

*Conclusions and Implications
for Theory and Practice*

Beliefs about public opinion help determine how leaders respond to public opinion when formulating foreign policy. Some individuals' views make them relatively open to considering public opinion when confronting threats to a nation's security. Other leaders' beliefs cause them to ignore public opinion when making decisions about similar issues. Some decision makers also have a more mixed perspective on public opinion, which results in behavior that lies in the middle on a continuum between responding to or ignoring public preferences. Individual beliefs about the role of public opinion in foreign policymaking interact with the prevailing decision context to determine the public's influence on policy outcomes on any given issue. As both the time to make a decision and the anticipated state of public opinion shift, the public's influence on the decisions of leaders with different beliefs orientations changes in a predictable manner. This perspective suggests that even though the public can significantly shape and alter foreign policy choices, its influence is highly dependent on the interaction between the leader's beliefs and the decision context.

This concluding chapter evaluates the findings of the analysis of a series of cases spanning several presidential administrations and their relevance to several areas of research. This examination suggests that even though the influence of public opinion can vary considerably from

case to case and from president to president, it does so in a largely predictable manner based on the interaction between an individual's sensitivity to public opinion (as represented by his or her beliefs) and the conditions under which the decision is made.

First, I consider the pattern of the public's influence in reference to the expectations of the realist, Wilsonian liberal, and beliefs models. Although the realist and Wilsonian models account for some outcomes, the pattern of public influence most closely follows the outcome expected by the beliefs model.

Second, I discuss the information the presidents possessed about public opinion as they made their decisions and the type of information to which they reacted. As I indicated earlier, even though the presidents had a large amount of information about public opinion, its influence, surprisingly, was felt mostly through their anticipation of how the public would respond at some future time.

Third, I look at the influence of public opinion across the different decision stages. Unlike previous work suggesting that the public affected policy mainly in the early stages of policy development, my analysis unexpectedly found that public opinion influenced decisions much later in the process.

Fourth, I outline several caveats to the findings, including those conditions that might alter the public's influence.

Finally, I explore the implications of these findings for several areas of research, including democratic theories of policy choice, the domestic sources of international relations, the public opinion and foreign policy literature, and American security policy after the Cold War.

Findings

The Influence of Public Opinion

The public's influence varied across presidents and decision contexts, suggesting that public opinion has no single pattern of influence on policy. In the crisis cases, and the Eisenhower reflexive case, public opinion either had no impact or acted as a constraint on the range of acceptable policy alternatives. This variation in influence in itself is not surprising, since the realist and Wilsonian liberal models predicted both types of influence. What is surprising is that neither a lack of influence nor a constraint on policy consistently dominated the type of influence that public opinion had on short decision-time cases. As discussed later, the beliefs model of the public's influence best explained the pattern of variation.

As the decision time lengthened, the influence of public opinion did not necessarily become stronger. Instead, efforts to lead the public became more evident across all decision makers, although constraining and following influences still were apparent for some presidents. Presidents tended to have more information about the public's preferences in these cases, but they used this information largely to formulate information programs to persuade the public to support their policy approach. As with the short-term cases, even though the influence of public opinion complied with either the realist or Wilsonian liberal models, neither approach fully accounted for the pattern of influence.

The pattern of the public's influence can be *generally* described as either no-impact or constraint during crises and elite efforts to lead public opinion on longer-term decisions. However, this pattern is highly contingent on the beliefs of the individuals in power. Compared with the realist and Wilsonian liberal models, the pattern of the public's influence suggests that the beliefs model best explains public opinion's influence on policy and how presidents tried to educate the public about their policies. The beliefs model accurately explains the influence of public opinion under high-threat conditions regarding national security decisions, but it will not necessarily have the same explanatory strength in other conditions. How changing conditions alter the influence of beliefs on presidential decisions is discussed later. Table 10.1 provides a graphical presentation of the accuracy of the predictions generated from each of the perspectives based on the data and results in chapters 3 to 6 and 8 to 9.

Realists believe that decision makers either ignore public opinion or, if allowed a longer time to act, lead the public to support their position. As table 10.1 shows, the realist perspective accounts for a nontrivial number of the decisions, especially those in the Reagan and Bush cases. Reagan largely ignored public opinion in the face of strong public pressure to withdraw the marines from Lebanon and did not consider public opinion in formulating the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI). Bush slightly adjusted the timing of his Gulf War policies in response to concerns about public support but mainly focused on the imperatives of national security, and he relied on the demands of diplomacy during the German reunification decisions. However, for other decision makers, the predictive power of the realist model diminished considerably. This model had a decidedly mixed predictive capability for Eisenhower, accounting for his choices in the deliberative case but performing less well when the cases included less decision time—exactly the opposite of

TABLE 10.1 Comparison of Model Predictions

President	Case	Realism	Wilsonian Liberalism	Beliefs Model
Eisenhower	Formosa Straits	-	+	DDE + JFD +
	Dien Bien Phu	+/-	+/-	DDE + JFD +
	<i>Sputnik</i>	+/-	+/-	DDE +/- JFD +
	New Look	+	-	DDE + JFD +
Carter	Afghanistan	+/-	+/-	+
	Panama Canal Treaty	+/-	-	+
Reagan	Beirut	+	-	+
	SDI	+	-	+
Bush	Gulf War	+	-	+
	German Reunification	+	-	+
Clinton	Somalia	-	+	+
	Bosnia	-	+/-	+

Notes: + = Confirms the perspective's prediction of the decision process and choice.

- = Disconfirms the perspective's prediction of the process and choice.

+/- = Mixed evidence on the perspective's prediction of the decision process and choice.

DDE = Dwight D. Eisenhower JFD = John Foster Dulles

Source: Table format adapted from Thomas Risse-Kappen, *Cooperation Among Democracies* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 203.

realist expectations. Even though the realist model could anticipate Carter's policy choices, it did not accurately predict *how* Carter considered public opinion when reaching his decision. The realist model also did not account well for Clinton's decisions in either of the two cases. In sum, the realist model had decidedly mixed results across the range of cases examined in this study and could fully account for the process and influence of public opinion in only five of the twelve cases. Because I selected cases that would favor the realist view, these mixed results challenge the realist model of the public's influence.

Realism may accurately predict the influence of public opinion in several of the cases, but this model does not explain the dynamics of the policy process. Realists contend that decision makers simply lack rele-

vant information about public opinion on many of the issues about which they need to make decisions and that the public reacts emotionally to foreign policy questions. In addition, some of the crisis literature suggests that policymakers are not able to consider public opinion because either the public has not developed policy preferences or these preferences cannot be communicated to the government with sufficient speed during crises.¹

In contrast, a lack of information about public opinion did not hinder its integration into the decision process for any of the crises examined. Instead, decision makers tended to use their information and impressions about public opinion—even those that did not directly relate to the policy issue at hand—as the basis for their decisions *when they decided to integrate public opinion into their calculations*. In all cases, if policymakers were interested in public opinion, they tended to rely on their anticipation of how the public would eventually respond, even when the actual information about public opinion was available. When decision makers ignored public opinion—as Reagan did regarding the Lebanon decision—they did not ignore it because they lacked relevant information about the public's preferences.

Despite a few exceptions in the cases examined here, the public did not react in what could be characterized as an emotional manner to the foreign policy issues considered. Although the public might be accused of emotionally opposing the Panama Canal treaty and favoring the promise of a nuclear defense in the SDI case, its views agreed with significant segments of elite opinion. In addition, the *Sputnik* case is often considered a prime example in which the public reacted emotionally to a newly revealed threat. However, as the public opinion data presented in chapter 5 demonstrate, the public generally adopted Eisenhower's restrained view, at least initially, until the barrage of information from the media and other elites shifted its view. The evidence from the cases show that the public's attitude toward these foreign policy issues was quite restrained.²

The Wilsonian liberal model did not perform as well as the realist model across the range of cases (see table 10.1). Although it accurately accounted for the constraining influence of public opinion on Eisenhower's and Clinton's crisis decisions, as the time for a decision lengthened, the accuracy of its predictions dropped considerably. Other than the partially accurate predictions of Eisenhower's response to public opinion after *Sputnik* was launched, Carter's attention to public opinion in the Panama Canal case, and Clinton's following public opinion about the

need to “do something” about Bosnia, the Wilsonian liberal model does not explain the decisions or processes of any of the long-term decisions, especially Eisenhower’s development of the New Look, Reagan’s development of SDI, and Bush’s handling of German reunification. This pattern of influence indicates that the Wilsonian liberal model fully explains public opinion’s influence in only two of the twelve cases examined.

The Wilsonian liberal model also did not do well in predicting the process of the public’s influence. Public opinion only rarely served as a source of policy innovation, information, or direction, with the exception of Dulles’s reaction in the New Look and Clinton’s reaction to Bosnia. More often, when public opinion did affect policy, it did so as a policy restraint by limiting the range of policy actions that decision makers saw as viable. Those policymakers who considered public opinion mostly used it either to avoid public opposition or to generate public support for a policy rather than to implement what the public wanted. In cases in which decision makers did follow public opinion (*Sputnik*, Bosnia), they reacted more from fear of public retribution than an attempt to incorporate the public’s preferences. In general, decision makers were constrained by public opinion when they felt they could not lead it and acted to lead the public when they sensed they could. A policymaker’s analysis of which of the conditions prevailed at a particular time depended greatly on that person’s sensitivity to public opinion, perception of the opinion context, and anticipation of the public’s view.

These cases partially support the realist and Wilsonian liberal models, but decision maker’s beliefs about the role of public opinion in foreign policy formulation primarily determined its degree of influence. The beliefs model suggests that an individual’s normative beliefs about the desirability of the public’s influencing foreign policy decisions and practical beliefs about the necessity of public support for a policy to succeed largely define the range of influence that public opinion will have on that person’s choices. As indicated in table 10.1, these beliefs affected the public’s influence in all twelve cases. In the one mixed case (the *Sputnik* case), even though Eisenhower tried to act consistently with his beliefs in not responding to public opinion, he did reluctantly react to public opinion when his continued strong stance against increased spending threatened to undermine support for his administration. Otherwise, across several decision contexts and presidents, the beliefs model more accurately accounted for both when and how public opinion entered the policy formulation process than did either the realist or the Wilsonian liberal perspectives.

The beliefs model suggested several orientations toward public opinion. The example of a delegate, who favors the public's input and thinks its support is necessary for a policy to succeed, was provided by Bill Clinton. In both the Somalia and Bosnia cases, he reacted to public opinion and swiftly adjusted his policies in light of public preferences. These reactions were directed at how he anticipated the public would eventually respond to his policies; thus public opinion was an important policy determinant.

The example of an executor, who favors public input but thinks its support is unnecessary, was provided by Jimmy Carter. Executors are expected to consider public opinion early in policy formulation and may be influenced by it if the public's view is a convincing one. However, because executors do not think that public support is necessary, they may ignore it if they strongly disagree with the public's view. In both the Afghanistan and Panama Canal cases, Carter considered the public's view but did not respond to it in his final policy, since he had firm positions on both issues.

Guardians reject both public input and the necessity of public support and are expected to base their decisions on their conceptions of the national interest rather than public opinion. Ronald Reagan provided the example of this type of orientation in both the Beirut and SDI cases. In both instances, he rejected public opinion as a reason to choose a particular policy and largely relied on his own conception of the national interest.

Finally, pragmatists, who see public input as undesirable but believe the public's support is necessary, are expected to base their decisions on national security and then lead the public to support their policies. If they do not think they can win the public's support, they will be swayed by the public. Because this study includes three pragmatists who varied in their assessment of a leader's ability to change public opinion, it illustrates how this variation affected their behavior. These three pragmatists believed they needed the public's support and were at times reined in by "unmalleable" public opinion. Their views of which opinions were malleable and which were not depended on their beliefs about the effectiveness of leadership efforts.

Of the pragmatists examined, Eisenhower had the least confidence in a leader's ability to sway the public. In several cases, when faced with public opposition, his mind was swiftly changed by public opinion. Dulles, who thought that elites could lead the public if given enough time, was influenced by the public only when he was surprised by the

issue and had a short time to make a decision, as in the offshore islands case. Bush, who assumed that the public would largely support the policy he chose, based his decisions on national security in the Gulf War and German reunification cases. Because of his beliefs, he acted to lead the public only as an afterthought. In the one instance in which he assumed he could not lead the public (if the Gulf War became a protracted conflict, he thought the public would irretrievably oppose the policy), public opinion limited his decision. In all these cases, the president's orientation toward public opinion explains his reaction to public opinion.

The influence of beliefs also affected how the presidents attempted to generate support for the policies they selected. All tried to win support for their policies, but how they did so and how they thought about it were affected by their beliefs. Clinton, a delegate, thought about educating the public about his policies, an action that he conceived of as showing the public how his policies aligned with the public's preferences. Carter, an executor, considered public opinion when formulating policy but viewed it instrumentally when trying to implement it. He tried to generate public support only when it became necessary to influence other actors, such as Congress. Eisenhower and Bush, both pragmatists, focused their leadership efforts on saying the things they thought would persuade the public to support their policies. For example, Eisenhower made sure to frame his New Look policy as increasing security rather than as reducing costs because he thought the public would respond better to the former. Bush pondered several ways of persuading the public to support the Gulf War before deciding on nuclear weapons proliferation as a justification. Finally, Reagan, a guardian, attempted to lead the public only by referring to the national interests at stake in an issue. In essence, even though they all may have taken actions that could be broadly characterized as leading the public, the substance of their approach and their conception of their efforts varied according to their beliefs.

The realist and Wilsonian liberal views suggest that conditions in the international (in the case of the realists) or domestic (in the case of the Wilsonian liberals) environments create pressures on decision makers that cause them to behave uniformly in reaction to public opinion under the same circumstances. The findings in this book dispute these assessments. Instead, people are likely to react to the same information differently depending on their beliefs. Although the realist and Wilsonian liberal approaches maintain that knowing the decision context is

sufficient to ascertain the influence of public opinion on policy formulation, the findings here demonstrate that though this may be a necessary condition to understand the public's influence, it is not enough. These models are correct in pointing to the decision context as an important factor in determining the public's influence, but they incorrectly diagnose the process and influence of public opinion, since they leave out a central component in determining the public's influence. The combined beliefs and decision context view does, however, accurately explain the influence of public opinion on policy. In sum, the beliefs model largely accounts for the influence of public opinion in situations marked by a high threat to important values in which national security considerations predominate.

Information, Decision Context, and Linkage Processes

The conventional wisdom is that policymakers have relatively little information about public opinion in crisis contexts. Except for Reagan's Lebanon case, when polling data were available from a survey in the field at the time of the Beirut bombing, polling did not affect the policies selected. Even in the Reagan case and even though his advisers placed great importance on the polling information, Reagan ignored it. The paucity of polling data as they selected a policy affected presidents in different ways. Some presidents turned to other indicators of public opinion. In the Somalia case, Clinton relied on members of Congress and their reactions to phone calls from constituents as evidence of the rising tide of public opposition. In the offshore islands case, Eisenhower used earlier information he had gathered about public opinion in deciding on American policy for the East Asian region. But Carter after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and Bush in the Gulf War made their decisions without any particular information about the public's views and relied on how they expected the public to respond. The polls did, however, affect how some presidents led and explained policy to the public once they reached a decision. This effect was clearest in Bush's Gulf War case.

In the longer decision-time cases, more information about public opinion was available to policymakers. Although they reacted differently to it, both Carter on the Panama Canal treaty and Clinton on Bosnia paid a great deal of attention to the polls when forming their policies. In implementing the New Look, Eisenhower commissioned an informal survey of newspaper editors to assess the extent of public support for his new emphasis on air and nuclear strike power. Bush clearly was aware of

public sentiment on the issue of German reunification and his administration's approach to the Soviets. Interestingly, he regarded public opinion as sending a mixed message, depending on the source. On the one hand, he felt that elite and editorial opinion was pressing him to take dramatic action. But on the other hand, based on his private polling results, he thought that the public favored his slow and determined approach to the changes in Soviet policy. Unlike other presidents, Reagan had no specific information about public opinion on SDI, although the growing nuclear freeze movement probably confirmed in his mind that the public might view a change in policy favorably.

The information about public opinion on which these policymakers relied came from several sources (e.g., letters, congressional opinion, polls). The polls were only one source of information, and the decision makers (e.g., Eisenhower, Carter, Clinton) who wanted information about public opinion turned to other places as well. As discussed later in reference to anticipated opinion, a lack of information did not prevent decision makers from integrating public preferences into the decision process. In fact, available information about public opinion is not a strong determining factor in the influence of public opinion on foreign policy. For example, in one case in which decision makers had a great deal of information about public opinion when reaching a decision (Reagan on Lebanon), the president largely ignored it. This behavior contrasts with decisions by Eisenhower, Carter, and Clinton, who had relatively less information about the public's reaction but still incorporated it into their deliberations. In essence, if the president believed that public opinion should be an integral part of his choice, anticipated public preferences became a part of the calculation, regardless of the amount of information he had about public opinion.

For the most part, when public opinion affected policy choices, it was because the president feared losing the public's support of either the policy or the administration, and this fear was contingent on the decision maker's beliefs orientation. In only a few instances did a policymaker decide to pursue a policy because he felt that the public wanted it (Eisenhower after *Sputnik*, Clinton on Bosnia). Instead, presidents mostly reacted to public opinion because they feared a public backlash if they either did not eliminate certain policies or decided to choose a policy the public did not favor. Executors and guardians are likely not to respond at all to their fears regarding public opinion, as was the case with Carter and Reagan, even though the possibility of losing public support was specifically raised during discussions. Pragmatists are more

responsive to this fear, but its effect may be mitigated somewhat, depending on their confidence in their ability to lead the public. Since Eisenhower saw a more limited capacity to change public opinion, his fear of public opposition limited his decision regarding the offshore islands. Bush, however, had more confidence in his ability to build public support, and he generally ignored his fears about public opposition. Delegates are the most likely to respond to these fears, since they tap in to both their normative views and their practical concerns. Clinton's hasty retreat in Somalia provides evidence of this tendency. In the end, although fear may push most decision makers to consider public opinion, how far and to what extent it influences them depend on their beliefs orientations.

Surprisingly, even those presidents who had a vast array of resources and the most sophisticated polling operations responded more to how they thought the public would eventually view the issue than to the current shape of public opinion.³ For all the presidents examined in this book, most reacted only to anticipated public opinion. To be sure, the immediate indicators of public opinion, such as polls, letters, and editorial sentiment, sometimes formed the basis for this evaluation. But the presidents turned to these representations of opinion only as one harbinger of future opinion. At times, this anticipation was nothing more than a guess, rather than hard evidence of the public's sentiment. For example, in formulating the New Look, Eisenhower looked somewhat far into the future to determine how the public would react to the strategic policy that the administration was considering. Both Carter's reaction to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and Bush's Gulf War policy incorporated public opinion, under conditions in which there was little information about public sentiment. In other instances, such as Eisenhower on the offshore islands and Dien Bien Phu, decision makers paid more attention to the anticipated reactions of public opinion than to other available indicators of opinion.

Presidents responded to anticipated opinion for a number of reasons. Some were held back by it because of fears that their policy would fail to attract future support. In his reaction to the offshore islands case, Eisenhower based his decision to avoid war largely on anticipated public opposition and used the information about public sentiments that he had gathered in other contexts as a partial basis for this projection. The same dynamic occurred during the Dien Bien Phu decision process. After the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Carter had little information about public opinion, but his deliberations still took into account how

the public would respond to potential policy options, with officials making fairly straightforward projections about public sentiment (e.g., farmers would oppose a grain embargo, the public would oppose the resumption of the previously unpopular draft, public sentiment would oppose boycotting the Olympics). Bush expected that public opinion would quickly turn against his Gulf policy if the United States suffered significant losses early in the deployment process or if the conflict dragged on. Given America's experience with Vietnam and Bush's reading of history, these projections did not diverge dramatically from reasonable expectations based on previous experience. As these examples show, it is not that these projections occurred in an information vacuum about public sentiment but, rather, that the presidents employed what they knew to formulate an anticipation of what they felt they needed to know—how the public would eventually respond to their policies.

Some presidents anticipated how the public's reaction to an issue at hand would affect larger questions. For example, several presidents considered how they thought public opinion might affect their success on other issues or their presidency's success in general. In the Somalia case, Clinton reacted to how he thought his handling of the issue would affect the success of an intervention in Bosnia, for which public support was particularly tenuous, and also his presidency's broader prospects for success. Eisenhower's New Look strategy was spurred in part because Eisenhower thought the public would eventually react unfavorably to the current American strategic policy.

Elections played an important part in forming these expectations. The context for Clinton's 1995 Bosnia policy was shaped in large part by how he thought the public would view his policies during the next election year. Fearing that inaction would leave him in a worse situation, he chose to act. Bush, too, decided to launch the Gulf War military attack in January 1991 in part because he feared that waiting another year would test public patience with his policy, and he wished to avoid starting a potentially disastrous attack during an election year. In addition, Eisenhower shifted his policy on the offshore islands crisis partly to keep the issue out of the forthcoming congressional elections. In all these cases, the presidents either removed or reduced the chances for an issue to color an election. Interestingly, in neither of the two cases in which a presidential election was held within one year of a decision did the presidents react to public opinion. Even though their views about the legitimacy of public opinion in the decision process differed, both Carter (about Afghanistan) and Reagan (about Lebanon) knew the

electoral implications of their policies, but neither reacted to them. In making the Afghanistan decision, Carter gave extensive attention to public opinion and eventually decided he had to implement policies the public opposed. Reagan, however, in the Lebanon decision, rejected responding to public opinion entirely (although his advisers did not). Whereas the structural condition of future elections played a part in several decisions, the president's reaction to this prospect was based more on his beliefs about the public's influence than on the fact of a forthcoming election.

Decision Stages

The influence of public opinion across decision stages was mixed. Only Clinton seriously considered public opinion while setting his agenda, whereas all the presidents thought about public opinion while implementing their policies, mostly in relation to leading it. Some decision makers considered public opinion while selecting their policies, such as in Eisenhower's offshore islands, Dien Bien Phu, and *Sputnik* cases, Carter's Afghanistan and Panama cases, Bush's Gulf War case, and Clinton's Somalia and Bosnia cases. But public opinion affected only the policies selected in the Eisenhower and Clinton cases. Public opinion constrained policymakers during the definition of the situation in several Eisenhower cases (Dien Bien Phu, *Sputnik*, and the New Look) and in both Clinton cases. Public opinion was rarely considered during option generation, with the exception of Dulles in the offshore islands case, Eisenhower in the *Sputnik* case, and the two Clinton cases.

Even though the influence of public opinion varied widely among the decision makers, three general conclusions are warranted. First, policymakers tended to ignore public opinion in agenda setting. Second, when public opinion did affect policy, its strongest influence occurred during policy selection by constraining decisions, although it caused some policymakers to follow the public's preferences. Finally, decision makers almost uniformly acted to lead public opinion when implementing their policies. These results indicate that public opinion affected policy more often in the later, rather than the earlier, stages of decisions.

The influence of public opinion later, rather than early, during policy formulation contradicts some earlier studies. Earlier research on the stage at which public opinion affects policy stressed that its influence occurred mostly during agenda setting or a treaty ratification process. Thomas Graham's analysis of nuclear arms control cases across a range of administrations found that the public influenced policy choices dur-

ing agenda setting and treaty ratification, but not during the negotiation or implementation of the agreements.⁴ Since he defined decision stages according to the process of an arms control negotiation rather than the decision process, some of his stages (concerning a treaty's negotiation, ratification, and implementation) have no clear comparison with this book's research. In the one treaty case in this study, the Panama Canal treaty, public opinion was considered during agenda setting and as the administration pursued ratification, which is consistent with Graham's finding.

The conclusions of Graham's research concerning the influence of public opinion at the agenda setting stage may be limited, however, since across a range of security issues, I found a consistent lack of influence of public opinion at this decision stage. The cases analyzed in this book suggest that the agenda-setting function for security issues might be limited to high-profile, long-term issues about which the public is highly motivated to get involved (e.g., high-profile treaties). In most of the instances in this study, policymakers turned to an issue because they saw it as important to national security rather than because of public opinion.

National security interests were an important part of policymakers' calculations for all the decisions considered here. The realists may be correct when they say public opinion is not relevant to many national security issues during agenda setting, but they go too far when they insist that this prevents public opinion from influencing other policy aspects. For the Wilsonian liberals, public opinion is usually not a force for policy innovation or pressure to consider an issue, but it does limit the policy options that decision makers saw as available. But as I argued, any of these influences is highly contingent on the beliefs of the person making the decision.

Caveats

In this study, several factors were controlled that may affect public opinion's influence on foreign policy, such as issue type (national security rather than foreign economic), approval rating, and proximity to the next election. As these controls are relaxed, there may be less variation among decision makers and a trend toward a more uniform response to public opinion. Beliefs may act as a baseline variable that sets the extent to which a decision maker excludes public opinion from decision making. As issues become more economically focused, approval ratings drop, and elections approach, all decision makers may become more

responsive to public opinion. Future research will have to determine whether as the control variables are relaxed, (1) the influence of beliefs continues, as found in this study; (2) responsiveness to public opinion in general increases; (3) leaders from different orientations tend to respond in the same way to public opinion because environmental factors overwhelm individual differences; (4) individuals with different beliefs become more responsive to the public by an equal amount, but differences between them continue because they begin from a different baseline; and (5) the changing conditions affect individuals in some orientations more than others.

First, as the presence of economic factors in a decision increases or the definition of security issues expands to include factors with more domestic components, such as trade, the environment, and nationalist and ethnic conflicts, the influence of public opinion may grow. Unlike more traditional national security issues that may not be relevant to domestic societal segments, interest groups and the public are more likely to be attracted to and become actively involved in issues that affect their pocketbooks, that relate to concerns in which they have a stake, or that contain a strong emotional element that can be communicated through television.⁵ As the issue becomes less dominated by national security interests, the conditions (e.g., ambiguity, decisions at the top of the hierarchical ladder, wide range of action) that make likely the influence of beliefs are also likely to decrease. Given the post-Cold War environment, more issues like these will probably enter the policy agenda, but more traditional security issues will remain as well.

Second, this study considered cases in times when the president's approval rating was relatively high. As approval ratings drop or reach low levels, public opinion may act as a stronger restraint on foreign policy choices.⁶ Decision makers may fear that difficulties in the international sphere may make a bad domestic situation even worse, or they may hope to improve the domestic situation with international success. As a result, policymakers may be more responsive to public preferences when they are unpopular than when they are popular. Consistent with this thinking, as argued in the *Sputnik* and New Look cases, Eisenhower's attention to public opinion at certain decision stages may have derived from his anticipation of future public disapproval. If foreign policy cases occur during periods when a president's approval rating is low, the constraining influence may be greater.

Finally, presidents may also become more attentive to public opinion as presidential elections draw closer. Presidential elections can act as a

policy restraint on presidents by limiting the risks they may take. Earlier research implies that especially during peacetime, presidents are less inclined to use force in election years than at other times. Conversely, during wars or in the year after an election, presidents are more likely to approve uses of force.⁷ Other research has found that presidents may be more inclined to use force during election years.⁸ In short, public opinion seems more prone to influence decision makers when they face an upcoming election, but it remains unclear whether it causes presidents to act more forcefully or more timidly.

The evidence from the case studies is equally mixed on this issue. Two cases, the Reagan Lebanon case and the Carter Afghanistan case, barely missed the one-year qualification level for consideration but were included because they were the most “crisislike” cases in those administrations. In both cases, advisers to the president were very concerned with the cases’ implications for upcoming elections. But given their beliefs, both presidents chose not to respond to these pressures. In addition, in two other cases (Clinton on Bosnia and Bush on the Gulf War), the possible use of force during an election year provided a reason for these policymakers to resolve the issue before the election. The implications of these results are twofold. First, the Carter and Reagan cases suggest a role for election-year politics in decision making, but not necessarily in policy outcomes. Since Bush and Clinton, both of whom thought public support was necessary, did respond to anticipated electoral effects, and Carter and Reagan, who did not believe in the necessity of public support, did not respond, it is not clear whether differences based on beliefs orientations disappear as elections approach. Second, as the Bush and Clinton cases suggest, the influence of elections may not be limited to the election year, given anticipation about the influence of policies on electoral outcomes. Because this study tried to limit the influence of elections, it cannot offer definite answers to these questions.

Aside from these factors, the coding of public opinion’s influence on *presidential* decisions may understate the public’s impact on the larger decision process, especially in regard to the influence of public opinion on the formation of presidential advisers’ views. By distinguishing between presidential policy calculations and choices and an administration’s other activities (such as the factors that lead advisers to offer certain policy recommendations to the president), this research may not reveal the full influence of public opinion in the policy process.

For example, in the Lebanon case, public opinion did not directly affect Reagan’s decision to withdraw the marines. The data show that

his advisers were highly responsive to public opinion and that it did affect their thinking on policy options. But when they advised Reagan, they framed their arguments as pertaining to national security factors. Consonant with this study's analysis of Reagan's preferences in regard to public opinion, the Reagan administration proved to be a sophisticated user of polls, which it employed primarily to build support for its policies.⁹ Although the coding accurately accounts for the *president's* decision, it may understate the influence of public opinion on the entire *administration* and the place of public opinion in an *administration's* deliberations.

This understatement is likely only in a few cases, probably only when a guardian is involved. In their discussions with the president, advisers of presidents in the executor (Carter), pragmatist (Eisenhower, Bush), and delegate (Clinton) orientations were quite open about their concerns regarding public opinion. In the case of the guardian, since advisers probably are aware of the president's desire to ignore public opinion, they may have an incentive to disguise the amount of influence that public opinion has on their preferences. For this reason, public opinion may have a larger influence on the administration's deliberations than a guardian would wish. Since my research focused on presidential decision making, this broader assessment is left to other scholars.

Implications

Democratic Theory

According to democratic theory, there are two ways in which the public is best served in a democratic environment. The *delegate* perspective argues that policymakers should consider public opinion in their deliberations and try to align their policies to the broad framework of public support. The *trustee* view contends that the public dispenses with its role in policy formulation once it selects a qualified individual to represent it. Based on the assumption that public matters are complicated, proponents of the trustee perspective believe that especially concerning foreign policy, the public should allow elected officials to determine the best policy to serve the public interest without regard for the public's view on the issue. Although the Wilsonian liberal and realist perspectives derive partly from the delegate and trustee views, respectively, these democratic theories encompass normative views of both foreign and domestic policy formulation. As with the Wilsonian liberal and

realist views, each of these democratic theory perspectives receives mixed support.

Elite theory, as exemplified in the writings of C. Wright Mills, provides a different picture of policymaking. Supporters of this view contend that decision makers construct policy with little regard to the public's preferences or the public interest and instead design policies to serve the elite's own economic and power interests. These proponents point out that the elite can manufacture public support to serve their interests, thereby freeing them from constraints by the public when deciding on foreign policy. Whereas the delegate perspective says that the public's opinion is considered, elite theory contends that decision makers take into account public opinion only to manipulate it (rather easily even if the public initially opposes a policy) to support the government's policy. Unlike the trustee concept, according to which decision makers act in response to the public's interests (although not necessarily in response to its opinion), elite theory suggests that the public interest is largely left out of the equation.¹⁰ Because my research found that decision makers reacted either to public opinion or to their perception of the national interest, the power-driven motivation posited by elite theory did not receive any support.

An extreme reading of the delegate view that would make the policymaker into a mere tabulation machine of public opinion receives no support; rather, the more relaxed perspective that public opinion should be one of the primary determinants of policy receives more support, both in the beliefs of the post-World War II presidents and in the cases examined. Given the dangerous nature of international politics, probably no presidents see their role as merely registering public opinion, nor would most proponents of the delegate view believe they should. Seven of the ten presidents subscribed to the importance of public opinion to foreign policy, for either normative or practical reasons. But only two agreed with the normative view that public opinion should affect foreign policy decisions. Clinton's beliefs perhaps come closest to the delegate view of representation, since he believed he should consider how the public would have wanted him to act once all the information has come out. In this sense, Clinton was comfortable acting against the prevailing public opinion of the moment if he thought the people would come to view an issue differently. For this reason, Clinton's view is a modified delegate perspective that takes into account the informational constraints and complicated nature of foreign policy. Clinton's attention to the public's long-term sentiments, as opposed to their short-term

views, comes the closest to the delegate's view of ideal behavior that this study found.

In regard to beliefs about public opinion, Clinton is the exception, however, rather than the rule, since most decision makers granted some importance to public opinion but did not allow nearly the amount of influence implied even by a more relaxed delegate perspective. Carter's views remain mainly in the delegate perspective because he valued public input into his foreign policy decisions. His openness to public opinion when reaching decisions on foreign policy and engaging it as a legitimate decision factor, rather than merely as the focus of potential manipulation, would certainly be looked upon favorably by delegate theory proponents. But in combination with his practical beliefs and as seen in the case studies, his actual foreign policy choices might not conform to the outcomes that these theorists would prefer.

Providing somewhat less support for the delegate theory are the five presidents who opposed public input into decisions but viewed public support as necessary. Here, the split among types of pragmatists based on their assessment of how readily they could lead public opinion becomes pertinent. One set, composed of Eisenhower and Kennedy, thought they had a fairly limited ability to shift public opinion. In turn, public opinion prevented them from enacting policies that they thought the public might not support, a result supported by the delegate theory. If these presidents based their policies on what the public could support, the correlation between opinion and policy that the delegate theory favors would occur in much the same way as the theory predicts.

Another set of presidents—Nixon, Ford, and Bush—assumed that nearly any policy they chose would be supported by public opinion because of the public's almost automatic support of the president's foreign policy or because they thought they could create support for a policy where none existed previously. Although they could be influenced by public opinion, these presidents' likely interaction with public opinion would probably not have matched that supported by the delegate theory because they would have been less likely to respond to public opinion.

The delegate theory is not supported by the beliefs of the three guardian presidents—Truman, Johnson, and Reagan. By rejecting public opinion as a factor on which to base their decisions, these policymakers' views directly contradicted the delegate theory's perspective.

The delegate perspective receives equally mixed support on policy behavior. Although the influence of public opinion never reached the

dominating influence suggested by the extreme delegate position, it often was an important consideration in policy deliberations and broadly constrained the decisions of several presidents, as expected from the more relaxed delegate position. Public opinion was considered extensively in Eisenhower's, Carter's, and Clinton's approaches to foreign policy. A limiting influence on the use of force was found in the offshore islands and Dien Bien Phu cases in the Eisenhower administration, and the Somalia and Bosnia cases in the Clinton administration. A more minor following influence was found only for parts of Eisenhower's *Sputnik* decision and for both of Clinton's decisions. Although Carter considered public opinion in his decisions, he did not use it as a basis for his choice, thereby providing mixed support for the delegate position. Furthermore, the almost total lack of attention to public opinion by Reagan and Bush provides contradictory evidence for the delegate view.

The results for the trustee perspective are somewhat stronger than for the delegate view, since several of the presidents who wanted to incorporate public opinion into their decisions also considered their approach to policy formulation to be in line with the trustee view. Most of the decision makers thought they should act in the public's interest by focusing on national security concerns rather than responding to its opinion. Truman, Johnson, and Reagan most explicitly held this viewpoint. To a lesser extent, Nixon, Ford, and Bush agreed with this perspective but also added the necessity of public support, which they thought they could easily achieve for any policy in the national interest. Eisenhower and Kennedy provide more of a mixed view. Each held views that agreed with the trustee perspective of decision making, in that they thought they should first decide on the best policy from a national security perspective. However, they also strongly believed that they needed to compare that policy with public opinion and should carry out a policy only if they thought public support would be forthcoming, because the public either favored the view already or would after their leadership efforts. If they thought they could not change public opinion, this realization would probably limit their policy choices. This view contradicts the trustee perspective that policymakers should select the best policy to serve the public's interests. Finally, both Carter and Clinton favored including public opinion in their determination of foreign policy, a perspective countering the trustee view. In total, six of the presidents maintained beliefs that broadly agreed with the trustee view; two had beliefs that did so to a lesser extent; and two did not follow the trustee view at all.

The presidents' behavior provides mixed support for the trustee view. Eisenhower in the *Sputnik* and New Look cases, the Reagan and Bush cases, and the results of the Carter cases largely support the trustee model of decision making. But the Eisenhower offshore islands and Dien Bien Phu cases, the process of Carter's decisions, and both of Clinton's decisions do not offer much support for the trustee view, since public opinion affected their policy choices.

Even so, in those cases in which public opinion did affect the policy outcomes, decision makers were highly concerned with the national interests at stake in the decision. When the presidents did react to public opinion, it was often because they thought that the broader national interest required it. For example, Eisenhower thought that any military action that did not have public support would end in disaster, a view that restricted him in the two short decision-time cases. In the two long decision-time cases, he feared that public opposition to his policies would eventually undermine the foundation of American foreign policy and thus damage national security. In this sense, even though the influence of public opinion in these instances seems to contradict the trustee view, Eisenhower acted in a framework that emphasized the national interest, but with the realization that the public's reaction to policies could significantly affect their success. The same cannot be said of Carter's or Clinton's approaches to the decision process, since they both considered public opinion to be an important part of a decision on its own merits.

Although the delegate and trustee views individually find moderate support in this study, democratic theory as a whole is strongly supported, since the shortcomings of the delegate perspective are mirrored by the successes of the trustee view, and vice versa. In nearly every case, the presidents focused either on improving what they perceived to be the national interest or on attempting to implement what they perceived to be the public will. In no instance were the economic or power-driven motives of elite theory supported. Some decision makers' beliefs agreed with the delegate perspective, some with the trustee view, and some with a combination of these perspectives. Although democratic theory may be supported more broadly, the descriptive value of either perspective is contingent on the views of the person making the decision.

The Domestic Sources of International Relations

Some scholars, mainly those subscribing to the neorealist and classical realist perspectives, claim that domestic factors usually do not affect

national security policy, but other analysts emphasize the influence of domestic considerations on a range of behaviors.¹¹ In fact, liberal international relations theory (of which Wilsonian liberalism is a distinct strand) stands in contrast to neorealism by proposing that the interaction between the state and society forms the basis for the state's behavior by determining its preferences.¹² This book takes the side of liberal international relations theory, which states that domestic factors can significantly alter national security policies. As argued in the case studies, foreign and security policy cannot be explained in reference only to prevailing international conditions or to perceptions of the national interest. Instead, across a range of cases, public opinion affected perceptions of possible policies, especially those of policymakers who were more open to information about public opinion. In fact, the public's influence was most noticeable in the short decision-time cases when choices involved the consideration of using force, which are the situations in which realists say that domestic factors should have the least amount of influence. When given a longer time to make a choice, decision makers often formulated their policy approach outside the public's view and with most of their attention to public opinion paid at the implementation stage. These findings imply that any influence of public opinion is unlikely to occur uniformly across decision makers or decisions. Because this book focused on the individual's sensitivity to public opinion and the decision context, future research should consider the extent to which the public's influence might be altered by other domestic and governmental processes.

Neorealists generally assume that a state's choice of goals and means is driven by the search for security in an anarchical system and is restricted by the international distribution of power capabilities, which largely leaves societal factors such as public opinion outside the explanatory framework. Although some realists may turn to domestic factors to explain irrational state policies, they largely ignore internal components when explaining the state's choice.¹³ For example, Kenneth Waltz argues that "the pressures of competition weigh more heavily than ideological preferences or internal political pressures." Likewise, Fareed Zakaria concludes that "across time and space, states' positions in the anarchic international system prove to provide the simplest, shortest guide to international relations."¹⁴ Some theorists now contend that structural realism can incorporate interactions at the foreign policy level, but other neorealists dispute this claim.¹⁵

This book's analysis of a single type of state (liberal, democratic, status quo-oriented, relatively powerful) demonstrates that public opinion can cause important and dramatic shifts in choices regarding policy goals and means that cannot be explained by capabilities or interests defined in terms of security or power. These results suggest that the interaction between public opinion and elites may be a potentially important source of state preferences that neorealist formulations largely ignore and cannot encompass.

Public opinion can influence a leader's perceptions of those interests that are worth committing resources to defend or support. In the off-shore islands and Dien Bien Phu cases, because of domestic opposition, Eisenhower's and (to a lesser extent) Dulles's sensitivity to public opinion significantly altered the way in which they approached these issues, even to the point of making choices that risked damaging what they recognized as American national interests. In addition, public opinion broadly constrained the manner in which Eisenhower and Dulles approached the formulation of the New Look strategic policy, in both the goals and means of long-range American policy. Likewise, Clinton responded to domestic opinion about the attention he gave to and the value he placed on American intervention in Somalia. Public opinion also affected his perception of American interests in Bosnia and the policy means he chose to resolve the problem. Public opinion somewhat pressured Bush regarding the means with which he pursued his Gulf War policy. Although realism does not account for these decisions, a national interest-centered approach does explain rather well the policy choices in the Carter and Reagan cases.

Not only can the means that states use to achieve their goals be affected systematically and predictably by public opinion, but also the goals and objectives themselves may be partially determined by domestic variables rather than just by state power and security incentives. Whereas the neorealists argue that pressures from the international system determine how a state acts, this book implies that how a leader interprets the international environment may be greatly affected by his or her perceptions of domestic pressures. The president's reaction or nonreaction to public opinion can shape state policy in a manner unanticipated by neorealist models. Although international imperatives may provide a useful guide to the constraints that a state faces, it is an accurate and useful guide to a state's international behavior only if the leader's views of the domestic environment agree with neorealist assumptions. If the

leader does not hold similar views, then he or she may act in a manner not predicted by neorealist formulations.

In contrast to realists who reject domestic-based explanations of international relations, some scholars who examine the domestic sources of international relations have incorporated in their work assumptions about how leaders react to domestic circumstances. Included in many of these approaches is the assumption that leaders are sensitive to how public opinion will react to their policies. Several of these models treat decision makers in democracies as if they were equally sensitive to the potential domestic costs of international behavior. For example, James Fearon argues that the potential loss of domestic support for democratic leaders who back down after making a commitment in an international dispute makes them less likely to do so and thus better able to signal their intentions than can leaders of authoritarian nations. This argument rests on the assumption that all democratic leaders are nearly equally sensitive to a potential loss of support and that all democratic leaders are more sensitive to this than their authoritarian counterparts are. A range of responsiveness by democratic leaders would undermine the signaling value of incurring domestic audience costs and make them a poor guide to international behavior, especially if that range overlapped with the sensitivities of authoritarian leaders.

Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and David Lalman contend that decisions regarding war are largely driven by domestic political imperatives, and they recommend that future research focus on determining the domestic processes that cause these pressures. They reject the notion that some leaders when reaching their choices are sensitive only to prevailing international conditions. This argument assumes that all leaders in a certain state respond in the same way to similar domestic pressures and processes.

Finally, Helen Milner examined the domestic determinants of international cooperation and found that internal factors rather than international conditions affect the propensity of states to cooperate with one another. She assumes that the policy preferences of leaders are driven in great part by their electoral concerns, and she contends that since people vote according to their economic conditions, a leader's preferences are partly determined by how a policy economically affects domestic social coalitions whose support is needed to win elections and by the direct electoral consequences of a policy based on its implications for the economy. Milner relies on the assumption that leaders are equally sensitive to their electoral fortunes in reaching foreign policy decisions.¹⁶

Each of these approaches assumes that leaders in the same state face the same domestic structural constraints and processes and that they react to them in the same way. But because this book found that this sensitivity varies among individuals, these models must be contingent on these processes. Unlike these models' assumptions, my findings suggest that decision makers differ in (1) how they react to the potential domestic consequences of failure in the international realm, (2) how they respond to domestic pressures, and (3) how they react to electoral consequences in their decisions. For example, because of his beliefs, Reagan did not react to domestic pressure to back out of Lebanon. Nor did he hesitate in adopting the SDI policy, which was premised on the eventual abrogation of the antiballistic missile treaty, which had significant domestic support. Likewise, Bush largely ignored the domestic consequences of his policies. After the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Carter took several actions that he knew would harm his chances for reelection, and he also risked public opposition to his Panama Canal treaty policy. Clinton, however, swiftly reacted to the potential electoral ramifications of his policies in Somalia and Bosnia. In addition, across a range of cases, Eisenhower was limited by potentially negative public reaction. In each of these cases, the influence of public opinion, elections, and domestic costs was determined by the policymaker's sensitivity to public opinion rather than by the prevailing domestic circumstances.

Some of the work on the domestic sources of international relations relies on assumptions that are actually contingent on individual level variables. Furthermore, the contingent nature of these assumptions could significantly contextualize or alter these findings. For Fearon's model, the domestic audience costs created by making commitments during crises may not imply the same thing for all persons, since some may be willing to accept the large domestic costs of backing down in a crisis and some may not. The fact that a democratic leader is making the decision implies nothing about his or her reaction to domestic audience costs. In addition, the beliefs model suggests that there is no reason to assume that democratic leaders are more sensitive to audience costs than are authoritarian leaders, because guardians may be just as insensitive to public opinion in their foreign policy decisions as authoritarian leaders are. In addition, public opinion might act as a restraint in following through on a commitment and could push democratic leaders to reach an accommodation rather than stand firm. Indeed, public opinion might cause them to renege on their commitments. For example, this

dynamic was present in the Eisenhower offshore islands case, the Reagan Lebanon case, the Bush Gulf War case, and the Clinton Somalia case. Because the effect of domestic audience costs probably varies, the central finding of Fearon's work, that domestic audience costs make democratic leaders better able to signal their intentions, is questionable.

In contrast to Bueno de Mesquita and Lalman's war model, my research found that some leaders pay more attention to the international context rather than the domestic environment. In addition, even those leaders who are attentive to the domestic arena do not necessarily react to it in the same way. For this reason, their conclusions are actually contingent on a leader's varying sensitivity to domestic factors.

Finally, Milner's assumption that all leaders consider electoral implications when making foreign policy decisions overstates the case. Some decision makers certainly do have their electoral fortunes in mind, but others just as certainly are less sensitive to their electoral prospects and the domestic consequences of their international behavior. These varying sensitivities suggest that the domestic processes that Milner identifies may sometimes, but not always, become engaged. This book's findings do not mean that any of these models are wrong but that their accuracy depends on assumptions that are highly contingent rather than universal.

A surprising result of my research is the lack of support for the diversionary use of force. The literature on the linkage between elections and the use of force argues that politicians initiate the use of force either early in the election cycle when they see a better chance of creating public support for a policy or immediately before an election in order to inflate popular support for electoral purposes.¹⁷ My findings, however, do not support these causal linkages. Relatively early in the election cycle, presidents (such as Eisenhower at Dien Bien Phu and in the offshore islands, Bush in the Persian Gulf, Clinton in Somalia) did not perceive a broader band in which to lead public opinion. In fact, in each of these instances, these presidents either regarded public opinion as a limiting factor or felt that the issue could damage their chances at the next election, even though it was at least two years away in each instance. In addition, in those cases that occurred closer to an election (such as Reagan on Lebanon, Carter on Afghanistan, and Clinton on Bosnia), none of these decision makers was tempted to resort to force to bolster their electoral prospects. In fact, in the Reagan Lebanon and Clinton Bosnia cases, public opinion and the next election provided arguments against using force because the adminis-

tration feared casualties could jeopardize their electoral prospects (although this reasoning did not color Reagan's decision). Although in the Afghanistan case, Carter did take public opinion into consideration, policymakers did not see it as a reason to react strongly, and to the extent that public opinion was considered, it was seen as a factor discouraging a bellicose response. The explanatory value of the diversionary use of force model is undermined because every case contradicts this theory's causal logic.

The diversionary use of force theory also rests on the assumption that decision makers expect that the use of force will enhance the perception of the administration in the public's mind.¹⁸ The findings from this book, however, point to just the opposite. Across a series of cases from different administrations, including ones for which extensive archival material was available, in no instance did any high-level official (including those in the Eisenhower administration whose views were not considered in this book) believe either that the public wanted force to be used or would react positively to the use of force. The public may have favored policy goals that entailed the use of force, but in every instance, the public was seen as opposed to the use of force to achieve these goals. Although leaders' perceptions of public opinion on the use of force did not vary, their reactions to it did. In accordance with their beliefs, some officials ignored this sentiment; some thought they could change it; and others were limited by it. However, the unanimity of perception of public preferences concerning the use of force across a range of individuals and cases belies the foundational assumptions of the diversionary use of force theory.

This argument should not be interpreted as suggesting that these decision makers did not recognize that they might lose some public support if they did not react forcefully in a particular instance. For example, Eisenhower feared he might lose public support if his action or inaction led to the "loss" of Indochina. Acting to prevent the loss of public support and acting to increase public support, however, entail different calculations. In the first instance, the policymaker sees little or no opportunity to increase public approval, only to lose it. In the second instance, he or she feels no such pressure but instead senses an opportunity to inflate the public's assessments.

Public Opinion and Foreign Policy

The scholarly literature discussed in chapter 1 on the influence of public opinion on foreign policy provides several possible explanations

of the correlation between opinion and policy: (1) Elites create public support, or the public tends to support elites' decisions; (2) public opinion sets broad policy constraints; (3) elites largely follow public opinion; and (4) each of these relationships is conditional. This book supports the fourth combined perspective and argues that public opinion can be led, can constrain policymakers, or can cause them to follow the public, but how public opinion is considered largely depends on the circumstances in which a decision is made and the person making it. In essence, each of the first three perspectives can be correct, but only conditionally.

My findings lean toward supporting the conditional perspective on public opinion's influence, but they also have implications for the other perspectives. First, one strand of the literature, most closely identified with the realist perspective, contends that public opinion is fairly permissive on foreign policy and generally supports the decision makers' approach. Policymakers who were guardians, such as Reagan, or whose behavior was similar to that of a guardian, such as Bush, usually reacted in accordance with the predictions of this viewpoint. Even so, this view often did not accurately account for the decision-making dynamics. Policymakers perceived constraints by public opinion even when objective assessments of it, such as those contained in polls, were either vague or supportive of the administration's policy. For example, during the formulation of the New Look, public opinion did not dictate that the policy needed to change, but it also was not seen as open to just any policy option. This view's descriptive accuracy of the relationship between opinion and policy depends greatly on how a decision maker approaches a choice.

The public constraint view received more support. When public opinion affected policy, it mostly did so through a mechanism of policy constraint. In addition, it was largely the anticipation of potential public opposition or electoral retribution that motivated policymakers to respond to public opinion. Decision makers rarely were aware that the public desired or required a specific policy for policymakers to implement. Instead, they concluded that the public would accept a range of policy alternatives but was not wedded to just one. However, this finding was still largely conditional. In both cases, Carter perceived a band of public policy acceptance, but he still ignored these restrictions in his decisions. In the Afghanistan case, he chose to implement policies that he thought were outside the realm of public acceptance. On the Panama Canal treaty, he assumed a narrow range of public constraint but instead decided to move forward on his preferred policy. In this sense,

even when decision makers recognize public constraint, its influence still is tightly conditioned by their beliefs and not just their perception of public opinion. For this reason, even though the constraint view was largely accurate when public opinion influenced policy, it did not always account for the reactions of decision makers.

The third view, buttressed by a growing set of quantitative correlational data, is that public opinion is often correlated with foreign policies and that it often changes before the policy shifts, thus implying that public opinion influences policymakers by causing them to follow it. This book does not provide much support for this model of public opinion's influence, since decision makers only rarely made policy decisions that tried to follow public opinion. The beliefs model posited that only delegates would react to public opinion in this manner. According to the case studies, it appears that the lone delegate, Clinton, did sometimes follow public opinion on foreign policy but that his broader reaction to public opinion revealed more of the interaction between opinion and policy that was posited by the constraint thesis.

In a larger sense, the case study findings contain a note of caution for correlational studies of the relationship between public opinion and foreign policy. A strict focus on coding policy outcomes and the prevailing public opinion, as reflected in the polls, might not only miss important decision-making dynamics but could also incorrectly code the relationship between opinion and policy. Because this book reveals that much of the connection between opinion and policy occurred because of policymakers' anticipations of public opinion—which might or might not be reflected in or derived from polling results—researchers must be careful in reaching conclusions about decision dynamics based solely on quantitative research.

Several examples illustrate this point. Reagan's decision making on Lebanon would appear from a correlational standpoint to be a case in which public opinion led to a shift in policy. From an aggregated perspective, public opinion shifted first, which was then followed by a policy adjustment. However, as the case analysis found, Reagan largely ignored public opinion in reaching his decision.

On the other side, Eisenhower's New Look policy would appear to be a case in which opinion did follow policy. There was no demand for a policy shift, and the aggregate readings of opinion quickly aligned with the policy once it was announced. However, this perspective overlooks the important constraining influence of Eisenhower's anticipation of long-term public support.

Finally, Clinton's Bosnia policy is a case in which an aggregate approach would point to a disjoint between opinion and policy. Aggregate readings of opinion saw the public as generally opposed to sending American troops into Bosnia under most conditions. However, as an examination of this case reveals, Clinton did consider public preferences when debating his decision. But because his reference point for public opinion was his anticipation of the public's long-term opinion of his Bosnia policy, a consideration of polling alone might miss this.

These examples do not imply that correlational analyses are incorrect in the trends they reveal but, rather, that they do not tell the whole story. If the influence of public opinion is to be understood, scholars must also look behind the numbers to confirm quantitative results. In this sense, these examples show that several research methods must be used to fully probe the complicated influence of public opinion.¹⁹

The case studies' findings add one other caution about the determination of public opinion's influence. As the length of decision time increased, decision makers had more information about public opinion. However, as revealed across several case studies, the greater amount of information about the public's preferences could be used in one of two ways: to respond to them or to attempt to change them.²⁰ In the long decision-time cases, some decision makers, Clinton in particular, saw the increased amount of information as an opportunity to construct a policy that not only could address the issue but respond to the public's preferences as well. Other decision makers, such as Eisenhower and Carter, used the added information to fashion leadership programs to enhance public support of their policies. Reagan's administration, in particular, was well known for using information about the public's views in this way. These instances serve to highlight a central finding of this study: that public opinion does not directly and objectively translate into policy outcomes. Instead, the public's influence is conditional on policymakers' perceptions and their sensitivity to public opinion. Both factors make the influence of public opinion highly conditional. However, when an individual's beliefs and the decision context are known, a fairly accurate gauge of how a policymaker will respond to public opinion and the influence the public will have on the development of a foreign policy is possible.

Security Policy After the Cold War

These findings regarding the general relationship between public opinion and foreign policy have implications for the development of

American foreign policy in the post-Cold War era. As the United States has confronted and will continue to cope with the uncertainties of the changing international environment, a debate over the goals and purposes of American foreign policy has begun. At the core of many of these discussions is the prospect of winning public support for a policy. Much of this concern focuses on the fear that the public will favor isolationism and the prospects for a continued internationalist orientation in American foreign policy.²¹ Although any speculation about the future direction of public opinion is beyond the scope of this book, the reaction of presidents to any shifts and changes in American opinion does lie in its purview. This book suggests that in future crises or international affairs generally, regardless of public opinion about the use of force and the level of engagement the public favors in international affairs, it is unlikely to provide an absolute restraint on policymakers. Instead, the reaction of presidents to public opinion will largely be determined by variations in their beliefs.

Although the types of foreign policy issues that may arise after the Cold War have increased and expanded, there is no reason to believe that the dynamics that drive public opinion's influence, or the lack thereof, have changed much. A president's orientation toward public opinion is likely to have an important influence on how he or she reacts to public opinion when formulating a foreign policy in the post-Cold War era. Delegates will probably try to stay within the limits of public acceptance, on both specific policy issues and broad approaches to foreign policy. They will likely move more slowly in response to changing international events and attempt to bring their policies into line with public opinion. As demonstrated in both Clinton cases, the only president so far who came into office after the Cold War (who happens to be a delegate) behaved as anticipated by this discussion. Even in the development of broad foreign policy, the Clinton administration has been closely attuned to shifts in public opinion and has worked to ensure that its policy aligned with public preferences.²²

Guardians, however, may be driven more by their perceptions of the national interests and be less likely to respond to the limitations of public opinion. Pragmatists, who are driven by their anticipation of public support, may try to create public support for whatever vision that they deem necessary for national security. Unlike guardians, they will be more inclined to engage the public to support whatever policy they determine to be the most appropriate. Finally, executors will be more or less responsive to the public, depending on the strength of their views. If

they form a strong preference about the shape of American involvement, they will likely act more like guardians in implementing their strategy. If their views are weakly held, public opinion may restrict their actions in much the same way as that expected of delegates. The direction of public opinion in the future cannot be known, but the beliefs of the policymakers who will be reacting to it will probably have a significant impact on the role of public opinion in shaping the direction of American foreign policy.

These different approaches to public opinion may portend more for the process of policy formulation and selection than the policy's eventual success. As illustrated in the cases in this study, public opinion probably will have little influence on the placement of national security issues on the agenda and the development of policy options, but it may have an important influence when policymakers reach decisions and try to implement their policy. Still, differing approaches to public opinion can achieve successful policy results regarding the United States' involvement in the world. For example, in laying the foundations for America's post-World War II policy, President Franklin D. Roosevelt moved the United States toward an internationalist foreign policy and the establishment of the United Nations with active American participation. Nonetheless, throughout this process, he closely watched public opinion and worked to ensure that his policy aligned with what the public would support.²³ Harry Truman, however, adopted the Truman Doctrine while giving little consideration to public opinion. In fact, he attempted to lead public opinion on the policy only after being warned by the respected Republican Senate Foreign Relations Committee chairman, Arthur Vandenburg, that Congress would support his program only if he could "scare hell out of the country."²⁴ Even though the role of public opinion differed, both Roosevelt and Truman moved toward forming the basis of America's post-World War II policy. These instances suggest that the factors under consideration in this study have more to do with the way that policy is made than whether it serves the nation's long-term interests. Paradoxically, policies that both incorporate and overlook public opinion can succeed in fulfilling American interests.

The connection between public opinion and foreign policy is complicated and multifaceted. Because the public's influence varies in accordance with the president's normative and practical beliefs, there is no single "mode" of response to public opinion; rather it is a highly individualized response that depends on how the person making the decision

sees the public's role in the decisions of a democratically elected leader of a modern republic. There is no reason to believe that the dynamic of the public's influence has shifted with the end of the Cold War. As policymakers confront the ambiguous questions of American national interests and the policies to serve them in the post-Cold War era, public opinion may play an important part in determining the direction of foreign policy. The public's support of internationalism during the Cold War and the results of earlier research indicating that public opinion is both rational and structured suggest that it can be the foundation for both long-term international engagement and a realistic policy to pursue American national interests. Public support will no doubt depend on leaders who are willing to use the "bully pulpit" to educate and inform the public about the pressing issues of the day. The burden to develop this supportive public opinion rests on policymakers who are willing to count the public in when formulating foreign policy.

