

DOWNLOAD PDF PUBLIC OPINION, THE PRESIDENT, AND FOREIGN POLICY

Chapter 1 : Public Opinion on Foreign Policy Issues - Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics

Sep 03, Á· Views on the use and role of public opinion in forming policy can often be as diverse as the opinions themselves. Winston Churchill took the view that there was "no such thing as public opinion.

Personal use only; commercial use is strictly prohibited. First, what do public opinion polls measure? How do citizens, who are generally uninformed about foreign policy and world affairs, form opinions on these matters? Second, how rational is public opinion? Is it stable or volatile? Do opinions plausibly reflect the flow of world events? Third, what factors influence the formation of citizen opinions? Specifically, what is the impact of fundamental attitudes toward war and military force, partisanship, ideology, and gender? Finally, how universal are the determinants of citizen opinion, especially on crucial issues of war and peace? Are the findings in global comparisons the same as those in the American or European contexts? Considerable scholarship has been devoted to these four questions. Scholars now characterize public opinion as rational, in the sense that it is fairly stable, coherent, and responsive to real world events. Attitudes toward war and military force are a major focus of the research literature because many specific policy attitudes flow from fundamental views of war. Gender has also become a major focus of research because many studies find that women are less supportive of the use of military force for most purposes. Finally, scholars are beginning to discover that some opinion patterns are universal across societies, while others are more affected by the individual characteristics of national societies. Studies of global public opinion have expanded greatly, with recent scholarship focusing on global attitudes toward gender equality, immigration, and climate change. As a result, scholars now argue that the study of foreign and national security policy can no longer be based solely on the military aspects of deterrence, coercion, and war. This article proceeds from the assumption that public opinion will continue to be an important concern in debates about international issues, especially concerning issues of war and peace. There is fertile ground for such an inquiry. Over the last 40 years, public opinion polling has spread to most corners of the globe, making international comparisons much easier than was the case previously. Moreover, scholarship on public opinion and foreign policy has produced a virtual revolution in the way scholars understand the process of opinion formation and change. In particular, research has brought new answers to four sets of important questions: What do public opinion polls measure? Does public opinion respond to what governments do? Precisely what is the form of that response? What factors influence the formation of citizen opinions? Specifically, what is the impact of fundamental attitudes toward war and military force? How important are partisanship, ideology, and gender? How universal are the determinants of citizen opinion, especially on crucial issues of war and peace? Are the findings in cross-national comparisons the same as those in the U. In this article, I review the scholarly literature on these questions and present data from public opinion surveys to illustrate the discussion. The immediately following section describes why the answers to an individual survey question can be close to meaningless. Finally I discuss the extent to which citizen opinions across the globe reveal both universal logics and the logic of specific national characteristics. Why are citizen responses to survey questions so sensitive to the wording of the question? Unless events conspire to make them salient to citizens, opinion surveys often yield a fair percentage of disinterested or uninformed opinions. A second reason is that citizens lack information about world affairs and therefore look for cues to help resolve uncertainty about complex policy issues. We know, for example, that different questions about the possibility of war with Iraq showed highly different percentages within many countries. When survey questions mentioned the United Nations or the support of allies for the war, this produced different percentages because these are quite distinct cues. Lacking detailed information about a range of foreign policy issues, citizens do not engage in an extensive search for that information but often use simple cues contained in the question itself. Similar cues might come from the morning headlines or a conversation over the water cooler, which helps explain why even an identical question might yield different percentages over the course of a week or even several days. They argue that citizens are relatively uninformed about issues

and, more importantly, that they are also ambivalent and conflicted. On controversial issues such as social equality or war and peace, people are likely to possess competing or even contradictory opinions. One may, for example, strongly prefer the peaceful resolution of a particular international conflict while at the same time acknowledging that military force might become necessary or approve it after it is employed. For any particular issue or policy choice, individuals possess a range of ambivalent sentiments. How is this ambivalence resolved when an individual is presented with a survey question that requests a relatively simple response? These observations show why the responses to a single survey question are of limited value. Single questions are rooted in one specific wording at a single moment in historical context, and they evoke a particular set of considerations for respondents. Individuals may formulate their answers differently in response to another question that evokes different considerations at a different moment in time. The implications for students of public opinion are clear. Further, to fully understand how events external to the survey influence the considerations of respondents, one has to study how opinions unfold over time. The examples in the following two sections illustrate these points.

Mood on Defense Spending In his study of the attitudes of U. Each question reveals a different level of support for increasing or decreasing the U. Nonetheless, Stimson demonstrates that the movement over time of these individual survey items has much in common—they tend to move up or down together. Citizens know what they want, and they vote accordingly. Stimson, Nonetheless, Figure 1 shows that the U. The figure shows three separate survey questions that measure support for defense spending. The first two, by the Gallup organization and the General Social Survey GSS, ask slightly different versions of the question of whether defense spending is too much, too little, or just right. For each of the series, I calculate support for defense spending as the percentage that favors an increase divided by the total favoring either an increase or a decrease in spending. Put briefly, the measure represents support for defense as a percentage of the total who express an opinion on increasing or decreasing the defense budget. Click to view larger Figure 1. Three measures of net support for defense spending in the United States. Not surprisingly, the three question formats do yield different levels of support. Nonetheless, the three series clearly move together, suggesting that each reflects a collective disposition regarding spending on the defense budget. These questions on defense spending therefore confirm that something coherent can be measured from what at first blush appears to be a cacophony of separate items. Thus, from the raw materials of individual survey questions, we can begin to construct a picture of the democratic politics of defense policy.

The Mood in Europe Can the analysis of policy mood be generalized to public opinion outside the United States? And it is the specifics of political institutions that so restrict our ability to create theories of general interest. According to this logic, the thought processes of people everywhere are likely to be the same. This means the same lack of specific information about foreign policy; the same ambivalence on difficult political issues; and the same tendency to resolve uncertainty and ambivalence by using the cues. These cues can be contained in the wording of survey questions, the considerations that are evoked by major political events, and by referencing their values, partisanship, gender, and other personal characteristics. If correct, we should find general dispositions in public opinion outside the American political system. Consider the process of European integration, which began modestly in with the establishment of a common market. During the s and s, the process accelerated rapidly with an expansion from 6 to 15 members, the further liberalization of the European market, and the transition to a single European currency in the Maastricht Treaty of It had also established the euro as the common currency for all of Europe. At the same time, public support for the process of integration grew in importance. The technical meaning of the word is fairly clear; integration is a process of gradually merging the authority of what were formerly separate sovereign states. First, the establishment of the original Common Market was accomplished quite explicitly in the pursuit of peace, following the cosmopolitan argument that the causes of war are rooted in the competitive anarchy of a system of separate sovereign states. Second, the common market and European Union were designed to increase European prosperity. Finally, framed as it was by the Cold War, the Common Market obviously had implications for European power. Power would flow to Europe by combining the resources and influence of

the individual member states and by eliminating their separate and even competing voices on the world scene. Figure 2 displays the European average in response to three questions. The first, labeled unify, evokes the cosmopolitan notion of eliminating sovereignty by asking: Results for three survey questions on support for European integration. The graph shows the average responses from surveys in all EU states that have been members since Commission of the European Union, Standard Eurobarometer bi-annual. Figure 2 reveals that until the mids, the three questions displayed a clear hierarchy of support. Anticipating the theme of the next section of this article, I would argue that this is a perfectly rational evolution. The fact that Europeans would increasingly interpret the membership question in a fashion similar to the benefit question therefore suggests that citizens had correctly identified the shifting nature of the integration process. In any case, the differences in support for integration found in the three questions show that citizens resolved any uncertainty by responding to the cosmopolitan or utilitarian considerations evoked by the question and by changing policy circumstances. Although the membership question did peak somewhat higher about the time of the Maastricht Treaty in , clearly there is a great deal of common movement in the three measures. We have seen that the combined impact of short-term considerations and the personal predilections of survey respondents produce opinion moods that ebb and flow in ways that make a good deal of sense given what we know about the policy issues. This pattern of stable, sensible movement in citizen opinion contradicts a longstanding consensus concerning public opinion on foreign policy. In particular, many foreign policy experts characterized public opinion as irrational in several specific senses of the word. First, it was argued that public opinion was highly changeable, indeed unstable, in the sense of revealing large swings from one opinion to another for no apparent reason. Second, public opinion was incoherent: Finally, public opinion could therefore not have any real relation to world events or policy actions, because the information needed to form such opinions was low. In addition, public opinion was too changeable and incoherent to produce any plausible relationship between the real world and public opinion. And if opinion was so irrational, how could foreign policy be governed democratically?

Chapter 2 : The Role of Public Opinion in Foreign Policy

Third, public opinion polls are simply the wrong instrument for evaluating support for foreign policy decisions.

For more information, please see the full notice. American Isolationism in the s During the s, the combination of the Great Depression and the memory of tragic losses in World War I contributed to pushing American public opinion and policy toward isolationism. Isolationists advocated non-involvement in European and Asian conflicts and non-entanglement in international politics. Although the United States took measures to avoid political and military conflicts across the oceans, it continued to expand economically and protect its interests in Latin America. The leaders of the isolationist movement drew upon history to bolster their position. Nevertheless, the American experience in that war served to bolster the arguments of isolationists; they argued that marginal U. Nye, a Republican from North Dakota, fed this belief by claiming that American bankers and arms manufacturers had pushed for U. The publication of the book *Merchants of Death* by H. Butler both served to increase popular suspicions of wartime profiteering and influence public opinion in the direction of neutrality. Many Americans became determined not to be tricked by banks and industries into making such great sacrifices again. The reality of a worldwide economic depression and the need for increased attention to domestic problems only served to bolster the idea that the United States should isolate itself from troubling events in Europe. During the interwar period, the U. Government repeatedly chose non-entanglement over participation or intervention as the appropriate response to international questions. Some members of Congress opposed membership in the League out of concern that it would draw the United States into European conflicts, although ultimately the collective security clause sank the possibility of U. During the s, the League proved ineffectual in the face of growing militarism, partly due to the U. Senator Gerald Nye The Japanese invasion of Manchuria and subsequent push to gain control over larger expanses of Northeast China in led President Herbert Hoover and his Secretary of State, Henry Stimson, to establish the Stimson Doctrine , which stated that the United States would not recognize the territory gained by aggression and in violation of international agreements. With the Stimson Doctrine, the United States expressed concern over the aggressive action without committing itself to any direct involvement or intervention. Other conflicts, including the Italian invasion of Ethiopia and the Spanish Civil War, also resulted in virtually no official commitment or action from the United States Government. Upon taking office, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt tended to see a necessity for the United States to participate more actively in international affairs, but his ability to apply his personal outlook to foreign policy was limited by the strength of isolationist sentiment in the U. In , President Roosevelt proposed a Congressional measure that would have granted him the right to consult with other nations to place pressure on aggressors in international conflicts. The bill ran into strong opposition from the leading isolationists in Congress, including progressive politicians such as Senators Hiram Johnson of California, William Borah of Idaho, and Robert La Follette of Wisconsin. In , controversy over U. Roosevelt lamented the restrictive nature of the acts, but because he still required Congressional support for his domestic New Deal policies, he reluctantly acquiesced. The isolationists were a diverse group, including progressives and conservatives, business owners and peace activists, but because they faced no consistent, organized opposition from internationalists, their ideology triumphed time and again. Roosevelt appeared to accept the strength of the isolationist elements in Congress until Even the outbreak of war in Europe in did not suddenly diffuse popular desire to avoid international entanglements. Instead, public opinion shifted from favoring complete neutrality to supporting limited U. The surprise Japanese attack on the U. Navy at Pearl Harbor in December of served to convince the majority of Americans that the United States should enter the war on the side of the Allies.

DOWNLOAD PDF PUBLIC OPINION, THE PRESIDENT, AND FOREIGN POLICY

Chapter 3 : Public opinion can play a positive role in policy making | Public Leaders Network | The Guardian

Aside from participating in the development of a climate of opinion and possessing a latent electoral veto over major foreign policy decisions—two not insignificant functions—the public's direct influence in the making of foreign policy is minimal.

Public Opinion - Presidential powers Photo by: Here, more than in domestic affairs, presidents are dominant over both Congress and the mass public. Their ability to create opinion and dominate the opposition assures them a relatively free hand in planning and executing foreign policies. Because of the vast information-gathering and information-disseminating facilities at their disposal and because they are the only truly national spokespersons, presidents are the most important source of information on foreign affairs. Through their public attention to specific international problems, they can go a long way toward determining the agenda of the national foreign policy debate. Although congressional committees and the mass media have developed their own informational and promotional capabilities, until recently they have not commanded the resources available to the president. It was only during the last decade of the twentieth century that round-the-clock cable television news and Internet sources, available everywhere around the world, began to level the information and propaganda playing fields. Naturally, some obscure policies that the public does not care to monitor eventually become major issues. One such example was the unpublicized U. During sudden crises citizens must accept their accounts of fast-breaking events or risk further loss of American lives. In similar situations Americans supported their leaders during the Korean crisis in the summer of and the Gulf of Tonkin incident in August Surprisingly, the public does not always withdraw its support when crisis diplomacy or military intervention fails. In noncrisis periods the president can develop support for a program by selectively suppressing or releasing secret information. Madison published letters from a turncoat British spy in an attempt to demonstrate that Federalists who challenged his British policies had been conspiring with the enemy. As for the suppression of important information, Harry S. Truman decided to withhold General Albert C. More important, its conclusions ran counter to official policies. From to , Richard Nixon suppressed information on the bombing of Cambodia while some of his aides participated in a cover-up that involved falsification of military records. In one of the most celebrated cases of all, Franklin D. Roosevelt concealed the extent of his involvement as a silent partner in the Allied effort in World War II for fear that such revelations might lead to his electoral defeat and a change in the direction of national policy. His defenders contend that the president and his advisers had a better grasp of what constituted national security than did the well-meaning but untutored public. Like the doctor who tells his patient that the bitter but vitally important medicine tastes good, Roosevelt obscured the issues and misled the people for their own alleged best interests. Such a position might seem tenable in the light of the times, but its acceptance as a legitimate procedure for all presidents is unlikely. Yet both presidents later cited national security in defense of their tactics. Conceivably, an alert, crusading press can counterbalance the awesome power of the president to mold foreign policy opinions. However, editors move with caution when it comes to printing material potentially detrimental to national security. After conferring with the White House, its editors decided not to run the story because they were convinced that the success of that covert operation was a matter of the highest national interest. In a related vein, when columnist Jack Anderson published excerpts from the minutes of the National Security Council during the Bangladesh war of , many reporters joined with the government to criticize his "impropriety. In general, the press has been far more circumspect in printing diplomatic than domestic exclusives. For journalists, it is one thing to uncover scandals and quite another to publish material that could render aid and comfort to a foreign enemy. Since the s, however, unaffiliated investigative reporters on the Internet have not been so circumspect. Despite their general mastery of the opinion problem, American leaders have traditionally claimed that the people are important to them as a source of support and inspiration. Since the Jacksonian period, most have probably believed that they were duty-bound to heed the people. Thus, they

DOWNLOAD PDF PUBLIC OPINION, THE PRESIDENT, AND FOREIGN POLICY

have constantly attempted to assess public opinion, or at least the opinions of relevant publics. Public officials have traditionally relied heavily upon newspapers and other mass media to discover what people are thinking about. The media, however, are better indicators of the topics in the current foreign policy debate than of the range of opinions on those topics. Despite charges about the biases of the "liberal press," most U. S. leaders consider newspaper and magazine columnists to be peers whose approval they covet. Occasionally, they use friendly journalists to float trial balloons for them, so that they can test the political waters before committing themselves to a new course. In some cases columnists may become directly enmeshed in the policy process. In the fall of 1947, Walter Lippmann proposed the dismantling of U. S. Moscow may have been confused by the fact that the Americans were using John Scali, a television journalist, as an unofficial go-between with one of their diplomats during the affair. From time to time such an interpretation of opinion on Capitol Hill has affected policy outcomes. In part, they tend to vote their consciences or party lines on international issues because foreign policy is not important to their constituents. In most cases, members of Congress will be neither rewarded nor punished for their endeavors in the international sphere. After all, there is no guarantee that national opinion leaders, to whom the president looks for guidance, will share the opinions of local leaders to whom legislators may listen. During the first twenty years of the Cold War, the handful of congressional critics of presidential foreign policy on both sides of the aisle was not influential. The concept of bipartisanship meant that the opposition was expected to approve executive programs while the president went through the motions of prior consultation. As a product in part of the Vietnam War, in the late 1960s, Congress began to flex its long-atrophied muscles and offer programs and ideas independent of the president and, to some degree, more representative of the range of opinions in the country. Since the 1970s, policymakers have employed polls as a third indicator of opinion. Even the best of them, however, are not always reliable, especially when they attempt to elicit opinions on foreign affairs. Survey instruments do not lend themselves to sophisticated treatment of such questions and, moreover, rarely cover enough contingencies to be of immediate use to decision makers. During the months before the attack on Pearl Harbor, a majority of those polled thought that the United States would go to war in the near future and recommended such a course if it appeared that England was about to go under. But up to December 7, 1941, only a very small minority told interviewers that they favored an immediate declaration of war. It is impossible to determine on the basis of these data how Americans would have responded to a presidential request for war in the absence of a direct attack on U. S. In addition, some polls are worded so ambiguously that antagonists derive support from the same poll. So it was during the 1960s, when hawks and doves often utilized the same poll to prove that they spoke for the majority concerning the Vietnam involvement. During the last decade of the twentieth century, particularly during the administration of Bill Clinton, policymakers used their own sophisticated polling techniques and focus groups to see how various foreign initiatives might be received by the public. Phone calls, mail and e-mail, telegrams, and faxes received by the White House and other executive branches represent a fourth source of information about public opinion for the president. Modern administrations keep careful count of the weekly "scores" on specific issues, paying attention to communication that does not appear to be mass-produced by a lobby or political organization. Presidents view significant changes in the direction of opinion or in the number of complaints or commendations on an issue as possibly representing shifts in national public opinion, even though they understand that their sample is very small and hardly a random one. When the mail flow is going their way, presidents often trumpet the news, hoping to affect those who did not write in to climb aboard the bandwagon. Richard Nixon took this part of the activity so seriously that he organized secret Republican operatives around the country to send in supportive letters and telegrams on demand after a speech or a foreign policy initiative. Last, and most important, politicians claim they have developed finely tuned antennae that enable them to "sense" public opinion. Through an unscientific sampling of opinion from newspapers, Congress, and the polls, and from talking to family members, friends, advisers, and influential leaders, they contend that they can accurately read public opinion on any major issue. Harry Truman told his friends that the polls were wrong in 1948. As he traveled across the nation, he sensed a swing to the

DOWNLOAD PDF PUBLIC OPINION, THE PRESIDENT, AND FOREIGN POLICY

Democrats that did not show up in the polls. Social scientists report that leaders of small groups are better able to assess the range of opinion in their groups than other members are, and, in fact, their rise to leadership status may relate to their superior ability to assess group opinion. Thus, when William McKinley toured the country in to determine what Americans thought of expansion, he apparently saw and heard only those who favored acquisition of the Philippines. In a slightly different case in the fall of , Franklin D. Roosevelt publicly proposed that the United States begin to take a more active role in curbing expansionists in Asia and Europe. According to most opinion indicators available today, a majority of Americans supported his bold quarantine speech. However, before the fact, the president had convinced himself that his remarks would launch a storm of isolationist protest. Consequently, after scanning the newspapers, telegrams, and letters, he found more opposition than was merited by the empirical data. It is irrelevant to students of the foreign policy process that presidents and their advisers often assess public opinion in an unscientific manner and confuse opinions stated publicly with public opinion. When officials act on the basis of an inaccurate reading of opinion, the opinions they hear represent effective public opinion. Naturally, this might indicate that they use public opinion to rationalize or justify a course already decided upon. The public is usually most important to the decision maker after a major policy has been implemented. At that point, dissenters who challenge both the legitimacy of the policy and presidential authority may be heard. In most cases, presidents have been able to cope with those who oppose their foreign programs. When they are confronted with some negative and little positive reaction to a policy, they can argue that the absence of widespread dissent is the same as tacit support—the silent majority assents by remaining silent. When the ranks of the dissenters swell in Congress and in the media, presidents can dismiss them as partisans who sacrifice national security for political gain. When, as in the s, hundreds of thousands of dissenters march on Washington and support moratoriums, presidents can call attention to the million who stay home. Most citizens would never think of protesting publicly or marching in open opposition to an official foreign policy. Such behavior appears unpatriotic, especially when it is confounded by officials and the media, sometimes purposely, with the scattered violence and revolutionary rhetoric present on the fringes of contemporary mass protests. Furthermore, critics lack knowledge of the intricate linkages between all diplomatic activities from Asia to Latin America. However, this line of argumentation lost some of its power after the s. Many of the more sensational revelations contained in the Pentagon Papers merely documented rumors and leaks that perceptive citizens gleaned from fragmentary accounts in the media during the s. The spirited public debates over the wisdom of intervention in Vietnam demonstrated that critics in the opposition often have as accurate intelligence and knowledge about the issues as those in the White House. In the last analysis, presidents can usually contain their critics because they hold the office of president, the most visible symbol of the American nation. Many who may privately express skepticism about certain foreign policies are reluctant to speak up for fear of insulting the dignity of the presidency and, perhaps, the prestige of the United States in the international arena. The power of the president to mold opinion has been enhanced in the twentieth century by electronic media. During much of American history, national leaders encountered difficulties when they tried to appeal to the mass public. In the s, James K. Polk threatened to "go to the people" whenever Congress challenged him. His threat, however, lacked credibility because he did not possess the physical means to reach them. Almost seventy-five years later, Woodrow Wilson might have succeeded in developing irresistible public pressure for his League of Nations had national radio hookups been available. In the s radio began to play an important role in the political life of the nation. Roosevelt, a consummate master of the new medium, increased his popular support through frequent direct contact with the public.

DOWNLOAD PDF PUBLIC OPINION, THE PRESIDENT, AND FOREIGN POLICY

Chapter 4 : Q&A: Public opinion plays shifting role in presidential policy decisions

12 Richard C. EICHENBERG, NÂ° 14, Automne Public Opinion and Foreign Policy in the Obama Era During his first year in office, President Obama undertook a number of foreign policy initiatives, including new approaches.

Each has been given specific powers and has assumed additional authority either through precedent or by relying on other constitutional responsibilities. Since the Vietnam War, Congress has tried to exert more influence and control over foreign policy. The president and foreign policy The president negotiates treaties, appoints ambassadors to represent the United States overseas, and is commander in chief of the armed forces. Even though they are effective only during the term of the president who made them, executive agreements negotiated with another head of state do not require Senate approval. Presidents also have access to discretionary funds that can be and have been used to finance both military and diplomatic initiatives. Presidents routinely rely on special envoys, who do not require Senate confirmation, to carry out negotiations with other countries. Congress and foreign policy The constitutional function of Congress is essentially to act as a check on presidential power. Congress has additional authority through its appropriation and oversight functions. As must all government programs, the operations of foreign policy must be funded. Congress can cut or increase foreign aid or the budget for a defense project. It can set restrictions on the length of time American troops are deployed during an international crisis by refusing to pay for them beyond a certain date. Congress has used its power to make laws that specifically limit the freedom of action of the president in foreign policy. The Neutrality Acts " are an early example. The War Powers Act, which was a direct response to the Vietnam War, requires that Congress be consulted whenever the president is ready to commit American troops. It puts a day limit on their deployment with an additional month for withdrawal without further congressional approval. Still, President George H. Congress also authorized the use of force in Iraq in the fall of The mass media and foreign policy The print and broadcast media play a role in setting the foreign-policy agenda for the country. Coverage of the Vietnam War is credited with bringing about the public-opinion shift in favor of withdrawal. On the other hand, the images of starvation in Somalia and the graphic reports of "ethnic cleansing" during the civil war in Bosnia built support for American intervention in both of those countries.

Chapter 5 : Milestones: “ - Office of the Historian

President Donald Trump's appearance at the NATO meetings in Brussels has returned our attention once again to his views on the need to change the role of the United States on the world stage. Trump's attempts to shift the ways of U.S. foreign policy are not a new phenomenon, of course.

Personal use only; commercial use is strictly prohibited. While traditional approaches have treated public opinion on domestic and foreign matters as largely distinct, the culmination of a series of changes may eliminate the effective distinction between foreign and domestic policy, at least in terms of how the American political system operates. All the factors central to the opinion and foreign policy process, such as information acquisition, attitude formation, media effects, the effect of opinion on policy, and presidential leadership now appear to mirror the processes observed at the domestic level. The traditional Almond-Lippmann consensus portrayed an emotional public with unstructured attitudes and little influence on foreign policy; however, revisionist views have described a reasonable public with largely structured views on foreign policy that can, at times, constrain and even drive those policies. The bulk of this analysis highlights emerging new research directions that should be pursued in light of the changes. In doing so, research should build on research from non-American contexts that points to the important influences of societal and institutional factors. In addition to continued examination of traditional demographic factors such as partisanship and ideology, additional attention should turn to consider potential genetic and biological foundations of attitudes. Finally, researchers should continue to evaluate how the new media environment, including social media, affects how the public accesses information, how the media provides information, and how political elites attempt to shape both. Given these changes, scholars should consider whether it continues to make sense to treat public opinion dynamics regarding foreign policy as distinct from domestic policy and its implications. In a sense, this is true. Humphrey made this observation in , the bipolar Cold War between the United States and Soviet Union, with its primary focus on traditional interactions between nation-states, dominated world politics. Domestically, the bipartisan consensus on foreign policy had yet to fray; the trauma of the Vietnam War lay just over the horizon. American political parties consisted of uneasy ideological alliances. Democrats were divided between northern liberals and conservative southerners, and Republicans were split between liberal northeasterners and conservative westerners and Midwesterners. At times, the cleavages within the parties were perhaps more important than the divides between them. News of foreign affairs landed in American driveways in the form of morning and afternoon newspapers, as well as the once-a-day national newscasts from a few national television networks. In this context, scholar Aaron Wildavsky suggested that the exigencies of national security fostered bipartisan support for the president abroad, whereas partisan conflict pervaded domestic politics. Fifty years later, the international and domestic landscape has changed radically. Internationally, nonstate actors whether international organizations, nongovernmental organizations, or terrorist organizations and flows of information, people, and ideas now challenge the dominance of nation-states. Domestically, more ideologically uniform political parties provide little space for issue compromise. Technological innovation has radically reshaped the information landscape so that individuals now have access to consistently updated information from a multiplying number of resources from around the globe. Polls appear to be ever present in American politics. During this period of transformation, intermestic issues Manning, “those subjects neither purely domestic nor purely international, such as immigration and trade” rose in prominence. Rather, no effective distinction exists between foreign and domestic policy, at least in terms of how the American political system operates. In effect, foreign policy has become domestic policy from a public opinion perspective. A pessimistic perspective suggested a largely moody and emotional public Almond, ; Kennan, ; Lippmann, , that possessed largely unstructured attitudes Converse, At least in foreign policy, these detriments did not cause an enormous amount of concern, since most analysts concluded that the public had only a limited influence on foreign policy Cohen, This Almond-Lippmann consensus dominated scholarly

thinking on the subject from the early 20th century until the Vietnam War see Holsti, , for a summary. As for structured attitudes, Eugene Wittkopf provided the most widely accepted framework, pointing to two attitudinal dimensions: Subsequent research suggested that this structure accounted for elite foreign policy attitudes as well, though with a different distribution Holsti, Recent research has also pointed to the need to consider isolationism as an independent third dimension instead of just reflecting opposition to militant and cooperative internationalism; Rathbun, Current research paths then continue to engage both the question of the dimensional content and the ordering role of core values. Initial re-evaluations employing statistical analyses seemed to point the way toward a full reconsideration of the traditionalist view of a limited public influence. These findings would feather with other research suggesting little presidential responsiveness to public opinion Wood, The Changing International and Domestic Context As in the Vietnam era, when international events spurred greater attention to public opinion, the more skeptical perspective on public opinion among scholars since the early s aligned with the shifting international context. Spurred on primarily by trends related to the Iraq War and attitude formation regarding terrorism after the September 11 attacks, scholars increasingly focused on public attitudes and war see Eichenberg, , and Klarevas, , for broader reviews of the use-of-force literature. Most broadly, scholars have emphasized that public attitudes on the use of force result from assessing the benefits of particular uses of force in comparison to the costs. More specifically, several factors appear to drive public attitudes regarding the use of force, including the national interests that are at stake, the foreign policy purpose of the intervention, and the extent of multilateral support Jentleson, ; Kull, ; the first two aspects highlight the potential benefits and the last points to a potential reduction in costs due to burden-sharing. In the post-September 11 context in response to the Afghanistan and Iraq Wars, casualties received renewed attention as factors affecting public opinion with an emphasis on perceptions and beliefs as opposed to objective numerical casualty figures. For example, Myers and Hayes found that individuals who perceived a high numbers of casualties apart from actual numbers of casualties expressed less support for war. Additionally, political knowledge and interest in political issues emerged as important factors determining the nature of public attitudes in this area. For example, Koch and Nicholson found that rising casualties increased interest which then drove higher voter turnout in elections, especially among the least politically engaged. Three themes emerged from the recent Iraq literature, all of which point to the intersection of information, the behavior of political elites, and the media in determining public attitudes. Emblematic of this work, Ole Holsti provides a comprehensive examination of American foreign policy toward Iraq before the war, the decision-making leading up to the war, and the sources and content of public opinion regarding the war and its influence. He highlights several aspects that characterized the literature in this field. Second, Holsti emphasizes the importance of the elite cueing and leadership efforts, especially in the run-up to the start of the war, in March Finally, the shifting media landscape during the Iraq War points to how changes in the media can affect the interaction among political elites, the media, and public attitudes. A second important work, edited by Richard Sobel, Peter Furia, and Bethany Barratt , brought together scholars studying a number of different countries to compare and contrast the dynamics of public attitudes and its influence. With the Iraq War as its focus, the editors brought together experts on twelve different nations to consider the influence of public opinion of the foreign policy choices in these countries. Particularly noteworthy here are their final conclusions p. Taken together, these works emphasize the interactive effects of the roles of information, the media, and the behavior and response of elites to public opinion. A particular focus in this more recent period emerges from the interaction among information about foreign policy events, media portrayals of the information, and cueing efforts by political elites. Some, who often portray the public as information misers, suggest that the public largely follows elite cues regarding support or opposition to conflicts. The public then takes its cues from the party leaders with whom they identify Berinsky, ; Brody, New Research Directions Looking forward, three broad areas should provide productive ground on which to focus scholarly attention. Second, since the source of nearly all information about the outside world necessarily comes to the public through the media, how recent changes in the media environment and media consumption affect the dynamic

between public opinion and foreign policy should be pursued. Finally, scholars need to further investigate recent research findings suggesting that politicians respond to narrower segments of the public than the mass public. While nothing has emerged to question the assumption that the public is fundamentally uninformed about foreign affairs, three recent developments suggest the need for greater attention to information sources. First, scholars studying American politics have long concluded that low- and high-information individuals differ in their assessments of policy issues and reactions to the information provided by election campaigns Althaus, ; Gilens, ; Zaller, Scholars focused on foreign policy have begun to disaggregate mass opinion by information level and have found high- and low-information individuals react differently to changing circumstances and information. The individual, not the information, seems to be the most important factor. For example, if low-information individuals become more informed about a policy, they do not align their attitudes with the high-information voters. Instead, research suggests that low- and high-information voters react to information about foreign policy events differently Berinsky, ; Sirin, Further, research has suggested that potential differences exist between individuals with generalized knowledge about foreign affairs and those with issue-specific knowledge Sirin, Much of the work in this area has focused on the Iraq War and casualties, and scholars should broaden the substantive areas exploring these concepts. Focusing on domestic issues, scholars in this area have examined the interrelationships among party identification, education, political knowledge, and media use Meirick, The question that requires more attention is whether a misperceptions drive policy attitudes implying that corrected information might shift attitudes , or b policy attitudes and beliefs drive misperceptions implying that corrected information would have little influence on attitudes. As foreign policy issues with significant domestic linkages such as trade, globalization, and immigration attain more domestic salience, it would be worth considering the effect that misinformation has on foreign policy stances on these issues. The interaction of these concepts might yield surprising results, as has been the case in the American politics subfield. Third, regardless of what the American public thinks, an implicit assumption in much of the work on foreign policy and public opinion is that American political elites are the most influential on American public attitudes Berinsky, Recent work has challenged this notion as well by suggesting that foreign elites can have just as much of an informational effect as domestic elites. The main empirical work in this area centers around the Iraq War where domestic elite cuing failed to operate in a traditional sense because Republican elites supported the conflict and Democratic elites either supported the conflict or remained silent. Experimentally Dragojlovic, , results point to interactions among party identification and level of political awareness mediating the responsiveness of individuals to foreign cuing by friendly national actors low-information Republicans were less persuaded, and Democrats were potentially more persuaded. As with much of the recent work in this area, the Iraq War provides at least the initial data on the question. A growing number of studies have examined the core components of the reasonability and stability of public opinion on foreign policy in other nations, and results have largely been consonant with the American case. For example, Holsti provides an extensive examination of non-American attitudes toward the United States, its foreign policies, and American society. Consistent with previous accounts in the American literature, Holsti attributes the attitudes of these non-American publics as reasonable responses to the changing strategic context and U. Not surprisingly, a commonality across these studies emphasizes both the similarity in the processes of attitude formation across nationalities and the differences between how the situational circumstances lead to differing substantive attitudes. For example, Everts and Isernia compared and contrasted American and European attitudes toward the use of force and concluded while Europeans and Americans share similar worldviews, they diverge in net assessments of uses of force because they react to contextual issues differently e. In particular, two studies have highlighted the value of comparative analysis in this field. Focused closely on public opinion and the Iraq War, Sobel, Furia, and Barratt brought together scholars from a number of nations and compared and contrasted the opinion formation and influence dynamics in the United States and European countries, as well as Japan, Mexico, India, and Turkey. By employing the same methodology across these cases, the volume is able to highlight how similar factors e. These processes then

interact to shape public opinion and policy outcomes. In a similar vein, a multinational study of foreign news coverage and public attitudes reinforces the view that news media content varies by media source market vs. Much in the vein of comparative politics, these works highlight that while the same variables operate in different nations i. Given the promising findings from these comparative examinations, greater extension into new countries should yield exciting insights. As this work moves into non-United States contexts, a greater presence from scholars and concepts from the comparative politics subfield will be needed to understand the complexities of public opinion in varying institutional and social contexts. This avenue points to the need for complementary multi-authored work to bring together specialists with varying geographic specialties e. Scholars have begun to challenge the findings on a range of demographic characteristics by suggesting that several other factors may be important in shaping foreign policy attitudes, alone or in combination with other characteristics. For example, Eichenberg and Eichenberg and Stoll found significant gender differences; women were on average less supportive of both the use of force and defense spending, with differences in support of defense spending by men and women varying over time in similar manner. Religious belief has often been overlooked as a potential explanatory variable for foreign policy attitudes. Ironically, as American society has become more secular, scholars have increasingly found that religious beliefs are associated with foreign policy inclinations, especially attitudes toward the Middle East. Scholars have noted the significant influence of religious beliefs, especially among evangelical Protestants, on matters dealing with Israel, Islam, the Iraq War, and on U. Additional research has also suggested that religious beliefs interact with partisan views Cavari, These initial findings suggest that study of the influence of religion on foreign policy attitudes would be a worthwhile endeavor. With the culturally salient September 11 attacks and the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars in the s, scholars have begun to consider whether millennials, who came of age in the midst of these international developments, as well as with the advent of social media and personal computing devices e. As with the findings on religion, this research suggests that the previous research on generation that emerged in the post-World War II and pre-September 11 eras might be temporally bound. Finally, in addition to considering how the demographic characteristics of individuals might influence their attitudes, scholars might be well served to consider how societal characteristics interact with demographic factors in the determination of their foreign policy attitudes. For example, Balestrini found that not only do national economic situations e.

DOWNLOAD PDF PUBLIC OPINION, THE PRESIDENT, AND FOREIGN POLICY

Chapter 6 : Making Foreign Policy

*Does the public alter American foreign policy choices, or does the government try to change public opinion to support its policies? In *Counting the Public In*, Douglas C. Foyle demonstrates that it depends on the president.*

Do presidents or the public drive the policy agenda? Canes-Wrone explores the shifting role of public opinion during various stages of presidential terms and how much influence the president can exert on the American people in promoting his initiatives. Canes-Wrone, a graduate of Princeton, joined the University faculty as an associate professor of politics and public affairs in fall. She previously served on the faculty at Northwestern University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Her fields of specialty include presidential, legislative and bureaucratic politics, as well as the study of elections. She recently discussed the issues raised in her new book. What have you discovered through this book about the relationship between public opinion and presidential policy-making? Does your research find that concern to be well founded? My evidence suggests that those concerns tend to be overblown, that presidents are not as apt to follow public opinion as the founders might have predicted. The first is that presidents are concerned about the ways in which citizens ultimately will view policies. In addition, they can use a mass appeal to go over the heads of Congress to try to leverage public opinion. I think the perception among presidents and much of the public is that if the president is popular he can go on TV and shift public opinion to get what he wants. Finally, there are certain circumstances under which it does make sense to pander to public opinion – that tends to be when the next election is fairly soon and when the president anticipates a close race. However, it is worth underscoring that one of the major arguments of the book is that presidents have fewer incentives to pander to public opinion than the conventional wisdom suggests. Of the group you studied, which presidents were most likely to pander to public opinion? I find that the individual differences among presidents are minor relative to the structural conditions. So things we tend to think of as very personality-based tend to be diminished significantly by more structural effects, such as the electoral environment. For example, we saw Jimmy Carter, who had been promoting an expansion of humanitarian aid, proposing to cut humanitarian aid during the electoral race in. In the book, I go through other reasons that these presidents could have shifted their opinions: Have the policies changed? Have conditions in the country changed? In the case of the Carter example, have international conditions changed a lot? And I try to rule these out. I also gathered a large data set of policies over time and looked at whether presidents are more likely to take popular positions under the conditions in which I predict pandering would occur. The patterns suggest presidents are indeed more likely to follow public opinion under these predicted conditions. Other than electoral concerns, what other conditions make presidents likely to pander? One interesting finding, although it is limited in scope by the small amount of data, regards the behavior of second-term presidents who are facing big scandal investigations or impeachment threats. The presidents who looked most idiosyncratic were Nixon, Clinton and Reagan early in their second terms, when each of them tended to behave like a president who was running for re-election. When have presidents typically been most effective in influencing the American public? One of the arguments I try to bring home is that presidents are rarely able to change mass opinion in a big way. Presidents always want to think that they can do this. You see this with the current president as well – he went out there with Social Security reform and thought he could shape public opinion. But the evidence, over time, is that voters are not that likely to change their opinions on policies simply because the president is promoting them, even when presidents are very popular. In foreign policy, presidents are often the primary or only information source available to people. In the long term, other information can seep out about whether a particular involvement is something that voters would want. But in the short term, if the president is telling you that we really need to send troops into Bosnia because it could spill over into Europe, people are unlikely to have hard-and-set views that oppose him. You noted that President Bush, like his predecessors, tends to believe he can sway popular opinion. Most recently, he supported the deal for a Dubai company to take control of several U. As I mentioned earlier, the

DOWNLOAD PDF PUBLIC OPINION, THE PRESIDENT, AND FOREIGN POLICY

book argues that highly unpopular presidents are unlikely to pander to public opinion. Furthermore, for Bush in his second term and second-term presidents more generally the incentives to pander are not great for any level of popularity unless the president becomes focused on helping a particular member of his administration win the subsequent presidential election. I also would say that Bush has behaved in other ways that are consistent with how presidency scholars believe second-term presidents behave, in that he seems to have a concern for how he will be evaluated historically. For instance, in his most recent State of the Union address, we saw him making these big statements about decreasing dependence on oil and the fact that we really do need to shift the way we think about energy. Of course, these statements do have specific proposals behind them from the administration.

Chapter 7 : Foreign Policy and Public Opinion | The American Conservative

Images of overly unstable foreign policy opinions changed after Shapiro and Page's () landmark study of American public opinion and foreign policy. They amassed an extensive database of survey questions on foreign policy in the United States between and

This article examines both. Firstly, it looks at the opposing theoretical perspectives on public opinion. It then analyses the empirical evidence on the accuracy or otherwise of those conflicting theoretical viewpoints. Finally, the article throws light on an alternative position on the impact of public opinion on foreign policy, followed by some concluding remarks. Mearsheimer, and diplomat-historian George F. Their choices are influenced by external forces, such as survival and maximisation of power in an uncertain international system, rather than internal forces, such as public opinion. As far as realism is concerned, the government always leads; it does not follow. Leaders can also lead the public to hold certain views. They can do so since the American public has less knowledge about foreign affairs than about domestic policies. Accordingly, there is little direct link between what the public thinks and what leaders do. The pluralist model, notably the liberal theories, finds public opinion to be relatively stable, sensibly structured, consistent, and consequently impactful on foreign policy, as presidents take into consideration public opinion when making foreign policy decisions. Firstly, public support is essential because it legitimises the government within democracies. Success in an election is usually essential to secure legitimacy, but it is not always sufficient. They avoid policies that alienate or offend the electorates. In addition to liberal theories, approaches in the subfield of Foreign Policy Analysis, especially those that focus on the decision-making process, assume that public opinion is a crucial source of analysis and therefore plays a part in shaping foreign policy decisions. Early influential studies of diplomatic historian Thomas A. Consequently, their opinions rarely influenced policymakers. The Vietnam War is said to have stimulated those studies, enabling political analysts to challenge the realist views on public opinion. One pioneering research was conducted by John E. Holsti undertook another prominent study that challenged the earlier views. Writing about the role of public opinion in the US, his research showed that World War I changed the role of public participation from a theoretical one into a practical one. World War II and its aftermath further strengthened the role of public opinion. For Holsti, the end of the Cold War, especially the ending of bipartisan foreign policy consensus, facilitated the rise of partisan divides in the US, and consequently raised new questions regarding the role of public opinion in foreign policy decision-making. Holsti used extensive data on public attitude and preferences on foreign events and concluded that, even though the American public was not well-informed on all details of foreign affairs, its opinion was generally stable and reasonable in reaction to real world events, was not lacking in structure, and, in many cases, had a crucial influence on foreign policy decisions. In his crucial work, Sobel made a strong case for the power of the people. The Bush Senior Administration would deploy a large force to the Gulf War in order to help the public feel secure, and thus gaining and maintaining American support. When public attitude approved the Allied action, the Clinton Administration eventually became involved in a multilateral mission. They are cited by Holsti, Sobel, Knecht and many others. Jentleson used data and figures to make the same points. There is only published opinion. Presidents do not always lead or follow. For instance, when a large percentage of Americans are attentive to the issue, or when a significant majority of Americans hold the same preference on the issue, presidents seem to feel increased pressure and response to public opinion. But if the public is not focused or, even worse, divided on the issue, political responsiveness decreases accordingly. The theory also finds that crises such as war usually produce a highly attentive public. During crisis, the public remains attentive to how policies are implemented, and are interested in results. However, on a number of occasions Obama even had to ignore public opinion. This article therefore will not be able to offer a final solution to such a theoretical dispute. The realist arguments are found in: Public Opinion and Foreign Policy: The Stages of Presidential Decision Making. Essays in public philosophy.

DOWNLOAD PDF PUBLIC OPINION, THE PRESIDENT, AND FOREIGN POLICY

Boston, Little, Brown and Company, pp. Oxford [England], Oxford University Press, pp. Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. The impact of public opinion on U. New York, Oxford University Press, p. Paying attention to foreign affairs: Knecht, Paying attention to foreign affairs. Robinson, The role of media and public opinion, p. Knecht and Weatherford, Public Opinion and Foreign Policy; similar realist arguments are put forward in Robinson, The role of media and public opinion, p. The liberal views are found in: Public opinion and American foreign policy. Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, pp. Does Public Opinion Matter? World Attitudes on Global Governance. The Council on Foreign Relations. Public Opinion as a Constraint against War: Foreign policy decision-making; an approach to the study of international politics. These pioneering studies are quoted in almost every academic piece on the correlation between public opinion and foreign policy. Some of the sources include: Sobel, The impact of public opinion on U. Knecht and Weatherford, additionally, cite a handful of recent studies that support the views of the early consensus. War, presidents, and public opinion. New York, Wiley, pp. Holsti, Public opinion and American foreign policy, pp. Hadfield, and Dunne, Foreign policy, pp.

Chapter 8 : Public Opinion and Foreign Policy - Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics

This analysis reviews historical trends in the literature on public opinion and foreign policy that has focused on the rationality of the public's opinions, the structure of its attitudes, and its influence on foreign policymaking.

For students of international law, the declaration that he would authorize the use of torture was among the more alarming, so there were signs of hope when he took office and appeared to backpedal. Soon after winning the election, President Trump sat down with the New York Times and implied that the winds of public opinion might cause him to shift his position on torture. But scholars have long questioned whether the public is sufficiently aware of foreign policy to register consistent preferences, and even so, whether leaders actually tailor their policies accordingly. Many key questions remain, however. Bethany Albertson and Shana Kushner Gadarian, who have recently written a book about the way anxiety affects public life, [2] discuss the role of emotions in shaping foreign-policy views. As they observe, political scientists have historically believed that the public does not have coherent attitudes about foreign policy. In fact, recent evidence suggests that particular features of foreign policy, whether casualties or, as they show in their book, anxiety and anger, can produce a consistent set of attitudes about foreign policy. Daniel Drezner, author of the recent book *The Ideas Industry*, focuses his attention on a subset of the public: Her fourth book, *Taxing Wars*: Her primary research interests are political psychology and experimental methods. Lane award for best book in political psychology. Kennedy School of Government and Department of Government. His research focuses on delineating the effects of domestic politics on international conflict and cooperation in general and American foreign policy in particular, as well as on the role of the mass media and public opinion in contemporary American politics. His books include *Soft News Goes to War*: He has also contributed op-ed articles to a variety of newspapers, magazines, and blog sites in the United States and abroad. His latest book, *The Ideas Industry*: His book, *The Peacemakers*: Her primary research interests are in American politics, political psychology, political communication, and experimental methods. She is co-author with Bethany Albertson of *Anxious Politics*: His research focuses on foreign policy, international security, and militant violence. Nor would most Americans be able to explain the complicated diplomatic relationship between Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the United States and the regional tensions that came to the fore this month when Saudi Arabia led a coalition of Arab states to economically isolate Qatar. In truth, on average, Americans do not have deep political knowledge of domestic affairs [8] either, but the issues in foreign policy, such as the right balance of trade, or when the U. Yet, recent polls of Americans show a public that does appear to have foreign policy attitudes. More fundamentally, is public support of discrete policies politically meaningful? Early theories of public opinion from Gabriel Almond [11] and Walter Lippmann [12] essentially concluded that Americans do not have stable opinions about foreign policy, but rather respond to events and moods. Without information, these scholars concluded, public opinion was unstable, unformed, and not particularly meaningful. A range of scholars have challenged this perspective, arguing that while Americans do not have specific facts to rely on, they do have broad principles ex. Some pieces of information, such as the number of casualties in an ongoing war [14] or the purpose of military engagements are easily understood and communicated [15] through the mass media and can serve as a basis for support or opposition to war. In addition, citizens may not need deep information because they can rely on cues about what types of policies to support or oppose from favored partisan elites, [16] the mass media, [17] or fellow citizens. For emotions to matter in politics, though, citizens need to see events and policies as relevant to them, their community, their country, or another group that matters to them. Not all foreign policy issues are equally likely to emotionally engage the public. On other issues, elites must work much harder to frame issues to get the public emotionally invested. For instance, economic issues like trade disputes are usually less likely to generate anger, anxiety, or hatred in the same ways that humanitarian crises or interstate violence are. Of course, even issues that are on their surface non-emotive, like the Trans-Pacific Partnership, can be framed to evoke strong feelings in voters. When

DOWNLOAD PDF PUBLIC OPINION, THE PRESIDENT, AND FOREIGN POLICY

foreign policy is threatening, such as in the wake of a terrorist attack, citizens pay closer attention to news and events in order to understand the nature of threats and to avoid future harm. Media outlets are also much more likely to spend significant time on a foreign policy story when news is threatening than when it is more reassuring. Emotions change our decision-making calculus. Front-page news stories might command our attention for a day, but whether stories have meaningful effects on ordinary citizens depends on the emotions they evoke. For example, anger encourages risk seeking, or risk acceptant attitudes and behavior. In our research, we find that anxiety causes people to support protective policies, and what counts as protective is often framed by partisan politics. Yet, even when emotions push people to become involved in a political issue, does this mean that these emotions are enough to change policy itself? Some international actions can cause outrage in the short term but do not cause enough engagement to actually make people put pressure on Congress and the president to act. Emotions such as anger, anxiety, and enthusiasm all motivate the public to act but sadness is not a motivating emotion, so foreign policy issues that create sadness are unlikely to cause people to call their members of Congress, join protests, or vote on those issues. Given what we know about how Americans approach foreign policy, what do we expect in the Donald Trump presidency? First, we would caution that support or opposition for discrete policies is of limited value. It can be challenging for climate change activists to get Americans excited or anxious about climate change, when its effects seem physically remote and temporally distant. A particularly severe hurricane season or record drought might change things. In this administration, it is also hard to imagine responsiveness to public demands on climate change or immigration without sustained political action that evokes emotions for a wide variety of constituents who become motivated enough to vote on those issues. On the other hand, the specter of terrorist attacks inspires widespread anxiety, and traditionally this translates into public support for the president and greater latitude to pursue protective policies. In our own research, we find that when people become emotional over acts of terrorism, they are more likely to support hawkish military policy and more likely to disregard civil liberties. But we are not in an era of politics as usual. With record disapproval, heightened partisan polarization, and an expanding investigation into the executive branch, it is hard to imagine the political parties coming together to support civil liberties restrictions under a Trump administration even after a major terror attack. Essay by Matthew A. Baum, Harvard University and Philip B. As the United States rounds out the second decade of conflict in Afghanistan, decisive victory seems to recede ever further into the distance. Early visions of a stable, unified, and democratic Iraq now seem laughably naive. North Korea continually escalates its provocations, seemingly without consequence. Syria is unsettlingly similar, with the U. How can the most powerful nation on the planet repeatedly fail to achieve its foreign-policy goals? While countries such as China have closed the gap, the U. We contend that public opinion and attentiveness, and the unusual way in which they interact with American political institutions, explain much of this puzzle. The public tends to know little and care even less about foreign policy, but when it does engage it tends to do so negatively, emphatically, and at great cost to elected officials. But they can only wield it without incurring a significant risk of punishment for failure when they keep engagements below the threshold at which voters begin to pay attention. The notion of the United States as a constrained foreign-policy actor is, in some sense, both surprising and seemingly at odds with existing research. Most academic work suggests that U. Donald Trump and Barack Obama have very little in common as presidents, either in style or in policy preference, but with respect to Syria they converge in their failure to achieve measurable progress, let alone resolve the conflict. When such divergent men reach convergent conclusions it seems wise to look for structural explanations for the issues they confront. This structure can be found in U. The latter condition is exceedingly rare. The result is a proliferation of low-level engagements in which the U. The public clearly does not favor deep engagement in Syria after the traumas of Iraq and Afghanistan. However, this insulation comes at tremendous cost to policy—the generals make tactical decisions while the presidents eschew strategic ones. What is particularly worrisome is that this is a further evolution of the process that led Congress to delegate much of its foreign policy role to the president in the first place. When the public is largely detached from foreign policy, and

primarily punishes rather than rewards when it does engage, elected officials have little incentive to incur the downside risk that comes with foreign-policy leadership. Easy solutions to Syria presently are not on the table and they seem unlikely to emerge with time. As a result, we are likely stuck with what we have: Essay by Daniel W. On the other hand, shifts in public attitudes have secondary effects on how elites influence foreign policy. The erosion of trust in authority and the rise in political polarization have made it easier for unconventional and marginalized individuals to exercise their voice in foreign policy debates. It would be safe to say that Barack Obama and Donald Trump treat ideas and intellectuals very differently. What is interesting is how the marketplace of ideas has treated both of them. When Obama was elected, he was heralded as the rare politician who was also a true intellectual. He made a concerted effort to reach out to opinion columnists and foreign policy experts—and not only those who were ideological allies. This would also explain why as president, Obama followed the playbook more often than not. Trump seemed less constrained by the Blob during the campaign. Trump reveled in running one of the most heterodox foreign policy campaigns in the last half-century. While he lacked command of foreign policy detail, Trump forged a consistent zero-sum worldview on how foreign policy worked. Trump disparaged numerous U. Foreign-policy analysts spanning the ideological spectrum panned his foreign-policy pronouncements. Trump explicitly disavowed the value of existing foreign-policy expertise. Those actions aside, however, Trump as president has not been quite as transgressive as his campaign rhetoric suggested. He has reaffirmed U. His more populist foreign policy advisers—Peter Navarro and Sebastian Gorka, for example—have found themselves on the margins. On a whole host of foreign-policy issues, President Trump has reversed Candidate Trump: Once in power, however, the quality of the thought leader matters—and, to be blunt, Trump is no Ronald Reagan. Their disruptions characteristically drive the implosion. Reconstruction follows, but under other auspices. And after 16 years of war in Afghanistan, 14 years of war in Iraq, policy fiascoes in Yemen, Syria and Libya, and a global financial crisis, perhaps some reflection was in order. In challenging long-held norms and principles behind U.

Chapter 9 : Presidential powers - Public Opinion

The president and foreign policy. The president negotiates treaties, appoints ambassadors to represent the United States overseas, and is commander in chief of the armed forces.