most important problem" question, Almond noticed that the mass public named international issues only after wars or crises had begun. Almond inferred that the

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[1]The quotation was a campaign theme of Sen. Barry Goldwater (R., AZ) in his 1964 presidential campaign.

[2]For a complete review of the Almond-Lippmann consensus and challenges to it, see Holsti (1992, 1996). Note also that Lippmann's pessimism about the public's role in a democracy applied to domestic policies as well and extended back at least to the 1920s (see Lippmann 1922, 1925; the latter is entitled *The Phantom Public*).

U.S. public was incapable of sustained attention to foreign policy priorities (Holsti 1996) and concluded that foreign policy views were best analogized to "mood swings" which "lack intellectual structure and factual content" (Almond 1950, pp. 53–54, 69). Even more dramatically, Lippmann (1955, pp. 16–27) saw the public as an irrational and dangerous force in foreign policy. "The unhappy truth," he wrote, "is that the prevailing public opinion has been destructively wrong at critical junctures. [The people] have compelled governments . . . to be too late with too little, too long with too much, too pacifist in peace or bellicose in war. . . ." To be sure, survey research (as Lippmann well knew) painted an unflattering portrait of the public on domestic matters as well, but the scholarly understanding of public opinion about foreign affairs was even more dismal.

Even as more data and more sophisticated tools of analysis became available, documenting a structure or interdependence of foreign policy attitudes remained elusive.[3] Attitudes toward specific foreign policies seemed not to be defined by traditional organizational principles, such as isolationism versus interventionism or liberal versus conservative. Campbell et al. (1960) found that opinions about foreign policy were not associated with the standard liberal-conservative ideological dimension, saying these opinions "fail to correlate with placement on the social welfare dimension" or with partisanship (p. 198). Converse (1964) highlighted the absence of ideological consistency in the views of the mass public in both the domestic and foreign policy spheres, as well as between the two. One would, he wrote, "come closer to reality by assuming no connection at all" (p. 230). Converse and others also revealed the public's ignorance of basic foreign policy facts (see Erskine 1963). According to one survey, at the height of the Korean War, almost one quarter of the American public answered "don't know" to the question, "Do you happen to know if there is any Communist government in China right now?" (Patchen 1966, p. 257, as cited in Mueller 1973).[4]

The Vietnam experience proved to be a watershed both in the politics of American foreign policy and in the study of public opinion and foreign policy. Sustained popular opposition to the Vietnam War began to contradict the image of the public as unpredictable and irrational (Holsti 1996). During those years, scholars gained access to large public opinion datasets with precise questions about foreign policy issues. A 1967 study by Verba et al. marks a subtle but important shift away from the Almond-Lippman consensus. While agreeing that foreign policy views

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[3]Scholars "speak of an 'attitude structure' when two or more beliefs are functionally related" (Campbell et al. 1960, p. 189).

[4]Only 37% of Americans responding to a poll conducted during the Berlin airlift knew that Berlin was surrounded by East Germany; during the Cold War, only 42% of Americans knew the United States was part of NATO; and one could go on. Similarly, of course, respondents have trouble answering domestic and other political questions correctly. For instance, in the American National Election Studies 1978 survey, 37% of respondents in districts with an incumbent-challenger contest for the US House of Representatives failed to recognize the name of the challenger, even when presented with it (Mann & Wolfinger 1980, p. 623).

appeared to fluctuate, their findings challenged the Almond-Lippmann consensus, claiming public views "were not as bad as had been assumed; and that the phenomenon under study was not as simple as previous reports had suggested" (Verba et al. 1967, p. 319). The authors documented a reluctance to pay the costs of the war but also found strong public support for negotiations with the Vietcong and strong opposition to a withdrawal of American troops, 88% and 81% respectively (p. 330). Rather than see a public confused about what choices were available, they viewed the results as indicative of a moderate stance that neither capitulated to the enemy nor further increased involvement to the levels needed to win a certain victory. Other Vietnam era studies increasingly supported this view of a moderate and logical public (Caspary 1970, Mueller 1973, Achen 1975).

The intellectual shift away from the Almond-Lippman consensus by Verba et al. was made possible by using a new survey format. Drawing heavily from the Downsian proximity model and related spatial models, scholars asked respondents to indicate where they themselves stood on an issue scale. In addition, respondents were asked to place competing candidates or parties on the same seven-point scale. With data in this form, scholars could measure not only distances from individuals to candidates but also distances between candidates. Moreover, these data were directly linked to a causal explanation of vote choice. Poor factual recall may be alarming (though we discuss below reasons that may mitigate alarm), but the presence or absence of some fact in memory does not by itself change a voter's choice. Greater or lesser distance to a candidate does. After using two such scales for the 1968 American National Election Studies (ANES) survey, scholars began regular and sustained use of the new seven-point issue scale in 1970. Intellectual developments (spatial theories of voting) led to new survey design, which in turn caused new intellectual advances (evidence of a "rational" public in matters of foreign affairs).[5]

Even with the new evidence, substantive inferences of a logical public were still indirect. Page and Shapiro were among the first to present direct empirical evidence of the public's capabilities (Page & Shapiro 1982, 1992; Shapiro & Page 1988). Using a dataset of >6000 questions compiled from five respected polling organizations, their 1988 study identified 425 foreign policy questions asked at least twice in the period 1935–1982. They could then use such repeated questions to examine stability or change in public opinion, its causes, and its consequences. The data revealed that responses to 51% of the questions remained constant throughout the period [with "constant" defined as opinion variation of 6% or less (Shapiro & Page 1988, p. 216)]. An additional 22% of policy-related responses fluctuated by less than 10%. [1]These authors thus claimed that when opinion shifts did occur, the change was precipitated by changes in the international environment (Shapiro & Page 1988, Page & Shapiro 1992). Additional studies showed the public

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[5]In the literature bridging foreign policy and public opinion, "reasonableness" has become the default definition of "rationality" in the colloquial sense, not to be confused with "rationality" as used in rational choice theory (see Nincic 1992).

reacting reasonably to issues of arms control (Russett 1990), Central America, the Arab-Israeli conflict, terrorism (Hinckley 1990, Sobel 1993), and military intervention (Jentleson 1992, Jentleson & Britton 1998, Chanley 1999). The overall trend pointed toward a public offering sensible responses to international events (Nincic 1992).[6] More importantly, Page and Shapiro found that changes in public opinion in response to international events regularly preceded eventual changes in public policy. Not only do Page and Shapiro offer compelling direct evidence, but the evidence of rational response to international events subtly undermines one of the pillars of the Almond-Lippman consensus—Almond's analysis of the Gallup "most important problem" question following major international events.

Stability only hints that true attitudes may be available to voters; it cannot by itself demonstrate that individual foreign policy attitudes are structured in a coherent enough manner to make them the basis of vote choice. A number of studies found evidence of an isolationist-interventionist dimension in which only a small minority of the public opposed international engagement entirely, with the rest divided according to advocacy of militant versus cooperative internationalism (Modigliani 1972, Holsti & Rosenau 1979, Mandelbaum & Schneider 1979, Wittkopf & Maggiotto 1981, Wittkopf & Maggiotto 1983, Mayer 1992).

Hurwitz and Peffley, in accordance with the pathbreaking work on core values by Feldman & Zaller (1992), argued that ethnocentrism and the morality of warfare were the core values that shaped people's opinions about certain approaches to foreign affairs, which in turn determined the level of support or opposition to specific foreign policy actions (Hurwitz & Peffley 1987a, Peffley & Hurwitz 1992). A related strand of research indicated that personality characteristics, such as aggression or accommodation, contributed to preference formation on a variety of international security and trade policies (Herrmann et al. 1999, Herrmann et al. 2001). Advances in the understanding of foreign policy beliefs held by the public occurred in tandem with what Sniderman (1993) called the "new look" in public opinion research, which revealed the impact of advances in social and cognitive psychology.

The evolving complexity of scholars' understanding of the structure of American foreign policy opinions is evident when tracing scholars' understanding of the American public's willingness to tolerate the deaths of U.S. soldiers in combat. Combat casualties are important because the willingness to pay the costs of war is one of the central mechanisms by which public opinion might affect foreign policy choices. Soldiers dying in combat is obviously something that the public would like to avoid, yet such deaths are inevitable when military force is used to achieve foreign policy goals. The tension of making this uncomfortable and emotional tradeoff makes casualty tolerance a difficult but important area for measuring and understanding the structure and complexity of opinions.

Milstein's pioneering analysis found that public support dropped as the U.S. military commitment in Vietnam increased and as casualties increased, whereas public

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[6]This statistic comes from Page & Shapiro's (1988, p. 217) assertion that of the 49% of questions that displayed fluctuating opinion, 44% of changes were opinion shifts of <10%.

support climbed when the burden was shifted to the shoulders of the Vietnamese themselves (Milstein & Mitchell 1968; Milstein 1969, 1973, 1974). Mueller (1971, 1973) built on this work with a landmark study of public opinion in the Korean and Vietnam Wars. He found that support for both wars dropped in proportion to the log of casualties (Mueller 1973, p. 62). Mueller later reinforced this "inexorable decline" view with his analysis of public opinion during the Gulf War, which emphasized that the euphoria over the quick victory obscured the precarious nature of the public's support (Mueller 1994).[7] This stream of research established the presence of fairly stable and coherent public attitudes toward paying the human costs of war, but it also suggested a mechanistic public response to casualties; public support for war declines consistently and inexorably in response to casualties, regardless of the context in which those casualties occurred.

Following the collapse of the Cold War, scholars began to reevaluate the willingness of the American public to tolerate casualties in war. Much like the scholarship of the Vietnam era, these works do not suggest that the public casualty tolerance might vary across different kinds of military conflicts. They do, however, suggest that public tolerance for casualties may vary over time. In particular, many observers began to posit a secular decline in public tolerance for casualties due to long-term trends in American society. Luttwak (1995, 1996), for example, argues that the public is more casualty sensitive now than in the time of the World Wars because of the lower birth rate. Moskos (1995), however, argues that the public is more casualty sensitive now because they see that children of the elite are not at risk in most military missions. Sapolsky & Shapiro (1996) argue that casualty phobia has driven changes in weapons technology, which in turn have reinforced casualty phobia by fostering unrealistic expectations of what human toll is unavoidable in war. And of course, numerous commentators have argued that the advent of near-real-time television coverage of military operations has heightened public casualty sensitivity by giving the deaths a vividness and immediacy that makes them more shocking (Stech 1994, Neuman 1996, Livingston 1997).

The most recent work in this area, however, has indicated a more nuanced structure. The public's response to operations that suffer U.S. military casualties is not automatic but context dependent. Although casualties are always a cost that the public would prefer to avoid, public support in the face of casualties varies in systematic ways. There is wide scholarly consensus that multiple factors are at work at the same time (Larson 2000, Klarevas 2002). What distinguishes different authors in this debate is the pride of place they give to certain factors.

Jentleson, for example, argues that the "pretty prudent" public bases its casualty tolerance on "the principal policy objective (PPO)" envisioned by the military operation (Jentleson 1992, Jentleson & Britton 1998). Larson (1996, 2000), however, argues that public casualty tolerance follows domestic elite casualty tolerance; that

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[7]Gartner & Segura (1998) revised this argument somewhat: Support for the Korean and Vietnam Wars declined with logged casualties during periods when the casualty rate was low; however, in periods of high casualty rates, public support dropped with marginal casualties, not logged cumulative casualties.

is, when domestic elites line up in a consensus behind the mission, public support will be robust even in the face of mounting costs, but when domestic elites are divided then even small numbers of casualties will be highly corrosive of public support. In contrast, Kull and colleagues argue that public support for a military mission will be more robust if the public sees that other countries also support the mission (Kull et al. 1997, Kull & Destler 1999, Kull & Ramsey 2000). Thus, whereas Larson emphasizes domestic elite cues as critical to public opinion, Kull emphasizes the international elite cues. Feaver and Gelpi identify expectations of success as the crucial factor in explaining the public's tolerance of casualties (Feaver & Gelpi 2004; Gelpi et al. 2005/2006). Eichenberg (2005) reaches a similar conclusion in an analysis of aggregate public support for U.S. military operations. Although the debate over the determinants of public tolerance for casualties has not yet reached consensus, these scholars agree that the American public has sophisticated and nuanced views about the difficult and emotionally charged issue of American soldiers dying in battle.

As economic policy becomes an increasingly important part of foreign policy, a nascent but growing body of research suggests that the public has coherent attitudes here as well. This work is primarily derived from foundational work in economics on the consequences of trade. Scholars have attempted to use economic models of the consequences of trade, such as the Ricardo-Viner (R-V) model and Heckscher-Olin (H-O) models, to predict public preferences for trade liberalization or trade protection. A number of scholars used these models to predict political coalitions that will support liberalizing trade (Rogowski 1989, Frieden 1991, Hiscox 2002). Until recently, however, surprisingly few studies actually linked these models directly to voter preferences, and even fewer studies examined the preferences of American voters. In an influential study of American public opinion regarding trade and globalization, however, Scheve & Slaughter (2001a,b) found that American public preferences for trade liberalization closely matched the predictions of the H-O model. The H-O model divides workers into two essential factors of production: skilled and unskilled labor. The model expects that liberalizing trade will increase the welfare of workers in the abundant sector of the economy at the expense of those in the scarce sector. In the United States—as in other developed economies—skilled labor is the abundant factor of production. Thus, according to the H-O model, skilled American workers should support trade liberalization whereas unskilled workers should oppose it. Scheve & Slaughter find strong support for this proposition and also find support for a causal link between the material consequences of trade and individual attitudes toward trade liberalization. Specifically, they find that workers blame the increase in globalization for slow real-wage growth among unskilled American workers.

More recent studies have expanded and built on this central result, but Scheve & Slaughter's (2001a,b) general conclusions appear robust.[8] For example, Baker (2005) finds that respondents' preferences regarding trade policy are based not only

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[8]O'Rourke & Sinott (2001), Beaulieu (2002), and Mayda & Rodrik (2005) report similar results with cross-national data that include the United States.

on the consequences they face as workers but also on the consequences they face as consumers. Thus, in a skill-abundant country such as the United States, relatively heavy consumers of exportable goods are more protectionist than those who tend to consume imports. In some circumstances, the consumption consequences of trade run contrary to the labor market consequences, but through an analysis of individual-level data, Baker demonstrates that both effects exist and that they are robust across a number of nations—including the United States. Consistent with the findings on American public opinion regarding casualties in war, this line of research suggests that American voters have well-formed attitudes about international trade and that they ground these attitudes prudently in terms of the material consequences of trade for themselves and their families.

At the same time, however, studies have demonstrated that public attitudes toward trade can be unstable. M. Hiscox (unpublished manuscript) finds that American public support for trade liberalization depends significantly which consequences of trade are accentuated to the respondents. The expressed level of support for trade liberalization can vary by as much as 19 percentage points depending on whether the question emphasizes the positive or negative consequences of trade. Not all voters are equally at the mercy of elite discourse and framing, however. Hiscox finds the framing effect more than twice as large for respondents who have never attended college as it is for those who spent at least some time in college. Hiscox contends that his findings contradict previous research indicating stable and coherent preferences about trade as predicted by the H-O trade model.

The truth, however, might lie somewhere in between. Although Hiscox finds that education and self-reported level of training have no impact on protectionist sentiment when respondents are presented only with positive arguments about trade, his results also indicate that the gap between skilled and unskilled respondents is significant when they are provided negative arguments about trade, both positive and negative arguments about trade, and no arguments about trade. In each of these circumstances, the impact of skill level is at least as large as the impact of the changes in question wording. Thus, respondents seem to express attitudes consistent with their material interests under a variety of circumstances. Aldrich et al. (1999) report findings similar to Hiscox's and argue that the influence of the H-O trade model's variables is significant but relatively modest. They also argue that the effects interact with political variables, especially party identification. These patterns of responses can be altered, however, by the information provided to respondents. This more complex pattern of results leads us to our next concern: elite discourse and the shaping of public opinion.

THE ACCESSIBILITY OF FOREIGN POLICY ATTITUDES

Following our simple causal chain, if members of the American public actually do have attitudes about foreign policy, can they access those attitudes so as to express them in a politically relevant way? Here the evidence is less clear, but a growing

body of research suggests that foreign policy views can be accessible to voters. The important caveat is that control over this accessibility may depend significantly on the behavior of policy-making elites, the news media, and other opinion leaders.

Perhaps the central work on attitude accessibility and public opinion is Zaller's (1992) Receive-Accept-Sample (RAS) model of public opinion formation. Zaller posits that survey answers are a "top-of-the-head" response to the questions presented. These answers reflect a person's beliefs (not unlike the "core values" of Feldman & Zaller 1992, Hurwitz & Peffley 1987a, and Peffley & Hurwitz 1992), but they also reflect the considerations that happen to be salient to the respondent at the moment the question is posed. Responses to any one question may not reflect the full complexity of an underlying attitude. As a result, survey responses may be unstable even if the underlying attitudes are perfectly stable. Framing, priming, and the like can have a significant effect on any single response to a survey question, as we discuss below.

Zaller's RAS model is heavily indebted to social psychology and its large body of findings concerning humans as "cognitive misers." In this view, people seek to "satisfice" (Simon 1957), or make good enough decisions or judgments with minimal cognitive effort. Instead of devoting the mental resources necessary to reach the best possible decisions about foreign policy, people use schemas, scripts, heuristics, or other types of cognitive shortcuts to make good decisions without knowing all the specifics. Partisanship, the news media, and elite discourse have all been suggested as labor-saving devices for the cognitive miser (Rahn 1993, Krosnick & Kinder 1990, Iyengar & Kinder 1987, Zaller 1992). Popkin (1991) argues that using heuristics is an eminently reasonable way to make voting decisions. One implication is that voters who choose the right heuristic(s) can, on average, make decisions similar to those they would have made if fully informed without expending the resources to become fully informed (Lupia & McCubbins 1998, Lau & Redlawsk 1997).

The effort required to monitor and express one's views prevents voters from expressing all aspects of their (reasonably nuanced) attitudes at once. Instead, they are more likely to focus on the dimensions of opinion made salient to them. Who chooses which dimensions to make salient? What sources inform the public of international happenings and events? Two influential answers are the politicians and the news media.

Research suggests that the mass media can have both salutary and deleterious effects on the accessibility of attitudes that contribute to judgments about foreign policy. On the one hand, the pervasiveness of the news media can help bring the public into contact with foreign policy issues of which they would otherwise be unaware. A number of scholars have held that the advent of the 24-hour news cycle and the proliferation of news media have given the public a more intense and vivid connection to foreign policy events—especially foreign military conflicts (Stech 1994, Neuman 1996, Livingston 1997). Moreover, media coverage gives even uninterested respondents some exposure to international issues (Baum 2002), and the diversity of media allows a variety of perspectives to be voiced.

Although the open and competitive American media environment enables a tremendous breadth of public expression, it also allows voters to select news media that reinforce their views and to avoid streams of information that might create dissonance. Studies of media consumption during the Iraq war, for example, indicate that respondents may select news media outlets that support their own views of the conflict (Kull 2002).

The other major source of information on which the public can draw when accessing attitudes about foreign policy is the rhetoric of the president and his administration. As numerous scholars have attested, the president has dramatic powers of agend setting in both the domestic and foreign policy spheres (Baumgartner & Jones 1993, Bond & Fleisher 1990, Kingdon 1995). This rhetoric is, of course, even more subject to problems of framing, selective use of information, and strategic manipulation than is the information from the mass media (Fritz et al. 2004). Kernell (1997) argues that American presidents can and do use public rhetoric to generate support for their domestic and foreign policies. Recent studies also confirm that presidents are strategic in their decisions to "go public" over foreign policy issues (Baum 2004).

These general ideas are rooted in two basic concepts: priming and framing. Priming (Krosnick & Kinder 1990, Mendelberg 2001, Valentino et al. 2002; but see Lenz 2005) refers to the allegedly simple and possibly nonconscious impact of a communication in terms of stimulating attention to a concept (such as a foreign policy attitude) stored in memory. A prime, in its pure form, brings that attitude, belief, or stored construct to attention but does not otherwise influence it. Priming helps determine what gets to the "top of the head" in Zaller's (1992) theory of the survey response. Thus, an affective cue, devoid of informational content (if such is possible), can arouse attention to that attitude or belief. In the narrowest sense, such a prime would stimulate accessibility of attitudes. A frame, on the other hand, is an argument about how individuals should construct their attitudes toward a particular issue. A frame provides a way of understanding an attitude or putting it into context (Nelson & Kinder 1996, Nelson et al. 1997). Whereas priming says only, "Think of this consideration," framing says, "Think of it this way." For example, a candidate's campaign message is, in effect, an attempt to frame the choice between the two candidates along lines favorable to that particular candidate. A campaign can therefore be thought of as a competition between frames. However, framing can come about in many ways, and possibly not in such a deliberate fashion. The "mere" coverage of an issue in the news media, for example, will provide both affective and cognitive content that may shape how voters think of that issue. Iyengar & Kinder (1987) conducted experiments to investigate the impact of priming and framing on citizens' thinking about political issues and found that media coverage of particular policies affects both (*a*) the likelihood that citizens will consider an issue important and (*b*) the types of opinions they express about a topic.

The notion of competitive framing was explored by Norris (1998) and Aldrich & Griffin (2003). Aldrich & Griffin's work, based on Petrocik's (1996) idea of "issue ownership," was extended to the study of foreign policy's effects on the 2004

election (Aldrich et al. 2005). Aldrich et al. argue that the concept of competitive framing is helpful to understanding the arguments of the presidential candidates on Iraq. Bush claimed that the Iraq war was a part of the war on terrorism and Kerry claimed that it was a distraction from fighting terrorism. Aldrich et al. (2005) find a nearly even balance of public opinion between the two frames. Their evidence also suggests that the attention both candidates paid to the war helps explain why citizens thought foreign policy unusually salient in the 2004 election (even more so than in 1968 and 1972) and why the 2004 ANES survey found little evidence that the election was "about" values issues. What is missing from these accounts is how voters come to adopt a proposed frame at all, let alone why some adopt one frame while others adopt another in a competitive environment. In particular, is there more to these processes than captured by the various effects attributed to partisanship?

In sum, the public seems to receive ample opportunity to access their attitudes regarding foreign policy, but the cues that they receive from both the media and politicians are likely to be strategically shaped by decisions at both the mass and elite levels. The public hold attitudes about foreign policy, but determining which aspects of those attitudes will get expressed is neither straightforward nor automatic. Elites appear to retain some leeway in shaping the expression of public opinion, but the mechanisms that give them that leeway are still little understood.

FOREIGN POLICY ATTITUDES AND ELECTORAL CHOICE

Scholars have long known that retrospective and prospective economic evaluations affect presidential approval and vote choice (Kinder & Kiewiet 1979, Fiorina 1981, MacKuen et al. 1992). Fiorina (1981) devotes considerable attention to retrospective evaluations of the president on matters of war and peace, and he finds them strongly related to the vote. Economics and foreign policy assessments share characteristics that make them especially appropriate for retrospective evaluations: important and easily judged outcomes, complex and difficult-to-judge policy means toward those outcomes, and great uncertainty (for the voter and expert alike) as to how the policy means connect to the outcomes.

In the late 1980s, scholars started to devote more attention to retrospective judgments of foreign policy. In their public opinion survey, Hurwitz & Peffley (1987b) found retrospective judgments of foreign policy to be statistically significant predictors of President Reagan's approval ratings. Similarly, Wilcox & Allsop (1991) directly compared the impact of foreign policy and economic issues on presidential approval. After examining survey data at six distinct points in President Reagan's tenure, they concluded that foreign policy attitudes were only slightly weaker predictors of presidential approval, although the strength of international issues relative to economic concerns varied with salience. Nickelsburg & Norpoth (2000) tracked quarterly presidential approval from 1976 to 1996 and pronounced that "to maintain public support the chief executive must be 'commander-in-chief'

and 'chief economist' in equal measure" (p. 313). Indeed, in most of their cases, foreign policy matched the overall approval ratings more closely than economic ratings did.

In addition, focused, individual-level panel survey data began to refine scholarly assertions about public opinion at the aggregate level. Peffley et al. (1995), for instance, examined the impact of dramatic use of force on individual appraisals of the president. Their polling before and after the U.S. bombing of Libya in 1986 showed that postbombing "improvements in presidential popularity are directly tied to citizens' evaluations of the initiative," and not solely the result of positive press coverage or elite consensus. By contrast, when Krosnick & Kinder (1990) examined the effects of scandals on individual evaluations of the president, they found that media priming had a strong effect.

All of these studies, except for the original work by Fiorina, focused largely on presidential approval and not vote choice per se. The evidence on whether and how the public makes the leap from opinions to actual vote choices is much more mixed. One important difficulty is the low level of information that most voters possess. Fortunately, as we saw above, a growing literature has pointed to a variety of cognitive processing factors that enable people to react rationally to changes in foreign policy outcomes and also allow them to vote "correctly" with low levels of information (Popkin 1991, Lau & Redlawsk 1997).

The earliest assessments found foreign affairs to have a limited relationship to voting. These studies highlighted the impact of short-term crises on particular elections but shied away from citing foreign policy as a regular factor in voting (Miller & Stokes 1963, Stokes 1966, Kernell 1978; Abramson et al. 1982). Stokes (1966), for instance, investigated six domains of influence on voting and found foreign policy to be important only in 1952 and 1964—and even then, popular references to international issues occurred with only one fourth the frequency of references to domestic happenings. The key to understanding this gap between public attitudes and electoral behavior lay in the positions taken by the major parties and especially their presidential nominees on foreign policy issues during elections. The 1940s through the 1960s were the era of the bipartisan consensus in American foreign policy. There were, of course, substantial disagreements over foreign policy during this period. However, leaders of both parties, especially at the presidential level, consistently agreed on the importance of American leadership of the First World and on the necessity of pursuing a policy of containment of the Second World. There were debates over how—but not whether—to implement America's containment policy against the Soviet Union (Gaddis 1982). For instance, Kennedy and Nixon debated who would more strongly back Taiwan in the event of China's invasion of Quemoy or Matsu. Similarly, Johnson criticized Goldwater for his alleged willingness to use nuclear weapons in Vietnam, debating which strategy was the better way to win the war rather than debating whether to fight the war. Given the level of general agreement between candidates, voters were not able to use their most important heuristic, party identification, to choose between the two parties' presidential candidates in election after election.

The Vietnam War, however, created a partisan cleavage on attitudes toward American foreign policy. Between 1948 and 1972, voters rarely had an opportunity to use their foreign policy views to distinguish between presidential candidates. In 1968, for example, the public could choose between Nixon's vague but firm "I have a plan to end the war" stance and Humphrey's pledge to continue Johnson's policies. By 1969, however, Vietnam had become "Nixon's war," and the Democratic Party broke the bipartisan consensus. McGovern's campaign promise to bring American troops home in six months not only marked the formal party opposition to the Vietnam War but also marked the rise of perceptions in the public that the Democratic Party favored negotiations with the Soviet Union instead of continued containment. Beginning in that year, the public perceived the Democratic Party as favoring peace and as "soft" on defense and Communism. The net result was a distinct and long-term advantage for the Republican Party on foreign policy concerns, as revealed through ANES responses on the open-ended "likes/dislikes" questions about the two parties and their presidential candidates (see Wattenberg 1996). Since this shift in the Democratic Party's foreign policy stance in 1972, voters have had the opportunity to distinguish between candidates on the basis of their foreign policy views, should they choose to do so.

This shift in partisan stances was nicely illustrated by public perceptions of the positions of the presidential candidates on the Vietnam War seven-point issue scale in the 1968 and 1972 ANES. Page & Brody (1972) examined whether citizens' views on Vietnam affected their vote choice in 1968. However, they also found that the range of public perceptions was so diffuse for each candidate and similar for the two candidates that people had little basis on which to contrast the candidates. Furthermore, the authors reported considerable "projection," that is, the attribution of a respondent's own position to a candidate already favored for other reasons. In 1972, by contrast, the public's perceptions of the positions of Nixon and McGovern were far more precise and distinct, with large majorities both perceiving a difference between the two candidates' positions and believing McGovern was the more dovish candidate (see, e.g., Aldrich & McKelvey 1977). Aldrich (1977) found that the Vietnam War issue strongly influenced the vote in that election, and that its effect clearly exceeded that of any other issue.

In 1989, Aldrich and colleagues set forth the three criteria for measuring foreign policy's influence over electoral outcomes on which we have focused here. First, attitudes toward foreign policy had to be available for the citizen; second, the citizen needed to have accessed those attitudes for use; and third, the parties and candidates had to present citizens with different policy choices rather than converging to the same options. Using ANES data from 1980 and 1984 and their own national survey (conducted by Gallup) from 1984, the authors showed that large majorities of the public could accurately characterize their own and the candidates' foreign policy positions, that foreign and defense issues were consistently identified among "the most important problems facing the nation," and that the survey respondents "perceived greater differences between the candidates on foreign and defense issues than on domestic issues" (Aldrich et al. 1989, p. 132). Not

surprisingly, they found strong evidence that foreign policy views affected vote choice as much as or more than domestic issues did.

Recent work has questioned whether Aldrich et al.'s research can generalize beyond the foreign policy issues identified in their study (Soviet Union, defense spending, and nuclear weapons) and beyond the bipolar era that ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union. Anand & Krosnick (2003) charge that the earlier research relied on ANES questions that had been selected specifically because of their salience at the time of the elections. Employing a new questionnaire that included a wider array of international topics, Anand & Krosnick have tested whether the 2000 presidential candidates took distinct issue positions and whether members of each issue's "attentive public" voted accordingly. They report that "Americans' attitudes toward foreign policy goals seem to have affected their evaluations of candidates" quite predictably (Anand & Krosnick 2003, p. 36). In stark contrast to previous work, Anand & Krosnick find only modest evidence of a humanitarian-militarism structure and no support for any other underlying organizational principles.

A study of the impact of the Iraq war on the outcome of the 2004 presidential election (C.F. Gelpi, J. Reifler, P.D. Feaver, unpublished manuscript) found strong evidence linking voters' attitudes about whether President Bush "did the right thing" by attacking Iraq to voters' choices in November 2004. These findings are consistent with much of the literature on retrospective voting, but more importantly for our purposes here, the results of this study illustrate the contingent mechanisms that link voters' foreign policy opinions to electoral outcomes. First, Gelpi et al. (2005/2006) demonstrate that the American public had coherent and well-organized attitudes about the war in Iraq. Then the authors demonstrate that the war and its media coverage during the 2004 campaign made foreign policy a salient issue, and thus made it accessible to voters. They show that about one third of the voters stated that foreign policy issues were the most important factor in determining their vote choice. For this segment of the public, Gelpi, Reifler, and Feaver (unpublished) find that attitudes toward the Iraq war had a substantial impact on vote choice—more substantial than their attitudes regarding which candidate would be more effective in handling the economy or social issues. For those who were more focused on economic or social issues, however, judgments about the Iraq war had little impact on vote choice.

Other studies of the November 2004 election also suggest that the Iraq war had a substantial impact. Campbell (2004), for example, argues that Bush's margin of victory was smaller than one would predict based on economic variables. He attributes the gap to Iraq and notes that respondents who believed that the war was not going well voted heavily for Kerry. Wleizein & Erickson (2005), on the other hand, conclude—based on their aggregate predictive model—that the Iraq war did not substantially hurt the president's electoral performance. D. Karol and E. Miguel (unpublished manuscript) appear to square this circle with their careful analyses of county-level data on casualties from the Iraq war and aggregate voting returns. They find that casualties had a significant negative aggregate impact on

votes for Bush outside the South, but that in the South casualties had no effect at all. Given the very solid support that the president enjoyed across the South regarding the war in Iraq, this pattern seems consistent with the individual-level findings about attitudes toward the war and votes for Bush.[9] Thus, the impact of foreign policy on electoral outcomes once again appears to be both potentially substantial and highly contingent.

PUBLIC OPINION AND THE MAKING OF AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY

Thus far we have demonstrated that the American public has coherent foreign policy attitudes and that it can—under some circumstances—translate those attitudes into choices at the ballot box. One question concerning foreign policy and public opinion remains to be addressed: How do elected policy makers respond to public opinion once they are in office? Do they ignore the public entirely, as Almond and Lippmann supposed? Or, alternatively, do they appear to be constrained by public opinion because of their mutually reinforcing desires to retain office and maintain the popularity necessary to govern effectively?

Consistent with the Almond-Lippmann consensus, realist scholars maintain that national interest would be best served if foreign policy makers ignored public opinion (Morganthau & Thompson 1985). Reasons to exclude the public stem from the need to maintain an administration's ability to act with secrecy, speed, and flexibility (Holsti 1996). These goals were considered especially important in the Cold War world of treaty negotiations and the nuclear balance of terror. The public, it was thought, could not be trusted to be calculating enough in tough situations or forgiving enough in cooperative situations (Lippmann 1955). Accordingly, during most of the Cold War period, policy makers wanted to be perceived as independent thinkers who incorporated public views minimally or not at all. In one famous example, a researcher asked a State Department official about the impact of public opinion on the agency's decisions and received the memorable reply, "to Hell with public opinion. . . . We should lead not follow" (Cohen 1972, p. 62). This view was consistent with what little empirical evidence could be mustered. For example, Miller & Stokes (1963) found direct or indirect influence of constituency opinion on congressional voting on social welfare and civil rights issues, but virtually no influence at all on their support for foreign involvement.

As the understanding of public attitudes toward foreign policy began to evolve, however, scholars began to take more seriously the notion that public opinion could

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[9]There have been relatively few studies of the impact of casualties on U.S. elections during wartime, but the available evidence from previous cases seems consistent with this result. See, for example, Carson et al. (2001) on the impact of casualties on congressional elections during the Civil War. This result is also consistent with Gartner & Segura's (1998) study of the impact of local casualties on support for military operations during the Vietnam War.

(and perhaps should) constrain American foreign policy at least modestly. This idea had been proposed by Key (1961), who had hypothesized that the public acted as a "system of dikes," channeling the flow of policy. Rosenau (1961) likened this mechanism of control to a "slumbering giant." Leaders formulated foreign policy as they wished as long as the public lay dormant, but they incurred political costs if policies provoked the "giant" by veering outside the boundaries set by public opinion. Gathering polls from the pre–World War II era through the end of the Cold War, Russett (1990) applied this theory to arms control and showed public opinion indeed kept U.S. policy in balance. The public supported hawkish policies when leaders came too close to perceived appeasement and dovish policies when U.S. initiatives seemed too aggressive. Sobel (2001) found that public opinion also constrained intervention policy, at times setting the duration or timing of American involvement in conflicts. Nincic (1988) found evidence for a more general "politics of opposites," observing that the public supported conservative policies during liberal presidential administrations and vice versa. Later work qualified this broad assertion by looking at public influence on individual presidents. In comparing the styles of presidents from Truman through Clinton, Foyle (1999) found that a president's beliefs about the desirability of public approval and necessity of public support to legitimize policy greatly affected the ability of the public to influence presidential foreign policy.

Of course, the entire literature on casualty aversion emerged from the perception that the American public could alter U.S. foreign policy enough to cause the president to withdraw from a military conflict or to avoid involvement in the first place. As noted above, ever since Mueller's (1973) seminal work, policy makers of all political persuasions have been reluctant to involve American troops in risky military situations. Policy makers have refrained from sending troops to Rwanda and Sudan and have withdrawn troops from conflict situations in the aftermath of attacks on American soldiers. For example, President Reagan removed American troops from Lebanon after 241 Marines were killed by a terrorist bomb, and President Clinton ceased American peacekeeping activities in Somalia after American soldiers were publicly defiled by Somali warlords.

America's experiences in Lebanon and Somalia clearly illustrate that the elite perception of public opinion can have a profound impact on foreign policy. The widespread assumption of public casualty aversion that flowed from these experiences also shaped American foreign policy in Rwanda, Bosnia, and Kosovo. But the policy impact of the myth of public casualty phobia also illustrates the difficulty of linking public opinion and elite behavior. The central lesson that American elites drew from the experiences of Lebanon and Somalia was that the public would not tolerate even a few casualties (Feaver & Gelpi 2004). Yet, when Burk (1999) investigated the peacekeeping situations in Lebanon and Somalia, he found that public support for the missions did not automatically plummet in the wake of casualties. Public support began to wane when the missions switched from humanitarian orientations to intervention orientations. The problem was exacerbated not by American casualties but by growing divisions between elite partisans in the United States.

How could American policy makers be so wrong about public opinion when political polling had become ubiquitous? Part of the problem is the endogenous relationship between elite discourse and public opinion noted above. That is, the public depended on the elites for cues about when to support military missions (Larson 1996), while the elites were looking to their perceptions of public opinion to shape policy decisions. Another source of confusion stemmed from elite policy makers' sources of information. According to Kull & Destler (1999), many members of Congress reported that they strongly distrusted polls and relied instead on vocal constituent groups and the media to access public opinion. Administration officials reported that they relied on Congress for the public view because that branch of government was closer to the people (Kull & Destler 1999). Thus, neither branch of government reported speaking directly with typical American citizens or paying much attention to their views as reported by public opinion polls. This problem had two severe consequences. First, the policy makers drastically underestimated the public's ability to understand situations sensibly. Second, they responded to erroneous perceptions of public views on issues ranging from foreign aid and defense spending to the United Nations, multilateralism, and humanitarian intervention.

Elite views of the public's reaction to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, also reflect some misconceptions about American attitudes. The 9/11 commission, for example, concluded that "neither in 2000, nor the first eight months of 2001 did any polling organization in the United States think the subject of terrorism sufficiently on the minds of the public to warrant asking a question about it in a major national survey" (Zelikow 2005, p. 341). To the contrary, a number of questions had been asked about terrorism in the months and years prior to September 11, and the data indicate that public attitudes toward terrorism have been much more stable than one might have expected.

In May 2001, for example, the "People and the Press Foreign Threats Poll" found that 64% of the public thought that terrorism was a "major threat" to the United States,[10] and a Fox News/Opinion Dynamics poll during the same month found that only 41% of Americans thought that President Bush was doing enough to prevent terrorist activity in the United States. In fact, public concerns over terrorism predate the September 11 attacks by many years. ABC News polling from 1995 and 1996 indicates that only 12% of Americans had a "great deal of confidence" that the government could protect them from terrorism. This number spiked to 35% in the immediate aftermath of the September 11 attacks and then quickly settled back down into the 10%–15% range. Thus, although the attacks represented a major turning point in American foreign policy—shaping the

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[10]We note that prior to September 11, 2001, American citizens may have been concerned with domestic terrorist attacks such as those conducted by the Unabomber and Oklahoma City terrorists. Nonetheless, the question cited explicitly addressed foreign terrorist threats: "I'd like your opinion about some possible international concerns for the United States. Do you think that international terrorism is a major threat, a minor threat, or not a threat to the well being of the United States?"

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Bush Doctrine and launching the "Global War on Terror"—there is little evidence that September 11 was a turning point in American public opinion about foreign policy.

Nonetheless, the casualty aversion literature does suggest an important link between elite *perceptions* of public opinion and American foreign policy behavior. This link is further substantiated by studies of American diplomatic history. McKeown (2000), for example, finds that perceptions of public opinion shaped the Kennedy administration's behavior during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Similarly, recent research explores the influence of elite perception of public opinion on presidential campaigns. D. Foyle (unpublished manuscript) argues that presidents do not automatically see pre-election foreign policy issues as opportunities for political gain. Instead, foreign policy can be either an opportunity or a vulnerability depending on the type of presidential contenders and the campaign context. Second-term presidents are unlikely to incorporate public opinion into their decisions because they have little to gain by doing so. Incumbents seeking reelection, however, will view national security issues as potential threats to their approval ratings because the wrong decision could make them look weak. Consequently, they will make foreign policy decisions as expediently as possible in order to avoid a prolonged public debate that could threaten their approval ratings. Although the theory does not make specific predictions about the type of action presidents will undertake to keep foreign policy issues below the electoral radar, it underscores the connection between public opinion and presidential need to project strength in foreign policy.[11]

Thus, the literature on American foreign policy substantiates the influence of public opinion on foreign policy, albeit an inconsistent influence. Looking across the international relations field, a number of theories purporting to explain the democratic peace also suggest a link between public opinion and foreign policy. In particular, the so-called structural theories of the democratic peace often contend that democratic states will be less likely to initiate military force because of the public's aversion to paying the costs of war (Doyle 1986, Maoz & Russett 1992). Other variants of this argument suggest that the public's desire to maintain economic growth leads democratic leaders to avoid military conflicts that will disrupt commerce (Domke 1988, Papayoanou 1996, Gelpi & Grieco 2006). The central mechanism of public casualty aversion and its influence on democratic foreign policies also underpin game theoretic models that seek to explain why democracies do not fight one another yet are willing to use force against nondemocracies (Bueno de Mesquita & Lalman 1992, Fearon 1994). Consistent with the more recent literature on casualty aversion, scholars have also developed models of the democratic peace based on the assumption that democratic publics will punish their leaders for defeat in war rather than for casualties per se (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 1999). All of these arguments contend that the

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[11]Foyle notes, however, that the definition of "strong" action depends more on how actions will be perceived by the public than on particular behaviors.

public acts as a constraint on elites who would otherwise be more willing to use force.

Diversionary war theory, in contrast, asserts that public opinion may encourage leaders to use military force.[12] Drawing on the sociological literature on group identification and on the dynamics of group conflict (Coser 1956), diversionary war theory contends that the use of military force will cause the public to "rally 'round the flag" in support of their leader during a crisis (Russett 1990), and that leaders who are concerned about their domestic standing may use force to divert the public's attention from domestic problems and focus attention on patriotic symbols. Some scholars have suggested that this dynamic should apply primarily to democratic leaders because of their dependence on public support for maintaining office and because of their inability to use more direct methods of dampening domestic dissent (Richards et al. 1993, Downs & Rocke 1995, Gelpi 1997). Consistent with this expectation, several studies of American foreign policy indicate that presidents have been more likely to use military force when their approval ratings have been in decline (Ostrom & Job 1986, James & Oneal 1991, Fordham 1998). Other studies have indicated—contrary to the diversionary logic—that U.S. presidents have been more likely to use military force when economic conditions have been favorable (Lian & Oneal 1993, Meernik & Waterman 1996). On the question of how public opinion influences American foreign policy, however, even these critical studies find that declining public approval has increased the probability that American presidents will use military force (Meernik 2000).

How are we to reconcile the mounting evidence that public opinion may both constrain American presidents from using military force and provoke them to do so? Bueno de Mesquita et al. (1999) bring these two disparate patterns together in an elegant model of democracy and foreign policy. As noted above, the central claim of their model is that fear of removal from office will constrain democratic leaders only to use force when the prospects for a quick and easy success are high. Interestingly, however, their model also indicates that this logic of constraint only holds when the leader's probability of retaining office is above some minimum threshold. Once the likelihood of retaining office drops below that level, the model shows that democratic leaders have an incentive to engage in risky policies that "gamble for resurrection." One such gamble would be to initiate a military conflict.

In contrast to the extensive attention given the link between public opinion and the use of military force, relatively little research has investigated the influence of public opinion on the setting of trade or other such foreign economic policies. One exception is Aldrich et al.'s (2004) demonstration that public opinion had a direct influence on voting by U.S. Senators on the NAFTA and GATT treaties. Needless to say, more work is necessary in this area.

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[12]Diversionary war theory is also sometimes referred as a "Wag the Dog" argument—after the popular film—or as a "scapegoating" argument.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Can public opinion about foreign policy influence American elections? To make this possible, (*a*) the public must have coherent attitudes about foreign policy, (*b*) the public must be able to access these attitudes when they vote, and (*c*) the political parties must uphold distinct foreign policy platforms so that voters can use their attitudes to distinguish between candidates. Our review of the literature on public opinion, foreign policy, and elections suggests that these three criteria have often—though not always—been met since the bipartisan foreign policy consensus collapsed during the Vietnam War. Voters appear to have held reasonable and coherent attitudes about America's foreign military and economic policies throughout this period, but their ability to express those attitudes in their electoral choices has depended on attitude accessibility and party platforms—both of which are strongly influenced by elite strategic behavior.

Has the public influenced American foreign policy behavior? The potential impact of foreign policy views on electoral outcomes is the critical mechanism linking public attitudes to elite behavior. Thus, there is some reason for optimism regarding the efficacy of public opinion. In practice, the record has been mixed, and the translation from public attitudes to elite policy is not always simple or direct. American military interventions have often been guided, for example, by the elite perception that the public would not tolerate casualties in such operations, but this perception appears to have been mistaken. Nonetheless, a mounting body of evidence suggests that the foreign policies of American presidents—and democratic leaders more generally—have been influenced by their understanding of the public's foreign policy views.

Despite much progress in understanding the link between the American public and U.S. foreign policy, at least two important questions remain. First, although evidence suggests that public opinion influences foreign policy, we know little about precisely when and how this influence is exerted. Scholars need to investigate the point(s) at which public opinion enters the policy making process (Powlick & Katz 1998). To what extent, for instance, do policy makers shape their policies in anticipation of public opinion as opposed to altering their policies in reaction to it? How much does the public alter foreign policy indirectly through its electoral choices as opposed to directly through constraining elected officials? How does the extent of public influence vary across differing issues—is public opinion equally likely to influence trade policy and military intervention?

Second, although we understand that foreign policy behavior involves a complex interaction between public attitudes and elite behavior that is directed both at domestic constituents and at international audiences (Putnam 1988), we need to know more about the fundamental structure of this relationship. Future research should tease out the various causal influences in the complex endogenous relationship among public opinion, elite discourse, elite beliefs about public opinion, and foreign policy behavior. Disentangling this web may be one of the most important next steps in the study of public opinion and its impact on American foreign policy.

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