CHAPTER TWO

Preserving Public Support

Eisenhower and Dulles as Pragmatists

Both President Dwight D. Eisenhower and his secretary of state, John Foster Dulles, placed primary importance on sustaining public support for their policies in both the short and long term. Although they believed in creating foreign policies based on the demands of the national security interests at stake, they also knew that any successful policy required the public's support. According to the analysis of their beliefs, Eisenhower held the normative belief that public opinion should not influence his foreign policy choices and thought its role in policy formulation should be limited to being informed about the policy the government had selected. This view complements his practical belief that public support was necessary and was best achieved through elite leadership efforts. However, if he thought he could not lead the public on a particular policy, he would, as a final resort, adjust his policies to the limits of public acceptance. Whereas Dulles was willing to take guidance on basic foreign policy objectives from the public, his normative beliefs regarding other foreign policies suggest that he thought the government should choose the best policy based on its own determination of the national interest. Like Eisenhower, Dulles saw, in his practical beliefs, public support as a necessary component of foreign policy that could best be achieved through elite leadership efforts.

These beliefs identify both Eisenhower and Dulles as pragmatists. Although the variations in their beliefs affected their behavior in certain instances, the model predicts that both would act consistently with the *lead category* unless they regarded effective leadership as impossible. In these instances, public opinion would limit their actions consistent with the *constrain category*.

This chapter examines both Eisenhower's and Dulles's beliefs. In addition to the qualitative analysis, I discuss, as a construct validity check, the oral history recollections of individuals close to both men. Finally, I compare the predictions of behavior expected from these two individuals based on their beliefs with predictions from the realist and Wilsonian liberal models.

Public Opinion Beliefs: Eisenhower

Normative Beliefs

Eisenhower did not want input from public opinion to affect his formulation of policy. For this reason, he believed that the republican form of government, outlined in the U.S. Constitution, represented the best framework for governing the nation because it shielded decision makers, to a certain extent, from the whims of public opinion. For example, a memorandum of conversation records Eisenhower as opposing a change in the electoral college because it would move the United States "closer to a democracy & less of a republic. Right now you have a truly representative body here, with more responsibility. . . . We can't let just a popular majority sweep us in one direction, because then you can't recover."[1] In the formulation of policy, he was more concerned with long-term policy success than the initial public response to a policy. He feared that policymakers would lose sight of a policy's ultimate objectives if they became overly concerned with poll ratings or temporary reactions. As he observed to a friend,

> I think it is fair to say that, in this [current political and historical] situation only a leadership that is based on honesty of purpose, calmness and inexhaustible patience in conference and persuasion, and refusal to be diverted from basic principles can, in the long run, win out. I further believe that we must never lose sight of the ultimate objectives we are trying to attain. Immediate reaction is relatively unimportant—it is particularly unimportant if it affects only my own current standing in the

> popular polls. These are the principles by which I *try* to live. I regret that I so often fail.[2]

Eisenhower believed that the public's influence on policy should be mainly through the selection of qualified representatives at elections to make policy decisions without reference to public opinion. He had faith in the public's ability to make the correct choice at the ballot box. This faith was reflected in a private letter in which he wrote that he rejected the idea that the electoral decisions reached by "popular majorities" could not be trusted.[3] Outside elections, he felt comfortable circumscribing the influence of public opinion on issues about which the public might know little, such as national security matters. He argued at a July 1953 National Security Council (NSC) meeting that "members of the Administration gave the people guides as to policy every time they appeared in public. The Administration should take the public into its confidence where the public has to make decisions or form public opinion. However, we did not have to tell everything."[4] At another point, he noted, "We will get the best effect in reaching difficult decisions if our public is fully and properly informed—or that is achieved so far as it may be practicable to do" within the strictures of national security. Suggesting that public opinion was unqualified to affect foreign affairs, he continued,

> I believe that the rule to apply is, Can, with the facts, the American public actually make a decision in this particular point? Should they? And I think it is easy to see that if the subject is sufficiently professional or technical, there would be no possibility of a great electorate making a decision anyway.[5]

Instead of relying on public opinion as a basis for policy, Eisenhower felt he should first select policies without reference to their popularity and then, if possible, lead the public to support the policies he deemed appropriate. In a memorandum to top administration officials outlining the need for better public relations, he explained his philosophy:

> We have a task that is not unlike the advertising and sales activity of a great industrial organization. It is first necessary to have a good product to sell; next it is necessary to have an effective and persuasive way of informing the public of the excellence of that product.[6]

Eisenhower explained to a friend that he considered it the obligation of the president to "have the courage and the strength to stand up and tell

the truth and to keep repeating the truth regardless of vilification and abuse" until the people accepted the facts that drove the decision. Because of the four-year election cycle, he felt that the president had "a longer assured opportunity to teach an unpleasant fact" and convince the public of the veracity of his arguments. "On the other hand, we have a Congress in which the members must be selected every two years, and they are sensitive indeed to even transitory resentments in their several districts."[7]

Eisenhower's preferences in dealing with the public derived from his estimation of public opinion. The public's support of government policies during World War II signified to him that the public was "grown up" and capable of assuming the responsibilities associated with American action in the international sphere.[8] Even though he felt that the public would respond positively if fully informed, he believed the complex nature of foreign affairs and the information necessary to make a proper judgment made public opinion a poor guide for choosing a policy. He remained concerned that the public might not always stand behind the correct policy and could force the government to act imprudently. During a discussion of nuclear weapons at a May 1953 NSC meeting, the memorandum of conversation reported that Eisenhower concluded the following:

> It seemed to him at least possible that some action could occur that would force the Government's hand and cause us to resort to atomic bombardment. He noted that popular pressure had forced the Government's hand in the Spanish American War. Accordingly, though Secretary [of Defense Charles] Wilson was generally correct [that the United States would never be the first to use nuclear weapons in a conflict with the Soviets], he should not be so certain in view of the temper of the American people.[9]

Although Eisenhower thought that the public reacted responsibly to news during World War II, the rapidness with which the public lost interest in foreign affairs concerned him. He commented:

> Right after the World War the great cry was for demobilization. . . . Along with it we suffered a certain distaste for anything that smacked of war and therefore almost smacked of foreign news. . . . The local story assumed its ancient and traditional importance in our lives . . . hope was strong that peace was with us, and we felt that one subject that we could now ignore—and turn back to our more accustomed paths and pur-

> suits—was war, the foreign problems with which we were beset. . . . And then, one day we awoke with a great shock.[10]

He feared this tendency by the public could deprive the government of the support necessary for its conduct of foreign affairs. Eisenhower also worried that the public might not always sufficiently understand foreign affairs, since it, unlike government officials, lacked a sufficient background in military affairs to avoid confusion and misunderstandings concerning international relations.[11]

Given this ambivalence about public opinion, Eisenhower believed that government efforts to inform the public were necessary to head off potential problems. He confided to an associate that he tried to speak about foreign affairs a great deal because "Americans understand it less than anything else."[12] He felt that public opinion could be shaped to favor the administration's goals, arguing "that much of our so-called 'public opinion' is merely a reflection of some commentator's reports which, as you so well know, bear little relation to the truth. By the same token, I believe that public opinion based on such flimsy foundations can be changed rapidly."[13] Even so, he was shocked at the seeming futility of his efforts to inform the public on important matters, lamenting at one point the "almost complete lack of information the American people have on subjects we have talked about time and time again."[14]

In summary, Eisenhower had a fairly limited view of what it meant to have the public involved in the formulation of foreign policy. Although the public could cope with broad foreign policy questions, he believed that it would sometimes, if not often, fail to understand specific issues. Accordingly, the public should take an essentially passive role in policy formulation. In short, Eisenhower believed that the primary direction of influence in foreign policy formulation should be from the government to the public.

Practical Beliefs

Eisenhower thought that the influence of public opinion on his foreign policy choices should be minimal, but he did believe that the public's support of a foreign policy was necessary for it to succeed, especially concerning issues of major importance such as the broad purposes of American foreign policy and, in particular, national security policy. He commented, "I am not pleading . . . for some utopian state on which in every minor question complete unanimity of opinion and conviction will be achieved. I am talking merely about the basic purposes that our

country is trying to achieve in the world."[15] Related to his notions of a free government, he felt that an informed public was necessary for its proper functioning. At a May 1956 NSC meeting, he noted that the "first task was to educate the American people and Congress. The National Security Council could be as wise as so many Solomons and yet end in complete failure if we cannot convince the public and the Congress of the wisdom of our decisions."[16] On questions involving war, Eisenhower felt that public support was a prerequisite for any successful action, especially given the Korean War experience. Reflecting this concern at an August 1954 NSC meeting, the minutes report that Eisenhower commented:

> Since the Civil War there [has] been only one war in which the United States participated which . . . evoked continuous and vociferous criticism from the American public. This was the Korean war. The President thought that a democracy such as the United States could not be led into war unless public opinion so overwhelmingly favored war that a Congressional declaration of war was merely an automatic registering of public opinion. . . . The country would have to be behind any action taken by our military forces."[17]

Public opinion could also play a critical part in diplomatic relations. Eisenhower observed that "if we can show the world that [John Foster Dulles's] words and thoughts represent the words and thoughts of the mass of Americans, his capacity for serving us all would be greatly enhanced."[18] On both diplomatic and national security policy, he saw public support as critical to its successful implementation.

In large part because of this view, Eisenhower saw his primary responsibility as leading the public. An internal memorandum records that "he felt his big job was selling the people of America the things that they have for the best of all the people."[19] To achieve this goal, he believed that "anyone who accepts a position of responsibility must, by that very fact, exert the leadership required in that position."[20] Public information programs provided the linchpin in his strategy. He was quoted as defining public relations as "nothing in the world but getting ideas put out in such a way that your purpose is actually understood by all the people that need to understand it in order to get it done efficiently and well."[21] These efforts placed a premium on information, education, and the presentation of facts to the public through congressional speeches, press conferences, and, especially, presidential speeches.[22]

While emphasizing the necessity of leading the public, Eisenhower also perceived the limited ability of any leader to sway the public. He recognized "that as far as speaking goes, any one, including himself, has only so much credit in the bank—people get tired of him."[23] In a long letter to his former speech writer Emmet Hughes, Eisenhower argued that the government's responsibility was to focus mainly on the job of government and not to become overly concerned about public relations. A popular president could alter the public's view, but usually only by deeds, rather than words, and the public would support the policy once it succeeded. "Occasionally I must go on the air and let the people have direct knowledge of the important and comprehensive programs that are in the mill."[24]

In perhaps the clearest explication of his beliefs, Eisenhower wrote to a friend about how he reached foreign policy decisions:

> More and more I find myself . . . tending to strip each problem down to its simplest possible form. Having gotten the issue well defined in my mind, I try in the next step to determine what answer would best serve the *long term* advantage and welfare of the United States and the free world. I then consider the *immediate problem* and what solution can we get that will best conform to the long term interests of the country and at the same time *can command a sufficient approval in this country so as to secure the necessary Congressional action*.[25]

Eisenhower's practical beliefs centered on the need for the support of public opinion, which could usually be achieved through concerted efforts to lead and inform the people about the administration's policy. Despite the importance of public relations in his approach, he believed that most of his attention should be on constructing suitable policies. Policy came first, followed by efforts to lead and explain the chosen alternative to the public to gain its support. But Eisenhower did not rule out adjusting his policy to conform with public opinion if he concluded he could not generate public support. In short, Eisenhower felt that by making the correct decisions, taking the proper action, and defending these choices in the public sphere, he usually could gradually persuade the public to accept the policies he deemed necessary, even if the public did not initially accept them.

Eisenhower's normative beliefs—reflecting a desire to formulate foreign policy without input from public opinion—and practical beliefs—viewing public opinion as a necessary component of a successful foreign policy—are characteristic of the pragmatist belief orientation. Like

Eisenhower's, Dulles's beliefs also identify him as a pragmatist, but Dulles differed in two important respects. In his normative beliefs, Dulles thought that public opinion should guide the nation's broad foreign policy objectives. In his practical beliefs, he assumed that with given enough time, he could lead the public to support the policy he deemed best, but without enough time, he probably could not do so. Other than these important differences, the analysis of their beliefs suggests that they largely agreed on their approach to public opinion.

Public Opinion Beliefs: Dulles

Normative Beliefs

Dulles did not want public input to affect the government's foreign policy choices regarding anything but the nation's broad and long-term foreign policies.

> The fact that the American people historically have certain objectives is not, however, in itself a foreign policy. The task of the President and the Secretary of State is to find the ways to accomplish this basic objective of the American people. It is the ways whereby our government proposes to accomplish that result that constitute a foreign policy.[26]

While in office, in an extemporaneous and off-the-record speech to interest-group representatives (the groups are not clear from the documentation), Dulles emphasized the broad nature of information he desired from the public. He commented that much of his time in the State Department was spent on "day by day problems." However, regarding "long-range problems" and the ability to "look ahead," he noted that "we [in the State Department] don't believe that we have a monopoly of out-giving; we want to get that kind of enlightenment from you. I can assure you that when your organizations make constructive suggestions to us that they get serious attention and that that is the kind of thing which we welcome."[27]

Dulles thought that the general outlines of national policy would be determined mainly at election time. In particular, he felt that presidential elections gave the public the means to determine broad foreign policy goals, observing that "national elections give the opportunity to translate the public will into action."[28] Dulles spoke positively regarding public opinion and its ability to cope with these larger issues, believing that the American people "possessed to a high degree the ability to see clearly and to think straight."[29] At the time of his appointment as spe-

cial counsel to the State Department during the Truman administration, he observed, "In the past, the American people have always developed a unity of purpose which has enabled them to repel successfully the successive challenges which come inevitably to every nation."[30] At another time, he commented, "The American people have always responded, once it was made clear to them that a need was vital. Our greatest lapses have been due to the fact that those in authority have been afraid to trust the American people and have kept from them unpleasant truths."[31] At least on the large and vital issues, he felt that the public could be trusted to do the correct thing.

Dulles had less faith in public opinion on specific policies than on broad foreign policy objectives. He judged it necessary for the government to reach its own decisions in the creation of foreign policy and not be limited by concerns regarding public opinion, since he did not believe the public would always react reasonably. Dulles privately told an associate:

> I give great importance to public opinion but I can't abdicate to such opinion the leadership I feel I must exercise. My responsibility, under the President, is to choose and carry out foreign policies most likely to contribute to the security and advancement of the American people. I often have to make decisions before the state of public opinion can be ascertained, and often such decisions have to be based on circumstances so complicated that it's next to impossible for the majority of the people to understand them. In other words, you can't make foreign policy on the basis of public opinion polls.[32]

During a February 1957 NSC discussion about whether the government should give information to the public regarding the possible consequences of a nuclear attack, Dulles argued strongly that this sort of information should not be given to the American public because it would seriously limit the government's ability to formulate policy. The memorandum of the discussion records his saying:

> It was clear in [Dulles's] own mind that the Government ought never [to give this sort of information to the public]. We were here involved with a very dangerous and delicate problem which called for our best judgment. In the circumstances, we certainly could not carry out the program . . . without creating a mob psychology which would compel us against our better judgment to accept a dangerously faulty disarmament program or else to undertake a vast and costly shelter program. . . . Sec-

> retary Dulles insisted that we do not wish to incorporate this kind of information in the minds of our people.[33]

This hesitance concerning the public's opinion of specific policies resulted from several defects in public opinion that Dulles thought could harm the formulation of policy. He decided that the public was not able to identify improper leadership and could be misled by this wrongheaded guidance.[34] This problem could be aggravated by the possibility that the public could develop a "mob psychology" if it became too aroused and that many foreign policy issues were too complicated for the public to understand. The public, he felt, could become too fixated on immediate results, making it difficult to maintain a consistent foreign policy. He remarked that "one of the weaknesses perhaps of the American people is that we want things to happen very quickly, and if they don't happen very quickly we become disappointed and turn away and try something else."[35] Although Dulles's overall view of public opinion was positive, he conceded that an uninformed or misguided public could suffer from problems at either of two extremes: it could be either too committed and adamant about a policy, regardless of its value, or too focused on short-term success.

In sum, Dulles felt that public opinion should play a role in policy formulation and believed that government leaders should try to achieve the public's basic foreign policy objectives. However, on specific policies, he deemed it acceptable to pursue the correct policy despite the public's preferences.

Practical Beliefs

Dulles believed that a successful foreign policy required public support. For example, he observed early in the Eisenhower administration:

> Under our form of society, foreign policy is not a matter just for diplomats, however astute they may be. Foreign policies to be successful must be understood and supported by the people. And I have stated that it will be my purpose, as far as it is possible, to see to it that our foreign policies are simple, so that they can be understood; that they are made public, so that the people will have a chance to understand them.[36]

In a private conversation with an associate, he linked the necessity of domestic support with a foreign policy's international success:

> There's no question that we need public support for our foreign policies. We can't get too far ahead of public opinion, and we must do everything

> we can to bring it along with us. Any United States foreign policy, to be effective, has to have a compelling majority of American public opinion behind it. Other nations are more inclined to listen to proposals or objections from the President and me if they know that the American people are thoroughly behind us. They are more inclined to hold back if they know the American public is divided.[37]

To gain this support, he wanted to

> make radio and television talks to the American people in an effort to bring them to feel that we really wanted them to know what was in our minds so that we could have a full exchange of thoughts and we could have the popular backing which is indispensable in our representative form of government.[38]

At the beginning of the Cold War, Dulles was particularly troubled by the possibility of disunity, especially as it affected American power:

> Power is not merely the existence of material power, whether it be in terms of weapons or goods. It includes unity of purpose, without which material things cannot be geared into an effective program. The United States still has great potential power but it is not effective power if its use is paralyzed by internal divisions, by distrusts, and by political rivalries. . . . Internal disunity always means ineffectual foreign policies.[39]

If disunity reigned, then the United States could not act decisively, thereby undercutting American leadership, whereas a united foreign policy held the possibility of enhancing American leadership.

Dulles sensed no contradiction between the necessities of policy and the requirement of public support. In fact, he saw the ever-changing machinations of power politics as both undesirable and unworkable in the United States.

> It is quite impractical for the United States to operate on a "freewheeling" basis in the field of foreign affairs. In a democracy like ours foreign policy must be understood by the people and supported by the people. We have had during these postwar years a foreign policy which has on the whole been successful, and which has had bipartisan support, whenever it was a policy that was understood and approved by our people. But the American people could never understand and put their weight behind a foreign policy which was erratic and, indeed, shifty in character. They cannot be led in devious and unpredictable paths by a govern-

> ment which chooses to operate on the basis of day-to-day expediency rather than of principle.[40]

Because public support was necessary, Dulles considered it vital to prepare public opinion and lead it to support a policy before implementing it. This requirement meant the United States would often move slowly because of the necessity for a "prolonged" preparation of public opinion before acting.[41]

To achieve this support, he sought consistent public information efforts. In a private letter regarding his concern for public opinion during his pre-Eisenhower government service, Dulles explained,

> Whenever I have been at meetings either of the Council of Foreign Ministers or of the U.N. I have, on my return, always made a report to the public. . . . This has both informed the public and invited public discussion, and afforded interested individuals an opportunity to exert an intelligent influence.[42]

Even so, as discussed earlier, Dulles remained prepared to withhold information from the public if the situation warranted it, in his judgment.

Dulles's practical beliefs concerning public opinion revolved around the need for the public's support. Any sizable public disagreement on the fundamentals of foreign policy would necessarily lead to difficulties. In addition, on specific actions, he did not feel comfortable acting quickly without public support. To gain the necessary support in these situations, he felt that a certain amount of time was necessary to prepare the public to accept the government's policy, and he believed that the best way to ensure the public's support of foreign policy was to inform it simply and clearly. In sum, Dulles believed that the government should use its best judgment to formulate foreign policy, consistent with the public's basic objectives, and to inform the public about this policy to obtain its acceptance. These beliefs are consistent with the pragmatist beliefs orientation.

Validity

Oral history recollections by people who knew Eisenhower and Dulles allow a validity test of the qualitative content analysis. Examining how those close to these two decision makers believed that Eisenhower and Dulles saw public opinion, confirmed the qualitative content analysis.

White House Press Secretary James Hagerty noted that Eisenhower did not use polls to guide policy:

> Most of the time [Eisenhower] would say, in effect, "Well, that may be so but I'm going to do what I think is right." Now, if the polls agreed with what he was doing, well and good. If they didn't, it didn't make the slightest bit of difference in what he thought was best for the nation or the world on whatever he was proposing.[43]

Even though he valued public support, the oral histories demonstrate that Eisenhower felt he should decide on policy based on other factors and then generate support for the proper policy by leading the public. The president's brother, Milton Eisenhower, compared Dwight Eisenhower's views with those of other presidents:

> I worked for eight [presidents]. The effect on the vote is always so important. As a matter of fact in Washington today the reason we don't solve our problems is because everybody is voting for what will get him reelected rather than for what is right. He [President Eisenhower] was never that way. If an essential policy or decision happened to have a bad political effect, too damn bad. But he really had enough confidence in the American people that he believed that they would accept the truth and then act wisely.[44]

Arthur Larson, who served as special assistant to the president, agreed with this assessment.

> Eisenhower could be said to be a man who made his decisions on the basis of principle rather than politics. . . . I've always said that Eisenhower was completely nonpolitical in the sense that in the scale of motivations for a decision, political advantage, the effect on votes and so forth, was not only low on the list, it was absolutely non-existent. If you wanted to get thrown out of the Oval Room, all you had to say is, "Look, Mr. President, this is going to cost you votes in West Virginia." Well, you wouldn't get past "West"—you'd be out.[45]

Andrew Goodpaster, who was Eisenhower's staff secretary and close associate, echoed this assessment and described Eisenhower as feeling strongly about the need to lead public opinion to support his policies. He recalled that Eisenhower "recognized that there was a great leadership responsibility in forming and advising public opinion, particularly in difficult areas removed from their own experience, such as foreign affairs and military activity."[46]

> I think that [Eisenhower] saw [the office of president] as the crucial place in government for the consideration, as he put it, of what's good for America—from the standpoint of what's good for America, insofar as the government was concerned. And then came the responsibility of trying to bring that about, working through the Congress, working directly with the people. . . . On occasion [Eisenhower] would see in addition to trying to lead public opinion, or have a role in forming public opinion, that it would be his task to create public interest in some topic that was of deep importance.[47]

The director of the Office of Defense Mobilization and a member of the National Security Council, Arthur Flemming, confirmed the notion that Eisenhower cared deeply about public support. Flemming found Eisenhower's reaction to the British, French, and Israeli seizure of the Suez Canal representative of his views concerning public opinion. He recalled that Eisenhower said:

> "I don't understand why they've done it. . . . To my knowledge this is the first time that a nation resting on a democratic foundation has committed its forces without the support of its people. . . . It won't work." [Flemming added,] The support of the people was at the center of his thinking, the center of his administration whether dealing with foreign policy or dealing with domestic policy. He recognized that under a democracy you had to work to get the support of a bill. I don't mean by that that he was just sitting around waiting to see whether or not a particular policy had the support of the people but he had the feeling that if he was going to get any place with a policy in which he believed that one of the things he had to do was to work on getting the support of the people.[48]

The oral history accounts portray Eisenhower as feeling that he should not follow public opinion but instead should determine the best policy for the nation. After he decided on a policy, he believed that he should gain the necessary public support by vigorous leadership efforts. In sum, the views of those close to Eisenhower largely echo the findings of the qualitative content analysis.

Oral history accounts of Dulles's beliefs also support the qualitative content analysis. These recollections identify Dulles as interested in public opinion, but not in terms of seeking guidance for policy. Former Vice President Richard Nixon agreed that Dulles strongly felt the need to lead the public:

> Dulles knew that you had to win politically in order to have your policies go through. . . . Some political leaders in the decision making process would put their finger in the air and say, what do the people want. Dulles never believed in decision-making by Gallup Poll. Dulles on the other hand, having decided what ought to be done, then wanted to check the Gallup Poll to see what was possible, and then he believed in educating the people and bringing them along to what ought to be done. He often said to me that that was the job of a statesman, never to find out what public opinion was, he said—"After all, you don't take a Gallup Poll to find out what you ought to do in Nepal. Most people don't know where Nepal is, let alone, most Congressmen and Senators. But what you do is to determine what policy should be, and then if there's a controversy and if there's a need for public understanding, you educate the public."[49]

The former assistant secretary of state for public affairs, Andrew Berding, reported that Dulles read State Department analyses of public opinion in the form of

> newspaper editorials, the columns of something like thirty columnists, as I recall it, also public statements by leading figures, statements made in Congress, occasionally letters by outstanding people to the editors, resolutions passed by national organizations, and the like. A compendium of all that, and an analysis of all that, was made and submitted to him on different aspects of American foreign policy.[50]

The special assistant to the secretary of state (among other positions), William Butts Macomber, reported that Dulles used polls to determine whether public opposition was building against a policy. Macomber recalled that Dulles would pay attention to polls

> if he thought that the US polls were indicating that public concern and opposition were building up against some policy or action he thought was awfully important. Then, you can be sure, he would look at those polls, and he would chart out some kind of a campaign to persuade people that what he was doing was right. So he used them as warning signs.[51]

The oral histories also confirm Dulles's recognition that the public's support of policy was necessary for a successful foreign policy. The director of the policy-planning staff of the State Department, Robert Bowie, explained,

> I think, also, he felt very strongly that it was important to carry along public opinion with foreign policy and that the Secretary had a respon-

> sibility for trying to fulfill that role, too. He was deeply concerned I think, at all times, with the fear that the democratic opinion might be misled or might be too easily tempted to let down and drop its guard or to cease to support the necessary measures.[52]

Macomber echoed these sentiments and noted that Dulles was more concerned with potential opposition:

> [Dulles] told me once that to have a successful policy you don't really have to mobilize over fifty per cent of the people behind you. But it will not be a successful policy if at any time over fifty per cent of the people of this country are against it. . . . So he worked very hard on explaining to the public why he was for something. He wasn't trying to get a huge majority behind him, but he always thought that no policy—no matter how good it was intrinsically—was going to work if over fifty per cent of the country was opposed to it. So he worked very hard to explain his policies in a way that would prevent a build up of opposition to the point where they would be overcome and shot down.[53]

As argued in the qualitative content analysis, the information given to the public played a critical role in Dulles's conception of how to avoid a loss of support. Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs Carl McCardle reports that Dulles saw one of his duties as secretary of state as "holding press conferences and keeping the people informed."[54] Special Assistant to the Secretary of State Roderic O'Connor also emphasized this point, stating, "There's no question in my mind but that [Dulles] felt that his relations with the press and keeping people informed was an extremely important part of his mission. . . . And he [gave a large number of press conferences] because he thought it was essential that people be kept informed about what he was doing."[55]

The oral histories portray Dulles as being very concerned about public support, especially potential public opposition. They support the qualitative content analysis's conclusion that even though he believed public support to be important, he did not believe in determining policy based on what would be popular. These reports also indicate that to gain public support and avoid opposition, he considered the best action to be to lead public opinion by explaining the policy.

Predictions

This qualitative content analysis suggests a range of predictions for Eisenhower's and Dulles's behavior which, taken as a whole, present a

pattern of expected reactions to public opinion different from that of the realist or Wilsonian liberal models. Eisenhower's beliefs corresponded most closely to a desire to lead the public. In his decision making, he would have attempted to formulate the best policy and then tried to convince the public of the value of that approach (assuming that he thought that the public would respond to his leadership). The role of public opinion in his behavior, in general, will likely be captured by the *lead category*. However, public opinion could constrain Eisenhower if he felt that he could not generate public support for his policy. He might have then adjusted his policy to fall within the acceptable range of public opinion. This influence would be particularly pronounced if the decision concerned involvement in war, because he saw public backing as necessary before engaging in military action. In these cases, the *constrain category* will probably describe his behavior. He would not have followed public opinion because of his view that the public was often uninformed about the critical details of policy. But he would not have ignored public opinion, either, since he felt that the public's support of foreign policy was too important to be taken for granted. Therefore, the *follow and no-impact categories* will not be indicative of Eisenhower's decision-making behavior.

These expectations, combined with the decision context variable, suggest predictions of behavior in particular situations. To the extent that the crisis and reflexive cases entailed the use of force, Eisenhower would have searched for other alternatives if he perceived the public was unsupportive. Under these circumstances, the *constrain category* would best capture Eisenhower's decision making. If public support was not problematic, then the *lead category* would be expected. In the innovative and deliberative cases, the *lead category* will likely best describe Eisenhower's behavior. In any of these cases, Eisenhower would likely act consistently with the *constrain category* if he found the public's opposition to his preferred policy to be unmovable.

Dulles's general beliefs also suggest he would have acted according to the *lead category*. He believed that the government should formulate policy first and then generate public support. If he did not see public opinion as a problem, he would have attempted to discern and implement the best policy from a national security standpoint. If he perceived that the public might be divided over the government's policy, Dulles would have reacted in one of two ways. If he had adequate time to educate the public, he would have pursued vigorous leadership efforts and/or stretched out the policy's implementation to generate public support for the policy as outlined in the *lead category*. If he thought that

the public might remain divided or there was not enough time to lead the public, he would have adjusted his policy recommendations to meet what the public would accept, as described by the *constrain category*. In addition, as found in his normative beliefs, Dulles expressed a willingness to consider the public's input on broad foreign policy objectives, especially as represented in electoral outcomes. In decisions involving these questions, he might have reacted to public opinion by either attempting to achieve the public's expressed goals, in accordance with the *follow category*, or at least by being limited by them, in accordance with the *constrain category*. In this sense, decisions involving broad foreign policy objectives are an exception to these predictions based on Dulles's pragmatist beliefs (since he would be acting much like a delegate). Except in this case, the *follow category* would not characterize his decision making. In addition, his concern for gaining public support of policy suggests that he would not have ignored public opinion, which rules out the *no-impact category*.

As with Eisenhower, combining the implications of the beliefs and context variables results in situational predictions. Dulles emphasized the need to have time to prepare the public adequately for the government's actions (allowing the government to lead on policy). The lack of time and need for preparation would be most pressing in a crisis context, given the short decision time and surprise. Thus the *constrain category* would likely describe Dulles's actions in a crisis context (assuming that he saw no immediate way of preparing the public for possible government action). Because of his concern with informing the public if the time allowed, Dulles would have acted consistently with the *lead category* in the reflexive, innovative, and deliberative contexts. The anticipation in the reflexive context and the long decision time in the innovative and deliberative contexts would have given him the time he believed necessary to lead public opinion. If a question arose concerning the broad objectives of American foreign policy, Dulles would have been affected by public opinion, as described in the *follow* or *constrain categories*.

Table 2.1 summarizes these predictions for both Eisenhower and Dulles, along with the decision contexts and cases examined. For comparison purposes, this chart also reports the predictions of the realists and Wilsonian liberals presented in chapter 1.

As the table indicates, in crises, the predictions based on beliefs largely agree with the Wilsonian liberal predictions. For reflexive cases, the beliefs predictions suggest that Eisenhower would have acted as the

TABLE 2.1 **Prediction Comparisons**

Situation (all high threat)	**Case**	**Realist**	**Wilsonian Liberal**	**Beliefs**
Crisis short time/ surprise	Formosa Straits, 1954	No Impact/ *Lead*	Constrain	DDE: Constrain/ *Lead* JFD: Constrain
Reflexive short time/ anticipation	Dien Bien Phu, 1954	Lead	Constrain	DDE: Constrain/ *Lead* JFD: Lead
Innovative long time/ surprise	Sputnik, 1957–58	Lead	Follow	DDE: Lead/ *Constrain* JFD: Lead
Deliberative long time/ anticipation	New Look, 1953–54	Lead/ *Constrain*	Follow	DDE: Lead/ *Constrain* JFD: Lead/*Follow on broad foreign policy*

Note: Italics indicate conditional predictions.

Wilsonian liberals describe and Dulles would have acted more as the realists predict. For the innovative and deliberative cases, both decision makers are predicted to act more consistently with realist views, except for Dulles on broad foreign policy questions. In the next four chapters, these contexts are considered in reference to the expectations of each of these models.