
Original Article

Knowledge without power: International relations scholars and the US war in Iraq

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Abstract In this article we present several important first steps toward understanding the role of academics in shaping US foreign policy – identifying their policy views on one of the most salient foreign policy issues of this generation, the US War in Iraq; exploring how those views differ from public opinion more generally; and assessing the extent to which scholarly opinion was reflected in the public debate. To determine how IR scholars' views on the invasion of Iraq differed from those of the public, we compare the answers of IR scholars at US colleges and universities to those of the US public on similar opinion survey questions. To this end, we analyze data from a unique series of surveys of IR scholars conducted by the Teaching, Research, and International Policy project.

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Introduction

On 26 September 2002, 33 leading scholars of international relations (IR) signed an advertisement in the *New York Times* saying, 'military force should be used only when it advances US national interests. War with Iraq does not meet this standard'. They argued that '[e]ven if we win easily, we have no plausible exit strategy', and the United States should concentrate on defeating Al Qaeda rather than going to war in Iraq. It is impossible to know how widely their views were shared at the time, but the signatories were among the most prominent IR and security scholars in the country. The year after the United States went to war in Iraq, against the advice of these



academic experts, a group calling itself Security Scholars for a Sensible Foreign Policy issued an open letter to the US public signed by 851 scholars of IR and national security policy. The 12 October 2004 letter described Bush's policy in Iraq as 'misguided' with 'overwhelmingly negative' results for US national security. The vast majority of the most prominent scholars of foreign affairs in the United States, including 20 past presidents of the American Political Science Association, signed the letter. IR scholars may agree on little else, but they agreed in the first decade of the twenty-first century that US policy in Iraq had strayed dangerously off course.

Students of US foreign policy have long understood the importance of foreign policy elites – variously described as opinion leaders, opinion makers, policy influentials, the effective public and foreign policy experts – in influencing policy-makers' preferences and shaping public response to foreign policy events and initiatives (Almond, 1950; Rosenau, 1961; Holsti and Rosenau, 1977; Oldendick and Bardes, 1982; Wittkopf, 1990; Rosati and Creed, 1997). These elites include knowledge-based experts within think tanks and the academy, as well as other specialists and professionals. Research on 'epistemic communities', 'networks[s] of professionals with recognized expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge within that domain or issue-area' (Haas, 1992, p. 3), has highlighted the role of knowledge-based experts in the foreign policy process (Adler and Haas, 1992; Jacobs and Page, 2005), and much ink has also been spilled on the role of think tanks, in particular (Abelson, 1996, 2002, 2006; Wiarda, 2010).

At the same time, increasing numbers of IR scholars in universities and colleges recently have turned their attention to bridging the gap between the academic and policy communities and increasing the policy-relevance of IR scholarship (Jentleson, 2002; Walt, 2005; Campbell and Desch, 2013; Avey and Desch, 2014). Harvard Professor and former policymaker Nye (2009), MacArthur Foundation President Gallucci (2012) and *New York Times* columnist Kristof (2014) have lamented, and largely blamed the academy for, the limited interaction between the academic and policy worlds of IR. As Gallucci (2012) notes, '[t]he worlds of policy making and academic research should be in constant, productive conversation, and scholars and researchers should be an invaluable resource for policy makers, but they are not'. Former US Ambassador Newsom (1995–6, p. 52) concurs, noting that scholars 'should have the most knowledge and insight to offer to policymakers. Challenges to conventional wisdom and provocative explorations of international issues are part of the domain of the scholar and teacher and are precisely what is often missing in the official policy world. Yet the practices and approaches that are part of the professorial world limit its direct influence on the formation of policy'.

Despite these frequent lamentations, very little has been written that empirically examines the role of academics in shaping US foreign policy. In this article we present several important first steps toward identifying their policy views on one of

the most salient foreign policy issues of this generation, the US War in Iraq; exploring how those views differ from public opinion more generally; and assessing the extent to which scholarly opinion was reflected in the public debate.

To determine how IR scholars' views on the invasion of Iraq differed from those of the public, we compare the answers of IR scholars at US colleges and universities to those of the US public on similar opinion survey questions. To this end, we analyze data from a unique series of surveys of IR scholars conducted by the Teaching, Research, and International Policy (TRIP) project. These data come from surveys of IR faculty in the United States conducted in 2004, 2006 and 2008. These surveys measure IR scholars' opinions across a number of questions regarding US foreign policy and IR. We compare these data with information on public opinion compiled by the Roper Center. We also explore the public debate on the Iraq War by examining op-ed pieces in national newspapers from the time of the invasion.

Together, these data show that scholarly opinion differed markedly from that of the general public in the run-up to and throughout the war in Iraq, but academic views were not well represented in the public discourse on the war. First, we find that IR scholars opposed the war in Iraq from the beginning. Unlike public opinion, scholarly opinion showed no 'rally "round the flag"' effect, in which an international crisis or war generates significant, short run increases in public approval of the president (Mueller, 1973). Second, scholarly opinion on the war remained remarkably stable over time. The actions and rhetoric of US policy officials and important events, such as the beginning of the Iraqi civil war in 2006 or the reduction of violence in Iraq following the 'surge' in 2007, did not change scholarly opinion, although these events had significant effects on public opinion. Third, differences in opinion between IR scholars and the general public can be explained in part by ideology, as conservative IR scholars were more likely than liberal scholars to support the invasion, and liberal scholars far outnumber their conservative counterparts. Even when we control for ideology, however, we find that IR scholars overwhelmingly rejected central components of the Bush administration's Iraq policy in far greater percentages than did the general public. At the same time, scholars' views on the war cannot be explained by their theoretical commitment to particular paradigms or schools of thought: once we control for ideology, realist scholars were no more likely than liberals or others to oppose the war. Finally, we find that IR scholars were not well represented in the public debate on Iraq. This debate largely ignored the scholarly consensus against the war. Whether because IR scholars were not sharing their views beyond the walls of the ivory tower, or because their views were being ignored, the op-ed pages of the nation's largest newspapers systematically over-represented pro-war arguments relative to the actual balance of scholarly opinion. This is true even when we isolate the sample to op-eds written by academics – pro-war scholars were disproportionately likely to be published in newspapers.



Our findings suggest that IR scholars can bring a unique voice to the policy process. Being a member of the IR academy, in other words, has some independent effect on scholars' policy preferences. The data cannot reveal whether this effect is driven more by principled or epistemic ideas. Nevertheless, the extraordinary level of consensus on the war in Iraq – and the fact that those shared policy views are not a function of political beliefs, theoretical commitments or general opposition to the use of force – suggests that IR faculty in the nation's colleges and universities form a community of academic experts. This scholarly community generally does support military intervention under certain conditions, but its members did not see those conditions in Iraq in 2003.

This article proceeds in four parts. In the next section, we present public opinion data on the Iraq invasion. Next, we contrast these data with results from the TRIP survey of IR scholars and show that the differences cannot be explained fully by alternative explanations. In the third section, we examine opinion pieces published in leading US newspapers to show that the consensus among IR scholars was not reflected in the press and public debate. Very few IR scholars were published on op-ed pages, and when scholars did publish op-eds, their views often were not representative of the consensus among their colleagues. In the conclusion we consider the implications of our findings for the IR discipline and for US foreign and security policy.

Before proceeding, it is important to highlight briefly what we do *not* address in this article. We do not explain why IR scholars failed to sway US policy on Iraq. We show that academic views did not receive much media attention, but a complete explanation of the decision to go to war in Iraq is outside the scope of the article. Nor do we seek to explain why IR scholars were ignored in the policy process, although that too is an important research question that follows from findings in this study. Our aim is more modest: we show that IR specialists hold views distinct from those of the general public and that, in the Iraq case, academic opinion was not well represented in the press or reflected in US foreign policy. As IR scholars become increasingly interested in making their research more relevant to policymakers (see Jentlesen, 2002; Walt, 2005; Maliniak *et al*, 2012a; Avey and Desch, 2014), they also will need to learn to make their voices heard in the policy process.

Public Opinion on Iraq

As a baseline for comparison with scholarly opinion, in this section we briefly outline public opinion trends on Iraq. Existing scholarship explores the impact of various factors – including the avoidance of casualties (Mueller, 1973), beliefs about the rightness of the war and the likelihood of victory (Feaver and Gelpi, 2004; Gelpi *et al*, 2005), ethnocentrism (Kam and Kinder, 2007), and partisanship (Jacobson, 2007) – on public support for military action. We examine basic trends in support for the Iraq War, but we do not explore the reasons for that support other than to show

that US public opinion tended to be sensitive to events on the ground in Iraq – including the formation of a transitional government, the 2005 elections, increased sectarian violence in 2006 and the promise of elections in 2010. In general, these public opinion trends show that, following an initial surge of significant support for the invasion, support for the US war in Iraq declined over time.

To study public support for the Iraq War, we gathered polling data from the Roper Center, which compiles publicly available data on US public opinion from a number of sources. All the surveys discussed here employ similar methodologies, including nationally representative samples. Sample sizes typically range from 600 to 2000 respondents. We compare survey questions with similar wording to ensure that differences in marginal responses across surveys reflect shifts in opinion rather than differences in phrasing.

In the early stages of the US war in Iraq, which began in March 2003, Americans overwhelmingly supported the invasion. A Gallup/CNN/*USA Today* Poll conducted in March found that over 70 per cent of Americans favored military intervention. Jacobson (2007) notes that after 11 September 2001 President Bush benefitted from a rally ‘round the flag effect to gain the largest approval rating of any US president since the advent of polling. This effect also characterized early views on the war in Iraq.

Public support declined over time, as Figure 1 demonstrates. This decline began almost immediately after the invasion and accelerated after key real or perceived setbacks in the US prosecution of the war. It was not until late 2005 and early 2006, however, that fewer than half of respondents supported the war. Through the 2007 surge and 2008 presidential election, support dropped even further to below 40 per cent. In short, US opinion on the use of force in Iraq was overwhelmingly

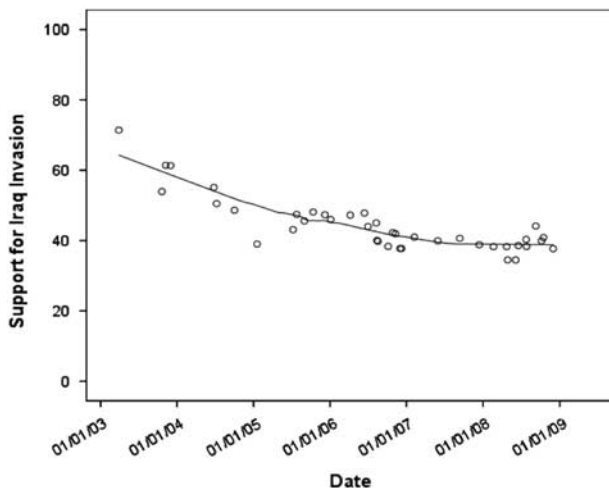


Figure 1: Public support for the Iraq war.



positive at first and declined significantly over time. This support also appeared sensitive to events on the ground, and over time rally effects diminished before disappearing altogether.

Public support for the Bush Administration's arguments for invasion and, later, for continued occupation of Iraq reflects similar trends: decline over time punctuated by responses to specific events. Initially, members of the Bush Administration argued that a pre-emptive strike against Saddam Hussein's Iraq would benefit US security in the long run, both by preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction by a rogue regime and by slowing state-sponsored support for international terrorist networks. A March 2003 Gallup/CNN/*USA Today* poll measured the extent to which the public's attitudes matched the Administration's rationales for an invasion. Specifically, it asked whether each of the following 'reasons for taking military action against Iraq ... is – or is not – a goal worth going to war over:

Freeing the Iraqi people from the rule of Saddam Hussein.

Destroying Iraq's capabilities of producing and using weapons of mass destruction.

Making the United States safer from terrorism.

Paving the way for a peace agreement between the Israelis and Palestinians'.

The results of the poll show that Americans believed that the need to destroy Saddam's weapons of mass destruction capability and to make the United States safer from terrorism were the most important reasons for an invasion. Eighty-seven per cent of respondents believed that each of these two goals was worth fighting for. At the same time, 81 per cent thought that freeing the Iraqi people from Saddam's rule justified the war. In contrast, only 54 per cent believed that facilitating an Israeli/Palestinian peace warranted war in Iraq.

The need to disarm Saddam was discredited after inspectors failed to find any weapons of mass destruction stockpiles, and the Bush Administration turned its focus instead to issues of US security and terrorism. An interesting pattern emerged among responses to polling questions about whether the invasion of Iraq and/or removal of Saddam Hussein from power would enhance US security by reducing the threat of terrorism: public support for the war increased rather than decreased over time. At the time of the invasion in 2003, as Figure 2 illustrates, the rally 'round the flag effect in support for the war did not inhibit skepticism for one of its key justifications. At that time, only 9 per cent of Americans believed that the removal of Saddam would reduce the likelihood of a terrorist attack against the United States. The public became less skeptical, however, as the Iraq war progressed through the end of the Bush Administration without further terrorist attacks on US soil. Similar to public opinion about the invasion, public perceptions of the security rationale were not stable over time.

After the invasion and overthrow of Saddam Hussein, the US administration shifted its rhetoric to the importance of establishing and maintaining a stable and democratic Iraq. Again, as Figure 3 illustrates, public views on this rationale changed over time, often in response to events and perceived progress on the ground in Iraq.

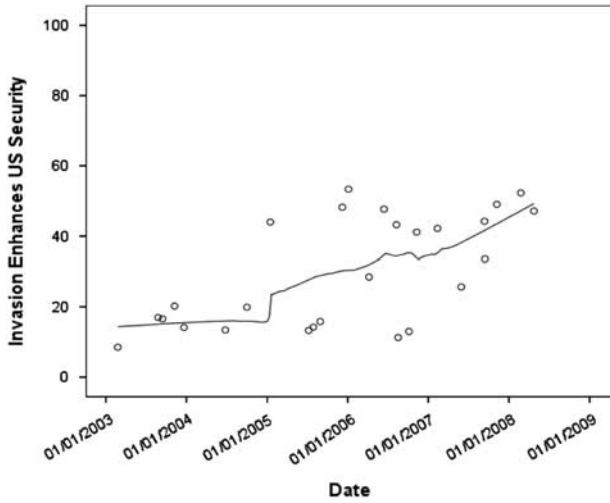


Figure 2: Public beliefs about whether an Iraq invasion enhanced US security.

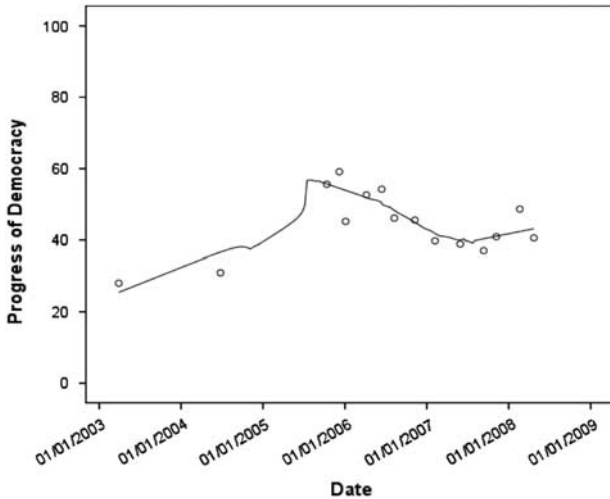


Figure 3: Public beliefs about the progress of democracy in Iraq.

The formation of a new Iraqi government after the fall of Saddam became the centerpiece of the Bush Administration's policy. But the formation of the Transitional Government, the subsequent introduction of democratic elections in 2005 and increased sectarian fighting in 2006 did not provide the stability or political



reconciliation that the US Administration had forecast. Unlike support for the Administration's argument about the link between Iraq and American security, which remained relatively flat until the 2005 Iraqi elections, public beliefs about the progress of efforts to achieve a democratic government in Iraq rose dramatically in 2005 before falling in 2006. Later, belief in Iraq's transition to democracy rose when elections were scheduled for early 2010. Even with this uptick, however, by 2008 fewer than half of US respondents believed that the United States was making progress toward establishing democracy in Iraq.

Public perceptions of the timeframe for establishing democracy in Iraq reflect a similar pattern: initial optimism (at least in relative terms) followed, first, by a waning belief that democracy would ever be possible and, later, by increased confidence. Table 1 presents responses over time to the CBS News Poll question, 'Which of these do you think is most likely? 1. Iraq will become a stable democracy in the next year or two, OR 2. Iraq will become a stable democracy, but it will take longer than a year or two, OR 3. Iraq will probably never become a stable democracy'. Any early optimism was relative since, regardless of the year of the survey, very few Americans ever thought that Iraq would become a democracy in the immediate future. As time progressed, however, fewer and fewer respondents thought democracy would be achieved, even in the long term. Concomitantly, the proportion of Americans who thought that Iraq would never become a democracy rose. At the same time that US hope for progress toward democracy in Iraq declined, another pattern emerged: US public opinion responded to particular events on the ground in Iraq. In December 2003, only 6 per cent of respondents believed that Iraq would become a democracy in the next year or two, and 59 per cent believed that it would become a democracy eventually. By December 2006, these percentages slipped dramatically to three and 32 per cent, respectively, before climbing again in 2007.

Scholarly Opinion

Scholarly opinion on the Iraq war differs significantly from public views. The Teaching, Research, and International Policy (TRIP) surveys of IR faculty in the

Table 1: Public perception of likelihood of democracy in Iraq

	<i>In the next year or two (%)</i>	<i>Longer (%)</i>	<i>Will never become a democracy (%)</i>	<i>Don't know (%)</i>
21–22 December 2003	6	59	31	4
29–31 August 2005	6	42	48	4
21–25 July 2006	5	39	54	2
8–10 December 2006	3	32	61	3
14–16 September 2007	4	40	53	3
30 May–3 June 2008	5	31	61	4

United States provide various measures of IR scholars' opinion on US foreign policy toward Iraq. Comparing these views with those of the general public, we find two main points of difference: the IR experts opposed the war from the outset, and their views did not change substantially over time. After reviewing the TRIP survey's methodology and findings, we outline scholarly opinion on the war in Iraq and consider alternative explanations for the gap between public and scholarly opinion. We conclude that there is a significant effect associated with studying and teaching IR within the US academy.

Survey methods

The TRIP project surveyed IR scholars in three separate rounds in 2004, 2006 and 2008. Each survey attempted to identify all faculty at 4-year colleges and universities in the United States who do research in the IR sub-field or who teach IR courses. The overwhelming majority of respondents have jobs in departments of political science, politics, government, social science, IR or international studies, or in professional schools associated with universities.

Each survey used a list of 4-year colleges and universities compiled by *US News and World Report (USNWR)*. To that list TRIP researchers added the Monterey Institute and nine military schools that were not rated by *USNWR* but that have a large number of political science faculty who teach courses on IR. The sampling frame includes all faculty who teach or research trans-border issues as they relate to some aspect of politics. Hence, the population includes political scientists specializing in American politics who study trade and immigration, and it includes specialists in comparative politics who study trans-border issues or the foreign policy of a particular country/region. This broad definition includes those scholars who create knowledge, teach students and provide expert advice to policymakers about trans-border issues, whether they adopt the 'IR' moniker themselves or not.

We sampled IR faculty members at these schools through a systematic series of Web searches, emails and communications with department chairs, staff and individual scholars. The 2008 survey identified 4126 individuals who appeared to research and/or teach IR, compared with 2705 in 2006 and 2320 in 2004. In all, 1719 scholars responded to the 2008 survey, either online or through the mail, while 1112 responded in 2006 and 1084 in 2004. Additional individuals in the sample may have been misidentified by this selection process, but they were not removed because they never informed the TRIP research team that they did not belong in the sample. Had these individuals been removed from the denominator, the response rate would have been higher. For this reason, the response rates reported here – 42 per cent in 2008, 41 per cent in 2006 and 47 per cent in 2004 – are conservative estimates.



IR scholars and support for the Iraq war

Using the results of the 2004, 2006 and 2008 surveys, we compare IR scholarly opinion with public support for the US war in Iraq. The pattern that emerges in scholarly opinion is different than the trends in public opinion described above. First, while the US public overwhelmingly supported the invasion from the outset, scholars opposed the war. The rally effect observed in the general population did not occur among experts. Second, whereas public opinion proved volatile, declining over time and changing in response to events in Iraq, expert opinion was stable.

From the beginning scholars overwhelmingly opposed the war. In the 2004 survey only 15 per cent of IR faculty reported that they had supported or strongly supported the US decision to go to war in 2003. Seventy-eight per cent reported opposing or strongly opposing the invasion. In fact, the most frequent response, given by 52 per cent of all IR scholars, was that they strongly opposed the US invasion of Iraq. Ideally, we would have data on faculty opinion in 2003, at the outset of the war. In recent retrospective analyses of the 10-year anniversary of the Iraq War some scholars have rightly argued that retrospective surveys asking people how they felt about something in the past may be biased and, in this case, may over-represent scholarly opposition to the Iraq War (Drezner, 2013). The 2004 results reported here, however, include the responses to a survey conducted when the United States had just overthrown Saddam and public support for the war was still high – in other words, when respondents were more likely to be biased in favor of the war. Moreover, all contemporaneous qualitative evidence points toward broad opposition by scholars to the war (Jackson, 2007). All the surveys, even if retrospective, are stable over time, finally, and do not fluctuate as the situation on the ground improved for the United States after the surge. Respondents' views had not changed significantly by 2006, for example, when they were asked the same question, even though political violence between Shiites and Sunnis had escalated and there may have been a temptation for respondents to retroactively believe that they had been opposed to the war at the outset. IR experts had made up their minds on Iraq much earlier, and they remained nearly unified in this opinion. Figure 4 summarizes public and expert opinion on the Iraq invasion.

Levels of expert support for each of the Bush Administration's rationales for war in Iraq also reflect the stability of scholarly opinion. The TRIP survey asked IR scholars whether they believed that the US decision to go to war with Iraq would end up enhancing US security, decreasing US security or having no impact. The experts were much less likely than the general public to believe that the war in Iraq would improve US national security, and their views tended to be stable over time. Only 9 per cent of scholars in 2004 believed that the invasion definitely or probably would benefit the United States, while 7 per cent in 2006 and 8 per cent in 2008 felt the same. A scant 1 per cent of IR experts in 2004 and 2006 and

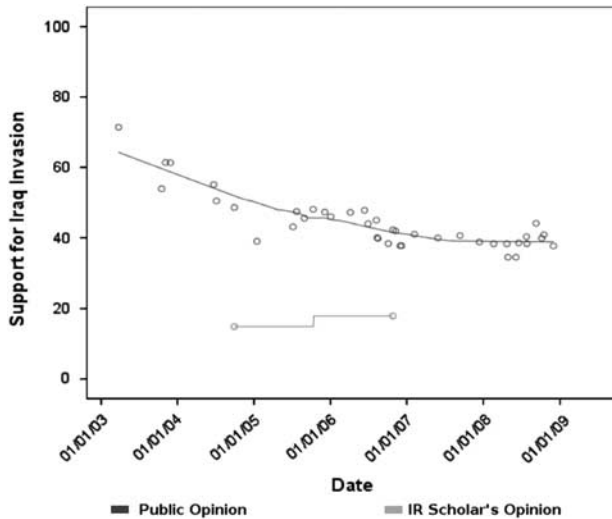


Figure 4: Public and expert opinions about invasion.

2 per cent in 2008 believed that the US war definitely (as opposed to probably) would make the United States more secure. In contrast, 59 per cent of the scholars surveyed in 2004, 62 per cent in 2006 and 45 per cent in 2008 thought the war definitely would decrease US security.

Compared with public opinion on the US invasion of Iraq, scholarly opinion was overwhelmingly negative and static. At the same time, as Figure 5 shows, the early years after the invasion saw only a modest divide between scholarly and public assessments of the security effects of the war. IR faculty were more skeptical than the general public, but the distance between the two groups' views was relatively small. Over time, however, as public perceptions shifted to include more optimistic appraisals of the effect of the war on US national security, the gulf widened because expert opinion remained constant and more pessimistic.

One area where the views of IR scholars and Bush Administration officials overlapped is the assessment of the likelihood that Iraq would become more democratic without a US invasion. In 2006 the TRIP survey asked about the likelihood of a democratic Iraq today and in 10–15 years had the United States not invaded. As Figure 6 shows, IR scholars overwhelmingly believed that Iraq would not have transitioned or become stable or democratic on its own. In 2006 IR scholars remained skeptical, however, that even with the US invasion, Iraq would be a stable democracy within 10–15 years.

Given differences in question wording, it is difficult to directly compare public and scholarly attitudes about the likelihood of democracy emerging in Iraq.

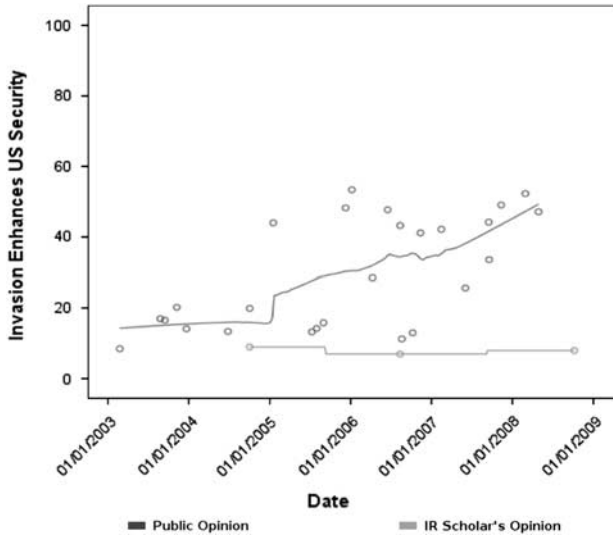


Figure 5: Public versus expert opinion: Will invasion enhance US security.

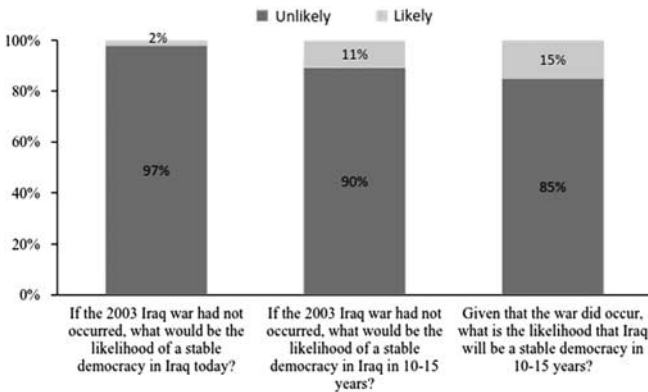


Figure 6: IR expert perceptions of democracy in Iraq (2006).

The TRIP survey only asked about a democratic Iraq in 2006, moreover, so it is impossible to track changes over time on this question. Within these constraints, we see that 32 per cent of the public believed in 2006 that Iraq could become a democracy eventually, but, as Figure 6 shows, only 15 per cent of the more skeptical scholars agreed.

What explains IR scholars' attitudes?

The TRIP survey allows us to explore IR faculty's skepticism about the Iraq war by examining possible determinants of both support for the invasion and beliefs about its effects on US security. There are several potential explanations for the gulf between scholarly and public opinion described above: IR scholars could be uniformly dovish on the use of force and so universally opposed to military intervention; they could be overwhelmingly liberal in their political beliefs, and their liberalism could have driven them to oppose a conservative administration's use of force in Iraq; or they could be overwhelmingly realist in their theoretical commitments and so opposed to the use of force where US interests are not directly at stake. As we show, none of these explanation accounts for IR scholars' attitudes on the Iraq War or the gulf between expert and public opinion.

First, scholars of IR might overwhelmingly be 'doves' who fundamentally oppose the use of force under nearly all conditions. According to such an explanation, it was not the peculiarities of the Iraq case that drove academic opposition to the invasion, but the nature of offensive military action more generally. This hypothesis does not stand up to empirical analysis, however: IR scholars are not unquestioningly opposed to the use of force. Indeed, scholars and the general public agreed on another contemporary use of force issue, the need for increased US troops in Afghanistan. When asked in the fall of 2008 whether a redeployment of US troops from Iraq to Afghanistan was likely to increase, decrease or make no difference to US national security, 57 per cent of IR scholars responded that an Afghan 'surge' would benefit the United States. Only 14 per cent of IR experts believed that the surge would decrease US security. This finding is virtually identical to the 59 per cent of the public who in December 2008 responded to a CNN/Opinion Research Corporation poll that they would favor a decrease in US combat troops in Iraq and an increase in US combat troops in Afghanistan.

Despite their opposition to the invasion of Iraq, IR scholars are often bellicose on questions of the use of force to protect US security, so long as the intervention is multilateral. The 2006 TRIP survey asked about support for possible invasions of North Korea and Iran, two countries included in President Bush's 'Axis of Evil' that were, at the time of the survey, generally believed to be pursuing weapons of mass destruction development. Figure 7 shows that, as they had in Iraq, IR scholars in 2006 opposed a US invasion of North Korea (70 per cent) and Iran (77 per cent). When asked if they would support United Nations mandated multilateral military action, however, 53 per cent said yes about North Korea and 48 per cent agreed for Iran. IR scholars do not oppose the use of force across the board, and they generally do not oppose military action to stop the development of nuclear weapons by rogue regimes. Rather, they often favor such action when it is done in concert with multilateral bodies such as the United Nations. These observations suggest that expert opposition to war in Iraq cannot be explained by any dovish aversion to military intervention.

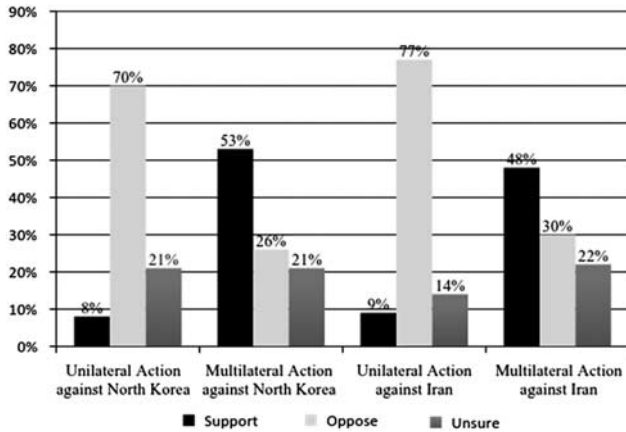


Figure 7: Expert support for unilateral and multilateral action against North Korea and Iran (2006).

Second, those IR scholars who were more ideologically disposed toward the Bush Administration and more likely to support its policies might simply have been too few in number to influence opinion in an academy that is often criticized for being overly liberal. Even if IR scholars as a group do not mirror the ideological or partisan landscape of the US public, those faculty members who describe themselves as conservatives may have been more likely to support an invasion, while liberals may have been more likely to oppose it, and liberals may simply have outnumbered conservatives. The TRIP survey findings certainly support conventional wisdom about the liberal academy: in 2008, 75 per cent of IR faculty described themselves as liberal, while 10 per cent called themselves conservative; in 2006, 70 per cent were liberal and 14 per cent were conservative; and in 2004, 69 per cent were self-described liberals and 13 per cent were conservative. In such a liberal academy it would not be surprising to find overwhelming opposition to war in Iraq.

Indeed, as Table 2 shows, ideologically conservative scholars were far more likely than liberals or moderates to support the US invasion of Iraq. In 2004 and 2006, respectively, 42 and 38 per cent of conservative experts opposed the invasion, compared to 82 and 81 per cent of moderates and 94 and 97 per cent of liberals. While 58 per cent of conservative experts in 2004 and 62 per cent in 2006 reported that they had supported the 2003 initiation of war, only 6 per cent of liberals in 2004 and 3 per cent in 2006 said they had supported the administration’s 2003 decision. Politically moderate IR experts leaned heavily against the war, with only 18 and 19 per cent in 2004 and 2006, respectively, supporting the invasion of Iraq.

Ideology, however, does not completely explain the gulf between experts and the public on Iraq. In 2004, conservative scholars were about 20 percentage points more likely than conservative members of the public to oppose the war. Figure 8 shows

Table 2: Ideology and IR scholars support for 2003 invasion

<i>Support Iraq invasion (2004 percent)</i>		
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
Conservatives	58	42
Moderates	18	82
Liberals	6	94

<i>Support Iraq invasion (2006 percent)</i>		
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
Conservatives	62	38
Moderates	19	81
Liberals	3	97

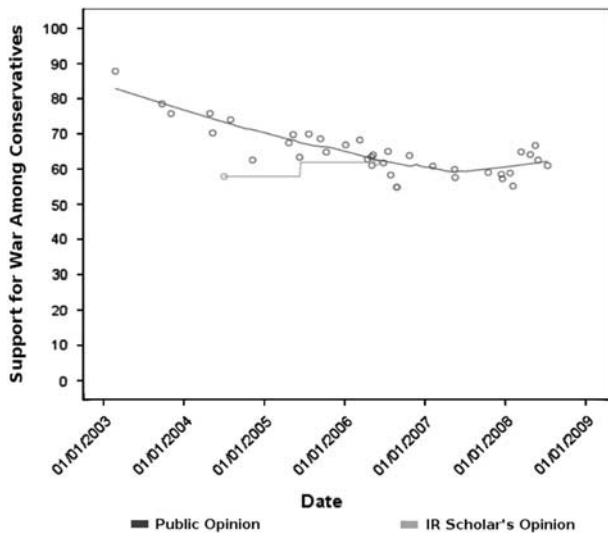


Figure 8: Support for the war among political conservatives.

that among the general public, about 80 per cent of political conservatives supported the war, compared with less than 60 per cent of conservative scholars. As public support for the war in Iraq declined between 2003 and 2007, even political conservatives began to doubt the wisdom of the invasion. Among conservatives in both groups, in fact, opinion on the war had converged by 2007; that is, conservative public support declined by 2007 to the relatively unchanged level of support among



conservative IR scholars. If anything, conservative support within the academy for the war increased slightly from 58 per cent in 2004 to 62 per cent in 2006.

Finally, realism, long considered the dominant paradigm in IR, might explain academic opposition, since that school of thought dictates that a country should use force only when there are clear threats to national interests. Indeed, many realists disliked the idea of intervening in Iraq for strategic reasons: they believed that Iraq posed only a minimal threat that could be contained by other means and that going to war in Iraq would drain resources from other strategic concerns, especially the rise of China, the war in Afghanistan and the need to defeat Al Qaeda.

There are several problems with the argument that realist opposition to the Iraq War explains the gap between scholarly and public opinion on the issue. First, the conventional wisdom is simply wrong: realists do not dominate the IR discipline. In 2004 and 2006, only 25 per cent of IR scholars described themselves as realists, and that number fell to 21 per cent in 2008. Indeed, there are roughly equal numbers of liberals (21 per cent in 2008) and realists (20 per cent) in the faculty sample, but IR scholars as a group overwhelmingly opposed the war. Second, while prominent realists – such as Kenneth Waltz, Stephen Walt and John Mearsheimer – vocally opposed the war, self-described realist respondents were *more* likely on average to support the invasion (25 per cent) than were liberals (11 per cent), constructivists (3 per cent) or Marxists (2 per cent). Rathbun (2012) shows us, however, that politics and paradigm often co-vary: realists are political moderates, but they tend to be more conservative than adherents to most other theoretical schools of thought. Once we control for ideology, we find that realists are no more likely than liberals or those who do not adhere to a particular paradigm to support or oppose the war in Iraq (Maliniak *et al*, 2007b; Maliniak *et al*, 2012b). In Appendix Table A1, there is no statistically significant correlation between realism, or any other paradigm, and scholars' views on whether the United States should have gone to war in Iraq or whether that war would enhance US security. Similarly, once we control for paradigm, the effects of political ideology diminish.

Our findings suggest the existence of a body of shared policy beliefs among IR scholars. These beliefs may derive from shared knowledge of the field, shared normative principles or both. We know that they do not reflect a shared normative aversion to war. We also know that they do not reflect a commitment to specific paradigmatic tenets, since liberals and realists alike opposed US policy in Iraq. This suggests the plausibility of another explanation, that IR scholars' shared knowledge of world politics, causal beliefs about civil and international war, and preferred policy solutions constitute them as an 'epistemic community' – 'a network of professionals with recognized expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge within that domain or issue-area' (Haas, 1992, p. 3) – whose effects on respondents' views on the Iraq war outstrip those of political ideology, paradigm and general views about the use of force. Members of an epistemic community share causal beliefs, problem-solving tools or

skills and preferred solutions (Adler and Haas, 1992). Previous work has shown that such communities often form in scientific and technological areas, where members share common understandings of policy problems and solutions. Epistemic communities may influence policy by helping to identify a policy problem.

A complete test of the claim that the beliefs of an epistemic community of IR scholars explain scholarly opposition to the war in Iraq would require that we establish the existence of such a community before the events we are studying here and that we show that the beliefs shared within this community were knowledge-based, rather than norm-based. We do not do that here. We do show, however, that a group of experts who share similar training and knowledge also share policy beliefs about the use of force and particularly about the use of force in Iraq in the first decade of the twenty-first century. We also can show, moreover, that those shared policy views are not (or not entirely) a function of political beliefs, theoretical commitments or general opposition to the use of force. IR scholars generally support military intervention under certain conditions, but they did not see those conditions in Iraq in 2003 and beyond.

Scholarly Consensus Ignored

The US public overwhelmingly supported the Bush Administration's decision to go to war in Iraq, while IR scholars overwhelmingly rejected the policy from the outset, suggesting that these academics may comprise a knowledge-based community that influenced their thinking about the Iraq War. Previous research suggests that such a network or community of professionals may influence policy by providing information to national leaders and speaking authoritatively about their area of expertise. Epistemic communities have shaped public debates, internal policy deliberations and policy outcomes on issues as diverse as marine pollution (Haas, 1989, 1990), ozone depletion (Haas, 1992), global warming (Demeritt, 2001), trade in services (Drake and Nicolaidis, 1992) and arms control (Adler, 1992).

A complete understanding of why the IR community failed to influence US policy (or even the public discourse) toward Iraq is outside the scope of this article. Certainly, part of the reason for this failure may have to do with the nature of epistemic communities, which tend to have the greatest impact in conditions of uncertainty (Adler and Haas, 1992). In retrospect, the lead-up to the war in Iraq was characterized by unfounded assumptions and faulty intelligence, but it was not characterized, at least publicly, by uncertainty among policymakers in the Bush Administration. Instead, even the small number of skeptics within the State Department and the Central Intelligence Agency, who were initially uncertain about whether Iraq had operational weapons of mass destruction, eventually came to believe that Iraq had such capability. Indeed, many of the Administration's critics shared the widespread belief that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction, but nevertheless encouraged a continued



policy of containment (Mearsheimer and Walt, 2003; Woodward, 2004). In any case, IR scholars' expertise and policy prescriptions in this issue area were not reflected in the Administration's Iraq policy.

As important, and perhaps part of the reason for policymakers' neglect of scholarly opinion, this expertise was not well represented in the US media, which portrayed expert opinion on the war as divided. We know from the findings of the TRIP survey and other sources (for example, Jackson and Kaufmann, 2007), however, that scholarly opinion was strongly unified. The media's presentation of a balance of opinion meant that it was relatively easy for both the public and the policy-making elite to mistakenly assume that there existed a robust debate among the experts. The pages of the major US newspapers highlighted a biased sample of expert opinion, and/or did not print analyses by IR scholars as frequently as those by politicians, journalists, pundits and Iraqi expatriates.

Public opinion, elite opinion and the media interact to influence each other and US foreign policy. Baum and Potter (2008) present a framework for understanding this relationship during a military conflict. The public's foreign policy attitudes generally are less informed and less deeply felt than are their beliefs about pocketbook or moral issues, so their demand for information about foreign policy during the early stage of a conflict is low. As the conflict continues, however, and especially as casualties mount, the public is likely to demand more information from the media. This increased demand on the media helps close the information gap between national leaders and the public. In the Iraq case it appears that, as the public received more information about the war, opinion shifted against US policy and moved closer to IR scholars' views. Even if the public had sought more information from the media early in the conflict, however, what they would have found was a relatively balanced, and therefore biased, sample of expert opinion. Public attitudes on foreign policy may be more malleable and open to persuasion by national leaders and the media than are domestic or budget views (Berinsky and Druckman, 2007), but the pages of the major dailies painted a view of the situation in Iraq that did not accurately reflect the overwhelming opposition to the war among IR scholars.

To measure media coverage of Iraq before and shortly after the 2003 invasion, we perform content analysis on opinion pieces in three major national newspapers: the *New York Times*, *USA Today* and the *Wall Street Journal*. These news sources represent only a small percentage of the total news exposure Americans likely received on the issue, but we believe that these three newspapers reflected the content and tone of the larger debate within the wider media. In terms of editorial policies (if not reportage), the *New York Times* is generally considered a left-of-center paper, the *Wall Street Journal* is generally thought to be right-of-center and *USA Today* is considered more middle-of-the-road. Insofar as these papers reflect prevailing liberal, conservative and moderate opinions, respectively, we believe that they present a representative snapshot of the debate over the Iraq invasion in the mainstream media.

Table 3: Balance of opinions expressed in major US newspapers regarding Iraq invasion

	<i>New York Times</i>	<i>USA Today</i>	<i>Wall Street Journal</i>	Total
Mean	2.6	2.9	4.4	3.3
Count	354	89	296	739

Note: 1 = anti-war and 5 = pro-war.

For each newspaper, we listed the universe of opinion pieces on the specific subject of a US invasion published between the 11 September 2001 and December 2003, a period ranging from 19 months before to 9 months after the invasion. The *New York Times* included 354 op-eds, the *Wall Street Journal* had 296 and *USA Today* published 89 opinion pieces on an Iraq invasion. We coded each op-ed on a 5-point scale measuring the extent to which it was pro-war or anti-war. A score of 1 indicates that the article was anti-war; 2 indicates it was leaning anti-war; 3 signifies a neutral position on the issue; 4 means it was leaning pro-war; and a score of 5 indicates that the op-ed was pro-war. Table 3 presents the mean score for each newspaper. The *New York Times* receives a mean score of 2.6, leaning slightly against war. *USA Today's* editorial policy was neutral with a score of 2.9. The *Wall Street Journal* leaned fairly strongly toward war with a score of 4.4. Averaging across the three papers produces an overall mean score of 3.3: the pages of the nation's major newspapers showed an overall balance of expert opinion, even leaning slightly toward a US war against Iraq.

Expert opinion printed in the nation's major dailies differed markedly from the reality in the academy, where IR scholars overwhelmingly opposed war. Simply looking at the mean scores across the papers, however, masks another trend: the right-of-center *Wall Street Journal* presented a strong and consistent pro-war perspective, while the left-of-center *New York Times* leaned only slightly anti-war. The middle-of-the-road *USA Today* projected a relatively neutral stance toward the invasion. Overall, op-ed coverage was either relatively balanced or skewed toward supporting the invasion. This finding should not be surprising. Mueller (1994, p. 75) reported about the 1991 Persian Gulf War that the editorial team of the *Los Angeles Times* had pegged its coverage to public support for President George H. W. Bush's Iraq policy: since support for the war at the time was running 80 per cent in favor and 20 per cent against, the paper's coverage needed to be 80 per cent positive. Regardless of the reason for the particular balance of published opinion pieces in 2003 and beyond, the op-eds did not reflect the largely anti-invasion views among scholarly experts of IR.

Few of the op-eds published about the Iraq War were authored by academic experts, and on balance the scholars whose essays were published were more 'pro-war' than their fellow experts in the academy. IR scholars authored only 5 per cent of all op-eds published on the topic of the Iraq War. These scholars were not representative of the larger IR community: their average score was 3.1, leaning slightly pro-war but far more hawkish than IR scholars in general. We cannot know whether IR scholars were



submitting op-ed pieces that were going unpublished. At the end of the day, though, we can say that very few scholars were heard on the most important foreign policy issue facing the United States.

Conclusion

Scholars of IR, experts on the dynamics of world politics and the use of force, opposed the US war in Iraq early and strongly. Overwhelmingly united against the war from the outset, scholars did not exhibit the same rally effect shown in the early public support for the 2003 invasion. Public opinion grew gradually more disenchanting over time, only beginning to creep up again in 2008, but academic opinion was stable and relatively insensitive to events on the ground in Iraq. Perhaps more striking, scholarly opposition to the war holds even when we control for ideology and paradigm; conservatives within the academy were far more likely than their conservative counterparts in the general public to oppose US policy in Iraq, and realists were not more likely than liberals or others to oppose the war.

Rather, the IR academic community bears many markings of an epistemic community with shared causal beliefs and policy solutions. Our data do not allow us to conclude that the academic consensus resulted from epistemic beliefs, rather than normative beliefs or both epistemic and normative ideas combined. We can say that, despite the consensus among IR scholars, academic experts were not well represented in the public debates leading up to and the early stages of the war. Indeed, most Americans probably were not even aware of the overwhelming scholarly consensus against war, since the editorial pages of the nation's major newspapers appear to have privileged a balance of views over an accurate representation of the opinions of IR experts within the academy.

We do not know why scholarly opinion against the war did not find its way onto the op-ed pages of America's major newspapers. IR scholars may simply have chosen to remain silent. This seems unlikely, however. Several dozen highly influential scholars placed an ad in the *New York Times* in 2002 opposing the use of force in Iraq, and hundreds of IR scholars signed an open letter in the *New York Times* in 2004 opposing what they saw as the Bush administration's 'misguided' policy in Iraq. It is doubtful that they would then hide their heads in the sand, or that even a small minority of those scholars would not continue to try to influence US policy in Iraq by writing analyses, op-eds and articles.

Walt (2009) suggests one reason why scholars may have chosen not to speak out against the war. He describes a news story about a well-known IR scholar who believes that academics remained silent because they knew they could not influence the Bush administration. This scholar noted, 'I don't think all the academics in the world could have had much impact on American public opinion ... I don't think academics matter'. In fact, the Bush administration's inattention to scholarly



opposition to Iraq policy stands in stark contrast to the role in the policy process often played by academic experts from other disciplines. When economists agreed in 2008 that a tax holiday on the nation's federal gasoline tax would not accrue benefits to most citizens, the experts' views were accorded serious public attention. Similarly, the consensus among scientists who study the upper atmosphere has framed the debate about the need for an international agreement to reduce ozone depletion. Political elites often craft policy that diverges from scholarly opinion (as the Bush administration did on global climate change, for instance), but it is unusual and striking for political leaders, the press and the public to ignore experts to the degree that they disregarded IR scholars on the Iraq war.

Previous research on publications in IR journals over the last 30 years (Maliniak *et al*, 2011), as well as the TRIP faculty surveys (Peterson *et al*, 2005a, b; Maliniak *et al*, 2007a; Jordan *et al*, 2009; Maliniak *et al*, 2011), portrays a scholarly discipline that wants to be policy-relevant: large numbers of scholars consult for the US government, believe that IR scholarship is useful to policymakers and intend their research to be prescriptive. For this reason, scholars often lament and are puzzled by the irrelevance of their work to policymakers (Walt, 2005; Nye, 2009). At the same time, however, little scholarly research in the field actually draws links to current policy debates, except after a major international event (Maliniak *et al*, 2011). It should not be surprising, then, that policy makers often do not listen to IR scholars. Nearly a decade of war in Iraq, however, has helped galvanize a movement toward greater policy relevance for the IR discipline. Numerous efforts to study and improve the interaction between the academy and the beltway have emerged in recent years, as policymakers, executive agencies and private foundations demand (and some academics strive for) a greater role in the policy process and seek to ensure that their voices will be heard on major national security issues.

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Appendix

Table A1: Ordered logit results predicting support for Iraq war and belief that war enhanced US security among IR scholars (TRIP survey)

	<i>Support for Iraq war</i> (1 = Strongly opposed, 5 = Strongly supported)					<i>Belief that war enhanced US security</i> (1 = Strongly decrease, 5 = Strongly enhance)				
	<i>A</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>G</i>	<i>H</i>	<i>I</i>	<i>J</i>
WMD	5.661*** (0.521)	—	—	—	5.241*** (0.533)	5.353*** (0.434)	—	—	—	4.918*** (0.455)
Mideast Expert	—	0.816*** (0.214)	—	—	0.832** (0.366)	—	0.681** (0.213)	—	—	0.375 (0.328)
Conservative	—	—	3.093*** (0.239)	—	1.718*** (0.348)	—	—	3.029*** (0.236)	—	1.615*** (0.332)
Realism	—	—	—	1.401*** (0.206)	0.266 (0.416)	—	—	—	1.419*** (0.201)	0.705 (0.381)
Liberalism	—	—	—	—	-0.292 (0.396)	—	—	—	—	-0.077 (0.380)
Marxism	—	—	—	—	-1.556 (1.797)	—	—	—	—	-1.256 (1.777)
Constructivism	—	—	—	—	-1.384** (0.643)	—	—	—	—	-0.023 (0.589)
Constant	-5.407*** (0.501)	-2.297*** (0.116)	-2.766*** (0.134)	-2.479*** (0.125)	-5.614*** (0.552)	-4.999*** (0.410)	-2.193*** (0.111)	-2.663*** (0.128)	-2.419*** (0.121)	-5.332*** (0.450)
<i>N</i>	1102	1102	1102	1102	1102	1102	1102	1102	1102	1102
Pseudo- <i>R</i> ²	0.5603	0.0177	0.2211	0.0562	0.6235	0.554	0.0121	0.2093	0.0582	0.6041

Note: Results from an ordered logit, robust standard errors in parentheses. ***Significant at 1 per cent, **Significant at 5 per cent.

