Collecting Data on Beliefs

Because beliefs cannot be measured directly and must be inferred from available data, analyses must rely on statements made by the individual.[1] This method, however, raises the potential problem of the representative and instrumental use of language and communication. Although a particular communication could reflect the content of an individual's beliefs (representative use), people often use communication to persuade or convince others (instrumental use). To differentiate between these two uses, the analyst should rely on a number of sources that span time, situation, and audience to identify any possible inconsistencies.[2] The analysis in this book used both public and private statements to infer beliefs. Although private communications are more likely to reflect a person's representative beliefs, public statements can also be used to determine beliefs. A person's public utterances might influence his or her own views based on cognitive dissonance theory or his or her own self-perception.[3] Public officials also have an incentive to maintain their credibility by acting consistently with their professed intentions. Other actors may also act according to a decision maker's word, thus making certain that a decision maker's behavior complies with public statements.[4] In order to ensure separate data sources for

measuring beliefs and behavior, I excluded statements regarding public opinion from the beliefs analysis if they occurred in the context of discussions pertaining to any of the decisions examined.[5]

Information regarding Eisenhower's beliefs came primarily from his private papers, located at the Eisenhower Presidential Library in Abilene, Kansas. I used "finding aids" (a list of files and their contents arranged by key words and subjects) of the papers to identify files with information about Eisenhower's beliefs concerning public opinion. All the finding aids of the Ann Whitman file (the primary collection of Eisenhower's private papers from December 1952 until January 1961) were searched for words that might indicate a reference to public opinion. Examples of words used in the finding aids to determine which documents to examine are *public relations, public opinion, politics, mail, polls*, and *political philosophy*. This source was supplemented by three others: (1) a search for prepresidential statements, as categorized in the *Reader's Guide to Periodicals* under Eisenhower's name; (2) a document-by-document search of the *FRUS* volumes dealing with basic national security policy through 1957 (the most recent available volume when his beliefs were analyzed in 1994); and (3) the Public Papers of the Presidents series.

Information on Dulles's beliefs came primarily from his private papers, at Princeton University. I also used finding aids here, as I did in the Eisenhower Library, with key words in the papers including *bipartisan policy, Cold War, foreign policy, isolationism*, and the names of significant persons (Eisenhower, Vice President Richard Nixon, etc.). In addition, since Dulles wrote all his speeches himself, I examined all of them, particularly those he gave before becoming secretary of state. I looked at all the files indicated by the finding aids for the period between the early 1940s through Dulles's death in 1959. As with Eisenhower, this source was supplemented by an examination of the *Reader's Guide* and the *FRUS* series. Dulles's *War or Peace* and Andrew Berding's *Dulles on Diplomacy*, which provides a record of Dulles's private statements, were also included.

Material for the other presidents relied on public source material, mainly memoirs and statements in the Public Papers of the Presidents series. Since the indexing of these materials varied from source to source, I searched the index for phrases that might indicate a reference to public opinion and foreign policy (e.g., views of the presidency, foreign policy). In certain instances, these materials were supplemented by other public source material, as cited in chapter 7. Unlike the data for

Eisenhower and Dulles, since many of the sources used for these presidents are public rather than private, the potential for inaccuracy is greater. But given the high accuracy of the predictions based on the analysis of the beliefs of these other presidents, this did not appear to be a problem.

Examining the Data

Any beliefs analysis of this kind is limited by the variety and quality of the available historical documentation. For the Eisenhower and Dulles beliefs data, this analysis relied on sources dated before the beginning of the Eisenhower administration. But because of a reliance on public source material for the other presidents, the data are from periods both during and after their administrations. Some of the important information on beliefs was from notes of the discussion recorded by a note taker. Since the exact phrasing of discussions was not available, and because of the relatively small number of statements available (from a statistical perspective), a quantitative content analysis of this material was not a viable alternative, and so I performed a qualitative analysis of the data instead. If the data were available in sufficient quantity, the beliefs dimensions would be amenable to a quantitative analysis. Some readers may be concerned that a qualitative content analysis (more than a quantitative content analysis) might be affected by the analyst's own opinions. Although a qualitative content analysis of the type in this study does not allow a traditional intercoder reliability assessment, I completed the beliefs analysis before examining the cases. This sequencing ensured that the beliefs analysis was not influenced by my examination of behavior. In addition, the use of oral history recollections in the Eisenhower and Dulles instances allows a rough test of the validity of the qualitative content analysis.

When I had collected the data from all the sources, I read each document and took notes on its content. These notes were organized under headings relevant to this study's analysis (e.g., is public support necessary, character of public opinion). Once I had examined all the data, I compared my findings in the groupings to discern similarities, caveats, and possible contradictions on a particular subject. I then reported these outcomes in the qualitative content analysis in the text. The content of these beliefs determined both the placement of the individual in a particular beliefs quadrant and the predictions of his behavior.

Selecting the Cases to Study and the Analysis Process

To select case studies for each administration, I first consulted significant secondary sources that provided an overview of the administration. Using these sources, I identified possible cases that might match each decision context and the control variables. Next I looked at significant secondary sources regarding the possible cases to determine further their applicability to the control variables and decision context. Finally, I selected the case studies examined in this book.[6]

Two methods were used to investigate the predictions of the various theories. First, I used a congruence procedure to determine whether a causal relationship for beliefs might exist. The congruence procedure requires first specifying the predicted theoretical relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Then, the values of the observed independent and dependent variables are determined and evaluated according to the theory's predictions. If the findings agree with the theory, a causal relationship may exist.[7] This process determines whether the behavior in regard to public opinion is consistent with the predicted behavior based on beliefs.

Second, process tracing, used by historians to make causal inferences, provides an additional way to examine possible causal relationships. The method "is intended to investigate and explain the decision process by which various initial conditions are translated into outcomes."[8] This method determines how inputs become outputs by examining the decision-making processes. In sum,

> the process tracing approach attempts to uncover what stimuli the actors attend to; the decision process that makes use of these stimuli to arrive at decision; the actual behavior that then occurs; the effect of various institutional arrangements on attention, processing, and behavior; and the effect of other variables of interest on attention, processing, and behavior.[9]

In the case studies, I examined the behavior for evidence that public opinion was on the decision makers' minds and whether it was used at important junctures in the decision making. From the manner and context in which public opinion was used, I made inferences as to its influence in a particular instance.[10]

Several questions guided my data analysis of each decision stage.[11] For agenda setting and the definition of the situation, I asked, How did the decision makers see the problem? What were the relevant consider-

ations? For option generation, What policy options were seriously considered by the policymakers? Why did they view options favorably or unfavorably? At the policy selection stage, What was the policy choice? What factors affected their selection of the eventual alternative over the other possibilities? Finally, during policy implementation, What choices were necessary to pursue the decision reached at the previous stage? How did the decision makers respond to events that might question the previous decision? What adjustments, if any, were made to the previous decision?

Using this method, I followed each issue through the decision process and identified key factors in the decisions. I then wrote each case according to the answers I found for each of the questions. Even though the questions do not formally structure the chapters, the answers to them are implicitly integrated into the case discussions. This case presentation method is a modification of that employed by Burke and Greenstein (a largely historical analysis of the cases followed by a variable analysis and coding section).[12]