A Disconnect Between Foreign Policymakers and the Public?

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Abstract

In this working paper, the authors examine whether foreign policy decision makers heed the views of the general public. On the one hand there are those observers who have said no, asserting that the public lacks the ability to make sensible decisions on matters of national life and death; decision makers should pursue the national interest according to their own best judgment, even if that contradicts the public's wishes. Others, including the present authors, are much more optimistic about the public's capacity to form reasonable opinions.

The authors, however, will show with systematic data what various examples in earlier work already suggested—that over the last 30 years there have been many substantial disagreements or "gaps" between foreign policy decision makers and the U.S. public. Indeed, there has been something like a "disconnect" between the two. Moreover, there has been no discernible tendency for the gaps to narrow or disappear over time. They see this as presenting serious problems for democratic values and as constituting a challenge for formulating an effective foreign policy.

This working paper will be part of a forthcoming book *The Foreign Policy Disconnect: What Americans Want from Our Leaders but Don't Get* (University of Chicago Press) by Benjamin I. Page with Marshall M. Bouton.

A Disconnect Between Foreign Policymakers and the Public?

Benjamin I. Page and Lawrence R. Jacobs

Introduction

Should foreign policy decision makers heed the views of the general public? Many observers have said no, asserting that the public lacks the ability to make sensible decisions on matters of national life and death; decision makers should pursue the national interest according to their own best judgment, even if that contradicts the wishes of the public. Others, including the present authors—bolstered by the evidence in a forthcoming book (see addendum)—are much more optimistic about the public's capacity to form reasonable opinions. We believe that democracy requires substantial responsiveness to what citizens want, and that in fact the results of pursuing a democratic foreign policy are likely to be good.

But even those who are skeptical about the wisdom of the public generally acknowledge that large discrepancies between what decision makers do and what the public wants are undesirable and potentially dangerous. Lack of public support for official foreign policy can send bad signals to international adversaries, constrain policy choices, upset policy continuity, and destabilize political leadership. Thus most skeptics about public opinion argue that it is important to "educate" the public to come into harmony with official policy.

Nearly all observers, then, agree on a key point: that foreign policy decision makers and the general public should not disagree with each other, at least not often, deeply, and persistently. In the long run, at least, policymakers and the public should come into substantial agreement, either because the policymakers respond to what citizens want or because they persuade citizens to agree with the policymakers' judgments.

In this working paper, however, we will show with systematic data what various examples in earlier work already suggested: that over the last 30 years there have been many substantial disagreements or "gaps" between foreign policy decision makers and the U.S. public. Indeed there has been something like a "disconnect" between the two. Moreover, there has been no discernible tendency for the gaps to narrow or disappear over time. We see this as presenting serious problems for democratic values and as constituting a challenge for formulating an effective foreign policy.

Should Policymakers Respond to Public Opinion?

In making foreign policy, should officials generally respond to what ordinary citizens want? Many observers and commentators have answered this question with an emphatic "no." Classical realists, in particular, have argued that policymakers should exercise discretion independent of the public's preferences, because of the dire stakes involved, the need for secrecy and dispatch, and the necessity for specialized skills, knowledge, and experience.

As we have noted earlier, for example, Hans Morgenthau, spoke of an "unavoidable gap" between the kind of thinking required for the successful conduct of foreign policy and the kind used by the mass public, which (he said) embraced "simple moralistic and legalistic terms of absolute good and absolute evil" and erratically changed its views due to shifting "moods" and a hunger for "quick results" that "sacrifice tomorrow's real benefit."[1]

Similarly, Walter Lippmann warned that the "public opinion of the masses cannot be counted upon to apprehend regularly and promptly the reality of things." The public, he asserted, simply did not have the "kind of knowledge—not to speak of an experience and seasoned judgment—which cannot be had by glancing [at media reports]." Lippmann concluded that

public opinion had "shown itself to be a dangerous master of decisions when the stakes are life and death" and was "deadly to the very survival of the state as a free society."[2]

George Kennan agreed that "public opinion… can be easily led astray into areas of emotionalism and subjectivity which make it a poor and inadequate guide for national action." He concluded that "a good deal of our trouble seems to have stemmed from the extent to which the executive has felt itself beholden to… the erratic and subjective nature of public reaction to foreign policy questions."[3]

Our view is quite different. For one thing, Americans' opinions about foreign policy simply do not now (if they ever did) fit these pessimistic characterizations. The "mood theory" of an erratic public opinion has been thoroughly discredited.[4] Increasingly, scholars have concluded that the problem of meager knowledge among most average citizens need not prevent collective public opinion from generally being stable and consistent and reflecting the best available information. This is so because citizens are able to use heuristics and cues from well-informed people to form sound opinions, and also because random variations in individuals' opinions (so long as they are independent of each other) tend to cancel out in the aggregate.[5]

We believe that the evidence presented in a forthcoming book (see addendum) supports and extends a "rational public" view of Americans' opinions concerning foreign policy. Three decades of Chicago Council surveys certainly do not reveal a moody, erratic, public opinion. Far from it; they display very substantial continuity. Many of the public's highly ranked goals and favored policy options, concerning key issues of security and justice (e.g., nuclear non-proliferation, protection of Americans' jobs, combating world hunger), have remained the same for a long time. Those that have changed appear to have done so in reasonable response to

changed world circumstances, such as the end of the Cold War or the rise of international terrorism. We see no sign of Morgenthau's erratic "mood" changes.

Nor do we see evidence of Kennan's "emotionalism and subjectivity." The American public tends to draw sharp distinctions among policy alternatives (favoring humanitarian foreign aid, for example, while opposing military or strategic aid, and distinguishing clearly among different countries or regions). Collective opinions are mostly consistent with each other, forming a reasonably coherent whole that reflects shared beliefs and values. Moreover, we have seen that <u>individuals'</u> opinions tend to reflect, in a purposive or instrumental fashion, the values they hold, the goals they seek, and the threats they perceive.

In our judgment, the findings of stable, consistent, and coherent collective public opinion point toward a relatively populistic brand of democratic theory that calls upon elected government officials (and those they appoint) to respond to the policy preferences of the citizenry. To allow officials simply to ignore what the public wants would risk ignoring values that the public holds dear and would be undemocratic. To assume that the officials always know best—despite plentiful historical examples of officials' errors and miscalculations, from Vietnam to Iraq—would be more dangerous than listening to the public.

To be sure, an alternative line of democratic theory, represented by Edmund Burke, Joseph Schumpeter and Giovanni Sartori, argues that officials should exercise their own judgment and then just be held accountable to the citizenry in periodic, competitive elections We are more persuaded by Robert Dahl and others who advocate a high degree of responsiveness to citizens' deliberative policy preferences. But in any case, even a looser sort of democratic theory, including responsiveness to "latent" or "anticipated" (rather than current) public opinion, prescribes eventual harmony between leaders and public.[6]

A number of international relations scholars have pointed out that, as a practical matter, officials <u>must</u> pay <u>some</u> attention to public opinion. One possible explanation for "democratic peace" (the phenomenon that democratic countries rarely fight each other), for example, may be that elected officials calculate that going to war requires broad public support in order to avoid electoral punishment.[7] Some students of American foreign policy appreciate that public support and society-wide legitimacy provide the foundation for stable and effective foreign policy.[8] A large body of literature has indicated that officials do in fact respond to public opinion, at least to some extent.[9]

Even the realists generally recognize the importance of public support in bolstering the country's willingness to bear financial and other costs of diplomatic and military action. For this reason they advocate efforts by leaders to change or "educate" public opinion. Morgenthau, for example, argued that government officials must "marshal[l] public opinion" to secure public approval for the policies that best serve the country's interests. It is the "historic mission of the government" to provide "informed and responsible leadership." "[The] government must realize," he emphasized, "that it is the leader and not the slave of public opinion…." In his view, public opinion is not a "static thing" but a "dynamic, ever changing entity" that leaders "continuously creat[e] and recreat[e]."[10]

Persuasive efforts of the sort that Morgenthau advocated, if effective, should eventually produce a high degree of harmony between foreign policy leaders and the general public. Thus practically everyone, including populistic democrats, "trustee"-style democrats, and classical realists, agrees that it is desirable that foreign policy leaders and ordinary citizens should end up in substantial agreement on the kinds of foreign policies that the nation should pursue.

The question for us in this paper is: To what extent do foreign policy decision makers and the U.S. public actually agree or disagree?

Studying "Gaps" between Decision Makers and the Public

Previously, we have mentioned a number of apparent disagreements between actual U.S. foreign policy and the policies that majorities of Americans say they want, such as participation in international agreements concerning global warming, a comprehensive nuclear test ban, the prohibition of landmines, and the International Criminal Court. But are such discrepancies unusual? How often do they occur?

An effective way to assess the size and frequency of gaps between policymakers and the public is to compare their responses to identically worded survey questions concerning their preferences on a broad set of foreign policy alternatives. Fortunately, each of the eight CCFR studies between 1974 and 2002 involved a survey of elite "foreign policy leaders" (including decision makers in the executive branch, the House of Representatives, and the Senate) as well as the general public surveys we have analyzed previously. Many of the same questions were asked of both leaders and the public, so we are able to select actual decision makers from the "leader" sample and compare their responses—on hundreds of international economic, defense, and diplomatic issues—with those of the general public.[11]

These data have both strengths and limitations. The decision makers surveyed were not randomly selected; respondents were chosen from institutional positions with foreign policy responsibilities, more often middle-level bureaucrats and members of Congress rather than the very top decision makers in the White House and the Department of Defense. The number of government officials interviewed in a given year was not very large (averaging about 78).[12] The

samples of policymakers do add up across surveys, however, to more than 600 respondents. And they have the advantage of being drawn in a consistent manner across years, because of continuity in survey organizations and research teams as well as conscious efforts to produce comparable data.

The most crucial advantage of using these survey data is that they permit us to make precise, direct comparisons of policy preferences between policymakers and citizens, using their responses to identical questions asked at the same time. Previous researchers have found it very difficult to devise measures of foreign policy and public opinion that are directly comparable with each other. They have often struggled to match polls of the mass public with some kind of indicator of (or sometimes just a subjective judgment about) government policy.

To be sure, our data on policymakers' expressed preferences are not inevitably indicative of actual policy. But close scrutiny of the data indicates that policymakers' responses have usually reflected the positions and actions of the institutions in which they hold office, and that rectification of any discrepancies would tend to strengthen rather than weaken our findings of extensive gaps between policymakers and public.[13] We believe that the problem of possible slippage between these survey responses and actual foreign policy is outweighed by the enormous advantage of being able to obtain precise, quantitative measures of differences of opinion between citizens and policymakers.

The scope and duration of the parallel surveys of policymakers and the general public enable us to make a number of different kinds of comparisons. In addition to judging overall levels of agreement or disagreement between policymakers and the public, we can compare levels of agreement at different time periods, for distinct types of policy issues, for sets of

policymakers from different institutions, and for different institutional contexts (e.g., unified versus divided party control of the executive and legislative branches of government).

Each quadrennial pair of parallel surveys included, on average, 145 common survey items—that is, 145 policy-relevant questions that were asked, with identical wording, both of policymakers and of the general public—for a total of 1,153 common questions over the years.[14]

In addition to tracking the extent of policy-opinion agreement or disagreement for all issues combined together for each survey (and for the whole 28-year period), we also investigated the level of agreement separately for each of three critical policy domains: Diplomatic Policy (e.g. relations with other countries and international organizations as well as general evaluations of America's vital interests and foreign policy goals); Defense Policy (including the recruitment and deployment of troops, military aid, and the development, procurement, and transfer to other countries of military hardware); and Economic Policy (e.g. issues related to trade, tariffs, and the protection and promotion of American jobs and businesses).[15] We also separately calculated opinion differences between the general public and three distinct groups of policymakers: officials in the House of Representatives, in the Senate, and in the Administration.

We used two different types of measures to compare the preferences of policymakers with those of the public. First, we calculated the number of disagreements between them as a proportion of the total number of common items. For each survey question, the percentage of policymakers taking a particular stand was subtracted from the percentage of the public taking that same stand ("don't know" or "no opinion" responses were excluded), and any difference of 10 percentage points or more was taken as constituting a "disagreement."[16] We then counted the number of such disagreements and reported them as a percentage of the total number of common

items. For instance, in 2002, we found 100 survey questions on which the public and policymakers disagreed by 10 percentage points or more, out of a total of 149 common items, producing a proportion of disagreement of 67%. We also calculated proportions of disagreements for subsets of policymakers and for the three separate policy areas. For instance, the proportion for diplomatic policy in 1974 was 75%—45 disagreements out of a total of 60 common items for this policy domain.

Our second summary measure is the proportion of survey items on which a disagreement of 10 points or more existed and <u>majorities</u> of policymakers took positions <u>opposite</u> to those of majorities of the public. For instance, 26% of common items in 2002 involved opposing majorities: on 39 of 149 total items a majority of policymakers disagreed with a majority of the public. From the perspective of democratic theory, the frequency of <u>opposing majorities</u> may be of particular interest. We believe, however, that the frequency of disagreements between the preferences of policymakers and citizens is also important, especially because (as we will see shortly) they are often quite large.

Numerous and Persistent Disagreements

The data indicate that, over a 30-year period, foreign policy decision makers in the administration, the Senate, and the House of Representatives have frequently and persistently disagreed with the views of the U.S. public. In short, there appear to be many "gaps": a substantial "democratic deficit," or even a "disconnect" between leaders and public. Overall, calculations of the proportions of disagreements and opposing majorities during the three-decade period reveal a striking degree of divergence between policymakers and the general public. Table 1 shows that during the whole 1974-2002 period, policymakers disagreed with the

public by 10 percentage points or more on fully 73%—that is, nearly three quarters—of the 1,153 survey questions that both leaders and citizens were asked. Data from each of the eight separate pairs of surveys indicate that the frequency of leader-opinion divergence has been fairly consistent over time, with only moderate variation between the low point of 67% in 2002 and the high point of 78% in 1990.

Not only have there been a large number of foreign policy issues on which decision makers and the public have differed, but the magnitude of those differences (as measured by percentage-point differences in support levels between the two groups) have been sizeable. As Table 2 indicates, in 80% of the disagreements over the three-decade period, the level of support among decision makers has differed from that among the public by 15 percentage points or more. In more than half (58%) of the disagreements the levels differed by 20 points or more. Moreover, the magnitudes of disagreement have been fairly consistent across all eight surveys. In every single pair of surveys, more than half the disagreements between decision makers and public involved 20 percentage points or more. The magnitude and consistency of these differences is remarkable. Changing counting rules or cutoff points, or making other methodological adjustments, does not meaningfully affect the results. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that there has been a rather wide gulf, on many issues, between the foreign policy preferences of government officials and the American citizenry.

Of course some might argue that gaps of even twenty or thirty or forty percentage points in support levels between the public and foreign policy leaders might not matter, so long as both the public and leaders ended up on the same side of each issue. If 90% of policymakers, but "only" 60% of the general public, favored some particular policy, why should anyone worry about the difference? We do not agree with this perspective, because we believe that a high or

low percentage of people favoring some policy on a survey question with limited choices (often only two choices) usually reveals something about what specific policy the <u>average</u> person would favor. We believe, for example, that if 90% of policymakers but only 60% of citizens favor "increasing" foreign aid to some particular country, the average policymaker is likely to favor a significantly larger increase than the average citizen does. Even if majorities seem to agree, therefore, we consider percentage point "gaps" to represent meaningful differences about precisely what sorts of foreign policies the United States should pursue.[17]

Still, the idea of a majority occupies a special place in democratic theory. It seems important to check how often <u>majorities</u> of foreign policy decision makers disagree with majorities of citizens on these survey questions.

When we do so, we see that that the answer is, <u>rather often</u>. Table 3 shows that over the 1974-2002 period as a whole, majorities of policymakers took stands opposed by majorities of the general public on 26%—about one quarter—of the 1,153 common items. This has been true year in and year out. There has not been a great deal of variation, in the different Chicago Council surveys, between the lowest proportion of opposing majorities (20% in 1986) and the highest (31% in 1998).

To be sure, one could emphasize that the glass is three quarters full rather than pointing out that it is one quarter empty. But we consider the fact that most public officials say they want to go in the <u>opposite direction</u> from what most members of the public want, on so many important foreign policy issues—including major issues of war and peace and economic relations—to be rather sobering. Neither democratic responsiveness nor education of the public by leaders seems to be functioning with anything close to perfection.

Variations in Citizen-Leader Disagreements

Over the whole three-decade period, then, and in each of the eight separate CCFR studies, there have been substantial disagreements between policymakers and the general public. But has the extent of disagreement varied based on such factors as the partisan control of Congress and the White House, the type of policymaker, or the particular policy area? A series of more refined comparisons simply bolsters the case that a substantial and pervasive democratic deficit exists across the board.

Party control and divided government. Politicians are recruited and their careers are advanced by political parties; they often hold distinctive public philosophies that reflect the core ideas of their party. Which political party controls the legislative chambers and the White House, therefore, and whether there is unified or divided party government, might be expected to affect officials' responsiveness to the policy preferences of the mass public.

We regrouped the proportions of citizen/official disagreements and opposed majorities in each CCFR study according to whether, and to what extent, the legislative and executive branches were unified (with the president's political party controlling both chambers of Congress) or were divided at the time.

Contrary to expectation, neither measure of policymakers' disagreements with public opinion appears to be related to political control of the lawmaking branches. Partisan control of government was divided (that is, a different party controlled the presidency and/or at least one chamber of Congress) during both a low point (1986) <u>and</u> the high point (1990) of leader-opinion disagreements. The average proportion of disagreements between policymakers and public did not differ appreciably in the six instances of divided government (71%) as opposed to the two instances of unified government (73%). A similar lack of relationship appears between opposed

majorities and political control. The average proportion of opposing majorities has been very nearly the same in the six instances of divided government (27%) as in the two instances of unified government (25%).

Nor does the over-all extent of leader-citizen disagreement appear to be related to <u>which</u> party controls the House and Senate, or by how big a margin. The parties may tend to disagree with the public on different issues; we do not have enough cases to tell. But a substantial over-all disparity between policymakers' preferences and those of citizens has been evident under different forms of political control and during both Democratic and Republican presidencies. Unified Democratic governments appear to be no more or less responsive to citizens' wishes than divided governments with Republican presidents.

Variations by type of policy. Aggregate comparisons of the preferences of policymakers and the mass public might mask important variations by policy area. Policymakers might, for example, be more responsive to public opinion on issues that have direct pocketbook impacts on ordinary Americans, such as economic policies affecting jobs or trade. On the other hand, some international relations scholars have emphasized that economic considerations may motivate powerful interest groups (especially business groups) to influence policy making, perhaps outweighing the public. Or corporate interest groups may have such distinctive preferences on economic matters that even a moderate influence on policy would produce unusually big gaps with the public.[18] We explored such possibilities by breaking down our comparisons into three policy domains—Economic, Defense, and Diplomatic.

Economic policies. There have indeed been some variations across issues. Table 4 indicates that policymakers' sharpest disconnect from public opinion does, as expected by some interest group analysts, occur in the Economic realm, presumably because business corporations

care most about economic policies, differ sharply from the public on many of them, and have substantial influence over what government does. The public-policymaker disagreement on Economic issues averaged 81% across the eight surveys, reaching a remarkable peak of 95% disagreement in 1994. Likewise, Table 5 indicates that majorities of policymakers and of the general public took opposite sides on fully one third (33%) of all economic policy questions, with a peak of 50% opposing majorities in 1994—a year in which the Democrats controlled both Congress and the Presidency. Foreign policy gaps between officials and citizens are thoroughly bipartisan.[19]

Policymakers' divergence from the public on economic policy can be illustrated with a few specifics from the 1994 peak year. Officials departed from the majority of citizens who thought that the protection of American jobs should be a very important foreign policy goal (84% did so, versus just 42% of officials). Large majorities of government officials bucked public opinion by favoring the elimination of tariffs (91% of officials vs. only 40% of the public) and judging that Europe genuinely practiced free trade (71% vs. 48%). Officials were also much more certain that NAFTA was "mostly good" (91% versus 62%). Ordinary Americans ranked the threats of economic competition from Japan and Europe higher than policymakers did and were more disposed to cut back economic aid, both overall and to several specific countries (with the exception of those in Africa).

Although the economic policy gaps between decision makers and the public were especially sharp in 1994, similar patterns pervade all the surveys. Again and again, officials have disagreed with some of the key opinions of the public. Most importantly, officials have been much less concerned about the goal of protecting Americans' jobs, consistently one of the top-ranked goals among the public. Officials have been much less receptive to tariffs, restrictions on

immigration, and other measures that ordinary Americans see as related to job protection. In 2002, for example, many more members of the public than policymakers preferred to decrease even legal immigration (57% compared to 8%), and more were alarmed about threats posed by population growth (45% to 18%) and globalization (33% to 17%). Year after year, foreign policy decision makers have also been much more ready than the public to spend tax money on foreign policy programs (especially foreign aid), and less eager to spend it on domestic programs like Social Security, medical care, and aid to education.

Defense policies. On average over the years, policymakers have not differed quite as often from the public on Defense or Diplomatic—as opposed to Economic—foreign policies, with average proportions of disagreement at 70% on both, and with opposing majorities only a little more frequent on Defense than Diplomatic issues (28% percent to 22%). (See Tables 4 and 5.)

But Table 4 shows that policymakers were out of harmony with the public on defense issues to an unusually great extent in 1990, disagreeing on fully 90% of the common items. A large part of this divergence stemmed from the quicker conclusion by policymakers than the public that the Cold War was over, that the Soviet Union was no longer a threat, but that continued support for longstanding defense alliances remained important. For example, officials were substantially less inclined to evaluate the Soviet Union as a threat, and more favorable toward cutting back defense spending, but more supportive than the public of providing military aid and equipment to other countries and more willing to use troops to defend traditional allies. In addition, policymakers were more supportive of using U.S. troops against Iraq in the fall of 1990 (21% of the public rated U.S. action to reverse the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait as "excellent," compared with 49% of officials—most opposition came from Congress, especially the House),

and policymakers were also considerably more supportive of using U.S. troops to reverse a hypothetical Iraqi invasion of Saudi Arabia, by a 92% to 67% margin.

The level of leader-citizen disagreement on Defense issues dropped sharply, to only about one-half (52% and 49%) in 1998 and 2002, largely because both policymakers and the public favored strong defense in reaction to terrorist attacks. The frequency of opposed majorities on defense matters dropped to its all-time low of just 13% in 2002 (Table 5.) Even then, however, significant gaps remained. For example, the public and policymakers disagreed about certain hawkish methods of combating terrorism (as we will see, they disagreed about several dovish or Diplomatic methods as well): more citizens than officials favored assassination of suspected terrorist leaders (72% compared to 59%) and racial profiling at airports (56% to 42%).

In 2002 there was also a continuation of the usual pattern of greater reluctance by citizens than officials to use U.S. troops in combat abroad. Over the years, the public has often been considerably more resistant than decision makers to the idea of using U.S. troops abroad (for example, in reaction to various hypothetical invasions) Some of this undoubtedly reflects public concern about risking the lives of U.S. troops, who are more often the sons, daughters, or friends of ordinary Americans than they are of public officials. In addition, however, the public appears more sensitive than officials to the costs of armed conflict and loss of life, including harm to non-Americans. The public has regularly been more opposed to military aid, and even to selling weapons abroad, than officials have.

Diplomatic policies. Disagreements between decision makers and the public have generally been least frequent (especially in terms of opposed majorities) in the Diplomatic realm (see Tables 4 and 5.) Even there, however, substantial gaps have often occurred, especially

reflecting greater support among the public than officials for the United Nations, for negotiating with adversaries, and for treaties and agreements on arms control and other matters.

In 2002, when citizen/official disagreements were less frequent than usual on Defense policy, Tables 4 and 5 indicate that policymakers and the public disagreed unusually often on Diplomatic matters. The public's strong multilateralism and support for international organizations and agreements contrasted rather sharply with the Bush administration's tendencies toward unilateralism. For example, government officials were much more supportive than the public of "go[ing] it alone" (58% versus 33% in favor) and considerably less supportive than the public of strengthening the United Nations (16% of officials compared to 58% of the public) or participating in the Kyoto agreement on global warming (49% to 75%), the International Criminal Court (45% to 76%), or the Landmines Convention (56% versus 80% in favor). In the context of combating terrorism, more members of the public favored trying suspected terrorists in an International Criminal Court (86% did so, compared to 63% of policymakers), while government officials were more in favor of sharing intelligence information (60% of the public versus 95% of officials), improving relations with adversaries (85% to 99%), helping poor countries develop their economies (80% to 97%), and being even-handed in the Palestinian-Israel conflict (70% versus 95% in favor). (Note, however, that large majorities of both the public and the surveyed officials favored most of these dovish measures against terrorism.)

Although the degree to which policymakers disagree with citizens has varied somewhat across policy domains and over time, our most important finding remains the high overall extent and persistence of disagreement. It is striking to see in Table 4 that, in the eight surveys between 1974 and 2002, and on the three clusters of diplomatic, economic, and defense issues, the

proportion of disagreements between policymakers and the public dropped below 66% (two-thirds) only five out of a possible 24 times. Not once did the proportion of disagreements fall below 49% (that is, about half) of the questions that citizens and policymakers were asked in common.

Different institutions: House, Senate, and administration. Realist and rational-choice theories of international relations tend to treat governments as "unitary actors," on the assumption that all relevant policymakers, evaluating the same set of international conditions, generally adopt similar policy positions. Our samples for separate groups of policymakers are rather small, but we are able to use the data at least in a suggestive fashion to examine the policy preferences of three different sets of policymakers—officials from the House of Representatives, the Senate, and the Administration—for evidence bearing on the unitary actor assumption. As is often the case with elite interviewing, the prominence of the respondents is critical; the officials studied are not necessarily statistically representative, but their responses do indicate the preferences of authoritative policymakers in their respective branches of government.[20]

Our data suggest that there have been some significant differences among different sets of policymakers on certain critical foreign policy issues. Data from 2002 illustrate these differences. Members of the House of Representatives were a bit more supportive than the Senate and Administration of "go[ing] it alone" with respect to Iraq (differences of 7 and 14 percentage points, respectively) but also substantially more supportive of the Kyoto agreement (differences of 23 and 28 points). Administration officials were more supportive than the House and Senate of using nuclear weapons (differences of 17 and 7 points, respectively).

Meanwhile, senators, with their crucial treaty-ratification responsibilities, were less supportive than members of the House or Administration officials of the treaty banning land

mines (differences of 28 and 31 points, respectively) and of participating in the International Criminal Court (differences of 16 and 14 points), but <u>more</u> supportive of requiring standards for working and environmental conditions as part of international trade agreements.

These results are suggestive of important differences among policymakers. On many issues, certain clusters of policymakers adopt positions that are close to those of the public, while others do not. For instance, Senate officials almost exactly matched the public's views on requiring working standards in international trade agreements, while the administration was some distance away. The connection or non-connection of public views to those of policymakers is undoubtedly complicated by differences among sets of government officials, each one of which typically exerts a conditional veto power over policy. (Sometimes an absolute veto, as in the case of senators and treaties.) For the same reason, foreign policy decision making may often be more complicated than "unitary actor" theories envision.

Convergence over time between policymakers and the public?

Democratic theorists and analysts of foreign relations often emphasize the temporal dimension of policymakers' relationships with public opinion. Classical realists expect policymakers to "educate" the public when it disagrees with them, changing citizens' stands over time so that they come to support the government's position. Some democratic theorists suggest that policymakers should respond to "latent" or <u>anticipated</u> public opinion: they ought sometimes to adopt positions that are currently be unpopular with the public, anticipating that—based on further experience and information—future opinion will move toward greater agreement with them.[21] Other democratic theorists expect officials to respond to the public only in the long run,

gradually moving toward the public's views. All these lines of thought share the expectation that, over time, disagreements between policymakers and the public should diminish.

But we have already seen reasons to doubt this prediction. As Tables 1 and 3 indicated, there has been no discernible tendency for the frequency of disagreements between policymakers and the public, or the frequency of opposing majorities, to decrease over the three decades of Chicago Council surveys. The frequency and size of gaps between leaders and citizens have remained much the same.

Still, that finding is not inconsistent with the possibility that gaps on particular policy issues generally narrow over time, but that those issues are then replaced by new ones with big initial gaps between leaders and citizens: gaps which then diminish in their turn. In order to test the convergence hypothesis more directly, we need to look at what happens over time with respect to individual issues.

We therefore examined a set of specific issues on which we have extensive over-time data and which would appear to be prime suspects for anticipatory responsiveness to future opinion or elite efforts at education: important, highly salient issues on which the preferences of government officials differed from those of the public (at some point in time) by especially large amounts—by 30 to 50 percentage points. Presumably policymakers would pay special attention to correctly anticipating future opinion, or would be prodded into responsiveness, or would devote special efforts to persuading the public, on issues like these involving potentially severe disjunctions between public policy and citizens' wishes that might cause risks of electoral retribution.

Table 6 shows the differences (in percentage points), for each Chicago Council survey, between the proportions of government officials and the proportions of ordinary Americans

taking a given position on half a dozen headline issues, including job protection, the use of U.S. troops in hypothetical battles abroad, and strengthening the United Nations. (Positive figures indicate that more citizens than leaders held the stated position; negative figures indicate the reverse.)

Table 6 offers little or no evidence of convergence between policymakers and the public over time. In fact, looking just at the starting point and ending point of each time series (1974 and 2002), in every one of the six cases there was a net <u>increase</u> in the magnitude of opinion difference between policymakers and the public. On the three troop-use questions this increase was quite substantial, going from no significant gap at all to a gap of 28 to 51 percentage points. On two of the questions (job protection and economic aid) the increase is too small to take very seriously, but there is certainly no indication of convergence.

Bear in mind that these issues were chosen for the existence of large gaps <u>at some point</u> (any point) in a time series. If anticipatory responsiveness, or delayed responsiveness, or education of the public were working well, presumably the largest gaps would tend to occur toward the beginnings of the time series (before those processes had time to work), not toward the ends. To be sure, one can pick through Table 6 and find some instances of citizen-leader differences declining from one survey to the next, but in every case these instances were counterbalanced by subsequent increases in differences on the same issue.

On these important issues, then, there is no sign that the views of policymakers and the public have converged, even over a nearly thirty-year period that would seem to allow ample time for delayed responsiveness to occur, for anticipations to prove correct, or for education and persuasion to take effect. Leader-citizen differences seem to be quite persistent.

These findings, though based on just a few cases, look somewhat damaging to classical realists like Morgenthau who have urged the makers of foreign policy to "mobilize" public support. If officials have tried to do so in these cases, they have not had much success. Our findings also cast doubt upon whether U.S. foreign policy decision makers always abide by even the looser forms of democratic theory. They do not seem to have narrowed these wide gaps between themselves and the public, either by gradual responsiveness to public opinion or by correctly anticipating that public opinion will come into harmony with their own views.

Causes and Consequences of Citizen-Leader Gaps

Our evidence of frequent and persistent disagreements between influential makers of foreign policy and the U.S. public challenges the optimism of classical realists regarding the efficacy of leaders at educating or persuading the public. It also casts doubt on others' claims that public opinion strongly constrains foreign policy making. In fact, government officials' preferences (and, we believe, the foreign policies they pursue) are often out of step with public opinion. Often they remain out of step for years or decades. Why have there been so many large, persistent gaps?

As we see it, the explanations fall into two groups. First, the gaps are not avoided or closed by policymakers more fully responding to the preferences of the public for the following reasons: highly unequal economic and other resources among citizens that are translated into unequal political influence; the costs of political information (especially concerning foreign policy) that muffle the public's voice and permit distortions and misrepresentations by officials and other elites; a two-party system that does not mobilize workers, permits bipartisan collusion, narrows voting choices, and gives power to party activists and money givers with extreme views;

noncompetitive elections that blunt the power of citizens; electoral rules that discourage and bias

public participation; and influence by organized interest groups, especially large business

corporations that push for economic policies opposed by the public. Second, gaps are not closed

by officials "educating" or persuading the public because education campaigns are very difficult

and usually not very effective. Indeed they are sometimes not even attempted, presumably

because they are not expected to be effective.

Here we will discuss the reasons for lack of democratic responsiveness under two general

rubrics, 1) the ability of decision makers to get away with non-responsiveness without much fear

of electoral retribution, and 2) the fact that competing influences often push them away from

doing what the public wants. We will then turn to the limits of educating or persuading the

public.

The ease of ignoring the public. Vote-seeking politicians undoubtedly do have some

motivation to respond to public opinion on foreign policy. The public perceives differences

between candidates on foreign policies, and these perceptions tend to affect their evaluations of

the candidates.[22] Moreover, some international developments regularly impinge on the daily

lives of Americans, as evident in the public's strong support for protecting jobs and its alarm

about immigration.

But electoral incentives for policy responsiveness can be muffled or evaded. As Richard

Fenno and others remind us, politicians use "explanations" to "develo[p] the leeway for activity

undertaken in Washington" and to dodge retribution by voters as they pursue their own policy

goals. Lawmakers may, for example, take advantage of arcane legislative procedures and the

sheer number and diversity of issues to obscure their responsibility for costly decisions.[23] The

executive branch can use its information control to conceal or misrepresent what it is doing abroad. This diminishes the ability of voters to hold officials accountable.

Foreign policy presents a special set of conditions that may particularly blunt electoral incentives for officeholders to engage in policy responsiveness. Although many citizens hold meaningful attitudes about foreign policies and know the positions of candidates, the relative certainty and intensity of public attitudes, and the clarity of their perceptions on foreign policy, may generally be weaker than those on such domestic policies as health care and job creation. Thus citizens may be less insistent on responsiveness and more apt to defer to the executive. Moreover, prevailing interpretations of the U.S. Constitution, combined with the executive's control over information and the nature of U.S. institutional arrangements, may encourage congressional and judicial deference as well to unilateral presidential actions in foreign affairs, especially on national security issues.[24]

Leeway from voter retribution, then, may enable even electorally mindful politicians to slight the preferences of the mass public and instead respond to the intense preferences of well-organized interest groups, activists, and money givers. The diffuse and uncertain threat posed by foreign-policy-oriented voters may often be less intimidating to elected officials (and may in fact have less impact on electoral success) than concentrated pressure and tangible threats of retribution from party activists, interest groups, financial contributors, and businesses threatening disinvestment from the United States. A resulting "bias in representation", in which business groups often prevail, is suggested by a substantial body of research in international relations[25] and is consistent with our evidence of large and persistent leader-public gaps.

Politicians' deviations from the public's wishes are apparently facilitated by a tendency for politicians to misperceive (perhaps rationalize) what those wishes are. Steven Kull and I.M.

Destler have shown that members of Congress often insist that ordinary Americans hold opinions that they do not in fact hold: a pervasive isolationism, for example; opposition to multilateral peacekeeping operations; opposition to all foreign aid. Such misperceptions can conveniently allow politicians to portray themselves—even to think of themselves—as responding to the public when they are not actually doing so. The misperceptions tend to persist even when confronted with strong evidence to the contrary, including opinion surveys in congresspersons' own districts.[26] The 2004 CCFR study confirmed and extended these findings. When "foreign policy leaders" were asked where they thought the U.S. public stood on eleven different issues, they correctly perceived what a majority of the public favored only in two of the eleven cases. Most leaders grossly underestimated public support for collective decision making within the U.N., participating in U.N. peacekeeping operations, giving the U.N. power to tax, participating in the ICC and the Kyoto agreement, and complying with adverse WTO decisions.[27]

Competing influences on policymakers. The leeway that decision makers have to ignore the public is important because they often have incentives to do so: incentives to respond instead to a variety of other influences. These include the organized interest groups, party activists, and campaign contributors we have mentioned. They also include the views of pundits and foreign policy "experts," and policymakers' own values and ideologies.

As we have noted, several past studies of relationships between public opinion and the making of foreign policy have indicated that the public has substantial influence on policy. But few of these studies took explicit account of alternative hypotheses or possible competing factors, so the findings of impact by public opinion may be spurious. That is, apparent influence by the public may simply reflect the fact that public opinion sometimes agrees with the wishes of other actors (organized interests and the like) who carry the real weight with policymakers.

Indeed, when Jacobs and Page included the preferences of competing actors in a regression analysis they found that business executives and foreign policy experts (themselves probably influenced by organized interests) had a big effect on foreign policy decision makers, but the influence of the public was barely discernible.[28]

Failure to "educate" or persuade the public. Our second type of explanation for the persistence of large gaps between the views of policymakers and the public involves the failure of decision makers to bring ordinary Americans' foreign policy preferences into line with their own preferences through education or persuasion. Classical realists appear to be wrong about the ease of "educating" the public. Or, if they are right, leaders do not make sufficient efforts at education to close the many large gaps that we have observed.

There are reasons to believe that such persuasive efforts face serious obstacles. The public's collective policy preferences, including its foreign policy views, have been found to be generally stable, rarely changing or fluctuating by large margins except in response to world events.[29] The institutional context of democratic states may be especially inhospitable and resistant to government-initiated political "education" because of the difficulty of sending clear and coherent messages for the public to heed. Divisions among policymakers may often produce multiple competing messages aimed at the public. Professional norms, legal protections, and commercial pressures within the media encourage the press to collect and circulate information that challenges the messages even of presidents on contentious policies.[30]

True, one can find examples in which unified, persistent, and energetic efforts by officials appear to have shifted public opinion. This was probably the case in the run-up to the U.S. invasion of Iraq, when the Bush administration overcame opposition to the war by arguing that Saddam Hussein's Iraq posed an imminent threat to the United States (particularly because of an

allegedly reconstituted nuclear weapons program and alleged ties to al Qaeda terrorists); that past U.N. resolutions justified U.S. action; and that a multilateral "coalition of the willing" had been assembled. But such persuasive successes can prove temporary, if based on shaky evidence and not confirmed by clearly positive results. In any case, campaigns of that kind require large amounts of time and effort. Neither attempts nor successes of that sort are very common.

Morgenthau and other classical realists may have significantly underestimated the obstacles facing presidents and other government officials who would like to mobilize public support behind policies that they have formulated independently of, or contrary to, the public's wishes.

By the same token, we believe that the manipulation of public opinion—in the sense of using false or misleading arguments or information to turn the public against its true interests (the preferences it would hold if information were accurate and complete)—is also very difficult. This is a key reason why we consider collective public opinion generally to offer a useful guide to decision making: it amounts to something more than just an echo chamber for elite wishes.[31] Indeed the very existence and persistence of "gaps" supports the largely autonomous, "authentic" nature of public opinion. There seem to be two main types of exceptions. In certain real or manufactured international "crisis" situations in which the executive has strong information control and bi-partisan backing (as in the Iraq case), it may be able to manipulate the public into consent—short-run consent, at least—to its policies. In some other, longer run situations, unified elites—working through compliant media, foundations, think tanks, and academia—may be able eventually to shift the public's views. But the shortfall of decades worth of efforts to convince the citizenry of the virtues of completely free international trade suggest that even here there are limits.

Turning to the consequences of gaps, we see them as mostly negative.

Should wise leaders override an uninformed citizenry? Even if the realists are wrong about the ease of "mobilizing" or "educating" the public, they might still be correct in seeing gaps as just a practical problem, not a normative one: not a reason to object to policies that contravene the public's wishes. Perhaps public opinion on foreign policy issues is often so ill-informed that it is not worth paying attention to. Perhaps decision makers more accurately perceive what is in the national interest, knowing better (for example) how to advance the country's position in the international system by maximizing its military strength relative to competitors. Perhaps the public's lack of knowledge and experience, and its inability to set aside emotions and rationally size up the country's interests, make it essential to insulate some government decisions from influence by the citizenry.

We cannot entirely dismiss this evaluation of gaps. The American public is not always right. As we have noted, for example, some of the public's disagreements with policymakers over defense policies at the beginning of the 1990s probably resulted from officials more quickly and accurately understanding the implications of the end of the Cold War than most ordinary citizens did. We have also seen that the public has held some gross misperceptions about the nature and extent of U.S. foreign aid. In these and certain other cases, policymakers may have been right and the expressed preferences of the public wrong. Some gaps may be explicable on these grounds and may therefore be less normatively troubling.

But these, we believe, are exceptions. A theme of this book has been that Americans' collective policy preferences concerning foreign affairs have generally been sensible, coherent, and logically related to a reasonable set of foreign policy goals. Often public opinion reflects the best available information. There is no guarantee that officials can do better than the public itself

at discerning or defining the national interest. Instead, officials may go off on mistaken or self-interested ventures of their own. We believe that gaps between the preferences of citizens and those of decision makers often reflect differences in the values and the objective interests of the two groups (differing reactions to job losses or to military casualties, for example), rather than differences in information, knowledge, or expertise.

This interpretation is bolstered by our findings about the very limited impact of levels of information or of formal education upon citizens' foreign policy preferences. If officials' superior wisdom were the main source of gaps between their policy preferences and those of the general public, one would expect that the most highly educated and best informed citizens would hold different policy preferences—preferences more like those of officials—than their fellow citizens do. But we have found that education and information (controlling for other factors) have had only sporadic effects, mainly related to the evaluations of obscure policies and low-salience foreign countries. When we controlled for income, ethnicity, religion, gender, and other demographic characteristics, again and again we found that formal education had no more than moderate effects on policy preferences. The effects it did have generally diminished greatly or vanished when we took account of ideology (especially "active part" internationalism) and specific foreign policy goals. That is, the effects of education on foreign policy preferences seemed often to work through individuals' goals, values, and ideologies—presumably because levels of formal education reflect people's social positions and their material self interests—not through information or expertise.

Why, in a democracy, should the goals and values of officials or high-status individuals count for more than those of other citizens? When interests differ, political equality would seem

to be an essential characteristic of democracy. Who can be better trusted to define the "public interest" than the public itself?

Dangers of gaps between officials and citizens. Returning to practical rather than normative issues, two serious risks are created by any persistent tendency of policymakers to ignore public opinion or to exaggerate the ease of molding it. First, policy that extensively and consistently flouts public opinion goes out on a shaky limb. The greatest concern of classical realists is not that citizen-leader disconnects signal a failure of democracy, but that they may cause the public to oppose and impede the government's conduct of foreign policy. Numerous large citizen-leader disagreements may increase the risk that government officials will find, at some point, that they have committed the United States to a long-term military or diplomatic position that lacks public support and becomes the target of divisive domestic opposition.[32]

The case of the Johnson administration's handling of Vietnam is instructive. The U.S. public is sometimes accused of having become disillusioned with the war and having "deserted" the administration. Archival evidence indicates, however, that the Johnson administration closely monitored public opinion and, in important respects, quite deliberately turned its back on the preferences of most Americans from the very outset of military escalation. The public's turn against the Vietnam war can be seen not as a case of the public deserting government officials, but as the opposite: policymakers knowingly disregarding the public's preferences in the false expectation that they would be able to "educate" the public to support their position.[33]

When officials adopt policies opposed by the public, they place American foreign policy on a weak foundation. Although it may take unusually strong electoral upheavals or social movements to actually overturn established policies, a sharp opinion-policy divergence means that policies that draw intense media coverage and become salient may elicit significant

opposition, eroding long-term trust in government officials and institutions and perhaps leading to excessive gun-shyness with respect to future policies.

A second danger of opinion-policy disparities is that government officials may excessively inflate expectations in efforts to "mobilize" the public. Decisive leadership of the sort that Morgenthau and others recommend seems to call for the enunciation of clear, sweeping goals and optimistic visions. But if appealing rhetoric turns out to contrast with ambiguous and costly realities in the actual implementation of policy, the public may be deeply disappointed. President Johnson was caught in just this kind of painful dilemma. On the one hand, the President was repeatedly urged by his aides to emphasize progress in Vietnam in order to discredit the "widespread impression... that the war may go on for years."[34] On the other hand, officials warned that administration's public and optimistic promotion of its initiatives produced a "psychological escalation" that was inevitably met by a "let down in the public's thinking" after the initiatives failed to clearly produce the promised objectives—peace or military victory.[35] Johnson and the country paid a steep price for this disillusionment.

Disillusionment of a similar—though, so far, milder—sort has resulted from the bloody and chaotic aftermath of the 2003 invasion of Iraq, when many highly publicized pre-war expectations proved to be hollow: that American forces would be welcomed with flowers rather than resistance; that low and rapidly diminishing numbers of U.S. troops would be sufficient to keep order; that Iraqi oil money would pay for reconstruction; and the like. The political, economic and social costs to the Bush administration and to the United States are like to prove significant.

Given our findings, one might counsel public officials to take seriously the practical dangers of foreign policies endemically distant from the preferences of citizens.

A more democratic foreign policy. The chief point we want to make about gaps is a different one, however. The persistence over time of large gaps between policymakers and citizens makes clear that officials <u>can,</u> in fact, sometimes get away with ignoring the public's wishes for a long period. But we believe they <u>should not</u> generally do so.

To the extent that the public's collective preferences are based upon sound information but different values or interests those of political leaders or influential interest groups (and we believe this is often the case), policymakers ought to pay more attention to the wishes of ordinary citizens. The resulting policies would be more democratic, more satisfying to more Americans, and (in many or most cases, we believe) more effective for the country as a whole.

To the extent that the American public is mistaken about certain matters, the proper course in a democracy is not simply for officials to defy the public's will and evade any negative consequences, but for them to ensure that better information is provided. This is not always easy to achieve but it is worth considerable effort. It is worth noting that some of the misinformation that has distorted certain of the public's policy preferences (concerning foreign aid, for example, or Iraq) has come from politicians and public officials themselves. To clear up popular misconceptions about foreign policy it would be helpful to raise the level of public rhetoric by politicians and others.

In any event, we consider large and persistent gaps between the preferences or actions of policymakers and the wishes of ordinary citizens to be normatively very troubling.

Table 1 Frequency of Disagreements between Policymakers and the Public

	1974	1978	1982	1986	1990	1994	1998	2002	All years
Disagreements as percentages of all opinion items	75%	74	73	68	78	72	70	67	73
	(184 /246)	(117 /158)	(105 /143	(63 /93)	(106 /136)	(83 /116)	(78 /112)	(100 /149)	(836 /1153)

A "disagreement" is defined as an instance in which the response frequencies of policymakers differed by 10 percentage points or more from those of the general public when asked identically worded questions. Entries are numbers of disagreements expressed as percentages of all opinion items asked of both groups. Numbers of disagreements and of common opinion items are given in parentheses.

Table 2. Magnitude of Disagreements between Policymakers and the Public

	1974	1978	1982	1986	1990	1994	1998	2002	All years
Size of Disagreement									
10-14 points	21%	15	16	21	26	17	28	20	20
15-19 points	24	21	28	16	18	19	19	23	22
20-24 points	21	20	14	17	15	20	13	11	17
25-29 points	15	12	10	16	15	17	10	15	14
30-34 points	5	14	5	13	8	5	13	9	8
35-39 points	5	9	13	6	5	5	10	6	7
40-44 points	3	4	3	3	2	10	3	7	4
45-49 points	3	2	3	2	8	4	3	3	3
50 points or more	2	4	8	6	2	4	1	6	4
	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
	(184)	(117)	(105)	(63)	(106)	(83)	(78)	(100)	(836)
15 points or more	79%	85	84	79	74	83	72	80	80
20 points or more	54%	64	56	63	56	64	53	57	58

Entries are percentages of all disagreements between policymakers and the public that had a given size in terms of percentage point differences in response frequencies by the two groups.

Table 3. Frequency of Opposing Majorities between Policymakers and Public

	1974	1978	1982	1986	1990	1994	1998	2002	All years
Opposing majorities as percentages of all common items									
	28%	22	27	20	27	28	31	26	26
	(68 /246)	(34 /158)	(38 /143)	(19 /93)	(37 /136)	(33 /116	(35 /112)	(39 /149)	(303 /1153)

      An "opposing majority" is an instance in which the response frequencies of policymakers and the public differed by 10 percentage points or more on identically worded questions and majorities of the two groups took opposite sides of the issue. Entries are numbers of opposing majorities expressed as percentages of all opinion items asked of both groups. Numbers of opposing majorities and of common items are given in parentheses.

Table 4. Frequency of Policymaker/ Public Disagreements by Policy Type

	1974	1978	1982	1986	1990	1994	1998	2002	All years
Policy type									
Economic policy	89%	73	86	79	75	95	68	77	81
Defense policy	65	80	83	66	90	74	52	49	70
Diplomatic policy	75	71	66	60	75	60	74	75	70

Entries are percentages of common items within a given policy domain on which policymakers and the public differed by 10 percentage points or more.

Table 5. Frequency of Opposing Majorities by Policy Type

	1974	1978	1982	1986	1990	1994	1998	2002	All years
Policy type									
Economic policy	36%	21	43	21	29	50	32	31	33
Defense policy	29	40	36	21	29	22	33	13	28
Diplomatic policy	23	13	19	20	21	21	29	32	22

Entries are percentages of common items within a given policy domain on which majorities of policymakers took the opposite sides from majorities of the public.

Table 6. Magnitude of Differences over time between Policymakers and Public on Selected Issues

	1974	1978	1982	1986	1990	1994	1998	2002
Protecting U.S. jobs very important f.p. goal	47	44	38	30	49	42	33	52
Favor economic aid	-38	-33	-41	-32	-39	-35	-41	-41
Favor U.S. troop use if North Korea invaded South Korea	no gap	-37	-53	-53	-46	-40	-50	-51
Favor U.S. troop use if Arab forces invaded Israel	no gap	no gap	-22	-40	-29	-27	-27	-28
Favor U.S. troop use if China invaded Taiwan	no gap	no gap	no gap	not asked	not asked	not asked	-34	-28
Strengthening U.N. very Important f.p. goal	30	36	27	38	45	44	21	42

Entries are percentage point differences: the percentage of the public taking a particular position on an issue minus the percentage of policymakers taking the same position on that issue. Positive figures indicate that more of the public than policymakers favored the stated position; negative figures mean that more policymakers than members of the public favored it.

Endnotes

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[1] Morgenthau (1973, pp. 135, 146-148.)

[2] Lippmann (1955, pp. 24-5, 20, 26-27.)

[3] Kennan (1951, pp. 93-100.)

[4] For refutations of the "mood theory," see Caspary (1970), Russett (1990), Page and Shapiro (1992, ch. 2), and Holsti (2004, pp. 42-49.) Gabriel Almond set forth the mood theory in 1950 but subsequently shifted his views somewhat, speaking of a "maturation" of mass opinion and increases in attention and opinion stability (1960, pp. xx-xxvi.)

[5] On heuristics, see Sniderman, Brody and Tetlock (1991), Popkin (1991). Page and Shapiro (1992) make a case that collective public opinion achieves properties of rationality through individuals' use of heuristics, collective deliberative processes, and off-setting errors by individuals. But concerning systematic errors and biases in collective opinion (some examples of which we have noted in previously) see Kuklinski and Quirk (2000), Althaus (2003).

[6] Contrast Burke (1949), Schumpeter (1976), and Sartori (1987) with Dahl (1989). On latent opinion, see Key (1961), Zaller (2003). On different types of representation, see Mansbridge (2003.)

[7] On the "democratic peace," see Russett (1996); Russett and Oneal (2001); Doyle (1983.)

[8] E.g. George (2002).

[9] In-depth case studies of the impact of public opinion on particular foreign policies are reported

in Graham (1989), Russett (1990), Risse-Kappen (1991), Peterson (1995), Foyle (1999), and Sobel (2001). Many case studies are compactly summarized in Holsti (2004, ch. 3). Generalizability is of course always a troubling issue with case studies. But most existing quantitative, aggregate-data studies, which also find substantial public influence (e.g., Monroe [1979, 1998], Page and Shapiro [1983], Ostrom and Job [1986], Hartley and Russett [1992]), suffer from ambiguities in causal inference. Often they do not test for other influences (e.g., by organized interest groups) at the same time they investigate the impact of public opinion. See the further discussion below.

[10] Morgenthau (1973, pp. 146-48.)

[11] Most previous analyses of Chicago Council data have focused on the broader set of "foreign policy leaders" that were surveyed – including not only government officials but also media figures, foreign policy experts, and leaders of business, labor, and religious organizations (Rielly, 1975 et seq.; Holsti, 2004; Page and Barabas, 2000; Bouton and Page, 2002, ch. 8.)

[12] The number of officials interviewed each year averaged about 19 from the Senate, 36 from the House, and 23 from the administration, for a total of 78 decision makers. The larger surveys of "foreign policy leaders" that included these officials averaged a total of 365 respondents in each of the eight years.

 Data on large numbers of key policymakers are very difficult to obtain, especially comparable data over multiple years. An important additional source of data on foreign policy leaders (though without parallel surveys of the public) is the set of large-sample surveys conducted every four years between 1976 and 1996 by the Foreign Policy Leadership Project (FPLP) directed by Ole Holsti and James Rosenau. The FPLP sample includes high military officers, who are unfortunately excluded from the Chicago Council surveys. Holsti (2004, esp. ch. 4) reports

extensive results over the years from the FPLP, CCFR, and other leadership surveys, along with some contrasting opinions of the public. See also Holsti and Rosenau (1984) and numerous other publications by those authors, many of them cited in Holsti (2004.)

[13] In some cases (involving, for example, various international treaties and certain uses of force) the preferences expressed by foreign policy decision makers in our data appear to be closer to the public's views than actual foreign policy was at the time. To the extent that this is true, our measures of "gaps" may <u>understate</u> differences between citizens' views and actual policy.

[14] The number of common leader-and-public survey questions varied from a high of 246 in 1974 to a low of 93 in 1986. To avoid distortions due to this variation, we have calculated the frequencies of opinion-policy agreement or disagreement in terms of <u>proportions</u> of the total number of common questions that were asked in a given year.

[15] Among our policy areas, questions about Diplomatic policies were asked most frequently, averaging 73 common items per year, followed by Defense policy (averaging 38 items) and Economic policy (28 items).

[16] "Don't know" responses are generally more common among the general public than among policymakers; it is necessary to exclude them in order to compare the views of those with opinions in each group. This exclusion, as well as the dichotomization of all items, is also necessary in order to obtain unique measures of percentage-point "gaps" between citizens and policymakers.

There is inevitably some arbitrariness in defining a minimum percentage point difference between citizens and policymakers that qualifies as a "disagreement." We selected a difference of 10 percentage points as the cutoff, partly because it would approximate a statistically significant level of difference if decision makers were treated as a random sample (the precise

level would depend on marginal frequencies and on the varying number of decision makers surveyed), but more importantly because the 10-percentage point figure seems to us to be real, notable, and substantively significant. We examined the effects of increasing the threshold by a few percentage points and found that it did not much alter our basic results. As Table 7.2 (below) indicates, most public/ policymaker disagreements were substantially larger than 10 points: 80% of them involved 15 percentage points or more, and 58% involved 20 points or more.

[17] Our argument that percentage point "gaps" generally matter even when majorities agree raises some complex technical issues. For one thing, it rests on the assumption that policy alternatives usually fall along a whole continuum of possibilities (for example, spending some exact amount of money between zero and $100 billion), rather than a simple yes/ no dichotomy. It also assumes that the citizens who pick a general survey response (e.g., that they "favor" foreign economic aid) have in mind some preferred amount of aid which would fall somewhere on the dollar continuum. But a precise translation from the percentage of Americans who "favor" foreign aid, to a dollar figure for how much the average citizen would favor spending, would be extremely difficult and would require considerably more knowledge about survey responses and underlying preferences than we have. To translate a percentage point gap between two groups into a difference in average preferred spending levels would require such knowledge about both groups.

[18] Jacobs and Page (2005, p.118) found indications of greater public influence on decision makers' preferences in the Economic realm than for other kinds of policies. But the same data reveal unusually sharp preference differences between business leaders and the public on Economic issues, so that moderate business influence on policy could translate into unusually big gaps.

[19] It is suggestive (though based on a small number of cases) that the sharpest observed divergence between policymakers and the public on economic foreign policy issues occurred in 1994, when Democrats controlled both Congress and the Presidency and Robert Rubin served as Secretary of the Treasury. Ferguson and Rogers (1986) and Ferguson (1995) argue that the Democratic Party, dependent on at least a modicum of corporate financial contributions, has come to favor pro-business international economic policies opposed by most working class Americans. Jacobs and Page (2005) offer quantitative evidence of generally greater influence by business than the public on U.S. foreign policy.

[20] It was apparently common for staffers, rather than decision makers themselves, to be interviewed for some or all of the CCFR surveys. We believe that staffers' responses generally reflect the views of those who hire, promote, and supervise them.

[21] The idea of democratic control through policymakers' "anticipated reactions" of voters' retrospective judgments or "electoral punishment" is an important one, with threads (but mostly underdeveloped threads) woven through many studies of democratic theory and/or public opinion: e.g., Key (1961) and Zaller (2003) on "latent opinion"; Page (1978, ch. 7); Fiorina (1981); Mansbridge (2003.)

[22] On electoral impacts of foreign policy, see Aldrich, Sullivan, and Borgida (1989.)

[23] On the ability of legislators to dodge policy accountability to their constituents see Fenno (1978, pp.136, 240-41), Mayhew (1974); Kingdon (1989); Jacobs and Shapiro (2000, ch.1); Arnold (1990.)

[24] On the foreign policy primacy of the U.S. president, see Wildavsky (1991); Silverstein (1997).

[25] The international relations literature related to a "bias in representation" or power of business includes Moravcsik (1997, p.530), Milner (1997); Gourevitch (1986); Rogowski (1989); Snyder

(1991); Frieden (1991); Grossman and Helpman (1994, 1995); Keohane and Milner (1996.) See also Ferguson (1995).

[26] Kull and Destler (1999.)

[27] Bouton (2004, pp.49-53) discusses the 2004 CCFR data on foreign policy leaders' misperceptions of public opinion.

[28] Jacobs and Page (2005) indicates that business leaders and experts have had much more influence on foreign policy decision makers than public opinion has.

[29] On the stability of collective opinion, see Page and Shapiro (1992, ch.2).

[30] On barriers against persuasion by presidents, see Jacobs (2002), Edwards (2003).

[31] An influential argument that public opinion is mainly shaped by elites is given in Zaller (1992).

[32] George (2002.)

[33] Results from White House polling can be found at the Lyndon Johnson Presidential Library in the files of Bill Moyers, Marvin Watson, and Fred Panzer. See Jacobs and Shapiro (1999).

[34] Records from the Lyndon Johnson Presidential Library: LBJ, Ex FG165, Memo to LBJ from J.Gardner, 12/19/66; LBJ, Kinter Papers, Box 7, Memo to LBJ from Robert Kinter, 5/30/66.

[35] Records from the Lyndon Johnson Presidential Library: LBJ, Panzer, Box 395, Memo to Redmon from Tad Cantril, 8/11/66 and Moyers, Box 12, Memo to Charles Roche from Redmon, 7/26/66; LBJ, Moyers, Box 12, Memo to Moyers from Redmon, 8/4/66; LBJ, Moyers, Box 12, Memo to Moyers from Redmon, 9/27/66.

ADDENDUM:

The Foreign Policy Disconnect:
What Americans Want from Our Leaders But Do Not Get

Benjamin I. Page   University of Chicago Press
with Marshall M. Bouton   September 2006

The Foreign Policy Disconnect shows that the makers of U.S. foreign policy often ignore the clearly expressed wishes of the American public. It argues that this makes our foreign policy less effective, less sustainable, and less democratic than it should be.

Evidence in the book, drawn from many national surveys conducted over a 30-year period, contradicts a good deal of conventional wisdom. Collective public opinion about foreign policy is not dangerously ignorant, unstable, or erratic; it is generally coherent, stable, and sensible. Individual Americans do not just express random, "door-step" opinions; they tend to organize their thinking into purposive belief systems, in which the foreign policy goals they seek and the international threats they perceive shape the policies they prefer. Seldom are opinions much divided by personal or social characteristics, ideology, or party affiliation; majorities in all groups generally agree.

The book paints a uniquely comprehensive portrait of the military, diplomatic, and economic foreign policies that Americans favor. Large majorities seek not only security from physical attack, but also security of domestic well being (particularly security of jobs and incomes) and justice for peoples abroad – including humanitarian foreign aid, especially for Africa. Large majorities favor cooperative, multilateral approaches rather than unilateral uses of force. Large majorities support international law and international organizations, especially the United Nations, and favor participating in several treaties and agreements that have been rejected in Washington.

Parallel surveys of leaders and the public show that the preferences of foreign policy decision makers often diverge sharply from what most Americans want. There have been many large gaps—perhaps a "disconnect"—between the two. Often these gaps result not from superior expertise among leaders, but from divergent values and interests over such matters as U.S. jobs and incomes. In such cases, the book argues, democracy calls for greater responsiveness to the public.