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Ends and Means in the Democratic Conversation

Understanding the Role of Casualties in Support for U.S. Military Operations

Eric Victor Larson

RAND Graduate School
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The original version of this study was prepared as a dissertation in August 1995 in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the doctoral degree in public policy analysis at the RAND Graduate School. The faculty committee that supervised and approved the dissertation consisted of Bruce Don (Chair), Richard Hillesius, and James P. Kahan.
This research addresses the role of casualties in public support for and attitudes toward U.S. military interventions. It should be of interest to those who are concerned with the public policy aspects of U.S. military interventions and want to understand the nature of the domestic political constraints that may be faced in a military operation.

There is little doubt that the issue of casualties is playing an increasingly prominent role in political debates over the use of the U.S. Armed Forces, and this has led many to conclude that the American public will not tolerate casualties in U.S. military operations. In fact, however, it is all but impossible to separate casualties from the host of other factors that also affect public attitudes toward the use of force: the importance of the interests engaged and the principles being promoted; the prospects for success; and perhaps most important, the level of support or criticism for the operation from congressional and other political leaders.

These leaders help members of the public to organize their political beliefs and interpret events. And they play a fundamental role in helping members of the public make judgments about whether the often intangible benefits of a military operation are in some sense "worth" the most tangible of costs imaginable—losses of life among members of the U.S. Armed Forces. Put another way, congressional and other political leaders figure far more prominently in the shaping of public attitudes toward U.S. military interventions (and casualties) than most realize.

There are currently profound disagreements among political leaders over the circumstances in which the U.S. Armed Forces should be used to pursue U.S. policy objectives, and when the costs that have been incurred in an intervention have become unacceptable. Because this is a normative issue, there are in fact no right answers to this question. Only a misanthrope, however, would disagree that lives should not be lost in pursuit of trivial causes or fool's errands. There are,
however, ample opportunities for well-meaning political leaders to broaden the sort of democratic conversation I describe in this dissertation to identify circumstances under which force could be supported.

One very personal word is in order. Individuals can differ greatly in their attitudes toward the role of force in statecraft and their willingness to ask others to sacrifice their lives to achieve political objectives. Many of these attitudes can be traced to larger normative beliefs—beliefs that lie outside the realm of empirical data and objective analytic methods. I have accordingly tried to be respectful of the very human dimensions of this issue, and equally respectful of what are ultimately matters of conscience: how to balance relatively abstract U.S. foreign policy and security objectives against the most tangible costs imaginable—the lives of U.S. military personnel. What follows is descriptive of the patterns that seem to lie in the data, and not an endorsement of any particular viewpoint.
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SUMMARY

Majorities of the public have historically considered the prospective and actual casualties in U.S. wars and military operations to be an important factor in their support, but the relationship between casualties and support has varied greatly across operations. The simplest explanation consistent with these data is that there are two aggregate-level processes at work.

The first process seems to be a crude weighing of the expected benefits and costs of an intervention, or an ends-means calculus: when the expected benefits broadly conceived are believed to be important (i.e., vital interests and important principles appear to be at stake), majorities are more likely to be willing to support the use of force and accept its costs. When the expected benefits or prospects for success are low, however, there is a lower willingness to support the use of force or accept casualties.

The second process involves leadership and consensus or dissensus among leaders. The weighing of ends and means just described is informed by debates among U.S. political and other leaders. When leaders agree that the objectives of an operation are worth their costs and risks, this increases the likelihood of support from those who follow these opinion leaders. When leaders are divided along partisan or ideological lines, however, members of the public tend also to divide along these lines.

Both of these processes, furthermore, are dynamic: as Figure S.1 suggests, support for a U.S. military intervention rarely remains at its initial levels, and over time tends to fall. Over the course of an operation, support is affected by changes in perceived benefits, prospects, casualties, and support from leaders. The view reported here is broadly consistent both with past RAND work by Lorell et al. (1985) and Hosmer (1985), and other work done by Mueller (1973, 1994b), Nincic (1992), Page and Shapiro (1992a), Zaller (1992), and other scholars that demonstrates the importance of leadership and objective events and conditions in public support.
Figure S.1 - Support as a Function of Battle Deaths

Six cases, a representative selection of U.S. wars and other military operations, were examined in detail. In all of the cases examined, in fact, the perceived benefits, prospects, and support of U.S. political leaders played important roles in the robustness of the public’s support for the war or operation, and the willingness to accept casualties. In short, it is not only difficult to isolate the effect of casualties from these other factors, these other variables even appear to mediate the importance of casualties in support.

World War II. Support in the Second World War remained high because of the important interests and principles that were engaged, the belief that the outcome would be a victory over the Axis, and the bipartisan support of U.S. political leaders. As a consequence, support also remained high in the face of very high U.S. casualties.

The Korean War. Although there was widespread agreement that important stakes were involved, support for the Korean War declined.

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The wording of the questions and the data for the figure are documented in the Appendix.
precipitously with the entry of the Chinese in November 1950, which destroyed any hope of reunification and a quick victory, led to widespread criticism from Republican members of Congress, and dramatically increased the cost in casualties.

The Vietnam War. Support declined only gradually during the Vietnam War, in part because of the durability of the U.S. interest in halting the spread of communism and enhancing U.S. credibility, but also because of the gradually increasing opposition of congressional and other opinion leaders, and the gradually increasing costs in casualties.

The Gulf War. Although the Gulf War lacked the justification of containing communism, most members of the public believed that important U.S. interests were engaged, and that a number of important principles were being promoted in the Gulf. Visible progress was evident from the earliest days of the war, and divisions among leaders were somewhat muted, contributing to high levels of support for the war. As judged by hypothetical questions asked about the prospective willingness to accept different levels of casualties in the Gulf War (such as that in Figure 3.1) and cross-tabulations of public opinion data on support and casualty expectations, the willingness to accept casualties in the Gulf War was higher than most understand—even among those who expected rather high casualties, supporters typically outnumbered opponents. And the observed levels of support were generally higher than those in these prospective questions. If the war had not turned out so well, however, leadership opposition could quickly have eroded this support.

Panama. Like the Gulf War, Panama was a "quick and decisive" operation in which a combination of vital interests (protecting American citizens and the Panama Canal, dealing a blow to Noriega's drug activities) and important principles (reestablishing the duly elected government while capturing a self-demonizing thug) were secured quickly and at low cost. The operation accordingly enjoyed bipartisan support from U.S. political leaders, and high levels of support from the public.

Somalia. Although Somalia lacked the engagement of U.S. vital interests, the operation was promoting humanitarian goals that have traditionally received high levels of support. Initial support also benefitted from good prospects and bipartisan support from congressional
leaders, and a general expectation of low or no U.S. casualties. With the accomplishment of the initial objectives and the deteriorating situation over the late summer of 1993—including an increase in the number of U.S. deaths due to hostile action—bipartisan congressional and public support were lost for the operation. Even before the firefight in Mogadishu, congressional and public support had crumbled.

POLICY PREFERENCES

Declining support says nothing about the policies that members of the public come to prefer—whether they desire escalation or deescalation. The general pattern observed in Korea, Vietnam, and Somalia was in fact polarization, with the levels of support for the various alternatives conditioned by the nature of the interests involved and the prospects for success.

In Korea and Vietnam, only minorities typically preferred either the extreme option of escalation of the war or immediate withdrawal. In both wars there is evidence of gradually increasing sentiment for withdrawal, but no evidence of increasing sentiment for escalation. In these two wars, the outcome was an unhappy equilibrium in which most grudgingly supported continuing the war until a negotiated settlement, return of U.S. prisoners of war, and orderly withdrawal could be achieved.

In Somalia, on the other hand, following the deaths in Mogadishu majorities consistently expressed a preference for withdrawal, although an orderly withdrawal (the alternative backed by the Congress) was ultimately preferred to an immediate withdrawal. Evidence of “escalatory” sentiment in Somalia turns out to reflect a misreading of the available data: majority support for such actions could only be found when it was instrumental to an orderly withdrawal, or did not impede a withdrawal. Majorities were happy to punish or capture Aidid, but only if it didn’t impede withdrawal.

LEADERSHIP CONSENSUS AND DISSENSUS

Leadership consensus or dissensus regarding U.S. military operations has a profound impact upon the nature of public support. When leaders are in agreement that the interests and principles being
promoted are worth the costs and risks, majority support from the public tends to follow. When leaders are divided, however, support is usually restricted to members of the president’s party or his core supporters, and this percentage is typically somewhat short of a majority.

The impact of leadership divisions was apparent in Korea, Vietnam, the Gulf War, and Somalia. In the first two wars, both declining support and polarized policy preferences had an important partisan or ideological component. Congressional criticism following President Bush’s November 1990 announcement that additional forces were being sent to create an “offensive option” led to similar declines in public support. The “rally” at the time of the Gulf War also had an important partisan component to it, with self-identified Liberals less likely to rally to support the war than Conservatives. In Somalia, leadership dissensus took an institutional form, pitting the Congress against the president even before the deaths in Mogadishu in early October 1993.

FINDINGS

The principal policy-relevant findings are as follows:

- The perceived recent decline in a willingness to accept casualties has to do with the arguably smaller stakes in the post-Cold War world. What may be new, however, is the extent to which congressional and other political opponents of interventions express their opposition in terms of the unacceptability of casualties.

- Both expected and actual casualties can affect support for a military intervention, although the importance of casualties in support depends on the perceived benefits, prospects and nature of leadership support. When perceived benefits or prospects are low, or leaders are divided, support will be lower.

- Increasing casualties and declining support do not ineluctably lead to growing or majority support for escalation, or withdrawal; the preferences of the public are most closely associated with the extent of leadership dissensus on war policies and the credibility of the alternatives that are
offered. The public opinion data are exceedingly slippery on this question, and easy to misread.

- As a result of the Gulf War the public do not expect—nor are they likely to demand—that all future U.S. military operations will be bloodless. Indeed, they fear precisely the opposite.

- As a consequence, casualty minimization is supported at all levels—diplomacy, strategy and tactics, doctrine, training, force structure, and technology—but the linkage of these pieces is not well understood.

- Majorities of the public believe minimizing U.S. casualties to be most important, and minimizing civilian losses next most important; there is little evidence suggesting that majorities place much importance on minimizing losses among enemy combatants.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

The U.S. is now in an era that is characterized by lower threats, a desire for domestic renewal, higher partisanship among leaders and lower partisanship within the general public, and a faster-paced information and media environment.

It is accordingly also an era in which disagreements among leaders over U.S. military operations have become quite common, and where opposition arguments have often turned on the point that the situation is not worth the potential costs and risks of U.S. casualties. Concern about casualties has, in short, become a standard way for congressional and other leaders to express their opposition to military operations, and such expressions are commonly used by leaders of all political persuasions. When the issue devolves to weighing the intangible benefits of achieving foreign policy objectives against the most tangible costs imaginable—the lives of U.S. service personnel—it is clear that opponents have a very compelling argument to make. And these arguments tend to resonate with the public. Before the Gulf War and after the deaths in Mogadishu, many members of Congress argued that neither operation was not worth the loss of U.S. lives, and members of the public accordingly anguished over this question.
The consequences of these deep disagreements among U.S. leaders are quite sobering. They can result in divisions in the public and support that is brittle and easily exploited by adversaries, thereby leading both to failed interventions and to incorrect "lessons." Ultimately, political and other opinion leaders may find them eroding the credibility of force in protecting important U.S. interests and underwriting U.S. diplomacy. The irony, of course, is that when deterrence and coercive diplomacy fail, the costs may ultimately turn out to be even higher.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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The final and most important thanks I offer to my parents, without whose encouragement and love during six long and at times difficult years I would never have completed this work. This dissertation is lovingly dedicated to them.

In spite of all of these intellectual debts, I alone bear responsibility for any errors of omission or commission.
ACRONYMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABC</td>
<td>American Broadcasting System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIPO</td>
<td>American Institute of Public Opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBS</td>
<td>Columbia Broadcasting System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCFR</td>
<td>Chicago Council on Foreign Relations</td>
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<tr>
<td>CNN</td>
<td>Cable News Network</td>
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<tr>
<td>GOI</td>
<td>Gallup Opinion Index</td>
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<tr>
<td>GSS</td>
<td>General Social Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NBC</td>
<td>National Broadcasting System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NES</td>
<td>National Election Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NORC</td>
<td>National Opinion Research Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OOTW</td>
<td>Operations Other Than War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPOR</td>
<td>Office of Public Opinion Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORC</td>
<td>Opinion Research Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIPA</td>
<td>Program for International Policy Attitudes, University of Maryland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POW</td>
<td>Prisoner of War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSRA</td>
<td>Princeton Survey Research Associates</td>
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<tr>
<td>RMN</td>
<td>Richard M. Nixon</td>
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<tr>
<td>ROE</td>
<td>Rules of Engagement</td>
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<tr>
<td>SRC</td>
<td>Survey Research Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNSCR</td>
<td>United Nations Security Council Resolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USAID</td>
<td>United States Agency for International Development, U.S. Department of State</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

This study describes how concern about U.S. casualties figures in domestic support for U.S. military interventions. It demonstrates that support for a military intervention is the result of a sensible weighing of ends and means that takes place in a larger democratic conversation among political leaders, the public, and the media.

THE ROLE OF CASUALTIES IN DECLINING SUPPORT

There is little doubt that the public are concerned about casualties in U.S. military interventions. Consider the data in Table I.1, which provides a rank-ordering of concerns of the public in the use of the U.S. Armed Forces.

Table I.1
Importance of Various Factors in Use of U.S. Armed Forces

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No one wants our nation to get into any conflicts in the future, but as in the past, our leaders might someday decide to use our armed forces in hostilities because our interests are jeopardized. I know that this is a tough question. but if you had to make a decision about using the American military, how important would each of the following factors be to you? (rotated)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of American lives that might be lost 86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of civilians that might be killed 79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whether American people will support 71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement by major power (e.g., USSR, PRC) 69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of time of fighting 61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possibility of failure 56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whether allies/other nations will support 56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fact that we might break int</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost in dollars 45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Americans Talk Security #9.
Note: "Rotated" means that the order of the response items was varied to guard against bias due to wording or order effects.
When Americans Talk Security\textsuperscript{1} asked respondents in October 1988 what they thought the most important factors were in deciding about using the American military, for example, 86 percent said the number of American lives that might be lost was very important, and 61 percent said the length of time U.S. forces would be fighting was very important.\textsuperscript{2}

Over the last 50 years, the public have behaved consistently and sensibly to both anticipated and actual casualties—as the prospective or actual costs of an intervention have increased, support tended to decline. Figure I.1 presents data from a poll done by Americans Talk Issues in the summer of 1991 that asked respondents what their limit was for the number of deaths in a U.S. military intervention.

I would like to get some idea of what you think "too much loss of life" is in a military intervention. What would be the rough figure you would use as an acceptable number of U.S. deaths? (Americans Talk Issues, 6/23-7/1/91)

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure1.png}
\caption{Support as a Function of Battle Deaths}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{1}Americans Talk Security is a nonprofit project undertaken to contribute to the public discourse on national security issues.

\textsuperscript{2}Fifty-six percent mentioned the possibility of failure as being very important.
The figure shows that prospective support for the generic intervention declined as the toll in deaths increased—a sensible response that will be observed in actual cases as well. In fact, analysis of these data suggests that for every increase by a factor of ten in the number of U.S. combat deaths, support declined by 18.5 percentage points, and that the median respondent to this question (the respondent at the 50th percentile) evidently thought that about 100 U.S. deaths was the acceptable limit. What is missing, however, is context: the respondent has no idea how important the interests might be, nor what sorts of principles might be promoted by the intervention. Nor is there any indication of whether the intervention is likely to succeed, or how much time it might take. It should be no surprise, then, that in different interventions the public has shown a willingness to accept far more or far fewer than 100 U.S. deaths due to hostile action. That is, depending on the merits of the case, the limit on casualties has been considerably higher, or considerably lower.

As can be seen in Figure I.2 and described in this study, the rate at which support declines varies across wars and interventions, but seems to be associated with the perceived benefits (e.g., the importance of the interests at stake, and the principles being promoted) and prospects, and the level of consensus or disensus among political leaders. Put another way, the public's tolerance for casualties looks very much like a sensible weighing of ends and means. This is readily apparent in the following figure, which presents the actual rates of decline in support as a function of casualties in World War II, Korea, Vietnam, and several smaller operations, and the prospective rate of decline in the Gulf War. But the decline as a function of casualties masks a deeper process—it also describes the rate at which political leaders, primarily members of Congress, become disaffected. In fact, and as will be demonstrated, in many cases the role of opinion leaders in declining support may be far more important than that of costs alone.

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A number of questions about the Gulf War asked respondents whether they would support the war at various levels of casualties. While some might argue that we are comparing apples and oranges, as will be seen, similar questions asked at the beginning of the Vietnam War were entirely consistent with the actual observed rate of decline.
The remainder of this report is devoted to showing how a simple model of ends and means, embedded in the democratic conversation among political leaders, the public, and the media leads to a consistent response to casualties across different periods and different types of interventions. It also shows that, although important, a focus on casualties alone misses the real story.

Figure 1.2 - Which Curve Are We On?

POLICY-RELEVANT QUESTIONS

This report addresses the following policy-relevant questions:

1. HAS THERE BEEN A RECENT DECLINE IN TOLERANCE FOR CASUALTIES IN U.S. MILITARY OPERATIONS?

2. DO EXPECTED OR FEARED CASUALTIES AFFECT THE INITIAL LEVELS OF SUPPORT FOR A MILITARY OPERATION? IF SO, IN WHAT WAY? PUT ANOTHER WAY, ARE MAJORITIES OF THE PUBLIC DETERRED BY THE POTENTIAL CASUALTY COSTS OF A MILITARY OPERATION? WHAT FACTORS AFFECT THE INITIAL SENSITIVITY OF THE PUBLIC TO CASUALTIES?
3. Do casualties over the course of a military operation affect public support? In what ways?

4. What other factors affect support in important ways? Are any of these more important than casualties?

5. Can fear of excessive U.S. casualties lead majorities to support casualty-minimizing strategies, including strategies of annihilation? Can casualties lead to support for policies of retribution?

6. Do casualties lead the public to prefer withdrawal or a decreased commitment? Do they lead the public to prefer escalation or an increased commitment? Are these even the right questions?

7. As a result of lessons learned from the Gulf War, do majorities of the public believe that most future U.S. military interventions will be lop-sided and relatively bloodless victories? Relatedly, are majorities likely to "demand" such victories to consider them successes?

**Organization of This Study**

Before we can address these policy questions, a deeper understanding of the American domestic political milieu is required. Two simple metaphors—that of a democratic conversation, and that of a model of ends and means—are used to highlight the most important factors in domestic support for military operations, and to provide a framework for data collection and analysis. Once the limitations of the existing literature and data are understood, the reader will be in a position to systematically evaluate the role of casualties through a number of historical case studies. And when the results of the case studies are integrated, we will finally be in a position to address the policy questions.

This document is organized in four parts, each consisting of several chapters. The organization is intended to track with the logic of analysis that was just presented. Important background information is presented in the three chapters of Part One. Part One is supplemented by an appendix providing a more detailed description of the
simple model of ends and means. Part Two consists of six case studies that examine in detail how public attitudes toward past operations changed in response to a host of military, political and other factors. Part Three integrates and summarizes the results of these analyses, and clarifies the role of casualties in the larger democratic conversation over U.S. military interventions. Part Four provides conclusions and implications.
PART 1: CONTEXT

Part One provides the reader with important background information on the American domestic political system and an approach for analyzing this system in a systematic and rigorous fashion.
1.1. BACKGROUND

MOTIVATION

The question of the willingness or ability of the American political system—and especially the American public—to tolerate casualties has occasioned a great deal of commentary and speculation, and a negligible amount of careful analysis.

The conventional wisdom is that the American body politic—the public—are no longer willing to accept casualties in U.S. military operations, and will “demand” immediate withdrawal following losses. A frequently heard minority view is that a protean public is inflamed by casualties and “demands” escalation to victory in response to such costs.4 Neither view, however, quite captures the truth of the matter.

The purpose of this report is to attempt to draw lessons about the role of casualties in support for past U.S. military interventions, ranging from large interventions such as Korea, Vietnam, and the Gulf War, to smaller interventions such as Lebanon, Somalia, and Haiti.

It is important to note at the outset that while much of the question of casualty tolerance has to do with public attitudes as reflected in public opinion data, it is more fundamentally about presidential leadership in adapting to and managing change (on the battlefield, and on the home front) and attending to various audiences—the Congress, the public, the media—to assure their active and continued support. Each of the actors whose support the President hopes to win—the Congress, the public, and the media—can and do influence the attitudes of the others. That is, they all participate in a democratic conversation.

For this reason, any analysis of the question of the impact of casualties on public support for military operations needs to consider the actions of and interactions among the Executive, the Congress, the public, and the media, and the sorts of cues from each that can affect support. For example, two cues appear to be especially important for

4Schwarz (1994).
the public: battlefield events, including successes or setbacks (and their impact on expectations), and elite consensus or dissensus (and their impact on the public’s determination of whether ends and means are in balance). For the Congress, public attitudes (as measured by public opinion data) and media views are similarly important. And so on.

Finally, while we may observe the political system becoming more agitated as costs mount in a military operation, we often cannot say with confidence which actor initiated the heightened activity. For my purposes, it suffices to observe that under certain circumstances these actors send out mutually reinforcing alarms in response to casualties, and seem to continue to do so until the burning issue of ends and means is resolved satisfactorily. And in most of the cases, there is substantial evidence that political leaders, and not the mass public, figured prominently in raising the issue.

It is also important at the outset to note that the policymaker needs to attend to the bases of domestic support on a consistent basis; indeed, when objectives (or the way they are valued), or costs change dramatically, changes in support can be expected. Although it is not unusual to hear it advanced, the view that once the public has given support to an operation that it is then obligated to continue supporting it regardless of changing objectives, prospects, and costs, is patently absurd. Only a naïve strategist would take such a view. 5

I will begin by placing the issue of support in the context of the policymaker’s responsibilities, and then describe a number of features of the current environment that complicate these tasks.

THE POLICYMAKER’S CHALLENGE

Viewed simplistically, the Executive is responsible for three basic functions vis-à-vis U.S. military interventions:

- Deciding when (and when not) to intervene;
- Managing the political conduct of the operation; and
- Deciding when to terminate or escalate the operation.

5Perhaps the most sophisticated treatments of ends and means in the domestic context can be found in the work of Brodie (1973) and Iklé (1991).
Each will be discussed briefly.

Deciding When to Intervene

It falls upon the Executive to decide when (and when not) to intervene when faced with a threat to U.S. interests, or an opportunity to change an unsatisfactory status quo situation, and there are a host of considerations that play into such decisions.\(^6\)

Consistency

Because uses of force help to define for observers the U.S. strategic conception and doctrine,\(^7\) consistency—with overall interests, values, and aims—is an important consideration in decisions to use force. For example, the decision to deploy U.S. forces to Saudi Arabia after the Iraqi attack on Kuwait was consistent with the prevailing bipartisan view that a preponderance of Gulf oil should not fall under the control of a hostile power. The intervention in Somalia was similarly consistent with the longstanding U.S. commitment to providing humanitarian relief, and the intervention in Haiti was consistent with the organizing principle of the Clinton Administration's national security strategy of "engagement and enlargement."\(^8\)

Criteria for the Use of Force

In addition to broader philosophical statements of when it is appropriate to use force, some administrations have also specified


\(^7\)As Seymour Brown notes: "An administration cannot escape the massive impressions created on domestic and foreign observers by its most dramatic actions. Regardless of intention, large doses of force in the international environment create a noise level that drowns out the sound of other signals." Brown (1968), p. 364.

\(^8\)Albright (1993) listed four problems that might require the use of force: the spread of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, ethnic violence, and the fall of democracy, and noted Haiti as an example of the last. As will be seen, the Clinton administration faces a tough audience in attempting to gain support for the last objective—it is viewed as being a very important foreign policy goal by only about a third of the public and the leaders.
criteria or tests for the use of force; the Reagan administration, Bush administration, and Clinton administration have all at one time or another articulated such criteria. They have typically been stated in a way that suggests any proposed use of force might be evaluated against them; by implication, if a proposed use fails the tests, force would not be used. Such criteria have met with mixed success, however, probably because they can create overly restrictive conditions that have often been ignored in practice.\(^9\)

The first and most widely known is the so-called “Weinberger Doctrine,” which was a response to the debacle in Lebanon, and a battle between Weinberger and then-Secretary of State George Shultz over the use of force in support of diplomacy. In a policy speech to the National Press Club in November 1984, Secretary Weinberger cautioned:

We have learned that there are limits to how much of our spirit and blood and treasure we can afford to forfeit in meeting our responsibility to keep peace and freedom. We cannot assume for other sovereign nations the responsibility to defend their territory without their strong invitation, when our freedom is not threatened.

He then went on to specify six criteria that needed to be met in weighing the employment of U.S. forces abroad:

The United States should not commit forces to combat overseas unless the particular engagement or occasion is deemed vital to our national interest.

If we decide it is necessary to put combat troops into a given situation, we should do so wholeheartedly, and with the clear intention of winning.

We should have clearly defined political and military objectives. We should know precisely how our forces can accomplish those clearly defined objectives.

The relationship between our objectives and the forces we have committed, their size, composition and disposition, must be continually reassessed and adjusted if necessary.

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\(^9\)The criteria specified by Secretary of Defense Weinberger in 1984 was in part motivated by disagreements with Secretary of State Shultz over the proper uses of force.

\(^10\)See Albright (1993), p. 47, on the potentially restrictive nature of such a doctrine.
Before the U.S. commits combat forces abroad, there must be some reasonable assurance we will have the support of the American people and their elected representatives in Congress.

The commitment of U.S. forces to combat should be a last resort, and be used only when other means have failed.\textsuperscript{11}

The criteria made the decision rather simple—absent vital interests (plus a number of other restrictive criteria) force should not be used. Some have even argued that the criteria were so restrictive that there are few likely circumstances under which military forces would ever be used.

This has led to something of a reformulation of the problem for circumstances where vital interests are not present, and different administrations have come up with different formulations. In a speech at West Point on January 5, 1993, President Bush summed up his decision calculus for situations where the stakes may be less than vital, but when other means have proved ineffective and the likely costs and level of risk are estimated to be low.\textsuperscript{12}

Using military force makes sense as a policy where the stakes warrant, where and when force can be effective, where no other policies are likely to prove effective, where its application can be limited in scope and time, and where the potential benefits justify the potential costs and sacrifice.

But in every case involving the use of force, it will be essential to have a clear and achievable mission, a realistic plan for accomplishing the mission, and criteria no less realistic for withdrawing U.S. forces once the mission is complete. Only if we keep these principles in mind will the potential sacrifice be one that can be explained and justified. We must never forget that using force is not some political abstraction but a real commitment of our fathers and mothers and sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, friends and neighbors. You've got to look at it in human terms.

President Clinton's national security team has also articulated various criteria for these low-benefit operations.


\textsuperscript{12} Bush remarks at the United States Military Academy at West Point.
In April 1993, for example, Secretary of State Warren Christopher said that the use of force against the Bosnian Serbs had to meet four tests:

- That the goal was stated clearly to the American people;
- That there was a strong likelihood that the use of force could be successful;
- "Is there an exit strategy?"
- Was there a program that could sustain the support of the American people?\textsuperscript{13}

National Security Advisor Lake later took a more conceptual view:

In recent years, discussions about when to use force have turned on a set of vital questions, such as whether our forces match our objectives, whether we can fight and win in a time that is acceptable, whether we have a reasonable exit if we can not, and whether there is public and congressional support. But we have overlooked a prior, strategic question—the question of "where"—which sets the context for military judgments.\textsuperscript{14}

Ambassador Albright commented on the desirability of a formal set of criteria for intervention:

For years, a debate has raged about whether it is necessary to spell out a set of specific circumstances—a checklist—describing when America will or will not contemplate the use of military force. This Administration has wisely avoided the temptation to devise a precise list of the circumstances under which military force might be used or of repeating the State Department's mistake concerning Korea 43 years ago when it defined too narrowly the scope of America's interests and concerns. Too much precision in public, however well-intentioned, can impair on the flexibility of the Commander in Chief or generate dangerous miscalculations abroad. But let no one doubt that this President is willing to use force—unilaterally when necessary.

Albright then offered a list of the circumstances under which military force might be used:

\textsuperscript{13}Reuter (1993).
\textsuperscript{14}Lake (1993).
In the future, if America’s vital economic interests are at risk, as they were in the Gulf, or if the lives of American citizens are in danger, as they were in Panama, or if terrorists need to be tracked down, as when President Reagan ordered the use of force to apprehend the hijackers of the Achille Lauro, President Clinton will not hesitate to act as a Commander in Chief must act to protect America and Americans. The President’s inaugural statement also indicated that we support the use of force on a multilateral basis when it is in our interests to do so.¹⁵

In April 1994, National Security Advisor Lake spoke about U.S. interests in Bosnia and advocated a framework of ends and means where the circumstances of the situation dictated the level of commitment:

While these interests [in Bosnia] do not justify unilateral American intervention, they do justify strong American involvement and the exercise of our leadership.

Direct threats to our nation or our people require us to be prepared for a unilateral military response...A second category of threats justifies only a limited use of force, and generally under international auspices. Peacekeeping would fall under this category. A third category may require our strong diplomatic engagement but not the deployment of our forces. In this rough typology, Bosnia fits into the second category: The interests and stakes warrant U.S. leadership and, at different stages and in different ways, the use of American force in tandem with others.

Lake also drew some lessons from the Somalia operation:

We also must define our mission clearly, early and often...A final lesson is that we must bring our forces to bear in sufficient mass to get the job done.¹⁶

The important point in this is that at the low end of threat/benefit spectrum, there is a far greater likelihood of disagreement over acceptable costs; for some situations, even modest costs in U.S. lives may enough to spark disagreement over whether the intervention is worth its costs. And in these circumstances, because the benefits of the

¹⁵Albright (1993). She also articulated the criteria for U.S. participation in U.N. peacekeeping operations.
¹⁶Lake (1994).
operation are low (or highly debatable), there is a higher likelihood that the potential cost in casualties will loom larger in the debate.\textsuperscript{17}

A second and related consideration has to do with the burden of history and tradition that a president inherits as Commander-in-Chief. The unique history, strategic circumstance, and preferred force structure of the United States have led over the past 50 years to patterns in the employment of military forces that have established implicit norms of behavior. For example:

- the U.S. has historically intervened more frequently in the Caribbean and Pacific regions and their littorals than other areas;\textsuperscript{18}

- U.S. Armed Forces have been used far more frequently for non-combat, and especially humanitarian operations than combat operations. For example, the United States Air Force mounted over 600 operations from 1947 to 1992, three-fifths of which were for humanitarian purposes;\textsuperscript{19}

- From 1975 to 1990, and prior to Operation Desert Shield, the United States Army deployed 50 or more soldiers outside the Continental United States on 22 occasions, primarily for security augmentation (six operations), nation building and operational support (seven operations), and humanitarian assistance (four operations);\textsuperscript{20}

- A review of U.S. Navy and Marine Corps crisis responses documented more than 200 such instances from 1946 to 1990, most of which involved the deployment of aircraft carriers;\textsuperscript{21}

Most of these deployments received little or no media or public attention, however, probably because they were small-scale and short-term operations, or because they didn’t involve the drama of combat.

\textsuperscript{17}The use of casualties in the political discourse will be discussed in a later section.

\textsuperscript{18}See for example, Blechman and Kaplan (1978). pp. 32-34.

\textsuperscript{19}United States Air Force (1993).

\textsuperscript{20}U.S. Army Concepts Analysis Agency (1991). This total does not include intelligence or special operations forces.

\textsuperscript{21}Siegel (1991).
There have, however, been a number of far more visible uses of U.S. military forces that reached the public consciousness because of the threat or actuality of combat. Consider the following partial listing of operations in which U.S. military forces have been used over the last 20 years: Mayaguez (1975); Iran Rescue (1980); Lebanon (1982-84); Grenada (1983); Libya (1986); Gulf refloating and escort (1987); Panama (1989); Iraq (1990-91); Somalia (1992-94); Tomahawk strikes on Iraq (1993); air operations over the former Yugoslavia (1993-94); and Haiti (1994).

This brief list suggests that presidents have used U.S. military forces in highly visible ways for a wide range of purposes, but that some are more common than others.  

- to support friends and allies in resisting internal or external aggression;
- to protect or rescue Americans;
- to depose illegal or odious regimes, and/or to promote more democratic ones;
- to punish sponsors of terrorism; and
- to avert or mitigate humanitarian tragedies.

In short, although there is certainly some consistency in the factors that have entered into presidential decisions to use force, presidents retain—and use—a great deal of latitude in such decisions.

The Costs of Intervention and Non-Intervention

A final consideration in the decision to intervene has to do with balancing the costs of intervening against the costs of not intervening.

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22 As will be seen, the public find some reasons more compelling than others, a point to which I will return in the next section.

23 Maynes (1995), p. 101, provides seven categories for the possible use of force by the U.S.: meeting alliance obligations; promoting counterproliferation; protecting key allies threatened with internal disorder; protecting individual Americans; supporting democracies abroad; interdicting drugs and countering terrorism; and assisting peacekeeping and peace enforcement.

24 See Meenik (1994) for a recent example of research on the presidential calculus in the use of force that avoids the logical errors of past analyses.
While the President's record on military interventions is most likely to be judged on the basis of his record of success or failure, to an extent he will also be judged on his record of generally using force for legitimate or trivial reasons.

By failing to act when necessary, important interests abroad may be compromised. The President may also develop a reputation as being weak, raising concern that his—or U.S.—credibility abroad has suffered, and that potential adversaries, believing that the President may also fail to respond if they were to act, may be emboldened.

On the other hand are circumstances where military force is used where there is little belief that U.S. interests are actually at stake, or that the use of force is either necessary or desirable. As will be seen, when force is used without a compelling reason, support may be very shallow and difficult to sustain over the course of an operation. There may similarly be complications to diplomatic relations with friends and allies who disapprove of the intervention, and public criticism by regional or international organizations, which can further compromise the perceived legitimacy of the intervention, and further reduce domestic support.

In either case, the Executive may face domestic political costs, either in terms of reduced support for important policies or programs or, ultimately, lost support in mid-term or second-term elections.

Managing the Political Conduct of the Operation

Once a decision has been taken to intervene, the President is responsible for managing the overall political conduct of the operation. This entails a host of actions, including determining the political objective to be achieved by the use of U.S. Armed Services; building and sustaining domestic support within the Congress, the public, and the media; and coordinating international actions with allies and friends.

Determining the Objective

The objective (or mission) that U.S. Armed Forces are given provides a view of the desired outcome that is to be achieved through the use of the military, and provides the political frame for the
establishment of the mission and campaign objectives. Beyond the obvious point that the objective needs to be chosen so that it is neither too difficult nor costly to accomplish, it also provides the linkage to domestic support. As will be seen in the next sections, public attitudes toward military operations are highly differentiated, and broad congressional and public support for an operation may often hinge on the selection of a specific objective; choice of another, lesser objective may result in much lower support.

There is also the question of what is often called "mission creep." There may in fact be legitimate reasons for the objective and mission to change, and in such cases, any change in mission needs to be considered as deliberatively as was done for the initial one. Furthermore, as will be discussed shortly, if the mission changes, congressional and public support also needs to be brought along, because earlier support will have been premised upon a different mission and a different distribution of expected benefits and costs. But it is important to understand that because different missions may be valued differently, a change or "creep" in mission may result in the pursuit of a less valued objective, which may reduce or make much shallower support for the operation.

25 In the Gulf War, the mission was "to counter Iraqi aggression, secure Kuwait, and provide for the establishment of a legitimate government in Kuwait." In OPERATION RESTORE HOPE, the humanitarian intervention in Somalia, it was "to create a secure environment for humanitarian relief."

26 Indeed, in addition to specifying the mission, the Executive may also specify constraints for the operation. For example, the intervention in Haiti was planned as a no-casualty operation.

27 The idea of changing the mission is somewhat anathema to the military. The point is that if the mission is to change, it should change only after careful analysis, deliberation, and planning.

28 The Johnson administration came under a great deal of criticism for its handling of the Dominican Crisis in 1965. President Johnson changed the mission from a human rescue operation to an operation aimed at ensuring that communists would not seize power. However, the thinness of the evidence justifying this change in mission led to criticism in closed hearings held by Senator Fulbright, and early complaints of a "credibility gap." See Rostow (1972), pp. 411-415; Brown (1968), pp. 35-36.
Constraints

Closely related to determining the objective is specifying constraints on U.S. forces, some of which can complicate or frustrate the achievement of military objectives. Constraints can include restrictions on the size or composition of the force to avoid political visibility, or on the acceptable limit of casualties or duration. This can be a rather difficult matter, for a host of reasons. For example, a desire to restrict the size of the force package may be in tension with the fact that overwhelming force has successfully been used to achieve U.S. objectives at low cost in in Lebanon (1982), the Dominican Republic (1965),\textsuperscript{29} Grenada (1983), Panama (1989), and the early phase of Somalia (1992-93).\textsuperscript{30} Political factors may also be reflected in rules of engagement (ROEs).

Building and Sustaining Support

The third aspect of managing the political conduct of an operation is building and sustaining domestic support within the Congress, the public, and the media. As will be stressed throughout this report, support is not a one-time issue; it is subject to a host of influences, and needs to be closely monitored, constantly reassessed, and attended to on a recurring basis.\textsuperscript{31} While the next section will provide a more detailed discussion of the matter, suffice it to say that initial support hinges on the case that is made that the ends are compelling, and the means are not unreasonable.

\textsuperscript{29}President Johnson and his advisors recalled the effectiveness of overwhelming force in creating a climate of intimidation conducive to the reduction or cessation of hostilities. Yates (1988), p. 66.

\textsuperscript{30}For example, according to the August 21, 1995, New York Times, the Clinton administration was under pressure from some members of Congress to minimize the size of the U.S. forces that might be sent to Bosnia.

\textsuperscript{31}Indeed, Secretary Weinberger's comment about the relationship between the objectives and forces applies with equal force to public support: it should be "continually reassessed and adjusted if necessary."
Coordinating International Actions

The fourth aspect of managing the political conduct of an operation is working with friends and allies abroad\(^{32}\) to ensure that international actions are coordinated and that the United States is receiving the support—symbolic and material—that it needs. This can include the contribution of troops or funding from other countries, arranging for approval or authorization from the United Nations or regional security organizations, and the establishment of basing or overflight rights.

Deciding When to Terminate or Escalate the Operation

The third and final function of the President is to decide when to terminate or escalate the operation. There are several considerations that might be used by the President in deciding whether to bring the operation to a conclusion:

Accomplishment of the Mission

It seems obvious that if the initial mission has been successfully accomplished, there will most often be little reason to continue with the presence of U.S. forces. Nevertheless, one can see from the post-war Gulf that a different set of missions can emerge in the wake of a conflict, and from the Somalia operation that a broader mission can emerge when initial objectives (in this case, sufficient order to assure humanitarian relief) have been achieved. By comparison, when success remains elusive, there may be an incentive to escalate by increasing the number of forces, by increasing the tempo or lethality of operations, or by merely extending the duration of the commitment.\(^{33}\)

Changed Equities

It may also be the case that the perception of the stakes or equities that led to the initial intervention have changed, either increasing or decreasing. For example, the consequences of a communist victory in South Vietnam were viewed as much less damaging to U.S.

\(^{32}\)This also includes managing potential adversaries whose actions need to be taken into account.

\(^{33}\)See Iklé (1991) for an excellent discussion of the many types of escalation, and the generally slippery nature of the concept.
interests in 1973 than in 1965. Similarly, in the Somalia intervention, the Clinton Administration’s stakes in Somalia may have increased at the time of the “nation-building” phase, because Somalia appeared to offer an opportunity to create an important precedent. By contrast, when the equities have increased, this may provide a rational reason for increasing or escalating the level of commitment to secure the higher levels of benefit.

**Excessive Direct Costs**

It may also be that the costs already incurred in an operation have already exceeded what the Executive considers to be acceptable, and that the operation should accordingly be ended because it is no longer affordable. The Executive may similarly decide that the likely future costs of completing the mission are excessively high, and are not commensurate with the stakes or interests in the situation. By the same token, the sunk costs may make the Executive more risk-acceptant, and willing to “bargain for redemption” by increasing the level of commitment so that he can achieve his objectives, and avoid a defeat that may occasion political costs.

**Political Costs**

As just suggested, in addition to direct costs, the Executive may also take into consideration the indirect costs of an operation. For example, he may be caught on the horns of a dilemma, between the political costs of continuing an increasingly unpopular operation, and the political costs of concluding the operation without a victory.

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35As United Nations Ambassador Albright noted at the time of UNSCR 816, a March 26 request that the Secretary General seek financing for the rehabilitation of the political institutions and economy of Somalia: “With this resolution, we will embark on an unprecedented enterprise aimed at nothing less than the restoration of an entire country as a proud, functioning and viable member of the community of nations.” Bolton (1994), p. 62.

36Such thinking needn’t, of course, be an example of the “sunk cost” fallacy. For example, the monetary costs of continuing an operation may create opportunity costs and necessitate cuts in other programs, cuts that the Executive is loath to make.

37See Fearon’s (1994) discussion of “audience costs.”
CHALLENGES ARISING IN THE CURRENT ENVIRONMENT

The preceding has given a rough idea of the sorts of considerations that enter into the intervention decision, managing its political aspects, and terminating or escalating the operation. There are also, however, a number of broad environmental factors that need to be taken into account to fully appreciate the challenge the policymaker faces in these actions. They include:

- A concern about casualties among political leaders and the public that is not entirely rational.
- The long shadow cast by Vietnam on prospective uses of military force, and political leaders' and the public's concern about stumbling into another one. The result is that there is a great reluctance to support interventions that may turn out badly.
- The current threat environment, which presents objectively smaller threats and lower stakes, coupled with the widespread public perception that this is the case. The consequence is a belief that the U.S. can be discriminating in its use of force.
- The current political environment, which evidences higher levels of partisanship in the Congress, but lower levels of partisanship in the body politic.
- The current public opinion environment, which evidences continued support for U.S. active involvement in international affairs, and opposition to isolationism, but at the same time, a preference for concentration on domestic economic and social issues.
- Technological and other advances that could have a profound effect on democratic governance.

Each will be discussed in turn.

The Current Concern About Casualties Is Not, Strictly Speaking, Rational

When one looks closely at casualties and the willingness to accept casualties, it quickly becomes clear that while there are rational
aspects to the problem, there are also many non-rational processes at work.

Risk Perception

From October 1979 through December 1994, there were a total of 530 deaths due to hostile action. These deaths constituted about 1.8 percent of the 28,659 deaths incurred by active duty U.S. military personnel during that period. By comparison, during the same period there were over 30 times more deaths due to accidents (17,220), more than nine times as many deaths due to illness (5,194), more than six times as many deaths due to self-inflicted injuries (3,683), and more than two times as many deaths due to homicides (1,580).³²

It is certainly humane—and entirely rational—to be concerned about avoiding unnecessary losses of life among U.S. military personnel. But if actors in the American political system (public and political leaders) were completely rational, they would be giving far greater attention to addressing these other, and more important, causes of death among U.S. military personnel before focusing on reducing the deaths that result from military interventions.³⁹

Even more telling is the fact that it probably wouldn’t make any difference to political leaders or the public if they actually knew that these other causes resulted in far more deaths than the number incurred in combat operations—they would still evidence the most concern about battle deaths. In short, this is a classic case of risk perception, where undue attention to low-probability events results in a level of concern at variance with an objective risk analysis. More importantly, there is something going on here that deserves better understanding. This section will give a broad overview of the U.S.’ record of casualties in military operations in an effort to put the issue in perspective.

³²Data are from the Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, U.S. Department of Defense.
³⁹The rational reader will be encouraged to know that non-hostile deaths have been declining. See Sapolsky (1994) for a nice discussion of the risk issue, and efforts to reduce all sorts of deaths among U.S. military personnel. See also Mueller (1989), pp. 257–269.
Table 1.1.1 reports the total number of U.S. dead and wounded incurred in various major wars and conflicts. The table shows that the Second World War was the most costly of these wars, followed by the Civil War (when both Union and Confederate deaths are included), and the First World War.40

Table 1.1.1

U.S. Casualties in Major Wars and Conflicts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Battle Deaths</th>
<th>Other Deaths</th>
<th>Wounds Not Mortal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Revolutionary War</td>
<td>4,435</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>6,188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War of 1812</td>
<td>2,260</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>4,505</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexican War</td>
<td>1,733</td>
<td>11,550</td>
<td>4,152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil War (Union only)</td>
<td>140,414</td>
<td>224,097</td>
<td>281,881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(North and South)</td>
<td>234,938</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish-American</td>
<td>385</td>
<td>2,061</td>
<td>1,662</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World War I</td>
<td>53,402</td>
<td>63,114</td>
<td>204,002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World War II</td>
<td>291,557</td>
<td>113,842</td>
<td>671,846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean Conflict</td>
<td>33,651</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>103,284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam Conflict</td>
<td>47,364</td>
<td>10,797</td>
<td>153,303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gulf War</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Department of Defense.

The U.S. has also engaged in a number of military operations in addition to these major wars and conflicts. Figure 1.1.1 summarizes the

40 The missing data for "other deaths" in the Revolutionary War and War of 1812 would be expected to be quite a bit higher than the number of battle deaths, perhaps comparable to those in the Mexican War. This is because of the rather primitive medical care that could be offered troops in the field during this period. Major advances in battlefield medical care began in the Civil War and have continued since; by the time of the Second World War, more were killed in battle than from other causes.
number of deaths due to hostile action in interventions undertaken during Fiscal Years 1980 through 1993. The figure shows that most of the deaths due to hostile action in this period occurred in two U.S. military operations—the U.S. intervention in Lebanon, and the Gulf War.\textsuperscript{42} Deaths in action in the Gulf in FY 1987, and the 1989 invasion of Panama were next.\textsuperscript{42}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{death_figure.png}
\caption{Deaths Due to Hostile Action, FY 1980-93}
\end{figure}

The sense one gets from these data is that U.S. military interventions and American casualties in military operations are both somewhat rare events, and when battle deaths occur at all, they typically occur in rather small numbers: indeed, the number of deaths in the Dominican Republic (1965), Grenada (1983), Panama (1989), and Somalia (1992-94) were not terribly different—in each case between 20 and 30 casualties—yet the reactions to these deaths varied rather dramatically in the different cases. In short, the attention that even

\textsuperscript{42}The deaths incurred in Grenada in October 1983 are also included in the column for FY 1984, however.

\textsuperscript{42}The deaths in Somalia in Fiscal Years 1993-4 were reported as deaths due to terrorist action.
potentially small numbers of casualties are given by political leaders and journalists seems to be unrelated to their actual numbers.43

The Willingness to Sacrifice, or Ask Others to Sacrifice

Experimental research suggests that people have great difficulty placing a price tag on human lives to achieve abstract political objectives. Because of this difficulty, members of the public can be expected to take their cues from political leaders and experts as to whether or not a U.S. military intervention is (or is still) in some sense "worth" the costs that it has incur or could incur.

The concern may in part be due to the moral dilemma inherent in asking others to sacrifice their lives for broader national objectives, since such a request requires that members of the public feel that any sacrifices would be for a good cause. The pragmatic dimension, i.e., that any deaths that were incurred would not be in vain, or would lead to the achievement of objectives. Because of these two concerns, members of the public are more likely to ask political leaders to provide cues and arguments about why an intervention is or is not worth its costs and risks, and to make the linkage between losses of life and some larger purpose.

While there appears to be little research that speaks to the willingness to sacrifice the lives of others, it would seem logical that there are parallels between the reasoning that leads individuals to be willing to sacrifice their own lives for a greater societal good, and the reasoning that makes individuals willing to ask others to make such sacrifices.

Stern (1995) provides perhaps the best thinking on the question of why individuals are willing to sacrifice their lives for their nation:44

[There are several] insights that must be incorporated into any convincing explanation of national loyalty and nationalist sacrifice: national loyalty has deeply emotional and normative components; it involves a perception of collective interest; it is socially constructed and manipulated by national

43Additional evidence of this will be presented in Chapter 3.2.
44Other excellent discussions can be found in Van Creveld (1991), pp. 157-191. Related work can be found in Kaplanowit (1990) and Hirshberg (1993).
leaders; and it must, to be effective, outcompete both self-interest calculations and individuals' loyalties to other social groups.

He then disaggregates the rational from the affective components of reasoning, to come to a broader understanding:

By seeing what can and cannot be explained by a thoroughly affectless and asocial theory, we can get a clearer idea of what functions emotion, social ties, and social construction must perform to forge national loyalties strong enough to motivate people to give their lives.

In Stern's thinking, it falls to political leaders to overcome self-interest and construct ties to deeper national loyalties and a willingness to sacrifice. But this can only be understood by:

Focusing on the ways national leaders' actions and rhetoric can construct emotional and moral ties to the nation and create a sense of common interest compelling enough to overcome self-interest and competing group loyalties.

For nationalist appeals to overcome self-interest, they must draw on a strong force at least as deeply rooted as that of self-interest... It follows that national leaders may be able to elicit nationalist altruism if they are able to mobilize strong emotional bonds or altruistic norms in the nation's name.

Needless to say, a willingness to make sacrifices is likely to diminish to the extent that the threat is trivial, the case is weak, or important reference groups (for example, members of Congress and other political leaders) argue that the cause is insufficiently noble to be worth the sacrifice, i.e., that the interests of the nation do not truly demand such a sacrifice:

When a nation-state asks people to go to war, it is often demanding a contribution or sacrifice at the same time that other groups to which citizens belong are demanding that the contribution or sacrifice not be made. For the national effort to succeed, national identity must overcome other group identities.

Some threats to the nation may simply be considered to be inadequate to justify loss of life. Consider the following discussion of the
psychological process involved in a willingness to sacrifice U.S. lives in the Gulf War. This discussion helps to explain why the argument that protecting Persian Gulf oil was viewed as an inadequate justification for the loss of U.S. lives and the "no blood for oil" argument was such a powerful one, but also why the brutalization of Kuwait by Iraq was considered to be one of several causes that were worthy of sacrificing lives:

Lakoff’s (1991) analysis of the roots of the overwhelming popular support for the Persian Gulf war relies on personalization of governments. He claims that a U.S. government-sponsored international relations “fairy tale” that equated Iraq with villain and Kuwait with victim (represented, for example, in the image of the “rape” of Kuwait) was effective in convincing U.S. citizens to back their country in taking the role of hero. Lakoff claims that an alternative fairy tale was tried by the Bush administration, with Iraq as villain and the U.S. as victim (“cutting off our oil lifeline”), but was not convincing. The metaphorical equation of nations with fairy-tale characters is rooted in powerful cultural myths and neatly bypasses claims of identities other than the national: in the fairy tale, when a nation is the villain, only a nation can be the hero, so individuals can act on their sense of moral obligation only through their national identification.

In cases where U.S. interests are not threatened, unless there is a compelling case, for example, of widespread atrocities, it may be difficult to overcome the natural tendency to be willing to sacrifice only for the betterment of fellow nationals. This building of support is also likely to be hobbled where an intervention is aimed at exploiting an opportunity rather than responding to an important threat:

In the case of political opportunity, the evidence tends to disconfirm the prediction that people coalesce around a nation-state seeking expansion in the way they do around one facing threat. The so-called rally-round-the-flag phenomenon, in which U.S. presidents gain a short-term boost in popularity after taking military action, is stronger when the action is taken (or presented) as a response to armed attack than when it is perceived to have other motives. Rational choice theory could account for a moderate difference between responsiveness to threats versus opportunities by adopting the utility

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calculus of prospect theory, in which people are risk-averse for prospective gains but relative risk-seeking when facing losses. 47

The implication is that efforts to merely improve an already reasonably satisfactory status quo—"to expand the zone of peace," for example, or "enlarge democracy"—immediately fall into a domain in which the willingness to sacrifice is likely to be lower than where a clear threat or loss can be identified. 48

It appears, then, that distorted risk perceptions and the process by which individuals are willing to sacrifice—or ask others to sacrifice—may play an important role in attitudes toward casualties.

The Vietnam War in Modern Memory, and the Vietnam of Mythology

There is little doubt that the Vietnam War casts a long shadow over deliberations regarding the use of the U.S. Armed Forces—the so-called "Vietnam syndrome" is a staple of the dialogue over discussions of public support for the use of force.

The ways in which Vietnam is viewed, however, are far more complex than most understand, and attitudes are colored by a host of varying interpretations: for some, the war was immoral; for others, it represented a painful first defeat for the U.S.; others regret the profligate waste of human and material resources; many have painful memories of the terribly divisive domestic debate; and still others believe that the U.S. failed to do enough to win the war.

Table 1.1.2 presents data from a May 1990 poll by The Gallup Organization that attempted to understand how the public had come to view the Vietnam War. As can be seen, nearly three out of four thought that the U.S. had made a mistake sending troops to fight in Vietnam, while a little over one in five thought it had not been a mistake. 49

Regarding preferred war policies, although more than half thought that

48 See also Jentleson (1992).
49 The 22 percent still supporting the war is slightly lower than the percentage supporting at the end of the war. In May 1971, for example, 28 percent supported the war according to polling by the American Institute of Public Opinion (AIFP). See Mueller (1973), p. 55.
the U.S. could have won the war, slightly fewer than four in ten thought the U.S. should have made a greater military effort.

By contrast, a robust majority thought that there should have been an earlier withdrawal from the war. In short, there is great ambivalence among the public about the Vietnam War, and while there seems to have been a crystallization of the attitudes that characterized the end of the war, the percentage believing that the war was a mistake has evidently reached an all-time high.50

Table 1.1.2
Support, Opposition and Policy Preferences for Vietnam, 1990

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Looking back, do you think the United States made a mistake sending troops to fight in Vietnam?</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think the United States and the South Vietnamese could have won the Vietnam War and kept Communism out of South Vietnam if our country had made a stronger military effort to win the war, or not?</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some people say that the United States should have cut its losses by accepting a negotiated withdrawal from Vietnam much earlier than it did. Others say the United States should have made an even greater military effort to try to win a victory there. Which comes closer to your view?</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


This ambivalence is captured well by Figure 1.1.2, which presents the percentages believing various wars to have been “just,” and shows that only about one in four considered Vietnam to have been such a war.

50Gallup and Newport (1990).
Even the First World War and Korean War, two wars whose outcome were widely disparaged by their generation, have been rehabilitated in the public mind: three out of four believed World War I was a just war, and nearly half thought Korea was.

![Bar Chart](image)

**Figure 1.1.2 - Were American Wars Just?**

Using polling data from the Vietnam War, Schuman (1972) found that there were two separate sources of opposition to the war. The first was entirely pragmatic in nature, and was found among the general population: the war was simply not successfully achieving its objectives, despite the seemingly endless stream of human and financial capital that had been invested. For these war opponents, it was a tragic waste, opposed because there was no relationship between the level of effort and progress being made. The second was moral in nature, and was found primarily among university students: for them, the war was immoral and unjust, and not the sort of war that the U.S. ought to be fighting. For these opponents, the war was simply morally wrong.

(Schuman surveyed residents of Detroit and students at the University of Michigan and compared the results of the two surveys.)
Table 1.1.3 provides more recent data on the public's views of the morality of the Vietnam War, taken from the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations' (CCFR) most recent survey, and from CBS News.

**Table 1.1.3**

**Was Vietnam Immoral?**

Tell me if you agree strongly, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat, or disagree strongly with the statement: The Vietnam war was more than a mistake, it was fundamentally wrong and immoral. (CCFR, 10/7-25/94, N=1435)

- 33% Agree strongly
- 26% Agree somewhat
- 19% Disagree somewhat
- 11% Disagree strongly

Do you think the Vietnam War was fundamentally wrong and immoral, not immoral, but a mistake, or neither immoral nor a mistake? (CCFR, 10/7-25/94, N=1492)

- 26% Fundamentally wrong and immoral
- 49% Not immoral but a mistake
- 14% Neither immoral nor a mistake
- 2% Both (volunteered)
- 8% Don't know/No opinion

Some people say that the American role in Vietnam was a noble cause. Other people say it was wrong and immoral. Do you think it was either a noble cause, or wrong and immoral? (CBS News, 5/4-6/95, N=1163)

- 33% Noble cause
- 40% Wrong and immoral
- 7% Wrong, but not immoral (vol.)
- 7% Neither (volunteered)
- 2% Both (volunteered)
- 11% Don't know/No answer

Depending on question wording, between 26 and 58 percent currently subscribe to the proposition that Vietnam was "wrong and immoral." This finding seems to support the view that while Schuman found such sentiment among students, there are now substantial percentages among the general public who believe that the war was immoral.
There are also perceptible differences between the public and opinion leaders on the question of the morality of the war, however, as can be seen in Table 1.1.4.

Table 1.1.4

Morality of Vietnam, Public and Opinion Leaders, 1990

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Leaders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree strongly</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree somewhat</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree somewhat</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree strongly</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


It seems that the leadership is somewhat more polarized about the morality of the war than the rest of the body politic—while 72 percent of the public agree that the war was “fundamentally wrong and immoral,” only 58 percent of the leaders accept this proposition; a robust majority, no doubt, but a significantly smaller percentage than the public.52

Finally, and apropos of the main subject of this dissertation, is the question of how American casualties in the Vietnam War are remembered and viewed. Table 1.1.5 shows that a slight majority think that the lives that were lost in Vietnam were lost in vain.

It is interesting, however, that the public are misremembering the Vietnam War in a way that makes it seem much worse than it actually was. Figure 1.1.3 shows that a plurality of 45 percent of the public wrongly

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52One possible explanation is that the leaders are generally more partisan than the public, and that because Vietnam is no longer a particularly salient issue in the mass public, higher polarization should be expected among them.
believe that the U.S. lost more lives in Vietnam than in the First World War, the Second World War, or the Korean War. In fact, the most lives were lost in the Second World War—almost 300,000—and nearly five times the number lost in Vietnam. For a plurality of the public, America's least just war is also wrongly believed to have been its most costly.

Table 1.1.5

*Attitudes Toward Vietnam Casualties, 1990*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thinking of the American soldiers who lost their lives in the Vietnam War, do you think they died in vain or not?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>51% Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41% Did not die in vain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7% No opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1% Refused</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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**Myth...**

In which of these wars do you think the greatest number of American troops lost their lives? (Gallup, 5/90)

**...and Reality**

Battle deaths (in thousands) in U.S. Major Wars of the 20th Century

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*Figure 1.1.3 - A Plurality Believe Vietnam Was Most Costly War*

There is further evidence that the human costs of the war have been an important factor for remembering (or misremembering) the war. In 1985, Schuman and Scott (1989) asked respondents what they thought were the most memorable events in the last 50 years. The two most frequently
mentioned events were World War II (29 percent mentioned) and the
Vietnam War (22 percent mentioned); the Korean War was ranked 20th, with
only 2.1 percent mentioning it.

When asked their reasons for mentioning Vietnam, the most frequent
answer (28.5 percent) was "division and distrust," while two of the next
three most frequent answers seemed to relate to the human costs of the
war: 23.2 percent said "lives lost," while 22.6 percent mentioned that
they "knew others in the war." In short, these data suggest that
Vietnam is generally considered to be a key event in recent history,
that the associations are quite negative, and that they revolve around
very human considerations.

Finally is the question of how the public view the impact of the
Vietnam War on U.S. willingness to use force abroad: as shown in Table
1.1.6, three-fourths of the public believe that the Vietnam War has made
the U.S. more cautious about its involvement in other military
conflicts.

Table 1.1.6
Impact of Vietnam on U.S. Involvement in Military Conflicts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>% Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree strongly</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree somewhat</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree somewhat</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree strongly</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No opinion/Refused</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Taken together, there seems to be a clear pattern in the public
opinion data on contemporary views of the Vietnam War: it was a mistake;
most believe that the U.S. should have settled for a negotiated
withdrawal much sooner, although non-trivial percentages believe the
U.S. should have tried harder; some opposed the war for moral reasons,
while some opposed it for more pragmatic ones, and as a result, the U.S. is believed to have become more cautious in its use of military power.

The implications for uses of U.S. military force in the current era also seem to be somewhat clear:

- "Other Vietnams" should be avoided, although this seems to mean different things to different people. For some, it probably means avoiding situations that lack a compelling moral basis for action, while others probably interpret it to mean avoiding situations where the U.S. is unlikely to achieve its objectives, or unlikely to achieve them within acceptable cost.

- Political leaders seem to be somewhat more polarized over the morality of the war than are the general public, which suggests that because they may have drawn significantly different lessons, political leaders may be somewhat more divided on future uses of force as well.

- A large segment of the public appear to have grossly overestimated the number of lives that were lost in Vietnam (or conversely, underestimated those in other wars), with the result being that Vietnam is widely (and wrongly) viewed as the most costly U.S. war ever. This lack of calibration could contribute further to concerns that American lives could be lost in vain in future military interventions, just as they are perceived to have been in the Vietnam War.

Lower Stakes, Smaller Threats

A number of features of the current strategic landscape also contribute to a cautious—if not ambivalent—attitude toward military interventions on the part of much of the public. Much of this has to do with the widespread—and quite accurate—perception that there are fewer cases in which U.S. interests are engaged in a way that demands the use of force, and that the U.S. faces a much less threatening world. The consequence of this is that the U.S. has a great deal of discretion in choosing when (and when not) to intervene.
Lower Stakes

While the bipolar world in the latter days of the Soviet Union was certainly reasonably predictable, perhaps for the first time since 1815, the international system now actually seems to be structurally stable, and the rather benign preeminence of the U.S. seems unlikely to be challenged for the foreseeable future. The gains to the U.S. from many uses of force have arguably gone down in the wake of the Cold War, since any use of force is far less likely to add much to the already dominant strategic position of the United States, since successful challenges are unlikely, and losses to the U.S. will not accrue to a single dominant adversary. As a consequence, the rationale of extended deterrence has lost its potency, since U.S. losses will no longer be entered as gains on the Soviet side of the ledger.

Smaller Threats

In terms of the overall level of threat, few would trade the current international environment for that of the Cold War. Suggestive of this perception of fewer and smaller threats is the fact that typically only about one to three percent of the public mention the threat of war as the most important problem facing the country; this level is down from the 30 percent or higher levels in the 1980s. The reasons for this lower perceived level of threat are quite sensible:

- Threats to the U.S. Homeland. The existential threat posed by the Soviet Union has clearly evaporated, even though a number of lesser-but-deadly threats remain; the possibility that nuclear proliferation could result in very damaging attacks on the U.S. homeland being perhaps the most obvious, but also including large acts of terrorism such as that against the

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52 Since internal development seems a more productive route to acquiring power than external expansion, none of the great powers is currently particularly expansionist. Haynes (1995), p. 99.
55 Of course, that is not to say that a failure to use force might not compromise U.S. interests such as the security of Persian Gulf oil. However, given the current U.S. planning paradigm of prevailing in two nearly-simultaneous major regional conflicts, this seems unlikely.
World Trade Towers in New York, or against the Federal Building in Oklahoma City.

- Threats to Important Regional Interests. It seems that most of the major powers, including Russia and China, are concentrating on internal economic development, and not on external aggression. U.S. defense planning accordingly is currently centered upon threats in regions where the U.S. has vital interests and/or security commitments: the threat to Southwest Asia posed by Iraq, and the threat to Northeast Asia posed by North Korea. To a lesser extent, there is also concern about a recidivist Russian threat to Europe. It is, however, rather difficult to imagine very many other circumstances in which significant U.S. interests would be engaged in the way they would in these circumstances. While the U.S. may often be concerned about undesirable escalation that brings in other regional actors, there is no longer the specter of escalation of brushfire conflicts into a confrontation with the Soviet Union.56

- Lesser Threats. There are also far more numerous threats that don’t engage U.S. vital interests, but in which the U.S. has an interest. The most obvious of these cases is Bosnia, in which, it is sad to say, the U.S. interest seems primarily to be in containing the conflict until it can burn itself out, and to keep it from becoming internationalized, especially with Russia siding with the Serbs and against the U.S. and its Western European partners.

However true it may be that we live in a world in which ethnic conflict is flourishing, there is little evidence that there is actually more instability or conflict, or that it is more lethal, than the conflicts during the Cold War. Consider Figure 1.1.4, which plots the total number of major conflicts by region over time, according to Wallensteen

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56 The military power of Russia is considered a critical threat by only about one-third of the public, according to the 1994 survey by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations.
and Sollenberg (1995). As can be seen, the total number of major conflicts in the world—those that involved one thousand or more casualties in a given year—remained relatively constant through 1992, and then fell dramatically; only in Europe can we actually discern an increasing trend in major conflicts, but even that seems to have petered out by 1994. In short, if we use a consistent metric for classifying conflicts, the deadliest sorts of conflicts have been on the decline.

**Figure 1.1.4 - Major Conflicts, 1989-1994**

In short, few would argue that the U.S. is less secure now than it was during the days of the Cold War. As U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Albright put it:

57 The counts reflect the number of conflicts in each region in which 1,000 or more battle-related deaths occurred in that year.

58 This lends support to Mueller's (1994a) argument that to come to the conclusion that international affairs have become more dangerous one needs to introduce a Eurocentric bias and elevate the importance of what were before considered relatively minor problems.
Obviously, America is safer and more secure than it was. Anyone who feels nostalgia for the Cold War ought to have his or her head examined. But anyone who concludes that foreign adversaries, conflicts, and disasters do not affect us misreads the past, misunderstands the present, and will miss the boat in the future. 59

While few would argue that these situations do not affect the U.S., there is little doubt that it is generally harder to make the case that important U.S. interests are threatened.

Taken together, it should be little surprise that the public has shown a fair amount of discrimination in choosing which operations to support, and has favored a deliberative process that includes congressional support and authorization, international sanction, and burden-sharing by allies and friends.

**Polarization Among Political Leaders**

Another factor that may be making more difficult the process of building support for U.S. military interventions is the increasing polarization among political leaders. As one example, there is ample evidence that just as the Congress has become more partisan, the public have become less so.

Figure 1.1.5 presents data from the Congressional Quarterly portraying the party-unity average scores—the percentage of votes in Congress that were partisan in nature, pitting a majority of Republicans against a majority of Democrats. The figure shows a rather consistent rise in the level of congressional partisanship. By 1994, Congressional Quarterly characterized the situation as follows:

> Congress cast fewer partisan votes than in the previous several years, but it was not for lack of partisan rancor. Rather, the political heat was turned up so high that it deterred votes on important issues such as health care and welfare reform, leaving the 103rd Congress colored by a partisanship not reflected in actual voting patterns. 60

By contrast, as can be seen in Figure 1.1.6, there has been a comparable rise in those disapproving of the way Congress is handling its job.

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60 Congressional Quarterly (1995).
This disapproval could have something to do with the increasing partisanship in Congress, which is at variance with the trend in the overall population. Figure 1.1.7 in fact shows that partisan identification has declined for both Democrats and Republicans, while the percentage characterizing themselves as Independents has risen over time.

![Graph showing decreasing partisan identification and increasing Independents]

**Figure 1.1.5 - Increasing Partisanship in the Congress**

Figure 1.1.8 provides further evidence of a less partisan public, and shows that although the percentages have careened back and forth, especially for presidential elections, the percentage of defections from party-line voting in elections has generally increased over time.

There are no doubt other divisions among political leaders that could be more important than partisan affiliation. For example, Rosenau and Holsti (1983) found that there had been a breakdown in consensus among political leaders that essentially transcended partisan lines. In both the domestic sphere and the realm of foreign policy, according to these analysts, opinion leaders had divided themselves into three separate groups, described briefly in Table 1.1.7.
Figure 1.1.6 - Increasing Disapproval of Congress

An important point to make is that if the leadership structure was
given by different belief systems in 1983, when the Soviet Union was
still a going enterprise, there can be little doubt that with the
decline and fall of the Soviet Union (and the consequent irrelevance to
the debate of Cold War Internationalism), the two remaining viewpoints
have also become somewhat splintered.61

There is also anecdotal evidence that differences in belief systems
may affect the willingness to use force. For example, Hinckley (1988,
1992) suggested that the willingness of members of the public (and
presumably, political leaders) to use force in various circumstances
during the Cold War could be described by the typology in Table 1.1.8.

61 A recent review of competing paradigms for thinking about U.S.
strategy suggested four competing worldviews: Realism; Multilateral
Security; Democratic Internationalism; and Strategic Independence. See
Levin (1994).
Figure 1.1.7 - Partisan Identification, 1952-1992

Figure 1.1.8 - Defections from Party-Line Voting, 1952-1992
Table 1.1.7
Summary of Belief Systems Held by U.S. Leaders

DOMESTIC POLICY BELIEF SYSTEMS

Reindustrializers seek a reindustrialized United States

Egalitarians seek an egalitarian United States

Quality-of-lifers seek a self-fulfilled, less materialistic United States

FOREIGN POLICY BELIEF SYSTEMS

Cold War Internationalists saw a bipolar world in which security issues predominated

Post-Cold War Internationalists saw a multipolar world in which economic issues predominated

Neo-isolationists saw a multipolar world in which interdependence should be minimized


It is not clear, however, how well the typology captures attitudes toward the use of force in the post-Cold War world. Nor does the typology quite capture how the ranks of each of these groups might shrink or swell depending on the circumstances of the intervention, the nature of the stakes or interests, the principles at stake, and other factors that would be expected to influence attitudes about the "goodness" of the intervention and whether to support it.

In other words, since there are often more (or fewer) than the 57 percent suggested by the table who are willing to support the use of force, there appear to be other factors that can affect the willingness to support the use of force in a particular circumstance. 62

62 This subject is addressed in more detail in the Appendix.
Table 1.1.8
Typology of Cold War Attitudes Toward Using Force

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ATTITUDE TOWARD USE OF FORCE</th>
<th>ATTITUDE TOWARD INTERNATIONAL INVOLVEMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unilateralist</td>
<td>Multilateralist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Hard-liner (16%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>Soft (7%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Support for Involvement, Not Isolationism, But Still a Domestic Focus

As has been suggested, in evaluating the new strategic environment, the public are finding less of a sense of threat and fewer reasons for using force. To be sure, the U.S. continues to have many interests that warrant protection and preservation, and principles that warrant promotion, and there has been broad bipartisan support for using force to underwrite diplomacy or counter a challenge in such cases. Public attitudes on U.S. vital interests and the foreign policy goals that are most important appear to be quite sensible, by any reasonable measure.

Perceptions of Vital Interests

There has been a high degree of differentiation yet a great deal of continuity in public perceptions of U.S. vital interests.63 For example, the United Kingdom, Canada, Mexico, Germany, Japan, Canada, and Saudi Arabia have consistently been identified as a vital interest by

63 The Chicago Council on Foreign Relations has asked the following question about a number of different countries every four years since 1974: "Many people believe that the United States has a vital interest in certain areas of the world and not in other areas. That is, certain countries of the world are important to the U.S. for political, economic or security reasons. I am going to read a list of countries. For each, tell me whether you feel the U.S. does or does not have a vital interest in that country...."
about two-thirds or more of the public every four years since 1978; South Korea has swung between 40 and 60 percent.64

Perceptions of Very Important Foreign Policy Goals

There has also been differentiation and continuity in the public’s perceptions of which foreign policy goals are very important,65 again suggesting a high degree of stability in the public’s views of which foreign policy goals should be promoted.

A Continued Commitment to Active Involvement in World Affairs

Contrary to some who would seem to suggest otherwise, there is little indication of growing isolationism or protectionism in the American public, but there is ample evidence of what one analyst has called "pragmatic internationalism"—favoring an active role for the U.S. in international affairs, but desiring a primary focus on domestic economic and social problems at home, and greater discrimination regarding intervention in the affairs of other countries.66

According to the most recent (1994) Chicago Council on Foreign Relations (CCFR) poll, domestic economic and social issues currently preoccupy both the public and opinion leaders; over three-quarters of the public and two-thirds of the leaders mentioned such issues when asked what the most important problem facing the country was.67 Figure 1.1.9 presents time series public opinion data on what respondents consider to be the most important problem facing the country.

64The Appendix includes a correlation analysis that reveals a high degree of consistency in the public’s and the leaders’ ranking of vital interests.

65The CCFR asks the following question every four years, followed by a number of possible foreign policy goals the respondent might consider to be important: “I am going to read a list of possible foreign policy goals that the United States might have. For each one please say whether you think that it should be a very important foreign policy goal of the United States, a somewhat important foreign policy goal, or not an important goal at all. How about...” Correlation analysis in the Appendix shows a high degree of correlation in the ranking of foreign policy goals over time.


67Ibid.
What would you say is the single most important problem facing the United States today, that is, the one that you, yourself, are most concerned about? (The Wirthlin Group)

Figure 1.1.9 - The Most Important Problem, 1992-95

The figure shows a similar result to the CCPR survey—only a small minority, less than ten percent, consider foreign policy and peace issues to be the most important issues facing the country.68

Importantly, however, there is little evidence of isolationism. Figure 1.1.10 shows the trend for those believing the U.S. should take an active part in international affairs; as can be seen, those preferring that the country take an active part continues to be well over a majority—currently about two-thirds, and growing.

In fact, almost half of the public and leaders surveyed said the U.S. plays a more important role today than 10 years ago, and almost three-quarters of the public believe the U.S. will play an even more important role in another 10 years.69

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68 Other series confirm the diminished importance of international issues to the public. In fact, since the late 1960s, respondents have typically chosen domestic over foreign affairs. See Smith (1985).
A Public Ambivalent About Using Force

While it may be true that majorities of the public desire that the U.S. remain "actively involved" in world affairs, "active involvement" evidently means very different things to members of the public when the use of the U.S. military is being considered. The issue, it seems, has to do with how the U.S. should involve itself in world affairs, and to what extent that involvement should be reliant upon the use of force.

As with perceptions of vital interests and important foreign policy goals, when it comes to support for hypothetical and actual interventions, there is also a high degree of differentiation and consistency. For example, the use of force to restrain the external actions of adversaries has tended to receive rather high levels of

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Figure 1.1.10 - Support for U.S. Involvement, 1946-1994

GSS stands for General Social Survey.
There has been some discussion of the circumstances which would justify using U.S. troops in other parts of the world. Would you approve or disapprove the use of U.S. military [force, troops]..[hypothetical circumstances] (CCFR)

Figure 1.1.11 - Increasing Support for Use of Force in Major Cases

There seems to be lower support, on the other hand, where the U.S. military is intervening in the internal affairs of a country, unless it

73For example, the 1993 Tomahawk cruise missile attack on Iraq after the discovery of an Iraqi plot to assassinate former President Bush, and the 1994 response to renewed Iraqi threats against Kuwait.
is concluded rather quickly, before opposition is mobilized.\textsuperscript{73} For example, the public and the leaders have rather consistently shown little interest in promoting democracy or human rights since the 1974 survey, roughly one out of three in each group has typically believed this goal to be a very important one.

Despite the notable U.S. successes in intervening in internal political situations,\textsuperscript{74} it has also had some tragic failures,\textsuperscript{75} and there seems to be little understanding of the intrinsic features of situations that favor success, nor agreement about what constitutes reasonable cost.\textsuperscript{76} Thus, the benefits of military action to influence internal affairs are especially subjective and problematic and accordingly command little consensus.

Taken together, these results suggest that the public in the aggregate have a rather sensible collection of attitudes toward international issues including military interventions: they evidence a high degree of differentiation, internal and temporal consistency. As will be seen in the case studies, furthermore, there is ample evidence that responses to military interventions are entirely sensible, even rational.

When one takes the time to examine the available public opinion data closely, it becomes clear that public support for military operations is often contingent on the support of political leaders.\textsuperscript{77}

\textsuperscript{73} On the basis of support for a number of past U.S. military interventions, Jentleson (1992) offers a similar argument, suggesting that the American public are "pretty prudent".

\textsuperscript{74} For example, the Dominican Republic (1965), Grenada (1983), Panama (1989), and Haiti (1994).

\textsuperscript{75} For example, Vietnam, Lebanon (1982–3), and Somalia (1992). An important point, of course, is that the humanitarian relief effort in Somalia was a great success; the effort to construct a thriving domestic polity out of Somalia was not.

\textsuperscript{76} It might be argued, for example, that unless certain preconditions are met—perhaps most notably the existence of a politically viable alternative leadership—such operations can easily end unhappily.

\textsuperscript{77} There is, to be sure, some simultaneity or endogeneity at work here. Both leaders and the public may interpret and respond in a similar fashion to events as reported by the media, for example. Many or most members of the public respond to opinion leaders, public opinion polls report the opinions of members of the mass public to leaders, and
the nature of the interests and principles involved, the objectives being promoted, the prospects for successfully achieving them, and the costs of the intervention. When analysts fail to examine any data, or fail to examine carefully the data that are available, there should be little surprise that they come to believe that the public are irrational.

Democracy in a Changing World

Finally, there are other changes underway in American society that may further contribute to the challenge the policymaker faces. These include long-term demographic changes, and the implications for democratic governance of information technologies.

While associating demographic factors with attitudes can be a hazardous business, there is also evidence that certain demographic groups are less willing to use military force than others, and some of these groups are growing. For example, women tend to oppose military interventions more often than men, and African-Americans more than whites; both groups are likely to constitute a larger percent of the population in the future:

- Current population projections predict an increasing proportion of the aged—"the greying of America"—and the greater longevity of women is likely to result in a larger percentage of women in the population.
- The percentage of non-whites in the population is also rising, for example, with African-Americans expected to constitute 15.7 percent of the population by 2050, up from the estimated 12.6 percent in 1995.

a smaller percentage of the population (which nevertheless represents a rather large absolute number) take actions to make their views known to the president, congressional and other political leaders. Needless to say, the question raises deep philosophical arguments about whether representative democracy emphasizes representation (leadership and consent) or democracy (grass roots activism). My belief is that elements of both are at work.
While it is all too easy to overstate their impact on democracy, various developments in news programming and information technologies could also have important implications for governing in an information society. At the very least, these developments are likely to continue speeding up the apparent pace of events and the felt need among policymakers that a quick (even ill-considered) response is better than none at all.78 At most, these technologies could increase the number and variety of pressures from domestic actors that reach the policymaker:

- Through round-the-clock news programming, live interviews from anywhere on the globe, news discussion programs, talk radio, and other electronic and print media, international events and public policy issues, and political leaders' reactions and positions, are being brought before the public to a greater extent and in more detail than ever before. Talk radio may also be creating opinion leaders outside of the traditional elite establishment, making consensus-building even more difficult.
- There has been a proliferation in the creation and use (and misuse) of polling information, with polling results more frequently created and used solely for the purposes of headlines or advocacy.79
- The ready availability of new information technologies such as electronic mail and fax has laid the groundwork for the development of national and trans-national political networks, which may easily be mobilized and used to communicate policy preferences to political leaders, preferences that reflect only the views of a highly motivated (and computer-networked) segment of the population.
- Electronic town meetings, electronic voting on referenda, and other tools are also under discussion, and could become a reality.

78 This is one of the more common definitions of "the CNN effect."
79 See Yankelovich (1991) on this point.
As a consequence, to have a reasonable basis for understanding the latitude and support they have for their policies, political leaders will increasingly need to be familiar with the various indicators and tools they might use for accurately assessing the preferences of the American public, and need to remain well-informed about the strengths and weaknesses of these various types of information.

All of this needs to be tempered by the basic insight provided by Downs (1957) that most of the public have little reason to get deeply involved in learning about or attempting to influence policy issues. In fact, for much of the public, it is entirely irrational to devote time to these issues. As a consequence, I am one who believes that representative democracy is likely to remain an attractive option in the face of all of these technological developments—it is an efficient division of labor to elect officials who can wrestle with the details and argue over the policy objectives and the merits of various strategies to achieve these objectives. This process informs and educates in a far more efficient way than reading dreary position papers, legislative histories, and other detritus of the policy process. Nevertheless, for all the reasons cited above, it also seems true that building and maintaining support for military interventions is becoming more of a challenge.

CONCLUSIONS

This section has described the principal tasks of the President in undertaking a U.S. military intervention, and a number of the factors in the current environment that complicate building and sustaining support. In the next section, I will present a simple model of democracy centered on a conversation among political leaders and other elites, the public, and the media.
1.2. DEMOCRACY AS A CONVERSATION

The voice of the people is but an echo. The output of an echo chamber bears an inevitable and invariable relation to the input. As candidates and parties clamor for attention and vie for popular support, the people's verdict can be no more than a selective reflection from the alternatives and outlooks presented to them.

V.O. Key, Jr.

This section uses the simple metaphor of a conversation among institutional and other actors to describe how the American body politic collectively regards U.S. military interventions. The simple model of "the democratic conversation over ends and means" is the result of an effort to integrate a host of empirical findings into a reasonably compact framework which might then be used to understand an important public policy issue, in this case, the role of casualties and other factors in domestic support for U.S. military interventions.

Lasswell (1971) captures well the difficulty of the problem of attempting to account for the sorts of contextual factors involved in a problem such as this:

Contextuality is an unescapable theme for the policy scientist. To be professionally concerned with public policy is to be preoccupied with the aggregate, and to search for ways of discovering and clarifying the past, present, and future repercussions of collective action (or inaction) for the human condition. In a world of science-based technology every group and individual is interdependent with every other participant, and the degree of interdependence fluctuates through time.

Imposing a pattern upon this, however, is what is required to properly understand the phenomena and epiphenomena of American politics as they play out over the course of a military intervention. This section will describe the metaphor of the democratic conversation and document its intellectual and empirical bases.

The public (or more accurately, sub-populations of relatively homogeneous individuals in the public) in this political drama have a rather simple role: to observe events and political decisionmaking over
the course of an intervention, to decide which leaders (if any) to follow and which policies (if any) to support, and to decide what (if any) actions to take (e.g., writing letters, demonstrating) if they are unhappy about the course of events.

OVERVIEW OF THE ARGUMENT

Support for a military intervention is the result of a conversation among the various actors in the American body politic: the President, the Congress and other political leaders, the public and the media. The model of the democratic conversation used here is a very simple one:

- The President decides when to intervene, and makes his case to his audiences (other political leaders, experts, the public and the media) that the military intervention is worth doing, and that it is likely to achieve its objectives at acceptable cost.
- Other political and opinion leaders decide whether or not they agree that the intervention is worthwhile and, if not, make their case that the intervention is not worth doing, or that it is unlikely to achieve its objectives at acceptable cost.
- Editorial decisions regarding newsworthiness determine the level of media reporting given to the intervention. The probability that members of the public will be aware of events or exposed to political messages, and that the issues will be considered more salient or important at the time of polling, are associated with media reporting levels.6" Combat operations and dissension among political leaders, for example, seem to cue higher levels of media reporting because they are inherently newsworthy (i.e., members of the public are interested in and concerned about combat and political dissensus about interventions).

- Members of the public develop opinions on the intervention based upon selective attention to elite discourse as reported by the media.81 The rate at which members of the public

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receive these messages is a function of media reporting levels, news gathering habits, and political interest and sophistication (the extent to which a respondent pays attention to politics and understands what has been encountered). The rate at which messages in the media-reported elite discourse are accepted or rejected is determined by political predispositions (stable, individual-level traits that regulate the acceptance or non-acceptance of the persuasive communications that are received).\textsuperscript{82}

- Over the course of the intervention, changes take place: the benefits or equities, the prospects for success, and the costs of the intervention may all change. These changes also lead to political changes. For example, because the equity or perceived commitment has changed,\textsuperscript{83} the President may change the objectives of the intervention or the means used to achieve them, or instruct the military to prosecute the intervention in a different way. Other political leaders and experts decide whether to continue supporting or to oppose the intervention.

- Again, members of the public base their support upon cues from opinion leaders (the President, other opinion leaders), as reported by the media. To the extent that opposition to the intervention or the policies being pursued is reported by the media, support will decline among those who are predisposed to take their cues from the opponents, with political awareness and predisposition determining the rate at which these cues are received and internalized.

\textsuperscript{82}This observation seems to be amply supported by psychological research on persuasion. See for example, Petty and Cacioppo (1981, 1986). Ajzen and Fishbein (1980), pp. 219-221 provide a good review of the relevant literature.

\textsuperscript{83}Becker (1980) describes the process of commitments coming into being as being when a person makes a side bet linking extraneous interests with a consistent line of activity. Pearson (1994) has suggested that the costs of backing down in front of a domestic audience may strengthen state leaders of democracies, because their "audience costs" are higher.
Put another way, objective events on the ground (including those domestically, such as demonstrations) and the nature of the elite discourse between the President and other political leaders cue media reporting, which in turn cues public awareness and concern about a problem; the level of discord in the elite discourse is ultimately mirrored in the public.

At the heart of this conversation is a model of ends and means in which the various actors determine their support and policy preferences on the basis of four factors:

- **The perceived benefits of the intervention.** The greater the stakes or interests and the more important the principles being promoted or objectives being sought, the higher the probability that the intervention will be supported.

- **The prospects for success.** The higher the probability that the intervention will successfully achieve its objectives, i.e., that the perceived benefits will be secured, the higher the probability that the intervention will be supported.

- **Prospective and actual costs.** The higher the prospective and actual costs, the lower the probability that the intervention will be supported.

- **The nature and depth of support for the intervention among the other actors.** The broader and deeper the support of the other actors, the higher the probability that an actor (e.g., member of the public, Congress) will support the intervention. For example, members of the public rely extensively upon opinion leaders (the President, congressional and other leaders, and experts) to interpret and clarify events and choices, and to inform their own opinions on the intervention. The President, on the other hand, gauges the attitudes of the public and Congress to determine what policies are politically feasible, and members of Congress (and the media) may gauge the receptiveness of the public to opposition arguments.

- **Expectations.** Over time, expectations—about benefits, prospects for success, costs, and elite support—may prove to
have been unrealistic or overly sanguine, and as the situation diverges from the initial expectations, cognitive dissonance may emerge, sparking anxiety or an urge to reevaluate the balancing of ends and means. In short, initial expectations can provide an anchor or frame for evaluating subsequent developments, and events that shatter this frame in a dramatic fashion (e.g., the Chinese entry into Korea, the Tet offensive of early 1968) can lead to a revision of the ends-means calculus.

A number of analysts stress the critical role of expectations in political judgments and support. Baumgartner and Jones (1993), for example, emphasize the importance of changing expectations—events can shatter the a priori image of the intervention, leading to the intrusion of other political actors:

Any given policy usually could be associated with many contending images, so logically these may change over time, and in fact the dominant public understandings of many public policy issues have often changed in the past. In the wake of crumbling public images, policy monopolies that were constructed behind their shield have often weakened or even disintegrated.

This view of the importance of expectations is one that is also shared by Richard Brody, who argues that members of the public evaluate presidents (and presumably their policies) on the basis of a comparison of expected and actual policy outcomes by other poli—it would seem sensible that as a class of presidential policy, military interventions would be evaluated on the same basis:

When the news reports a result in accord with the expectations set by the president, the public treats that as "good" news and adds a positive increment to its evaluation of the president; when the news media report results that are contrary to presidential expectations, the "bad" news detracts from the public's evaluation of presidential performance.

On "position" issues, the public in the aggregate discounts policy proposals and looks to political and policy outcomes—to "results"—for information on presidential performance. Because the political elite, following its own interests, offers little opinion leadership on policy outcomes, the
effects of predispositional standards are muted, and the public tends to judge the president on the standard of the expectations he has set. When results match presidential expectations, the public responds positively; when presidential expectations are not met, the president suffers a loss of support in the public.\textsuperscript{82}

The important point, however, is that this model is at the heart of a dynamic process that is dominated by interactions among the various actors, as they adapt to the changing situation.

**A Model of Democratic Conversation**

Consider Figure 1.2.1, which presents a simplified model of the democratic conversation over ends and means in a U.S. military intervention.

\textsuperscript{84}Brody (1991), p. 121.
The President decides when to undertake a military intervention, and members of Congress and other political actors respond to this decision, setting off a heightened level of political and military activity. Much of this activity is reported by the media, which informs the public and provides feedback to political leaders and others. Both because of the inherent drama of an intervention and the high levels of press reporting it receives, the salience of the intervention to members of the public typically increases rather quickly, and seems to be sustained until combat is concluded. The salience of supportive (pro) or oppositional (con) messages from other political leaders also increases, to the extent that they are reported.

As Daniel Yankelovich has observed, reconciling leadership on public policy issues with public opinion is much more nuanced than most understand:

It should be clear that the two alternatives of slavishly following the opinion polls or standing on one’s own convictions irrespective of public opinion are false choices for democracy. In a democracy, one of the major qualifications of leaders is that they develop the skill to move the public toward consensus by playing a constructive role at every stage of the public judgment process—consciousness raising, working through, and resolution. For this to happen, the culture has to broaden its definition of leadership to incorporate this ability.85

Initially, public opinion polling may only reflect responses off the top of the heads of respondents, which may be somewhat unstable.86 As the salience of support and opposition increases for members of the public, it increases the probability that members of the public will come to identify (at least loosely) with proponents or opponents, and that this support or opposition will be detected by public opinion polling. As the salience increases further over time, public attitudes may harden and become more crystallized, to the point that public opinion polling does not just reflect answers to questions to which the respondent has

86 Philip Converse has done much of the pioneering work in this area, especially in Converse (1964). Zaller and Feldman (1992) provide a recent, and thoughtful addition.
given little or no prior thought, but in fact reveals attitudes that are
held more deeply. In either event, public opinion data join the mix of
newsworthy events that can inform political leaders.

It is quite common in public opinion analysis to differentiate
between opinion leaders, the attentive and articulate public, and the
mass public. The reasons for this are rather simple: differences among
these groups—in news gathering habits and information levels, in their
interest in politics and policy, in the importance of partisanship or
ideology, in political activism, etc.—appear to have a rather
important effect on opinions (if not underlying attitudes), and on the
likelihood that they will engage political or other leaders directly,
expressing their policy preferences or advocating that a particular
policy be supported.

Among those considered to be opinion leaders are local, state and
national political leaders; scientific and other experts; editors and
journalists; clergy; academics; and those who meet certain criteria,
such as being found in Who's Who in America. Opinion leaders are
elites, and constitute only a very small percentage of the overall
public, perhaps less than one percent.

Those considered to be members of the attentive public make it
their business to be well informed, and resemble the experts and leaders
in many respects.\footnote{Yankelovich (1991), p. 47. Verba et al. (1967) call this group
"the informed public."} The attentive public seem to be defined more on the
basis of their level of political interest, news gathering habits and
information levels. Depending on how the concept is operationalized, it
seems that the attentive public accounts for probably less than a fifth
of the overall public.

The articulate public are similar in many respects to the attentive
public, but are somewhat more active politically, and more inclined to
volunteer their positions on public matters, for example, by writing
letters to public officials or newspapers.\footnote{Verba et al. (1967), p. 328.} While the size of this
group is difficult to estimate, most public opinion researchers seem to
suggest that it is a relatively small percentage of the overall public:
What is important is that there are perhaps five percent (of the public) who are activists and news junkies who do pay close attention. If they see that something is seriously wrong in the country, they sound the alarm and then ordinary people start paying attention.\(^{39}\)

The mass public are those who remain, and who are not very attentive to news, are somewhat disinterested and unknowing about politics, are not particularly moved by partisanship or ideology, and are not very inclined to participate in the political process by making their views known to political leaders. This group probably describes perhaps four-fifths (or more) of the public. Members of the mass public are Downside voters who are most likely to rely upon cueing from political and other leaders to help them formulate their political opinions and attitudes.

Figure 1.2.2 presents several ideal types, and suggests that members of the public can differ in the extent to which they follow their opinion leaders, make their own judgments while taking into account elite cues, or seek to influence policymaking. The bases for these differences will be discussed shortly, but the point here is that the extent of "followership" may vary greatly across individuals.

Beginning at the top, political and other opinion leaders are posited to rely upon a simple model of ends and means that assists them in weighing benefits and costs. Because it is filtered through partisan and ideological lenses, this assessment can lead leaders to differ over support for a military intervention, with some coming to support and others coming to oppose the intervention. But it also leads to efforts to persuade members of the public through the media to accept a particular viewpoint toward the intervention (e.g., pro or con).

\(^{39}\)Professor W. Russell Neuman of MIT, quoted in Kagay (1989). Verba and Brody (1970) report that a Spring 1967 survey found that 13 percent of those polled had tried to convince someone to change his views on Vietnam, two percent had sent letters to public officials, one percent had sent letters to newspapers, and one percent had demonstrated. Because those engaging in any one activity were more likely to engage in others, the five percent figure would appear to be a reasonable estimate of the size of the "articulate" or activist public.
Figure 1.2.2 - The Importance of Leadership Differ for Different Publics

Because of individual-level differences, members of the public receive, understand, and accept different messages, and may or may not engage in a conversation directly with political leaders.²⁰

The group on the left denotes members of the mass public who tend to follow the President ("followers") or party leaders ("partisans"), when considering their position with respect to a U.S. military intervention. These members of the public may generally be disinterested in political matters or, by virtue of education or other factors, they may have a limited ability to weigh the merits of the intervention themselves. In either case, the consequence is that this group relies extensively on cues from political leaders to order their

²⁰*p(success) connotes the probability of success.
²¹The following discussion, and the groups described, are meant to be illustrative. In fact, members of the public can probably be placed along a continuum in terms of the extent to which they rely upon opinion leaders or engage in political activity themselves.
own opinions (as measured by public opinion surveys) and attitudes
(which may or may not be adequately captured by these surveys).\footnote{Grotman and Norrander (1990) examine the nature of the
information that can be gleaned by an endorsement by a reference group.}

Like the leaders, the group in the center ("attentive") has a
capability to weigh the merits of the intervention, but it also relies
on the leaders for cues. It does not, however, engage in direct
political action or U.S. military interventions—letters or phone calls
to political leaders or the press, demonstrations, etc. In short, this
group is hypothesized to base its attitudes on a mixture of cueing from
leaders and independent analysis of the news reporting that it receives
and understands.

Finally, the group on the right ("activists," much like Verba et
al.'s "articulate" public) consists of individuals who tend to be most
independent in their thinking about the merits of the intervention, and
are also most likely to act upon the conclusions they reach. They have
what are perhaps the most strongly held views, and actively seek to
influence policy, including communicating their views to or interacting
with policymakers. These members of the public have a variety of direct
methods (meetings, letter writing, electronic mail, fax, telephone) to
signal their preferences to political leaders.\footnote{Of course, there could also be activists who take their cues from
leaders.} The role of these
activists will be explored following a discussion of the roles of the
various actors.

THE ROLE OF LEADERSHIP

Perhaps the most fundamental assumption about the political system
is that political leaders and other elites—and not the public—are at
the center of the policy process. As Page and Shapiro (1992a) put it:

Experts and researchers and government officials constantly
learn new things about the political world and about public
policies. They make new discoveries and analyze and interpret
new events. These analysts pass along their ideas and
interpretations to commentators and other opinion leaders, who
in turn communicate with the general public directly through
newspapers and magazines and television, and indirectly
through social networks of families and friends and co-
workers. Most members of the public never acquire much
detailed information about what trusted experts and
commentators and officials are saying government should do.
And they tend to form and change their policy preferences
accordingly.

As a result, new information can affect collective public
opinion, indirectly, even when most members of the public have
no detailed knowledge of that information. Even when most
individuals are ill-informed, collective public opinion can
react fully and sensibly to new information.

These leaders are associated with various political and other
institutions—the Executive, Legislative and Judicial branches of the
federal government, political parties, and so on—and seek to influence
the public policy agenda (the order in which issues will be addressed)
and the instrumental policies that they feel will lead to their
preferred outcomes.

In some respects, the essence of leadership is being able to
influence or control the policy agenda, and to ensure that the policy
outcome reflects an actor’s policy preferences. To accomplish these
ends, however, a great deal of persuasion and bargaining may often be
required, to bring along other political leaders whose support is
crucial. It also involves persuading the media and the public that a
preferred policy outcome is in the public’s best interest.

Because political leaders disagree over the agenda and the best
policies for an individual issue on the agenda, however, they attempt to
use their institutional advantages to build and effectively spend
political capital to competitively influence other political leaders, the
media and the public to create a more conducive environment for their
preferred policies. Again, institutions are central to this process.
For example, the Presidency has vast informational and political
resources that can confer bargaining advantages in political debates
with the Congress. Political parties similarly represent an efficient
institutional mechanism for coordinating the actions of the like-minded
in their debates with their political opponents. And major media
organizations can similarly influence the political process.

In the domain of U.S. military interventions, because of the unique
constitutional allocation of responsibilities, decisionmaking is, a
fortiori, centralized among political leaders to an even greater extent. In U.S. military interventions, the President alone decides when to intervene, although he will necessarily seek support from the Congress and the public. Military interventions often reflect responses to rapidly deteriorating circumstances about which the President has unique informational advantages and few informed challengers. Furthermore, the costs and benefits of most military interventions do not affect most members of the public directly, unless they are very large and of prolonged duration, in which cases the costs in blood and treasure are more likely to be felt.

The leadership model that is proposed here relies upon two principal insights—the important role that opinion leaders play in the formation and diffusion of mass public attitudes, and how individual differences in attitude and knowledge are responsible for differences in the rate of diffusion.

The Role of Opinion Leaders

There is substantial anecdotal and empirical support for the proposition that the process of setting the public policy agenda, constraining the range of policies to be considered for dealing with an issue, and leading the broader public through a debate over the desirability of alternative policies largely rests with political leaders—primarily the President and members of Congress—but also with other opinion leaders outside of government.

Under certain circumstances, where there is broad, bipartisan agreement regarding which issue should next be addressed and which policy is the preferred one, little mobilization of support may be required to implement that policy. In other circumstances, either because of a consensus among political leaders but dissensus in the public, or because of dissensus among political leaders, it is necessary to mobilize support.

Cueing by political leaders, and especially the President, can have a profound effect on shaping public attitudes and mobilizing support. For example, Rosenau (1963) provides a case study showing the critical role of opinion leaders in mobilizing public support, and Mueller (1973).
has shown for the Korean, Vietnam and Gulf Wars how public support (or opposition) and preferred war policies tended to mirror those found among political leaders. Based upon an analysis of the "Truman Doctrine speech," Kernell (1976) showed that presidential leadership lay at the heart of convincing the public of a broader U.S. role. MacKuen (1984a), Page and Shapiro (1992a) and Zaller (1992) have presented data supporting a cognitive model of attitude formation that relies extensively upon the cueing of political leaders as reported by the mass media, and differences in exposure and acceptance of information.

This is not to say that policymakers do not pay attention or are indifferent to securing and maintaining the consent of the governed: the evidence is substantial that polling data are assiduously studied and used in policy deliberations, as Page and Shapiro (1983, 1992a), Lorell et al. (1985), and Po Wick (1991) have shown. Furthermore, Neustadt's (1980) observation that public opinion is viewed by political actors in Washington, D.C., as a form of political capital, a resource that strengthens an actor's bargaining position, appears to be no less true today than when the observation was first made.

It seems sensible that leaders may attend to the activist or articulate public as they make their concerns known, but treat the attitudes of the mass public, as revealed through public opinion data,  

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A more thorny question is whether opinion follows policy or policy follows opinion. There is ample empirical evidence of a correspondence between the two, as can be seen in Page's (1994) and Jacobs and Shapiro's (1994) reviews of the matter. But it appears that most analyses have failed to examine the evolution of the conversation over policy. For example, analyses typically base their conclusions about cause and effect on the basis of whether public support for a policy precedes or follows a change in policy. These analyses fail to take into account the fact that there is typically a debate among political and other leaders before the policy change that is instrumental in building support for the policy change. Conclusions based upon simple sequencing are accordingly very likely to misinterpret the role of leadership and followership.
as a constraint or a type of political resource that can be used in
political bargaining.\footnote{This is a slight extension of Neustadt’s (1960) comment about the Gallup presidential approval rating being treated as an index of a president’s political bargaining power.}

The model that is assumed to be at the heart of this mobilization
process is a leadership-centered one based upon a rich body of work by a
diverse group, including Belknap and Campbell (1951-52), Downs (1957),
Converse (1962), Gamson and Modigliani (1966), McGuire (1969), Mueller

The fundamental premise of this work is offered by Downs (1957),
which is that it is irrational and inefficient for most members of the
public to attempt to acquire sufficient political and policy information
to come to informed judgments about complex public policy issues.
Instead, they rely upon their elected representatives to publicly debate
the issues. This very public process results in a clarification of the
issues and the arguments for and against various proposals—it is a very
efficient means of using the ideological and partisan differences that
are built into the U.S. political system to ensure a thorough airing.

Converse (1964) elaborated this notion, and argued that few
individuals reasoned for themselves about how political ideas relate to
one another. Instead, most members of the public rely on “contextual
information” provided by elites about how these ideas “go together” in a
coherent framework, and thereby “constrain” one another.\footnote{Converse (1964), Zaller (1991).}

Members of the public use a host of cues—partisan, ideological,
race, credibility, and so on—to help them identify participants in this
elite discourse who are likely to share their interests, and advocate
positions that are likely to be acceptable. Since individuals differ on
ideology, partisanship, and these other factors, members of the public
pay closer attention to those participants in the elite discourse for
whom there is an affinity, and who thus become opinion leaders for these
individuals.

Mueller (1973, 1994b) has shown the critical role of political
leaders in establishing the parameters of debate over U.S. military
interventions in Korea, Vietnam, and the Gulf War. Perhaps one of the most important of Mueller's findings is that public attitudes tended largely to follow the terms of the elite discourse during these conflicts.

More recently, Zaller (1991) has argued that political leadership was at the heart of changing attitudes toward Vietnam, and that cues from political elites (primarily, but not only, party leaders) were an important force in changing mass public opinion on Vietnam from 1964 to 1976.

THE SEARCH FOR CONSENSUS AND RESOLUTION OF CONFLICT

The assumptions that are made here are rather strong ones, but each has a sound empirical basis. These assumptions have to do with the roles of leadership, the media, and individual- and mass-level attitudes in building consensus for a military operation, and the influence of public attitudes on policymakers. But perhaps the strongest assumptions are about consensus and conflict over U.S. military interventions: the President seeks an approving consensus on his use of the U.S. military, and seeks to avoid domestic opposition so that the conflict can be concluded on the preferred terms.97

Policy Legitimacy, Robust Support and Consensus

It seems rather obvious that political leaders desire support for a policy that is robust enough to weather the sorts of setbacks that might reasonably be expected. While authors have given different names to the concept—"political feasibility,"98 "policy legitimacy,"99 "political legitimation,"100 "public assent"101 or "good quality public opinion"102—the concept generally centers on the question of whether support for a policy is deep or robust enough to accomplish the policy objectives, and

97 Much of the following owes a debt to V.O. Key's masterpiece, Public Opinion and American Democracy; while nearly 25 years old, it provides one of the most clear-headed expositions of public opinion and American politics available today.
99Smoke (1994).
100Trout (1975).
whether the support that has been given has taken into account the possible costs, consequences, and outcomes.

In military operations, the president as Commander in Chief has constitutionally and politically unique responsibilities. As a consequence, at the initiation of an intervention, the president usually has a monopoly of high-quality political and intelligence information about the situation at hand, and congressional and other political actors are consequently hesitant to challenge the president—they take a wait-and-see attitude and give the president a permissive environment to conclude the operation.

When a president fails to achieve robust support for an intervention, as Baumgartner and Jones’ (1993) study of agenda change has shown, the interest and involvement of other political actors may increase as a result of subsequent events, and fearing that the intervention is not going as well as it should, they may seek to impose constraints—to weaken or destroy the policy monopoly that the president has enjoyed on the intervention:

Destruction of policy monopolies is almost always associated with a change in intensities of interest. People, political leaders, government agencies, and private institutions which had once shown no interest in a particular question become involved for some reason. That reason is typically a new understanding of the nature of the policies involved. Where proponents claim that a practice serves only to promote equality and fairness, two widely shared goals in America, opponents may argue that in fact it harms the environment, leads to profits for foreign investors, is a waste of taxpayer resources, or something else.103

Key differentiated between three types of consensus, each of which entailed a different level or depth of support:104

- a supportive consensus entails opinion that underpinned an existing policy or practice. In both the Korean and Vietnam Wars, a supportive consensus existed for continuing action until an honorable peace and withdrawal could be negotiated.

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104 See Key (1961), pp. 29-29.
a permissive consensus occasions widespread public agreement on
a question that permits the government to act without fear of
powerful dissent. During much of both Korea and Vietnam, there
appeared to be a willingness to support temporary escalations
of the war, for example, bombing of North Vietnam.

A decisive consensus indicated a movement of opinion that was
so closely correlated with governmental action as to be
decisive. An example of decisive consensus could be found in
public support during the Second World War.

Key then went on to suggest that if there is an underlying consensus in
American society, it has to do with fundamental issues such as the
handling of issues according to the rules of the constitution, but does
not necessarily exist for more ephemeral issues. The implication seems
to be that consensus needs to be built on a case-by-case basis for these
more ephemeral issues.

Conflict

Despite an underlying consensus over broad values and
constitutional processes, Key noted that when certain issues became
salient to a large enough segment of the population, conflict resulted.
Key described the origins of conflict in public opinion as beginning
with political and other opinion leaders:

Yet the tempests in officialdom rarely arouse the emotions or
even attract the attention of a large part of the citizenry,
regardless of the size of the headlines. Popular consensus is
more characteristic than conflict, although even on matters on
which agreement pervades the population the media may suggest
that cleavages are wide and deep. Nevertheless, from time to
time issues arise of which substantially the entire population
is aware and concerning which people divide. Such popular
divisions of opinion parallel cleavages of opinion within the
leadership circles of society and may acquire their form and
their content from the cues given and the positions taken by
leadership cliques.

Although Key did not rule out grass roots disaffection about policy,
institutions were necessary to clarify policy options:
Clusters of popular opinion may form also in response to conditions that affect the population and generate nebulous opinion blocs of approval and disapproval, of discontent and satisfaction; but commonly conflict groupings polarize around divergent points of political leadership, each offering its own diagnosis and its own prescription.\textsuperscript{105}

He then went on to show that most often these cleavages are bimodal in nature, because an issue that attracts the attention of the American public has typically been fitted into a dual-party mode. In short, the institutional setting lends itself to considering two alternatives at any given time.

Key also noted, however, that multimodal distributions of opinion were also possible where three or more solutions to a problem or viewpoints about it enjoyed considerable public support. As will be seen, by some accounts preferences during the Korean and Vietnam War were multimodal, with non-trivial percentages of the public preferring immediate withdrawal, continuing on the same course, or increasing the level of commitment.\textsuperscript{106} The process of conflict was described by Key as follows:

In the interaction between governmental and leadership levels and the public, bipolarized clusters of opinion form foundations of support for opposing leadership cliques. In turn, oratory and fulminations at the leadership levels maintain cleavages within the public. If the course of events and the tenor of debate gradually produce a consensus in mass opinion, the foundation of popular support for one of the leadership clusters in conflict is weakened, if not destroyed. It may be supposed that, at least on great questions that attract wide public attention, adequate presentation of divergent viewpoints at leadership levels requires the encouragement of an empowering public response. That response, in turn, depends in a measure on the clarity, vigor, and reasonableness with which leaders present various outlooks.\textsuperscript{107}

\textsuperscript{105}Key (1961), p. 54.

\textsuperscript{106}As will also be seen, however, question structure can shoe-horn the public into categories that may lack subtlety.

\textsuperscript{107}Key (1961), pp. 59–60.
In this regard, the parties were seen as embodying collectivities of individuals who were likely to be affected in a similar way, provided an efficient source of cues on what positions to take on policy issues:

For economy of effort, it makes some sense for people to act in terms of groups rather than in terms of substantive issues. It is simpler to appraise political events and alternatives in terms of "how do they, or will they, affect people like me" than to acquire information on a series of complex issues.108

They were also seen as the locus for settlement of conflict:

It is also in the relations between the opposing centers of leadership that the composition or settlement of conflict occurs. In turn, patterns of action at the leadership level affect the distributions of popular opinion which, of course, have repercussions upon the behavior of the governing apparatus. It is probably in this set of complex interactions—among leadership components and between them and clusters of mass opinion—that one must search for the role of public opinion in popular governance.109

When reconciliation—a return to consensus—does occur, it can occur a number of ways, perhaps bounded by the two contrasting patterns:

A pattern that doubtless recurs is that of a resisting leadership structure that finds that its popular support has evaporated. The measures enacted by the innovators over stiff opposition gradually gain acceptance; the pattern of differences within the public is replaced by the curve of consensus; and the band of prominent persons in residence see that they have lost the battle and subside.110

In other instances it seems probable that reconciliation occurs first at the level of political leadership, and clusters of public opinion in conflict gradually dissolve because of lack of encouragement from prestigious givers of cues. Thus changes in the form of opinion distributions are preceded by changes in the policy postures of political leadership.111

110 Key (1961), p. 75.
111 Key (1961), p. 75. This seems to be what happened to hawkish leaders of the Democratic party from 1968 to 1972.
Although he suggested that divisions largely emerged among political and other opinion leaders and became diffused among the population, Key was not oblivious to the possibility that grassroots sentiment could bubble up to leadership circles:

These comments are limited to those great issues of public policy that arouse both widespread attention and concern within the electorate; such issues are few in number. Although evidence is extremely limited to support these hypotheses about interactions within the political elites and about interactions between the political elites and mass opinion, it seems plausible to posit their existence in the American order. At any rate, from the smatterings of evidence available, such an interpretation seems far more plausible than the alternative simplistic views of the role of public opinion.\textsuperscript{112}

In fact, Key ultimately argued for a flexible model in which leadership and public opinion were mutually constrained:

The contention that "public opinion rules," while it no longer enjoys much vogue, tells us nothing about how and under what circumstances opinion makes itself felt. Nor does the thesis that "public opinion is ruled" by the public's betters satisfactorily describe what occurs. The theory of the workings of a democratic order must make a place for mass opinion, but its role needs to be treated as a part of a complex system of interactions within the circles of influence and leadership, and between them and mass opinion.\textsuperscript{113}

In the context of this system of relationships between political leaders, opinion leaders, and the mass public, we can now look more closely at the public itself.

THE MEDIA AND AGENDA-SETTING

It has recently become fashionable for various analysts to bemoan the impact of the media on military interventions, often reducing the role of the media to an ill-defined "CNN effect." Most of these analyses, however, are quite unconcerned about defining clearly or measuring operationally either the "CNN" or the "effect."

\textsuperscript{112}Key (1961), p. 76.
\textsuperscript{113}Key (1961), p. 75.
This is unfortunate, because there is a well-developed literature that clearly identifies that sorts of roles that the media can play, and the importance of the media in attitude formation. The role of the media has been described in great detail by a number of scholars, including Key (1961), Mackuen (1981, 1984a, 1984b), and Page and Shapiro (1987, 1992a). The basic finding is that because the media provide most of the political and policy information to the public, the levels and content of media reporting can have an impact on what concerns the public, and about their positions on salient issues.

There is a growing literature that is relating the salience of a policy issue to media reporting levels or objective conditions or events. The essence of this research is that when issues are given more prominent treatment in the press—for whatever reason—they tend to be the issues that are most salient when public opinion questions are asked about the most important problem facing the country, the most important foreign policy problem, and so on.

While some (the more conspiratorial among us) seem to accept this as strong evidence that the media are the drivers in "agenda-setting," less well understood is the extent to which media reporting levels reflect an "accurate" or "balanced" view of issues or, by over-reporting on certain issues or by emphasizing particular persuasive messages over others, they manage to set the public policy agenda or to shape mass public attitudes.

Put another way, if mass attitudes are in large part a function of the rate at which messages are received and accepted, the media is in a critical position in being able to play "agenda-setter" by emphasizing certain issues, or "gatekeeper" by keeping certain messages from the public while emphasizing others. While some analysts seem to believe that there is evidence of the media's playing such a role, or often fail to provide sufficient attention to oppositional arguments, I believe

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114 For example, see Funkhouser (1973), Erbring, Goldenberg, and Miller (1980), Mackuen and Coombs (1981), Page, Shapiro and Dempsey (1987), and Neuman (1990).

115 For example, Bennett and Manheim (1993) have argued that the media should have broadened the debate over the Gulf War to include issues and options that were not found within the elite discourse.
that they misunderstand the nature of media organizations, and their objective functions.\footnote{My view of media organizations is that they are attempting to maintain or maximize circulation in their audiences, which corresponds with both advertising and other revenues. Because some media organizations (the New York Times, for example, and the Washington Post) are attempting to maximize circulation in a specific niche audience of elites, there is a higher level of policy and political reporting than in local newspapers; devoting attention to policy matters is how these news organizations maintain their audiences. But these organizations have few incentives to report policy options outside of the elite discourse, because they have no standing or legitimacy in that discourse. And to expect them to do otherwise seems to misunderstand that they are businesses. I am indebted to Jim Droutzos for these insights.}

There has been a fair amount of empirical research on agenda-setting. Examining public opinion data from 1964 to 1970 on the "most important problem" facing the country in the 1960s, Funkhouser (1973) found that whether or not an issue was mentioned as an important problem when respondents were asked by the Gallup Poll "What is the most important problem facing America?"\footnote{The issues of inflation and drugs were exceptions to this relationship, but Funkhouser argued that inflation was a pervasive enough problem that had high visibility even without media coverage, and that the drug issue had become prominent independent of media coverage.} was clearly related to the amount of media coverage for an issue during a given year. While there could be a question about the direction of causality (i.e., a chicken-and-egg problem), experimental research by Iyengar, Kinder and associates has shown that increases in the volume of coverage of various news topics increased the salience of the topic in evaluations of the president by their experimental subjects.\footnote{See Brody (1991), p. 111, and Iyengar and Kinder (1987).} That is, experimental evidence supports the view that the level of media reporting on a subject is the linkage to the national issues that the public consider to be important.

Like Funkhouser's, the work of MacKuen and Coombs (1981), MacKuen (1984b) has sought to distinguish between the separate effects of objective events and conditions and the effects of media reporting on agenda-setting. The key point of his work, however, is that in many (if not most) cases, the media are reporting the actions and statements of elites or exogenous events as they are interpreted by political leaders.
and other elites. Put another way, in MacKuen's paradigm, political leaders served a mediating and interpretive role for the public on many issues, a view that is entirely consistent with a leadership model of mass attitude formation. MacKuen did, however, find some issues in which objective events and conditions seemed not to need much mediation or interpretation:

For a substantial portion of political issues, the public reacts wholly to the manifestation of elite representations in the press. On the other hand, the economic issues suggest that individuals are in fact capable of evaluating their local environment. The media do not by themselves set the public's agenda. The result, then, is a portrait of political man playing two parts. In the first, he seems to react to political events as a symbolic game in which he is merely a passive observer, though of course one with a rooting interest. In the second, he engages his full and active daily-life consciousness in assessing his environment when its nature is defined in understandably personal terms.\textsuperscript{113}

Even for those cases where media effects appear to be present, however, it is not clear whether the reason lies in the failure to use good indicators of the conditions and events that the public pay attention to in that particular issue area, or whether the media in fact had a prominent role in setting the public agenda.

For example, the prominence of the Vietnam War in mentions of the most important problem was predicted better by media reporting than by the indicator that was used for the objective situation—the personnel strength at the time. It seems sensible, however, that media reporting and public concern were far more likely to follow the ebb and flow of the political and military situation than personnel strength, i.e., the indicator used simply was not a very good instrumentation of the objective factors that are of interest to the media and the public.

What is critical in this is that unless reasonable indicators are used as surrogates for the sort of objective conditions and events that drive media reporting, it is highly likely that the media will appear to loom larger in importance than the objective conditions and events that in fact precipitated the media reporting in the first place. In short,

\textsuperscript{113}MacKuen (1984b).
it will prove the null hypothesis that "media effects" (rather than media reporting in rough proportion to objective events and conditions) were responsible for respondents' awareness of an issue. This is a difficult issue that, as Mackuen and Coombs have shown, must be addressed carefully on a case-by-case basis.

In the event, the media are central players in the democratic conversation, in that they lubricate communications between leaders and the public, and under certain conditions may in fact have a hand in shaping mass attitudes through editorial decisionmaking.

THE PUBLIC

As is clear from The Federalist Papers, the founding fathers' design of the institutions for good governance reflected a balancing of concern about the prospects for a tyranny of the few, and the prospects for a tyranny by the largely unenlightened masses.

This view of the mass public's attitudes as being protean, unstable and insufficiently enlightened to be considered seriously by policymakers has been under attack for decades, and articulate arguments in favor of the proposition that the aggregate public are responsible, sensible, and even rational can be found in a number of works perhaps beginning with V.O. Key's Public Opinion and American Democracy (1961) and up to Page and Shapiro's The Rational Public (1992a). While it may be the case that there was some reason in the past to believe that the mass public in the aggregate were less than rational on issues of foreign affairs, this view seems insupportable in light of more recent evidence and more enlightened research designs that are sensitive to important differences in wording and timing.

Because both individual and mass-level processes are at work in attitude formation, the public need to be understood at both the individual and the aggregate level.

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120 Walter Lippmann, Gabriel Almond (1960), and Klingberg (1979) were articulate proponents of this view.
121 One explanation that has been offered is that there were so few salient differences on political matters during the 1950s that public opinion analyses of this era have tended to turn up noise.
Individual-Level Rationality?

The model of mass attitude formation described by Key, Converse, McGwire, MacKuen and Zaller is entirely consistent with research on persuasion and attitude formation in the psychological literature.

V.O. Key observed in 1961 that verified information about the stability or instability of public opinion was scarce at that time, but seemed to suggest a higher degree of stability at the individual level than most analysts up to that point had assumed. By contrast, Converse (1964, 1970) examined panel data on public attitudes toward policy issues, and found that the attitudes of individuals were generally unstructured, and exhibited seemingly capricious fluctuations.

This disagreement among analysts continues, and there is at present something of a muddle over the consistency and rationality of individual attitudes. As the next section will show, however, individual-level rationality is in any event not necessary for collective rationality.

Rationality of the Public in the Aggregate

There is rich theoretical social choice literature with roots dating back to Condorcet and Boorda, which seeks to identify processes for achieving societally preferred outcomes. These theories have been elaborated and tested empirically, and yield a picture of rationality arising from the aggregation and decisionmaking process.

The work of Grofman and his associates, for example, has explored the accuracy of group judgmental processes as a function of the competence of individual group members, the group decision procedure, and group size. Feld and Grofman (1988) have shown that a group as a whole can be characterized as exhibiting an ideological basis for its preferences even though many, or even most, of its members have preferences that are inconsistent with the supposed uni-dimensional ideological continuum, and offer a number of reasons why collectivities

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are likely to be more ideologically consistent than are the individuals composing them. Their work shows that the electorate can express preferences among candidates that are entirely consistent with an ideological ordering, even if individual-level attitudes are logically incoherent.

V.O. Key (1961) argued that aggregate public opinion possessed varying degrees of "viscosity," in that some opinions might change slowly, if at all, in response to the flow of new ideas and events of the political world, while other opinions might change rapidly and unpredictably to the changing political scene.\textsuperscript{125}

In this, Key offered an important insight—that a failure to take into account the changing environment and its impact on public opinion could easily lead one to conclude that changing opinion was in fact random or spurious, when in fact it was a sensible response to a changing world:

Stability of opinion both in idea and in fact can be understood only in relation to the stimuli that affect opinion. Public opinion must be in a substantial degree a product of the stimuli to which the public is subjected: that is, events, the issues, the problems, the cues from leadership, and the objective circumstances that affect individual well-being. If all the public phenomena to which people react remained constant through time, presumably attitudes and opinions would remain unchanged. Obviously the stimuli do not remain the same.

Converse (1990) has also noted that the noise in individual-level attitudes are driven out in the process of statistical aggregation, essentially correcting for the individual-level instabilities he had discovered. Again pointing to a leadership-centered model, in Converse’s view, the signal that emerges from the “miracle of aggregation” may be determined disproportionately by a relatively small number of citizens who are paying careful attention. This process makes it possible "to arrive at a highly rational system performance on the backs of voters most of whom are remarkably ill-informed much of the time."

\textsuperscript{125}Key (1961), p. 235.
Inglehart (1985), and Page and Shapiro (1992a) have shown that taken in the aggregate, the attitudes of the public on policy issues are highly stable, and show a great deal of consistency. Page and Shapiro (1992a), for example, have argued that the process of social (or statistical) aggregation serves to smooth randomness in individual-level responses, and produces aggregate-level opinion that is remarkably stable and sensible, even rational. Feld and Grofman (1988) similarly showed that a group as a whole could be characterized as having stable ideological preferences, even if individuals lacked them.

In terms of foreign policy as an issue area, 126 a number of other scholars have shown a fair amount of stability in mass attitudes. 127 One theory that has taken a battering is Almond's (1950) "mood theory," in which public attitudes on foreign policy were said to careen back and forth unpredictably every 30 or so years. The emerging consensus regarding public opinion on foreign affairs and military issues is that it is quite stable, differentiated, and rational: the public has been described as "pretty prudent." 128 and as evidencing "sensible internationalism." 129 In short, the public are widely regarded as far more rational on issues of foreign affairs than was thought earlier.

Individual Differences and the Diffusion of Attitudes

The question of rationality is perhaps best understood in the context of both mass-level and individual-level factors.

At the mass level, the nature (and volume) of political debates in leadership circles and reporting by the mass media determine the overall character (i.e., pro or con) of the information regarding particular policy alternatives. At the individual level, members of the public differ in their level of political activism and are endowed with varying levels of cognitive ability, education, and interest and access to political and policy information.

129 See The American Enterprise, March/April 1993, pp. 94-104.
The consequence is that those who are most politically sophisticated, partisan and news-hungry are also most likely to become aware of how their opinion leaders interpret a new event, or the position they have taken on a new policy issue. That is, they are most likely to receive persuasive political messages and most capable of critically judging and accepting or rejecting them. Conversely, those who are least politically sophisticated and partisan are least likely to be able to integrate new information. Their attitudes, therefore, are somewhat less coherent and more volatile.

Beiknap (1951–52) Converse (1962), McGuire (1969), MacKuen (1984a) and Zaller (1987, 1991, 1992, 1993) have shown that it is these individual differences in individuals’ political knowledge that affect the probability of ever receiving policy-relevant messages from opinion leaders, and that partisan or ideological differences go a long way toward explaining whether a message will be accepted or rejected, once received.

Converse (1962) proposed a two-step model of mass political persuasion that engendered exposure to a message followed by acceptance of its contents. McGuire (1969) extended this idea and showed how it could explain a variety of complex and seemingly contradictory findings in laboratory studies in persuasion. The basic insight of McGuire was that the probability of an attitude change was a function of the probability of receiving a persuasive message times the probability of accepting the message conditioned upon its being received.

Zaller (1993) suggested two auxiliary assumptions about the key variables involved in the process of persuasion:

The greater a person’s level of general political awareness, the greater the likelihood of reception of mass communications, where reception involves both exposure to and comprehension of the given communication.

The greater a person’s political awareness, the less the probability of uncritically accepting the contents of mass communications, where acceptance involves bringing one’s attitudes into line with the contents of the communication.

The second of Zaller’s auxiliary assumptions recognizes that ideological and other differences can predispose individuals to accept or reject
arguments, depending on their consistency with existing attitudes. This argument is consistent with earlier work by Belknap and Campbell (1951-52) and Gamson and Modigliani (1966).

Belknap and Campbell (1951-2) showed that the attitudes of Democrats and Republicans toward the Korean War tended to polarize as their level of political knowledge increased. Put another way, highly knowledgeable Democrats were most supportive of the Truman administration and its war policies, and highly knowledgeable Republicans were least supportive.130

Gamson and Modigliani (1966) were attempting to relate knowledge of foreign affairs to policy opinions, and after rejecting two other models of the process settled upon a cognitive consistency model as being most in accordance with the empirical data:

This final model contrasts with earlier consensus models in its implication that increasing knowledge will change people in different directions leading to greater polarization of opinion among the more knowledgeable. This model argues that endorsement of a specific policy position stems from more general attitudes and assumptions that are being applied to a specific case. Knowledge of foreign affairs is important not because it reflects enlightenment or exposure to mainstream influences but because it reflects conceptual sophistication. Such sophistication reflects the ability to integrate specific policies with more general attitudes and assumptions one holds...[A]mong the sophisticated, those with different predispositions will rally around different specific policies, creating sharper differentiation among those with different ideological orientations.

One of the striking implications of the cognitive consistency model is that increases in knowledge should have a polarizing effect on the opinions of a set of persons. Knowledge has the effect of allowing one to understand more clearly the policy most consistent with his predispositions. This means that subsets of persons who share different belief systems will tend to deviate from one another with increases in knowledge, each moving toward the policy most consistent with its underlying assumptions.

It also suggests that those who are less sophisticated, or whose partisan or ideological ties are less strongly held, will feel

130This will be described in greater detail in the case study on the Korean War.
increasingly cross-pressured as the level of polarization among elites increases. Gamson and Modigliani continue, describing the sort of three-way cross-pressures that seem to have existed during the later parts of the Korean and Vietnam Wars, as support for the wars declined, and partisan preferences regarding war policies tended to diverge from presidential policy:

We would suggest that two primary forces are operating, both of which tend to correlate with education and knowledge. On the one hand, there is a strain toward attitudinal consistency that increases with knowledge; this produces a higher relationship between belief system and policy among the more knowledgeable and an increasing polarization around different policy alternatives for those who would start with different premises. At the same time, there is greater attachment to society and susceptibility to social influences—a force that produces support for official government policies. [Emphasis in original.]

Such a view is also entirely consistent with Mueller (1973), who found differences in respondents' predilections to follow cueing by political leaders. Mueller described members of the public in a simple, three-way typology that reflected their orientation toward opinion leaders:

- Followers were those who followed and approved of presidential and U.S. governmental policy. For example, followers supported escalation when it was U.S. policy, and supported deescalation when that was U.S. policy.
- Partisans were predisposed to accept the cues of their party's leaders, whichever policies were supported by those leaders.
- Believers were less inclined to follow consistently either the president or a particular party's leaders, although it was unclear whether they tended to choose their opinion leaders on a case-by-case basis, or whether they were just more inclined to think independently.

This schema for classifying respondents is consistent with the notion that members of the public may use different opinion leaders to assist in ordering new political information into more coherent frameworks. In fact, respondents may either be relatively consistent in preferring to
follow institutions ("followers" consistently follow the president, "partisans" consistently follow the leaders of a specific party; or have a more eclectic or complex way of using opinion leaders (i.e., "believers" may be turning to different opinion leaders on different questions).

The Concept of Robust Support

As just described, the model of the public is one that focuses on leadership with the consent (or consent) of the governed, where the governed are influenced greatly by the arguments and options that are offered by their leaders, but where public attitudes may also change over time in response to developments on the battlefield or in political circles. Policymakers desire robust support for U.S. military interventions, i.e., support that is unlikely to respond to these changes by eroding to the point where public and congressional consent is lost. In short, policymakers want to be able to accomplish their objectives without having additional constraints imposed on them, constraints that may in fact compromise the overall likelihood of success.

Evaluating Robust Support

One of the problems in using public opinion data, however, is the absence of a basis for evaluating the robustness of public support, and the level of strength with which opinions are held, or are merely ephemeral responses to the public opinion interview situation. Responses to public opinion questions are known to differ based on the context in which questions are asked, the order in which options are presented, and to wholly nonsubstantive changes in question wording. Public opinion polling results are also known to be responsive to timing, to presidential leadership, and prevailing government policy. In short, public opinion polling can tap a great many factors other than

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131Yankelovich (1981) offered a "mus特殊ness index," but because of the costs that it would add to surveying by requiring that additional questions be asked, this index has never been used.
133For example, see Mueller (1973) and Kernell (1976).
the deep, underlying attitudes or preferences that many tend to assume or claim.

Part of the problem is inherent in the public opinion polling process itself. Eleanor Singer (1988) noted a number of problems with public opinion data:

- the lack of truthful responses to survey questions;
- the failure to do justice to the richness of people's experience;
- the failure of people to understand certain types of questions that depend on memory or insight into their own feelings;
- the tendency of survey researchers to impose their own framework on the public;
- the fact that certain words in questions mean different things to different people;
- the tendency of people to give an opinion even when they do not have a real point of view on the subject, and;
- the tendency of people to modify their answers to questions when the context shifts or question wording changes.

As a consequence, the fundamental problem has to do with the fact that rather than revealing deeply held preferences, public opinion polling questions may often reflect “answering questions” that have been given little prior thought, and where any “preferences” that are “revealed” by the questions are held not at all firmly.\(^\text{134}\)

There have been two slightly different views of this problem of stability or instability in individual-level responses and attitudes. The first takes a cognitive perspective, and suggests that public opinion questions measure the most salient or easily retrieved response to a particular question. In this framing of the problem, the more information an individual has been exposed to, the more likely it is that a consistent response (e.g., pro- or con-, partisan- or ideologically- based) will be tapped by a public opinion question.

\(^{134}\) Zaller and Feldman (1992). Philip Converse has done much of the pioneering work in describing individual-level instability of opinion. See for example, Converse (1964, 1970), and Converse and Marcus (1979).
Higher information levels for an issue also lower the likelihood that there will be an inconsistent response if the same question is re-asked, or if another question that differs only slightly in wording is asked.

An important point is that individual-level differences in political sophistication and interest, or in the depth of partisanship or ideological attachments, can lead different individuals to very different conclusions when offered the same mix of information. This is because as the level of interest and information increase, individuals are more inclined to be aware of the partisan- or ideologically-based framings that are offered by opinion leaders and reported in the mass media. They are thus better able to accept or reject messages on the basis of consistency with their ideological or partisan framing for the issue, thereby enabling them to answer questions in a more consistent fashion.

A second but related view is offered by Yankelovich (1991). His view is that there is a difference between “good-quality” public opinion, which is public opinion that has crystallized and is responsible, and “bad-quality” public opinion, which taps only ephemeral or transitory responses rather than substantive beliefs. Yankelovich offers three tests for evaluating the level of crystallization in public opinion:

It is not difficult to find out whether an opinion poll is measuring mass opinion [bad-quality public opinion] or public judgment [good-quality public opinion]. Three simple tests can be applied, deriving from the threefold definition of quality. One test is to ask questions in opinion polls in several slightly different ways that do not change the essential meaning of the question. If people change their answers in response to slight shifts in question wording, this is a sure sign that their opinions are volatile. A second test is to plant questions that probe for inconsistencies and contradictions—another sign of mass opinion. A third test is to confront respondents with difficult trade-offs that directly challenge wishful thinking. This approach presents people with the consequences of their views and then measures their reactions.133

Building Robust Support

In Yankelevich's view, there is a three-stage process for arriving at "good-quality" public opinion on an issue, i.e., public opinion that passes this tripartite test. The issue must be made salient to the individual, and the individual must "work through" the costs and difficult tradeoffs to arrive at a resolution of the issue, and a crystallization of opinion around beliefs that are more firmly held because they result from this "working-through" process.

Yankelevich offers ten rules for leaders who aim to help the mass public in its "working-through" to a resolution, and "good-quality" or "crystallized" public opinion:

1. On any given issue, it is usually safe to assume that the public and the experts will be out of phase. To bridge the gap leaders must learn what the public's starting point is and how to address it.
2. Do not depend on experts to present issues.
3. Learn what the public's pet preoccupation is and address it before discussing any other facet of the issue.
4. Give the public the incentive of knowing that someone is listening... and cares.
5. Limit the number of issues to which people must attend at any one time to two or three at most.
6. Working through is best accomplished when people have choices to consider.
7. Leaders must take the initiative in highlighting the value components of choices.
8. To move beyond the "say-yes-to-everything" form of procrastination, the public needs help.
9. When two conflicting values are both important to the public, resolution should be sought by tinkering to preserve some element of each.
10. Use the time factor as a key part of the communication strategy.\(^{136}\)

One interesting aspect of Yankelovich's work is that he focuses on differences in opinion between experts and opinion leaders and the mass public, and suggests that policymakers account for these differences in the early stages of deliberation over an issue.

Misleading the Public

While some analysts seem to stress the opportunities for mischief— that "education" can be little more than "propaganda"—there are reasons to be somewhat more sanguine that the public are not easily misled, and when misled, there are processes at work that rectify the problem.\(^{37}\)

First of all, the work of Converse, McGuire, MacKuen, Taller, and others suggests that as long as there is a lively debate among opinion leaders—whether these opinion leaders are political, members of watchdog groups or the media, spokespersons for political parties, academics and other policy gadflies—the public may have little reason to be concerned that it is being propagandized. This is because any effort to mislead the public by one side is likely to be greeted with harsh denunciations and accusations of ethical lapses and casuistry. In short, there are broad countervailing forces that are at work to ensure that the hygiene of political arguments is relatively high.

There is another reason that the opportunities for mischief may be somewhat limited. Yankelovich, for example, suggests more strongly than many other analysts that even in circumstances where there is broad agreement among opinion leaders—and despite extensive efforts to educate or lead the public—public attitudes can remain distinctly different from those of elites. In this rendering, then, Yankelovich allows for differences between leaders and the mass public that may not be able to be bridged, even when there is bipartisan support for a particular policy. While this view is at some tension with the first, which suggests a central role for leaders in the diffusion of mass attitudes, it is not entirely inconsistent, in that it allows for opinion leaders to emerge from grass-roots organizations, to gain

\(^{37}\)The political communications and media analysis sub-fields of political science seem quite gloomy about this. The work of Lance Bennett and Zarek Yanheim, for example, stresses the manipulation of the media for political ends.
attention from the media, and to thereby have a broader impact on public
attitudes.\footnote{128}

Misreading the Public

In spite of the constraints on misleading the public, there appear
to be ample opportunities to wittingly or unwittingly misread the
public.

Most media organizations, for example, have more of an incentive to
find good copy in their public opinion polls than analyze and report the
results in a careful fashion.\footnote{129} There are also many who seek to
influence the policy process through public opinion polling. It is
well-known that considerable power lies in the hands of question-writers
to secure results that align with their prior preferences,\footnote{130} and any
in-depth analysis of public opinion data reveals results that appear to
be outliers because of question-wording, context effects from the
artificiality of the interview experiences or other sources.

For example, some of the results of the Louis Harris organization
seem to me to have a slight but somewhat consistent liberal bias to
them, and the results of the University of Maryland’s Program for
International Policy Attitudes seem to have a consistent
internationalist bias. When some of these results are compared with the
results of other public opinion organizations, the bias becomes somewhat
clear, but because so few analysts and journalists take the time to
examine closely the wording and compare it to other questions with
slightly different wording, there is a great deal of analysis around
that fails to capture the nuances and richness found in public opinion.
In short, when one reads public opinion data, it is necessary to
understand more than just the result of the question at hand—also
important are the wording, the wording of other questions or “priming”

\footnote{128}{A reasonably good example is that of Howard Jarvis, who led a
taxpayers’ revolt in California in the 1980s.}

\footnote{129}{Yankelovich (1991) has some very unkind things to say about the
media’s use of polling information.}

\footnote{130}{A point made by Mueller (1973).}
that the respondent may have received, the general policy platform, if any, of the sponsoring organization, and other factors.\footnote{143}

\section*{Public Attitudes Toward Military Interventions}

There are a number of literatures that pertain to public opinion on the use of force by the United States. These will be summarized briefly to describe what is known about the public support for U.S. military interventions.

The "Rally 'Round the Flag" Literature

The "rally" effect refers to the short-term boost in support that a president usually receives when he has used force in a dramatic, publicly visible way.\footnote{144}

This rally is usually suggested to be the result of a gathering-together of members of the public in the face of a common threat, but it seems likely that there are also other factors that are important, having to do with information asymmetries and cueing from political leaders. For example, deference to the president in part is based upon the fact that he has private information sources that the public does not, and is charged with the responsibility of ensuring that U.S. interests are defended; so long as the public have little evidence suggesting that the president is quite wrong about the nature of the threat or the importance of the interests, they tend to defer to him. Congressional leaders similarly tend to defer to the president, and withhold criticism that could cue declining support among the public.

A short-term boost in support is often the consequence, but this support can decay rather quickly, usually over the next several months. When the president has a poor case for his intervention, it appears

\footnote{143}It would be interesting to see PIPA incorporate question-wording that was identical to that used by other polling organizations so that the extent of any bias could be systematically evaluated.

\footnote{144}See Hugick and Gallup (1991) for an inventory of rallies in past U.S. uses of military force, and the February/March issue of Public Opinion, p. 29.
that such a boost is not always forthcoming, nor sufficient to give him a majority of supporters.\textsuperscript{143}

The Literature of Declining Support

Following the initial rally effect (when there is one), support may fall rather quickly to a more natural baseline level.\textsuperscript{144} Once it has reached this level, it is subject to further decline. In his seminal book *War, Presidents and Public Opinion*, Mueller (1973) showed that the increasing costs in casualties in the Korean and Vietnam wars was associated with declining support; for each increase by a factor of ten in the cumulative casualty costs in the two wars (dead, wounded, hospitalized, and missing), there was a decline of about 15 percentage points in support. Others have come to similar findings regarding the cumulative costs,\textsuperscript{145} and still others have shown that declining support was also related to the simple monthly casualties in Vietnam.\textsuperscript{146}

Bueno de Mesquita, Siverson and Woller (1992) place this finding in a somewhat broader perspective. Using data for over 170 interstate wars from 1816 to 1975, they examined the relationship between the outcome (success or failure) and the role played by a country (initiator or target of aggressive action) and found that the probability of violent regime change increased with the costs of the war, irrespective of the outcome. Their analysis showed that violent regime change was least likely for winning initiators, followed by winning targets, losing targets, and losing initiators. In short, while winning or losing was most important, the costs of success or failure increased political unrest. While there would seem to be a much lower probability of a

\textsuperscript{143}Brody (1991), pp. 45-82, provides an especially insightful analysis, as does Burbach (1994), who provides an excellent review of this literature and a technical analysis of the decay in rallies. Burbach’s conclusion is that the public’s responses to uses of force suggest that they have differentiated views with respect to the rationales for intervention, and that they don’t unthinkingly reward politicians for uses of force regardless of the outcome. Russett (1990-91) notes that rallies are typically smaller for interventions to overthrow other governments than those for protecting American citizens or defending friends and allies from armed attacks across borders.

\textsuperscript{144}See Mueller (1973) on Vietnam for an example of this.

\textsuperscript{145}See Milstein (1974).

\textsuperscript{146}See Milstein (1974), and Kernell (1974).
violent regime change following a U.S. war, it is not unreasonable to expect that the same logic might be at work in political opposition or electoral punishment.

Presidential Decision Making on the Use of Force

There is also a growing literature examining the role of public opinion in presidential decisions to use force. With few exceptions, these analysts have tended to argue that presidents use force to improve their standing with the public, while simultaneously scolding that the rallies are typically so small in size and so ephemeral in nature that presidents should see no advantage in using force for this purpose, and hence, should refrain from uses of force that are undertaken principally to improve their standing. Keenik's (1994) analysis shows that these other analyses have generally mis-specified the problem, and that the high explanatory power imputed to public opinion was an artifact of a failure to include salient variables. Most important among these was the "opportunity" to use force, consisting of a challenge or threat that was significant enough to have potentially warranted the use of force. When presidential choices to intervene or not intervene are both analyzed, the importance of public opinion in the decision essentially evaporated.

The Literature of Ends and Means

There is also a literature that describes how the public weigh ends and means in the use of military force, much of which emphasizes the benefits side of the equation.

Some of this literature has focused on public preferences regarding the circumstances under which force should be used, and aims to get at the benefits side of the ends-mean calculus. Russett and Nincic (1976), Mueller (1977), and Russett (1990-91), for example, found that military action to repel an attack against a country typically receives higher levels of support than actions that involve interventions aimed at quelling domestic insurgencies. As Russett (1990-91) put it:

[M]ilitary action to repel an armed attack across international borders more effectively rallies support than does military intervention against domestic communists within
a country. The 1983 action against Grenada was more widely accepted when presented as "mainly to protect the Americans living there" than to overthrow a Marxist government. In 1986, the Nicaragua government was posing no immediate threat to its neighbors or to the United States, so American popular sentiment to overthrow it was low.\textsuperscript{147}

Using public opinion data from a number of military interventions, Jentleson (1992) observed a similar result—there were different levels of support based upon the objective of the intervention, in that the public consistently preferred force to "restrain" the actions of other international actors over attempts to "remake" their governments through internal interventions.\textsuperscript{148} Recent unpublished work by Carl Builder has focused on the moral bases of support for U.S. uses of force—"the countenance of war"—and how adversaries can erode the bases of domestic support by making "good" look like "bad" ones.


Less satisfying are Schwarz's (1994) and Luttwak's (1994) discussions of casualties and public attitudes. Schwarz's findings of increasing public sentiment for escalation in Korea, Vietnam, the Gulf

\textsuperscript{147}Russett (1990-91), p. 518.

\textsuperscript{148}This preference seems also to be supported by the CCFR data, which consistently shows that only about one out of three members of the public consider promoting democracy and human rights to be "very important" foreign policy goals of the U.S. See Rielly (1975, 1979, 1983, 1987, 1991, 1995a and 1995b).
War, and Somalia are contradicted by virtually all of the available evidence, as well as by Mueller’s excellent analysis of public opinion toward the Korean and Vietnam Wars. Similarly, although he does not examine carefully the available public opinion data, Luttwak argues that the explanation for an asserted unwillingness to accept casualties results from smaller families that have made “great powers” loathe to sacrifice their children.\textsuperscript{149} His argument, however, does not account for the great variance in the willingness of the American public to accept casualties across interventions in the same period. For example, in the Gulf War, majorities of the public seemed willing to accept up to several thousand casualties; in Somalia, however, even eleven U.S. deaths due to hostile action were far too many. It is in any case rather difficult for me to imagine that any of Luttwak’s “great powers” would have even bothered to intervene in Somalia, much less been willing to sacrifice lives to achieve humanitarian ends.

The Benefit-Cost Calculus

More recently, there have been several excellent efforts to describe the larger weighting of ends and means in public support for U.S. military interventions.

Klarevas and O’Connor (1994) analyzed a large number of U.S. military interventions showing the critical role of expected and actual costs, and benefits (“justifications,” in their vernacular). They found that all of the military operations undertaken which received clear support were “justifiable” and relatively low in cost, while the executed missions which were clearly opposed were relatively high in cost. Richman (1994, 1995) has suggested that public support for U.S. military interventions is based upon four factors: the nature of the threat, the source and target of the threat, preferences among military actions and other means, and an ends/means calculus which he describes as “anticipated costs of actions and expectation of achieving objectives

\textsuperscript{149}It is not unusual for strategists to point to the “softness” or “weakness” of the public, or to diminish the importance of domestic political factors in foreign policy or military affairs. All too rare are strategists like Bernard Brodie, who are willing to wrestle with the confluence of strategy with domestic politics.
with acceptable losses." Milstein's (1974) work aside, what has been missing is a conceptual framework for integrating these considerations into a simple calculus of ends and means that addresses not just initial levels of support, but also the dynamics of changing support.\footnote{An adaptation of Milstein's framework, and some empirical work to support it, is found in the Appendix. As will be seen, the case studies in this dissertation provide circumstantial evidence that such a framework may be at work.}

**Political-Military Linkages**

Furthermore, while there has been little apparent work tying political consideration of costs to operational-level decisionmaking,\footnote{Milstein (1974) perhaps being the main exception.} some of Bueno de Mesquita's work suggests a linkage between strategic-level consideration of costs and much consideration at the levels of campaign strategy, tactics and technology.\footnote{Bueno de Mesquita (1983).} Krome's (1981) discussion of political feasibility and military decisionmaking is also suggestive, as is Mueller's (1980) work on the U.S. search for a North Vietnamese "breaking point."\footnote{At the level of campaign and battle, the various works of Dupuy, Heimbold, and McQuie are notable in their consideration of casualties, breakpoints, and other such phenomena.}

In short, the literature in this area is somewhat sketchy, somewhat contradictory, and somewhat limited to the cases that have been examined. The next section will describe the method that was used in the analysis.

**CONCLUSIONS**

The picture that emerges from all of this is a conversation among various actors, largely facilitated by the media: debates and disagreements among leaders are observed and reported to the public, and become diffused in a predictable way, and are measured from time to time by public opinion polling. As was shown, there is a strong anecdotal and empirical basis for accepting such a model of mass attitude formation that is leadership-centered and attends to the level of dissensus among political leaders, while still remaining cognizant of
the importance that individual differences play in the reception and acceptance of persuasive political messages.

The two metaphors—that of the democratic conversation, and that of the simple model of ends and means—together suggest both that the casualty costs of an intervention are only one factor in public support, and that in some circumstances, they may not even be the most important factor in support.

The next section will describe the method that was used for the analysis. The remainder of this dissertation will aim to show the role that casualties have played in declining public support when other factors are taken into account.
1.3. METHOD

This section describes the method and data used in this analysis.

CASE STUDY APPROACH

The core of this analysis rests upon the comparative case study approach informed by the work of George (1979), and many others.\textsuperscript{154} and applied to the following cases of U.S. military intervention: the Korean, Vietnam and Gulf Wars; the invasion of Panama; and the intervention in Somalia.\textsuperscript{155} Because the focus of the research was on support for military interventions and the role of casualties in that support, the approach that was taken was to construct a rich history for each case that touched upon the decisions, events and other factors that, a priori, would have been expected to figure into changing public attitudes. Multiple sources of often-conflicting evidence were used to ensure that each history was reasonably robust, and seemed to capture the most important features of the story.

Following Yin (1989), who suggests that a complete research design requires a theoretical framework for the case study that is to be conducted, this history was constructed in a manner that highlighted a consistent set of dimensions that were believed to be important correlates of public support for an intervention, and could help to rule out single-variable explanations.\textsuperscript{156} Also after Yin, the framework sought to enhance the quality of the case study comparisons by attending to important design considerations, described in Table 1.3.1.

A consistent set of questions were addressed in each case study:

- what were the critical decision points and events over the course of the U.S. military intervention?

\textsuperscript{154}Excellent treatments of this approach can also be found in Cohen (1979), Ecksstein (1975), Lipjhart (1975), Ragin (1987) and Yin (1989).

\textsuperscript{155}Additional comparisons were made to other, similar cases. For example, some examination of the 1983 invasion of Grenada was done to look at features that it had in common with the Panama invasion.

\textsuperscript{156}This theoretical framework is described in more detail in the appendix.
### Table 1.3.1

**Case Study Design Considerations**

| CONSTRUCT VALIDITY | Use multiple sources of evidence  
| Establish chain of evidence |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|
| INTERNAL VALIDITY   | Do pattern-matching  
| Do explanation-building  
| Do time-series analysis |
| EXTERNAL VALIDITY   | Use replication  
| Logic in multiple-case studies |
| RELIABILITY         | Use case study protocol  
| Develop case study data base |


- how did the levels of political and military activity change over the course of the intervention, and how were these changes related to military events on the ground, including casualties?
- how did the support of congressional and other political leaders change over the course of the operation?
- how did the media respond to these objective events, and to the political activity that these events might have occasioned?
- what sort of cueing—supportive or oppositional—did the public seem to receive from political leaders over the course of the operation?
- how did the most important public attitudes about the intervention change over the course of the operation?
- understanding the broader context within which public attitudes changed, what can we say about the role of casualties, if any, in these changing attitudes?

In short, an attempt was made to use a consistent set of analytic questions and measures to inform a broad-brushed analysis of the
correlates of public support over the course of a wide variety of U.S.
military interventions.

**POLITICAL, MILITARY AND MEDIA ACTIVITY**

A mixed qualitative and quantitative analysis of political,
military and media activity was performed to provide a richer
understanding of the sequence of events in each intervention, and to
understand the changing pace of events. This analysis was also
constructed around a model of what might be called “the democratic
conversation,” not unlike Lasswell’s (1971) mapping of social and
decision processes.

In fact, it was somewhat sobering how thin the evidentiary basis
was for many assertions made by various analysts, which would not have
been discovered if a rather eclectic and inclusive approach had not been
taken. For example, many tend to bemoan “the CNN effect” in Somalia,
but there is little evidence that CNN (or any of the major television
news networks) increased its reporting substantially before the major
decision points: the airlift decision in August 1992 or the intervention
in December 1992. Furthermore, support had collapsed before the
firefight in Mogadishu, and both those who saw and those who didn’t see
the televised images of a dead U.S. serviceman’s body being mistreated
preferred withdrawal from Somalia. In short, CNN did not have quite the
effect some have asserted.

**Qualitative Analysis**

The first step of analysis for each case study was to accumulate
multiple histories and chronologies to gain an understanding of the
sequence of events. These histories and chronologies included
descriptions of the political, military and media dimensions of each
intervention, which were most often found in scholarly journals or as
chapters in books. The approach that was taken was inclusive, both to
ensure that important features of each history would not be left out,
and to collect hypotheses or explanations of why events played out as
they did, so that these hypotheses could be evaluated in light of more
complete information. In short, the aim was to provide a rich,
historiographic foundation to the analysis.
Quantitative Analysis

To provide a complementary perspective to these qualitative analyses, and to compensate for the bounded perspectives of the authors, a broader set of quantitative indicators of political, military and media activity were developed to be able to gauge in a crude fashion the ebb and flow of activity, and to better identify the events that occasioned increased activity. The approach that was used was to attempt to construct general indicators of the relative activity levels of various actors over time, under the assumption that the level of activity (and especially publicly visible activity) was a good gauge of the level of importance of the issue at that time, and for that actor. The reason for this is that political actors have limited time available, and for each issue they devote time to there is another, presumably inferior, issue that didn't have time devoted to it. Put another way, political activity is a crude gauge of how important an issue was at any given time, and evidence of greater importance in certain periods can be used to cue more detailed analysis to understand the events that led to this increased importance.

Data

A great number of data sources on political and media activity were used to understand the shifting attention devoted to each intervention by political leaders and the media.\textsuperscript{157}

The approach that was taken was as follows: the results of keyword searches from on-line data sources were incorporated into spreadsheet files. Individual records were then constructed for each event or document, and these records were coded. While coding varied, in all cases the records were coded by date so that they could be aggregated for selected periods of time (e.g., the number of New York Times stories on Somalia by month). Other coding depended upon the source, and the consistency of their treatment of particular kinds of events. For example, it was relatively easy to identify appearances by members of

\textsuperscript{157}Such an approach has a long and rich intellectual heritage, from Harold D. Lasswell's (1941) early work on the "World Attention Survey" to more recent works such as Baumgartner and Jones' (1993) analysis of agenda change.
Congress on CNN from the data record, so the pattern of congressional appearances over time could be assessed. Once aggregated (by day, week, or month, or to provide a cumulative count of records), these data could be plotted as line charts in the spreadsheet program. In fact, a great deal more graphical analysis than statistical analysis was done on these data, because my research interest was not in fitting curves but in understanding broader patterns: there is clearly much interesting work that remains to be done, involving the statistical assessment of the cueing processes that were at work in these interventions. Measures of political activity included the following:

- **The Public Papers of the President.** Presidential documents are available on-line, and can be used to gauge the amount of presidential attention to different policy issues. The basic datum used was the document, which could be aggregated. Data were from LEXIS/NEXIS.

- **The Congressional Record.** The Record is similarly available in electronic format, and can be used to gauge congressional activity. The basic datum used was the document, which could be aggregated. Data were from LEXIS/NEXIS.

- **Thomas.** The Library of Congress' Thomas system provides information on the status of bills, including the dates of introduction, and their full text. The substance of congressional activity can be evaluated by searching this system. Thomas can accessed as a web site.

- **The Federal News Service.** The Federal News Service is a clearinghouse for transcripts from political events in Washington. The Service documents daily briefings and other activities by Executive and Legislative Branch actors, and can be used to track the public activity of the White House, the Congress, and the State and Defense Departments. The basic datum used was a political event (e.g., a press briefing), which could be aggregated. Data were from LEXIS/NEXIS.

Measures of military activity included the following:
• Casualties. The number of casualties and their date was a principal measure of the consequence of military activity. This analysis emphasizes the number of deaths due to hostile action, but the number of wounded also led to some insights about tempo of action.

• Other Data. Beyond casualties, it is exceedingly difficult to find data on the changing level of military activity that isn’t in fact derived from media reporting. I was interested in separating the objective events from the media reporting of these events so that I could understand the importance of the media in, for example, agenda-setting.\textsuperscript{158} This poses a major methodological problem.\textsuperscript{159} Efforts to quantify military activity were, therefore, somewhat limited, and a more qualitative approach was used in which the principal themes (e.g., political, military, human interest) in the reporting stream were assessed.

Measures of media activity included the following.

• \textit{New York Times Reporting}. The \textit{New York Times} is the newspaper of record, and provides a good basis for understanding the attention that was devoted to the intervention by the elite press. The basic datum used was the story, which could be aggregated, or disaggregated by desk (e.g., Editorial), or whether it was a \textit{New York Times} editorial, an Op-Ed piece, or a letter to the editor. Data were from LEXIS/NEXIS.

• \textit{Cable News Network (CNN) Reporting}. CNN provides round-the-clock news coverage that is widely thought to be very influential in policy circles. The basic datum used was the program segment (many of which are re-broadcast a number of times), which could be aggregated, or disaggregated, for

\textsuperscript{158}Michael MacKuen has done some fine work in this area.  
\textsuperscript{159}Milestein (1974) made use of the substantial data regarding the Vietnam War, including bombing missions and battalion-size operations. Such data were not available to me for the other interventions.
example, by whether a member of the administration or the Congress was appearing live. Data were from LEXIS/NEXIS.

- ABC, CBS and NBC News Reporting. With their wide viewership, the attention of the major television news organizations would also seem to be important. The basic datum used was the program segment. Data were kindly provided by Dan Amundson of the Center for the Media and Public Affairs in Washington, D.C.

- Vanderbilt University Television Archives. Data for ABC, CBS and NBC were also available via a web site at Vanderbilt University's Television Archives.

- MacNeil-Lehrer News Hour. The News Hour also has a wide viewership, especially among the better educated and those more interested in public affairs programming. The basic datum was the program (not program segment), and data were from LEXIS/NEXIS.

A word on the level of analysis for the media data. There is, obviously, a difference between counting programs on which a story on a U.S. military intervention occurred, and counting program segments, the number of words, or the amount of air time devoted to the subject. The main aim, of course, is to try to gauge the level of emphasis given such a story, given that there is a fixed amount of time for broadcasting all of the possible stories that might be.\(^\text{160}\)

Because the amount of time devoted (the parameter of interest) is probably roughly correlated with the number of words in the segment, and because the total number of words devoted to an intervention seems to be correlated with the number of program segments, the program segment was used as the basis for most of the media analysis.\(^\text{161}\)

PUBLIC OPINION

The analysis reported here relies upon data from thousands of public opinion questions. Each case study typically involved

\(^{160}\)This time period is known as the “news hole,” because it must be filled with stories.

\(^{161}\)MacNeil-Lehrer News Hour is an exception, since the data are not broken down by segment.
interpretation of several hundred public opinion questions, although some (e.g., the Gulf War) seem to have involved more.\textsuperscript{162} This section provides a broad overview of some of the issues that are important in properly using public opinion data for policy analysis. While its main points about the limitations of these data were discussed in the last section, there are also analytic techniques that can help to compensate for these limitations:

- A single polling result, a single type of question, or even a single series of the same question asked repeatedly over time rarely tells the whole story of ongoing support for a military operation. Furthermore, it is quite easy to be misled by published polling results, because they often do not actually say what they are purported to say. This section will therefore provide an overview of the sorts of data that can be used to assess public support for a military operation, and identify some of their limitations. It will also stress that the only hope of understanding public opinion on military interventions is to perform a careful—and comprehensive—analysis of all available data.

- Because it is rare that a good experimental design is used to formulate which questions will be asked in a poll, it is often very difficult to draw conclusions about the support of military operations from polling results. Support is often highly contingent on specific cueing found in the question wording, and there is a failure to systematically control for the most important factors that could be influencing the levels of support for particular responses. This section will describe the main factors that one ought to take into account when looking at polling results to be able to assess the robustness of support.

- Most specifically, differences in question structure and wording—especially important cues that may be found in the

\textsuperscript{162}Some of these questions were, however, asked more than once, thereby providing time series.
wording—can have a dramatic effect on the percentage responding to a polling question in a particular way. I will also stress the importance of variations in question wording, and describe some rules of thumb for determining whether public opinion questions may be (intentionally or unintentionally) inflating or deflating response levels.

- The importance to sustaining public support of opinion leadership by the President and the Congress and other elites should not be underestimated. The President is the natural opinion leader on foreign policy, but that opinion leadership can be undercut—and ultimately lost—if the Congress and other elites come to oppose an operation, and consistently make a critical case against the operation. This section will describe other influences on public opinion that need to be monitored.

The first part of this section will be devoted to providing an overview of the sources and types of data available for understanding public support for U.S. military operations and public attitudes toward casualties.

Sources

There are a great many sources of public opinion data on military operations and other public policy issues.

Older Public Opinion Data

There are two voluminous compendia of somewhat older public opinion data: The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion, 1935-1971\(^{163}\) by George R. Gallup, and Cantril’s Public Opinion, 1935-1946.\(^{164}\)

Recent Public Opinion Data

The most obvious sources of contemporaneous public opinion data are the polls reported by many newspapers, television news programs and

\(^{163}\)Gallup (1972), updated by the annual editions of The Gallup Poll, which are published by Scholarly Resources, Inc.

\(^{164}\)Cantril (1951).
other news organizations who frequently cooperate in their public opinion polling activity. Among the organizations that frequently collaborate are: ABC News and the Washington Post; The Gallup Organization, Time Magazine, Newsweek, Cable News Network (CNN), and USA Today; CBS News and the New York Times; and NBC and the Wall Street Journal. Another good source of recent public opinion polling can be found in several journals that report polling results. These include the Gallup Organization's Gallup Poll Monthly, and the Roper Center's The Public Perspective.165

There are also organizations that specialize in archiving public opinion data, and undertake archival research for a fee. These include:

- The Roper Center at the University of Connecticut;
- The American Institute of Public Opinion (AIPO, also known as The Gallup Organization); and
- The National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago.

Scholarly Surveys

There are other organizations which undertake surveys for scholarly research or policy analysis purposes. For example, NORC's General Social Survey (GSS), The University of Michigan Center for Political Studies' biannual National Election Studies (NES),166 and the quadrennial Chicago Council on Foreign Relations (CCFR) survey provide substantial data of potential interest to the student of public opinion.

Scholarly Journals

There are also several journals which occasionally publish research on public opinion and U.S. military operations, including the American Political Science Review, the Journal of Conflict Resolution, and the Journal of Peace Research, the Political Science Quarterly, and Public Opinion Quarterly, among others.

165The latter is sometimes found as an insert in The American Enterprise, a publication of the American Enterprise Institute.
166The results of these biannual surveys are now available on CD-ROM at a nominal cost.
On-Line Sources

Finally, there are on-line retrieval systems that contain public opinion data. The R Poll database (accessible through LEXIS/NEXIS) of the Roper Center contains marginal results from tens of thousands of polling questions which can be accessed via keyword search.107 The Louis Harris Data Center houses past results of the Harris Survey, as well as public opinion polling done for USA Today.108

Limitations of Public Opinion Data

Most often the policy analyst does not have precisely the polling data he would like to have to assess the nature and evolution of public attitudes regarding military operations. What are the characteristics of the sort of data the policy analyst might want?

- A rich array of public questions arising from an experimental design that systematically elicit data on preferences in light of a number of other factors, including perceived benefits and costs, difficult tradeoffs between important values, etc.
- Panel data that follows the changing attitudes of the same respondents over time.
- Numerous data series, each of which is based upon a consistently worded question asked at regular intervals.
- Questions on how closely the operation is being followed or how important the problem is to the respondent; expectations or assessments of progress; approval for the operation, its objectives and strategies; and preferred policies, including reducing the commitment (or withdrawing) or increasing the commitment by increasing the forces or tempo of combat operations.
- Questions that shed additional light on these preferences, such as whether the respondent supports reprisal attacks so long as they do not impede withdrawal.

107 This database can be accessed via telnet by users who have LEXIS/NEXIS accounts.
108 The Louis Harris Data Center is accessible via telnet.
Finally, the policy analyst would like to have comparable data for a number of military operations to enable comparisons to be made across operations.

Public opinion data on military operations are, however, created by a variety of organizations for a variety of purposes. The principal purpose is to feed major news organizations with information on public attitudes that can be used to provide additional perspective to news reporting, to assist in editorial judgments, or to influence policymakers. These organizations use polls both to gauge the interest of the public in particular issues, and to spic up news stories by reporting what the public "believe" about an issue.

While there is some coordination among the news organizations that share polling data and resources, the focus of polling by these organizations is not to build a body of data for analysts—it is to provide additional perspective on routine news reporting.

As a consequence, question wording can greatly vary across polling organizations, and over time for a particular polling organization, and questions often include seemingly random cues that may affect response levels in ways that are often difficult to assess. Furthermore, questions are asked at irregular intervals that seem most often to be associated with significant events (events that might occasion attitudes that are quite ephemeral in nature).

In short, public opinion questions are somewhat haphazardly structured and randomly asked, and only rarely are time-series panels used where the changing attitudes of the same respondents are followed. Because there is no experimental design to control for the sorts of factors that might affect response levels—and thereby allow inferences about causality to be made—the policy analyst must use great caution in drawing conclusions about "what the public want."

Furthermore, to speak of "the public" as monolithic in this way is incorrect; one of the first findings of public opinion researchers was the existence of many "publics," each of which can reflect a somewhat different structure to its attitudes and its responses to events. This adds still another level of complexity to the already difficult task of
summarizing public attitudes in a policy-relevant way—understanding the nature of important differences among different publics.

Finally, public opinion questions are asked of many members of the public who have never given any thought to, much less have strong feelings about, the issues about which they are asked. In other words, to believe that "the public" are "demanding" something, more often than not, is nonsense. The consequence of this is that public opinion analysts need to be very careful in interpreting public opinion data, for there are a number of very deep issues that, if neglected, can lead to poor public opinion analyses.

**Questions Relevant to Military Operations**

As a consequence of all this polling activity, there is often a great variety of public opinion questions that can be used to assess public attitudes regarding military operations, and speak directly or indirectly to casualty tolerance. The most important of these can roughly be divided into questions on:

- public awareness of the operation, and its salience;
- the potential benefits of the operation, as reflected in U.S. stakes, interests and principles engaged in the situation, and preferences regarding the objectives of the operation, or the acceptance of different justifications;
- questions on the prospects for success, and likely outcome;
- questions on the expected costs and duration;
- various measures of support or approval, whether the intervention is believed to have been a "mistake," questions on presidential handling of the situation, approval of the decision to use U.S. forces, questions that ask whether the operation is likely to be worth its expected costs, and approval for the presence of U.S. forces;

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169 See Schwarz (1994).
170 For a roughly similar division of polling questions on a military operation, see the tables in the data appendix to Mueller (1994b).
preferences regarding strategy, especially regarding a desire to increase/escalate the level of commitment or decrease/withdraw that commitment.

It is important to stress that each of these types of data emphasizes a different aspect of public attitudes toward military operations, but that all are important in understanding the nature of public support and how it changes over time. That is, it can be very time-consuming to do policy-analytic quality analysis with public opinion data. Furthermore, there are also other questions, not mentioned in the above list, which also can be useful in understanding the nature and depth of public support, or can inform our interpretation of other data.

The approach that I took was to treat each history (story) as the embodiment of a working hypothesis regarding the sequence of events and which were most important in changing both policies and attitudes. I then attempted to remain open to alternative interpretations that were suggested by new data, and revised my hypothesis (story) accordingly. Occam’s razor was used: while the stories that resulted necessarily do not contain all of the events that occurred (indeed, none possibly could), they seemed to be the simplest stories that were consistent with all of the facts that were known to me. Additional facts might lead me to modify certain observations, but the overall picture that is painted for each case appears to be relatively robust in the face of new evidence.

Each category of public opinion questions will briefly be reviewed to give the reader an overview of the potential richness and complexity of the public opinion data that is often available on military operations.

**Awareness, Salience, and Importance**

It is of interest to understand how closely the public is following a military operation, and how important they consider it in comparison to other national policy issues, so as to be able to gauge its relative importance on the “worry budget” of members of the public.
Military interventions by the U.S. typically are dramatic events, a fact that does not go unnoticed either by the media or the public. Accordingly, the level of media and public attention paid to a situation typically increases at the time of deployment. After the initial deployment, there are a number of factors that can influence the level of media, public and congressional attention, which will be described shortly.

News organizations often ask public opinion questions that help to assess the public’s awareness and level of interest in the intervention, and the importance it is being given, so that editors have a basis for better ensuring that news reporting is focused on issues in which the public has an interest. These questions can include the following:

- **How Closely the Operation Is Being Followed.** Some polling organizations ask respondents how closely they are following news on various issues, including proposed or ongoing military interventions.

- **Most Important News.** Also asked are rather open-ended questions about what news stories were considered the most important stories of the last month. In January 1993, 51 percent said that the U.S. deployment to Somalia was the most important news event of the last month.

- **Most Important Issue or Problem.** Finally, a number of polling organizations frequently ask the respondent to identify the most important issue or problem facing the country.

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172 Media reporting levels on a country typically increase dramatically when U.S. forces are deployed there.

173 Such questions are often asked by Princeton Survey Research Associates (PSRA) on behalf of the Times/Mirror news organization, to help construct their "news interest index."

174 In September 1993—the month before the deaths in Mogadishu—20 percent of those polled were following the Somalia situation very closely, and 42 percent were following it somewhat closely. PSRA and Times/Mirror, 9/9-15/93.

175 PSRA for Times/Mirror, in a 1/3-6/93 poll.

175 Another variant is to ask the respondent to identify the most important international foreign policy problem or issue. For these questions, Somalia, for example, never received a mention from more than five percent.
the course of the Korean and Vietnam Wars, for example, the wars came to be considered the most important issue by a majority.

As might be expected, mentions tend to increase at the time of highly-visible military interventions, and when significant events take place over the course of the intervention. As will later be shown, it appears that the public become more attentive to a situation when U.S. servicemen are engaged in combat operations, and when the public is cued either that the costs have changed in a significant fashion, or that important opinion leaders have begun to criticize the intervention.

Potential Benefits

It is important to understand the nature and level of the interests perceived by the public to be at stake—whether described as "national" or "vital" interests, or of a "moral" or "humanitarian" nature—because such an understanding can assist us in gauging the level of benefits or worth of completing the mission.

Questions are often asked regarding the nature and degree of U.S. interests in a situation. Some of these questions can assist in establishing the extent to which what might be thought of as "vital" or "national" interests are perceived to be involved, while others can lead to an understanding of the degree to which "moral" or "humanitarian" interests are perceived to be involved. Among the many types of questions that can assist in assessing public attitudes regarding interests are the following.

- **Direct Questions About Vital or National Interests.** Some questions plainly ask whether U.S. vital or national interests are at stake in a situation,\textsuperscript{176} or whether the U.S. has a great deal at stake in what happens there.\textsuperscript{177} Other questions

\textsuperscript{176}For example, ABC News twice asked in early October 1993 (just after the deaths in Mogadishu): "Do you think America's vital interests are at stake in Somalia or not?" The percentage responding no varied only slightly, from 69 to 73 percent.

\textsuperscript{177}Time/CNN asked in October 1993 and February 1994 "Do you think the United States has a great deal at stake in what happens in each of
sometimes state that the U.S. has no interests and ask whether
the respondent agrees.\textsuperscript{178}

- \textbf{Indirect Questions About Such Interests.} Some questions get at
the nature of U.S. interests less directly, for example, by
giving cues to respondents that national interests might be
involved, and then asking whether the respondent finds the
argument convincing.\textsuperscript{179}

- \textbf{U.S. Responsibility to Act.} There are sometimes questions that
ask whether it is a U.S. responsibility to act, often after
cueing the respondent (e.g., of a humanitarian disaster and the
unique capabilities of the U.S. to redress it).\textsuperscript{180} This type
of question evidently aims to get at the moral bases for U.S.
action.

\textsuperscript{178}The University of Maryland’s Program for International Policy
Attitudes asked the following question in a 10/15-18/93 survey: “Somalia
is far away from the United States. We don’t really have any interests
there. Therefore it does not make sense for us to put our troops in
harm’s way or to spend money to try to solve the situation there,” and
asked whether the respondent found the argument very convincing (26
percent did), somewhat convincing (23 percent), just slightly convincing
(19 percent), or not at all convincing (31 percent).

\textsuperscript{179}For example, in a 10/15-18/93 survey, PIPA cued the respondent
with the following argument regarding U.S. interests in Somalia: “Oil
shipping on nearby sea lanes is vital to our national security. We
still have a strong interest in seeing that chaos in that region does
not spiral out of control. Staying in the J.N. operation serves not
only the Somalia, but our own national interest.” It then asked how
convincing the respondent found the argument. Nineteen percent found it
very convincing, 35 percent found it somewhat convincing, 23 percent
found it just slightly convincing, and 20 percent found it not at all
convincing. This was not, however, an argument that was heard as a
justification for the intervention.

\textsuperscript{180}For example, CBS News/New York Times asked the following
question during their 6/21-24/93 poll: “Do you think the United States
has a responsibility to do something about the situation in Somalia, or
doesn’t the United States have this responsibility?” Fifty percent
thought the U.S. had a responsibility, while 38 percent did not.
Prospects for Success

Expectations regarding the probability of success are also important in determining the level of support, because the probability of success helps to determine the expected benefits of the operation. Questions are sometimes asked whether respondents expect that the operation will be successful.\textsuperscript{181} Another formulation was used during the Vietnam War: respondents were occasionally asked whether they thought the U.S. was making progress, standing still, or losing ground. As will be discussed in a moment, the expected duration can also be a reasonable indicator of the evaluation of progress.

Expected and Actual Costs and Duration

The expected and actual costs and duration also figure into support for the intervention.

- Regarding Costs. There are several types of question that are sometimes asked that can assist the analyst in understanding public expectations regarding casualties. During the Gulf War, for example, several different types of questions were posed that asked the respondent how many casualties the respondent expected.\textsuperscript{182} Somewhat less direct questions are also sometimes asked regarding whether the respondent believes that the U.S. "will become bogged down" in the operation, or whether the situation will become a "quagmire." Similarly vague, polling organizations will sometimes ask whether the respondent

\textsuperscript{181} For example, in a 12/4-6/92 poll, Gallup asked "Regarding the situation in Somalia, how confident are you that each of the following will happen? Are you very confident, somewhat confident, not too confident, or not at all confident that: ...the U.S. effort will succeed in ending widespread famine." Fourteen percent indicated they were very confident, 35 percent were somewhat confident, 28 percent were not too confident, and 18 percent were not at all confident.

\textsuperscript{182} See Mueller (1994b) for an inventory of these questions. For example, Gallup repeatedly asked: "If the U.S. takes (Now that the U.S. has taken) military action against Iraq, do you think that the number of Americans killed and injured will be...Less than 100; Several hundred; Up to a thousand; Several thousand; Tens of thousands; Don't know." These questions will be examined more closely in the next section.
believes—or is concerned—that the operation will become "like Vietnam" or "like the Gulf War."

- Regarding Other Costs. Questions are also sometimes asked about the likely or actual financial costs of the intervention.

- Regarding Duration. Respondents are occasionally asked rather direct questions about how long they expect an intervention to last, for example, how long "U.S. troops" will remain.\textsuperscript{183} Some of the more ambiguous questions just mentioned in regard to casualties (e.g., "bogged down", "quagmire") are also suggestive of a long-term intervention.\textsuperscript{184}

**Support Questions**

There are a number of types of questions that can be used to assess public support, each of which provides a somewhat different indicator of support. Among them are:

- **Support for a Prospective Intervention.** Before an intervention—and especially when the situation has been building for some time—polling organizations will often ask whether the respondent favors or opposes the use of U.S. forces.\textsuperscript{185} There are often many variations in wording and question structure that may affect the levels of approval (a point to which I will return shortly).

- **Support Given Hypothesized Casualties and/or Duration.** A subset of the questions just described asks whether the respondent would support the operation given different numbers of lives lost, and/or given different amounts of time to

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\textsuperscript{183}For example, Gallup/Newsweek asked the following questions twice: "Do you think U.S. troops will still be in Somalia:...three months from now?...six months from now?...a year from now?...longer than that?"

\textsuperscript{184}Questions on duration can also be taken to be a measure of progress or the probability of success.

\textsuperscript{185}For example, this question was asked roughly 50 times from 1992 to 1994 regarding a potential U.S. intervention in Bosnia, and a great many times regarding Haiti.
conclude the conflict. Such questions were asked a number of times prior to the beginning of the Gulf War.\textsuperscript{186}

- Approval of the Decision to Intervene. Once the intervention has begun, respondents may sometimes be asked whether they approve of the decision to use U.S. military forces.

- Support for Current Military Involvement. Once a military operation is underway, polling organizations may also ask whether the respondent approves of U.S. forces being involved in the operation at that time.\textsuperscript{187}

- "Mistake" Questions. "Mistake" questions ask whether the respondent thinks it was a mistake for the U.S. to have gotten involved in a conflict, although the wording can take a number of different forms.\textsuperscript{188} A "no" response to the mistake question has been used an indicator of support for a war or operation, while a "yes" response has been taken to indicate opposition.

- Presidential "Handling" Questions. There is also a question commonly asked over the course of military operations that asks the respondent if she approves or disapproves of the way the president (or some other actor such as the Congress or United Nations) has been "handling" the situation in which U.S. forces are involved.

- "Worth" Questions. Of special relevance in understanding public attitudes toward casualties, polling organizations during or after an operation will also sometimes ask whether an operation has been worth the loss of life and other costs, given what has been achieved.\textsuperscript{189}

\textsuperscript{186}See Mueller (1994b) for a comprehensive collection of public opinion data on the Gulf War.

\textsuperscript{187}This was asked five times for the Somalia operation.

\textsuperscript{188}Mueller (1973), especially in Chapter Three, makes use of "mistake" questions as an indicator of support for the Korean and Vietnam Wars. Another variant of the "mistake" question asks whether the U.S. was "right" or "wrong" in getting involved.

\textsuperscript{189}In a 22/6/92 survey, CBS News asked: "Given the possible loss of American lives and the other costs involved, do you think sending U.S. troops to make sure food gets to the people of Somalia is worth the cost, or not?" Sixty-six percent said it was worth the possible loss of life, while 20 percent said it was not.
When all of the data series show an overall rising or falling trend and exhibit the same ephemeral rises or declines, interpretation may be somewhat easy. But as might be expected, while these different support questions often do move together, they don't always. When they don't, careful attention needs to be paid to differences in wording that may help to explain these differences.

Assessing the Level of Commitment

In past military interventions, and especially after support has turned against the interventions, polling organizations will frequently ask whether the respondent prefers to increase or escalate the level of commitment, or reduce or withdraw the commitment. These questions can take a great many forms, including the following:

- **Escalation Questions.** Some questions ask whether the respondent would prefer that the U.S. increase or escalate the commitment (e.g., with additional forces, with more extensive combat operations), without specifying the purpose of the escalation; these often tend to receive lower levels of support than questions that specify the purpose of the escalation. Although the vagueness of the concept of escalation has been given an excellent treatment, most analysts of public opinion fail to be clear in their meaning of the term. Among the questions that suggest varying interpretations of the term are the following: questions about pursuing a more ambitious objective, increasing the number or types of forces, and increasing the tempo or lethality of operations.

- **Contingent Escalation Questions.** These are also questions that are asked that suggest escalation to achieve a particular objective, for example, to free U.S. servicemen held hostage.

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190 For example, over the course of the Somalia operation support as measured by the "mistake" question fell less than most other indicators of support; a likely interpretation is that the public felt that the original humanitarian operation had not been a mistake, even though the later nation-building and warlord-hunting were viewed less favorably once costs began to mount at the end of the summer of 1993.

or to punish an adversary. Paradoxically, sometimes escalation is actually instrumental to another end such as a withdrawal. In Somalia, for example, strikes to force the release of U.S. hostages received a great deal of support, but these strikes were clearly instrumental to an orderly withdrawal following the recovery of the hostages. Analysts have occasionally failed to make these sorts of important distinctions, and have been led to incorrect conclusions about what the data are saying. 122

* Withdrawal Questions. Also common (especially after a setback) are questions asking whether the respondent favors the withdrawal of U.S. forces. Again, wording can be very important in these questions—typically the shorter the time period for the withdrawal, the lower the support. In Somalia, for example, immediate withdrawal typically received much lower levels of support than withdrawal "as soon as possible," and this option often received lower support than "withdrawal in six months." Similar patterns are to be found in Vietnam. Analysts who assess the public's desire for withdrawal only on the basis of support for immediate withdrawal are therefore quite likely to misunderstand and underestimate the levels of public sentiment for withdrawal.

* Changing Exit Criteria. Questions that ask respondents what objectives should be completed before the U.S. withdraws can also provide an important gauge of the level of commitment. In Somalia, it seems that many came to feel that U.S. forces should withdraw once the humanitarian objective had been completed.

* Changing Preferences for Objectives. Similar to changing exit criteria are changes in preferences regarding the objectives that should be pursued. In Somalia, for example, by the late summer of 1993, majorities preferred a return to the

122 See Schwarz (1994). In short, this is a good example where attention to question wording is absolutely essential to correctly interpret the data.
humanitarian objective over continued pursuit of the nation-building or "warlord-hunting" objectives; in short, they indicated a desire for a less ambitious objective requiring a lower level of commitment.

Sub-Populations and Opinion Leaders

While the responses and attitudes of various sub-populations often move in parallel, there can be important differences in these attitudes. African-American women, for example, are typically less supportive of using force that white males. Liberals and conservatives seem to disagree substantially over the circumstances under which the use of force is justified.

An important distinction needs to be made, however, between opinion leaders, the "attentive" and "mass" public. There is ample evidence that opinion leaders (including the President, members of Congress and other political leaders, experts and commentators) have a substantial impact on public attitudes toward military interventions. There is a great deal of evidence that the attitudes of the mass public tend to lag and follow those of the leaders, with the most attentive members following most quickly.

Importantly, however, sub-populations of the public tend to lag different opinion leaders. As an illustration of Mueller (1973) suggested three different types of respondent in the Korean and Vietnam Wars:

- "Followers" tended to follow the President and/or U.S. government policy, and tend to support whatever policy is the current policy at the time. In Vietnam, "followers" tended to support escalation in bombing North Vietnam when that was U.S. government policy, and deescalation when that became policy.

- The attitudes of "partisans" tended to follow those of their party leaders; when their party leaders supported a course of action, partisans tended to follow.

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194 Haiti seems to provide something of an exception to this rule.
195 See McClosky (1964) and Zaller (1992) for two seminal studies on this matter.
From Mueller's description, "Believers" seemed to have been somewhat more independent and less predictable in that they did not consistently follow either the President or party leaders.

These descriptions are, of course, crude categorizations that Mueller used to make a more important point, namely that the attitudes of substantial proportions of the public can be predicted from the attitudes of political leaders. A consequence of this is that over the course of a military intervention, as political leaders become polarized, so too can the public. The analyst may often wish to examine sub-populations separately to better understand the diffusion of attitudes.

Other Influences on Public Attitudes

The public generally receive most of their information about military operations through the print and electronic media; even political actors such as the President communicate their messages through the media, for example, in prime-time addresses, or in weekly radio broadcasts. Congressmen and other elites are similarly covered by news programs when their views are newsworthy.

The processes that lead from information cues in the news to public attitudes are becoming reasonably well understood. There seems to be little doubt that there is a connection between the level of news reporting on a policy issue and the awareness and salience of the issue to the public. In fact, one commonly accepted view is that media informs the public what to think about, and therefore which issues are used to evaluate performance of policymakers. This has led some researchers to impute an important agenda-setting role to the media.

But as Mackuen and others have shown, in many issue areas, objective events (e.g., changes in the inflation rate) are a better explanatory variables of the public's perceived importance of an issue than the news media's reporting on that issue. In some areas, however, it is more difficult to specify the objective events that are associated

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with news reporting and changes in public awareness and salience. It seems sensible that except in those (hopefully few) cases where media reporting levels are completely distorted and therefore bear little relationship to the actual availability of events, media reporting levels are generally associated with some set of stimuli in the objective world. The consequence of all of this, of course, is that one needs to understand the levels of political and media activity, and the nature of the messages contained in this information stream, to understand the dynamics of public attitudes toward a military operation.

Limitations and Compensations

To properly interpret public opinion data regarding a military intervention, then, it is important to pay attention to a number of technical considerations:

- Question-wording and structure. Cues contained in the wording, and the shoe-horning of responses into a limited number of narrow categories, can affect response levels;
- Question-order and so-called "context effects," where the wording of questions that were asked prior to the question being analyzed may have affected responses to the current question;
- Sample size, which can increase the size of the error term around the polling result;
- The type of poll and its call-back procedures. For example, overnight polls with less strict call-back procedures can result in different response levels than longer-term surveys with stricter call-back procedures;
- Differences in the population being sampled. For example, a sample of voters may return a different result from a sample of the entire population;

From a substantive standpoint, the following are also very important:

- The sort of question that is being asked, and the type of insights that can (and cannot) be expected from it;
• The precise wording of the question, and how that wording differs from other questions of a roughly similar type;
• The questions that were not asked, and the consequent gaps in our ability to interpret public attitudes;
• The availability of questions that can shed light on or inform the proper interpretation of still other questions;
• The timing of questions, both in terms of the sorts of events that may have precipitated the asking of the questions, and the debates or policies that were ongoing at the time.

In his book on the Korean and Vietnam Wars, Mueller (1973) suggests two approaches to assessing public opinion: trend analysis of consistently worded polling questions over time, and the comparison of different questions to determine whether wording differences or important cues appear to be associated with differences in response levels.

A set of questions that use identical wording and structure and are asked of a comparable sample of the population two or more times can be treated as a time series, and this series can be examined to determine whether there is any trend over time (e.g., whether it is rising or falling). Because there may often be more than one question that is asked repeatedly, it is possible to have many different data series, one each for each question wording. In this case, while each series may appear to have a different natural or base level of respondents choosing a particular option, it is possible to examine whether all of the data series rise or fall together.\textsuperscript{197}

\textbf{CUEING AND INTERACTIONS}

No formal attempt was made to statistically analyze or model the cueing and interactions. Instead, a two-pronged effort was made to understand the processes by which policies or attitudes changed. The first was to identify events that, a priori, would have been expected to cue other actors, and examining the reactions, if any. The other was to

\textsuperscript{197} Mueller (1973) uses the musical metaphors of parallel fifths or different chords over time.
identify the periods in which activity levels increased dramatically, and then looking in more detail at the reporting stream to better understand what themes were being emphasized. While crude, this approach was a powerful one, in that the quantitative data assisted in focusing attention, while the qualitative data provided the richer historiographic context that was needed to understand what was being said and done.

CONCLUSIONS

The approach taken in this dissertation was to begin by constructing a rough history of each military intervention, and then looking both qualitatively and quantitatively at political, military, and media activity. This was followed by an analysis of the public opinion that was informed by this broader history, and the sorts of events that would, a priori, have been expected to affect public attitudes. In the analysis of the public opinion data, close attention was paid to wording and contextual factors such as timing so that the responses to differently worded questions could be assessed. The robustness of findings was tested by comparing responses to similar questions that nevertheless had differences in wording; to the extent that the result was unaffected by these wording differences, a finding was considered to be relatively robust. Multiple time series were also examined to attempt to identify which movements in these attitudes over time were robust, i.e., were reflected in multiple time series.

In conclusion, this is a complex analysis that relies upon many more sources than are often used, and upon quantitative indicators that are somewhat novel and innovative. The analysis that results is an eclectic and catholic one, and one that is based upon empirical work that is informed by more traditional methods of historical analysis.
PART 2: CASE STUDIES

Part Two provides the reader with six case studies that are assessed in a systematic and consistent fashion to examine the role of casualties in light of broader processes that were at work. Readers who found the discussion of the democratic conversation over ends and means a bit sketchy may want to examine the appendix before proceeding to the case studies.
2.1. THE SECOND WORLD WAR

The Second World War was "the good war"—it clearly involved tremendous stakes and a compelling moral cause, and pitted the U.S. and its principal allies against two adversaries with vast strategic aims and military capabilities that threatened the U.S. own. The war ultimately entailed total mobilization of the country against one adversary led by a fully demonized dictator (Hitler) and against another that had launched a sneak attack against Pearl Harbor after a prolonged crisis. There was, therefore, both a rational and a moral basis for action.

This section briefly describes some of the relevant public opinion data on the Second World War. The aim in this chapter is not to be comprehensive, but to provide evidence that the metaphor of an ends-means calculus embedded in a larger democratic conversation can be seen as easily in the public opinion data for this now 50-year-old war as in the more recent cases examined in this dissertation.198

WARTIME: AN OVERVIEW

Before describing public opinion on the war, I will provide a very brief chronology of U.S. participation in the war in the North African, European and Pacific theaters.199

198One of the best analyses of the domestic environment prior to and during the war can be found in O'Neill (1993), who weaves public opinion polling results into a larger narrative. Excellent analyses focusing on public opinion data before and during the war can be found in Jacob (1940), Cantril (1940, 1947), Cantril, Rugg and Williams (1940), Bruner (1943), and Page and Shapiro (1992a). Rather exhaustive compendia of war-era public opinion data from the Office of Public Opinion Research (OPOR), the American Institute for Public Opinion (The Gallup Organization), and Fortune magazine can be found in Public Opinion Quarterly during the war years, most of which appears to have been compiled in Cantril (1951); the AIPO data can also be found in Gallup (1972).

199The following is based largely upon the history of World War II found in U.S. Army (1989), pp. 473-528. Other excellent histories of the war can be found in Weigley (1973), pp. 269-359, Baxter (1993), and Smith (1993).
The European Theater

Early in the war, a strategic decision was made to give first priority to the European theater. In the first example of leadership and followship in the war, Table 2.1.1 shows that over the course of about three months about 25 percent of the public came to support the administration’s “Germany first” strategy.

Table 2.1.1
Preferences on Strategy, Spring 1942

<table>
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<tr>
<th>(%)</th>
<th>Put most of our effort into fighting Japan</th>
<th>Put most of our effort into fighting Germany</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
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(NORC, 3/28/42)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>(%)</th>
<th>Put most of our effort into fighting Japan</th>
<th>Put most of our effort into fighting Germany</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>Both</th>
<th>No answer</th>
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(NORC, 6/17/42)

The strategy that was settled upon was to initially focus on the rather sparse German forces in the North African littoral, and then to use a strengthened position in North Africa as a springboard for a move against the junior partner in the European Axis, Italy. While these operations in the Mediterranean were under way, a massive buildup of air, naval, and ground forces in England was undertaken in preparation for the invasion of France across the English Channel.

The North African Campaigns

The U.S. Army began its ground offensive against the European Axis with the invasion of North Africa in late 1942. The initial fighting was for the strategic littoral between Tunisia and Egypt that was controlled by Rommel's forces. On November 8, 1942, the U.S. Navy put U.S. Army forces ashore near Casablanca, while the Royal Navy landed
other U.S. troops near British forces near Oran and Algiers. Rommel responded with an offensive penetration at the Kasserine pass that was brought to a halt in late February 1943. By May 10, the last of some 275,000 Germans had surrendered. U.S. Army losses in the campaign were approximately 2,900.\textsuperscript{200}

The Italian Campaigns

With North Africa under Allied control, the battle for Europe began with the Sicily campaign in July 1943. The Allies achieved tactical surprise by landing in heavy weather on July 10, and after a final assault securing Messina on August 17, the Germans began to withdraw to the mainland. Allied losses were 22,000, while the Germans incurred probably 10,000 casualties and the Italians as many as 100,000.\textsuperscript{201}

With Sicily secured—and the resignation of Mussolini—the Allies faced newly reinforced German troops in Italy. In September 1943, Allied forces landed at Reggio, Taranto and Salerno, thereby beginning the Italian campaign. On September 15, the Germans began to withdraw and in early October, the Allies had taken Naples. In January 1944, Allied forces landed at Anzio but were then bottled-up by German forces, and nearly split by a German attack in February 1944. Allied forces regrouped over the winter and spring, and began a synchronized attack to break the Winter Line in May 1944. On June 4, 1944, U.S. troops entered Rome, but it was not until May 1945 that German forces in Italy’s Po River valley finally surrendered. In the meantime, the Allied forces tied down German troops so that they could not participate in the defense of France from an Allied invasion.

The Invasion of France and the Final European Campaigns

Two days after Rome was taken, on June 6, Allied forces began landing forces in Normandy, an operation made possible by the earlier successes of the anti-submarine and air campaigns.\textsuperscript{202} The Allies

\textsuperscript{200}Clodfelter (1992), p. 963.
\textsuperscript{201}U.S. Army (1989), p. 479.
\textsuperscript{202}The corner had been turned in the submarine campaign by April 1943, and by February 1944, the U.S. Army Air Force was able to match the thousand-plane raids of the Royal Air Force. U.S. Army (1989), pp. 483-4.
achieved tactical surprise through deception and another amphibious landing in heavy weather. By the end of the day, 50,000 U.S. troops had been brought ashore, and American casualties were much lighter than expected—approximately 6,500.203 There were close to a million men ashore by the end of June, but it was not until late July that Allied forces were able to break out of their hemmed in positions in Normandy. The First Army began its attack on July 25, and exploiting a breach in the German line, set up conditions for the rout of the Germans in France by Patton’s Third Army. On August 15, the Allies staged an invasion of southern France, and within days the port cities of Toulon and Marseilles had been seized, and the Germans had begun to withdraw. Paris was soon in rebellion against the German occupying force, and on August 25, was entered by supporting Allied forces.

With the Germans in retreat from France, attention turned to the West. Including Antwerp, the Moselle and Meuse Rivers, the Vosges Mountains in Alsace, and the Ardennes and Heurtgen forests. On September 17, 1944, a combined offensive against German forces in the Netherlands was undertaken, but failed to achieve its rather ambitious objectives.

By December 1944, the Germans had managed to rebuild their forces during an Allied pause in operations, and on December 16 launched a major counteroffensive that came to be called the Battle of the Bulge. The offensive was concentrated in the Eifel region opposite the Ardennes forest in Belgium and Luxembourg, and exploited thinly manned U.S. positions along a 60-mile front, achieving surprise against the VII and V Corps. The Germans made gains very quickly against the U.S. forces in the region. After a month of hard fighting, there were 75,000 U.S. casualties and nearly 100,000 German casualties, with little to show for the action apart from a bulge in the front lines.204 By the end of January 1945, however, U.S. forces had recovered the ground that had been lost, and defeated a smaller German attack in Alsace, which effectively expended the remaining German reserves.

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The Allies launched an offensive across the Rhine shortly after the Soviets launched their offensive in January 1945. The Germans lost ground and troops as they undertook delaying actions. By March 1945, Allied forces were crossing the Rhine river, and by April had fanned out to encircle the Ruhr, and overwhelming remaining German defenses. With the Russians within about 40 miles of Berlin, the western Allied forces made for Berlin to link up with Russian forces, which finally occurred on April 25 near the town of Torgau. The linkage having been made, wholesale German surrender followed. With Hitler dead, Berlin under Soviet control, and the German military no longer an effective organization, the German government surrendered on May 7.

By the end of the war in Europe, over 163,000 U.S. servicemen had been killed in battle.

The Pacific Theater

The second theater of operation for the U.S. was the Pacific. With the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and the invasion of the Philippines and Wake Island, Japan temporarily neutralized U.S. striking power, and moved to occupy Malaya, the Netherlands Indies, the Philippines, Wake Island, Guam, the Gilbert Islands, Thailand, and Burma. By early 1942, the Japanese had established their intended defensive perimeter: the Kurile Islands, Wake, the Marianas, the Carolines, and the Marshalls and Gilberts to Rabaul on New Britain, and then westward to New Guinea, and including the Indies, Malaya, Thailand, and Burma.

The Japanese began their first attacks against the Philippines on December 8, 1941, with a strike against Clark Air Field, achieving complete tactical surprise and destroying about one hundred U.S. military aircraft. In the next weeks, the Japanese made a number of small landings with about 6,000 troops, followed by a major landing force on December 22. General MacArthur led his forces in a number of delaying actions to the Bataan peninsula, which resulted in the first of several major Japanese attacks on January 7, 1942. After withdrawing further down the peninsula and repulsing a number of other offensives, the U.S. defenses finally succumbed on April 9; 70,000 surrendered, including 12,000 Americans, and 5,000 American and Filipino soldiers.
died in the Bataan campaign. Another 7,000 to 10,000, including over 2,300 U.S. military personnel, died in what came to be called the Bataan death march, where prisoners of war were marched 90 miles under exceedingly cruel conditions. Following the Japanese Bataan campaign, they secured Corregidor Island in Manila Bay following heavy shelling in April and early May. The Japanese landed on Corregidor on May 5, and U.S. forces surrendered the next day with about 2,000 killed or wounded and another 11,000 taken prisoner.

The strategy that was ultimately settled upon was a two-pronged one. The first prong involved a southern approach through the Solomon Islands, New Guinea, and the Philippines with the aim of reaching Japan's Ryuku Islands, and involved amphibious landings of rather large Army and Marine forces supported by air power and naval gunfire. The second prong was dominated by naval forces, and involved large-scale naval battles and an “island-hopping” strategy through the central Pacific—Wake Island, the Marshalls, Carolines, and Marianas, again converging on the Ryukus.205

The battle of the Coral Sea in early May 1942 gave the U.S. its first strategic victory over Japan and the battle over Midway Island in early June 1942 turned the tide of the Pacific war and broke the Japanese string of victories. The Japanese lost four fleet aircraft carriers in the battle of Midway, as well as one heavy cruiser and perhaps 275 aircraft.

Guadalcanal and Tulagi were the first offensives of the war. On August 7, 1942, the 1st Marine Division landed on Guadalcanal and other islands in the southern Solomons. A series of sea and air battles ensued before the island was secured in November, following the addition of a second Marine division, two Army divisions, and one separate regiment. With the conclusion of the fighting, in February 1943, U.S. forces began construction of major air and logistic bases for island-hopping.

Meanwhile, General MacArthur had begun an offensive in the Papua campaign. The Japanese had pushed toward Port Moresby in New Guinea in

205 In fact, the early version of the plan for the central Pacific had Formosa (Taiwan) as an objective before reaching the Ryukus.
the late summer of 1942 and by mid-September were only twenty miles from securing their objectives. Australian and U.S. forces drove the Japanese back, and defeated the Japanese after four months of hard fighting.

In November 1943, Tarawa and Makin in the Gilbert Islands came under attack by U.S. Navy shelling. On November 20, U.S. Marines attempted a landing but found their tractors grounded several hundred yards short of shore and under heavy fire; nearly 1,500 of the 5,000 Marines in the first wave were casualties in the operation. In some of the bloodiest fighting of the war, the nearly 19,000 U.S. Marines secured the island over the next several days, after beating back suicide attacks on the night of November 22-23. Of the more than 4,800 Japanese troops who had occupied Tarawa, only about 100 prisoners were taken, and only 17 of these were combat soldiers.

The Marshall Islands were secured over January 29-February 7, 1944, the Japanese naval base at Truk in the Carolines was attacked on February 17-18, the Marianas were finally secured over July 25-August 2, and the Palau Islands fell in late November 1944.

The campaign for the reconquest of the Philippines began in late October 1944 with the assault on Leyte. By late December Leyte had been effectively retaken, by March Corregidor and Manila had been taken, and by August 1945, Mindanao and Luzon had fallen. All told, approximately 13,700 U.S. servicemen were killed in the fighting in the Philippines.

After heavy air attack by U.S. Army Air Force bombers, Iwo Jima was invaded in February 1945 by about 30,000 Marines. Losses were high in the fighting that followed—the battle was the bloodiest in the Marines' 200-year history, and bloodier than any other battle of the war except the Battle of the Bulge and Okinawa. During the main battle alone, nearly 7,000 Marines died in combat.

The Battle for Okinawa was perhaps the greatest battle of the Pacific campaign, and according to Cleese (1992): "the costliest in lives for both the United States and the Japanese empire." During April 1945, eight waves waded ashore at Okinawa, and the operation was not concluded until late June, at a cost of nearly 7,400 in battle deaths,
and tens of thousands injured or stricken with disease. A single Marine regiment—the 29th Marine Regiment—had an 81 percent loss rate.

The final operations of the Pacific war in July and August 1945 were largely air operations against the Japanese coast involving U.S. bombers and naval air. The war with Japan was, of course, ended after two atomic bombs had been dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

All told, the Pacific war cost over 54,000 U.S. battle deaths, about a third of those incurred in the European theater.

CHANGING BENEFITS, PROSPECTS, AND LEADERSHIP SUPPORT

If there had been any doubts that a war with Japan and Germany was justified, they were allayed for most of the public by the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, and the subsequent German and Italian declarations of war on the United States, triggered by their treaties with Japan. A sense of the dramatic increase in support for the war once under way can be gained from Figure 2.1.1, which plots a number of questions on support for U.S. involvement in the war from early 1938 to the end of 1945—support increased from 20 percent or lower to about 80 percent.296 The remainder of this section will describe the elements of the public's support calculus—expected and actual benefits, prospects for success, and costs.

Benefits

Despite the bad memories of the Great War and the aversion to getting involved in another war in Europe, as events played out in Europe, the perceived benefits of the war—such as they were—can be summarized in four classes: blunting the grave and growing threat to the U.S. and its allies, rolling back the Japanese and German gains, establishing an objective of unconditional surrender, and punishing Germany and Japan for atrocities and other moral outrages.

296 An exception can be found to the consistent 80 percent support in the question that asked respondents whether the war had been a mistake: in early 1944 (before the invasion of Normandy), those saying that it had not been a mistake ranged from a low of about 55 percent to about 80 percent.
Figure 2.1.1 - Support for the Second World War

Blunting the Perceived Threat

Table 2.1.2 provides a sense of the sorts of consequences that were envisioned by the public if Germany were to win the war in Europe. While slightly less than half thought that Germany would attack the U.S., majorities foresaw a variety of other important negative consequences of a German victory.

Much of the changing attitudes toward support for England can be understood in terms of the fact that England was viewed as a bulwark against Nazi aggression—if England were defeated, the U.S. would have to shoulder a greater burden to defeat Germany. Table 2.1.3 presents data from late 1940 and 1941 showing that two out of three saw the country's own security intimately tied to England's ability to prevail against the Germans, and that three out of four respondents viewed a German victory as having quite grave consequences.

Judging by the data in Table 2.1.4, the consequences of defeat were viewed even more gravely by 1942 than they were in 1941.
Table 2.1.2
Consequences of a German Victory, July 1940

If Germany should win the war, which of these statements do you believe would be true, which false? (Percent true) (Fortune, July 1940)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>She will try to extend her influence in South America</td>
<td>77.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She will interfere seriously with our vital interests in foreign trade</td>
<td>73.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A victorious Germany would mean the end of religious freedom in Europe</td>
<td>65.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She will try to seize territory on our side of the ocean</td>
<td>53.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A German victory would be followed by world revolution and confusion</td>
<td>57.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She will actually attack us on our own territory as soon as possible</td>
<td>45.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany will join with Japan in an effort to dominate the world</td>
<td>42.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of German attack would make us give up most of our liberties to dictatorship here</td>
<td>27.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It will bring Europe under a strong and efficient government</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the long run it will make for a more peaceful Europe</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It will bring about a fairer distribution of world's wealth and resources</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rolling Back German and Japanese Gains

There were also benefits to be had in rectifying the unacceptable status quo; Page and Shapiro (1992a) noted the following change of opinion:

In mid-November 1941, three-quarters of the public (76% of the respondents who offered opinions) told OPR that they favored peace "today" on the basis of Britain "keeping the British empire as it now stands" and Germany "holding the countries she has conquered so far." In the middle of December, however, just after the Pearl Harbor attack and the declarations of war, only 10% of those with opinions told OPR that they would favor peace "now" if Hitler offered peace to all countries "on the basis of not going any farther, but of leaving matters as they are now." Fully 90% opposed such a
status quo peace, suggesting a complete and enduring reversal of opinion. In February and again in March 1942, 92% took the same position.207

Table 2.1.3
Perceived Threat, 1940-41

Do you think our country's future safety depends on England winning this war?
(AIPO, 12/18-23/40)
68% Yes
26 No
6 No opinion

If Hitler wins the war, what do you think will be the effect on the future well-being of this country?
(Fortune, 4/41)
73.6% Very serious
14.4 A little serious
5.2 Not serious
0.5 Good thing
6.3 Don't know

If Germany wins the war in Europe, how do you think the peace that will be established by Hitler will affect the United States? Do you think it will:
(NORC, 11/41)
74.0% Be quite harmful to us
6.9 Be a little harmful to us
6.9 Not make much difference to us
0.6 Be a little helpful to us
0.7 Be quite helpful to us

Achieving the Objectives of the War

Beyond a return to an acceptable status quo, that which presumably existed prior to Japanese and German aggressions, was the question of clarity about and preferences for the objectives of the war.

Not surprisingly, clarity about the war seems to have been associated with perceptions of the quality of the information on the war respondents were receiving.

### Table 2.1.4
An Increased Threat by 1942

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you think that if Germany and Japan should win this war they would keep their armies over here to police the United States? (OPOR, 3/26/42)</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suppose Germany defeated this country. I would like to get some of your ideas about what the Germans might do to us. (OPOR, 7/15/42)</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think they would keep an army over here to police us?</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think they would make us pay for the cost of the war?</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think they would kill some of our business and political leaders?</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think most of us would have to work for the Nazis instead of for ourselves?</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think they would take a lot of our food away from us so they would starve most of us?</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2.1.2 shows that from early 1943 to mid-1944, the percentage who were clear about what the U.S. was fighting for was closely associated with the belief that the government was giving the public
enough information, and that it was trying to present war news accurately. This seems to suggest that "sugar-coating" of the news did not in the least improve the public's understanding of the war's aims.

![Graph showing the percentage of people with different views on government's actions and war clarity.]

**Figure 2.1.2 - Clarity of Objectives and Information**

There was a lack of clarity about the purpose of the war among a non-trivial segment of the population as late as December 1942. This poll followed U.S. successes in the Pacific in the Coral Sea in May, and at Midway in June. The battle for Guadalcanal was underway at the time of the poll, and the campaign for North Africa had just begun in November. The figure shows that nearly three out of ten were unclear what the U.S. was fighting for, and that percentage seems to have increased by mid-1944.\(^{208}\)

Figure 2.1.3 shows the relationship between economic status and clarity about what the war was about in December 1942.

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\(^{208}\)In its 12/4–9/42 poll, Gallup asked: "Do you feel that you have a clear idea of what the war is all about—that is, what we are fighting for?" Sixty-eight percent responded affirmatively, while 32 percent responded negatively.
Figure 2.1.3 - Clarity of What War Is About by Economic Status, December 1942

As can be seen, as economic status increased, a higher percentage of respondents indicated that they had a clear idea of what the war was about. If we can use economic status as a crude surrogate for information level,\textsuperscript{229} this suggests, as would be expected, those who have the highest information levels are also those who are most clear about the purposes of the war.\textsuperscript{228}

As early as 1942-3, over eight in ten were unwilling to settle for a status quo peace, as can be seen in Table 2.1.5. It should be little surprise, then, that majorities came to support the war aim of

\textsuperscript{228} Unfortunately, there were no data showing the relationship between information levels, partisanship, and clarity about the war.

\textsuperscript{229} An interesting hypothesis, yet to be tested but seemingly plausible, is that when the mass public is partitioned by information level, the attitudes of the higher information level members of the public most closely approximate opinion leaders, i.e., the higher information level members of the public may in fact be the opinion leaders. This would allow analysts to view opinion leaders as being part of a continuum, rather than as an entirely distinct group.
unconditional surrender in both theaters of the war, announced by
President Roosevelt at the Casablanca Conference in January of 1943. 211

Table 2.1.5
Peace As Things Are Now? 1942-43

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>12% Favor</th>
<th>84 Oppose</th>
<th>4 Don't know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NORC, 8/21/42</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NORC, 11/27/42</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NORC, 6/18/43</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Page and Shapiro (1992a) have noted that by 1945, many Americans
had escalated their war aims. The decision to demand an unconditional
surrender from both adversaries probably also helped to clarify for many
the precise goals of the war, and may very well have contributed to the
perception of higher benefits than an outcome that left Japan and
Germany unpunished. Table 2.1.6 provides data showing the high level of
support that unconditional surrender received—three out of four or more
respondents appeared to be set on the complete defeat of Germany and
Japan.

211 See O'Neill (1993), pp. 178-181, for a good discussion of the
circumstances under which unconditional surrender was selected as the
Allies' war aim.
Table 2.1.6
Support for Unconditional Surrender, 1944-45

Do you think we should demand an unconditional surrender from Germany before we stop fighting, or not? (NORC, 2/44)
81% Yes
10 No
1 Don't allow surrender
8 Don't know

Do you approve or disapprove of requiring unconditional surrender of our enemy? (AIPO, 1/31/45)
75% Approve
12 Disapprove
13 Undecided

If Japan offered to make peace now, should we try to work out peace terms, or should we go on fighting until the Japanese armed forces are completely defeated? (AIPO, 2/20/45)
78% Go on fighting
18 Work out terms
4 No opinion

Do you think the peace treaty on Germany should be more severe than the treaty at the end of the last war? (AIPO, 5/15/45)
90% More
3 Less
7 No opinion

Japan may offer to surrender and call her soldiers home provided we agree not to send an army of occupation to her home islands. Do you think we should accept such a peace offer if we get the chance, or fight on until we have completely beaten her on the Japanese homeland? (Fortune, 6/45)
84.1% Beat her on homeland
9.5 Accept peace offer
6.4 Don't know

Moral Benefits
Finally, the perceived justness of the war with Japan and Germany was also likely to have increased over time, with the accumulation of a litany of grievances beginning with the rape of Nanjing, to reports of
such horrors as the Bataan death march, the holocaust, and the torture of U.S. prisoners of war.212

There is little doubt that majorities of the public viewed the Japanese and German military elites as deserving of strict punishment. Table 2.1.7 provides a chilling account of the depth of hatred for those in Germany and Japan who had prosecuted the war.

Table 2.1.7
Preferred Treatment of Japanese and German Military Elites, 1944-45

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>After the war, do you think the Japanese military leaders should be punished in any way? (AIPO, 11/17-22/44)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>88% Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 No opinion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When asked how they should be punished, typical responses were: "We should string them up and cut little pieces off them—one piece at a time"; "Torture them to a slow and awful death"; "Put them in a tank and suffocate them"; "Kill them, but be sure to torture them first, the way they have tortured our boys."

What do you think should be done with Gestapo agents and storm troopers after the war? (AIPO, 5/18-23/45)

| 45% Quickly destroy them -- "kill them...hang them...wipe them off the face of the earth" are typical replies |

Preferences for harsh treatment were not restricted to Japanese and German leaders, however, as can be seen in Table 2.1.8. When asked to evaluate the cruelty of the German and Japanese people, it seems that both were seen as having been complicit, but majorities of the public thought the Japanese to have been far more cruel. While only about three in ten respondents thought the German people knew entirely about mistreatment of prisoners in Germany, six in ten thought the Japanese had been complicit in their approval of such treatment. And when asked

which people were "more cruel at heart," the Japanese were considered to have been worse by a four to one margin.

**Table 2.1.8**

Moral Culpability of Germans and Japanese, May 1945

To what extent do you think the German people have approved of the killing and starving of prisoners in Germany—entirely, partly, or not at all?

- 31% Entirely
- 51 Partly
- 4 Not at all
- 3 German people didn't know
- 5 No opinion

To what extent do you think the Japanese people have approved of the killing and starving of prisoners—entirely, partly, or not at all?

- 63% Entirely
- 25 Partly
- 2 Not at all
- 4 Japanese people didn't know
- 6 No opinion

Which people do you think are more cruel at heart—the Germans or Japanese?

- 82% Japanese
- 18 Germans


Beyond requiring unconditional surrender, preferences regarding how the two societies should be treated after the war differed somewhat, as can be seen in Table 2.1.9. Although the wording and structure of the two questions did differ (which means caution should be used in making such comparisons), only 36 percent chose one of the first two options for Japan, while 54 percent chose these more lenient options for Germany. The 12 percent who chose "kill all Japanese people" had no analogue in the question on Germany.

This section has thus far shown that the perceived benefits of a victory against Germany and Japan seemed to be quite high, and probably grew over the course of the war: the consequences of a loss seemed to be much graver in 1942 than in earlier years; the objectives of the war
most likely became more clear when the objective of an unconditional surrender was announced, an objective that was preferred to a negotiated settlement; and the atrocities and other moral outrages during the course of the war gave majorities a strong desire for vengeance.

Table 2.1.9

Preferred Treatment of Defeated Japanese and Germans, 1944-45

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What do you think we should with Japan as a country, after the war? (AIFO, 11/17-22/44)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8% Rehabilitate, reeducate,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 Supervise and control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33 Destroy as political entity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Kill all Japanese people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Miscellaneous, no opinion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What do you think we should with Germany as a country? (AIFO, 5/4-9/45)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8% Be lenient, rehabilitate, educate, encourage trade, start afresh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46 Supervise and control, disarm, eliminate Nazis, control industries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34 Treat very severely, destroy as political entity, cripple her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Miscellaneous, undecided</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Prospects for Success

Changing prospects for success are important because the expected benefits of a war can be thought of as the simple product of the probability of success and the perceived benefits, just described. The simple model of ends and means predicts that all else equal, as the prospects for success fall so too will support, but when the prospects for success are quite sanguine, support will remain robust.

Initial Expectations

I will begin with a brief discussion of the expectations about the prospects for the war. The reason for this is quite simple—support that is based upon expectations of an easy victory may quickly erode if the war turns out to be longer and far more difficult to end than was initially expected.
The reader will recall that roughly eight out of ten or more initially expected the U.S. to emerge victorious from the war. But how long and difficult a war was expected? In fact, it appears that the expected duration of the war—as much an index of hope and wishful thinking as sober prediction—varied greatly across polls done at the beginning of the war.

Table 2.1.10 shows that expectations about the length of the war changed very quickly after Pearl Harbor: on December 10, 1941 (before President Roosevelt’s declaration of war against Japan), only 21 percent thought that a prospective war with Japan would be a long one, but 50 percent polled immediately after the announcement, and 53 percent polled in February 1942 expected a long war.

Table 2.1.10

Initial Expectations of Duration of War with Japan, December 10, 1941

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If the United States goes to war against Japan, do you think it will be a long war, or a short one? (AIPO, 12/10/41)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Do you think the war against Japan will be a long war, or a short one? (AIPO, 12/10/41)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Long</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Do you think the war with Japan will be a long war, or a short one? (Fortune, February 1942)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Long</td>
<td>52.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short</td>
<td>32.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The December 1941 Fortune magazine poll revealed that the median respondent (the respondent at the 50th percentile) expected the war to last between two and five years, and as Table 2.1.11 shows, polling

In December 1941, Fortune asked: "Regardless of what you hope, how long do you think the war will last?" Nine-tenths of one percent
by NORC in late December showed that two out of three respondents expected a long war, with the median respondent expecting somewhere between 25 months and three years.\textsuperscript{224}

Table 2.1.11

Initial Expected Duration, December 1941

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Long</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depends</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

About how short? About how long? Asked of 89% of sample who thought that the war would be long or short.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under six months</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 months to 1 year</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 months to 2 years</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 months to 3 years</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 5 years</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: NORC, 12/24/41.

Changing Expectations About Duration

As a result of the ebb and flow of events on the battlefield, reports of success or failure, and following the pace at which ground was being gained, public expectations changed regarding the length of the war.

thought it would last less than six months. 4.5 percent said six months to one year, 14.5 percent said one to two years, 37.8 percent said two to five years, 9.7 percent said five to ten years, and 2.7 percent said ten years or more.

\textsuperscript{224}Other polls revealed a spread of responses. Although there were some slight differences in wording, the 1/5/42 NORC poll also placed the median response at the bottom end of 25 months to three years, the 1/6/42 AIDP poll placed the median response at 2.16 years, and the 1/28/42 NORC poll placed the median response near the top end of 25 months to three years.
The expected duration would be expected to shorten when progress was perceived to be made, and lengthen after setbacks or the absence of progress. Figure 2.1.4 presents data on expectations regarding the expected length of the war, including both the European and Pacific theaters.

![Graph showing expected duration of war, 1942-43](image)

**Figure 2.1.4 - Expected Duration of War, 1942-43**

The figure captures the deep pessimism in the summer of 1942, which seems to have recovered by the end of the year, with the launching of the North Africa campaign in November, and the successes in the Pacific in the Coral Sea and at Midway, the latter of which was the turning point of the Pacific war.

The figure shows that the percentage expecting a war lasting two years or less (the solid black line with black boxes denoting data points) fell in the early spring of 1942 but recovered by about June. The second series shows that the percentage expecting a relatively short war of less than two years increased substantially in late 1942 or early 1943, and then declined somewhat by the late summer of 1943. By contrast, those expecting a war two years or longer in duration (the
dashed black line with open circles as data points) increased in early 1942, fall, and then increased for most of the summer and fall. The percentage expecting a longer war declined in late 1942, and then increased gradually after bottoming out in early 1943.

Figure 2.1.5 presents expectations about the probable length of the war against Germany. It shows a see-sawing in expectations for a short war of one year or less (the solid black line with black boxes denoting data points).

![Graph showing expected duration of war against Germany, 1942-44]

Figure 2.1.5 - Expected Duration of War Against Germany, 1942-44

The percentage expecting a short war seems to have increased initially to nearly 70 percent by the middle of 1943, following the successes at El Alamein, Tunisia, and Sicily, and then tumbled from late 1943 to the spring of 1944, when Allied forces were stalled at the Winter Line after landing at Anzio. Those expecting a short war then increased from a low of about 20 percent in the late winter of 1944 to nearly 90 percent by the fall of 1944, following the surrender of German forces in Italy in May 1945, the invasion of Normandy in June, the subsequent breakout later that summer, and the pursuit to the Ardennes, and in the south, the invasion of southern France and the liberation of
Paris in August. Conversely, the percentage expecting a longer war generally increased in late 1943 and early 1944 when Allied forces were bottled up at the Winter Line in Italy, and then fell dramatically after January 1944.

Figure 2.1.6 presents data on expectations about the likely duration of the war against Japan.

![Graph showing expected duration of war against Japan, 1942-45](image)

**Figure 2.1.6 - Expected Duration of War Against Japan, 1942-45**

These data do not show nearly as much volatility—the overall trend seems to be an increase in the number of the percentage who expected the war to last two or less years, and a decline of those expecting a longer war. Nevertheless, there appears to have been a drop in confidence in April 1943, which is somewhat surprising given the U.S. victory at Guadalcanal in February of that year. There also appears to have been slight dips in optimism in January 1944 (the bloody battle at Tarawa had just been concluded, and may have signalled the sort of high-cost operations the U.S. might expect in the future), and drop in confidence in April 1944 (another surprise, in that it followed successes in the Marshalls and at Truk in the central Carolines), and in August 1944,
perhaps representing a sense of foreboding before the invasion of the Philippines.

Increasing Expectations of Victory

There was a high level of optimism at the beginning of the war. While the dark days of 1942 offered ample evidence that victory was by no means a foregone conclusion, the outcome of the war—a victory for the U.S. and its allies—was generally seen as just a matter of time.

Most members of the public remained optimistic about victory, although over the course of the war it seems that expectations about the outcome changed as news was received from the battlefield. Table 2.1.12 shows that expectations about victory were somewhat sensitive to the nature of the victory that was implied by question wording: while nearly nine out of ten in July 1942 thought the Allies would win, only two out of three thought that there would be decisive victory.

Table 2.1.12

Expectations of Victory, July 1942

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you think either side will win a decisive victory in this war? (AIPO, 7/29/42)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66% Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21% No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13% Don’t know</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Which side do you think will win—the Axis, or the Allies? (AIPO, 7/29/42)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>87% Allies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2% Axis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4% Stalemate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7% Don’t know</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.1.13 presents data showing that only about three in ten from May to August 1942 thought that the U.S. had taken the offensive.

---

216 See Gallup (1972).
217 Because a policy of seeking an unconditional surrender had not yet been announced, it may be that members of the public at this time were expecting a negotiated settlement, as in the First World War.
Table 2.1.13
Evaluations of Progress, Mid-1942

Would you say the United States is now fighting mainly on the offensive or mainly on the defensive?
(NORC, 5/6/42)
  30% Offensive
  46  Defensive
  24  Don’t know and no answer

(NORC, 8/29/42)
  31% Offensive
  50  Defensive
  19  Don’t know

Table 2.1.14 suggests declining optimism from October to November 1942, in spite of the success of Allied forces at El Alamein in October, and the cease fire and defection to the Allies of the French in Algeria in early November.

Table 2.1.14
Expectations of Victory, Late 1942

Would you say that the way we’re working now, we’re pretty sure to win the war, or do you feel we’ll have to work a lot harder if we’re going to win?

(NORC, 10/6/42)
  22% Working hard enough
  75  Work harder
  3   Don’t know

(NORC, 11/19/42)
  30% Working hard enough
  65  Work harder
  5   Don’t know

By October 1943, 72 percent were convinced that the Allies would prevail, according to a poll by NORC. Nevertheless, 25 percent were somewhat pessimistic, believing that unless greater effort was made, victory was not certain.
**Table 2.1.15**

**Prospects for Success, October 1943**

Which of these four ideas comes closest to the way you feel the war with Germany and Japan is going? (NORC, 10/2/43)

38 We have beaten them already
69 It will take time, but we can’t lose
25 We must work harder or we won’t win
* Too late
3 Don’t know

Note: * = Less than 0.5 percent.

By late 1944, fully 86 percent felt that victory was assured, as can be seen from the polling by AIPO done at that time presented in Table 2.1.16.

**Table 2.1.16**

**Expectations of Victory, 1944-45**

Do you think there is any chance that we will lose the war in Europe? (AIPO, 12/28/44)

86% No
9 Yes
5 Uncertain

Do you think that there is any chance that we will lose the war in Europe? (AIPO, 12/31/44-1/4/45)

86% No
9 Yes
5 Uncertain

**Figure 2.1.7** summarizes some public opinion data describing perceptions of progress and the prospects for victory. The most notable trend in the figure is the rather dramatic increase in optimism in late 1942, following the successes in the Pacific and the invasion of North Africa. From about September 1942 to June 1943, the percentage who thought the Allies couldn’t possibly lose seems to have hovered at over 70 percent, although there are few data points over the period, and there could have been more volatility between the polls.
Figure 2.1.7 - Changing Perceptions of Progress and Prospects

The Response to Events on the Battlefield

Page and Shapiro (1992a, pp. 193-6) provide support for the argument that public perceptions of progress and prospects closely followed events on the battlefield:

The proportion favoring a negotiated peace fell from 36% in June 1942 to 23% in August 1943, after the tide began to turn the allies' way with successes at Midway (June 3-6, 1942), in North Africa (October 1942-March 1943), Stalingrad (November 1942), Guadalcanal (February 1942), and Sicily (July 1943). Cantril [1967, p. 176] particularly emphasizes the "amazing" rise from 36% to 81% in the proportion of the public that was optimistic that the allies were winning, immediately after the October 1942 invasion of North Africa. ²²

They similarly noted that the willingness of the public to talk peace or insist on a harsh and total victory varied with the extent of U.S. sacrifices and with military success or failure (a point to which I will return in the section on preferred policies):

Support for a peace negotiated with the German army (assuming Hitler out of the way) rose again, however, to 40% in April 1944, as the war effort progressed slowly without any opening of a Western front. It then dropped to 29% in August 1944, after the Normandy invasion (June) and the Russian offensive into Eastern Europe (taking Warsaw in August) brought total victory closer. It rose once more, to 37% in February 1945, with the German counteroffensive in Belgium while the allies were bogged down in the West, and finally dropped to 24% in April 1945, as the allies triumphantly moved toward Berlin from both East and West.\textsuperscript{219}

And with the U.S. entry into the war and the fitful culmination of successes on the battlefield in both Europe and the Pacific, there was ample evidence by late 1944 that progress was being made, and success seemed assured. By January 1945, 86 percent of those polled thought that there was no chance that the U.S. would lose the war in Europe.\textsuperscript{220}

**CHANGING COSTS: CASUALTIES AND SUPPORT**

While it seems that most of the political establishment and the public believed that the cause was a good one and that the U.S. and its allies would ultimately triumph, it was a long, hard war—at 292,000 American war dead, the Second World War was also America’s costliest.

This was not entirely unexpected, however, as can be seen from Table 2.1.17; a plurality of 45 percent expected that another world war would result in higher losses than the first had, while about three in ten expected smaller losses and about one in ten expected about the same level.

When asked whether they knew how many soldiers and sailors had died in the First World War, only one in five said they did, and while only six percent named a figure within about ten thousand of the actual toll of 50,000, Gallup unfortunately did not report the median estimate of

\textsuperscript{219}Page and Shapiro (1992a), p. 194.

\textsuperscript{220}The question Gallup asked on 12/31/44-1/4/45 was: “Do you think that there is any chance that we will lose the war in Europe?” Eighty-six percent said no, nine percent said yes, and five percent were uncertain. Gallup (1972), p. 483.
war dead. To understand the actual pattern of losses over time, we need to examine data on the actual toll of the war.

**Table 2.1.17**

*Casualty Expectations, June 1941*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fewer</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About the same</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No opinion</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If we go into the war, would you say that we will have more soldiers and sailors killed, or fewer, than in the first World War?

Do you happen to have any idea how many Americans were killed as a result of the first World War?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Army and navy records list 50,510 killed. Six percent named a figure between 40 and 60 thousand.

Source: Gallup, 6/26-7/1/41, in Gallup (1972), p. 289.

Figure 2.1.8 gives a crude idea of the rate that the toll in battle deaths accumulated: it aggregates the number of battle deaths from the roughly 30 campaigns of the war into a cumulative count of battle dead. The most important points from these data are:

- The vast majority of battle deaths occurred in 1944, with most of the deaths being attributable to the European theater.
- Battle deaths in the European and Pacific theaters appeared to grow at about the same low-but-steady rate until late 1943. Beginning in 1944, battle deaths in the European theater grew dramatically, while deaths in the Pacific generally continued to grow at a comparatively slow rate.

---

222 As will be seen, at the end of the Second World War the median guess of war dead was fairly accurate.

223 The cumulative toll was constructed by adding in the total number of battle deaths for each campaign on its closing date as given in Clodfelter (1992), pp. 963-4. The count thus underestimates somewhat the number of battle deaths at any given time.
Figure 2.1.8 - U.S. Cumulative Battle Deaths by Closing Date of Campaign\textsuperscript{223}

- Battle deaths in the European theater were nearly three times as high as those in the Pacific theater.

Figure 2.1.9 gives the battle deaths in the various campaigns in the European theater from 1942-45. It shows that the Rhineland campaign which began in September 1944 was the most costly of the European campaigns, followed by Ardennes-Alsace (which included the battle of the Bulge), Northern France, and Normandy.\textsuperscript{224}

Figure 2.1.10 describes the toll of the various campaigns in the Pacific theater of the war. It shows that the defense of the Philippines, which ended in May 1945 and included the Bataan death march, was the most costly, followed by the southern Philippines campaign of 1943-4.

\textsuperscript{223}The labels are the names of operations that were begun or concluded. Those in italics were in the Pacific theater.

\textsuperscript{224}Of these three, it appears that Ardennes-Alsace was the most ferocious, followed by Normandy, and Northern France.
Figure 2.1.9 - Battle Deaths in European Campaigns

Members of the public were often asked which aspects of the war they would like to know more about; Table 2.1.18 presents one such question, showing that 44 percent were most interested in the welfare of U.S. servicemen, while nearly as many were interested in more news on shortages and rationing.

One interesting conclusion from the public opinion data of the Second World War is that members of the public wanted to be better informed about the war (that is, so long as secrecy was maintained), and did not want to have bad news withheld. In fact, the sense one gets in reading these data is that the public were far more capable of accepting bad as well as good news than the government gave them credit for. For example, Table 2.1.19 presents data on public attitudes toward the handling of news on casualties; nearly three out of four in late December 1941 wanted deaths to be reported as soon as possible.
Table 2.1.18
Desire for More Information, October 1943

There are probably a lot of things about the war and problems here at home that everyone would like more information about. What are some of the things that you would like to have more information about? (NORC, 10/3/43)

13% Shortages and rationing
5 Treatment of soldiers
5 Losses, casualties
4 Fighting the war

Table 2.1.20 presents data from 1943-4 showing that a majority gave at least qualified approval for the publication of stories and pictures showing dead and wounded U.S. soldiers, although 53 percent in October
1943 supported more complete reporting, only about ten percent had actually seen such pictures, judging from these data.  

Table 2.1.19

Handling News of Casualties, December 1941

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Not release news stories at all because it might encourage the enemy and discourage our own people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13%</td>
<td>Hold up bad news of this kind at least until some good news can be released with it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73%</td>
<td>Release news about such losses as soon as they are confirmed, so long as the news doesn’t actually help the enemy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4%</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By the end of the war, estimates of the casualties that had been incurred varied widely, but the average (median) estimate (see Table 2.1.21) was rather close to the 400,000 battle and non-battle deaths that were actually incurred.  

Table 2.1.22 provides the bookend to Table 2.1.17, which presented data on casualty expectations, and suggests the role that expectations played, and the reliability of the estimates. By the end of the war, 87 percent correctly said that the Second World War had resulted in more deaths than the First World War.

— A picture of three dead U.S. servicemen who died in the assault on Tarawa was reportedly given prominent coverage by the press; there is no explanation for the low percentages who said they had seen such images. Fussell describes the sanitized nature of the photographs of the dead that were published during the war: "No American dismemberings are registered, even in the photographs of Tarawa and Iwo Jima. American bodies (decently clothed) are occasionally in evidence, but they are notably intact." Fussell (1989), p. 269.

— The Department of Defense reported 292,131 battle deaths and 115,185 other deaths.
Table 2.1.20
Show Pictures of War Dead? 1943-44

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approval</th>
<th>45%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Qualified approval</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disapproval</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Have you seen any newspaper or magazine pictures of this kind (photos depicting suffering of G.I.'s on battlefield) which you thought it would have been better not to give out? (NORC, 10/2/43)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not seen any news or magazine pictures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific mention of picture of three dead American boys on beach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other mentions of pictures of dead soldiers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pictures of wounded soldiers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atrocity pictures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pictures of starving children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not ascertainable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Should newspapers and newsreels show war pictures with men dead or wounded on battlefields, or should such pictures not be shown? (Gallup, 1/8-11/44)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes [should be shown]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No [should not be shown]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No opinion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Forty percent of those polled in June 1941, furthermore, had expected about the same or fewer casualties than had been incurred in the First World War; by the end of the war, a comparable 38 percent said that the casualties had been more than they had expected. Similarly, in June 1941 45 percent said that they expected more casualties than in the first war, and by October 1945, 42 percent said that actual casualties had been less than they had expected—they had evidently expected much higher casualties. Only six percent said that the casualties that had been incurred had been the same as what they had originally expected.
Table 2.1.21

Views of Casualties in Second World War, October 1945

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6% Under 100,000</td>
<td>9% 100,000 to under 200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7% 200,000 to under 250,000</td>
<td>8% 250,000 to 260,000 (correct answer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7% Over 260,000 to 300,000</td>
<td>5% Over 300,000 to under 500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10% 500,000</td>
<td>3% 500,000 to under 750,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4% 750,000 to under 1,000,000</td>
<td>14% 1,000,000 to 2,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5% Over 2 million</td>
<td>16% Don't know</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Median: Over 300,000 to under 500,000)

Table 2.1.22

Retrospective Views of Casualties in World War II, October 1945

Were more Americans killed in this war or in the last war? (AIPO, 10/17/45)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>87% This war (correct)</td>
<td>5% Last war</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7% No opinion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Were the number of killed and wounded more than you expected when the war started, or less? (AIPO, 10/17/45)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>38% More</td>
<td>42% Less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6% Same</td>
<td>14% No opinion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

LEADERSHIP

In spite of the long, drawn-out war, the slow accumulation of successes, and the climbing costs, it appears that President Roosevelt never lost the confidence of the majority of Americans. Figure 2.1.23 shows that in June 1943, 58 percent preferred a peace planned by the
administration to one planned by the Congress. Although a majority in January 1945 still chose President Roosevelt, he had by this time evidently lost the confidence of about nine percent—five percent who had previously supported him, and another four percent who had previously been undecided.

Table 2.1.23
Presidential or Congressional Leadership? 1943-45

If you had to take a choice between a peace planned by Roosevelt and his Cabinet and one planned by the present Congress, which would you prefer to take your chances on?

(NORC, 6/43)
58.1% Roosevelt
27.9 Congress
14.0 Don’t know

(NORC, 1/45)
53.2% Roosevelt
36.5 Congress
10.3 Don’t know

Table 2.1.24 disaggregates respondents from the June 1943 poll by economic status. It shows that Roosevelt had maintained the support of majorities of lower economic status Americans, but higher status members of the public (many more of whom were Republicans) had become divided over his stewardship of the war.

One likely reason for this was that many believed that Roosevelt should have been more demanding of organized labor, which was widely viewed as failing to make a full contribution to the war effort as a consequence of various strikes and work stoppages. In the event, while there may have been squabbling over the domestic measures that were being taken, support for President Roosevelt’s prosecution of a bipartisan war was quite high.

227 See Cantril (1951) for public opinion data supporting this assessment.
Table 2.1.24
Presidential or Congressional Leadership? By Economic Status

If you had to take a choice between a peace planned by Roosevelt and his Cabinet and one planned by the present Congress, which would you prefer to take your chances on? (NORC, 6/43)

PERCENT CHOOSING ROOSEVELT, BY ECONOMIC STATUS
Low 60.7%
Lower middle 59.5
Upper middle 53.2
High 45.4

PERCENT CHOOSING CONGRESS, BY ECONOMIC STATUS
Low 20.3%
Lower middle 27.9
Upper middle 35.6
High 45.1

THE RESULT OF THE CALCULUS WAS HIGH SUPPORT

The precipitating events and the expected benefits from the war—reversing the German and Japanese successes, and defeating and punishing the aggressors—resulted in widespread support from the Congress, other establishment figures, the media and, not surprisingly, the public.\textsuperscript{228} This support was in spite of the expectation by most that it would be a long and difficult war, and the expectation by a plurality that it would be costlier than the First World War.

Although the data are sketchy and the polling methods of the time somewhat less than completely reliable,\textsuperscript{229} as a consequence of the benefits, prospects and leadership, the war received consistently high levels of public support, as can be seen in the public opinion data presented in Table 2.1.25. Although the wording of the questions varied, support appears to have remained over 80 percent throughout most of the war. Judged by these data, opposition to the war seems generally

\textsuperscript{228}Smith (1993), p. 160, notes that there was not a single speech in opposition to the congressional declaration of war against Japan.
\textsuperscript{229}See Converse (1964).
to have been confined to fewer than 5-10 percent of the population; and this support for the war was rather robust in the face of the steadily mounting economic and human costs.

Table 2.1.25
Support for World War II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source/Date</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AIPO, 12/7/41</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>U.S. go to war with Japan in near future? (yes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fortune, 3/43</td>
<td>85.5</td>
<td>Keep on fighting? (yes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NORC, 5/7/44</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>Demand unconditional surrender before stop fighting Germany? (yes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPOP, 8/30/44</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>Discuss peace with Hitler now? (no)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIPO, 2/19/45</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>Approve of requiring unconditional surrender? (yes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fortune, 6/1/45</td>
<td>86.8</td>
<td>Go on and clean out Japs in China? (yes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIPO, 12/41</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>Want peace as things are now? (no)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIPO, 2/42</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>Want peace as things are now?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIPO, 2/43</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>Want peace as things are now?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIPO, 9/4/43</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>Want peace as things are now?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Campbell and Cain (1965).
Note: Percentages are responses that connote continuing war.

In spite of the differences in wording, when data on support for the war are plotted against the cumulative battle deaths from the war, it becomes readily apparent that the American public were remarkably tolerant of casualties—over the four years of the war and the horrific casualties there is hardly any discernible decline apparent.

In fact, the estimated rate of decline as a function of casualties for the data points presented above (see Figure 2.1.11) was only about

---

230 It is also interesting that on December 7, before the U.S. declaration of war, only 52 percent of those polled by AIPO said that they thought the U.S. should go to war in the near future. This suggests a high degree of followership after the Congress unanimously declared war.

231 Indeed, there was an increase in those who said "no" to the question that asked respondents whether they wanted peace as things were then; in December 1941, 86 percent said "no," while in September 1943, 89 percent said no.
two percentage points for every increase by a factor of ten in the number of battle deaths. However, the only real series—which asked the respondent whether they wanted peace as things were at that time—actually shows a slight increase in support from December 1941 to September 1942.\footnote{332}

![Figure 2.1.11 - Support as a Function of Battle Deaths\footnote{333}}

\footnote{332}{This series is represented in Figure 2.1.11 as the line connecting the data points.}

\footnote{333}{The casualty data are based on data in Clodfelter (1992), which provided beginning and ending dates and casualty numbers for the major military campaigns of the war. Because of deaths that were not accounted for in the various campaigns, the cumulative battle deaths used here actually understate the number of deaths at the time each question was asked. That is, if we had better information, we would expect the line to be even further to the right, i.e., display more casualty tolerance than is implied here.}
CONVERGING PREFERENCES ON WAR POLICY

Although there seems to have been some lack of clarity over the purpose of the war in 1942, there was robust consensus in favor of the decision to demand an unconditional surrender of the Germans and Japanese, as could be seen in Table 2.1.25. In fact, if there was disagreement over the management of domestic affairs, there seemed to have been little disagreement over strategy.

Changing Sentiment on Escalation and Deescalation Was Entirely Rational

The model of ends and means predicts that when the perceived benefits or prospects for success increase, it is entirely rational to support escalation, and when the converse is true, deescalation.

As was described in the section on prospects for success, Page and Shapiro (1992a) provide evidence that this dynamic seemed to be at work during the Second World War, where setbacks led to a greater willingness to negotiate peace while successes led to harsher terms to be extracted from the U.S. adversaries. There were many fluctuations in opinions about war policies that appeared to be the consequence of the ebb-and-flow of events at home and on the battlefield:

These included opinions toward “sacrifices” for defense, the military draft, and wartime information policies. Willingness to talk peace—as opposed to insistence on a harsh and total victory—also varied with the extent of U.S. sacrifices and with military success or failure. Again the opinion changes represent reasonable responses to reported events.

Nevertheless, there was a clear escalation in the war aims of the public over the course of the war:

By 1945, many Americans had escalated their war aims. Between the beginning of 1943 and August 1945 NORC found a very large (21%) increase, to 60%, in the proportion wanting the United States to obtain new bases at the end of the war...Between November 1943 and October 1944, according to Gallup, 21% fewer

---

234 Mueller presents data from June 1942 showing that only 53 percent of the public had a clear idea of what the war was about. See Mueller (1971), p. 374.
235 There were, however, criticism and conspiracy theories following the attack on Pearl Harbor.
Americans chose relatively mild postwar policies—to "strictly supervise" or to "rehabilitate" Germany or to "do nothing": a substantial 44% (up from 23%) wanted to "destroy Germany completely." (This 44% figure dipped only slightly, to 39%, as the war wound to a close in May 1945.) In April 1945, 85% of Americans told Gallup they favored using German men to "rebuild cities in Russia which they have destroyed," up 15% since July 1944.  

In short, as the costs increased, these costs were compensated by increasing war aims and prospects for success.

Table 2.1.26 presents data from 1942 showing that nearly four out of five thought the U.S. was doing all it could toward winning the war, and that a near-majority felt that the war would not be won by air attacks alone.

**Table 2.1.26**

*Perceptions of U.S. War Efforts, 1942*

| Do you think the United States is doing all it can toward winning the war? (Gallup, 1/25-30/42) |
| 78% Yes | 17% No | 5% Undecided |

| If the Allies build a strong enough air force do you think they can win the war virtually by air attacks alone? (Gallup, 8/1-6/42) |
| 40% Yes | 49% No | 11% No opinion |

By mid-1942, it seems that by some measures, four out of five were generally satisfied with the conduct and justness of the war (see Table 2.1.27). The third polling result, however, shows that only about six in ten approved of "the government's policy with respect to conduct of the war"; the reason may be that some of the 28 percent respondents believed that domestic efforts to support the war could be increased.

---

Table 2.1.27
Support and Preferred Strategy, 1942

So far, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the government’s conduct of the war against Germany? (AIPO, 5/21/42)
81% Satisfied
12 Dissatisfied
7 No opinion

As things are right now, do you think we are doing the right thing in sending our men overseas to fight? (NORC, 8/29/42)
87% Yes
8 No
5 Don’t know

Do you approve or disapprove of the government’s policy with respect to conduct of the war? (AIPO, 9/3/42)
59% Approve
26 Disapprove
13 No opinion

Table 2.1.28 suggests a preference by many for strategies that traded casualties for time: nearly four out of five in May 1945 preferred to “take time and save lives,” while a plurality of 43 percent in June 1945 wanted to “take more time to try to weaken [Japan] by conquering one by one the places she controls outside of Japan proper,” and a majority of 58 percent in late June wanted to “wait until the navy and air force had beaten [the Japanese] down and starved them out.”

These data suggest that even as early as the Second World War, concern about U.S. casualties manifested itself into preferences regarding strategies and a willingness to trade time for casualties—a willingness that will also be seen in the analysis of the Gulf War.

\[218\] As will be seen in the other case studies, a preference for casualty-reducing strategies has been a quite common feature of U.S. public opinion on military operations.
Table 2.1.28
Support for Casualty-Reducing Strategy in Japan, Late Spring 1945

Which of these two plans do you think we should follow in our war with Japan—try to end the war quickly even if it means greater loss of American life, or take more time to end the war, in order to keep down the loss of American life, or try to end the war quickly in order to save more lives?
(AIPO, 5/15/45)

9% End war quickly despite casualties
79 Take time and save lives
4 End war quickly and save lives
6 No opinion

Which do you think would result in fewer men getting killed or wounded in fighting the war against Japan: to throw everything we have against Japan's homeland and try to conquer it in a hurry, or to take more time to try to weaken her by conquering one by one the places she controls outside of Japan proper?
(Fortune, June 1945)

33.3% Conquer in a hurry
43.0 Take more time
7.0 No difference
16.7 Don't know

Should our troops invade the main Japanese homeland or should we wait until the navy and air force have beaten them down and starved them out?
(AIPO, 6/27/45)

27% Invade
58 Wait
15 No opinion

CONCLUSIONS

Taken together, there appears to be substantial reason to believe that between the grave threat and vital stakes, the moral outrages, the widespread consensus among political leaders that the aims of the war were worthy, and a belief that the prospects for success were very high, the public displayed high support and an exceedingly high tolerance for casualties in the Second World War. In short, despite the heavy costs of the war, the public felt that the ends and means of that war were in balance.
There is little doubt that none of the three limited wars fought by the U.S. over the next fifty years—Korea, Vietnam, and the Gulf War—engendered the same stakes and principles as grave as those in the Second World War. This goes a long way to explaining a lower willingness to tolerate casualties in these wars. Nevertheless, as will be seen, much of the same basic logic of the aggregate public’s response to the Second World War can be seen in these other wars, as well as a number of lesser operations.
2.2. THE KOREAN WAR

What a nation can or must do begins with the willingness and the ability of its people to shoulder the burden.

Harry S. Truman\footnote{Truman (1956), Vol. II, p. 345.}

The invasion of South Korea was a dramatic historical event of signal importance, precipitating not only the Korean War, but also catalyzing a broader consensus in the U.S. regarding a sustained commitment to contain global communism and to build up sufficient military forces to deter or defeat challenges to U.S. interests elsewhere.

CHANGING BENEFITS, PROSPECTS, AND LEADERSHIP SUPPORT

Initial impressions that the North Korean invasion signified the opening gambit in another world war soon proved unfounded, and the perceived gravity of the conflict as a consequence declined as the U.S. found itself in what turned out to be a limited (and for most, frustrating) war on the Asian continent.

Given the eroding congressional support, changes in war aims, changing prospects for success, and mounting costs, support for the war seems to have subsequently followed a predictable path. Generally speaking, the overall decline in public support for the war mirrored the erosion of consensus among political leaders. This erosion was not over whether important interests were at stake (there was broad agreement that they were), but over diverging views about the most appropriate war aims, and what costs and risks were worth assuming. The result was the polarization of the American body politic, pitting those who preferred escalation to include attacks against the Chinese mainland, with those who thought that the costs outweighed the benefits of this course of action.

\footnote{Truman (1956), Vol. II, p. 345.}
Following the North Korean invasion President Truman made a compelling argument to both the Congress and the public that important U.S. interests and principles were at stake in Korea:

The attack upon Korea makes it plain beyond all doubt that Communism has passed beyond the use of subversion to conquer independent nations and will now use armed invasion and war...A return to the rule of force in international affairs would have far-reaching effects. The United States will continue to uphold the rule of law.\textsuperscript{240}

This view was largely endorsed by members of Congress, and the U.S. entry into the war received strong initial bipartisan congressional support. A majority of the public also saw important U.S. interests at stake—nearly six in ten in late July 1950 thought that the U.S. had already entered World War III.\textsuperscript{241} This bipartisan and public consensus on the importance of the situation contributed to the high initial levels of public support for the war shown in Figure 2.2.1.

While there was initial concern about U.S. ability to stem the North Korean advance, there seems to have been a willingness to accept the costs that would be incurred in the process.\textsuperscript{242} With MacArthur's landing at Inchon and the progress made toward the Yalu, war aims were expanded to reunification of the Korean peninsula, and the public rightly came to expect an even more favorable outcome than a return to the status quo ante of a divided Korea. The success of the Inchon landing also led to the prevailing expectation that the war would be concluded quickly, and at somewhat lower cost than had been feared.

\textsuperscript{240} Statement by President Truman, June 27, 1950, in Truman (1955), pp. 338-9.
\textsuperscript{241} In its 7/30-8/4/50 poll, Gallup asked: "Do you think the United States is now actually in World War III—or do you think the present fighting in Korea will stop short of another world war?" Fully 57 percent said they thought the U.S. had entered a third world war.
\textsuperscript{242} The public had initially been given every reason by President Truman to expect a difficult and costly war.
Figure 2.2.1 - Support for the Korean War

The electoral sweepstakes of 1950 turned congressional support for the Truman administration's war policies into a somewhat mixed and partisan affair over the summer and fall of 1950, however. And with the entry into the war of the Chinese in November 1950, hopes of a quick and cheap victory were soon dashed. Congressional support declined.

242 The wording differed for each series. Series A: “Do you think the United States made a mistake in going into the war in Korea, or not?” (AIPO). Series B: “Do you think the United States was right or wrong in sending American troops to stop the Communist invasion of South Korea?” (NORC). Series C: “As things stand now, do you feel that the war in Korea has been (was) worth fighting, or not?” (NORC). Series D: “Looking back over the Korean War since it started last June (in June last year, last year, two years ago, in June of 1950) would you say now that you feel the United States (we) did the right thing in sending American forces to Korea?” (Minnesota Poll)

244 As Mueller put it:

Support remained high through the summer and into the fall of 1950 as the North Korean thrust was stopped at Pusan and reversed at Inchon. This high level of support was maintained probably because the public was convinced the war would be a short one. In July, only 14 percent expected the war to last
further with the debacle, largely over the question of whether to expand the war or keep it limited to the Korean peninsula, a dispute that was crystallized in the Truman-MacArthur controversy over war policy.

Also with the Chinese entry, the broader (and more desirable) war aim of reunification was jettisoned in favor of a return to the status quo ante, leaving many congressional critics (and following their lead, members of the public) with the feeling that they were settling for far less than they should. As can be seen in Figure 2.2.2, the Chinese entry also resulted in the most bloody fighting of the war.

After a long, hard fight back up the peninsula that culminated in bloody fighting in the spring of 1951, the U.S. and its allies halted their advance after returning to the 38th parallel, where the situation stalemated. Truce talks began shortly thereafter, although the costs continued to mount in the periodic offensives that were aimed at breaking the stalemate. With the high levels of congressional criticism of the war, and a policy of accepting a return to the status quo ante, it is not surprising that by October 1951, a majority would agree with the assessment of one senator that Korea was an utterly "useless war."\[245\] Although the final settlement was denounced as a sell-out,

more than a year. It was the entry of China into the war that apparently altered such perceptions and, with them the basic support for the war. As the Chinese swarmed across the Yalu River, blunting and then turning the Allied "home by Christmas" offensive, the war took on a new and far more painful appearance. By the time the "mistake" questions were again posed in the last days of 1950, support for the war had dropped some 25 points...The Chinese intervention seemed to shake from the support ranks the tenuous and those who felt they could support only a short war. The war was then left with a relatively hard core of support that remained generally constant for the duration, despite changes of fortune and climbing casualty figures. Mueller (1971), p. 361.

\[245\] Gallup, 10/14-19/51: "A United States senator says that the Korean war is an utterly "useless war." Do you agree or disagree with this?" Fifty-six percent agreed, 33 percent disagreed, and 11 percent had no opinion. GOL, p. 1019.
NORC found that the public preferred the armistice to continued fighting by a five-to-one margin. 246

![Graph showing battle deaths by month in Korean War]

**Figure 2.2.2 - Deaths by Month in Korean War**

**The Linkage to Leadership Support**

The anecdotal evidence that public attitudes toward the war mirrored and followed those of political leaders has considerable empirical standing. Mueller (1973) found among the sub-population he dubbed "followers" a loyalty to governmental policy and an unwillingness to admit that "we" might have done wrong. 247 He also found that as the criticism of the war increased, partisan differences in the public became more apparent over time:

Partisan differences were relatively small at the beginning of the war, presumably under the influence of a sort of

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246 Mueller (1973) reports that NORC survey 348 found that 75 percent preferred the Armistice, while 15 percent preferred to continue fighting.

nonpartisan consensus at a time of national emergency. Differences broadened considerably once the wars were underway, becoming entirely unambiguous after the Chinese intervention in Korea and by the second year of the war in Vietnam.\textsuperscript{248}

Indeed, the data Mueller provides on the Korean War suggests that the decline in support for the war varied based upon both partisan leaning and upon educational attainment, entirely in keeping with the Converse-McGuire-Zaller reception-acceptance-sampling model of attitude formation.\textsuperscript{249}

In fact, Belknap and Campbell (1951-52) provide striking evidence that is entirely consistent with the Converse-McGuire-Mackuen-Zaller leadership model of public attitude formation. The authors compared the congressional environment in June 1951 with the results of a survey undertaken at that time. They described the congressional environment as follows:

In the summer of 1951 a significant change had come about in the alignment of party leadership regarding foreign affairs. European economic and military assistance, the Korean War, and finally the dismissal of General MacArthur became major issues. Although there were many individual deviations from party positions, Congress was split along party lines on the subject of foreign policy as it had not been since the 1930's. From a bi-partisan foreign policy which had tended to minimize the importance of foreign policy as a political issue, Congressional leaders of the two parties moved into opposing positions as foreign policy issues became major political questions.\textsuperscript{250}

This polarized congressional environment was in fact mirrored in the public:

There is ample evidence from the survey that the division of opinion regarding foreign affairs which characterized Congressional leadership in June 1951 was also present in the general public. This was true both of general reactions to foreign policy and of reactions to specific issues such as "troops to Europe" and policy in Korea. (p. 604)

\textsuperscript{248}Mueller (1973), pp. 116-117.

\textsuperscript{249}To validate the model with these data, support would need to be cross-tabulated by partisanship and educational attainment.

\textsuperscript{250}Belknap and Campbell (1951), p. 603.
From these tables the following facts seem clear: 1) At the
time of the survey the public was divided on issues of foreign
affairs, 2) This division was consistently related to party
identification, 3) The positions held by the adherents of the
two major parties reflected the positions held by the
leadership of the two parties, and 4) Independent voters
tended to hold positions between the adherents of the two
parties. (p. 658)

They then went on to present data that showed that attitudes toward the
Korean War were related both to partisanship and to the respondent's
level of political information or sophistication.

The Converse-MacGuire-Mackuen-Zaller model of mass attitude
formation predicts that those who are most politically sophisticated and
aware are most inclined to receive and accept the messages of their
chosen opinion leaders, and those who are least politically
sophisticated and aware are least inclined to receive and accept these
messages. Those who are in the low and high information levels are thus
predicted to be least inclined to adapt their positions to new
information, while those in the middle information levels may respond to
alternative opinion leadership and non-partisan arguments.

Perhaps the most important insight of the model for present
purposes is that it is also compatible with Ganson and Modigliani's
(1966) observation that increases in information do not necessarily lead
to convergent opinions, but often lead to polarization in opinion. Put
another way, as the amount of political information increases, political
leaders with different ideological or partisan orientations are likely
to interpret this information differently, and members of the mass
public will be led to different conclusions based upon the availability
of information and the congeniality of the arguments, as mediated by
ideology, partisanship or other attitudinal factors.

Approval for the U.S. Decision to Go into Korea

To illustrate this framework in the context of Korea, and to show
that mass public attitudes were increasingly polarized along partisan
lines as political sophistication rose, I will now present data
regarding whether the respondent thought the U.S. was right in going
into Korea. Again, the expectation would be that the high-information
Democrats would be most favorably disposed to the administration's position, and the high-information Republicans least favorably disposed. Figure 2.2.3 presents data on those believing the U.S. was right in going into Korea, by partisan affiliation and information level.\footnote{The question that was asked by SRC was: "Do you think we did the right thing in getting into the fighting in Korea last summer or should we have stayed out?"}

![Graph showing percent believing U.S. was right in going into Korea by partisan affiliation and information level.]

\textbf{Figure 2.2.3 - Percent Believing U.S. Was Right in Going Into Korea}

The data are entirely consistent with the reception-acceptance-sampling model elaborated by Converse, McGuire, MacKuen, and Zaller, and provides strong empirical support for the proposition that the increasingly polarized elite discourse regarding the war led to increasing polarization among the public, with the most politically sophisticated the first to recognize and accept the messages provided by their chosen party's opinion leaders.

As predicted, for Democrats there is a monotonic positive relationship between information level and a belief that the decision had been right; low-information Democrats had the lowest levels of
support, while high-information Democrats were most supportive. By contrast, the model would predict that the partisan criticism of Republican leaders would result in substantially lower, and a possibly non-monotonic relationship between information level and support, because Republicans at the middle levels of sophistication and awareness would be more cross-pressured than either their low- or high-information brethren. That is, Republicans at the middle information levels would be more likely to be exposed to both pro- and anti-administration messages, but would not be as inclined to oppose administration policy as high-information Republicans would be. In fact, the figure seems to bear this out: high-information Republicans were slightly less supportive of the decision to go into Korean than middle-level information Republicans.

If the model of diffusion is correct, we would also expect that the support for the war would continue to polarize as time passed. In fact, this appears to be the case: by November 1952 support for the war was quite partisan in nature, probably in large part due to the atmospherics of the electoral season.

Figure 2.2.4 presents data from the 1952 National Election Survey of the University of Michigan's Survey Research Center. As predicted, it shows that support for the Korean War (as measured by a belief that the U.S. did the right thing in getting into the fighting) was monotonically increasing as a function of information levels for Democrats and Independents, and monotonically decreasing for Republicans.

Later in this section, we will see that divisions over war policy also appeared to mirror those among political leaders, and that elite polarization in the Korean War seems to have led to divisions in the public over escalation or continuation of the war until a negotiated peace could be achieved.

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232 This is at present an hypothesis that can be tested by examining data on approval from later in the war. In fact, data from the University of Michigan's 1952 National Election Study would provide another data point. This analysis is, however, beyond the scope of this dissertation.
Figure 2.2.4 - Support for Korea by Partisanship and Media Usage

CHANGING COSTS: CASUALTIES AND SUPPORT

Figure 2.2.5 presents the data on support for the Korean War as a function of battle deaths. As can be seen, support appears to have declined somewhat more quickly early in the war and then stabilized somewhat. In fact, following Mueller (1973), support was regressed on the log of the cumulative number of deaths due to hostile action. The regression model suggested that for each increase by a factor of ten in the number of war dead, support for the Korean War declined by 3.3 percentage points.  

Although the regression equation does a reasonably good job of predicting support (about two-thirds of the variance is explained), casualties are not the only—or necessarily the best—explanation for the decline. As was shown, a number of other factors—falling support

\[25^3\text{Mueller (1973) regressed support on the log of the total cumulative casualties (dead, wounded, hospitalized and missing) and determined that for both the Korean and Vietnam Wars, each increase by a factor of ten in the number of total casualties resulted in a decline in support by about 15 percentage points. The difference obviously has to do with using a different measure of casualties. Kernell (1978) found that the correlation between the monthly number of casualties and support for President Truman was } -0.58.\]
from the Congress and other political leaders, changing war aims in the conflict, and changing prospects for success—all seem to have figured into the declining support.

![Graph showing cumulative deaths and support for Korea as a function of battle deaths.]

**Figure 2.2.5 - Support for Korea as a Function of Battle Deaths**

Furthermore, it may be that, to the extent casualties were important in declining support, they manifested themselves through congressional and other political leaders. That is, it may very well be that political leaders responded to casualties, withdrew their support, and members of the public took their cues and followed. In short, while declining public support was clearly associated with mounting casualties in battle deaths, we do not fully understand the process by which this took place.

**DIVERGING PREFERENCES: ESCALATION, WITHDRAWAL, POLARIZATION**

Support for the Korean War clearly declined, but did that support manifest itself in a desire to do more, i.e., to escalate or increase

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234 Data from Mueller (1973), Table 3.1, described earlier.
the level commitment, or to do less, to immediately withdraw or decrease the level of commitment?

The principal disagreement in the war was over war aims and whether the war should be escalated to attack the Chinese mainland; these divisions over war policy were reflected in public opinion as well. Figure 2.2.6 summarizes sentiment in favor of escalation in the Korean War.255

As can be seen in the figure, there is no evidence of a consistent pattern of increasing sentiment for escalation—support for this option ranged from about 20 to 50 percent, depending on the wording of the question, although none of the series shown exhibited a clear increase over time. That is, there is little evidence in these data that "over time, more and more respondents preferred the escalation option."256 If there is little evidence of increasing sentiment for escalation, however, that does not mean that there was a clear pattern of increasing

255The labels refer to data in Table 4.4 of Mueller (1973).
sentiment for immediate withdrawal. Figure 2.2.7 presents data on withdrawal sentiment in Korea.

![Graph showing support for withdrawal in Korea]

**Figure 2.2.7 - Support for Withdrawal in Korea**

Withdrawal sentiment in Korea appears generally to have ranged between about 15 and 30 percent, although there is little evidence in the figure of increasing sentiment for immediate withdrawal.\(^{257}\) Again,

\[^{257}\text{There is one series from NORC done late in the war that shows a gradual increase in sentiment for withdrawal, and declining sentiment for increasing the level of effort. NORC asked the following question in November and December 1951, and in February 1952: "Which one of these three things comes closest to your idea of what we should do in Korea? Attack the Communist forces now with everything we have; Continue the war on the present basis while the peace talks are going on; Pull our troops out of Korea and bring them home." Another series shows a much more dynamic pattern of increasing and decreasing support for either escalation or withdrawal. NORC asked the following question in March, April, June, August, October and November 1952: "Suppose the truce talks break down completely. Which one of these three things do you think we should do then? Go on the attack against the Chinese Communists; Keep out troops in Korea and hold the present line there; Pull our troops out of Korea and bring them home."}^\]
question wording and cutting from political leaders seem to have affected support for these options (see Figure 2.2.7).258

There seems to be little doubt that the policy preferences of members of the public followed those of their chosen opinion leaders. Table 2.2.1 presents data that suggests important differences in preferred policy based upon partisanship and political sophistication. The data are from the University of Michigan's 1952 National Election Study on policy preferences broken down by partisanship and various indexes of political interest and sophistication. The reader will recall that the elite debate centered on staying the course until a negotiated settlement could be achieved (the Democratic administration's position) or taking a stronger stand by expanding the air war to Manchuria and China (the position of Republican critics), withdrawal was never a favored option among elites in the war.

Leadership, Revisited

The Converse-McGuire-Zaller model would predict that the option of escalation would be preferred over merely seeking a negotiation by politically sophisticated Republicans because they would be most likely to know that their opinion leaders supported this option. While cross-tabulated data are unavailable, Republicans and those who were most politically sophisticated appeared to support this option.259 By contrast, Democrats generally would be expected to prefer the negotiation option over the escalation option. In fact, the data do seem to be consistent with these patterns.

The data presented in Belknap and Campbell (1951-52) provides even clearer evidence of consistency with the Converse-McGuire-MacKuen-Zaller model of opinion leadership and attitude diffusion. Figures 2.2.8 and 2.2.9 present data on policy preferences in Korea, as measured by approval for the Truman administration's policy in Asia, and siding with Truman in his dispute with MacArthur over escalation of the war.

259It is, however, interesting that Republicans also represented the highest percentage who were willing to withdraw. These probably represented less well-educated Republicans from the Taft (isolationist) wing of the party.
Table 2.2.1
Preferred Policies Depended on Partisanship and Other Factors

Which of the following things do you think it would be best for us to do now in Korea? Pull out of Korea entirely? Keep on trying to get a peaceful settlement? Take a stronger stand and bomb Manchuria and China?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pull Out</th>
<th>Negotiation</th>
<th>Bomb China</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PARTISANSHIP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POLITICAL CONCERN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care very much</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care pretty much</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't care very much</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't care at all</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEDIA ATTENTION</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read About Campaign in Magazines</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quite a lot</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not very much</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read About Campaign in Newspapers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quite a lot</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not very much</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed college</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other High School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-college</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed High School</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some High School</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed Grad School</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some Grade School</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2.2.8 presents data showing the percentage who approved of the administration's Asia policy. The reader will recall that elite criticism of the administration's Asia policy began as early as the fall
of 1950, and increased after the Chinese entry into the war and Truman's firing of MacArthur. In short, by June 1951, political leaders were rather polarized and crystallized in their positions regarding war policy.

![Graph of Percent Approving Administration Policy in Asia](image)

**Figure 2.2.8 - Percent Approving Administration Policy in Asia**

Support increased for those at the low and medium information levels, regardless of party—they would be least likely to be aware of differences among partisan leaders. Also as expected, support from Democrats was a monotonically increasing function of information level (with the most informed being the most supportive of the Truman administration's policy in Korea). Support from Republicans was non-monotonic, with the cross-pressured middle-level information Republicans giving more support to the administration's policy in Asia than either their low- or high-information fellow Republicans, and the high-information Republicans most inclined to be aware of and embrace the Republican party's opposition to the Truman administration's policies in Asia.
The next figure presents data on attitudes toward the dispute between Truman and MacArthur. Again, we would expect to find that high-information Democrats were most supportive, and high-information Republicans least supportive, with the middle-information Republicans perhaps cross-pressured between supporting the president and their party leaders.

![Figure 2.2.9 - Percent Supporting Truman in Dispute with MacArthur](image)

Figure 2.2.9 - Percent Supporting Truman in Dispute with MacArthur

Again, we see that support for Truman among Democrats was both higher than that for Republicans and a monotonic increasing function of information level. By contrast, support for Truman from Republicans was very low and non-monotonic in nature, with the middle-information level Republicans apparently most cross-pressured.

Figures 2.2.10 and 2.2.11 present data from the November 1952 National Election Survey on policy preferences by partisanship and information level, again as instrumented by media usage. The two options that were offered were continuing the war until a peaceful settlement and negotiated withdrawal could be achieved, which was the Truman administration's preferred policy, and taking a stronger stand,
including bombing Manchuria, preferred by MacArthur and leaders of the Republican party.\footnote{260}

Figure 2.2.10 presents the November 1952 NES data on support for the Truman administration’s policy—continuing the war until a peaceful settlement and negotiated withdrawal could be achieved. The figure shows that as information level increased, Democrat, Independent, and Republican support declined, but that majorities of both Democrats and Independents supported this option at every information level.

\begin{quote}
Which of the following things do you think it would be best for us to do now in Korea?...Keep trying to get a peaceful settlement (SRC)
\end{quote}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{chart.jpg}
\caption{Figure 2.2.10 - Support for Trying to Get a Peaceful Settlement by Partisanship and Media Usage, November 1952}
\end{figure}

By contrast, as the information level of Republicans was increased from the second level to the highest, support declined, bottoming out at

\footnote{260 The option of pulling out entirely received the highest levels of support—about 25 percent—from lower-information Republicans, the group that would be most expected to find attractive the arguments of the isolationist wing of the Republican party. Next most supportive, about 20 percent, were low-information Democrats.}
around 30 percent. In short, while majorities of Democrats and Independents supported continuing the war until a negotiated settlement could be achieved, majorities of Republicans from the medium information level and up followed their leaders by failing to support this option.

Figure 2.2.11 presents support on the option that came to be preferred by many Republican leaders—taking a stronger stand by bombing Manchuria.

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**Figure 2.2.11 - Support for Taking a Stronger Stand by Partisanship and Media Usage**

The figure in fact shows that high-information Independents were most inclined to support this option—nearly 70 percent in fact did—but that support from high-information Democrats and Independents settled out at below 50 percent. It also suggests a division within the Republican party between the less-educated isolationist wing and the

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261 The value for the low-information Republicans is probably due to the thinness of the data.

262 This suggests that by the fall of 1952, high-information Republicans were aware that their leaders no longer supported MacArthur's option of taking a stronger stand, but that MacArthur may have continued to have a great deal of support from high-information independents.
better-educated internationalist anti-communist wing—there is a dramatic difference between low-information and high-information Republicans.²⁶³

To summarize, it appears that public attitudes toward the Korean War mirrored and followed those among political leaders. Furthermore, the polarization in the public over the Korean War has a consistent explanation: differences in partisan leanings and political sophistication affected the rates at which messages from elites were received and accepted. And because Democratic leaders (especially the President) and Republican leaders provided different evaluations of Korean War policy, the attitudes were diffused among the mass public in a predictable way, where those who turned to the President and other Democratic leaders for their cues typically had a more favorable view, while those who turned to Republican leaders had an increasingly unfavorable view.

These results are entirely consistent with the findings of Belknap and Campbell (1951-52) and Mueller (1973), and also are entirely consistent with the model of opinion leadership suggested by the work of Converse (1964, 1964), McGuire (1969), MacKuen (1984a), and Zaller (1984, 1987, 1991, 1992, 1993).

THE LESSONS OF KOREA

If the preferred policies of the public followed those of political leaders and neither escalation nor immediate withdrawal gained support over time, what lessons should we draw from Korea about preferred policies?

The lesson is not that more came to prefer escalation or immediate withdrawal, but that the war polarized the American body politic: as political leaders became divided over the war but were unwilling to withdraw in a precipitous fashion, majorities of the public followed and also remained unwilling to liquidate the U.S. commitment to Korea before a negotiated settlement could be reached, while majorities also opposed escalating the war to a broader war against the Chinese. Put another

²⁶³At the lowest information level for Republicans, this is due to the thinness of the data—there were no cases in this group.
way, despite the low levels of support for the war, majorities never preferred either a precipitous withdrawal or a costly escalation of the war, and instead favored pursuit of a negotiated settlement followed by an orderly withdrawal.

However, this support for staying the course was the result of a polarized environment in which a little over a third consistently favored a clear victory, while the vast majority wished merely to end the war on honorable terms.

For example, in November 1952, the University of Michigan's Survey Research Center (SRC) asked "Which of the following things do you think it would be best to do now in Korea?" and found that 38 percent wanted to "take a stronger stand and bomb Manchuria and China," while a plurality of 45 percent wanted to "keep trying to get a peaceful settlement," and nine percent wanted to "pull out of Korea entirely." In other words, those who wanted to escalate were outnumbered by those who didn't, and those wanted to withdraw were vastly outnumbered by those who didn't.

Table 2.2.2 shows that 52 percent of those polled opposed to escalation, while 57 percent opposed withdrawing—the outcome was an unhappy equilibrium in which the middle course was supported. The consequence was that so long as President Truman was willing to accept the political costs of such a course of action, he had a permissive environment to continue the war until a negotiated settlement could be reached. This point is made well by Figure 2.2.12, which shows consistent majorities in the spring of 1951 rejecting withdrawal, while favoring continued prosecution of the war.

Furthermore, among those 34 percent who approved of the war in November 1952, an equal number supported holding the line as preferred escalating, while among those 58 percent who disapproved of the war, about a third wanted to pull out and slightly more wanted to escalate.
Table 2.2.2
The Mistake Question and Policy Options, November 1952

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suppose the truce talks in Korea break down completely. Which one of these three things do you think we should do then?</th>
<th>As things stand now, do you feel that the war in Korea has been worth fighting or not?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pull our troops out of Korea and bring them home (23 percent)</td>
<td>Support, worth fighting (34 percent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep our troops in Korea and hold the present line there (29 percent)</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go ahead and attack the Chinese Communists (38 percent)</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No opinion (10 percent)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: NORC.
Note: Numbers in parentheses are for total sample.

Neither immediate withdrawal nor "escalation to victory" came to be supported by a majority in the Korean War. Instead, political leaders and members of the public became polarized over the war, largely over the question of whether to escalate the war to include attacks against the Chinese mainland, or to keep it limited in scope (and costs). Believing that the risks and costs of a war with China would be too high, Presidents Truman and Eisenhower both chose the latter course of action.
Do you think we should continue to keep our troops in Korea, or should we pull them out? (NORC)

Figure 2.2.12 - Pull Out or Continue in Korea?
2.3. THE VIETNAM WAR

We will not surrender.
We do not wish to enlarge the conflict.
We desire peaceful settlement and talks.
And the aggression continues.
Therefore, I see no choice but to continue the course we are on, filled as it is with peril and uncertainty.

President Johnson, May 4, 1965

Americans don't like long, inconclusive wars.
This is going to be a long, inconclusive war.

Ho Chi Minh, July 1965 \(^{265}\)

There are a great number of similarities between the Korean and Vietnam Wars: both involved the same important U.S. interest (containing the expansion of global communism in Asia); both offered the risk of escalation to involve a major Communist power; and as a consequence, both were fought as limited wars. As will be seen in this section, there are also many similarities in the way the American body politic responded to the two wars.

There is also evidence, however, that many viewed the two wars as being very different in nature (a brazen invasion and an unclear internationalized civil war, respectively)\(^ {266}\), that the containment argument had lost much of its potency by the time of the Vietnam War\(^ {267}\) and that few expected or were willing to tolerate Korea-like losses, much less those that were actually incurred: four in ten showed a willingness to tolerate Korea-like casualties at the beginning of the war, and by 1968, when the toll approached Korean War proportions of over 30,000 war dead, only about four in ten remained as supporters\(^ {269}\).

\(^{265}\) Time, 16 July 1965, p. 25.
\(^{266}\) Hans Morgenthau, for example.
\(^{267}\) For example, Mueller (1971) notes that unlike Korea, where similar phrases consistently elicited more hawkish responses in public opinion questions, the phrase "Communist expansion" inserted in a question in a February 1967 Gallup poll had no discernible impact.
\(^{269}\) See Voth (1967) and NORC 876-S, February 1966. These data will shortly be described in more detail.
Similarly, one in four showed a willingness to fight "a major war with hundreds of thousands of casualties."^268

Yet the war continued for nearly another five years, the toll in war dead increased by more than 25,000, and there was never majority support for a precipitous withdrawal. In short, the American public showed remarkable tolerance for casualties in Vietnam, well past the Korean War levels they had earlier seen as incommensurably high with the interests and principles at stake.

CHANGING BENEFITS, PROSPECTS, AND LEADERSHIP SUPPORT

The objective of preventing the Communists from achieving power in Indochina, and especially in South Vietnam after 1954, had been shared by five American presidents, and presumably by a majority of congressional and other political leaders. Thus, prior to the escalation of the war in July 1965 there was broad consensus among political leaders (including members of Congress) that Vietnam represented one of only a few areas in the world in which the U.S. had a vital interest,^270 primarily in South Vietnam's remaining outside the Communist sphere.

The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution had reiterated these interests and gave President Johnson wide latitude in responding to the situation:

[T]he Congress approves and supports the determination of the President, as Commander-in-Chief, to take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression.

[T]he United States regards as vital to its national interests and to world peace the maintenance of international peace and security in southeast Asia...the United States is, therefore, prepared, as the President determines, to take all necessary steps, including the use of armed force, to assist any member or protocol state of the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty requesting assistance in defense of its freedom.

^268 In his analysis of the public opinion data for the Gulf War, Mueller (1994a) argued that before the war few expected or were willing to fight a Vietnam-like war. These data suggest that during the early days of the Vietnam War few were willing to fight a Korea-like war in terms of casualties, much less a Vietnam-like war.

^270 George Kennan, of course, was one notable exception, and Hans Morgenthau another.
With the 1964 presidential election behind him, and facing attacks on U.S. forces at Pleiku on February 7, President Johnson stepped up military activity in Vietnam, including bombing North Vietnam. The tempo of activity increased dramatically, and reached unprecedented levels by June 1965. In late July, President Johnson announced the escalation of the war and the introduction of over a hundred thousand ground troops.

President Johnson's escalation of the war received bipartisan support from the Congress and other establishment figures, and public support followed accordingly. In short, President Johnson was fully justified in believing he had the majority support of the country when he undertook his escalation of the war. Unfortunately, neither the administration nor the rest of the country knew that the war would be less successful and more costly than they ever imagined—it ultimately became a different war.

Following the initial "rally" in support (see Figure 2.3.1), by early 1966 it had become clear that the war would be neither brief nor low in cost. Furthermore, with the instability of the South Vietnamese government and criticism of the war in hearings held by Senator Fulbright in February and March, public support rather quickly declined to around 50 percent, and continued declining gradually thereafter. While this decline was interrupted by rallies at the time of the Tet offensive in early 1968 and at the time of President Nixon's taking office, support generally declined thereafter at a rather constant rate for the remainder of the war. By mid-1969, public support for the war had generally bottomed out.

The decline in support was facilitated by a host of factors: the erosion of support among political leaders; the realization that the most likely outcome of the war was not a clear victory but instead a

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27 Mueller observes what appears to have been a "rally 'round the flag" at the time of the escalation and that at the beginning of the war there does not seem to be evidence of cross-pressures or value conflicts. Mueller (1971), p. 364.

27 Senator Fulbright held widely publicized hearings on the war in February 1966, in which establishment figures such as George Kennan went on record against the war.
negotiated settlement not unlike Korea: the absence of visible progress or success, and the increasingly common expectation that the war would be a long one; and the steadily mounting costs of the war.\(^{272}\)

Figure 2.3.1 - Support and Opposition in Vietnam

Although the response to the Tet offensive did not reduce support as dramatically as the Chinese entry into the Korean War had, it was a watershed event that showed that the “light at the end of the tunnel”

\(^{272}\)According to Seyom Brown (1974), as the costs of Vietnam rose, the strategic importance of Vietnam was increasingly called into question. In fact, a reassessment of the importance and desirability of global resistance to communism was under way by the mid-60s. See Brown (1973), pp. 22-3 and 27. Holsti and Rosenau (1979) found that a majority of leaders in the Spring of 1976 supported this view: slight majorities disagreed with the propositions that the structure of the international system had fundamentally been altered by the outcome in Vietnam, and that systemic changes represented a swing toward the ascendancy of communist influence in world affairs. Nevertheless, and as expected, supporters were more inclined to agree with these propositions than opponents, i.e., supporters viewed higher costs to a defeat than did opponents.
arguments heard in the fall 1967 Johnson "peace offensive" lacked credibility.

In the event, although the rate of decline in support for the war and the rate at which withdrawal sentiment increased were rather constant, as Figure 2.3.2 shows, Tet essentially destroyed for most any residual optimism about the war: those who thought that the war would last two years or less had approached 50 percent in the fall of 1967 but then fell over 10 percentage points shortly after Tet; those who thought the U.S. was making progress fell by more than 30 points; those who considered themselves "hawks" (i.e., wanted to increase the level of commitment) rallied by about eight points briefly, but then fell nearly 20 points.

![Graph showing the impact of Tet on public opinion](image)

**Figure 2.3.2 - The Impact of Tet**

In short, although Tet was not the military failure that it was portrayed to be by opponents of the war and the news media, it was a strategic defeat that eviscerated most of the remaining attitudinal bases of support for the war—the benefits were not high enough, the

\(^{274}\)Braestrup (1977); Hallin (1986).
prospects were not good enough, and the costs were too high to continue prosecuting the war in the same way. Accordingly, on March 31, 1968, President Johnson announced a limited bombing halt, and his intention not to seek the Democratic nomination for president, and subsequent war policy sought to minimize casualties so as to husband whatever support for the war remained until a negotiated settlement and withdrawal could be achieved.

From that point on, the U.S. aimed to pursue a low-casualty strategy until a negotiated settlement could be reached. And as can be seen from the earlier figure on casualties in Vietnam, both the Johnson and Nixon administrations were somewhat successful—the casualty rates were generally well below those of 1967 and 1968.

CHANGING COSTS: CASUALTIES AND SUPPORT

Having shown that declining support was associated with a number of other factors, we can now turn to the question of the relationship between casualties and support.

Hypothesized Casualties, Prospective Support

If there was strong initial support for the Vietnam War, that support was at some level contingent upon expectations about the costs that would be incurred—at some price, one might reason, achieving U.S. objectives would prove too costly for most Americans. There appears to have been only three public opinion questions that asked about prospective support in light of hypothesized casualties in Vietnam.

The first is from a survey done by Voth (1967) in which San Jose, California opinion leaders were surveyed to identify potential areas of disagreement between these leaders and U.S. government policymakers responsible for the conduct of the war (see Figure 2.3.3).

According to Voth's data, only about 36 percent were willing to support the war if it entailed Korea-like or higher casualty rates.275

275 The question Voth asked the opinion leaders was: "At what point do you believe the U.S. objectives are not worth the cost in casualties? Not worth the loss or injury of a single American; last year's casualty rate-100/month; Last year's casualty rate adjusted to increased troop strength-250/month; The Korean War rate-4,380/month; World War II rate for the U.S.-24,230/month; Other; Explain; Other write-in responses."
Although the question asked about casualty rates (i.e., the rate at which total dead and wounded were incurred) and not cumulative casualties or war dead, when the data are plotted, the result is the familiar downward-sloping curve introduced earlier.

![Graph showing the relationship between percentage approval and casualty rate](image)

**Figure 2.3.3 - Elites' Prospective Casualty Tolerance in Vietnam**

The second source of public opinion data on prospective tolerance for U.S. casualties is from a question NORC asked of a national sample in February 1966. According to these data, only about 38 percent approved of continuing the fighting if it meant that several hundred American soldiers would be killed every week—roughly the same rate at which war dead were accumulated during the first year and a half of the war.

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276 NORC asked: "Would you approve of continuing the fighting if it meant several hundred American soldiers would be killed every week?" Thirty-eight percent approved, 54 percent disapproved, and 54 percent didn't know. NORC 876-8, 2/66, N=1497.
Korean War.\textsuperscript{277} In short, the two questions are both asking about willingness to incur Korea-like or higher costs.\textsuperscript{278}

The third piece of data is from a survey also done in the early spring of 1966 by Verba et al. (1967). According to these data, only about one in four (23-26 percent, depending on whether "don't knows" are included) were willing to choose "a major war with hundreds of thousands of casualties," precisely the sort of war Vietnam turned out to be.\textsuperscript{279}

The data suggest that there was little prior support for a war whose toll would be similar to Korea, much less the much higher costs that ultimately obtained in Vietnam. But how do these questions on prospective willingness to tolerate the human costs of the war compare to observed support in the face of actual casualties?

Casualties and Observed Support

Figure 2.3.4 plots the monthly casualties in the Vietnam War from July 1965 through 1973. As can be seen, there was a gradual increase in casualty rates through the early part of the war, with especially high casualties in the spring of 1967, 1968, 1969, 1970, and 1971.

Tet destroyed any remaining illusions about the war at a substantial cost—the loss of life among U.S. service personnel was over 2,200 in February and May 1968, the highest monthly tolls in war dead for the entire war. In fact, Tet and the next several months occasioned the highest loss rates of the war—from January to June 1968 there were 1,500 or more deaths per month, and for two months, the toll was well over 2,000 deaths.

\textsuperscript{277}Department of Defense data show that from June 1950 through December 1951 there were ten months in which the average weekly casualty rate in war dead was 250 per week or higher.

\textsuperscript{278}This was frequently observed in 1967 and 1968: a casualty rate of 250 or more deaths per month was observed in May and November 1967, January through June 1968, August and September 1968, and most of the period from February to June 1969.

\textsuperscript{279}The question Verba et al. asked was: "Suppose you had to choose among continuing the present situation indefinitely, fighting a major war with hundreds of thousands of casualties, or a withdrawal of American troops leading to an eventual Communist takeover. Which would you choose?" Nineteen percent choose the withdrawal option, 43 percent chose continuing with the present situation, and 23 percent chose fighting a major war. Verba et al. (1967), p. 328.
Figure 2.3.4 - Deaths by Month in Vietnam War

Figure 2.3.5 plots data on support for the Vietnam War (the "mistake" questions, presented earlier) as a function of cumulative battle deaths. Like Korea—and to a lesser extent World War II—support for Vietnam exhibited a steady decline in the face of battle deaths.

Again following Mueller (1973), when the relationship between support and cumulative war dead was assessed using regression analysis, support was found to decline by about 23 percentage points for each increase by a factor of ten in the number of war dead. If we take

Muon regressed support on total cumulative casualties (dead, wounded, hospitalized and missing) and found that in both the case of Korea and Vietnam, each increase by a factor of ten in casualties corresponded to a decline of about 15 percentage points. The difference is due to the fact that I am regressing support on war dead, not total casualties. Other analysts have found a relationship between monthly casualties and support. Milstein (1974) found that the correlation between support and the cumulative casualties in the war was 0.94, and that controlling for the linear trend over time, the partial correlation between U.S. troops killed in the previous month and opposition to the war as measured by the "mistake" question was 0.50. Kernell (1978) had a similar finding: the correlation between the monthly number of war dead and presidential popularity was ~0.78.
the rate at which support declined as a function of battle deaths as a reasonable measure of "casualty tolerance," then, it appears that the willingness to accept deaths in Vietnam was substantially lower than that in either the Second World War or Korea.281

![Graph showing support for Vietnam as a function of deaths]

**Figure 2.3.5 - Support for Vietnam as a Function of Deaths**282

This would seem to make sense, given that the stakes in Vietnam were lower than in either of the other two wars—the Second World War was, of course, a total war, and Korea was initially viewed by many as the first theater of another world war; in spite of its shared aim of containing global communism, Vietnam never assumed the gravitas of Korea.283

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281 The reader will recall that the rate of decline in World War II was about two, and that for Korea was about 8.3.

282 Question wording provided earlier.

Returning now to the question of prospective and actual support, the questions on prospective support in the face of mounting casualties were not terribly bad predictors of observed support.

Data in Mueller (1973) suggest that total casualties (killed, wounded, hospitalized and missing) in Vietnam reached Korean War levels in about March 1968, at which time the average casualty rates for the two wars were comparable. From Voth’s data, we would expect support for the war to be no higher than about 36 percent, but according to data from AIPO, public support for the war in March 1968 was about 41 percent, about five percent more support than was found among Voth’s San Jose opinion leaders at this casualty rate.

Similarly, the February 1966 NORC data would have led us to expect that when the casualty rate reached several hundred war dead each week, only about 38 percent would still be supporting the war. Nevertheless, when the war reached this level of ferocity, the level of public support ranged from 40 to 42 percent, again somewhat higher than the 36 percent we might have expected from the question on prospective support. In short, the questions on prospective support actually seem to have underestimated slightly the willingness of the public to tolerate casualties.

As has been described here, while the cumulative costs of the war were a good predictor of support, the explanation of declining support as a function of casualties needs to be leavened by the knowledge that public support for the war was responding to a host of other factors—the level of support for the war among congressional and other political leaders, perceptions of the likely benefits, prospects for success, and

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284 Mueller (1973), p. 36. The average rates were the same because the cumulative casualty levels and the amount of time that had passed in each war were both roughly the same.

285 AIPO asked “In view of the developments since we entered the fighting in Vietnam, do you think the U.S. made a mistake sending troops to fight in Vietnam?” In early February 1963, 42 percent said it had not been a mistake, in March, it stood at 41 percent, and in April, at 40 percent.

286 Throughout the winter and spring of 1968—in January, February, March, April and May—the average weekly death rate was consistently above 300.
battlefield events. While casualties appear to be an important part of
the story, there is more to the story.

In fact, given the evidence that public attitudes tended to lag yet
mirror those among political leaders, a reasonable hypothesis is that
the way casualties manifested themselves on public support was
indirectly—the mounting war costs (among other factors) led to
increased dissension among political leaders, which then cued a decline
in public support. This is, of course, only a hypothesis, but it is not
inconsistent with what is known about how attitudes on Vietnam became
diffused through the public.287

DIVERGING PREFERENCES: ESCALATION, WITHDRAWAL, POLARIZATION

How did this declining approval manifest itself? Did increasing
percentages favor escalating or increasing the level of effort, or did
they increasingly prefer immediate withdrawal or decreasing the effort
in Vietnam? Mueller (1973) noted that there was no consistent pattern
of increasing sentiment for escalation in Vietnam. Using Mueller's
data, Figure 2.3.6 suggests that if there was an increase in escalation
sentiment, it seems to have peaked in 1966.

The data are, however, quite equivocal on this point, and the
levels of support for escalation are greatly influenced by differences
in question wording and the operative policy at the time of the poll.288
Of those who supported escalation, however, this may have been an
entirely rational response given their beliefs about the prospects for
success; in their survey of American leaders, Holsti and Rosenau (1979)
found that those who consistently favored military victory in Vietnam
believed that the war could and should have been won, but was not
because of self-imposed restraints on military forces.289

By contrast, a number of separate series suggest a rather
consistent pattern of increasing sentiment for withdrawal over time,
although support for this option seems never to have reached majority

288 The labels refer to series in Mueller (1973), Table 4.5. See
the table for the question wording.
support: all of the various series presented in Figure 2.3.7 show increasing support for withdrawal.290

Figure 2.3.6 - Escalation Sentiment in Vietnam

Again, withdrawal sentiment seems to have been a reasonably rational response to beliefs about the prospects for success:

Those who favored withdrawal from Vietnam not only regarded it as an unwinnable situation, but also one that could not have been salvaged by a different deployment of military capabilities.291

290As Mueller (1973) observed, when gradual—as opposed to immediate—withdrawal options were offered, they tended to receive much higher levels of support, often with robust majorities preferring the withdrawal option.

291Holsti and Rosenau (1979), p. 28.
Figure 2.3.7 - Withdrawal Sentiment in Vietnam

The data from the University of Michigan's Survey Research Center (SRC) in Figure 2.3.8 tend to support this finding—the percente who wanted to increase the U.S. effort slowly withered over time, while those who wanted to withdraw gradually increased, although again, they never achieved majority status.\(^2^8\)

\(^2^8\)Although SRC changed the survey instrument in 1968 (in 1964 and 1965 they asked a screening question prior to asking this question) this is a robust finding. Three-way questions from Gallup/NORC and Harris that asked the respondent to choose between increasing, decreasing or continuing at the same level of commitment show a similar finding of slowly declining sentiment for escalation and slowly increasing sentiment for withdrawal.
Figure 2.3.8 - Policy Preferences on Vietnam, 1964-1970

Using the National Election Survey data, Converse and Schuman (1970) noted that among those who disapproved of the war, a substantial percentage disapproved because they wanted the U.S. to take a stronger stand. Some have even seemed to argue that among those who disapproved, escalation sentiment increased. In fact, as Figure 2.3.9 shows, among those who disapproved, escalation sentiment declined modestly, while withdrawal sentiment increased modestly.28

28 These data raise important questions about Schwarz's (1994) assertion that: "Vietnam presents an even sharper picture of the public passion for escalation as conflicts continue...As was the case with the Korean War, as the conflict continued, as casualties mounted, and as "disapproval" of the commitment grew, an increasing number of those polled found escalation the most attractive option." Most of the public opinion data from Vietnam tends to refute this finding.
Figure 2.3.9 - Policy Preferences Among Those Disapproving

Although the question of whether the public came to prefer an increased or decreased commitment to Vietnam is an interesting one, the real story seems to be that the American public became increasingly polarized in their views about Vietnam.\(^{30}\)

These attitudes seem to have been cued by the changing attitudes of political leaders regarding what policy should be pursued in Vietnam, as presented by the media. A glimpse of this can be found, for example, as early as 1966, when substantial percentages of elites polled by Gallup wanted to reduce the level of effort in Vietnam—a plurality of 35 percent of opinion leaders who were polled wanted to slow down the fighting. 21 percent wanted to continue at present, and 27 percent wanted to step up the fighting.\(^{31}\) As early as 1966, elites were already somewhat polarized over the war, with those in the center somewhat fewer than those who wanted to do more or do less. It apparently took some


\(^{31}\)The question Gallup asked of a random selection from Who's Who in America was: "If you were President, what would you do about Vietnam?" GCI. pp. 2025-26.
already somewhat polarized over the war, with those in the center somewhat fewer than those who wanted to do more or do less. It apparently took some time for these attitudes to become dispersed through the general public.  

Figure 2.3.10 presents data that captures this lag rather well: respondents in November 1965 were asked to locate themselves on a seven-point continuum, where one signified immediate withdrawal, four signified a continuation of the current policy, and seven signified fighting to a complete military victory.

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![Bar chart showing policy preferences on Vietnam, November 1965.](chart)

**Figure 2.3.10 - Policy Preferences on Vietnam, November 1965**

As can be seen, a plurality of about 30 percent supported no change in policy, while the remainder spread to the two extremes.  

As in Korea, declining support resulted not in a clear majority preference for escalation or immediate withdrawal, but in polarization and policy deadlock. Despite this unhappy situation, President Johnson

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256 See Zaller (1992), especially pp. 185-219, for a compelling discussion of how the attitudes of opinion leaders became shared by the public at large.

257 Data are from Page and Brody (1972).
(and later Nixon) was still able to pursue a negotiated settlement and an orderly withdrawal—"peace with honor."

Figure 2.3.11 is consistent with such a view, and is similar to the response to Korea—as unhappy as they were about continuing the war, majorities consistently opposed a precipitous withdrawal from Vietnam.

![Bar chart showing public opinion on Vietnam war continuation or withdrawal](image)

**Figure 2.3.11 - Withdraw or Continue the War in Vietnam?**

**Leadership Disaffection Leading to Public Disaffection**

While the preceding treatment provides strong anecdotal evidence of such a connection, there is also empirical evidence that the increasing disaffection of political leaders toward the war led to the disaffection of the public. The first piece of evidence is from a survey from 1960, in which 2,282 respondents from a sample of opinion leaders were asked about their early and late positions regarding the Vietnam War. Table 2.3.1 compares the percentages supporting various policies early in the war and late in the war.
Table 2.3.1
Early and Late Positions on the War in Vietnam

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Early</th>
<th>Late</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I tended to favor a complete military victory</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I tended to favor a complete withdrawal</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I tended to feel in between these two</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The data in the table show a pattern quite similar to that observed in the contemporaneous public opinion data for the public—those favoring a complete withdrawal increased, in this case from 22 percent to 57 percent. There is also a clear decline in support for a complete military victory, from 51 percent at the beginning of the war to 22 percent at the end.\(^\text{298}\)

Figure 2.3.12 reclassifies these opinion leaders into seven groups in terms of their early and late positions toward the war. The options presented along the left axis represent the stated preferences of the leaders at the beginning of the war, and the options presented along the top represent the preferences at the end of the war.

Supporters were in favor of complete military victory throughout the war, while Critics consistently favored complete withdrawal.

\(^\text{298}\)It is possible that the percentage of the sample reporting support for a complete military victory at the beginning of the war is somewhat understated.
Converted Supporters were those who did not initially favor complete military victory but came to support that option by the end of the war, while Converted Critics were those who did not initially favor complete withdrawal, but came to support that position by the end of the war. Those in the center column are those who by the end of the war had moved away from supporting complete victory or complete withdrawal but either took a centrist position, or were unsure which course of action they preferred.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At the Beginning...</th>
<th>At the End of the Vietnam War...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete victory</td>
<td>Supporters (15.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In between these two</td>
<td>Converted Supporters (5.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete Withdrawal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2.3.12 - Opinion Leaders' Changing Policy Preferences

The figure shows the greatest growth in the Converted Critics—38 percent of the opinion leaders moved to support for a complete withdrawal. On the other hand, only 5.6 percent were Converted Supporters, who came to support a complete victory.

These data are consistent with the anecdotal and other evidence, presented earlier, that opposition to the war among opinion leaders increased, and that a growing preference for escalation was confined to

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288Rosenau and Holsti (1983). Same question wording as in Table 2.3.1.
a distinct minority. But is there a reason to believe that these attitudes were disseminated from the opinion leaders to the public rather than the other way around? In fact, there is empirical evidence supporting this proposition.

Extending work done by Converse (1962) and McQuire (1969), Zaller has suggested that the availability of information, political involvement and partisan predispositions affect the rate at which oppositional messages are received and accepted by members of the public. The basic insight is that those who have the most political information and are most politically involved and partisan are most likely to be exposed to the positions of their political leaders and most likely to accept these positions. Dissemination of attitudes among other members of the population is somewhat more complex, but equally predictable:

[The process by which political attitudes diffuse through the public] depends on variations in individual exposure to and acceptance of persuasive communications. The model specifies that exposure increases with individuals’ level of political involvement; it further specifies that disposition toward acceptance of persuasive messages generally declines with involvement, but that the amount of this decline interacts with individuals’ ideology and age. The model explains the initial public response to the issues of school desegregation in the 1950s, gay rights in 1978, defense spending in 1980, and the nuclear freeze in 1982. It also explains changes in public attitudes toward the Vietnam War between 1966 and 1970 and defections from the Democratic party in the 1972 presidential election.

Looking at the Vietnam War, Zaller (1987, 1992) has shown that increasing disaffection among political leaders seems to have cued declining support in the public, and that this declining support related

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300 It also provides additional evidence against a hypothesis of increasing escalation sentiment among the leaders: the 38 percent who were “converted critics” (i.e., converted to withdrawal sentiment) vastly outnumber the 5.6 percent who were “converted supporters” (i.e., converted to favor a complete military victory.


to the volume of pro- or anti-war stories in the press. Hallin (1986) found that administration spokesmen were given heavy exposure during the war up to the spring of 1968, but that after the Tet offensive, there was roughly comparable reporting from an administration viewpoint and from the viewpoint of its critics. The "tilt" in media reporting followed a "tilt" to opposition by political leaders, which was in turn followed by a "tilt" to opposition by the public. The process by which this seems to have taken place is an important one.

Figure 2.3.13 presents data from Zaller (1987) that plots the increase in opposition to the Vietnam War from 1966 to 1970 (the y-axis), as a function of political involvement for respondents with different political leanings. The figure provides strong support for a view that public attitudes followed those of partisan leaders.

All three groups in the figure showed an increase in opposition to the war, although there were some distinct partisan differences. As political involvement increased among Liberals, there was a monotonic increase in opposition to the war. The response of the Centrists and Conservatives was a non-monotonic function of political involvement. While all Centrists showed a 15 percent or higher increase in opposition to the war, those with high levels of political involvement showed the greatest increase—nearly 45 percent. Conservatives also show a non-monotonic response, but in their case, the most politically involved conservatives showed the smallest increases in opposition to the war. Those Centrists who had a moderate level of political involvement showed the greatest increase in opposition to the war.

302 See Zaller (1987), pp. 186-190, for a good discussion of declining support for the war among congressional and other political leaders.

306 Zaller used the following question from the University of Michigan's biannual National Election Survey: "Which of the following do you think we should do now in Vietnam? Pull out of Vietnam entirely. Keep our soldiers in Vietnam but try to end the fighting. Take a stronger stand even if it means invading North Vietnam." In Zaller's formulation, the withdrawal option was used to connote opposition to the war. See Converse and Schuman (1970), which shows that some of those who disapproved actually disapproved because they wanted to increase the level of commitment.
Figure 2.3.13 - Changes in Popular Opposition to the War in Vietnam, 1966-1970

Figure 2.3.14 presents data from the University of Michigan's National Election Surveys tracing the preferences over time of the most knowledgeable self-identified Democrats and Republicans.\textsuperscript{305} The figure shows that support for taking a stronger stand (the solid lines) fell over time both among Republicans and Democrats, but that highly knowledgeable Republicans were consistently more likely to support an escalatory option. It also shows increasing support for pulling out entirely among both Republicans and Democrats, although the Democratic support for that option was always higher than Republican support, and increased dramatically from 1968 to 1970.

Finally, the figure shows that just as support for escalation declined, support for a negotiated settlement initially increased among both highly knowledgeable Democrats and Republicans. From 1968 to 1970, however, Democrats became increasingly disenchanted with this option (it

\textsuperscript{305}A knowledge index ranging from zero to three was constructed by adding up the number of correct answers to three factual questions that were asked by NES. Those respondents who correctly answered all three questions were coded as being highly knowledgeable.
was, after all, now the war of a Republican president), while support for continuing the war increased among highly-knowledgable Republicans, and by 1970 was clearly preferable to taking a stronger stand in Vietnam.

![Graph showing changing policy preferences of the most knowledgable](image)

**Figure 2.3.14 - Changing Policy Preferences of the Most Knowledgable**

Finally, it is interesting to note that among the most knowledgable members of both parties in 1970, and just as in Korea, there was polarization among the elites of both parties: two of the three options (pulling out and trying for peace) received the support of about 45 percent. By contrast, in 1970 only about 30 percent of the most knowledgable in each party favored taking a stronger stand, a percentage that had declined over the course of the war.

While one cannot "prove" in any meaningful sense that the Converse-McGuire-Zaller model of reception and acceptance was at work, the

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Indeed, by showing that the Democratic party's stand on Vietnam charged significantly between 1968 and 1972, Gerber and Jackson (1993) point out that the changing relationships between partisanship and preferences on Vietnam coincided with significant changes in the major parties' positions on these issues, suggesting that preferences may have been endogenous in the electoral process during this period. This may reflect two facts, however. First, that the Vietnam War broke down
available evidence seems to be entirely consistent with this model, and to my knowledge, there is no other model that can provide a robust explanation of the pattern of mass political attitudes in the Vietnam War.

In conclusion, there seems to be very strong evidence that increasing public opposition followed from the growing opposition of congressional and other political leaders, and that the preferences of the public came to resemble those of their opinion leaders.

CONCLUSIONS

As stated at the beginning of this section, there are many similarities between the Korean and Vietnam Wars. In both wars, the perceived benefits for most seem to have declined or become increasingly elusive. As casualties mounted and congressional and elite criticism increased, public support declined, although the consequences were apparently not uniform. For some, the increasing death toll led to a desire to liquidate the commitment, in part because it was too costly. For others the increasing human costs may have actually increased the perceived stakes, leading them to support an increased commitment so that these deaths were not in vain. But fewer than four in ten in 1965-6 were willing to tolerate Korea-like casualties, and when the costs reached these levels, about this many supporters of the war remained.

In both wars, declining approval for the war and divisions in the public over preferred strategies mirrored those among members of Congress and other political leaders. There is, furthermore, ample evidence that disaffected opinion leaders during the Vietnam War had a substantial impact on declining public support for the war.307 That is, party loyalties while it was President Johnson's war, and then, with Nixon's election, it served the institutional interests of the party to oppose the war to differentiate its position from the Republican president.

307This is, in fact, one of the more important of Mueller's (1973) findings; he found that opinion leaders—and especially the president's position on war policy—substantially affected attitudes in the general public. More recently, Zaller (1992) found that increasing criticism from political leaders conveyed via the media cued polarization in the body politic.
disaffection and polarization among political leaders cued similar responses in the American public. And in both wars, although the American body politic became polarized, the president was left with a free hand to continue the war as long as he was willing to pay the political price in declining support. Although both wars were exceedingly difficult to conclude and essentially cost the incumbent of the White House his presidency, neither president faced the prospect of being forced into withdrawing from the conflict in a precipitous manner.

As unhappy as this polarization was, however, there was never any serious threat that an immediate withdrawal would be forced upon either President Truman or Johnson. In fact, in the case of both the Korean and Vietnam Wars, it is remarkable that majorities of the public refused either to escalate into the sort of war that they felt would be too costly, or to demand a precipitous withdrawal from a war from which they only wanted a negotiated settlement and an orderly and honorable exit.
2.4. THE GULF WAR

Yours is a society which cannot accept
ten thousand dead in one battle
Saddam Hussein\textsuperscript{108}

I don’t think that support would last if it were a long,
drawn-out conflagration. I think support would erode as it
did in the Vietnam conflict.
President Bush\textsuperscript{109}

There are many parallels between the Gulf War and the Korean War.
Like Korea, the Gulf War began dramatically, with the invasion of Kuwait
by Iraq in August 1990. It involved important stakes, although not as
compelling as the containment of global Communism. Unlike Korea,
however, the Gulf War was a remarkable success, achieving its objectives
at costs far lower than most had expected.

\textbf{BENEFITS, PROSPECTS AND LEADERSHIP SUPPORT}

After several days of consultation following the Iraqi invasion of
Kuwait on August 2, 1990, President Bush announced that he was sending
U.S. forces to “draw a line in the sand.” In building support for his
Gulf policy, President Bush benefited greatly from the longstanding
consensus that the Persian Gulf represented a region of vital importance
to the U.S., and from the fact that he was promoting goals that were
likely to be viewed favorably. In fact, there was bipartisan
congressional support for sending troops to the Gulf, and while the
measures are very crude, the data in Table 2.4.1 show that majorities of
the public thought vital U.S. interests were engaged, and probably
believed that important principles were being promoted.

The issue, then, was not whether important interests and principles
were at stake in the Gulf—there was broad agreement that they were—or
whether there was broad bipartisan and public support for sending troops

\textsuperscript{108}Stein (1993), p. 175.
\textsuperscript{109}Idelson (1991), p. 16.
to the Gulf—there was. Rather, the issue ultimately devolved into the question of what policy to pursue to force Iraq to quit Kuwait: whether sanctions were likely to be effective at forcing an Iraqi withdrawal, or whether force was ultimately required to achieve this objective, and whether the situation was important enough to warrant the risks and costs.

Table 2.4.1

Interests and Goals in the Gulf, November 1990

% BELIEVING VITAL INTERESTS INVOLVED

Many people believe that the United States has a vital interest in certain areas of the world and not in other areas. That is, certain countries of the world are important to the U.S. for political, economic or security reasons. I am going to read a list of countries. For each, tell me whether you feel the U.S. does or does not have a vital interest in that country...*

77% Kuwait
83% Saudi Arabia

% BELIEVING FOREIGN POLICY GOALS "VERY IMPORTANT"

I am going to read a list of possible foreign policy goals that the United States might have. For each one please say whether you think that it should be a very important foreign policy goal of the United States, a somewhat important foreign policy goal, or not an important goal at all. How about...

61% Defending our allies' security
59% Preventing the spread of nuclear weapons
57% Protecting weaker nations against foreign aggression
61% Securing adequate supplies of energy
58% Promoting and defending human rights in other countries

Source: Chicago Council on Foreign Relations.
Note: Foreign policy goals are goals that appeared to apply to the case of the Gulf.
As the Bush administration led the country to war, it sought to persuade the country to support a course that emphasized diplomacy and sanctions but was ultimately backed by force. Meanwhile, congressional opponents sought to persuade the public that sanctions were likely to work if given enough time, and that the situation did not warrant the risks or costs of a war.

Figure 2.4.1 shows the relative levels of public political activity of the Bush administration and the Congress in their respective efforts to make their cases to the public.\textsuperscript{310} The figure suggests that the administration consistently devoted attention to public efforts to make its case, far more, in fact, than did the Congress.\textsuperscript{311}

\textsuperscript{310}Data are from the Federal News Service, a clearinghouse for information on noteworthy political events in Washington, and retrieved from LEXIS/NEXIS.

\textsuperscript{311}The total White House, State and Defense Department levels dwarf congressional activity.

\textsuperscript{312}The figure presents the cumulative number of documents in the Federal News Service database of LEXIS/NEXIS that related to the situation in the Gulf. The search logic was "HEAD(IRAQ OR KUWAIT OR
The increase in congressional activity in November reflects the high levels of criticism the Bush administration received following its November 8 announcement that it was sending additional forces to create an offensive option.\textsuperscript{313}

Because members of the public receive most of their political information through the media, they tend to be aware of political activity only as reported by the media. Figure 2.4.2 shows the amount of Gulf-related reporting on ABC, CBS and NBC devoted to the administration and Congress, as well as several other Gulf-related subjects.

Although military stories clearly dominated reporting, of the policy actors it appears that the administration viewpoint dominated the congressional viewpoint by nearly a five-to-one margin.\textsuperscript{314} These data suggest that the public were far more likely to have been exposed to messages that were favorably oriented toward the Bush administration’s Gulf policy than opposed to it.\textsuperscript{315}

Judging by the somewhat higher levels of reporting devoted to the administration’s perspective, the tug-of-war between the Bush administration and opponents in Congress for public support may have been rather one-sided: the public generally tended to receive messages that were favorable toward the Bush administration’s Gulf policy.\textsuperscript{316}

\footnotesize{SAUDI OR PERSIAN GULF) AND DATE (AFT 7/90 AND BEF 4/91)\textsuperscript{\textdagger}, which retrieved records that had the keywords in the headline or first paragraph of the story.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{313}A similar finding results if one compares presidential activity as measured by the number of public papers of the president and congressional activity as measured by entries in the Congressional Record. The principal difference is that the Congressional Record entries go flat during the congressional recesses in August and November-January 1990.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{314}The relatively low levels of media attention given the congressional perspective is clear from data on reporting by Cable News Network.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{315}Zaller (1992) found that exposure to negative messages during the Vietnam War appeared to be associated with declining support.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{316}In part, this was no doubt due to tight controls on the media by the military and an acceptance of these controls by media organizations. But it also seems to have been a matter of giving the public the pro-military news they wanted. Mueller (1994a) notes that the media}
The one period in which reporting on congressional views was higher (during the period of congressional criticism following the November 8 announcement) seems to have had a predictable impact on the public: there was a substantial decline in public support for the Bush administration's Gulf policy. Approval of the administration's handling of the Gulf situation declined by 10 points or more, although it appears that this declining support was arrested before it fell below 50 percent. As the January 15 United Nations deadline for Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait approached, majorities became more gloomy about the prospects that sanctions alone would drive the Iraqis out of Kuwait.

essentially provided the public with the pro-administration perspective that they wanted.

The data reflect the number of program segments on the Gulf situation. The author wishes to thank Dan Amundson of the Center for Media and Public Affairs for making these data available.

The reader will note that this may in fact just be a continuation of the downward trend from the initial rally in August.
and ever gloomier about prospects that the U.S. was moving toward war.\textsuperscript{319}

Nevertheless, after listening both to the president’s case and that of his congressional critics, majorities of the public evidently believed that there were ample reasons to go to war with Iraq, as can be seen in Table 2.4.2. In the event, robust majorities of the public indicated they wanted the Congress to vote in favor of authorizing the use of force in the Gulf, and once the war was begun (see Figure 2.4.3), there was a significant rally in support.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figures/fig2.4.3.png}
\caption{Bush Handling of the Gulf Situation\textsuperscript{320}}
\end{figure}

In fact, support was remarkably high, initially reaching 80 percent or higher. While there was some decline after the initiation of the air

\textsuperscript{319}Data presented in Mueller (1994a) shows a clear downward trend in the public’s belief that sanctions would work and in their support for sanctions, while those believing war was likely increased.

\textsuperscript{320}While the wording of these questions varied, the general thrust is captured well by Gallup’s language: “Do you approve or disapprove of the way President Bush is handling the situation in the Persian Gulf region?”
war—most likely due to a decay in the "rally," support climbed again at the time of the ground war.

Table 2.4.2
Good Reasons for Going to War, December 1990

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To restore the former government of Kuwait back to power</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To prevent Iraq from ultimately attacking Israel</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To prevent Iraq from controlling a larger share of Mideast oil and threatening the U.S. economy</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To prevent Saddam Hussein from threatening the area with chemical and biological weapons</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To prevent Saddam Hussein from developing nuclear weapons</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To lower oil prices</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Gallup, 12/6-7/90, N=769.

Evidence in Support of the Leadership Model

The work of John Mueller (1994a) and John Zaller (1993) appears to provide strong support for the argument that, as in the Vietnam and Korean Wars, public attitudes tended to follow and mirror in a predictable way those of political leaders.

Peer and Chestnut (1993) examined coverage of the Gulf War in the New York Times, Washington Post and on ABC News for the weeks of November 8-16 and November 27—December 5, 1990 to better understand the quality of the media’s coverage. They found that:

- While the newspapers were more critical of Bush administration policy, the second and third most frequently cited sources were Bush administration officials (14 percent for both of the weeks that were analyzed) or Democrats (11-12 percent). Of the
remaining 75 percent, the most frequent statements were unsourced (31-39 percent), or sourced to various other actors. In the first week, 22 percent of the statements were unsourced, 11 percent each were attributed to experts and ordinary citizens, and nine percent were sourced to the U.S. military. By contrast, in the second week, 17 percent of the statements were sourced to administration officials, 13 percent to U.S. allies, and 12 percent each to Democrats and Republicans.

These data suggest the prominence of political leaders in the reporting regarding the Gulf War.121

Zaller (1993, see Figure 2.4.4) has shown that a rally in support for the Gulf War (as measured by approval of President Bush's handling of the Gulf situation) took place both among Conservatives and Liberals, but that the probability of rallying to support the Gulf War was much higher for Conservatives than for Liberals, and that the probability of a rally as a function of political awareness increased monotonically for Conservatives, but was non-monotonic for Liberals.

The interpretation seems to be that the more politically aware Conservatives were, the higher was the likelihood that they would support the war, once begun. By contrast, as the political sophistication of Liberals increased, there was initially an increasing probability of rallying to support the war, but that probability actually declined for the most politically aware Liberals, who seem to have followed the lead of more dovish congressional and other political leaders.

Like the Vietnam War, support for the Gulf War seems to have closely followed the Converse-McGuire-Zaller reception-acceptance model of attitude formation. In short, the anecdotal and empirical evidence again suggests that members of the public followed their preferred opinion leaders, and that political awareness and orientation were good predictors of coming to support the war once it was begun.

121 These analysts also found that the most prominent theme of reporting on ABC News during the week of November 8-16, 1990, accounting for fully 25 percent of the reporting, was danger to American troops.
**Figure 2.4.4 - Probability of Rallying to Support the Gulf War**

It also provides substantial support for Mueller's (1994a) argument that had the war gone badly and members of Congress had come to oppose the war or promote different war policies, public support and policy preferences would have changed in an equally predictable fashion.

**CHANGING COSTS: CASUALTIES AND SUPPORT**

The Gulf War was, of course, a stunning victory for the U.S. and its coalition partners, marred only perhaps by the failure to topple Saddam Hussein.\(^{322}\) In fact, three-quarters of those polled after the war thought that the war had been worth its costs. But what if the war had not gone so well, and it had turned out to be much costlier and longer in duration than it actually was? What sort of tolerance for casualties might have been expected?

There are two simple approaches to understanding the willingness of the public to tolerate casualties in the Gulf War. The first is to compare expectations about casualties with patterns of support to see if

\(^{322}\)At the conclusion of the war, few believed that Saddam could survive such a defeat.
supporters expected only low levels of casualties, since this would suggest that support was contingent upon low casualties. The second approach is to examine public opinion questions that asked respondents about prospective support given various hypothesized casualty levels.

**Expected Casualties and Support**

There is little doubt that before the war most members of the public were presented with a bewildering range of casualty projections. While the most common one seems to have been in the low thousands, estimates ranged well into the tens of thousands of deaths, and majorities of the public seem to have been aware that the toll could be very high indeed.\(^{323}\) In fact, at least the way the public was using the term, there is little evidence that they were expecting "low" casualties.\(^{324}\) In fact, as Table 2.4.3 shows, there is at least some evidence that most expected very high casualties. The median respondent to this question expected over 48,000 war dead, although this is probably inflated by the large percentage (nearly 45 percent) who were uncertain about the number of casualties to expect from the war. However, if the expectations of those in the "Don't know/Refused" category were distributed the same way as the other respondents', the median guess would still be rather high—perhaps 15,000 or higher.

Nor is there strong evidence that support was based upon the anticipation of low costs. Table 2.4.3 presents data from Gallup on the support and opposition at each of a number of different casualty estimates. The table shows that although support predictably declined

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\(^{323}\) For example, a poll done by ICR/Operation Real Security and the Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation from 1/30-2/3/91 asked: "According to the press, one Pentagon estimate predicted that 30,000 Americans will be killed if we start a ground war (with Iraq). Were you aware that losses could be that high?" Two out of three respondents (67 percent) said that they were aware that losses could be that high, while 32 percent said they were unaware, and one percent didn't know or refused to answer.

\(^{324}\) When a number of questions that asked about expected casualties in a non-quantitative way (e.g., whether respondents expected "high" or "low" casualties, "heavy" or "light" casualties) are examined, it is clear that more tended to choose the higher-cost options. For another view, see Mueller (1994a).
as the costs increased, at each level of expected cost from 3,000 to nearly 40,000, supporters outnumbered opponents.

Table 2.4.3
Casualty Expectations by Whether Situation Was Worth War

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| All: in all, is the current situation in the Mideast worth going to war over, or not? | 47% | 44%

How many Americans do you think would be killed before the war was over?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Less than 1,000 (6.1%)</th>
<th>45%</th>
<th>51%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1,000 or more but less than 3,000 (6.9)</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3,000 or more but less than 5,000 (2.8)</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5,000 or more but less than 10,000 (4.1)</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,000 or more but less than 15,000 (4.6)</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15,000 or more but less than 20,000 (2.3)</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20,000 or more but less than 30,000 (6.5)</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30,000 or more but less than 40,000 (3.7)</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40,000 or more but less than 50,000 (2.8)</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50,000 or more (15.4)</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know/Refused (44.9)</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Gallup, 1/3-6/91, N=1006.
Notes: Numbers in parentheses are percentages for total sample. The median guess was over 48,000 war dead.

One important point in Table 2.4.3 has to do with the "Don't know/Refused" category—probably as a consequence of the wide-ranging projections of U.S. casualties. 45 percent of the public in early January 1991 were unable or unwilling to guess how many U.S. servicemen might be killed. But the table also shows that a plurality of 46 percent of those who couldn't or wouldn't offer an estimate of likely casualties were still willing to accept the inherent risks of high casualties—even among the "Don't know/Refused" category, supporters outnumbered opponents. This is rather strong evidence that support for the war was not conditional upon expectations of "low" casualties or low risks of casualties, at least as the term seemed to be used by the public itself—if the public had been risk averse, we would have expected the "Don't know/Refused" category to show more opposition.
Although the "Don't know/Refused" category could have been distributed like the remainder of the respondents, their support could well have been somewhat more volatile than that of those who had a clearer idea of the likely costs.\textsuperscript{325}

In the event, with the beginning of the air campaign, approval for the war soared, and supporters outnumbered opponents by three to one or a larger margin, as can be seen in Table 2.4.4.\textsuperscript{326}

\textbf{Table 2.4.4}

\textbf{Casualty Expectations by Approval of Decision to Go To War}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approval</th>
<th>Less than 100</th>
<th>Several hundred</th>
<th>Up to a thousand</th>
<th>Several thousand</th>
<th>Tens of thousands</th>
<th>Don't know/Refused</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>approve</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disapprove</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Gallup, 1/17-20/91.

The second approach to understanding the likely casualty tolerance of the public if costs had been higher is to examine questions that

\textsuperscript{325}Several other comparisons of approval and expected costs from a Gallup poll done from January 17-20, 1991, were performed to see if there was a comparable result: in fact, majorities of those who expected costs in the tens of thousands still supported the war. For example, even among those respondents in a Gallup 1/30-2/2/91 poll who thought it "very likely" that "the situation will develop into a bloody ground war with high numbers of casualties on both sides," the decision to go to war was approved by a more than three to one margin.

\textsuperscript{326}Also interesting is that among those who disapprove, the higher the expected casualties the larger the percentage disapproving.
asked respondents about prospective support given various hypothesized casualty levels, usually in terms of war dead (see Figure 2.4.5).

![Graph showing uncertainty in the public's prospective casualty tolerance](image)

**Figure 2.4.5 - Uncertainty in the Public's Prospective Casualty Tolerance**

When data from these questions are plotted, they show the familiar pattern of fewer supporting as the level of hypothesized deaths increases, although the numbers seem to decline at somewhat different rates. Regression analysis of these data suggests that prospective support for the Gulf War declined at a rate ranging from about 6.5 to 13 points for each increase by a factor of ten in the number of war dead.\(^{327}\)

Does such a rate of decline represent "low" tolerance for casualties, "high" tolerance, or something in between? The answer to

\(^{327}\)The slope of -13.0 was estimated from the two Los Angeles Times series, while the slope of -6.5 was estimated from the remaining data points. Because the diagnostics were somewhat better for the regression of Los Angeles Times series, we can use the slope of -13.0 as our estimate of tolerance for casualties in the Gulf War (a decline of 13 points for each increase by a factor of ten in the number of deaths).
this question is that such a judgment can only be made relative to some standard. The most sensible standard is obviously the observed tolerance for casualties in the other wars.

If the stakes in the Gulf were less than those in Korea or Vietnam, as would seem to be the case, we would expect that the public’s prospective tolerance for casualties in the Gulf War would be lower than the observed tolerance in either the Korean or Vietnam Wars.

When the slope for the rate of decline as a function of casualties for the Gulf (-13.0) is compared with the slopes for World War II (about -2.0) Korea (about -8.3) and Vietnam (about -23.0), the prospective tolerance for casualties in the Gulf War was found to be lower than the observed tolerance in the Korean War, as predicted, but was actually somewhat higher than the observed tolerance in the Vietnam War. That is, if these questions are good estimators of the actual tolerance that would have been observed, the tolerance for casualties in the Gulf War lay somewhere between Korea and Vietnam.

This finding needs to be tempered, however, by remembering that both the Korean and Vietnam Wars began with the full support of congressional and other political leaders. In the case of the Gulf, however, the vote to authorize the use of force was a highly partisan one, passed by a bare majority. If the war had turned out to be costlier and longer, it seems likely that Congressional opposition might have become far more vocal far more quickly than in either of the previous two wars, with a predictable effect on public support.

Ultimately, there were 147 deaths due to hostile action in the Gulf War. And as Figure 2.4.6 suggests, healthy majorities of the public felt that the situation had been worth its low cost, although there is ample data that suggests widespread disappointment that Saddam’s overthrow was not thrown into the bargain.

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325 The reader will recall that questions on prospective support given hypothetical casualty rates in the Vietnam War turned out to be reasonably close to the observed support.
329 Mueller (1994a) makes this argument.
Given the loss of life and other costs in the Persian Gulf, do you think the war to defeat Iraq was worth the cost or not? (CBS/NYT Times, Time/CNN)

Figure 2.4.6 - Was the Gulf Situation Worth Going to War?

Was a high-casualty war likely or possible? From a military perspective the Gulf War was obviously a very different war from either Korea or Vietnam, one that greatly favored the use of air power and mechanized forces in a combined-arms setting. Even if Iraq had attempted a casualty-maximizing strategy against the U.S., the U.S. would likely have adapted its own strategy to minimize casualties—this was not a one-move game, but an adaptive one. In short, unless Iraq was able to effectively use weapons of mass destruction, it is rather difficult in retrospect to see how it could have created the sort of war that would have resulted in exceedingly high losses.

Rather, it seems that the U.S., through its choice of strategy, may have had as much control over the magnitude of U.S. casualties. As many strategists noted, had there been a direct ground assault without a prolonged air campaign (as opposed to the extended air campaign followed

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Mueller (1994a), for example, argues that an Alamo-style defense of Kuwait City could have been used to inflict heavy casualties on U.S. forces.
by an operational-level maneuver that was actually used), there likely would have been much higher U.S. casualties. Instead, the U.S. operational plan was explicitly aimed at minimizing casualties through the application of technology (air power) and operational art.
2.5. PANAMA

The invasion of Panama was a case where moderately important short- and long-term benefits were expected from overthrowing and capturing General Manuel Noriega. Not only would the security of Americans in Panama be improved in the short-term, but a longer-term problem that had bedeviled both the Reagan and Bush administrations would finally be solved.

In many respects, Panama is like the U.S. interventions in Lebanon in 1958 and in Grenada in 1983: several reasonably important objectives were being promoted; there was broad congressional support (or at least no visible initial opposition); overwhelming force was used to quickly cow potential adversaries and to enable massing of forces and firepower; objectives were achieved in a quick and decisive manner; and the costs in battle deaths were rather low and widely perceived as acceptable. Finally, all three interventions benefited from reasonably high levels of public support at their conclusion.

**BENEFITS, PROSPECTS AND LEADERSHIP SUPPORT**

While the litany of grievances against Noriega was a rather long one by December 1989, there were two key events earlier in the year that had exacerbated tensions between the U.S. and Panama and appear to have occasioned heightened U.S. political activity, and a final set of events in December 1989 that precipitated the intervention, as can be seen in Figure 2.5.1, which presents the simple cumulative count of records related to Panama from the Federal News Service database in Lexis/Nexis.

332 In Lebanon, the objectives were to restore order, support King Hussein, and protect American lives, while sending a signal to the Soviet Union and unfriendly Arab regimes. In Grenada, the objectives were securing the safety of Americans in Grenada, toppling a leftist regime, and expelling Cuban military personnel.

333 In Panama, there were 22 deaths; in Grenada, 25; and in Lebanon, only one battle death.

The first event was Noriega's refusal to honor the May 1989 presidential elections. This led to increased political activity on the part of the U.S. government, and an increase in U.S. forces in Panama, a response that was widely praised by members of Congress and appears to have boosted public approval of President Bush's handling of Panama. Efforts by the OAS to negotiate a transition to the rightful regime were also undertaken at this time. These efforts ultimately failed to yield a solution, however, and tensions increased further in the fall of 1989 following the breakdown in the OAS talks with the Noriega regime.

Figure 2.5.1 - Public Political Activity on Panama

The second key event was an unsuccessful coup attempt against Noriega undertaken in early October 1989. As a result, the Bush administration had been widely criticized for failing to assist the coupists, and approval for the administration's handling of Panama accordingly fell.

These events, and the political activity they generated, also resulted in increases in media reporting, as can be seen in Figure 2.5.2.
Figure 2.5.2 - Television News Reporting

As a consequence, by December 1989, the public had been exposed to a fair amount of concentrated reporting on Panama, and had followed members of Congress in giving President Bush high marks for his military response to the first event, and poor marks for the U.S. non-response to the second. In short, before December 1989, there was substantial evidence that the Congress and public would support a successful military operation against Panama.

As Table 2.5.1 shows, majorities believed that the U.S. had a vital interest in Panama, and that at least one of the objectives—halting the flow of drugs—may also have been considered a "very important" foreign policy goal by a majority. 335

335 Indeed, President Bush had been engaged in a major campaign against drugs in 1989, and other public opinion data suggest such a conclusion. The goal of promoting democracy has consistently been considered "very important" by only about 30 percent of the public.
Table 2.5.1

Interests and Goals in Panama

% BELIEVING VITAL INTERESTS INVOLVED

Many people believe that the United States has a vital interest in certain areas of the world and not in other areas. That is, certain countries of the world are important to the U.S. for political, economic or security reasons. I am going to read a list of countries. For each, tell me whether you feel the U.S. does or does not have a vital interest in that country... Panama

77% U.S. does have vital interest (11/78)

% BELIEVING FOREIGN POLICY GOALS "VERY IMPORTANT"

I am going to read a list of possible foreign policy goals that the United States might have. For each one please say whether you think that it should be a very important foreign policy goal of the United States, a somewhat important foreign policy goal, or not an important goal at all. How about...

85 Stopping the flow of illegal drugs into the United States (10/94)
30 Helping to bring a democratic form of government to other nations (10/86)

Source: Chicago Council on Foreign Relations.
Note: Foreign policy goals are goals that appeared to apply to the case of Panama.

These data fail to capture the breadth of the interests and principles engaged in Panama, however, and the depth of the congressional and public support for an operation to finally solve the Noriega problem.

The invasion of Panama was widely hailed by members of Congress, many of whom had been very critical of the Bush administration in October 1989 for failing to capitalize on a coup attempt against Noriega. Robust majorities of the public also found numerous benefits in the intervention, and rather consistently gave evidence that the U.S. had good cause in invading Panama and overthrowing Noriega.
Perhaps first and foremost (and most urgent) among these was protecting Americans in Panama. Polls taken in the last several years show that protecting the U.S. and its citizens is given the highest priority for the use of military forces—80 to 90 percent support, and in the case of Panama, majorities believed that Americans were in danger:

- 65 percent thought that Americans in Panama were in a great deal or a fair amount of danger, while another 28 percent thought that they were in some danger.\(^{337}\)
- 68 percent thought that the shooting killing of a U.S. soldier by Panamanian forces signaled that there was increasing danger to Americans in Panama.\(^{338}\)

This was not the only basis for support, however. In fact, members of the public seemed to believe they had very many reasons for supporting the intervention in Panama:

- 89 percent thought that President Bush’s reaction to the situation in Panama was about right (69 percent) or had not been tough enough (20 percent)\(^{339}\)
- Between 74 percent\(^{340}\) and 80 percent\(^{341}\) thought the U.S. was justified in invading Panama and overthrowing Noriega, and 55 percent thought the action was morally justified.\(^{342}\)

\(^{336}\)Richardman (1995), p. 44. For example, in December 1982, Gallup/Newsweek asked: "In general, do you think each of the following is or is not good grounds for sending U.S. troops to another country?" Eighty percent said they thought that Americans being attacked was good grounds for sending U.S. troops, while 17 percent said it was not. We can see further evidence in public support for operations such as the Dominican Republic (1965), Mayaguez (1975) and the aborted effort to rescue American hostages held in Iran (1980), all of which included the justification of rescuing or protecting American citizens, and all of which received support from three out of four or more respondents.

\(^{337}\)ABC News, 12/20/89.
\(^{338}\)ABC News, 12/20/89.
\(^{339}\)ABC News, 12/20/89.
\(^{341}\)Newsweek, 12/21/89.
\(^{342}\)Los Angeles Times, 12/21/89.
87-88 percent felt that the reasons President Bush offered were good enough for ordering the operation.\(^{341}\)

68 percent thought that the U.S. had made every effort to negotiate a peaceful settlement before the intervention, that is, that it was action taken as a last resort.\(^{342}\)

77 percent thought sending U.S. forces into Panama to overthrow Noriega was legal.\(^{345}\)

53 percent were not bothered by the fact that only a few countries had expressed support for the action.\(^{346}\)

As in the case of Iraq, the demonization of Noriega had led the public to prefer one very clear objective above all others: overthrowing and capturing Noriega. Although most seemed to think Noriega's capture was inevitable, there is evidence that if Noriega had not been captured, fewer would have seen the intervention as a success:

- 79 percent approved of the U.S. having sent its troops to overthrow Noriega.\(^{347}\)
- 58 percent said that U.S. actions in Panama could not be considered successful unless Noriega was captured, but 72 percent thought Noriega would eventually be caught.\(^{348}\)

If the public were optimistic about the short-term objective of capturing Noriega, they also fully expected longer-term benefits in a democratic Panama: six out of ten or more thought the U.S. action meant that the prospects for democracy were improved by the intervention.\(^{349}\)

**CHANGING COSTS: CASUALTIES AND SUPPORT**

Majorities furthermore seemed to believe that U.S. objectives would be achieved at reasonably low cost: between 85 and 92 percent thought

\(^{343}\)ABC News, 12/20/89 and 12/21/89.

\(^{344}\)Los Angeles Times, 12/21/89.

\(^{345}\)ABC News, 12/20-21/89.

\(^{346}\)ABC News, 12/21/89.

\(^{347}\)ABC News, 12/21/89.

\(^{348}\)ABC News, 12/21/89.

\(^{349}\)ABC News, 12/21/89; Los Angeles Times, 12/21/89; ABC/Washington Post, 1/11-16/90.
the U.S. would avoid a Vietnam-like involvement. In fact, as Figure 2.5.3 shows, even if casualties had continued to mount over several weeks, as long as Noriega was seized, majorities thought that the operation would be worth its costs.

![Figure 2.5.3 - Approval With and Without Casualties Mentioned](image)

Nor did support appreciably decline when respondents were reminded of the prospect of civilian casualties: 58 percent said that they would still approve if large numbers of Panamanian civilians were killed or wounded during fighting in Panama.

Altogether, there were 23 deaths among U.S. servicemen due to hostile action, as many as nine of whom may have been killed by friendly fire, and another 324 were wounded in the operation.

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350ABC News, 12/21/89; ABC/Washington Post, 1/11-16/90; 351While 54 percent said that the removal of General Noriega from power would be worth the cost if casualties continued to mount over the next several weeks, only 42 percent thought that it would be worth it if Noriega escaped (Black/USA Today, 12/20/89). 352ABC News, 12/20/89. 353U.S. Department of Defense (1995). 354Clodfelter (1992).
Although Figure 2.5.3 suggests that support would have declined if casualties had mounted over several weeks (even though majorities would apparently have continued approving of the operation), the relationship between casualties and support in Panama is difficult to assess, because there were so few battle deaths, most of these were incurred in the first day of the operation, and there are so few available data points. When the available data are plotted, as in Figure 2.5.4, it appears that there may have been a slight decline in support, but there are too few data points to properly estimate the slope using regression analysis.

![Chart showing support for Panama as a function of deaths.](chart)

**Figure 2.5.4 - Support for Panama as a Function of Deaths**

Suffice it to say, however, that the intervention in Panama was widely perceived as a success, and as being worth the costs that were incurred, an observation confirmed by public opinion data showing that between 55 and 66 percent of those polled stated that the intervention had been worth the losses in life.\(^{355}\)

\(^{355}\)Los Angeles Times, 12/21/89; Black/USA Today, 1/5-6/90 and 1/8/90. Again, if the U.S. had failed to achieve the benefit level from seizing Noriega, it is entirely possible that majorities would not have viewed the operation as having been worth the costs.
Considering the many anticipated benefits, the high prospects for (and ultimately quick) success, the fact that the costs were not terribly high, and the willingness to tolerate still higher casualties if it led to the capture of Noriega, it is little surprise that four out of five or more of those polled during and after the operation typically supported it. But perhaps more important in shaping these attitudes were the facts that there was bipartisan support for taking action against Noriega, and that the operation quickly succeeded in eliminating opposition at relatively low cost in casualties—26 servicemen died in the action.

The next section will describe a recent intervention that incurred roughly the same number of battle deaths as Panama and Granada, but ultimately received much lower levels of elite and public support.
2.6. SOMALIA

Unlike the cases of the Gulf War and Panama, in which respondents found very many reasons to support the use of force, Somalia is a case where there was only one reason to intervene—to relieve the widespread human suffering.

Somalia was also a case where public support seems to have been somewhat contingent upon pursuit of the initial humanitarian objective, and accomplishing the mission with few-to-no casualties. In the event, the incremental benefits may have diminished when the mission became "nation-building" (and again when it became "warlord-hunting"). And when the costs started mounting, the political consensus among the Congress and other political leaders broke down, and majorities of the public withdrew their support for the operation. In sum, Somalia was a case where there was initial agreement that ends and means were in balance, but when the perceived benefits, prospects for success, costs, and support from opinion leaders changed, support fell.

BENEFITS, PROSPECTS AND LEADERSHIP SUPPORT

There had been congressional support (if not pressure) for greater U.S. action even before President Bush made the August 1992 decision to airlift relief supplies, and the November 1992 decision to introduce U.S. forces to ensure that these supplies could reach the afflicted Somali population. President Bush’s decisions were widely supported by members of Congress and other political leaders, as well as by representatives of humanitarian organizations and the press. Indeed, the scale of the looming losses—hundreds of thousands of Somalis who were starving to death—created a moral basis for action from which only a dedicated misanthrope could turn away.

Judged by the data in Figure 2.6.1, it was not until August 1992 that political activity on Somalia, led by the State Department, picked up; State’s actions were lagged by the Congress, Defense Department, and
White House.\textsuperscript{356} And media reporting levels seem to have followed the actions of these political leaders and events on the ground.\textsuperscript{357}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure2_6_1.png}
\caption{Political Activity on Somalia}
\end{figure}

While the State Department remained active throughout the fall of 1992, it was not until President Bush's late November 1992 decision to introduce U.S. troops into Somalia that administration and congressional activity picked up. This reflected a concerted effort by the Bush administration to explain the reasons for the intervention, and heightened levels of congressional commentary, mostly favorable. In large part, this consensus was due to President Bush's promise that the operation would be limited in objective and scope, and yield vast

\textsuperscript{356}By contrast, data from the public papers of the president suggest a rather low level of White House activity for the period from July through September 1992, and data from the Congressional Record suggest an increase in congressional activity in mid-July and a low level of activity during the August recess.

\textsuperscript{357}Indeed, contrary to the conventional wisdom about "the CNN effect" in getting the U.S. involved in Somalia, Andrew Natsios argues that he was unsuccessful in his attempts to gain media attention for the tragedy when he was heading USAID's relief efforts.
humanitarian benefits at a cost in U.S. casualties that could be expected to be rather low.\textsuperscript{358}

Majorities of the public evidently expected the operation to be a success: nearly six out of ten were confident that the U.S. would succeed in ending the famine and that U.S. troops would be able to withdraw in a few months, as planned, and 74 percent were confident that the U.S. troops would be able to accomplish their objectives with very few or no casualties, the same percentage that approved of the operation.\textsuperscript{359} In fact, the operation was generally supported both by those who expected few or no casualties and by the 39 percent or so who didn't.\textsuperscript{360} In short, it seems that the vast humanitarian benefits of the operation were seen to justify the operation with the few or no casualties that most expected.

The Somalia intervention subsequently played out more-or-less as expected: by the time of the transition to the United Nations in May 1993, the objective of providing a secure environment to enable humanitarian relief had largely been achieved and at a cost of only four deaths due to hostile action. The transition included a change of objective to support for a broader process of political reconciliation, which came to be described as "nation-building." While members of Congress and the public provided a permissive environment to the administration to pursue this objective, it seems that they thought that the earlier success and low costs would continue to obtain.

\textsuperscript{358} The U.S. had convinced the Somali warlords that the U.S. had no aspirations to determine Somalia's political future. The Somali warlords accordingly agreed not to oppose the U.S. objective of feeding the starving. It was not until the U.S. and United Nations attempted to exclude the warlord Aidid from the political reconciliation process that the situation escalated.

\textsuperscript{359} Gallup, 12/4-6/92, N=1005. See Gallup Poll Monthly, December 1992, pp. 18-20. A chi-square test of statistical independence revealed that casualty expectations and approval were not independent, i.e., that those who approved were more inclined to expect low casualties than those who did not. This result was statistically significant at the 0.01 level.

\textsuperscript{360} Among those who were very or somewhat confident that U.S. troops would be able to accomplish their mission with very few or no casualties, 87 percent approved, while among those who were not too or not at all confident, 61 percent approved.
Over the summer, the situation in Somalia seemed to unravel. The first inkling to much of the public that the situation had changed in this regard came with the deaths of 26 Pakistani peacekeepers in June, which precipitated a forceful U.S. and UN response, ultimately including the dispatch of U.S. Army Rangers. The addition of a “warlord-hunting” mission shifted the media and public’s focus back to military operations and away from the continued successes the U.S. was having in the humanitarian mission. Worse yet, despite numerous U.S. and United Nations attempts to capture the warlord Aidid, the prospects for success of the “warlord-hunting” mission seemed to decline after a series of unsuccessful raids. This lack of success also began to come at a price in additional U.S. deaths due to hostile action: there were four U.S. deaths in one incident in August, and another three in September; the death toll had nearly tripled in the space of two months.

The congressional consensus also came unraveled, and by late September both houses of Congress were on record with a non-binding resolution that the Clinton administration needed to report on its objectives and exit strategy by October 15, or face a potential cutoff of funds on November 15. With the diminished benefits, the declining prospects for success, the increasing costs, and the increasing disaffection of members of Congress, public support collapsed over the late summer of 1993. A number of measures of public opinion told essentially the same story: more had come to believe that the U.S. intervention had been a mistake; over half thought that the U.S. was too deeply involved in Somalia; only about four in ten approved of President Clinton’s handling of the situation, and the same percentage approved of the presence of U.S. troops in Somalia. Furthermore, majorities had come to prefer a return to the humanitarian focus over “nation-building” or “warlord-hunting.” In short, prior to the deaths in Mogadishu, support for U.S. policy in Somalia had already collapsed.

The 18 deaths and dozens of wounded incurred in the October 3-4 firefight in Mogadishu created a firestorm of congressional criticism, and nearly succeeded in a congressionally led effort to withdraw U.S. forces from Somalia by the end of the year. Negotiations between the
administration and the Congress, however, ultimately led to an agreement on a six month timetable for withdrawal.

As shown in Figure 2.6.2, which presents a picture of daily media reporting levels for October 1993, the political reaction also led to an explosion in news reporting.

![Figure 2.6.2 - Media Reporting, October 1993](image)

By the end of October, CNN had broadcast nearly 300 segments on Somalia; the New York Times had printed nearly 175 stories; NBC, CBS and ABC had broadcast 20-25 segments; and even the staid MacNeil-Lehrer NewsHour had broadcast eight stories. In all cases, there was an immediate increase in reporting, but CNN also evidenced heightened reporting just before the congressional debate over Somalia, which led to approval for a six-month withdrawal timetable.

In fact, it appears that CNN was used as a channel for Clinton administration officials and congressional opponents to make their respective cases to the public. Figure 2.6.3 suggests that congressional appearances on CNN initially outnumbered those of administration spokespersons, i.e., that members of the attentive public
who were turning to CNN were more likely to receive (mostly negative) congressional messages than (mostly favorable) administration ones.

![Graph showing cumulative program segments over October](image)

**Figure 2.6.3 - Administration/Congressional CNN Appearances**

By October 7, reporting on the administration had essentially caught up with the high level of reporting on the Congress. It was also on October 7 that President Clinton addressed the nation announcing a short-term increase in troops to better defend U.S. forces in place, but a definite withdrawal of U.S. forces by the end of March 1994.

In summary, there were a great many changes that figured into public support. First, it appears that most of the benefit from the operation was achieved with the initial U.S. success at the humanitarian mission, and that the "nation-building" and "warlord-hunting" objectives that replaced this mission were not only fuzzy to much of the public, but were also probably valued less highly. Second, the prospects for success of political reconciliation came to be seen as far lower than the prospects had been for the initial mission—as time passed, leading Somalia to political reconciliation seemed less likely to succeed.

Third, widespread congressional support for the humanitarian operation had turned into widespread opposition to the broader objectives, and
formal (and highly visible) action to constrain the operation through the threat of a cutoff of funds.

CHANGING COSTS: CASUALTIES AND SUPPORT

The U.S. engagement in OPERATION RESTORE HOPE and UNOSOM from 1992 to 1994 cost a total of 29 lives due to hostile action, and another 14 due to other causes. While the other changes—in objectives and perceived benefits, in the prospects for success, and in the mounting congressional opposition to the intervention—figured prominently in declining support, the mounting costs in casualties in August, September and October 1993 certainly also contributed in an important way.

As was seen, in early January 1993 there was a common expectation that the U.S. would achieve its objectives with few or no deaths due to hostile action, and until August 1993, the operation for the most part lived up to this expectation. By October 1993, however, this expectation was no longer tenable, and many were concerned that the U.S. was bogged down in a situation from which it would be very difficult to extricate itself.

In fact, public opinion questions in October that asked respondents whether they thought the humanitarian mission to Somalia had been worth the losses of life and other costs found that only 42 to 48 percent thought that the operation had been worth these costs, and 60 percent agreed with the statement that "nothing the U.S. could accomplish in Somalia is worth the death of even one more U.S. soldier." Figure 2.6.4 plots public opinion data on approval for the Somalia operation against the cumulative costs in deaths due to hostile action.

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361CBS News, 10/6/93, 10/6-7/93, 10/18-19/93 and 12/5-7/93. Forty-eight percent in the last poll responded that it had been worth the costs when they were asked: "Given the possible loss of American lives, the financial costs, and other risks involved, do you think sending U.S. troops to make sure food got through to the people of Somalia was worth the cost, or not?" By that time, of course, the U.S. troops were scheduled to be withdrawn by the end of March 1994.
362Time/CNN, 10/7/93, N=500.
363The data make use of questions on approval for presidential handling of Somalia and approval for the presence of U.S. troops in Somalia. Because of the change in mission, questions that asked whether
Figure 2.6.4 - Support for Somalia as a Function of Deaths

As can be seen, Somalia also displays the familiar downward sloping relationship observed in the other case studies—as the costs in deaths due to hostile action increased, support fell. In fact, regression analysis suggests that the rate of this decrease was a decline of about 30 points in support for each increase by a factor of ten in the number of deaths due to hostile action.

Since the Somalia operation engaged no vital interests and seemed to engender only a single humanitarian objective, it should be little surprise that the rate at which support declined as a function of casualties was much higher than that of any of the other wars and interventions discussed in this study.\textsuperscript{364}

\textsuperscript{364}The reader will recall that this slope is much higher than that for the Second World War (-2.0), Korea (-8.3), the Gulf War (-13.0), or the Vietnam War (-23).

the initial operation had been a mistake seemed unsuitable, since many still approved of the original humanitarian mission but disapproved of the subsequent ones.
Somalia therefore provides yet another case where casualties appeared to figure into the decline in public support in an important way, but where a focus on casualties alone would lead us to miss a number of other very important correlates of the declining support: diminishing incremental benefits and prospects for success, and increasing opposition from congressional and other opinion leaders.

The next section will turn to a question that was also asked about the Korean and Vietnam Wars: did this declining support manifest itself in a desire for an increased commitment or escalation, or in a desire for a decreased commitment or withdrawal?

WITHDRAWAL, NOT ESCALATION OR POLARIZATION

Schwarz (1994) recently argued that:

In the case of Somalia, it is widely believed that the American public demanded a withdrawal of the U.S. commitment there after a small number of American deaths. In fact, however, poll results show a more complex public attitude.365

While Schwarz is entirely correct that the attitude is somewhat more complex than that, there is absolutely no doubt that withdrawal from Somalia was the clear and consistent preference of a majority of respondents.366 The overall preferences of the public are captured well by Figure 2.6.5: a plurality (and not a majority) favored immediate withdrawal, and slightly smaller percentages favored an orderly withdrawal or escalation; very few wanted to keep the current level of troops.

There were three questions that asked respondents to choose between immediate withdrawal, an orderly withdrawal, and continuing or increasing the commitment, and in each case withdrawal—whether immediate or orderly—was preferred over escalation or continuation of the commitment:

- The October 7 poll by Time/CNN in Figure 2.6.5 found that 37 percent wanted to remove all U.S. troops immediately, 28

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366For a good overview of Gallup’s data on the subject, see Moore (1993).
percent wanted to remove them in the next six months (a total of 65 percent preferring withdrawal), six percent wanted to keep the current number of troops, and 25 percent wanted to send more troops.

**How should the United States respond to the fighting that has broken out in Somalia? (Time CNN/Yankelovich, 10/7/93)**

![Bar Chart](chart.png)

**Figure 2.6.5 - Policy Preferences, October 7, 1993**

- An October 5 poll by Gallup/CNN/USA Today found that 43 percent wanted to withdraw U.S. troops right away, 26 percent wanted to gradually withdraw U.S. troops (a total of 69 percent preferring withdrawal), seven percent wanted to keep the involvement the same, and 18 percent wanted to increase the U.S. military commitment.

- And a University of Maryland poll found that 28 percent wanted to withdraw immediately, 43 percent wanted to withdraw in six months (a total of 71 percent favoring withdrawal), and 27 percent wanted to "withdraw when we have stabilized the country, even if this takes longer than six months."
In fact, when the more than 30 questions on withdrawal sentiment were carefully analyzed, it becomes clear that withdrawal from Somalia was favored over either maintaining or increasing the U.S. commitment, with six out of ten or more typically preferring withdrawal.

Like the cases of Korea and Vietnam, immediate withdrawal was rarely supported by a majority, although before President Clinton's announcement of a withdrawal by the end of March 1994, a plurality commonly supported this option. Unlike Korea and Vietnam, however, when majorities were given a simple choice between continuing the commitment or withdrawing, they overwhelmingly chose withdrawal: In October and December 1993, CBS News/New York Times asked whether the U.S. should keep its troops in Somalia until the situation was peaceful, or withdraw its troops as quickly as possible; 60 percent in October and 61 percent in December preferred withdrawal as quickly as possible.

But what of escalation sentiment? Although robust majorities typically supported withdrawing from Somalia, a careful analysis of questions that asked about sending additional troops, or attacks on or efforts to capture Aidid, shows that the public was not looking for an increased commitment to Somalia: majorities were generally willing to support uses of force only to facilitate an orderly withdrawal, or to punish those responsible for the deaths in Mogadishu.

For example, there was majority support for sending additional forces when it was suggested that they were being sent to better protect U.S. troops until they could be withdrawn, or to force the release of U.S. servicemen held hostage. By comparison, questions that simply asked if the respondent favored sending additional forces failed to be supported by a majority. There was also majority support for punishing

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367 In only one case did a majority support immediate withdrawal. When asked the following question by ABC News on October 7: "What would be your preference -- to have all U.S. troops withdrawn from Somalia immediately, by March 31 (1994), or sometime after March 31?", 50 percent favored immediate withdrawal, another 33 percent supported withdrawal by March 31 (for a total of 83 percent preferring withdrawal), and only 12 percent wanted U.S. forces to stay past March 31, 1994. The same poll found that 89 percent thought that bringing U.S. troops home as soon as possible should be the most important goal of the United States.

or capturing Aaidid, but this support seemed to evaporate when
respondents were asked if they would still support the option if it
would delay a U.S. withdrawal.

These data do not show support for an increased commitment so much
as a desire to ensure that all U.S. forces in Somalia could be withdrawn
without any further risk—respondents were committed to an orderly
withdrawal, but didn’t mind punishing Aaidid and his followers if it
could be done cheaply, effectively, and wouldn’t impede the U.S.
withdrawal.

COMPARISONS

There are three other cases in which the public’s tolerance for
casualties might be productively compared to the experience in Somalia:
the U.S. intervention in the Dominican Republic (1965), in Lebanon
(1982-84) and in Haiti (1994-95).

The Dominican Republic. Over the course of the intervention,
support fell from around 75 percent to between 36 and 53 percent,
depending on question wording. As with the other cases, there are a
number of factors other than casualties that also contributed to the
decreasing support. Most importantly perhaps, the U.S. objectives
changed from rescuing Americans to intervening against leftist forces in
the civil war, which resulted in high levels of congressional criticism
of the Johnson administration.\footnote{In short, while the data points in
Figure 2.6.6 show a rather strong decline in support as a function of
casualties,\footnote{The slope of -16 suggests that support declined by about 16
points for each increase by a factor of ten in the number of deaths due
to hostile action. The questions used for the Dominican Republic were
as follows: 76 percent approved when asked “How do you feel about
President Johnson’s sending troops into the Dominican Republic?”
(Gallup, 5/13-18/65), and 52 percent approved when asked “How do you
feel about President Johnson’s sending troops into the Dominican
Republic?” (Gallup, 11/18-23/65). If two questions that asked about
approval for President Johnson’s handling are included in estimating the
slope, then the rate of decline would be approximately 79 points for
every increase by a factor of ten in the number of battle deaths.} The
paucity of the data and the presence of these

\textit{Hearings held on the Dominican intervention in September 1965 by
Senator Fulbright were highly critical of the intervention. (\footnote{Hearings held on the Dominican intervention in September 1965 by
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approval for President Johnson’s handling are included in estimating the
slope, then the rate of decline would be approximately 79 points for
every increase by a factor of ten in the number of battle deaths.}}
confounding factors suggest we should be very cautious in imputing the decline to battle deaths alone.

![Graph showing support as a function of battle deaths for the Dominican Republic, Somalia, and Lebanon.]

**Figure 2.6.6 - Support as a Function of Battle Deaths**

**Lebanon (1982-84).** The U.S. interest in Lebanon changed over the course of the operation: the rescue of the Palestine Liberation Organization, assistance in an Israeli withdrawal, and ultimately, keeping the Syrians from consolidating a grip on Lebanon. The public opinion data show that from the very beginning of the operation, Lebanon was never supported by a majority of the public—typically only about 40 percent were supporters.\(^{371}\) In fact, it appears that the Reagan administration was able to domestically sustain the operation largely on the basis of a compact with the Congress. While there is some evidence that the leaders and the public thought that the U.S. had a vital

\(^{371}\)The appearance that support for Lebanon was insensitive to casualties is an artifact of there being not much room left for support to fall when U.S. deaths climbed; from the very beginning, support appears to have come only from hardcore supporters.
interest in Lebanon, there is less evidence that they thought the objectives being promoted in Lebanon were either very important or likely to be achieved.

**Haiti (1994-95).** Haiti (not shown in the figure) was a case where the operation was generally opposed by members of Congress of both parties and few members of the public saw vital U.S. interests other than reducing illegal immigration into the country. Haiti is also a very interesting case because despite expectations of about 50 deaths in hostile action, the actual operation (to this date, at least) was a nearly zero-casualty operation (in fact, there was one death due to hostile action in January 1993). Since it seems to have turned out reasonably well and at a lower cost than expected, we would expect support to be somewhat higher now than it was initially. In fact, the public opinion data are equivocal: some series show a slight increase in approval from the time of the intervention, while others show a decrease.

In the next section I will attempt to draw together the results of the various case studies.

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372 In CCFR's October 1982 survey, 55 percent of respondents from the public and 74 percent of the leaders said that they thought the U.S. had a vital interest in Lebanon, while 36 percent of the public sample and 45 percent of the leaders said they thought the U.S. had a vital interest in Syria. Only 34 percent of the public thought that "protecting weaker nations against foreign aggression" should be a very important foreign policy goal. Twenty-six percent thought "helping to bring a democratic form of government to other nations" should be a very important goal, and 43 percent said "promoting and defending human rights in other countries" should be a very important goal.

373 Seventy-two percent said that they thought "large numbers of immigrants and refugees coming into the U.S." was a critical threat to the vital interest of the United States and the same percentage said that "controlling and reducing illegal immigration" should be a "very important" foreign policy goal. CCFR, 10/7-25/94.

374 Gallup/Time/CNN asked on 9/20-21/94: "About how many American casualties do you expect there will be among U.S. troops in Haiti?" Eleven percent thought there would be none, and 42 percent thought that there would be 50 or fewer. And when CBS/New York Times asked on 9/19/94 "Given the possible loss of American lives and other costs involved, do you think sending U.S. troops to Haiti is worth the cost, or not?" only 32 percent said they thought it was worth the possible losses and costs.
PART 3: RESULTS

Part Three integrates the results of the case studies for the reader. It then examines more closely the role that casualties played in the political discourse of leaders. It closes with an evaluation of two potential future U.S. military interventions.
3.1. INTEGRATION

We can now summarize the cases using our quadrupartite framework of support from congressional and other political leaders, perceived benefits, expected costs, and prospects for success:

- **Second World War.** There was broad bipartisan support for the war from political leaders. The benefits of defeating Germany and Japan were seldom in doubt and were widely perceived as quite substantial. While there were some dark days in 1942 in which it was not clear to many that the U.S. and its allies would prevail, majorities of the public were generally optimistic about success. The human costs, of course, mounted to horrific levels.

- **Korean War.** Congressional and other political leaders initially supported the war, possibly believing that it was the opening move in a wider war, but with the congressional electoral season and the Chinese entry came to oppose "Truman's War" and his policy of limited war. The initial perceived benefits almost certainly declined over the course of the conflict. The prospects for success tumbled with the entry of the Chinese, and seemed to lead both to increasing criticism from political leaders, and declining support. The costs were highest at the time of the Chinese invasion, but continued to mount while the situation remained in stalemate.

- **Vietnam War.** Johnson had broad support from congressional and other political leaders at the time of his escalation of the war in July 1965, although this support seems to have started eroding in early 1966. The benefits of the war (containment of Communist gains) were seen initially to be substantial, but may have declined over time. The prospects for success almost certainly declined for most, especially with the Tet offensive. The costs mounted inexorably, and by 1968 had reached levels
that at the beginning of the war only a minority of leaders and
the public indicated a willingness to accept.

- *Gulf War.* Political leaders almost uniformly supported sending
U.S. troops to the Gulf to defend Saudi Arabia; the
disagreement was over how much time sanctions should be given
before using force, and whether the benefits were worth the
likely costs. While the public saw important benefits in a
U.S. war with Iraq, most thought that the war was not worth
supporting for the reason of securing oil supplies. There was
great uncertainty in the likely costs of the intervention, but
majorities nevertheless supported the war. While they were
almost certainly unwilling to tolerate a Vietnam-like war, they
appeared willing to tolerate substantially higher casualties
than most realize.

- *Dominican Intervention.* Political leaders initially supported
the noncombatant evacuation operation aimed at rescuing
Americans and others from Santo Domingo. When President
Johnson changed the mission to quelling the leftist rebellion,
the operation was widely criticized by elites. The benefits of
rescuing Americans was probably viewed as superior to those of
crushing the leftists in a civil war. Although most of the
costs in casualties were incurred early in the operation, they
continued to be incurred over the rest of the summer. Support
for the intervention appears to have fallen rather
dramatically.

- *Lebanon.* Political support eroded as the mission in Lebanon
and the costs expanded, and U.S. forces looked more and more
like they had been sent on a fool's errand to enforce a peace
among parties that were happily slaughtering one another.
While the public viewed U.S. vital interests as being engaged,
the mission of enforcing a peace was probably less valued than
the earlier humanitarian or peacekeeping missions. The
perceived prospects for success in Lebanon do not seem to have
been particularly high. And the costs continued mounting, to
the point where congressional leaders struck an agreement with
the Reagan administration in the fall of 1983 to allow 18 months additional participation. A host of actions including the bombing of the Marine barracks and a threatened expansion of the mission seemed to fracture this congressional agreement. Support tended to hover around 40-45 percent throughout most of the intervention.

- Grenada. The operation in Grenada was concluded quickly and successfully, and at relatively low cost, leading to about six in ten supporting the operation.

- Panama. There was rather strong support from congressional and other political leaders for an intervention to solve the problem of Manuel Noriega. The benefits perceived by the public seem to have been numerous and substantial. Most of the military action in the operation was concluded rather quickly, leading to the perception that the operation would be a success. The costs were generally seen to be worth what was accomplished, and four out of five ultimately approved of the operation.

- Somalia. The broad congressional support that occasioned the original intervention crumbled once the costs of a new mission began to grow. The public seems to have viewed the benefits of the operation as being vast, the prospects for success quite high, and the likely costs quite low. Until the mission changed and the costs began to increase, the operation pretty much played out as expected. Although support had crumbled before then, with the death of 18 U.S. servicemen in Mogadishu in October 1993, the house of cards that was U.S. Somalia policy came tumbling down.

Having attended to the larger context within which attitudes changed, we can now examine more closely the relationship between casualties and support for these interventions.
SUPPORT AS A FUNCTION OF CASUALTIES

The most obvious (and congenial) framework for comparing the relationship between casualties and support is to lay all of the cases on the same set of axes, as in Figure 3.1.1.

![Graph showing support as a function of battle deaths for various conflicts: Dominican Republic, Korea, Vietnam, Lebanon, Gulf War, and WWII.](image)

**Figure 3.1.1 - Support as a Function of Battle Deaths**

The figure shows support declining at different rates for the different wars and other interventions, but it appears that the rate of decline is roughly associated with what most would agree would be a rank ordering of the stakes or interests involved:

- The Second World War clearly involved the most important stakes, and also showed the slowest decline in support (if indeed there was any decline at all).
- Next most precipitous in their rate of decline as a function of battle deaths are the Korean, Vietnam and Gulf Wars. This seems sensible, given that few would argue that the stakes were as important as those in the Second World War.
Next, we have the U.S. interventions in the Dominican Republic and Somalia, which showed much faster rates of decline in support as a function of battle deaths. Again, this comes as little surprise, as the stakes and interests were considerably lower than those in the major wars. Lebanon is a special case where only the 40 percent or so of hard-core supporters favored the operation. In other words, Lebanon received a low level of support from the very beginning of the operation, but even that declined after the bombing of the Marine barracks.

Recalling that many of the operations had several data series that could be used to gauge the decline in support, Figure 3.1.2 plots the slope coefficients for the various series with 90 percent confidence intervals. While there are some modest overlaps, the basic intuition that support for the operations declined at a rate that was roughly in keeping with the nature of the interests involved seems generally to be substantiated.

![Figure 3.1.2 - Rate of Decline in Support as a Function of Casualties](image-url)
In short, when comparisons are made of the rates of decline as a function of casualties—the most sensible gauge of the public's tolerance for casualties in military operations—the less substantial the interests involved, the higher the rate of decline.

This is either a profound or trivial finding, depending on one's level of sophistication in political affairs: it confirms the intuition that the public's tolerance for casualties is not fixed, but varies greatly depending on the cause, the effectiveness with which objectives are attained, and leadership. The importance of this last factor will be discussed next.
3.2. CASUALTIES IN THE RHETORIC OF OPPOSITION

This section is devoted to looking more closely at the role of leadership in public attitude formation, by focusing on how the theme of casualties is used in the larger democratic conversation over ends and means.

THE ROLE OF LEADERSHIP

The figures comparing the rates of decline in support shown in the last section have momentarily returned the reader’s focus to the relationship between casualties and declining support. But the case studies, summarized at the beginning of that section, have shown rather clearly that much more happened to affect public attitudes than just increasing casualties.

Perhaps more important in shaping mass public attitudes than the perceived benefits, prospects for success, or costs is the fact that dissensus among political leaders has often sparked a parallel loss of support in the public. Critics or opponents of an intervention are alternative opinion-leaders-in-waiting, and a failure either to manage properly the conduct of an intervention or to attend to the most important base of domestic political support—the Congress—can lead to the collapse of support for an intervention.

The case studies provide very strong evidence that is entirely consistent with a leadership model of mass attitude formation. The evidence strongly suggests that the changing character of the elite political discourse becomes diffused through mass public opinion, i.e., large segments of the public followed their opinion leaders. This is, in fact, one of Mueller’s (1973) more profound findings on Korea and Vietnam, and he finds evidence of the same process at work during the Gulf crisis (Mueller, 1994a).

Quantitative support for the proposition of opinion leadership on military interventions can also be found in the work of Zaller (1987, 1992) and Hallin (1986) on Vietnam, Zaller (1993) and Bennett and Manheim (1993) on the Gulf War, and others’ work. In short, the
Converse-McGuire-Zaller model of mass attitude formation seems to provide ample evidence that the same sort of processes observed in these studies also were probably at work in the interventions examined here.

If this is the case, a somewhat different interpretation of the above figures is necessary: they may be showing the public's lagged reception and acceptance of the attitudes being expressed by political leaders. That is, the rates at which support declined among the mass public was a function of the rate of declining support among political leaders, and the rate at which these attitudes became diffused throughout the public. In this interpretation, congressional and other political leaders may have mediated the interpretation of events on the ground, and promoted specific interpretations of these events for consumption by the attentive public.

Of course, we can never know for certain the processes that were actually responsible for declining support for these interventions. But a leadership model of mass public opinion formulation with a simple model of ends and means embeded in it goes a long way to explaining changes in public attitudes in a host of military interventions.

It is commonly asserted that the American people will not tolerate casualties in military operations. If past empirical work on the critical role of leadership in the formation of mass public attitudes is correct, however, the source of such attitudes may lie elsewhere.

A leadership model of public opinion formation relies upon the notion that political leaders lead the democratic conversation, the political discourse of political leaders is observed and reported by the media, as members of the public are exposed to these messages, attitudes change in a predictable fashion. The proposition that political leaders have a central role in mass public attitude formation has a sound empirical basis.375

The model of how mass public attitudes change that has gained the widest acceptance is described by a rich literature including Converse

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(1967), McGuire (1969) and, most recently, Zaller (1987, 1992, 1993), here referred to as the Converse-McGuire-Zaller model of reception-acceptance or leadership-centered model of mass attitude diffusion.\footnote{376} In this model, exposure is a function of the availability of the message in the political discourse; the level of reporting the media devotes to the message; the intensity of the message; and individual-level differences in political awareness and ideology.\footnote{377} At its simplest level, the probability of an attitude change is:

\[
\text{Probability(Attitude Change)} = \text{Probability(Reception)} \times \text{Probability(Acceptance | Reception)}
\]

Put in words, the probability of an attitude change is the probability of receiving a message times the probability of accepting it given reception.\footnote{378}

This simple model has been used to successfully explain the diffusion of mass public attitudes on Vietnam\footnote{379} and the Gulf War,\footnote{380} as well as mass attitudes in a number of other policy domains, including both domestic and foreign policy issues. In short, there is a growing body of empirical evidence to support the model as a reasonable approximation of how attitudes on military operations (and other issues) become diffused. If we assume that this model describes how attitudes about casualties in military operations are formed, it would suggest that we look for several pieces of evidence.

* First, we would expect to see the issue of casualties assuming increasing importance among political leaders in their discussions of military interventions in recent years. That
is, we would expect to see casualties mentioned frequently and prominently in the discourse among political leaders.

- Second, we would expect to see some relationship between the frequency with which casualties were discussed by political leaders and the frequency with which the subject was reported by the media. *\(^{38^2}\)*

Can we find such evidence of the prominence of casualties in the discourse among political leaders?

In fact, there is not only substantial anecdotal evidence, but also empirical evidence that casualties have become increasingly prominent in the discourse among political leaders. I will first demonstrate that the theme of casualties has been a very prominent one in political leaders’ debates over recent interventions, and show the ways in which casualties have been used to make larger arguments, primarily against intervention in one circumstance or another. I will then provide empirical evidence showing both the increasing frequency with which the theme of casualties appears in elite discourse, and evidence showing a strong relationship between the prominence of casualties in the elite discourse, and the theme of casualties in the stream of media reporting that reaches the public.

**THE RHETORIC OF CASUALTIES, CASE ONE: THE GULF WAR**

The first case I will use to show how casualties were used in congressional arguments regarding an intervention is the Gulf War of 1991. In addition to being of interest in its own right, this case also shows that the use of casualties in arguments is not restricted only to those cases (such as Somalia and Haiti) where opponents believe no vital interests are at stake—the Gulf War was a clear case where there were vital interests involved, but there was also a high perceived risk of large numbers of U.S. deaths and injuries.

*\(^{38^2}\)Since increased reporting heightens the probability that the issue will become salient to a member of the public, it should be sufficient to show media attention that is associated with the discourse among political leaders.*
During the congressional debates over the Gulf War, much of the argumentation against the war turned on the question of costs and risks. The potentially high costs of the war were stressed by numerous critics of the Bush administration's Gulf policy:

And even when we do win, what have we won? A Gulf War could cause thousands, perhaps tens of thousands of deaths and casualties; and lead to wider war in the region; invite terrorist retaliation against the United States; stimulate a regional arms buildup; require a prolonged U.S. military presence; and in general, destabilize the region rather than achieving the stability we seek.\textsuperscript{382}

I foresee many casualties, the use of chemical weapons by Iraq, terrorist strikes, Israel's involvement, and long-lasting turmoil in the Middle East. Repeatedly, I asked myself the same question: When we win the war, then what happens? What happens to the balance of power in the Middle East? To the governance of Iraq? To the stability of friendly governments in Egypt and Saudi Arabia? Repeatedly, I have come to the same answers. While the status quo is unacceptable, the alternative of war is even worse.\textsuperscript{383}

And in this war, 1,000 to 20,000 casualties. I've heard that. 1,000 deaths would be acceptable? Acceptable to whom? Who can relate to 1,000 dead like you can to one precious child being killed in a car wreck? Difficult, is it not?\textsuperscript{384}

Others focused on a burden-sharing argument, the possibility that U.S. casualties would be disproportionately high when compared to the casualties incurred by other coalition members:

But the truth is that not every member of the coalition will use force if it comes to that. The administration won't admit it. But it is fair to say that our experts in this administration are not counting on everybody to participate when signed on, to say the least. If there is a war 95 percent of the casualties in the coalition will be American.\textsuperscript{385}

Let there be no mistake about the cost of war. We have arrayed an impressive international coalition against Iraq. But when the bullets start flying, 90 percent of the casualties will be American. It is hardly a surprise that so

\textsuperscript{382} Statement of Representative McDermott, January 10, 1991.
\textsuperscript{383} Statement of Senator Danforth, January 10, 1991.
\textsuperscript{384} Statement of Senator Bumpers, January 10, 1991.
\textsuperscript{385} Statement of Senator Biden, January 10, 1991.
many other nations are willing to fight to the last American to achieve the goals of the United Nations. It is not their sons and daughters who will do the dying. Most military experts tell us that a war with Iraq will not be "quick and decisive" as President Bush suggests. It will be brutal and costly. It will take weeks, even months and will quickly turn from an air war into a ground war with thousands perhaps even tens of thousands of American casualties. The administration refuses to release casualty estimates. But the 45,000 body bags the Pentagon has sent to the region are all the evidence we need of the high price in lives and blood we will have to pay. Military experts have used Israel's two recent desert wars as reliable indicators of the casualties we will suffer. In its Six-Day War in 1967, Israel suffered 3,300 casualties out of a force of 300,000, including 700 dead. In the heavier fighting that lasted 20 days in the 1973 war, Israel's casualties were over 11,000 for a force of similar size, with 2,600 dead. In other words, we are talking about the likelihood of at least 3,000 American casualties a week, with 700 dead, for as long as the war goes on.\footnote{386}

Still others used the issue of casualties to advocate a prolonged air campaign as a strategy to minimize casualties:  
\footnote{387} There is little question that the United States and its allies can inflict crippling military defeat on Iraq. It can eject Iraq from Kuwait; it can destroy Iraq's military forces and military industries; it can destroy, if it wishes, Iraq's cities. The question is at what cost -- and whether it is wise to incur that cost.

Whenever a nation accepts the hazards of war, the precise outcome is not predetermined. Depending upon the military strategy chosen and the tenacity of Iraq's forces, there could be a considerable variation in the outcome. In the event of an all-out assault on entrenched Iraqi positions, the casualties may be expected to run into several tens of thousands. However, if we avoid that all-out assault, make use of our decisive advantages in the air, and exploit the opponent's vulnerabilities by our own mobility, the casualties could be held to a fraction of the prior estimate. In between four and eight weeks, it should all be over -- save for starving out or mopping up the remaining Iraqi forces in Kuwait.\footnote{386} Statement of Senator Kennedy, January 10, 1991. \footnote{387} In fact, Edward Luttwak revealed after the war that his projection of thousands of casualties was not an error, but in fact was an effort to strengthen his argument for an air campaign.
The question then becomes whether one goes on to occupy Iraq, to destroy the balance of Iraqi forces, and the like. That would be far more difficult and time consuming, but circumstances may make it unavoidable. I think it prudent to say no more about strategy and tactics in this session. Suffice it to say that the immediate price will not be small. American forces would be obliged to carry a disproportionate burden in any struggle. This will affect the attitudes of our public and the attitudes in the Middle East regarding the United States. I believe that the direct cost of combat -- including that of a probable scorched earth policy in Kuwait-- will be the lesser part of the total cost. The Middle East would never be the same. It is a fragile, inflammable, and unpredictable region.

The sight of the United States inflicting a devastating defeat on an Arab country from the soil of an Arab neighbor may result in an enmity directed at the United States for an extended period, not only by Iraq and its present supporters, but ultimately among the publics of some of the nations now allied to us. To be sure, there are no certainties, yet that risk must be born in mind. Moreover, the United States will be obliged to involve itself deeply in the reconstruction of the region in the aftermath of a shattering war. In brief, the non-combat costs of a recourse to war, while not calculable in advance, are likely to be substantial.388

Still others, supporters of the Bush administration’s Gulf policy, argued that if the U.S. were to delay the operation and give sanctions more time to work, it would provide Iraq with an opportunity to strengthen its defenses, thereby ultimately increasing the number of U.S. casualties:

If I can add one other thing. I believe that the longer we go over there, the more expensive it becomes--I am going to make some points a little later--the more Saddam Hussein will have a greater opportunity to entrench, protect, preserve and kill; more casualties cannot help but occur, because that is what he is doing, digging trenches and putting mines out there and bunkering and doing all the kinds of things that will make it more difficult to dislodge him from Kuwait if we wait.389

THE RHETORIC OF CASUALTIES, CASE TWO: SOMALIA

To gain a sense of the context in which casualties are used in congressional rhetoric over ends and means, consider the following:

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statements from the debates over Somalia policy before and after the October 3-4 firefight in Mogadishu. From these statements, it is clear how important the role of casualties is for both opponents and proponents in making their larger points: opponents point to the losses of human life being incommensurate with the ends, and proponents pressed the argument that to fail to continue would mean past deaths were incurred in vain. The views of the American public were occasionally identified with their own.

In early September 1993 (before the October firefight in Mogadishu) Senator Robert Byrd was an opponent of a continued nation-building mission in Somalia. In his arguments, he concentrated both on the changed objective (ends) and the unacceptable costs in lives (means):

"...[T]here is little difficulty to believe it is possible to muster a consensus here, or in the country at large, that such an effort is worth any price in American blood. Without the building of such a consensus, the mandate for American action and participation is murky, at best. U.N. Security Council resolutions have never, and should never serve as a substitute for the responsibility of this institution to affirmatively approve placing U.S. forces into hostile situations.

...[I]f such a consensus cannot be achieved, our experience in Lebanon and elsewhere should tell us that U.S. support and participation cannot be sustained. With signs of trouble or casualties, the American people will reject the operations and force a fast withdrawal. This kind of inconsistent behavior reduces the credibility of the United States around the world. We should enter into such operations with our eyes open, knowing that we are going to have to open our wallets, knowing there are going to be increasing costs from the standpoint of treasure and knowing also that there will be costs in blood, and only after careful debate and thoughtful consideration of the possible consequences of the action. Then, when trouble comes, we stand a better chance of maintaining our course. This has not been the case in regard to Somalia ever since the purpose of the operation was changed by the United Nations last May.

...[T]he Administration has a duty to seek the approval and the authorization of the Congress before we invest more of the nation’s treasure and more of the nation’s blood in Somalia.
where I think we have accomplished the mission which was originally stated to be our cause.390

Senator Sam Nunn made a somewhat different argument, pointing out that lives were being lost unnecessarily in that it was unclear as to what mission their deaths contributed:

Some people have compared Somalia to Vietnam. I do not see that analogy at all. I do not think that we face that kind of military danger. I do not think it is that kind of threat. But I do believe we are putting our forces in harm’s way without clearly knowing what we expect them to do. I think that mission has to be defined.391

Senator John McCain placed Somalia in the context of the larger debate over ends and means in the post-Cold War world, and compared Somalia to Lebanon, where the mission also shifted:

This issue is also part of a larger debate, Mr. President, and that larger debate has to do with what the United States’ mission in the post-Cold War era exactly is.

We find ourselves in a situation where the lives of young Americans are being committed to many countries, in all kinds of circumstances. They are even being placed under the command of leaders that are not Americans.

...Since June 5, 1993, United States forces have also become involved in a conflict with Farah Aidid, the leader of one Somali faction. Despite rising American casualties and efforts by the Administration to clarify the goals of our troops, their mission is becoming increasing vague.

Mr. President, I remember all too well that we sent Marines into Lebanon for the purpose of peacekeeping. In contrast, we sent American troops into Somalia for humanitarian purposes because there was the risk of over a million people starving to death. The American people overwhelmingly supported such action. It was clearly humanitarian in nature, and it was clearly intended to be of short duration. That mission

390 Statement by Senator Robert Byrd, September 8, 1993, during the debate on an amendment to the Department of Defense Authorization Act of 1994. In fact, as has been shown, unless a six month withdrawal constitutes “a fast withdrawal” (roughly the amount of time between the Marine barracks bombing and U.S. withdrawal from Lebanon, and between the firefight in Mogadishu and withdrawal from Somalia).
391 Statement of Senator Sam Nunn, September 8, 1993.
 appealed to what is best in America, the need to save the lives of innocent people.

There was no vital national security interest involved, but our nation, and its outstanding young men and women, had the ability to keep people from starving to death by the thousands. We did, in fact, succeed in that mission. Now we read in the papers and see television coverage of aborted raids that end up in U.N. headquarters, and the dispatch of elite troops who are now in the game of warlord hunting.\textsuperscript{392}

Senator McCain also pointed to the absurdity of combat in a humanitarian operation:

\begin{quote}
Mr. President, we went to Somalia to keep people from starving to death. Now we are killing women and children because they are combatants.\textsuperscript{393}
\end{quote}

Senator Paul Simon defended the operation by linking a withdrawal from Somalia after a small number of casualties to broader lessons that adversaries would draw about U.S. ability to stay the course in such operations:

\begin{quote}
So if we compound that message in Somalia that once the U.N. takes over and we have four American deaths, tragic as that is—but we might have four American deaths at Fort Riley, Kansas, in an automobile accident, where I took my Army basic training, or a great many other places. But to send a message to the world that the only nation that can lead—and there is only one nation that can lead—the only nation that can lead is going to get frightened real easily and is going to move out, I think is the wrong message.\textsuperscript{394}
\end{quote}

Senator Carl Levin also defended the operation in Somalia, but pointed to casualties in a way that suggested that those who advocated a quick conclusion to the operation would make the deaths already incurred deaths that were incurred in vain if the situation returned to the status quo ante of mass starvation:

\begin{quote}
The world responded and America responded. We have suffered some losses in Somalia: one of those servicemen killed in action was from my home state of Michigan. I share the pain
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{392} Statement of Senator John McCain, September 8, 1993.
\textsuperscript{393} Statement of Senator John McCain, September 9, 1993.
\textsuperscript{394} Statement of Senator Paul Simon, September 8, 1993.
of those families. Other nations have suffered losses, too, in even greater numbers than ours. But ours are enough.

However, we should do nothing here tonight to diminish the sacrifice of our people who are still there and the greater sacrifice of some who have given their lives for a very important humanitarian cause in Somalia. That cause is preventing the additional death, from mass starvation caused by anarchy and chaos, of hundreds of thousands and perhaps additional millions of human beings.

If it was important enough to go into Somalia—and I think all of us agree that it was—then it is important enough to make a reasonable effort to see to it that when we leave Somalia it does not immediately relapse into the same chaos and the same anarchy that created starvation. What is a reasonable effort to make sure that return to chaos and anarchy does not occur? That is the issue.395

Senator John Warner echoed the sentiment that withdrawing could create a precedent and lead other potential adversaries to draw their own conclusions:

I also would like to pick up on another point made by my distinguished colleague. We certainly do not want to have a precedent of cut-and-run. As we look at the uncertain future of this world, more and more the United States will be called on to participate with other nations in joint action.396

In his argument to show that the operation had been worth the losses, President Clinton drew attention to the good that had been accomplished. He also, however, expressed the administration's position that the emphasis on Aiddi had sidetracked the U.S.:

I have to remind my fellow Americans and all of the people in the world who have an aversion to the events of the last two weeks not to forget that over 300,000 people lost their lives there, were starved, were murdered, were subject to incredibly inhumane conditions because of the chaotic and lawless behavior of the people who had authority.

Now, many of those warlords have changed their behavior, have been cooperating with the United Nations, have enabled at least the conditions of orderly life to remain. On the other hand, it is plain to me that it was never an option for us to

continue to pursue a military solution or to be obsessed with Aidid or anybody else, to the exclusion of trying to build a peaceful society.\textsuperscript{397}

On September 25, the White House issued a statement condemning the deaths of three U.S. servicemen, linked these deaths to the aim of establishing better security in Mogadishu, and to the successful turnover of the operation to Somali authorities:

The United States condemns the attack on United Nations forces in Mogadishu last night which resulted in the death of three American soldiers and injuries to several other American and Pakistani soldiers. The President offers his deepest condolences to the families and friends of these brave men who were performing a vital humanitarian mission in Somalia.

This attack underscores the need to reestablish security in Mogadishu to prevent the international humanitarian efforts from being undermined. At times like this, it is essential to remember the reasons for our engagement in the 25-nation U.N. mission in Somalia. The U.N.'s goal is to prevent the recurrence of the famine and anarchy that resulted in the deaths of 350,000 Somalis last year. We are working to create a peaceful environment in which the U.N.'s mission can be assumed by a Somalia authority.\textsuperscript{398}

With the firefight and deaths of 18 U.S. servicemen in Mogadishu on October 3-4, casualties came to the forefront in political arguments against a continuation of the operation by both Democrats and Republicans. Senator Byrd condemned the operation as representing losses in life for ill-conceived aims:

Madam President, the reports from Somalia over the last few hours indicate Americans by the dozens are paying with their lives and limbs for a misplaced policy on the altar of some hazy multilateralism. At least 12 are dead, with another 5 missing, and 70 more others are wounded. Five U.S. helicopters have been shot down.

Madam President, if more Americans are to be sacrificed in Mogadishu, the Congress ought to share the responsibility for it. If the decision is disengage, why in the world should we

\textsuperscript{397} President's Press Conference with Italian Prime Minister Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, September 17, 1993.

\textsuperscript{398} President's Press Conference with Italian Prime Minister Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, September 17, 1993.
drag these fatal cops-and-robber operations on any longer. Let us vote and let us get out.\textsuperscript{399}

Senator Dole echoed these sentiments:

Mr. President, we just learned that the American loss of life in Somalia this week was far worse than initially reported. At least 12 American servicemen were killed, several are missing in action, and dozens of Americans have been wounded. Early reports indicate that some U.S. forces may be held hostage. According to the wire sources that came in, I guess we are preparing to send more troops and tanks to Somalia, an additional 200 infantry men, plus tanks and armored vehicles. That is what they said today.

Also, early reports indicate that some U.S. forces may be held hostage. Of course, these casualties are above and beyond the nine which killed one Somalia and an American and wounded three more.

As the body bags pile up in Mogadishu, confusion over U.S. objectives increases. U.N. Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali has once again attempted to veto a U.S. effort to find a political resolution to set limits on U.S. Armed Forces. I happen to believe it is high time for Boutros-Ghali to recognize that we will decide what is in the American interest and that he is not empowered to make U.S. foreign policy.

It seems to me that enough Americans have died in Somalia. I do not believe we should indefinitely continue to support Boutros-Ghali’s plan in Somalia.\textsuperscript{400}

President Clinton responded to the assault on U.S. Somalia policy by emphasizing that the purpose of sending additional forces was to improve the security of forces already in place, i.e., to prevent further losses:

The only thing I have done so far is to authorize the Rangers that are there who are wounded or exhausted or done more than their fair share to be replaced, to roll over that group and then to send some more people there with some armored support so that we can have some more protection on the ground for our people. None of this happened when we had 28,000 people there. And even though there are lots of U.N. forces there, not all of them are able to do what our forces did before. So I’m just not satisfied that the folks that are there now have

\textsuperscript{399}Statement of Senator Byrd, October 4, 1993.

\textsuperscript{400}Statement of Senator Dole, October 4, 1993.
the protection they need. So all I’ve authorized is a modest increase to provide armored support, to provide greater protection for the people over there trying to do their job. This is not to signify some huge commitment or offensive at this time.401

Secretary of State Christopher emphasized a single theme—steadiness of purpose:

In the face of this kind of an attack on American troops—the obscene pictures we have just seen—it’s a time for Americans to be very steady in our purpose here and not talk about getting out.402

Representative Benjamin Gilman, a leading critic of the Somalia intervention, linked his displeasure about the U.S. losses to the futility of the current mission, and voiced his impatience with the administration over a failure to explain the U.S. purpose in Somalia:

Tragically, new United States casualties in Somalia sharply underscore the futility of our Somalia military operations. We cannot afford to wait any longer for the President to explain why our forces are being sent to bleed and die in Somalia.

I would simply respond by saying that this debacle in Somalia is a perfect example of how misguided idealism can distort our policies and our understanding of our own national interest. The only time that American troops should be used anywhere in the world is when there is a compelling national United States of America interest.

Mr. Speaker and Members of this House, the time has come to do two things: We must go into Somalia with everything we have, full-blast, to get out hostages, all eight of them, and any dead besides, out of there. And then we have to get our troops out of Somalia and we have to keep them out. This misguided deadly adventure in Somalia has got to stop, and it must stop today.403

Senator George Mitchell argued for a more deliberative and consensual procedure involving the Congress and the public before committing forces to combat operations:

401President’s Remarks to the Press, October 4, 1993.  
402Secretary Christopher’s Television Interview, October 4, 1993.  
403Statement by Congressman Benjamin Gilman, October 5, 1993.
[N]o President can face the prospect of putting men and women in uniform into a combat situation where they are likely to suffer either death or serious injury without leaving the overwhelming weight of public opinion, popular support, and congressional support behind the President. Anyone who would run the risk of putting our people in jeopardy and not have our support clearly stated by a vote on the House and Senate floors, will find that once the bombs start to explode and people start dying, that the men and women who serve in either body of Congress will be in full flight in the other direction, not supporting the President but running precisely the opposite way.  

Senator Claiborne Pell advocated a posture that would aim to better defend U.S. forces in place:

Madam Speaker, I am deeply saddened by the heavy losses of life that our Armed Forces suffered in Somalia on Sunday. I am also concerned about the circumstances and military tactics that led to this tragedy.

I do not...believe it is wise for U.S. forces to be involved in offensive operations against Aidid's forces. That is what led to the tragedy on Sunday.

Having said that, I would like to point out that our options in Somalia are not limited to pulling out or continuing to be pummeled by Aidid's forces. There is a third option, and I believe we should try it.

We should concentrate on those activities instead of engaging in high-risk attacks on Aidid and his forces...In the meantime, U.S. forces should be in a defensive posture against any attempt by Aided to break out of south Mogadishu, but we should not be seeking him out.

I am as upset as any Member of this body about the casualties we have suffered in Somalia. We must change how we operate in Somalia, otherwise our forces will needlessly suffer more casualties. But let us give the Administration a chance to change course rather than forcing the Administration to cut and run.  

Finally, in his October 7, 1993, television address to the nation on Somalia, the structure of President Clinton's argument was to explain

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404 Statement of Senator George Mitchell.
405 Statement of Senator Claiborne Pell.
U.S. Somalia policy and argue that, in spite of the losses, that the mission needed to be completed before a withdrawal could take place:

Today I want to talk with you about our nation's military involvement in Somalia. A year ago, we all watched with horror as Somali children and their families lay dying by the tens of thousands, dying the slow, agonizing death of starvation, a starvation brought on not only by drought, but also by the anarchy that then prevailed in that country.

This past weekend, we all reacted with anger and horror as an armed Somali gang desecrated the bodies of our American soldiers and displayed a captured American pilot, all of them soldiers who were taking part in an international effort to end the starvation of the Somali people themselves. These tragic events raise hard questions about our effort in Somalia. Why are we still there? What are we trying to accomplish? How did a humanitarian mission turn violent? And when will our people come home?

So now we face a choice. Do we leave when the job gets tough or when the job is well done? Do we invite a return of mass suffering or do we leave in a way that gives the Somalis a decent chance to survive?

...Today, I have ordered 1,700 additional Army troops and 104 additional armored vehicles to Somalia to protect our troops and to complete our mission. I've also ordered an aircraft carrier and two amphibious groups with 3,600 combat Marines to be stationed off-shore.

We may need up to six months to complete these steps and to conduct an orderly withdrawal. We'll do what we can to complete the mission before then. All American troops will be out of Somalia no later than March the 31st, except for a few hundred support personnel in noncombat roles.426

While evidencing satisfaction with the President's decision to withdraw U.S. forces from Somalia, Senator Dole recapitulated the theme that casualties were especially unacceptable in an ill-managed operation:

One thing that frustrates average Americans is that they seem to believe that the United Nations are directing our forces and we are the force taking the risk, suffering the casualties and suffering the death of good Americans in Somalia, and it is hard for the American people to accept. It is not that we do not respect the United Nations, but I do believe the average American—and I think with justification—feels that

426 President Clinton's television address, October 7, 1993.
they do not have the competence to direct the military operations. 407

QUANTITATIVE EVIDENCE OF MORE ATTENTION TO CASUALTIES BY LEADERS

In their survey of opinion leaders in the spring of 1976, Holsti and Rosenau (1979) reported that when leaders were asked to evaluate a number of lessons from Vietnam, they generally rejected as a lesson that "limited wars should be fought primarily with air power so as to avoid introducing American ground troops." In fact, this lesson was rejected by each of the seven subgroups of leaders that were analyzed—Supporters of the Vietnam War, Converted Supporters, Ambivalent Supporters, Ambivalents, Ambivalent Critics, Converted Critics, and Critics.

Judged by the prevailing sentiment just described by the quotes above, it seems that the current crop of leaders use the issue of casualties as an important part of their vocabulary of ends and means when discussing military operations. It also seems that there is much greater attention to casualties in leadership circles than in the past. But is such a conclusion warranted? Is there evidence of increasing attention to the issue of casualties among political leaders, attention that might be influencing the public to be more concerned about it?

In fact, there is. While these data do not prove that political leaders have been responsible for the increasing prominence of casualties in political deliberations over U.S. military interventions, they do provide rather strong correlative evidence that is entirely consistent with a leadership-centered model of mass political attitudes.

**Frequency of Reference to Casualties by Political Actors**

The Federal News Service is a clearinghouse of transcripts of news conferences, congressional hearings, and other political events, and reports on activities in the White House, Congress, and the State and Defense Departments. These data can be used to compare the frequency with which these various political actors refer to casualties. While the data are exceedingly crude, they can help to provide a first-order

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understanding of the frequency with which each actor makes reference to American casualties.

Figure 3.2.1 presents data from the Federal News Service aggregated by month, but disaggregated by actor.\textsuperscript{409} When this source is used, references to American casualties in the Congress (in black) seem to predominate, but during some periods other actors focus on casualties to a greater extent than the Congress.

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\textbf{Figure 3.2.1 - Frequency of American Casualties in Leaders’ Discourse}

\textsuperscript{409}The data were collected via keyword search against transcripts from the Federal News Service. The search logic was a fairly restrictive one that aimed at ensuring that the context was military interventions and concern about American deaths. Because of the highly restrictive keyword formulation, we would expect the results to understate the extent to which casualties figured in the political debate in Congress. The Boolean search logic was: "(TROOPS OR FORCE) AND (AMERICAN CASUALTIES OR AMERICAN LIVES), where the number of occurrences were aggregated by day and disaggregated by actor—the White House, Congress, State and Defense Department. A number of other formulations of the keyword search were also tried, which showed roughly similar results.
Such data, of course, cannot prove that members of Congress have been using casualties in their argumentation to a greater extent than they have in the past, but these data are entirely consistent with such an argument. We will now examine this question more closely.

The Congressional Focus on Casualties

First, as suggested by the various quotes just presented regarding casualties in the Gulf War and Somalia, there appears to be rather strong circumstantial evidence that members of Congress may be providing opinion leadership on the issue of casualties in military operations.

There is a sensible reason for this: military interventions are presidential policy, and the President gains little from emphasizing casualties in any context other than preparing the public for their possibility, or in making the case that the intervention is worth the potential or actual casualties. Put another way, the context in which the White House and other Executive Branch departments and agencies are likely to mention casualties typically is their strictly factual (e.g., Defense Department reporting on expected or actual casualties) or political, arguing that the operation is worth (or still worth) its casualty costs.

Members of Congress, on the other hand, may or may not support a particular U.S. military intervention, and opponents have every reason to stress the unworthiness of the aims of the intervention, the low prospects for success, or the high potential costs in casualties. In short, opponents have a strong incentive to argue that the benefits or objectives of an intervention are simply not worth the risks or costs in human lives. Given the great divisions in Congress over when the use of force is [and is not] warranted, it should be little surprise that opponents will often use the casualties argument in making their case.

If this intuition is correct, then we would expect that any comparison of the Congress with other political actors would reveal that the Congress would typically be the place where the issue of casualties was raised first, and that it would also focus on the casualty aspects of military operations to a greater extent than the Executive Branch departments and agencies.
Figure 3.2.2 presents data from the Federal News Service for the period from November 1990 to the conclusion of the Gulf War, showing the cumulative frequency with which the issue of casualties was mentioned by various actors. The figure suggests that Members of Congress were the first and most likely to emphasize the potential American casualties.

Figure 3.2.2 - Mentions of American Casualties by Various Actors—Gulf War

The most dramatic increases in mentions of casualties (gauged by the slope of the cumulative frequency distribution) can be seen to be in late November 1990, following the Bush administration's announcement of an offensive option, and the beginning of the divisive congressional debate over the desirability of this action, and at the time of the congressional debates in January 1991, just prior to the beginning of the Gulf War on January 15. During these periods, Members of Congress were heatedly debating the merits of a war with Iraq, and whether such a war could possibly be worth the potentially high costs in U.S. casualties. In short, this indicator appears to have a commonsense
Figure 3.2.3 provides similar data for the period from August 1993 through December 1993, what was essentially the end-game in Somalia.\textsuperscript{25}

![Graph showing cumulative frequency over time with data points labeled as Defense, White House, and Congress.]

**Figure 3.2.3 - Mentions of American Casualties by Various Actors—Somalia**

In this case also, the Congress appears to have been the actor most focused on the issue of casualties, i.e., it was responsible for nearly half the occasions on which casualties were discussed by the various political actors. Again, it appears that the casualties issue was first raised by Members of Congress in mid-September,\textsuperscript{36} raised again following the deaths of three U.S. servicemen in a helicopter shoot-down in late September, and then increased dramatically as the results of the October 3-4, 1993, firefight in Mogadishu were reported. By comparison, the Defense Department was probably primarily in the role of reporting the casualties and their factual circumstances, while the White House seems to have been in the role of defending the administration's Somalia policy in the face of the casualties.

\textsuperscript{25}There were no records for the State Department in this period.

\textsuperscript{36}The reader will recall that the highly restrictive logic of the search would have missed other ways in which casualties might have been mentioned—the virtue of the approach presented here is consistency.
In fact, it seems that when compared to other actors the Congress is in general responsible for a large share of the attention devoted to the question of casualties. Figure 3.2.4 shows the average congressional share of casualty mentions, with the data aggregated by year; as can be seen, the Congress accounts for between 30 and 70 percent of the times that casualties were mentioned, based upon this crude keyword search formulation, and the last four years 1992-1996 have had a higher percentage of mentions by the Congress than the first four years 1989-1991.

![Figure 3.2.4 - Congressional Share of Casualty Mentions](image)

Again, these do not prove that the Congress is the principal source of statements from leadership circles that should be expected to influence increasing concern within the public about casualties, but they provide strong circumstantial evidence that is entirely consistent with that argument: in two recent U.S. military interventions, Members of Congress have taken the lead role in giving the issue of expected or actual casualties prominence in the leadership debate over ends and means, and in general, the Congress seems to pay a great deal of attention to the question of casualties. Is there additional evidence
of Congress have taken the lead role in giving the issue of expected or actual casualties prominence in the leadership debate over ends and means, and in general, the Congress seems to pay a great deal of attention to the question of casualties. Is there additional evidence from a source other than this one to support the argument that Members of Congress have recently evidenced a greater usage of the rhetoric of casualties in their arguments over U.S. military interventions?

The Increasing Prominence of Casualties in the Congressional Debate

Figure 3.2.5 presents data on the number of references to casualties in U.S. military operations in the Congressional Record.413 Although the data are an exceedingly coarse indicator of the prominence of casualties in congressional deliberations, there does in fact seem to be an increase in the average number of times in which American casualties were mentioned.415

The 1991 congressional deliberations over the Gulf War clearly occasioned the highest frequency of usage of casualties in congressional discussion and debate; this should be no surprise given the potentially high losses that the war could have produced. But interestingly, 1990, 1991, 1993 and 1994 occasioned more frequent mentions of casualties than the years 1985-1988. Furthermore, because the invasion of Panama in December 1989 and the intervention in Somalia in December 1992 occurred during congressional recesses, the totals for 1989 and 1992 probably understated the number of occurrences that would have obtained if those interventions had occurred during periods where Congress was in session and Members were debating the record.412 In short, there may be a more pronounced difference for the years 1985-88 and subsequent years than is actually suggested by the data.

413 Data are from the RECORD file in the LEGIS library of the LEXIS/NEXIS information retrieval service. The keyword search that was used was "(TROOPS OR FORCE) AND (AMERICAN CASUALTIES OR AMERICAN LIVES) AND DATES".

415 Of course, this may in part be a reflection of the number of military operations in a year.

412 Indeed, there was an apparent increase in the number of mentions in the month after the recess: January 1990 and January 1993.
Figure 3.2.5 - Mentions of American Casualties in Congressional Record

Did Leadership Concern About Casualties Get Reported?

Turning now to the question of whether the frequency counts in the Congressional Record were somehow influential in setting the public policy debate, Figure 3.2.6 seems to suggest a high degree of correlation between mentions of "American casualties" in the Congressional Record and mentions in other sources, including the Public Papers of the Presidents, and a number of media sources.

In fact, the apparent positive correlations between the White House and Congress, and between these two policy sources and the various media sources, are very real. Table 3.2.1 reports the correlations between the annual mentions of casualties in two separate policy sources, the Public Papers of the President and the Congressional Record, and between these two policy sources and a number of media sources.

These correlations suggest that the Congress is not engaging in a monologue; there is a high correlation between the annual mentions of casualties in the Congressional Record and those in the Public Papers of the President. One sensible interpretation is that opposition
statements that rely on the rhetoric of casualties needed to be responded to to defend the losses.

Figure 3.2.6 - Mentions of American Casualties in Various Sources

Nor is this conversation among political leaders in the White House and Congress going unobserved. The correlations between these two policy sources and the various media sources suggest that the media has been paying close attention to this conversation: correlations with mentions by the President range from 0.300 to 0.746, and correlations with mentions in the Congressional Record range from 0.665 to 0.884. The correlations are generally somewhat higher between the media sources and the Congressional Record than the Presidential Papers, however, suggesting that the media may be emphasizing the congressional viewpoint. Put another way, it is weak statistical evidence that not only does the Congress mention casualties in the context of U.S. military interventions more often than White House, it also may tend to generate more reporting to the public by the media.
Table 3.2.1
Correlations Between Policy and Media Sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlation (r)</th>
<th>Source</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.549</td>
<td>Presidential Papers and Congressional Record</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.497</td>
<td>New York Times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.300</td>
<td>Cable News Network (CNN)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.746</td>
<td>Washington Post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.695</td>
<td>Newswires</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.541</td>
<td>Magazines</td>
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<tr>
<td>0.589</td>
<td>ABC News</td>
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<td>New York Times</td>
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<td>Magazines</td>
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<td>0.861</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

To reiterate a point made earlier, there is a reasonable hypothesis for the somewhat higher correlations between the media sources and the Congressional Record. Because a U.S. military intervention is presidential policy, we would expect the issue of casualties to be most important in the context of a challenge to this presidential policy. Since this opposition is most likely to come from the Congress, and since conflict between the Executive and Legislative branches is a good story for the media, we should expect that the media would, in general, attend more to the congressional side of the conversation. In fact, this may be what we are seeing.

Evidence of an Ends-Means Discussion

The reader may at this point be willing to acknowledge that casualties appear to figure prominently in discussions of U.S. military interventions. But what evidence is there, skeptics might ask, that
this reflects a debate over whether the intervention is or is not worth the lives it may or has cost?

Again, the evidence is entirely circumstantial and correlative in nature, but quite compelling and consistent with the story that U.S. political leaders debate the ends and means of U.S. military operations, and that these debates are observed by the press, with the arguments ultimately being made available to the public.

In addition to the keyword searches on American casualties, several searches were performed to try to find a good indicator that the importance or ends of the operation were also being stressed. Because the vocabulary of ends and means is such an impoverished one, the best indicator seemed to be one that tapped the dimension of vital or national interest, a recurring theme in debates over U.S. military operations.413

Having uncovered evidence that by providing news copy the Congress may be very important in shaping views of the acceptability of American casualties in U.S. military interventions, this search was run against the Congressional Record, and the number of occurrences were aggregated by month. To establish whether or not there was a linkage to a larger debate and a connection to the public, however, the search was also run against the New York Times. The results of the correlation analysis are presented in Table 3.2.2.

The correlation coefficients in the table suggest a number of interesting findings. First of all, both the Congressional Record and the New York Times found a correlation between mentions of casualties in a month and mentions of vital or national interests, which suggests that when Members of Congress discuss casualties, it is as part of a larger ends-means conversation. Second, there are fairly strong correlations between the various sources regarding when casualties are discussed by political leaders, and this appears to be a relatively robust finding. Third, there are much lower correlations between discussions of vital interests in the Congress and reporting in the other sources. It is not clear why this should be the case, and so no explanation is offered.

413 The keyword search that was performed used the following search logic: (TROOPS OR FORCE) AND (VITAL INTEREST OR NATIONAL INTEREST).
### Table 3.2.2

**Correlational Evidence of the Debate Over Ends and Means, Monthly Aggregations, 1988-1995**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlation Between...</th>
<th>Correlation (r)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ENDS AND MEANS DISCUSSED ROUGHLY AT SAME TIME</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vital/National Interests and American Casualties/Lives</td>
<td>CR: 0.628 NYT: 0.468</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEDIA REPORTING MIRRORS CONGRESSIONAL DIALOGUE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Means: American Casualties/Lives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congressional Record and FEDNEWS/TOTAL</td>
<td>0.410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congressional Record and FEDNEWS/CONGRESS</td>
<td>0.413</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congressional Record and New York Times</td>
<td>0.462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEDNEWS/CONGRESS and FEDNEWS/TOTAL</td>
<td>0.961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ends: Vital/National Interests</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congressional Record and FEDNEWS/CONGRESS</td>
<td>0.203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congressional Record and New York Times</td>
<td>0.020</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The important point in this, however, is that there is relatively strong correlational evidence that casualties are discussed in the context of ends-means discussions, and that these discussions are observed and reported by the media, precisely what the leadership model of public attitude formation predicts.

**AMERICAN POLITICAL LEADERS AND THE MEDIA**

The topic of casualties is a recurring one in debates over the merits of U.S. military interventions, to the point where some critics seem to have begun satirizing political leaders' aversion to U.S. casualties. For example, in his argument against congressional efforts to circumvent U.S. participation in UN peacekeeping operations, historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., recently quoted Senator Robert Dole as follows:
This bill, Mr. Dole tells us, "imposes significant new limits on peacekeeping policies which have jeopardized American interests, squandered American resources and cost lives..."The American people," [Senator Bob] Dole says, "will not tolerate American casualties for irresponsible internationalism."...a few soldiers get killed and popular demand for withdrawal becomes almost irresistible.\footnote{Schlesinger (1995).}

The media have also actively emphasized the issue of casualties in military operations. For example, an editorial in the New York Times at the time of the Haiti intervention argued that congressional authorization was needed:

...[I]n a military action where most Americans see no compelling national interests at stake and in which the first casualties are likely to bring bitter recrimination.\footnote{Congress Must Vote on Haiti, New York Times, September 13, 1994, p. 22.}

And even the Times is not immune to an engaging sound-bite on the subject:

"Our armed forces didn't join to die for the United Nations," Representative Jon Christensen, a Nebraska Republican, said.\footnote{Schmitt (1995).}

Political leaders may also have imposed constraints on themselves. The public's willingness to tolerate U.S. casualties in the Gulf War may have been underestimated by President Bush, and in spite of public opinion data suggesting that majorities would support the use of ground troops in a U.S. evacuation of NATO and United Nations peacekeepers, President Clinton was recently described as having decided in 1992 that the American public would not risk American lives in the Balkans under any circumstances:

The United States remains unwilling to provide any [ground troops]. Mr. Clinton concluded after he was elected that the American people did not want him to risk American lives in the Balkans. Instead, he sent Secretary of State Warren Christopher to Europe in an attempt to persuade the allies to
lift the arms embargo for the Muslim-led Bosnians and to support them with air strikes against the Serbs.\footnote{17}

No doubt much of this is merely reporting the arguments made by commentators and political leaders, who use the media to promote their viewpoints, but as Rosenthal (1994) argues, there may be something more at work:

Oftentimes, listening to some of the American journalists and politicians who opposed the U.S. intervention in Haiti, you can hear clearly what they do not say. They want the mission to fail and Haiti to explode into violence and chaos. They do not want American troops to be killed. But if casualties do come, they are poised, mouth and computer at the ready, to scream havoc.\footnote{18}

Whether Rosenthal's assessment of motives is correct or not, the theme of casualties is frequently raised in the current political milieu by political actors of all stripes, to make arguments of all kinds, but mostly arguments in opposition to a U.S. military intervention. While the interventions and their merits or demerits may differ greatly, arguing that the operation is not worth its potential or actual losses of life is likely to remain a hardy perennial, because it is exceedingly difficult to put a price tag on human lives on the rather vague foreign policy objectives that are being promoted by an operation.

To sum up this section, it seems that there is substantial reason to believe that it is disagreements among political leaders that has led to the prominence of casualties in the larger political conversation over U.S. military interventions. There is abundant evidence that the aversion to casualties that is so often imputed to the public actually originates with their political representatives in Congress, who consistently fail to agree that military operations are worth the potential human costs.

Until congressional and other political leaders can agree on the circumstances under which military interventions are warranted.

\footnote{17}Whitney (1994). As was seen, the public appear perfectly willing to support ground troops in Bosnia for the limited purpose of evacuating UN and NATO peacekeepers.

\footnote{18}Rosenthal (1994).
casualties are likely to continue to dominate the discussion, because it is easier to argue that an operation is not worth the potential losses of life than to argue that it is. But there should be no mistake about the matter: to the extent that casualties loom large in the public mind, it is precisely because it looms large in their leaders' minds.
PART 4: CONCLUSIONS

A U.S. military intervention entails three important questions for the president: when (or whether) to intervene; how to manage the political conduct of the intervention, including the building and sustaining of support; and when to terminate or escalate the intervention. The focus of the research reported here has been on the factors that relate to building and maintaining support over the course of an intervention.

Successful political leadership of an intervention needs to take into account both sensible responses to changing conditions on the battlefield and in the domestic sphere, especially including the broader context of leadership consensus or conflict. The analysis reported here has shown that three simple metaphors—an ends-means calculus, a democratic conversation, and a curve tracing support as a function of casualties—can aid in understanding the process of building and maintaining domestic support for a U.S. military intervention.

THE ENDS-MEANS CALCULUS

The policymaker first needs to understand that although short-term shocks can produce short-term effects that may be somewhat unpredictable, the public in the aggregate generally behave as if their support is contingent upon a number of sensible concerns. Unless these concerns are attended to by the policymaker, the loyalty of supporters can be lost to opponents of the intervention.

The metaphor of an ends-means calculus was used to simplify and systematize the sorts of considerations that seem to characterize aggregate attitudes and support for an intervention. The metaphor assists in thinking about support for an intervention by characterizing support as being the result of a series of tests or questions that need to be answered collectively by political leaders and the public:

- Do the benefits seem to be high enough?
- Are the prospects for success good enough?
- Are the expected or actual costs low enough?
• Taken together, does the probable outcome seem (or still seem) worth the costs?

The calculus suggests only that when the benefits of the intervention and the prospects for success are judged to be high, support will be more robust than when these factors are absent. It also suggests that as the costs increase, support may be lost, but the relationship between costs and lost support will differ, depending on circumstances.

The calculus also makes it clear that efforts to mislead the public about what to expect from the intervention can backfire: as events play out over time—many of which are well beyond the control of the policymaker—if the intervention fails to live up to expectations, the result can be a decline in support, and questions about the credibility and competence of leaders can arise. Understating costs, for example, can make support quite brittle, while overstating them ("inoculation") may make support narrow. Changes in objectives can similarly have a positive or negative impact on support, depending on whether the new objectives are valued more or less.

THE DEMOCRATIC CONVERSATION

But the calculus alone masks a much richer process linking public support or disaffection to leadership consensus or conflict, a process that in fact can offer political leaders opportunities to build robust support. As Daniel Yankelovich has observed, reconciling leadership on public policy issues with public opinion is much more nuanced than most understand:

It should be clear that the two alternatives of slavishly following the opinion polls or standing on one's own convictions irrespective of public opinion are false choices for democracy. In a democracy, one of the major qualifications of leaders is that they develop the skill to move the public toward consensus by playing a constructive role at every stage of the public judgment process—consciousness raising, working through, and resolution. For this to happen, the culture has to broaden its definition of leadership to incorporate this ability.419

In building support, needless to say, the very drama of a military intervention can do much for the consciousness-raising regarding an intervention undertaken with little warning. In other cases, an intervention may follow from a prolonged or episodic crisis, and leadership may merely amount to occasionally bringing to the attention of congressional and other leaders, and the public, the growing litany of grievances and the attempts to resolve the situation peacefully.\footnote{Panama seems to be a rather good example of this.}

But even with consciousness raised, leadership is required to help potential supporters work through the difficult tradeoffs in a meaningful way so that the resulting support is robust enough to weather the unexpected. In the case of the public, support should be based upon what Yankelovich calls “good” quality public opinion:

\begin{quote}
I propose that the quality of public opinion is considered good when the public accepts responsibility for the consequences of its views and poor when the public, for whatever reason, is unprepared to do so.\footnote{Yankelovich (1991), p. 24.}
\end{quote}

The single most important reason people have for failing to accept the consequences of their opinions is their difficulty in resolving their own conflicting values and ambivalences. The ability to resolve internal conflicts of values is the foundation of good-quality public opinion.\footnote{Yankelovich (1991), p. 30.}

In the present case of interventions, the conflicting values and ambivalences are typically over whether the benefits and prospects for success warrant the expected or actual costs and risks.

But the president will seek not only to build consensus, but to maintain that consensus until the operation is successfully concluded. To do this, the president must show leadership on bringing issues to the attention of his audiences—the Congress, public, and others—informing the difficult tradeoffs, and giving the public a continued sense of clarity of purpose and resolution. Failing this, he may fail to mobilize the support he needs (Lebanon (1982) and Haiti (1994) come to mind), or lose the support he has (Somalia in 1993).
This process can be thought of as a democratic conversation typically led by the president and his advisors, debated and discussed by his political allies and adversaries, experts, and journalists, observed by the mass public as filtered through the media, and measured by public opinion surveys, letters to the editor, and calls to congressmen. This conversation generally places the president in the position of stressing the justifications (high benefits and prospects, acceptable costs) for the intervention, and others accepting, amending, rejecting, or otherwise responding to these arguments.

The articulation and valuation of benefits, prospects for success, expected costs, and whether the results of the intervention are worth its costs and risks are ultimately, therefore, the result of an often disorderly social process. This process can occasion different justifications or arguments being suggested, which are found either to resonate with the other actors, to be met with indifference, or rejected out of hand.

The evolution of the arguments for and against going to war against Iraq in 1990-91 is an excellent example of the essentially social nature of this process. The Bush administration's arguments to support a military solution to the conflict were more frequently reported by the media, and seemed to resonate more deeply with the public, than those of congressional and other opponents. Although most of the public were initially ambivalent about going to war, by the time of the congressional vote on a congressional authorization to use force, a healthy majority favored congressional authorization; this authorization represented a formal closure to the conversation, at least for the time being. But if things had gone terribly wrong, and the operation had dragged on much longer and at higher cost than expected with no resolution in sight, this conversation would surely have begun again. Although such opposition would likely be tentative at first, as congressional and other opponents came to steal opinion leadership from the president, support for the war would have been lost, segment by segment of the public, with the least committed dropping out first, followed by those only slightly committed, and so on.
This conversation may not take place formally at all, or may only become formalized if the situation turns out to be worse than expected. Whether or not it occurs formally, however, it captures the essence of the process that seems to have taken place in most of the cases examined. In Somalia, for example, only one house of Congress ultimately passed the joint resolution supporting the U.S. intervention. Although there were congressional hearings over the course of the intervention, there were few questions raised about the broader U.S. and U.N. aims beginning in May 1993. In fact, it was not until the situation had deteriorated significantly over the summer of 1993, the objectives of the operation appeared to have changed substantially, and the costs began to mount, that the Congress renewed the formal conversation in September 1993. The deaths in Mogadishu in early October precipitated the entry of the public and the media into the conversation, and led to a dramatic increase in political and media activity. In short, the conversation had become less a dialogue than a concerted attack on Clinton administration Somalia policy; through its failure to attend to ends and means, the administration had ceded leadership to the opposition.

**Which Curve Are We On?**

A third metaphor captures the most important characteristics of the other two, the simple model of ends and means and the democratic conversation. A curve that traces support—up until now, thought strictly in terms of public support—as a function of casualties, in fact represents both the weighing of ends and means and consensus or dissensus among leaders.

Armed with the model of ends and means and the metaphor of the democratic conversation, the reader can now see that it is a mistake to look at public support solely as a function of casualties. Support reflects a collective judgment of the public as they respond to a host of exogenous events, including the arguments of political leaders to continue supporting or begin opposing the intervention. Seen this way, the curves reflect how the American body politic respond to perceived benefits, prospects, and costs, and changes to these parameters, but
tend also to be greatly influenced by the interpretations of events offered by political and other opinion leaders, and the decisions of these leaders to continue or stop supporting the intervention.

While "the curve" is ultimately defined by the social process of the democratic conversation, there is an important pattern to be seen when the curves for several interventions are compared. When the American body politic have collectively recognized that there are high expected benefits from an intervention, there has been a higher willingness to accept casualties than in those cases where it has been divided over the benefits of the operation, or (more obviously) where there was agreement that the benefits were not worth very many lives at all.

To the extent that the examined cases fell into several classes, and cases in each class appear to share a number of important characteristics, there would seem to be some diagnostic or heuristic value to these curves. That is, when evaluating the likely nature of support for a proposed intervention, we may be able to identify the group of cases to which it belongs, thereby gaining some insights into the likely path of support as the costs mount. In some cases, such as the Gulf War, the willingness to accept casualties may be relatively high, while in other cases such as Somalia or Haiti, quite low. The simple model of ends and means can then be used to further inform our understanding of how various shocks can dynamically affect support.

In any case, rather than merely hoping for the best, such a crude diagnostic tool can help us to understand "which curve we are on," the likely nature of constraints, and the efforts that will be required to build and maintain robust support.

**ARE LEADERS AND THE PUBLIC ON THE SAME CURVE?**

The metaphor of the curve can be further extended. Different actors may in fact be "on different curves." For example, because the president derives greater and more direct benefits from a U.S. military intervention than either his political adversaries or the mass public, he is often likely to show a higher willingness to accept costs than these other actors.
In fact, however, to misunderstand "which curve the public is on" may lead a president not to one, but to two different types of errors.

- First, if the president overestimates the robustness of support in the face of changes (i.e., he may believe that support will decline more slowly than it actually will, and that the public is on a flatter curve than it really is), he may find himself in the unenviable situation of losing domestic support for his intervention before his policy objectives can be achieved. The consequences—in terms of wrong lessons drawn, implications for credibility and deterrence, and so on—may have ramifications well beyond the intervention itself.

- Second, the president may err by underestimating the robustness of the support for a prospective operation (i.e., he may believe that support is likely to fall more quickly than it actually would, and that the public are on a steeper curve than they really are). In this case, he may either fail to act for fear that he will have insufficient support; may pursue objectives that, although likely to be less costly, may paradoxically meet with lower levels of support than the objectives he would otherwise have chosen to achieve; or may demand strategies that, while meant to minimize casualties, may have the perverse consequence of reducing the probability of success, thereby leading to a longer (and more costly) commitment.

Support is not static, however, but is the result of a dynamic process, only a part of which is under the control of policymakers. When bad (or good) things happen, the willingness to accept casualties can also change. For example, when the prospects for success improve, it is entirely rational to be more willing to accept additional costs to achieve the objective (i.e., if the expected value of the outcome increases, it should be worth the higher costs). By the same token, if the objective or mission of the operation changes in a way that is valued less by a majority of the public than the original objective was,
there may be a lower willingness (or certainly no higher willingness) to accept casualties; Somalia is a good example of such a case.

Thus, another extension of the curve metaphor is that if conditions change to a new mission, for example, or higher or lower benefits or prospects for success, leaders may misread the curve potential. Supporters in Congress and the public are on, or ask supporters to move from one curve to another. In the case of Somalia, for example, the Congress, public and most others appear to have been on "the curve for humanitarian interventions." When the mission was broadened and began to involve combat operations again, majorities in these audiences remained on "the curve for humanitarian interventions," while the administration had moved on to a more costly curve—"the curve for peace enforcement" (or "nation-building," or "warlord-hunting").

Thus, other actors (such as political leaders) can also be thought of as having their own curves, and these actors can also move from one curve to another. Furthermore, the curves of various actors (including different segments of the public) can be compared.

Rather than recognizing the rich process by which support is constructed and maintained, some analysts have jumped to simplistic, and at times alarming, conclusions about the nature of support in the face of casualties. Some have, for example, wrongly suggested that once committed—and regardless of leadership support, the specific objectives being pursued, the prospects for success, or the costs—public support for U.S. military interventions will remain robust over the course of the operation, and that there will be calls for an increasing commitment. The data presented here suggest otherwise, and seem to show that the level of commitment of the aggregate public is tied in some sense to a rational calculus informed by political leaders.

Still others have suggested that "the public will no longer accept casualties" in any U.S. military interventions, and will demand immediate withdrawal. Again, the data tell a different story, and show that when the benefits and prospects for success are high, and when there is broad consensus among political leaders that the circumstances warrant it, and sufficient "conversation" in the body politic, the willingness of the public to accept casualties can be quite high.
These errant conclusions result as much from a misunderstanding of the broader processes at work as a failure to examine enough data to really understand the dynamics of support in U.S. military interventions. But more telling, they also appear to result from a propensity to selectively (and misleadingly) cite data that comfortably supports a particular viewpoint or agenda—and there are many axes being ground in support of various agendas—rather than merely letting the data speak for itself through a careful reading.

A FRESH LOOK AT THE ISSUES

This research has taken a fresh look at support for U.S. military interventions through a comprehensive comparison of six case studies—the Second World War, the Korean and Vietnam Wars, the Gulf War, Panama, and Somalia. This review suggests a number of policy questions.

A Recent Change in Tolerance for Casualties?

HAS THERE BEEN A RECENT DECLINE IN TOLERANCE FOR CASUALTIES IN U.S. MILITARY OPERATIONS?

It is more accurate to say that the U.S. has recently engaged in military interventions that have historically failed to command much tolerance for casualties from political leaders and the public—the perceived benefits and prospects for success for these types of interventions were never perceived by political leaders and the public as being worth the loss of very many lives.

Earlier precedents of low support in the face of very low casualties are not difficult to find. In these cases, the support of political leaders was weak, the benefits were not perceived to be very high, the objectives changed substantially, or the prospects for success were low, and support was accordingly usually pretty low. Two examples that come easily to mind are the intervention in the Dominican Republic in 1965 and the intervention in Lebanon in 1982-84. In fact, the decline in support as a function of casualties in Somalia seems not terribly unlike that in the intervention in the Dominican Republic in 1965.

Further evidence of the lack of a recent change is found in the fact that during roughly the same period, the public showed a
willingness to accept casualties into the thousands or tens of thousands (in the Gulf War), a willingness to tolerate somewhat more than the 26 servicemen who died (in Panama), a willingness to tolerate no more than the 29 who had died (in Somalia), and an unwillingness to accept the 50 or so deaths that were expected from an intervention (in Haiti).

In short, recent U.S. experiences where there was low tolerance for casualties in U.S. military operations are most attributable to the fact that there has been little agreement among political leaders (and as a consequence, the public) that the benefits of these interventions were worth very many casualties, or that the prospects for success warranted the loss of many lives.

At its heart, however, the role of casualties can be understood only in the context of the benefits of the intervention as perceived by political leaders. When there is significant opposition to a U.S. military intervention among congressional and other political leaders, opposition leaders will argue that the interests and principles at stake are small, that the prospects for success are low, that the costs are likely to be high, and that the intervention is not worth the risks and costs. And as the costs mount, opposition leaders will point to these rising costs as being incommensurate with the small stakes, and more members of the public will find this argument credible.

What is new, however, is the extent to which political leaders (and journalists) have used the fear of casualties as a way to argue against one or another intervention. If this trend continues, it seems likely that an increasing unwillingness to accept casualties by the public could become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The Impact of Casualties on Initial Support

Do expected or feared casualties affect the initial levels of support for a military operation? If so, in what way? Put another way, are majorities of the public deterred by the potential casualty costs of a military operation? What factors affect the initial sensitivity of the public to casualties?
All else equal, the higher the prospective casualties in a military intervention, the lower the level of support—this is an obvious outcome of the simple calculus of ends and means.

The level of initial support as expected casualties increase depends, however, on the nature of opinion leadership (i.e., the support or opposition of political leaders), perceived benefits (e.g., the number of good reasons for intervening, the importance of the interests and principles), and the prospects for success. For example, expectations of few to no casualties can be essential to support for interventions where there is disagreement among political leaders that important national interests are at stake (e.g., Somalia, Haiti). Conversely, when important interests and principles are engaged and widely acknowledged by political leaders, the public is in fact willing to tolerate somewhat higher (e.g., Panama) or much higher casualties (the Gulf War).

The implication for policymakers is that the public will attempt to inform themselves on the good (if any) that can come of an intervention, the prospects for success, and the likely costs. If policymakers don’t provide this information, they can expect straight talk from others who may be less favorably predisposed to the intervention. Policymakers should also attend to building support in the Congress and among other opinion leaders, since a failure to do so can result in a swift decline in public support if (when) things don’t go as expected.

The Impact of Casualties on Subsequent Support

DO CASUALTIES OVER THE COURSE OF A MILITARY OPERATION AFFECT PUBLIC SUPPORT? IN WHAT WAYS?

There is little doubt that, all else equal, public support declines as casualties in a military operation rise—as the costs are increased, the least committed will be first to withdraw their support, followed by others, if costs continue to mount.

It seems reasonable to assume that in a large war with many deaths, because of the increased probability of knowing someone touched by the loss, the response to mounting casualties may in part be more direct and unmediated by the attitudes of political leaders. In the case of much
smaller interventions, because the losses are much smaller, the media is able to report on individual incidents of deaths. In these cases, the response to casualties is probably mediated to a greater extent by opinion leaders, who may interpret even a small number of casualties as being incommensurate with the interests. In either case, however, to the extent that leaders are persuaded that the interests and principles continue to be worth the costs that are being incurred, and continue to support the operation, much of the public will follow their lead. Conversely, popular disaffection typically follows disaffection among the leaders.

To the extent that policymakers continue pursuing objectives that meet with support from the Congress and other opinion leaders, and there is ample evidence that progress is being made, there will be a degree of insulation.

Other Correlates of Support

WHAT OTHER FACTORS AFFECT SUPPORT IN IMPORTANT WAYS? ARE ANY OF THESE MORE IMPORTANT THAN CASUALTIES?

The simple calculus of ends embedded in a democratic conversation suggests that the support of political leaders, perceived importance of the benefits, and the probability of success also appear to be very important determinants of support.

The principal reason that support of congressional and other political leaders is important is that it can cue support among the attentive public. Conversely, opposition among political leaders can cue dissension among the public.

The expected benefits of an intervention are the product of the perceived benefits of a successful operation and the probability of success. The public has a highly differentiated view of the relative worth of various objectives in military interventions. Majority support may accordingly hinge on whether the intervention is promoting specific principles or objectives that are important enough to warrant the probable costs; the more important these objectives, the more robust the support. For example, in the cases of Panama and the Gulf War, the
overthrow of the hated dictator Noriega became the principal criterion for success.

Also important are the prospects for the success of the intervention, since a lower probability of success reduces the expected benefits from the intervention. Risk orientation is also very important in this regard. Prospect theory predicts a higher willingness to accept risks in the domain of losses than in the domain of gains. This means that risk acceptance may be higher for interventions aimed at reversing an unacceptable loss (for example, ejecting Iraq from Kuwait or North Korea from the south, or preventing certain deaths to hundreds of thousands in Somalia) than intervening to merely improve an existing but less-than-dire situation (for example, promoting democracy in Somalia or Haiti).

Policymakers need to recognize that support for an intervention often turns on fairly subtle issues, and that the concerns of supporters in the Congress and public need to be addressed. For example, even slight differences in the objectives or mission can have a dramatic impact on initial support from congressional and other opinion leaders, and the public, and that changes in objective or mission can also alter support.

Support for Casualty-Minimizing Strategies

Can fear of excessive U.S. casualties lead majorities to support casualty-minimizing strategies, including strategies of annihilation? Can casualties lead to support for policies of retribution?

The public consistently supports casualty-minimizing strategies of all kinds. For example, majorities of the public typically prefer the use of diplomacy and economic tools over the use of the military; they prefer the use of standoff weapons such as cruise missiles to the employment of manned aircraft; they prefer the use of less vulnerable air and naval forces to the insertion of more vulnerable ground forces; they are willing to accept high losses among the adversary's forces if it means that U.S. casualties can be minimized; and when ground combat is involved, they are averse to combat that is drawn out over a longer period of time and instead prefer intervening with overwhelming force to
quickly secure objectives and then leave. Furthermore, when costs become too high, casualty-minimizing strategies can be an essential element of maintaining public support until an orderly withdrawal can be achieved (Korea, Vietnam, Somalia).

The implication is that casualty-minimization involves a great many more considerations than most recognize—diplomacy, strategy and tactics, doctrine, training, technology—and each has a role to play. At the first extreme, low casualty operations can be extremely stressing in their requirement for coordinated political and military activity. At the other, technological substitutes can be very expensive.

Preferred Policies: Escalation, Withdrawal, Polarization

DO CASUALTIES LEAD THE PUBLIC TO PREFER WITHDRAWAL OR A DECREASED COMMITMENT? DO THEY LEAD THE PUBLIC TO PREFER ESCALATION OR AN INCREASED COMMITMENT? ARE THESE EVEN THE RIGHT QUESTIONS?

Mounting casualties are associated with declining support, but the policies that are preferred as a consequence appear to depend on evaluations of the benefits and the prospects for success, and the credibility of political and military leaders who are offering alternative strategies.

For many political leaders and members of the public, casualties may rise to a point where the costs are no longer viewed as being commensurate with the probable benefits, support will be withdrawn, and concluding the commitment through withdrawal is preferred. For others, however, casualties may in fact increase the perceived equities in the operation—the costs in lives are viewed as losses that must be redeemed or compensated for by a successful outcome achieved through a continued or increased commitment. While polarization often occurs (Korea, Vietnam) which group is more numerous seems to depend on the perceived losses (negative benefits) of a successful outcome, the perceived prospects for success (it would be irrational to support escalation, for example, if it was felt unlikely to achieve the objectives), and the willingness to trade off additional costs for the benefits of achieving a successful outcome.
When important interests and principles are engaged and the prospects for success are high, there is more willingness to support an extended or increased commitment to secure objectives—this is entirely sensible (World War II, Gulf War). When the prospects for success are low or falling, however, this declining support seems to manifest itself in polarization, possibly due to differences in the perceived prospects for success: while a small group of hard-core (and presumably optimistic) supporters may prefer an increased commitment, there is typically strong or growing support for an honorable and orderly withdrawal among others (who are presumably more pessimistic) (Korea, Vietnam, Somalia). Even in cases where U.S. interests are not as important, while there may be clear and consistent majority support for withdrawal, there is rarely majority support for forcing an immediate withdrawal (Somalia). In some cases, majorities may prefer a withdrawal, but still want to punish those responsible for the U.S. deaths, as long as it doesn’t impede a liquidation of the commitment (Somalia).

The implication is that policymakers need to achieve their objectives before leadership is ceded to opponents of the intervention. Rational sentiment for escalation may follow from a higher valuation of the benefits or a higher subjective probability of success. Rational sentiment for withdrawal follows from lower perceived benefits and lower subjective probability of success.

**A Demand That Future Operations Be Low in Casualties?**

As a result of lessons learned from the Gulf War, do majorities of the public believe that most future U.S. military interventions will be lop-sided and relatively bloodless victories? Relatedly, are majorities likely to “demand” such victories to consider them successes?

As was seen from the public opinion data, support appeared to be sensitive to the characteristics of the various interventions as described by political leaders (e.g., whether the operation was expected to be “like Vietnam”), and the expected number of casualties varied depending on these descriptions, just as the willingness to tolerate
casualties varied. For example, few thought the Panama invasion or the Gulf War would be like Vietnam.

The public will always prefer victory to defeat or stalemate, and cheap interventions to costly ones—this is only sensible. Nevertheless, the public's definition of "costly" depends more on the specific merits of the case (support of political leaders, perceived benefits, and prospects for success) than upon a simple heuristic that all future interventions will be bloodless. In short, the public are likely to favor any and all efforts that will reduce U.S. casualties, from diplomacy to the development and employment of casualty-minimizing strategies and technologies.

Policymakers accordingly will want to ensure that they are pursuing objectives that are valued highly and are believed likely to be achieved—when these factors are present, the willingness to accept casualties will be higher.

Weighing U.S. Casualty Minimization Against Other Desiderata

HOW DO THE PUBLIC RECONCILE AN INTEREST IN MINIMIZING U.S. CASUALTIES AND AN INTEREST IN MINIMIZING CASUALTIES TO CIVILIANS NONCOMBATANTS OR EVEN CASUALTIES AMONG AN ADVERSARY'S FORCES?

Majorities of the public support minimizing casualties among civilian non-combatants, and believe that the U.S. military takes this into account in planning and executing its military operations. There is, however, a paradox. It seems that it is because of this faith that the military is attempting to minimize casualties among innocents that the public have evidenced a willingness to accept civilian losses to achieve U.S. objectives or if it would help to minimize U.S. casualties (Panama, Gulf War).

When important interests and principles are involved, the public seem perfectly willing to use strategies that will result in high casualties among adversary forces to achieve the objective (Korea, Vietnam, Panama, Gulf War), or to minimize U.S. casualties (Korea, Vietnam, the Gulf War).

The implication in such a set of tradeoffs is that minimizing U.S. casualties is considered most important, minimizing civilian losses next
most important, and minimizing deaths among enemy combatants not terribly important at all. The deaths on the so-called “highway of death” during the war with Iraq was evidently more important to journalists and political leaders than the public.

**ADVICE TO THE POLICYMAKER**

If it is true that members of the public base their decisions to support an intervention on cueing from political leaders, perceived benefits, the prospects for success, and the expected and actual costs (especially casualties), then there are clear implications for managing the political support of the operation:

- Policymakers should attempt to ensure that the specific objectives of the operation are supported by congressional and other political leaders. Congressional consultations are an important tool for identifying an objective that is likely to meet with congressional support, i.e., to be perceived as worth doing and doable. For example, congressional support for an evacuation of United Nations and NATO personnel from Bosnia would be expected to boost public support for the operation, and to the extent that congressional support remained robust, public support would also be expected to.

- Where delaying a military response will not significantly affect the costs or probable success of an intervention, policymakers may wish to delay intervening until a sufficiently long litany of reasons for intervening have been accumulated, the perceived benefits of a successful operation are consequently high, and other political leaders support the action (Panama). While the perceived benefits will in part be a function of the importance of the interests that are engaged and principles being promoted, it may also take time to develop a long enough litany of good reasons for intervening.

- While policymakers need to ensure that objectives are worth doing, they also need to ensure that they are, and are seen as, doable, and at a “reasonable” cost. Interventions that are similar to past operations that met with success because they
turned on military considerations more than political ones
(Grenada, Panama, the Gulf War) are more likely to be seen as
having good prospects for success than those that failed
because the military was being used to solve inherently
political problems (Vietnam, Lebanon, the second phase of
Somalia). When operations of the latter type are contemplated,
diplomacy and limited objectives are often the sine qua non for
creating and maintaining a benign (low-casualty) environment
for U.S. forces.

- Similarly, the willingness to accept risks may also be affected
  by context—willingness to accept risks in an operation aimed
  at reversing an important loss is likely to be higher than the
  willingness for an operation aimed at improving a troubling
  status quo situation.

- Operations that appear likely to be successful at low cost will
  always be preferred to operations that are concluded at higher
cost, especially if unsuccessful. To the extent that
policymakers use the tools at their disposal to quickly achieve
objectives at low cost, these interventions will be rewarded
with higher support. Operations that are longer in duration,
if there are few visible costs involved, may also be
sustainable for their duration. But support for interventions
with mounting costs over a long duration is only likely to be
sustainable if it is seen as important and moving purposively
toward a successful outcome.

None of this should suggest, however, that robust public support for a
military intervention—majority support that is likely to last for the
duration of the intervention—is merely a matter of manipulating public
opinion or "spin control." In fact, because support is in part based
upon initial expectations, efforts to mislead the public can backfire,
and failure to bring the public along by explaining the reasons for
changed objectives, etc., can reduce support. Withholding information
from the public can similarly lead to public distrust and can turn
military successes into political debacles (Vietnam).
In short, leaders need to start the democratic conversation and set its parameters, and when changes occur, they need to renew it to establish "which curve" supporters are on, and what sort of support remains for the objectives they are pursuing. If they do not provide this information to their would-be supporters, then it may be supplied by others who are less favorably predisposed to the intervention.

If it is also true that the willingness of the public to support a continued or increased commitment to an intervention in the face of casualties is based upon the perceived importance or benefits of the intervention and the prospects for success, then this also has policy implications:

- Support for interventions where important interests and principles are not perceived, or visible progress is not being made, may invite attempts by adversaries to impose catastrophic losses (e.g., Lebanon, Somalia) to force the U.S. to relinquish its objectives or to change its strategy to a casualty-minimizing strategy that makes success impossible. For example, as was seen in Somalia, congressional and public support for an intervention can hinge on specific objectives and costs that are low; when the objectives and the costs change, support can collapse.

- In circumstances where support is brittle or nonexistent, the best course of action may often be to identify discrete, limited objectives that reduce the risk of armed opposition (the humanitarian phase of the Somalia intervention) by eschewing larger political aims that invite escalation.

- A related technique is to use diplomacy to minimize armed opposition. Indeed, the first months of Operation Restore Hope and the U.S. intervention in Haiti are striking examples where diplomacy contributed greatly to minimizing U.S. casualties.

- Paradoxically, the use of overwhelming force for the duration of the intervention may help to smother any incentives for local forces to try to escalate past U.S. willingness to tolerate casualties.
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- Ultimately, however, because the stakes are likely to be much higher for indigenous actors, the U.S. may have few alternatives between withdrawing U.S. forces and destroying opposition forces as an effective military organization. In many cases, however, the stakes for the U.S. (e.g., humanitarian objectives) are not commensurate with such a course of action.

- Consequently, until new operational concepts, doctrines and technologies can be developed to assure low-casualty operations in situations where the benefits are typically viewed as rather low, and unless employment can be linked effectively to diplomacy, the policymaker is likely to face the prospect of intervening without support, or losing it over the course of an intervention. Especially in so-called operations other than war (OOTW), important asymmetries—in interests, stakes, cost-tolerance, and willingness to escalate—can place the U.S. at a distinct disadvantage—it is only through an understanding of ends and means (limited yet worthy objectives, limited costs) and successful integration of political and military tools that these operations will be viewed a success.

Ultimately, the historical record suggests that where important interests and principles have been engaged, policymakers will be given high levels of support and broad discretion to choose the means of concluding a U.S. military intervention. The record also suggests that this permissive environment will be withdrawn only if there is a failure to achieve success despite mounting costs. Even where less important interests are engaged, however, members of Congress and the public have typically resisted the impulse to force an immediate withdrawal. In some cases where low U.S. interests have been engaged, if policymakers had available military tools that would have quickly and cheaply achieved their objectives, operations now viewed as failures might have instead been viewed as successes. In such cases, however, the low level of interests may not warrant the level of military action that is
required to create a benign environment (e.g., neutralizing or eliminating Aidid's clan as an effective military organization).

CLOSING THOUGHTS

The American body politic appears to have a highly differentiated, yet consistent and sensible view of U.S. military interventions: it will support such operations only as long as it is convinced that the perceived benefits and prospects for success are sufficiently high, and the costs are tolerable. Because it is so difficult for members of the public to attempt to weigh the worth of rather intangible foreign policy objectives against what are perhaps the most tangible costs imaginable—the lives of U.S. servicemen—members of the public rely upon political leaders, both to help them interpret events and the appropriate policy responses, and to help them assess whether or not the intervention is "still worth it" in light of the costs, benefits and prospects for success.

The apparent recent increase in the importance of casualties ultimately reflects a failure of leadership, both on the part of the President and the Congress. When Presidents fail to persuade and intervene in areas in which the U.S. has no vital interests, or for reasons that are viewed as unconvincing by substantial numbers of those in Congress and the informed public, once the costs begin to rise, congressional opposition can ultimately be expected to cue public opposition. By the same token, when members of Congress fail to engage in discussion and debate over the circumstances under which an intervention could be supported, and instead attempt to gain partisan advantage, dissension in the public is more likely. Because opponents know that rhetorical appeals suggesting that the human costs have exceeded the worth of the intervention will resonate deeply within the public, such appeals are made, and a low tolerance for casualties is accordingly imputed to the public.

It is, however, the fact that there has been broad disagreement among political leaders over the merits of many recent operations, and the tremendous emotional power of the argument that an intervention is not worth the loss of lives, that has led to divisions in the public
that have been misconstrued as "a low tolerance for casualties" among
the public themselves; in fact, it merely reflects profound divisions
over benefits and acceptable costs among political leaders themselves.

In short, a fixation on casualties masks a deeper division over
ends and means among U.S. political leaders in a world characterized by
a lower level of threat, a greater degree of latitude and discretion in
choosing when (and when not) to intervene, and a greater diversity of
views on when the use of force is appropriate. The research reported
here also suggests that for the foreseeable future we can expect the
political leaders' polarized discourse over military interventions to
continue to be mirrored in the public. Proponents can be expected to
continue arguing that the purposes of an intervention are worthy of its
prospective or actual losses of life, while opponents can continue to be
expected to point to U.S. casualties as being incommensurate with the
stakes and interests. Members of the public will listen to these
arguments, and support will fall, with many mistakenly arguing that the
cause lies in mounting costs.

To the extent that consensus support among political leaders for an
intervention can be built, it is likely to be built only on a case-by-
case basis. Because the vocabulary of "interests" and "principles" is
so limited, however, this may only be possible when both vital interests
and a number of important principles are at stake, or where agreement
can be forged around a very specific and narrow objective. Without
broad acknowledgment among political leaders that U.S. vital interests
are engaged, that there are a good number of very good reasons for
intervening, and that there is an objective that political leaders can
agree upon, support for U.S. military interventions is likely to be
shallow. But this shallowness has more to do with leadership divisions
and unclear purposes in an uncertain world, than an unwillingness to
sacrifice lives when important American interests and principles are
truly at stake.

There is nothing in the model of ends and means that is meant to
imply that deeply felt values are being left out of the public's
evaluation of interventions—the model is meant to accommodate these
considerations, and others. Indeed, the model provides a framework in
which cool calculations of vital or national interests can coexist with important principles.

In this, the model of ends and means is also a metaphor for the successful blending of important interests and principles that obtained during much of the Cold War, where liberal internationalism and conservative anti-communism could find common cause to support the use of force to contain communism, while securing an environment in which democracy and economic growth could be promoted. The current era, however, is characterized by the impoverished vocabulary of vital interests and moral principles, a vocabulary that can be enriched only through an ongoing democratic conversation over ends and means. Indeed, the historical record suggests that neither vital interests nor important principles are sufficient in themselves to justify to a majority the use of force—both are necessary.

Until political leaders engage in such a conversation, there is unlikely to be understanding, much less agreement, on the circumstances under which the use of U.S. military forces are justified. And whenever there is a failure among political leaders to agree that an intervention is worth losses of life among U.S. servicemen, public ambivalence should come as little surprise.

While it is simplistic to view leadership in a democracy as either slavishly following opinion polls or standing on one’s own convictions irrespective of public opinion, for leaders to have followers, they must understand and attend to the considerations that are most salient to those who would follow them. In supporting military interventions, there is strong evidence that the public consider the support of congressional and other opinion leaders, the nature of the objectives (benefits), the prospects for success, and the expected and actual costs. An understanding of this calculus of ends and means embedded in a larger democratic conversation can lead to a more informed view of the nature of domestic constraints.

Whether or not it also offers a glimmer of hope that a new consensus on the use of force can be built ultimately depends on whether political leaders are as sensible as those they govern.
APPENDIX
A MODEL OF ENDS AND MEANS

The pattern of American involvement in the world has often been interpreted as the outcome of these conflicting pulls of national interest and power on the one hand, and political morality and principles on the other.

Samuel Huntington (1981, p. 246)

Yin (1989) suggests that a complete research design requires a theoretical framework for the case study that is to be conducted. This appendix provides such a theoretical framework.

The American public consider a rather large number of factors to be very important in their decisions of whether or not to support a U.S. military intervention. As will be shown, this richness can be captured in a simple model of ends and means that relies on four crude parameters, each of which will be discussed:423

- Leadership and cueing from political leaders;
- Perceived benefits;
- Probability of success; and
- Expected and actual costs.

While the model presented owes an intellectual debt to another author (Milstein [1974]), it has benefited greatly from the insights of several other analysts. Klayman and O'Connor (1994) posit a calculus that reconciles "justifications" (ends) with costs, especially in casualties (means). Richman (1995) provides an exceedingly rich framework that links public support for military interventions to the nature of the

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423The word "model" is used here in the sense of an aid to understanding the dynamics of support for U.S. military interventions, or as a tool for generating stories that are consistent with the data, rather than in the sense of a formal, mathematical representation that results from a priori theoretical considerations or statistical hypothesis-testing.
threat, attitudes about the source and the target of the threat, preferences among military actions, and an ends/means calculus.\footnote{For two excellent recent efforts to relate support to a calculus of ends and means, see Klarevas and O'Connor (forthcoming), and Richman (1995).}

After a brief presentation and exercise of the model, each of these parameters will be discussed in the context of the model. Before proceeding, however, several concepts need to be grasped so that the reader can understand what the model is meant to be (and not meant to be).

**BACKGROUND**

The simple model of ends and means is embedded in a larger democratic conversation, and assumes that the aggregate public responds sensibly, even rationally, to their environment and the information they’re given. As was discussed in Chapters 1.2 and 1.3, there are a number of factors that contribute to rational behavior in the aggregate.

The first is that there is long-term stability in collective preferences, which is a direct consequence of the aggregation of large numbers of individuals. When individual preferences are aggregated, inconsistencies on the part of individuals are canceled out as preferences are aggregated, and the result is most often a high degree of stability and consistency.\footnote{See Black (1950, 1958), Arrow (1951), Farquharson (1969), Riker (1962) and others.}

The second factor has to do with a fundamental insight of perhaps the first of all social theorists, the Marquis de Condorcet (1785), which has played a prominent role in modern social choice theory.\footnote{See Page and Shapiro (1992a), pp. 15-23.}

That insight is that so long as the average member of the public is more likely to be “right” than “wrong” about a dichotomous social choice, majorities are likely to be more often correct than the individuals:

The Condorcet jury theorem says that if each individual is somewhat more likely than not to make the “better” choice between some pair of alternatives (along some specified evaluative dimension) and each individual has the same probability of being correct in this choice, then (with each voter voting independently) the probability of the group
majority being correct increases as the number of individuals increases, towards a limiting value of 1. Moreover, even if individuals have varying competence—where by competence we mean the individual probabilities of making the "correct" (dichotomous) choice (i.e., the choice that has the higher value along the specified evaluative dimension)—then so long as the average competence is greater than .5 the probability of the group majority being correct still increases to 1 as the group gets large. \(^{427}\)

A third factor has to do with the role of leadership and information in improving the prospects for correct choice. Substantial percentages of the population rely upon the cueing of political leaders and others to minimize their information-gathering costs, \(^{428}\) and to facilitate the integration of new information into an internally consistent framework.

Similarly, there are many ways in which individual (and collective) opinion could respond to new, policy-relevant information, which we see as a central aspect of collective rationality. It is possible though we doubt it often happens—that individuals make elaborate cost-benefit calculations on their own each time new information is available. More likely, responsiveness to new information results from individuals who rely upon trusted shortcuts or rules of thumb, such as reliance upon trusted delegates or reference figures (friends, interest groups, experts, political leaders) to do political reasoning for them and to provide guidance. If such cue-givers are available and reliable, people may be able to form or adjust their opinions sensibly without elaborate instrumental calculations. \(^{429}\)

While the use of such heuristics can often result in less-than-rational behavior, \(^{430}\) the net effect of this can be to increase the probability that members will choose sensibly among alternatives. The model seems to account for observed behavior reasonably well, but I do not mean to imply that individual members of the public are utility maximizers.

\(^{427}\)Crofman and Feld (1988), pp. 569–570.

\(^{428}\)See Downs (1957).

\(^{429}\)Page and Shapiro (1992a), p. 17. Page, Shapiro and Dempsey (1987) on page 23 suggest, however, that they “consider citizens’ preferences among alternative public policies to be primarily instrumental. That is, policies are judged in terms of expected costs and benefits for the individual and for his or her family, friends, favored groups, and the nation or world as a whole.”

\(^{430}\)See Kahneman, Slovic and Tversky (1988).
performing elaborate benefit-cost analyses. I tend to agree with Page and Shapiro (1992a) on this point.

Finally, there is nothing in the model that is meant to imply that individuals are homogeneous in their information, their perceptions, or their preferences. In fact, there is substantial reason to believe that there are important differences in attitudes on military operations between different groups (men and women, whites and African-Americans, Liberals and Conservatives, Republicans and Democrats, etc.). The model is perhaps best thought of as providing a consistent framework for evaluating the likely impact of various factors, where relatively homogeneous groups may share the same preference orderings, willingness to accept costs, and so on.

In short, the simple model of ends and means is meant to provide a framework for evaluating and comparing reasonable behavior in the face of change. It furthermore recognizes that different groups of individuals may have more or better information on which to base their attitudes, and may differ greatly on normative issues such as the circumstances under which they believe the use of force is appropriate, at what cost it remains appropriate, the willingness to continue supporting an operation after a setback, and so on. The model is a tool for generating and evaluating stories that are consistent with rational behavior and observed phenomena. But, as one seasoned analyst remarked to the author regarding a model developed in another context, "it doesn't wash windows," and it isn't meant to.

THE MODEL

Reflecting upon a paradox uncovered by his sophisticated quantitative analysis of the U.S. political-military experience in Vietnam, Jeffrey Milstein (1974) posited a microeconomics-based model of ends and means to describe the paradox of states waging war to increase their power.

In this model, the preference systems of the individual members of the public were determined in part by socialization, education, and persuasion, but also as a result of experience and information. Milstein also argued that because political leaders had the most to gain
(or lose) from a successful (unsuccessful) outcome in an intervention (credibility, reputation for wisdom, statesmanship, etc.), they also had a higher tolerance for costs than most members of the public, whose interests in the results were less direct.

There was a paradox, however: by prosecuting wars where societal tolerance for costs was based upon the political leaders' (and not the public's) willingness to accept costs, political leaders risked the loss of support from members of the public. Figure A.1 is a simple adaptation and extension of Milstein's model.

![Diagram](image)

**Figure A.1 - A Simple Model of Ends and Means**

The ordinate (y-axis) indicates the objective benefit for an individual if the operation is successful in accomplishing specific objectives (for example, ejecting Iraq from Kuwait), and the abscissa (x-axis) measures the costs (e.g., deaths due to hostile action). The three curves are equal-utility indifference curves for three individuals, which show the willingness of these three individuals (and others like them) to trade off benefits and costs while still remaining
at the same level of utility.\footnote{And the level of utility is determined by how they actually value the benefit term B, which is the successful achievement of the objective.} The indifference curves are bent back to the left because each marginal increase in costs requires a larger marginal increase in benefits to be acceptable. The four parameters of ends and means will be discussed briefly in the context of this model.

Benefits. The model predicts that at a fixed level of costs, the higher the benefit level, the higher the probability of any given individual finding acceptable the tradeoff between benefits and costs. For example, if the tradeoff is between B benefits and C cheap costs, only Pifcheap (and others who are willing to accept this or an even less palatable tradeoff, and whose indifference curves lie to the right), will find the tradeoff acceptable. If the benefit is lower, say B/2 and the cost is C cheap (i.e., the point B/2, C cheap), because the intersection falls below and to the right of Pifcheap’s willingness to trade off benefits and costs, fewer can be expected to approve of the tradeoff. Finally, if the benefit level is higher, say 1.5B, and the costs are C cheap, Pifcheap, plus others who demand somewhat higher benefit levels (up to and including 1.5B) for cost C cheap, will support the operation.

Probability of Success. The probability of success works in a similar way to benefits, but is bounded by 0.00 (zero probability of success) and 1.00 (success with certainty). If the probability of success is certain and B is the maximum level of benefit possible, then the expected benefit level will be B, since it is achieved with certainty. If there is a lower probability of success, the expected benefits will be the simple product of that probability and the maximum benefit level that could be achieved. For example, if there is a 50 percent chance that B will be achieved, the expected benefit is B/2. Higher expected benefits are associated with higher support, and lower benefits with lower support.

Costs. If we assume that the military intervention will yield an objective benefit level of B for all three individuals, the first (Pifcheap), will support an operation if it costs no more than Cifcheap.
Pmedian will tolerate no more than CExpected costs, and Phardcore will tolerate no more than a cost of CBad to achieve the objectives of the operation.\footnote{The term B is merely used to simplify presentation, and is not meant to imply either that each individual values the intervention the same way, or that interpersonal comparisons of utility need to be made.}

If the objective benefit levels are fixed (i.e., we assume that if the operation is undertaken, the objective associated with $B$ will be achieved with certainty), as the costs are increased, Pcheap (and others who display a similar willingness to tolerate costs) will exceed his minimum tradeoff first, followed by Pmedian, and finally (assuming the costs exceed CBad), by Phardcore.\footnote{This is very much like the way Mueller describes declining support for the Korean and Vietnam Wars.} Put another way, if the benefits are fixed and the costs are increased, support should decline.

Because individuals have differences in their value structures, partisan leanings, information sets, and so on, displeasure about the higher than acceptable costs can manifest itself in several different ways, each of which would be predicted by the model under certain circumstances.

- First, the individual could become an increasingly reluctant supporter,\footnote{Milstein (1974) provides an excellent discussion of this process.} feeling more and more unhappy about the increasing costs, but having no preferences about what to do differently.

- Second, if the costs become high enough, he may ultimately withdraw his commitment to the operation, and prefer a withdrawal. The individual may believe that the objectives could be achieved but they are not worth the costs, or may believe that the objectives are unlikely to be achieved and the situation does not warrant paying additional costs for such an uncertain outcome.

- Third, the individual may decide that the real problem lies in the fact that not enough effort is being made, but that given additional effort, the objectives are likely to be achieved.
This individual would support an increased commitment to achieve the objectives, and might prefer additional forces or a higher level of military activity. In this case, the individual would be expected to be somewhat more optimistic about the outcome, since it would make little sense to support additional effort that was unlikely to be successful.

- Fourth, the individual may require additional compensating benefits to continue supporting the operation. For example, he may decide that the only way he can continue supporting the intervention is if a total (and not limited) victory is achieved. In such a case, the individual again would need to believe that the additional benefit levels could be achieved, and would often be expected to support an increased commitment to achieve these additional objectives.

Because so many changes can occur in an intervention (in support from political leaders, in equities and perceived benefits, in the prospects for success, and in the costs), the model also needs to be able to account for dynamic change. In fact, as new evidence becomes available (or when salient events—including public opinion questions—cause individuals to think about the intervention), I expect that individuals will reevaluate the benefits, the prospects for success, the costs, and whether the aims of the operation justify the costs. The four parameters of the model will now be described in greater detail.

LEADERSHIP AND CUEING FROM POLITICAL LEADERS

Substantial percentages of the public take into account the views of their fellow citizens, the Congress, and allies and other nations in their decisions of whether to support an intervention. They also show concern about the legitimacy of the intervention in terms of its conformance with international law and treaty obligations. But another

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Schuman (1972) found two sources of antiwar sentiment during the Vietnam War: moral criticisms (which were most common among college students) and pragmatic disillusionment over the failure to win the war (more common among the wider public). The model presented here accommodates both.
way, large segments of the public are likely to find highly salient public opinion data on support, reporting on the views of members of Congress, the positions of important allies and other nations, and information on whether the action conforms with international law and treaty obligations. Table A.1 provides a list of the sorts of considerations that a majority of the public consider to be very important when they are asked to support a military intervention.

Table A.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance of Various Factors in Supporting an Intervention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>71. Whether or not the American people will support the action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64. Whether or not the U.S. Congress will support the action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56. Whether or not our allies and other nations will</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55. The fact that we might break international laws or treaties with other nations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In the simple model presented here, political leaders (the President, members of Congress) and others (e.g., experts, media commentators) can cue public attitudes about the perceived benefits of a U.S. military intervention, the probability of success, the expected costs, or the acceptability of the costs in light of the expected benefits. As Rosenberg et al. (1970) put it:

Where individuals are uncertain about what is right and what is wrong, or where they do not have much information and have not given the problem much thought, they are likely to lean upon authority figures as a way of arriving at an opinion on the matter. And the most important authority figure in our society is the President...When the President appears on television to announce a major decision or to describe some
crisis, there is an immediate and wide tendency for the American public to rally to his support...If the President makes a major decrease in the war, the support he receives from the public is likely to go up.\textsuperscript{435}

The President and his supporters will attempt to persuade other political leaders and members of the public that the benefits of the intervention are high, that the prospects for successfully achieving those objectives are high, and that the cost at which objectives can be achieved are acceptable, given what will be accomplished. Opponents of an intervention, on the other hand will attempt to persuade other political leaders and members of the public that the benefits are not very high (or are negative), that the prospects for success are not very good, that the costs are likely to be high and, in fact, incommensurably high when compared to the benefits.

There is strong empirical evidence that public attitudes toward policy issues (including military interventions) are affected both by the nature of the objective conditions and events, and by the support or criticism of the intervention by political opinion leaders, as it is presented by the media, and mediated by a predisposition to receive and accept these messages:\textsuperscript{437}

- MacKuen and Coombs (1981) have shown that in some issue areas, the elite discourse carried by the media is the dominant source of information on which the public base their views of what issues are important.\textsuperscript{438} The authors also observe that

\textsuperscript{435}Rosenberg et al. (1970), pp. 25-26.

\textsuperscript{437}See Mueller (1973) and Mueller (1994a) for a discussion of political cueing in the Korean, Vietnam and Gulf Wars. See Zaller (1992) for a general model of mass opinion formation, and empirical work showing that the growth in opposition to the Vietnam War fits the general model.

\textsuperscript{438}As they put it: "From this chapter's analysis of Vietnam and crime, and from the strong results for race and campus unrest above, it is obvious that for a substantial portion of political issues, the public reacts wholly to the manifestation of elite symbolic interactions in the press." MacKuen and Coombs (1981), pp. 99-101.
citizens are sensitive to dramatic political events, and not merely the amount of coverage that these events are given.\textsuperscript{439}

* Mueller (1973) also suggested that there are important differences in the extent to which members of the public are cued by political leaders. He posited three groups, one of which tended to support the actions of the president, whether the reflected an increased or decreased commitment (Mueller called them "followers"); one of which tended to respond positively to partisan cues ("partisans"); and a group of independent thinkers who seemed to be somewhat less susceptible to being influenced by the president or partisan affiliation (Mueller called them "believers").

* Evaluating the predictive ability of his model of mass opinion formation, Zaller (1984, 1992) established a relationship between opposition to the Vietnam War by political leaders and opposition in the public, where the rate of disaffection among the public was mediated by differences in media exposure, political knowledge and predisposition to accept positive or negative messages.

In short, cueing from political leaders can have an impact on the three other parameters—perceived benefits, prospects for success and expected costs—but that impact tends to vary greatly depending on differences in respondents’ information environment, and political sophistication and predisposition to accept messages. Put another way, there is not one "public," but many "publics."

Cues from political leaders play in another important way: because it can be so difficult to attempt to relate intangible foreign policy objectives to the very tangible losses of life, many members of the public often rely upon the cueing of political leaders to assist in establishing whether the likely and actual tradeoff between benefits and

\textsuperscript{439}As the authors put it: "Thus we come to understand that the citizen's view of what is politically important derives most clearly from an active consideration of his environment, both local and distant, and does not merely reflect the editorial space allocations of the press." Ibid, p. 122.
costs are acceptable. In short, the mediation of political leaders may be especially important where the task is to try to weigh benefits and costs.

PERCEIVED BENEFITS

Perhaps the least well-understood parameters in the model regard the perceived possible benefits of the operation.

The first reason is a conceptual problem. The U.S. has such a limited (and vague) vocabulary for talking about the reasons for the good that might come of a military intervention: arguments in favor or in opposition to an intervention often point to “vital interests” (or their absence), the specific principles (or lack of them) that are being promoted by the operation, or a U.S. moral responsibility (or its absence) to act. There seems to be little in the way of empirically based research that has attempted to map these factors into a coherent framework.

The second reason is essentially a measurement problem. The public opinion data that are available in time series (e.g., the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations data) offer only very crude indicators that might be used for gauging the benefits of an operation. Public opinion questions that are asked about specific interventions are not informed by a factorial experimental design that aims to tease out the underlying structure of attitudes.

The third, and possibly most important problem is also conceptual: the concepts of vital interests, important principles, moral responsibility, and so on are in fact socially constructed through elite discourse and interactions with the public, which are somewhat subjective, normative, and unpredictable. Often using very different definitions or pointing to different considerations, some may argue that vital interests are engaged, while others may argue that they are not,

As an example of what I mean by “socially constructed,” the Bush Administration discovered that the principle of nuclear non-proliferation, i.e., halting Iraq’s development of nuclear weapons, was seen as a good reason for using force against Iraq. Because this was seen as an important reason to the public, it became a recurring theme in the administration’s arguments for using force against Iraq.
some may argue that important principles are at stake, while others may disagree. As this conversation progresses, however, opinion leaders and members of the public may come to develop a general sense of whether the situation in some sense merits the use of military force, or does not.\footnote{44} Sometimes the result of this conversation is a high level of leadership and public support, and other times it results in polarization.

The consequence of this last problem is rather profound: it argues that one may not be able to predict a priori the level of public support for a military operation, because that support is the consequence of a conversation among leaders and the mass public whose outcome cannot be readily predicted—it hinges on the persuasiveness of the arguments and counter-arguments that are made, the credibility of the actors making those arguments, subsequent events which lend credence to or diminish these arguments, and other factors.

A Two-Variable Representation of Benefits

The model begins with a very simple formulation for the benefits of a military intervention. While there are any number of discrete criteria by which the justification for an intervention could be evaluated, to simplify we might think in terms of just two dimensions: the extent to which “vital interests” are believed to be engaged, and the extent to which important principles or values are being promoted.\footnote{42} To be clear, benefits are likely to be a function of more dimensions than just two, but these two are sufficiently clear to illustrate the principle.

Figure A.2 presents a two-dimensional representation of the problem for an individual who is trying to evaluate on the basis of these two dimensions whether any good can come of the intervention.

In this formulation, which uses a simple microeconomic framing, the greater the perceived interests (from “none” to, perhaps, “vital”), and

\footnote{44}{I tend to believe that there are thankfully many constraints on the ability to manipulate beliefs about interests and benefits.}

\footnote{42}{Since these dimensions may be highly correlated for many individuals because of efforts at “balancing,” the simplification may not pose much of a problem.}
the more important the principles that are being promoted, the greater the perceived utility. But another way, as both the importance of the interests and the importance of the principles are increased, the perceived benefits of the operation increase.

![Diagram showing perceived benefits and interests](image)

**Figure A.2 - Perceived Benefits-Interests and Principles**

It seems sensible to believe that for a fixed utility (connoted by the indifference contours), members of the public are willing to trade off interests for benefits at some rate. For example, if very important principles are being promoted by the intervention (for example, large-scale atrocities with many deaths to innocents), individuals may be willing to accept somewhat lower interests without feeling that they are diminishing their level of utility. By the same token, it may be that if the interests are considered to be truly vital, some sacrifices of principles may be acceptable. Of course, in many cases these two dimensions may in fact be correlated in many individuals' minds, and we have no empirical basis for asserting the specific shape of these indifference curves; all that is implied here is that there may be a
willingness to trade off between the various dimensions that comone the "goodness" of the intervention.

The public, however, does not choose the interventions that the President decides to undertake; they are merely presented with an intervention, and given an opportunity to evaluate the potential good that come of it. In this sense, a particular intervention could fall on a utility curve that represented a high or low combination of benefits. If there is general agreement that high benefits are involved, however, there is a higher probability that any given individual will support the operation; low benefits would be expected to result in a lower probability of any individual supporting the intervention. When these preferences are aggregated, the intervention may fall into any of a number of regimes-high support (quadrant II of Figure A.3), low support (quadrant IV), or divided support (quadrant I or III).

![Vital Interests Diagram]

**Figure A.3 - Evaluating Tradeoffs in Benefits**

To the extent that an individual is presented with an intervention in quadrant II, in which vital interests and important principles are
judged to be at stake, there is a higher probability that the individual will believe that the successful accomplishment of the objectives of the intervention would offer high benefits.\(^{43}\) When individuals are aggregated, we would expect a higher level of support. Conversely, an intervention judged to be in quadrant IV would be less likely to be perceived as offering high benefits, and when aggregated would meet with low support.

Interventions falling into quadrants I and III, however, are a more complex story, and can result in divided support. Because individuals may differ in the way they trade off interests and principles, interventions that fall into these quadrants can be expected to meet with aggregate levels of support at least as high as that in quadrant IV (although probably higher), and support no higher than that found in quadrant II (although probably lower). That is, interventions that are widely perceived to fall into these quadrants may be expected to draw primarily from only one of the two potential pools of supporters.

Further complicating the picture is that individuals are likely to vary greatly in the information they have about the potential benefits of an intervention, and in the way they evaluate these benefits conditioned on this information. As has been discussed, cueing by different political leaders and different value structures will make individuals predisposed to either accepting or rejecting arguments about the benefits of an intervention.

Despite their inherent coarseness and other limitations, these two dimensions of vital interests and important principles can be used as a rough indicator of the probable level of perceived benefit that could result from an intervention. Each will be discussed in more detail.

**Vital Interests**

It is very common for political leaders to discuss whether or not U.S. vital interests are involved when the U.S. military is used abroad—the presence of vital interests is one litmus test. Each four years, the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations surveys both the public and

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\(^{43}\) To reiterate, the problem is no doubt described by more than two dimensions.
government, business and other opinion leaders to assay their attitudes on foreign policy issues. In this survey, they routinely ask whether the U.S. has a vital interest in various countries:

Many people believe that the United States has a vital interest in certain areas of the world and not in other areas. That is, certain countries of the world are important to the U.S. for political, economic or security reasons. I am going to read a list of countries. For each, tell me whether you feel the U.S. does or does not have a vital interest in that country...

Table A.2 presents responses to this question by the members of the public and opinion leaders polled in the fall of 1994.

A number of analysts have tended to look at these data and focus on the "gaps" between the leaders and the public, suggesting that this is indicative of some sort of disconnect between the preferences of the leaders and the public. Fewer have looked for common patterns in their responses.

While the countries that are mentioned can differ across survey years, it turns out that there are several clear patterns in these data that suggest that public perceptions of vital interests are both sensible and enduring:

- First, the public responses seem quite sensible terms of the external validity in that they are quite consistent with the responses of (the presumably better-informed) leaders. Although the leaders were far more inclined than the public to see U.S. vital interests in many countries, the rank-order correlation between the two groups in 1982 was 0.81, in 1986 was 0.84, in 1990 was 0.71 and in 1994 was 0.89.
- Second, the public responses show a high degree of internal consistency over time: when responses for 23 countries mentioned in the 1978, 1982, 1986, 1990 or 1994 surveys were compared, the survey-to-survey rank-order correlations ranged from 0.77 to 0.95. By way of comparison, the survey-to-survey

rank-order correlations for the leaders ranged from 0.74 to 0.97.445

- As might be expected, the rank-order correlations declined as the time between the surveys increased, but even the correlation between the earliest and latest available survey results was reasonably high: the correlation between 1973 and 1994 proved a healthy 0.72 for the public, while the correlation between 1982 and 1994 for the leaders was a slightly more anemic 0.52.

- There is also evidence that many of the changes that did occur from survey to survey were associated with the movements of leaders. The simple correlations between survey-to-survey changes for the public and the leaders were 0.319 for all the pairwise comparisons (31 total cases), 0.22 for 1982-6, 0.61 for 1986-90, and 0.77 for 1990-94. While there are several possible explanations, two seem to be especially obvious: that the public and the leaders were responding similarly to the same sets of events, or that members of the public were responding both to changing events and the leaders’ changing views.

In short, it seems that the public is quite able to distinguish between countries in which the U.S. has a vital interest, and those in which it does not, and does so in a manner that is both internally consistent over time, and entirely consistent with the ranking orderings of the more sophisticated leaders. Furthermore, to the extent that there were changes in perceptions of vital interests from survey to survey, the leaders and the public generally moved in parallel. On vital interests, then, the data are entirely consistent with a leadership model.

445 Data for the leaders was available only for 1982, 1986, 1990, and 1994.
## Table A.2

**Vital Interests, Fall 1994**

Many people believe that the United States has a vital interest in certain areas of the world and not in other areas. That is, certain countries of the world are important to the U.S. for political, economic or security reasons. I am going to read a list of countries. For each, tell me whether you feel the U.S. does not have a vital interest in that country...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUNTRY</th>
<th>PUBLIC</th>
<th>LEADERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Britain</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuba</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haiti</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bosnia</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baltic countries</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Chicago Council on Foreign Relations (1995)*.

### Important Principles or Goals

Vital interests are often not enough, however, to gain public acceptance of an intervention: just as U.S. foreign policy has historically been a blend of interests and principles, there has been a somewhat moralistic strand in justifying military interventions: there must be a good cause, i.e., important objectives must be promoted.
Although these will be referred to as "important principles," they also represent an important link between broader principles and the specific objectives of U.S. military interventions. For example, an intervention can be undertaken to defend a friend or ally, to halt atrocities, or for any number of other purposes. Similarly, support can suffer when the intervention becomes tarnished by accidents, atrocities and other events.

Just as public perceptions of where U.S. vital interests might be found are sensible and consistent, so too are perceptions of what U.S. foreign policy goals are "very important." Again, the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations surveys can be used to inform our understanding of the public's preference ordering among different foreign policy objectives. Table A.3 presents the question that CFR asks, and provides the percentage of the leaders and the public who believed that goal was "very important" in the October 1994 survey.

Of course, many of these goals (or principles) are entirely irrelevant to the use of the military, and the goals that are actually being promoted in an intervention vary from case to case. But as with the data on vital interests, these data provide a reasonably consistent measure of the public's rank-ordering of various foreign policy goals that might be promoted:

- The rank-order correlations between surveys for the public seem to have fallen over time. The correlations were rather high among the earlier surveys (0.95 for a 1974-78 comparison, 0.99 for 1978-82, and 0.98 for 1982-86). But the correlations between the surveys before and after 1990 were much lower—0.59 for both 1986-90 and 1990-1994. The interpretation seems to be that 1990 was an outlier, since the correlation coefficient between 1994 and all of the other years returns to a high level—0.86 or higher.445

445By comparison, the leaders showed a higher degree of consistency: for the four available surveys (1978, 1982, 1990 and 1994), the correlations from each survey to the next ranged from a low of 0.73 (from 1982-90, and again from 1990-94). The lowest correlation among
Table A.3

Very Important Foreign Policy Goals, Fall 1994

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>85</td>
<td>Stopping the flow of illegal drugs into the U.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83</td>
<td>Protecting the jobs of American workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82</td>
<td>Preventing the spread of nuclear weapons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72</td>
<td>Controlling and reducing illegal immigration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>Securing adequate supplies of energy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>Reducing our trade deficit with foreign countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>Improving the global environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>Combating world hunger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>Protecting the interests of American businesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>Strengthening the United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>Maintaining superior military power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>Defending our allies' security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Promoting and defending human rights in other countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Helping to bring a democratic form of government to other nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Protecting weaker nations against foreign aggressors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Helping to improve the standard of living of less developed nations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


- The correlation between the public and the opinion leaders ranged from .22 in the 1990 survey to 0.66 in the 1994 survey, and the overall correlation between the public and the leaders for a pooling of the data from the four surveys (1978, 1982, 1990 and 1994) was 0.49.\(^{447}\)

\(^{447}\)When the percentage of the public believing a goal was very important was regressed on the percent of the leaders, about one-fifth (0.22%) was accounted for, with all coefficients statistically significant.
In fact, if we assume the leadership model and regress the data for the public from the 1978, 1982, 1990 and 1994 surveys were separately regressed on the data for the leaders for each of those years, it appears that the influence of the leaders may have waned and then waxed.\footnote{In 1978, 33 percent of the variance in the public could be explained by the leaders, and the coefficient of 0.41 was statistically significant. In 1982 and 1990, only 12.5 and zero percent of the variance could respectively be accounted for by the leaders. By 1994, however, 39 percent of the variance in the public's support for various foreign policy goals was explained by the leaders, with an even stronger coefficient of 0.72.}

In this case, however, the relationship between the survey-to-survey changes for the public and the leaders was somewhat weaker; it ranged from a high of 0.78 for 1978-82, to 0.019 for 1982-86.

As one example of consistency over time, there has typically been a low level of support for the promotion of democracy abroad.\footnote{This finding is consistent with the finding of Bruce Jentleson (1992) that the public prefers "restraining" other governments to "remaking" them, i.e., that internal interventions aimed at changing the power structure are not as popular. Jentleson regards the cases of Grenada and Panama, aimed to "remake" governments but which received rather high levels of support, as benefitting from a "halo" effect, because of their quick success and low costs.} From 1974 to 1994, the percentage of respondents in the CCPR surveys saying this goal was "very important" ranged from 25 to 30 percent.\footnote{Other data from the Los Angeles Times seem to confirm this. In polls taken in September and November 1985, December 1990, and March 1991, between 19 and 32 percent said that "promoting national values like freedom and democracy" should be the most important foreign policy objective. This was the second highest category.} By contrast, the goal of "combating world hunger" has hovered around 50 percent, "protecting the jobs of American workers" has generally been supported by three out of four, and "securing adequate supplies of energy" has consistently been seen as "very important" by three out of five or more.

The discontinuity in the fall of 1990 is of more than passing interest, and appears in part to reflect a response to the fall of the Soviet Union, and in part the situation in the Gulf.
• The relationship to the dissolution of the Soviet Union is suggested by the fact that belief that "worldwide arms control" was a "very important" foreign policy objective fell 16 points from 1986.

• The inference that it may also reflect the situation in the Gulf in the fall of 1990 seems warranted since from 1986 to 1990 those believing that "defending our allies' security" was very important increased by five points (to 61 percent), those believing that "protecting weaker nations from foreign aggression" was very important increased by 25 points (to 57 percent), and those believing "promoting and defending human rights in other countries" to be very important increased by 16 points 1986 (to 58 percent). The first two seem to relate to the invasion of Kuwait and the threat to Saudi Arabia, while the last may be a reflection of the terrible human rights situation in Kuwait after the Iraqi invasion.

In fact, when the data points for 1990 are removed for these four questions, the correlation between 1990 and the other years becomes quite robust, ranging from 0.75 to 0.81.

The public's views of threats to these vital interests may also be important in understanding the potential benefits of different U.S. military interventions. Table A.4 presents additional data from the fall 1994 CCPR survey.

The table shows that there is substantial agreement between the public and the leaders on nuclear proliferation—a substantial percentage of both perceive nuclear proliferation as a critical threat to U.S. interests. The other threats that were mentioned by CCPR show greater divergence between the public and the leaders, and in most cases, the respondents from the public were more concerned about these potential threats than were the leaders.

In fact, the correlation between the public and the leaders on these threats to vital interests (0.56) is appreciably lower than that for vital interests. This also shows up in the sorts of problems that are mentioned by the public and the leaders, when they are asked what
the most important foreign policy problems are (see Table A.5): the
public and the leaders seem most concerned about very different
problems. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that three issues
related to military intervention ("getting involved in the affairs of
other countries," "Iraq: Saddam Hussein, invasion of Kuwait," and "Our
relationship with Haiti") were in the top five problems mentioned by the
public.

Table A.4

Threats to Vital Interests, Fall 1994

I am going to read you a list of possible threats to the
vital interest of the United States in the next 10 years.
For each one, please tell me if you see this as a critical
threat, an important but not critical threat, or not an
important threat at all...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PUBLIC</th>
<th>LEADERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>72%</td>
<td>61% The possibility of unfriendly countries becoming nuclear powers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72</td>
<td>31 Large numbers of immigrants and refugees coming into the U.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69</td>
<td>33 International terrorism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62</td>
<td>21 Economic competition from Japan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>46 The development of China as a world power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>39 Possible expansion of Islamic fundamentalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>16 The military power of Russia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>11 Economic competition from Europe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


To conclude this section, it seems that public opinion data on
vital interests, and the sorts of foreign policy goals that the public
consider to be very important, show a high degree of differentiation and
consistency over time. Where discontinuities can be found, there are
obvious explanations to be found. But also interesting is the fact that
aside from the nuclear proliferation issue, which both the public and
the leaders consider to be a critical threat, members of the public
appear to differ substantially from the leaders on where the critical
threats and most important problems are.
PROSPECTS FOR SUCCESS

Majorities of the public also view as "very important" the prospects for success of an operation: 56 percent of the respondents in the October 1988 Americans Talk Issues survey mentioned "the possibility of failure" as a very important factor to them in making decisions about using the American military.

Table A.5

Most Important Foreign Policy Problems, Fall 1994

What do you feel are the two or three biggest foreign policy problems facing the United States today? (Answers listed are spontaneous responses)

THE PUBLIC

19% Getting involved in the affairs of other countries
16 Foreign aid: too much sent to other countries
12 Immigration: illegal aliens
11 Iraq: Saddam Hussein, invasion of Kuwait
10 Our relationship with Haiti

THE LEADERS

24% International trade: free trade with all countries, some countries too strict with trade policies
23 Dealings with Russia
19 Weak leadership
16 Stronger foreign policy needed: U.S. is compromising
16 Relations with Bosnia


The third parameter in the simple model of ends and means is the subjective probability of success for the operation given by members of the public (and also by political leaders). Members of the public cannot know with any certainty (nor precision) what the likelihood of success is, and so this parameter may be a simple dichotomous (0-1) variable. But whether it is treated in this fashion, as odds, or as percentages, unless the subjective estimate of the probability of success is unity (one), then the expected objective benefit from the operation will be lower than the objective benefit level if the outcome
of the operation were certain. This is because the expected benefits are the simple product of the benefits if successful and the subjective probability of success. Consider the following example.

Assume that all three individuals in Figure A.1 expect benefit level $B$ to be achieved with certainty at a cost of $C_{\text{Expected}}$. That is, they believe that the technological production function for the intervention is described by the line from the origin to $TE$. At this cost, Pifcheap will refuse to support the operation since the cost is outside the frontier of his maximum willingness to trade off costs and benefits. But Pmedian, who is just indifferent to achieving benefit level $B$ at this cost, and Phardcore will both support the operation.$^{431}$

Now assume instead that there is only a one of out of two chance that the outcome of the operation will be a success. The expected objective benefit of the operation is therefore $B/2$, half of the benefit that would be achieved if the operation were successful. In this case, not even Pifcheap is willing to support the operation, because the tradeoff between the expected objective benefit level of $B/2$ and the expected costs of $C_{\text{Expected}}$ are below and to the right of the indifference curve that represents his minimal acceptable tradeoff between benefits and costs.

**COSTS**

There are a great many costs involved in military interventions: of course, there is the prospect for the loss of lives among American service personnel, but there is also the potential for losses among innocent civilians, financial costs, and the opportunity costs of political leaders allocating attention abroad instead of to domestic problems that in some circumstances, may be considered more important.

As shown in Table A.8, costs seem to loom large in the public's estimation of whether to support an intervention. Several of these factors—the number of American and civilians lives that might be lost, the possibility of escalation, the length of time, and the cost in dollars—suggest the importance to the public of avoiding costs.

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$^{431}$As will any others who have indifference curves to the right of Pmedian.
The public seem to respond to each of these costs, and appear to take them into account in deciding whether or not to support a military intervention. The preeminent cost, however, is the number of American lives that might be lost. Fully 86 percent of the total sample and all of the various sub-populations considered this factor to be most important in deciding whether to support a use of force.452

Table A.6
Importance of Costs in Supporting an Intervention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cost Description</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The number of American lives that might be lost</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The number of civilians that might be killed in the area of combat</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whether or not another major power like the Soviet Union or the People's Republic of China might get involved</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The length of time that we would be involved in fighting</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The cost in dollars</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


There is ample empirical research relating declining support to costs:

- John Mueller (1973) found a strong, and strikingly similar, relationship between support for the Vietnam and Korean Wars and the cumulative casualties in each (dead, wounded, missing and hospitalized). Mueller (1994a) observes that questions asking about prospective support given hypothetical casualty levels in the Gulf War showed a similar logarithmic decline.

452The cost in American lives was the most important factor independent of partisanship, political viewpoint (conservative, moderate or liberal), region, education, and gender.
• Jeffrey Milstein (1974) found a negative correlation of -0.50 between the monthly battle deaths in the preceding month and opposition to the Vietnam War as measured by the "mistake" question.

• Kornell (1978) found a strong relationship between the casualties in a given month and presidential approval for both the Korean and Vietnam Wars.

• Klabevs and O'Connor (1994) found that all of the military operations undertaken which received clear support were justifiable and relatively low in cost, and that all executed missions that were clearly opposed were relatively high in cost.

In short, in addition to the large body of anecdotal evidence, there is also ample empirical evidence that expected and actual costs figure into the public's decisions regarding support for a military intervention.

THE CALCULUS

I will return now to the calculus of ends and means and its impact on support for U.S. military interventions. I will first focus on the relationship between individual factors and support for an intervention.

Benefits and the Use of Force

The linkage between a military operation and the interests, values or principles is found in the objectives of the operation, i.e., what goals are being promoted by the operation. But how do these measures of principles and interests relate to a willingness to use force?

In addition to its questions on vital interests and very important foreign policy goals, CCR also asked questions about the willingness to support the use of force under various circumstances:

There has been some discussion of the circumstances which would justify using U.S. troops in other parts of the world. Would you approve or disapprove the use of U.S. military [force, troops]...[hypothetical circumstances]

Because of very sparse data, correlations over time could only be estimated only for a sample of seven different hypothetical situations,
and information on even these cases was somewhat spotty. As a consequence, we should not read too much into these results. Nevertheless, there does appear to be a great deal of continuity in these data as well, although the aberrant case of 1990 shows up again:

- For the public, the survey-to-survey correlations were generally rather strong: 0.89 for 1974-78, 0.99 for 1978-82, 1.0 for 1982-86, 0.36 for 1986-90, and 0.95 for 1990-94.
- For the leaders, the correlation between 1978-82 was 0.97, between 1992-95 was 0.27, and between 1990-94 was 0.87.
- The public were also very similar to the leaders in their willingness to support the use of force. The correlations between the leaders and the public when all 17 pairs of data points were pooled was 0.84. For 1978, the correlation was 0.98. For 1982 it was 0.83, for 1990 it was 0.94, and for 1994, it was 0.87.

Using the CCPR data, it is possible to assess the relationship between interests and principles and the willingness to use force. Public support for these hypothetical uses of force were regressed on a number of CCPR measures: the leaders' willingness to use force in that circumstance; the leaders' and public's evaluations of vital interests; the percentage of the leaders and public who thought defending allies or defending weaker countries from aggression was very important.

When approval for the use of force in the hypothetical situation was regressed on the public's own evaluation of whether vital interests were engaged, only about three percent of the variance was accounted for, and none of the variables for principles that were being promoted.

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453 They were: a Soviet/Russian invasion of Western Europe; an Iranian or Iraqi invasion of Saudi Arabia; a North Korean invasion of South Korea; a Chinese invasion of Taiwan; an Arab invasion of Israel; a Soviet invasion of Japan; and a Soviet/Russian invasion of Poland.

454 There were no data available for 1974 or 1986.

455 The hypothetical situations all seemed to involve an external aggression to weaker nations or allies. The following—Western Europe, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Japan, Israel and Taiwan—were coded as allies, while Poland was not. For the perceptions of vital interests in Western Europe, the percentage associated with Germany was used.
provided any better explanatory power. Although it is possible that the lack of a relationship is due to the hypothetical nature of the question, this would seem to argue against the proposition that the willingness to use force is associated with the public's perceptions of vital interests or principles (at least as measured by the CCFR data). Another explanation of public support will therefore be offered.

Leadership and Cueing and the Use of Force

If the insight is correct that mass opinions tend to mirror and lag those of opinion leaders, differences between the leaders and the public on vital interests and important principles may be significant.

For example, the leaders are more inclined to see U.S. vital interests in many places that the general public does not. In some cases, this may help to buoy public support, because the higher support from leaders can in turn cue higher levels of public support.

Conversely, when fewer leaders see vital interests, it can reduce the level of public support. Consider the following examples of gaps between leaders and the public:

- In 1982 and 1994, respectively, 93 and 94 percent of the leaders believed the U.S. had vital interests in Saudi Arabia; the equivalent percentages for the public were 80 and 83 percent.
- From 1982 to 1994, the percentage of leaders who believed the U.S. had vital interests in South Korea rose from 66 to 90 percent; the percentage of the public rose from 49 to 65 percent.
- A recent example where fewer leaders saw vital interests than respondents from the public was Haiti in the fall of 1994: 56 percent of the public saw a U.S. vital interest there, but only 33 percent of the leaders saw vital interests.\textsuperscript{456}

\textsuperscript{456}It seems that the public may have been using the term "vital interest" differently than the leaders, since public opinion questions before the U.S. intervention showed levels comparable to those of the leaders. In short, it may be that for the public, the presence of U.S. troops confers an interest, perhaps in their success and welfare.
There is clearly disagreement among political leaders today about the circumstances under which U.S. military forces should be used. Making the point that the presence of vital interests is no guarantor of support for the use of force is the close and highly partisan congressional vote in favor of the authorization to use force for the Gulf War. Showing that humanitarian desiderata are insufficient, are current efforts by Republican leaders to curtail the use of U.S. troops for peacekeeping, nation-building and other operations other than war.

Interestingly, although the public’s own perception of vital interests and very important foreign policy goals did not explain particularly well the willingness to use force, two other variables turned out to be relatively good predictors. One caution, however, is that because the data are rather sparse (only 19 bivariate pairs were available), the evidence should be treated as providing a basis for rejecting (but not accepting) the leadership model. That is, if coefficients on the leadership variables are negative, then that would seem to rule out the notion that the public were influenced by the leaders’ preference ordering, and would be damning evidence against a leadership-centered model.

The first of the regressions estimates public troop approval \( (PUBTRP) \) on the basis of the leaders’ willingness to send troops \( (LEADTRP) \) (see Figure A.4); this model accounted for 59 percent of the variance in the public’s willingness to send troops. The coefficient is positive, and statistically significant—entirely consistent with the idea that the public and the leaders have reasonably similar attitudes regarding where force should be used.

The next best explanatory variable for the public’s troop approval \( (PUBTRP) \) was the percentage of the leaders who believed vital interests were engaged in that country \( (LEADVIT) \)—40 percent of the variance was accounted for in this model. Again, the coefficient on the variable was positive and statistically significant, suggesting that the leaders’ views of where the U.S. has vital interests is a good predictor of where the public is willing to send troops in a hypothetical situation.
Dependent variable is: PUBTRP

42 total cases of which 23 are missing
R² = 70.3%  R²(adjusted) = 68.6%
s = 7.633 with 19 - 2 = 17 degrees of freedom

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**Figure A.4 - Regression of Public Approval for Sending Troops on Leaders' Approval for Sending Troops**

Next, I performed a multivariate regression of public approval for sending troops (PUBTRP) on the two leader variables: the leaders' vital interests (LEADVIT), and the leaders' approval for sending troops (LEADTRP). Because the leaders' vital interests and their approval for sending troops were strongly correlated (0.69), the regression proceeded in two steps to address the collinearity in the independent variables. The leaders' troop approval was first regressed on their vital interests (diagnostics in Figure A.5) and the residuals from the regression were saved. Public troop approval was then regressed on the leaders' vital interests and the residuals from the first regression (Figure A.6).

The equation that results explained almost 60 percent of the variance, and both coefficients were statistically significant. Nevertheless, the explanation provided by the equation was inferior to that which used the leaders' troop approval only, and which explained nearly 69 percent.

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427 This correlation is also of substantive interest: support from the leaders for sending U.S. troops abroad is strongly associated with their belief that U.S. vital interests are engaged.
Dependent variable is: PUBTRP
42 total cases of which 28 are missing
$R^2 = 44.6\%$  $R^2(\text{adjusted}) = 40.0\%$
$s = 10.31$ with $14 - 2 = 12$ degrees of freedom

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**Figure A.5 - Regression of Public Approval for Troops on Leaders' Vital Interests**

Dependent variable is: PUBTRP
42 total cases of which 28 are missing
$R^2 = 65.6\%$  $R^2(\text{adjusted}) = 59.3\%$
$s = 8.492$ with $14 - 3 = 11$ degrees of freedom

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**Figure A.6 - Regression of Public Approval for Troops on Leaders' Vital Interests and Residuals for Leaders' Troop Approval**

In short, this is reasonably strong evidence that approval for the use of force (at least in a subset of the hypothesized situations found in the CCR data) is closely associated with the views of leaders on whether force ought to be used or whether vital interests are involved-
we cannot reject the leadership model on the basis of these data.\textsuperscript{452}

Put another way, the attitudes of the leaders regarding the presence of vital interests and the desirability of using force in hypothesized situations are associated in a positive and statistically significant way with public approval for using force.

What are we to make of this? It is rather difficult to construct a clear story that suggests that the leaders’ views on force had an impact on those members of the mass public, although many members of the public may be aware of the leaders’ views of where U.S. vital interests lie. It is not unreasonable, however, to hypothesize that both the leaders’ and the public’s attitudes toward force are affected by the same changing environment. Nor is it unreasonable to suggest that the leaders’ attitudes may have adapted to these events, and that the public was cued not only by the environmental changes, but also by the changes in the leadership’s attitudes. In any case, due to data limitations, we can never know. The important point, however, is that the data are entirely consistent with a leadership model of mass attitude diffusion.

\textbf{Prospects for Success and the Use of Force}

Apart from the data in the case studies and the Americans Talk Security data offered earlier which showed that 56 percent thought that a reasonable probability of success was an important consideration, there is little data that describes the relationship between the prospects for success and support for the use of force.

\textbf{Costs and the Use of Force}

The expected and actual costs also seem to have an impact on support. Figure A.7 presents the data from the poll done by Americans Talk Issues in the summer of 1991 that asked respondents what their limit was for the number of deaths in a U.S. military intervention. The figure shows that as the hypothetical costs of an intervention are increased, the percentage of respondents who supported the intervention

\textsuperscript{452}Data for the leaders was available only for 1982, 1990 and 1994, and could be an artifact of the rather small number of available cases.
The form is similar to the declines in support associated with actual U.S. military interventions.

I would like to get some idea of what you think “too much loss of life” is in a military intervention. What would be the rough figure you would use as an acceptable number of U.S. deaths? (Americans Talk Issues, 6/23-7/1/91)

![Graph showing support as a function of battle deaths](image)

**Figure A.7 - Support as a Function of Battle Deaths**

**Expectations**

While not a parameter in the model, per se, initial and subsequent expectations are of critical importance, for a very simple reason—initial support is based upon expected benefits, costs and support from congressional and other opinion leaders. The intervention may look to be very different from the one that was initially mounted if it pursues objectives other than the ones that were specified initially, if the prospects for achieving these objectives turn out to be much lower than those expected.

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459 Part of this, it may be argued, is merely an artifact of asking the same respondents whether they would support the intervention at successively higher costs. But in a real intervention, the same thing happens—costs increase and the public are asked to evaluate whether the probable benefits are still worth the costs.
what opinion leaders and members of the public were led to believe, if the costs turn out to be far higher than expected, or if the support of congressional and other leaders is withdrawn. Especially when expectations are shattered in a dramatic fashion, as in the Chinese entry into the Korean War or the 1968 Tet offensive, it can have a profound impact on the bases of support for the war.

It seems likely that expectations have both a "cool" or cognitive dimension, and a "hot" or affective one. On the cool side, of course, is the role of expectations in the microeconomic model that was presented earlier in this Appendix, and which will be discussed momentarily. On the "hot" side, however, are hopes for success at low cost (i.e., expectations that have an emotional stake in them), that may be based upon feelings such as patriotism, nationalism, a desire for a presidential success, or a desire to validate one's prior views on the goodness, morality, or efficacy of force in that situation. These non-rational expectations can also lead individuals to different conclusions, based upon similar evidence. For example, during the Vietnam War, political leaders and the public polarized, and it seems that differences in beliefs and expectations may have figured prominently in their varying prescriptions for concluding the war.

THE DYNAMIC WEIGHING OF ENDS AND MEANS

Taking into account these factors, and relying extensively on political leaders to clarify the benefits, prospects for success, likely costs and, ultimately, whether the intervention is a good idea or not, members of the public decide whether or not to initially support the operation.\(^460\)

Definition of the benefits, prospects and likely costs is a social process, however: it is the publicly observed discourse between the President and other political leaders over the merits of an intervention that leads to public recognition of the benefits of the operation.

An important point is that this is not a one-time process, but a recurring one that is responsive to a host of changing circumstances:

\(^{462}\)Although they may not make a decision until they are asked to state their position, for example, in a public opinion survey.
changing support from political leaders; the changing situation on the ground; changing objectives, perceived benefits or equities; changing prospects for success; and increasing costs.

Put another way, majorities of the American public attend closely to developments in U.S. military interventions and, in large part because they are greatly influenced by the preferences of political leaders, respond reasonably sensibly and consistently to changing circumstances.461

Changing Support from Congressional and Other Political Leaders

Looking at the Vietnam War, Zaller has shown that increasing disaffection among political leaders seems to have cued declining support in the public. Zaller suggests that the availability of information, political involvement and partisan predispositions affect the rate at which oppositional messages were received and accepted. Figure A.8 presents data from Zaller (1987) that plots the increase from 1966 to 1970 in opposition to the Vietnam War (the y-axis), as a function of political involvement for respondents with different political leanings.

The figure shows that all three groups showed an increase in opposition to the war, although there are some distinct partisan differences. As political involvement increased among Liberals, there was a monotonic increase in opposition to the war. The response of the Centrists and Conservatives was a non-monotonic function of political involvement. While all Centrists showed a 15 percent or higher increase in opposition to the war, those with high levels of political involvement showed the greatest increase—nearly 45 percent. Conservatives also show a non-monotonic response, but in their case, the most politically involved Conservatives showed the smallest increases in opposition to the war. Those Centrists who had a moderate level of political involvement showed the greatest increase in opposition to the war.

461See Page and Shapiro (1992a) for their discussions of changing public opinion in the Second World War, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War.
Figure A.8 - Changes in Popular Opposition to the War in Vietnam, 1966-1970

Zaller's work, coupled with that of Mueller (1973) and a number of others, provides compelling evidence that changes in public attitudes on the Vietnam War tended to follow changes among the leaders.

Changing Benefits

There are a number of ways in which the objective or perceived benefits of the operation can change.

Milestone (1974) suggested that during the Vietnam War, the perceived equities or benefits for political leaders increased, while those for the public in general did not, resulting in increasingly divergent preferences.\textsuperscript{462}

\textsuperscript{462}Milestone does not argue that the benefits could not change for members of the public; however: "The preference system of the masses can also change with their experience. If they perceive themselves to be personally threatened by the enemy, they may become attracted to appeals to national loyalty and may change their preference system to be more like that of the elite, as happened with the American public in World War II. If this occurs, the slopes of the mass indifference curves would also become less steep." (p. 161) Since the public are not homogeneous, it is possible that for some "hawks," the expected benefits did indeed increase.
U.S. political elites came to include in their evaluation of the net expected benefits of victory not only the value held early in the war of defeating a Communist attempt to gain control in South Vietnam but also the goal of maintaining American prestige after more than half a million American troops were committed and more than 60,000 American lives were lost in Vietnam. Such values as making good on American political commitments to governments challenged by the Communists and of not losing American "face" were added to the U.S. political elites' net expected benefits of victory in Vietnam. As value was added to the net expected benefits of the elites, they became willing to permit their country and people to incur greater expected costs for a given net expected benefit than they had previously. (p. 161)

However, in a stalemate war like the Vietnam War, the masses learn that additional objective costs they bear do not increase their net expected benefits; they learn of additional costs previously hidden by official secrecy: the opportunity costs of pursuing the war become more salient (i.e., people become more and more aware of the goods and services they must forgo because of the war effort); and the contagion effect of concern and dissatisfaction occurs (i.e., people communicate their dissatisfaction to each other, influence each other, and reinforce each others' dissatisfaction). In such a war the masses are willing to pay fewer net expected costs for any given net expected benefit, and thus...the slopes of the masses changed indifferent curves...become steeper than they were before. (pp. 162-3)

It is also possible that the perceived benefits of the intervention may decline. For example, it became clear relatively quickly that the Korean War was not the opening move in a third world war, and that the war was to be fought in a way that was limited in both its ends and its means. Similarly, following Inchon and prior to the entry of the Chinese into the war, most observers seemed to believe that the war would be over quickly and the outcome would be the reunification of the Korean peninsula. Of course, with the entry of the Chinese and the jettisoning of the broader war aim in favor of a return to the status quo ante, the expected benefits fell to the point where majorities agreed that the war was "worthless."

The consequence of the objective benefits falling is a reduction in the expected benefits, which would be expected to make the tradeoff between expected benefits and costs unacceptable for many.
Changing Prospects for Success

So too can the prospects for success change over time, with a similar effect on support. Following Inchon, expectations that the war would be concluded by Christmas were frequently heard, but these hopes were of course dashed with the entry of the Chinese into the war. Similarly, following the Tet offensive, fewer saw progress being made in the war and more expected a stalemate or a loss, while the expected duration of the war increased.

Changing Costs

It seems that there is a rational expectations aspect to the way in which costs are treated (see Figure A.9). All else equal, if the operation unfolds as expected, and the objectives (and benefit level of B) are achieved at a cost of CExpected, then Pmedian and Phardcore will still remain as supporters. If the objective were achieved at a lower cost, say CCheap, then in addition to Phardcore and Pmedian (and others like them who were willing to accept higher costs) Pifcheap is also likely to become a belated supporter of the intervention. That is, when the intervention turns out to be less expensive than expected, the simple model predicts that more will support the operation at its conclusion than supported it at the beginning. But if the costs turn out to be much higher, say CBad, then only Phardcore (and others with a similar or greater willingness to trade off costs and benefits) would remain, because Pifcheap and Pmedian would find it too expensive.

Assume that all of the three individuals initially expected the operation to be achieved at a cost of CExpected, but when that cost was reached, they judged that only about B/2 of the benefits had been achieved.463

The first thing that can happen is that these individual may decide that the prospects for success are lower than what was initially expected, and that the expected objective benefit level of B is unlikely. They might view partial success as worth something, or it

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463 Again, it seems reasonable to assume that if these individuals treat the probability as a dichotomous variable, they will be realizing zero benefits until the objective is actually accomplished.
could either be that until the objectives are actually achieved, they believe that they are not realizing any benefits. Put another way, the benefits may be divisible or they may be "all-or-nothing" in nature.

![Graph showing objective benefit level vs. costs]

**Figure A.9 - When Success Is Not Achieved at Expected Cost**

The second thing that will happen is that they will need to revise upward their expectations about costs. If a cost of CExpected has been incurred while only B/2 (or less) benefit has been achieved, it is clear that the ultimate cost will be at least somewhat higher than CExpected. If they do a straight-line guess, they may estimate that the intervention is actually being prosecuted according to the production function connoted by the line from the origin to TB, and that the intervention is likely to cost Cbad to achieve the benefit level of B. Again, this may be too high a cost for them.

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464 How much higher the cost is expected to go will be a function of how optimistic each individual is about the technological production function for the remainder of the intervention. For example, some might expect faster progress than had been experienced up to that point, while others might expect slower progress.
It may also be, however, that because of other changes (e.g., an escalation in the number or kind of forces, a new commander or change in strategy), instead of believing that they are on an inferior production function for achieving the objectives, they expect that the old production function of TE will no longer obtain, but a much better one \( [20] \) will obtain that will allow the objective to be achieved at only a small increment in cost.

In short, the model is a congenial framework for facilitating an understanding of the dynamic impact of a variety of changes over time.

**ESCALATION, WITHDRAWAL, POLARIZATION**

There are several additional implications of the model that need to be drawn out, having to do with policy preferences when an intervention is opposed, i.e., whether individuals prefer to withdraw or decrease the commitment, or to escalate or increase the commitment.

**Withdrawal or Decreased Commitment**

There are a number of circumstances under which the model of ends and means predicts increased sentiment for withdrawal or a decreased commitment.

As was mentioned earlier, if the benefits are fixed (or falling), the model predicts that when costs are increased the tradeoff between benefits and costs will decline to the point where individuals are indifferent between continuing and ending the intervention. If the costs rise further, members of the public will prefer withdrawal. Put another way, with benefits fixed or falling, mounting costs will lead some members of the public to prefer withdrawal or a decreased commitment, as the benefits of the operation are no longer seen as being worth the costs. But under what circumstances might the benefits be fixed? Two different situations come readily to mind:

- **When Benefits Are Fixed by Agreement.** When the objective is fixed as a result of negotiations, for example, among members of a coalition, or between the President and Congress. In Korea, following the entry of the Chinese, the United Nations jettisoned its objective of reunification and returned to its
original objective of a return to the status quo ante. In the Gulf War, the objective of ejecting Iraq from Kuwait meant that no higher level of benefit would result.\textsuperscript{465}

* When No Other Objectives Can Provide a Higher Benefit Level. When the individual believes that the objective that is being pursued is already maximizing his benefit levels, and that there is little or no additional benefit to be gained by pursuing more ambitious objectives. In Somalia, it seems that most of the benefit was achieved through the accomplishment of the humanitarian aim of heading off mass starvation: the goal of nation-building was supported only as long as the costs remained relatively constant.

There are also circumstances under which the perceived benefit level may actually decrease:

* When the Probability of Success Falls. When the probability of success falls, so too does the expected benefit from the intervention, because the expected benefit is the product of the two.

* When the Cause Becomes Tarnished. Under other circumstances, the moral cause may be sufficiently tarnished to reduce the perceived benefits. For example, an ally committing atrocities, a military error resulting in large numbers of deaths to innocent civilians, or revelations regarding policy failures that ultimately led to the intervention, can all tarnish the cause.\textsuperscript{466}

This suggests that the model predicts that under some circumstances it is plausible (even rational) to prefer to withdraw or reduce the level of commitment.

\textsuperscript{465}There were, of course, many who believed this objective was inferior in its benefit level to overthrowing Saddam Hussein.

\textsuperscript{466}RAND colleague Carl Builder has described this as "changing the countenance of war," while research on asymmetric strategies I recently worked on at RAND labelled this as "inducing revulsion."
Escalation or Increased Commitment

There are also circumstances under which the model would predict increasing sentiment for escalation or an increased commitment. As Iklé has observed, escalation is a very vague term that can mean very many things, including increased objectives, force levels, tempo of operations, time of commitment, or number of fronts. A few different interpretations of escalation will be described briefly, but this discussion is not meant to be exhaustive, but only to show how a preference for escalation/increased commitment is a natural extension of the model presented here.

- Escalation to Ensure Success. The first circumstance under which support for escalation would be predicted has to do with expectations about success. It may be that the current level of forces or scale or magnitude of operations has been unsuccessful in achieving the objectives of the intervention, and is unlikely to do so. In such a case, if there was reason to believe that success could be achieved with certainty at little or no additional cost by increasing the forces or level of military activity, it would be rational to support this increased activity (especially if the alternative is failure).

- Increasing Objectives. A second explanation for a willingness to escalate has to do with increasing the benefit level to compensate for the additional costs; this is done by pursuing objectives that are viewed as superior to the original objectives, i.e., represent an escalation in objectives. As was mentioned earlier, the shape of the indifference curves assumes that a larger increment in benefits is necessary to compensate for each marginal increment in cost. When the benefit level is treated as somewhat plastic, and an objective can be identified that is superior to the one being pursued, there may be support for pursuit of that broader objective to compensate for the increased costs. An example that comes to
mind is the increasing preference for an unconditional surrender by Germany and Japan in the Second World War.\textsuperscript{467}

**Polarization**

In short, there is a logic that suggests that under different circumstances it is rational to favor withdrawal or a reduced commitment while under other circumstances it is sensible to support escalation or an increased commitment. In the past, different individuals have been faced with the same situation, and yet have preferred different policies (e.g., Korea, Vietnam). What can account for this?

The simplest explanation, of course, is that individuals can differ in a great many ways: the political opinion leaders they take their cues from can differ; the perception of benefits from an intervention can differ; the subjective probability of success for the operation can differ; their expectations about costs can differ; and their willingness to trade off benefits and costs can differ.

But if the simple model is roughly right, there seem to be two factors that are especially important in an individual’s support for an increased commitment: the belief that a higher level of benefit can be achieved that would compensate for the additional costs, and the belief that only escalation can assure success. To the extent that neither is believed to obtain, it would seem to be irrational to prefer escalation. But if either is believed to be true, it would be sensible to support escalation.

One hypothesis, then, is that among those who disapprove of an intervention (i.e., the tradeoff between benefits and costs has fallen below the point at which they are indifferent between continuing and terminating the operation), differences in preferred policies may be accountable to different perceptions of the ability to pursue higher-benefit objectives, or to actually achieve a successful outcome.

**THE LIMITS OF RATIONALITY AND ANALYSIS**

There are two final points that need to be made about the simple model of ends and means. The first has to do with factors (such as risk

\textsuperscript{467}Page and Shapiro (1992a).
orientation) that may lead to individual behavior that is less-than rational. The second has to do with the limits of analysis when the explanatory variables are highly correlated.

The Limits of Rationality

The model just described assumes that responses by political leaders and the public generally exhibit rationality, even if that rationality is bounded. The model suggests that members of the public are persuaded by arguments that focus on the benefits, prospects for success, and costs of an intervention, and a weighing of these factors, what Petty and Cacioppo (1986) have referred to as “the central route to persuasion.” Indeed, these authors suggest that higher levels of personal involvement will tend to engage these sorts of “cool” cognitive processes.

There are obviously, however, a number of other bases for attitudes about military operations:

- For example, attitudes may rely on what Petty and Cacioppo call a “peripheral” route to persuasion (e.g., likability of the source), the importance of which may be enhanced when there are lower levels of personal involvement.

- The fact that the observed behavior of the public in the aggregate appears to conform to a model of rational expectations does not mean that some individuals (or all individuals, some of the time) aren’t in fact forming their attitudes to some extent on “hot” cognitive processes, that is, based on emotional considerations or responses.

- It also leaves out questions of risk perception and orientation. For example, according prospect theory, willingness to accept risks can depend on the framing of the prospect; individuals are more risk-seeking (i.e., willing to accept higher risks) when they feel they are in the domain of losses than when they are in the domain of gains. For example, a perceived loss (e.g., of South Korea, South Vietnam, or Kuwait) may result in a higher willingness to accept risk than
the equivalent gain (e.g., adding a nation to the community of democracies).

- The importance of altruistic or humanitarian considerations may also be high, leading members of the public to favor the use of force, for example, to halt the starvation in Somalia, or to halt atrocities in Bosnia; indeed, such considerations may be incorporated in the model of ends and means and treated as entirely rational.

In short, there is nothing in the model of ends and means that is meant to imply that deeply felt humane values or cognitive processing distortions are being left out of the public’s evaluation of interventions—the model is meant to accommodate both. Indeed, the model provides a framework in which cool calculations of vital or national interests can coexist with important principles—whether they relate to “credibility” or promoting deeply held values and principles.

Perhaps more importantly, however, I follow Page and Shapiro’s (1992a) argument that when attitudes are aggregated, the effect of many of the individual-level distortions are minimized, and a higher degree of rationality and consistency in the aggregate obtains.

The Limits of Analysis

The second issue has to do with the nature of the evidence that is available. This is a difficult analytical problem because it is much easier to measure casualties and assess statistically the relationship between casualties and support than it is to measure and assess the relationship between these other factors and support. If we were to rely on casualties as an explanation, it would come down to an issue of imputing cause to the thing we can measure. The only other choice is accepting the limitations of data and analysis but recognizing a more complex process at work. Fortunately, the best analysis of public opinion data during the Korean and Vietnam wars, Mueller (1973), treats casualties as a very crude and aggregate measure of the level of effort that has been devoted to the conflict, while also attending to issues such as presidential policy and political opposition as sources of declining support.
Also complicating analysis is the fact that rising costs, declining leadership support, perceptions of benefits, and prospects for success are most likely highly correlated in individual respondents' minds, and possibly also correlated when measuring the attitudes of the mass public. In fact, there is ample evidence from the psychological and public opinion literature that individuals often strive for consistency in their views, and may realign their perceptions to achieve such consistency.

The fact that declines in support from political leaders, perceived benefits, prospects for success, and rising costs are probably correlated may leave some readers somewhat unsatisfied. In their naivete, they would prefer (or demand) to see orthogonal (uncorrelated) dimensions used to explain mass public behavior. So would we all. But just because we would like to find such evidence doesn’t mean that such evidence exists. And that is precisely the point here: because we cannot untangle the effect of casualties from the effect of these other factors we should be very cautious about accepting the argument that casualties are the cause of the declining support. They are clearly one cause whose importance may vary, but they are not the sole cause.

CONCLUSIONS

The model of ends and means is a metaphor for the blending of important interests and principles that obtained during much of the Cold War, where liberal internationalism and conservative anti-communism could find common cause in the use of force to contain communism, while promoting democracy and market economies. The current era, however, is characterized by the impoverished vocabulary of vital interests and important principles, a vocabulary that can be enriched only through a democratic conversation over ends and means. Until political leaders engage in such a conversation, there is unlikely to be understanding, much less agreement on the circumstances under which the use of U.S. military forces is justified.
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