

Public Opinion and the International Use of Force

Edited by

Philip Everts and Pierangelo Isernia

Routledge/ECPR Studies in European Political Science



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Public Opinion and the International Use of Force

Recent years have witnessed a growing interest in the relationship between public opinion and foreign policy in Western democracies. Contemporary research has challenged earlier conclusions regarding the volatility of public opinion, the coherence of political beliefs and the impact of public opinion on policy making. However, until now the debate has been limited by a focus on American, rather than European, public opinion and foreign policy, a primary concern with the opinion-policy connection during the Cold War. More particularly, there is also scholarly neglect of the crucial role played by casualties and casualty-related issues in the calculations of decision makers and the support of mass opinion regarding the international use of military force.

Public Opinion and the International Use of Force addresses these previously overlooked issues and constitutes a major contribution towards filling the gaps in current scholarship. Its international contributors use comparative studies to offer completely up-to-date analyses based on the United States and a wide range of other countries. Combining various forms of analysis, the book examines the ways in which public opinion and its relationship with decisions on the use of military force have developed since the end of the Cold War. In so doing, it also addresses in particular the so-called 'casualty hypothesis' and, more generally, the crucial and topical question of whether—and to what extent—a democratic foreign policy in this area is either desirable or possible.

This book is stimulating and invaluable reading for students, scholars and practitioners interested in foreign policy, public policy, public opinion and international relations.

Philip Everts is Director of the Institute for International Studies at the University of Leiden. He has published (in Dutch) *Leave It To Us! Democracy, Foreign Policy and Peace*. **Pierangelo Isernia** is Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Siena. He recently co-edited *Decision Making in a Glass House: Mass Media, Public Opinion and American and European Foreign Policy*.

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Series editor's preface

The gulf between the presumed irrationalities of public opinion and the real world of violent international relations probably has never been more evident than in the summer of 1914. Apparently with great enthusiasm and overwhelming popular support, the people of Europe entered one of the most devastating wars in history. At the end of the century, problems in the Balkan region once again led to military conflicts. This time, however, popular support was much less clear. NATO bombing of Yugoslavia in the spring of 1999 relied on the use of sophisticated aircraft and missile technology instead of risking the lives of millions. In order to avoid the expected consequences of a deteriorating public opinion on international policy making, not a single NATO soldier should die. Nothing could be more threatening to the attempts to reach specific goals than television reports showing politicians at airport ceremonies receiving the remains of their own soldiers in flag-covered coffins. Obviously, the *body-bag syndrome* makes the *zero-dead strategy* virtually unavoidable when democracies go to war nowadays.

Myths are tough and reappear at regular intervals. The presumed waves of enthusiasm and popular support continue to characterise depictions of the events in the summer of 1914, no matter how many reports by serious historians draw a much more differentiated picture. The same applies to more recent events. The relationships and recursive impacts of political opinion, on the one hand, and foreign policy making, on the other, seem to remain an area where myths and common sense are as important as the results of careful and subtle analyses of the available empirical evidence. In the collection of essays presented in this volume the authors deal with the question of how and why the impact of public opinion on foreign policy making has changed in the last few decades. They try to fill three major gaps in the discussions about this relationship. First, many conclusions are based on US studies and it is not self-evident that public attitudes in Europe underlie similar structuring principles and mechanisms. The analyses have to start, then, with a closer look at the content and nature of public opinion about foreign policy issues. Second, most analyses are restricted to experiences during the Cold War. With the collapse of the Soviet Union the bipolar international landscape changed radically and many conflicts are defined as armed interventions ('humanitarian aid') instead of conventional inter-state wars.

This development might have consequences for interpretations of the links between public opinion and policy making. Finally, the authors address the role of casualty-related considerations in the calculations of decision makers as well as in mass support for the use of force.

In order to deal with these complicated themes and topics, the contributors to this volume analyse thoroughly the empirical evidence available for a large number of countries and conflicts. Before these analyses are presented, Philip Everts provides an extensive overview of the available interpretations in the introduction to this volume ([Chapter 1](#)). His co-editor Pierangelo Isernia returns to the questions and problems discussed by Everts in the concluding chapter, summarising the results presented in the nine substantive contributions in a systematic way ([Chapter 11](#)). These nine chapters are grouped in two parts of the book. The structure, determinants and correlates of public support for the use of military force are the main objects of the contributions to [Part I](#). William O. Chittick and Annette Freyberg-Inan develop a general framework for the study of public opinion ([Chapter 2](#)), and Zoltán Juhász investigates the structure and development of public opinion on the basis of the experiences in Germany in the 1990s ([Chapter 3](#)). At the aggregate level, the support for military action and peacekeeping is analysed for the Italian case by Pierangelo Isernia ([Chapter 4](#)), and by Jan van der Meulen and Marijke de Konink for the Dutch actions in the Balkans ([Chapter 5](#)). The relationships between public opinion and foreign policy making are approached in several ways in [Part II](#). The adaptation of dramatic changes in foreign policies by the public is studied by Karin Gilland focusing on the changed meaning of the traditional Irish concept of neutrality ([Chapter 6](#)), and by Tamar Hermann who explores the impact of the events related to the signing of the Oslo treaties by Israel ([Chapter 7](#)). In the remaining substantive contributions the viewpoint is moved to that of decision makers. Natalie La Balme develops a typology of ways through which French decision makers cope with public opinion towards the use of force ([Chapter 8](#)). Striking differences between the results of opinion polls, on the one hand, and media's characterisations of the public mood, on the other, are presented by Steven Kull and Clay Ramsay in their analyses of the perception of public opinion by American policy makers ([Chapter 9](#)). Finally, Philip Everts explores the support for NATO air campaigns during the Kosovo conflict in the spring of 1999 on the basis of a comparative study of European and American public opinion data.

The empirical record on the relationships between public opinion and foreign policy making shows a complex and divergent picture. Public opinion on the use of force appears to be much less irrational, uninformed, whimsical, or driven by images of *body-bags* than is commonly presumed or suggested. But nor does public opinion lead to war by implication. As Natalie La Balme reminds us: 'Public opinion can act as a catalyst, but it does not, by itself, have the power to force governments to launch these military operations.' This recursive relationship and mutual dependency of public opinion and foreign policy making in democratic political systems will continuously present new puzzles and problems. Only

thoroughly empirical analyses, based on a wide variety of different cases and approaches as presented in this volume, might lead to the disappearance of some tough myths and prejudices.

Jan W. van Deth
Mannheim, June 2000

Editors' preface

A number of years ago a group of European researchers started to meet occasionally and in varying settings and composition. They were joined by a common interest in the content, origins and impact of public opinion on international affairs. They also aimed at pooling resources, data and insights. More particularly, they shared the conviction that it might be useful for furthering understanding of the European situation to build on research results and methodologies already developed in the United States. Applying these to studies of European countries might also help to answer the question as to whether and to what extent these results could be generalised. A conference organised at the University of Siena, Italy, held in October 1996 at Pontignano, was the starting point for more specific cooperation. While the group (albeit loose) continued to meet at various other occasions and conferences before and since then, that conference was the starting point for specific cooperation, by bringing together coalescing interests and activities that until that time were scattered among individuals in an uncoordinated fashion. Among other things, the group produced a proposal—which was accepted by the European Consortium for Political Research—for a workshop to be held at the ECPR Joint Sessions of Workshops in Warwick, UK, in March 1998, and to be chaired by the editors of the present work. The workshop focused on public opinion on the international use of military force and brought together a diverse group of researchers to discuss the role of public opinion in foreign policy in a primarily non-American context, although it greatly profited from the active participation of a few American colleagues. Some fifteen papers were presented and discussed by the participants. The organisers of the workshop were then invited to develop a proposal for a book that would consist first of all of a selection of the workshop papers. In making their selection, the editors tried not only to select the best papers, but also those that would give as much coherence to the book as possible. All papers were revised, often considerably, to fit into the common framework of analysis, and in the light of the discussions at Warwick. Some chapters were written especially for this book, such as the Introduction and the Conclusions, and also the chapter on public opinion on the conflict over Kosovo in 1999, which was included to bring the analysis as up to date as possible.

This book is therefore a reflection of earlier work, but it is also very much ‘work in progress’ and part of an ongoing project, aimed at studying the role of public opinion in foreign policy in a comparative perspective and trans-Atlantic context. Another outgrowth of this wider project was the book *Decisionmaking in a glass house. Mass media, public opinion and American and European foreign policy in the 21st century*, edited by Brigitte L.Nacos, Robert Y.Shapiro and Pierangelo Isernia and published by Rowman & Littlefield, 2000. It was the outcome of a conference, held at Columbia University in New York, and succeeded in bringing together a good representation of both Americans and Europeans working in this field. In many ways that book is a companion volume to the present one, which focuses on one particular aspect: the use of force in the conditions of the post-Cold War world.

This book would not have been possible without the efforts and contributions of many people. We want to acknowledge this and thank them for their indispensable assistance. Too many people to be listed individually were helpful in contributing data or references to data on public opinion on the Kosovo conflict, collected for [Chapter 10](#). As far as institutions are concerned, our thanks go to: Archivio Disarmo; Centro Interdipartimentale di Ricerca sul Cambiamento Politico (CIRCaP) of Università di Siena; Monte dei Paschi di Siena; the National Archives; and SWG-Servizi Integrati di Ricerca, Trieste, all in Italy.

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Finally, we wish to thank all those involved in the editorial and publication process for being patient and understanding with us and accepting delays and other shortcomings on our part.

While each author is responsible for his or her individual chapter, the responsibility for the overall selection and presentation remains ours.

Pierangelo Isernia and Philip Everts
Siena and Leiden,
December 2000

1

Introduction

Philip Everts

The democratic model and its application

The recent conflict in Kosovo (1999) has forcefully reminded us once again of the role and significance of public opinion, alleged or real, in decision-making concerning war and peace and the use of military force in particular.¹ The decision of the NATO allies to rely on air power alone, with the corresponding number of innocent civilian casualties in Serbia, was, among other things, motivated by an assumption or perception that public opinion would not support a war in which the risk of military casualties on the allied side was anything but minimal.

The Kosovo conflict, therefore, not only raised profound questions of prudence and statecraft, but also disturbing questions about their moral implications. Kosovo is, however, only the most recent example of the difficulties democratic systems face when dealing with the twin tensions of peace and justice in the post-Cold War world.

A confusing debate

The debate over these issues is not a new one. It takes place along two axes: one concerns the distinction between empirical and normative considerations, the other concerns the realist-liberal dimension. Representative democracy is built upon the notion that public opinion underpins public policy. The reality of this remains an empirically open question and the real role of public opinion in the formulation of foreign, security and defence policy can be, and often has been, questioned. While most students of foreign policy agree that the willingness and ability of democratic governments to involve their military in international conflicts will indeed be affected in some way by public opinion, the implications of this have always been controversial.

From a normative perspective, the role public opinion ought to play in the formulation of foreign policy can therefore also be questioned (sometimes challenging the ideals of representative democracy).² Although the sensitivity to political response fully corresponds to democratic ideals, it has often been

questioned, for instance, whether it would be wise for governments to pay more attention to the opinion and demands of the population when it comes to foreign and security policy decisions.

The possibility and/or desirability of applying the democratic model to the making of foreign policy, or, more generally, the relationship between domestic democracy and international peace, has been the subject of often intense debates ever since the ideas about democracy began to be discussed in the Age of Enlightenment. In these debates, conceptual, methodological, empirical and normative questions are inextricably intertwined, and it is therefore understandable how the debate has often tended to spread more heat than light. Although various issues are involved in the debate, two fundamentally opposed traditions have developed. The first claims that the normal functioning of democratic processes is equally possible in foreign policy as in domestic affairs, and that for this reason the foreign policy making of democratic states is different from that of authoritarian and totalitarian ones. Moreover, democratic control of foreign policy is not only possible but also desirable, and democracy is conducive to peace. The international peace movement is among the inheritors of this 'Kantian' tradition. Its present-day supporters can point to the thesis of the 'democratic peace', the fact that democracies do not fight one another. They also stress the degree to which the public is knowledgeable or at least able to form a considerate opinion, as well as the stability, consistency and rationality of public opinion. The adherents of the opposing view, however, stress the incompatibility between democracy and foreign policy. They have equally respectable credentials. They tend to emphasise the complexity of foreign policy, the remoteness of the issues involved, leading to lack of knowledge and involvement, as well as the alleged emotionality and volatility of popular attitudes. In short, foreign policy is to be seen as 'incompatible' with the requirements of democracy. In their view, all of this makes it undesirable if not impossible to leave questions concerning the vital interests of the nation to the vagaries of the democratic process. According to Walter Lippmann (1922), who is often quoted in this connection, public opinion was always wrong on the issues of war and peace, being 'too pacifist in peace and too bellicose in war, too neutralist or too appeasing in negotiations'.

As far as the empirical aspects are concerned, different observations and views concerning the nature of the public and its impact on foreign policy underlie the two views. According to the realist view, public opinion is irrational and volatile or, more precisely, is volatile because it is irrational and this is so because foreign policy is 'out of sight, out of mind and out of touch', to quote Walter Lippmann (1922:30) again. Moreover, and probably more important, the realists do not deny that public opinion does often indeed have an impact on policy making in democracies, but this is the very reason democratic foreign policy making is erratic and incoherent. From all this, they normatively derive that a good foreign policy is incompatible with the democratic process and therefore

the decision-making process should be isolated from the vagaries of public opinion.

On the other hand, the liberal 'Kantian' view claims opposite empirical evidence. Public opinion is a force of reasonableness and peace, but unfortunately it has no impact on the actual process of foreign policy making. Therefore, foreign policy is bellicose and reckless. From all this, they draw the normative conclusion that public opinion should make itself heard in foreign policy to make it more peaceful and rational.

Positions on the questions of the nature of the public, its impact on foreign policy and whether this is good or bad do not entirely coincide, however, with the realist-liberal dimension, if only because there are, at least theoretically, other positions. In fact, one could say that there are three logically separate questions involved, two of which are empirical and one normative. The empirical questions concern the nature and quality of public opinion, on the one hand, and its concrete impact on foreign policy, on the other. The normative question concerns our appreciation of these empirical situations and the desirability of maintaining or changing them. Thus, for instance, apart from the positions outlined above, there are those liberals who recognise that public opinion may often be volatile and detached from the normal foreign policy decision-making process, but who also argue that it could be made a force of peace if only properly educated. On the other hand, there are those realists who recognise that the public may be rational, but claim that public opinion is wrong because it is too peaceful and averse to risk-taking. This is, for example, the position of Luttwak (1994) who claims that the public nowadays is reluctant to fight, based on a careful cost-benefit analysis of the possible losses of children in war.

Regarding the public's competence, it might be claimed that both camps agree in recognising that, whatever one's preferences, public opinion on foreign policy and national security issues does not always demonstrate sensibility and responsiveness to changing conditions, because of the complexity of these issues, their low level of visibility or salience to ordinary citizens, and the public's lack of factual information. Where the two sides diverge concerns, among other things, whether it is possible, through appropriate means, for the public to become more attentive, interested, and knowledgeable about such issues. It is not so much the superficiality and susceptibility of public opinion to manipulation that are the focus of debate, but rather the possibility of overcoming such deficiencies and making public opinion less superficial and less susceptible to manipulation. To this end, one camp claims that open debate and high-spirited discussion are crucial to increasing the public's level of awareness, whereas the other side contends that this only makes these matters worse. Clearly, this is an open question for urgent further study of how the public becomes informed about international affairs and foreign policy.

Participants in the public debate on democracy and foreign policy are often likely to make their normative judgement not as a general statement, but on the

basis of those cases where they happen to be in (dis)agreement with the direction of public preferences. This takes us straight into the consideration of the degree to which we are able to make generalising statements, or should refrain from doing so.

At first sight the complexity of the question is, however, just as evident as its importance. Whatever the case and whatever one's normative judgement on these matters, this book departs from the fact that public opinion has always been involved in one way or another in modern wars. Therefore its role should be taken into account in any analysis of policy and decision making by governments considering the international use of force (Everts 1996; Sinnott 1995).

A new situation

As a consequence of the end of the Cold War, the question of war and peace has fundamentally changed, at least in Europe. Specific dangers, first of all, have been replaced by diffuse risks requiring a variety of actual or possible uses of the military forces. During the 1990s, Western European countries have been experiencing an acceleration in the process of political and institutional integration that implies a radical reconsideration of the issue of national sovereignty. In addition, new issues have emerged in international affairs, not only in the areas of national defence and security, but also those of the international economy and the global environment.

One implication of these recent changes could be that the thesis of the democratic peace may become less relevant when, as is presently the case, interstate wars have become far less likely and less frequent when compared to forms of violent intra-state conflicts. Another implication could be a heightening of the tensions between the requirements of international responsibility with respect to these intra-state conflicts and current gross violations of human rights, along with the tendency of democratic systems to risk the lives of their soldiers only in the case of direct threats to immediate national interests.

All of this forces one to take a new look at the ancient debate concerning the implications of the democratic model concerning foreign policy in general, and the use of military force in particular. The normative debate referred to above will probably continue but strengthening the empirical basis on which it is carried out may further it. At least that is the basic normative rationale behind this book. Our knowledge in this area of study may have increased considerably over the years, but it still leaves a lot to be desired. Fundamental gaps in our understanding remain.

Limitations of the debate

In empirical terms, much of the debate has been limited in three important ways. First, much of the evidence has been based on data from US public opinion and its relationship to US foreign policy. Less attention has been devoted to

European publics. A lack of comparable data across nations and across time still poses severe limitations to our understanding of European public opinion and to our ability to extrapolate available findings across nations, although the gaps in our knowledge concerning public attitudes in Europe on foreign affairs, including the use of military force, are beginning to be filled.

Second, research has not yet expanded much beyond the examination of the opinion—policy connection relevant to and in the context of the Cold War. Especially in Europe, the problem of war and peace has fundamentally changed, however, as a consequence of the end of the Cold War and because of the recent pace of European integration. Both the recent radical changes in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union and the profound restructuring and enlargement of the European Union should offer a unique opportunity to examine to what extent mass beliefs and attitudes have changed over time in connection with changes in the political landscape, and to specify the extent to which the conclusions reached based on analyses of the Cold War period still hold today and into the future. Taking these two shortcomings together, this means that a much greater and systematic cross-national effort is needed to increase our understanding of the crucial relationships between public policy and public opinion in a new world of international politics that covers a wide spectrum of democratic regimes and a diverse set of issues.

Third, this debate has generally overlooked the crucial role that casualties of war and casualty-related considerations have come to play in both the calculations of decision makers and in the support of mass opinion regarding the international use of force.

This book is a contribution towards filling these three particular gaps. It is deliberately comparative, offering analyses across a wide set of countries (superpowers, medium- and small-size powers, countries facing the risk of or actual involvement in war as well as countries involved in peace-keeping operations) in both the Cold War and post-Cold War periods. In doing so it attempts to look at the role of public opinion at both the individual and aggregate level.

Four issues

Specifically, we shall assess and explore the following topics and issues:

- 1 What are the implications of the recent fundamental changes in the international system that took place in the last few years concerning attitudes towards using military force, especially with regard to the stability and consistency of these attitudes and their possible sources of differences? More precisely, we shall examine to what extent the increasing number of peacekeeping, peace-enforcing and peace-supporting operations carried out by a variety of inter-governmental institutions have affected the perception of the role of the military, as well as the assessment of the

acceptability and desirability of military force in its various forms. In this context, the old and more general questions of change versus stability, consistency versus randomness, and emotionality versus rationality are addressed again: Did the end of the Cold War affect stability at the aggregate level on foreign policy issues? Is the general population now more volatile or not? And what effects has the end of the Cold War had on the way both elite and mass opinion structure their views of the international system?

- 2 To what extent, more specifically, do we find empirical support for the so-called ‘casualty hypothesis’ in the event of international use of military force, such as in peacekeeping operations? In this context we want to know whether and how the fear of casualties affects the support over time for these kinds of operations.
- 3 How and to what extent can we make progress in understanding the form and structure of international attitudes towards the use of force and related issues? The question is raised as to what new evidence is available regarding how public opinion is structured in this respect in terms of general worldviews or policy orientations.
- 4 Finally, we aim in this book not only to describe, compare and contrast attitudes, but also to address the fundamental question of how public opinion interacts with policy makers and affects policy making. In particular, we want to examine how, and to what extent, public opinion, in both its organised and non-organised form, affects the calculations of decision makers and the military in decisions concerning the use of force. Who is leading whom in the decisions to undertake a military operation abroad or not?

Before moving to describe how the following chapters will address these problems, let us first see what we know and do not know on these issues.

What we know and do not know: five sets of questions

Over the last few years, a combination of factors, including political events as well as developments in research, has strengthened an interest in the issue of public opinion and the relationships between public opinion and foreign policy in Western democracies in general. The study of this topic comprises five different sets of questions: what does public opinion think on foreign policy issues; why does it do so; how is it structured; does it change over time; and, finally, what difference does it make to the outcome of policy making? Underlying this set of issues there is, moreover, a bundle of conceptual and methodological problems related to the way one conceptualises public opinion and the means through which one comes to measure and study it. We first want to address very briefly these more general conceptual issues and then move on to examine the present

knowledge with respect to the five main issues of the public opinion—foreign policy relationship.

The concept of public opinion and how to study it

In spite of the vast research on the concept of public opinion as one of the most enduring concepts in the social sciences, its definition remains controversial. 'Public opinion', like beauty, is essentially in the eyes of the beholder. Indeed, the difficulty of defining public opinion as an object of empirical study is perhaps still best expressed by V.O.Key (1961:8) and appropriately quoted again here: 'To speak with precision of public opinion is a task not unlike coming to grips with the Holy Ghost.'

There are obvious reasons why public opinion is equated with that uncovered by mass surveys. Despite all the obvious shortcomings, it is a definition that permits a fair degree of objectivity. This is not to say that there are no serious methodological and practical problems in measuring public opinion, especially its evolution over time (Bourdieu 1980; La Balme 1999:69–77). We often have different surveys at different times, commissioned by different institutions and carried out by different agencies, often implying different wordings of questions. Strictly speaking, this makes their comparison highly problematic because it is difficult to decide to what extent differences in answers reflect an actual change of events or are being brought about (also) by differences in question-wording. One other aspect is the question of salience. Some people are more interested and involved in specific policy areas, or have stronger opinions than others and it is evident that this contributes to a differential impact on the policy process. Yet, this element of salience is often overlooked in opinion surveys that treat each individual opinion as similar in weight.

The shortcomings of opinion surveys are not the only reason why we should try to be more thorough and precise in our efforts to understand both the content of public opinion and the relationship between mass opinion and foreign policy. Especially when studying the impact of opinions on policy making, we should distinguish among the various manifestations of public opinion in both its non-organised form (public opinion at the mass level, being a disposable and mobilisable but passive resource rather than an actor-in-its-own-right), and its organised and active form (public opinion as mediated through parties, active pressure groups and other actors). Public opinion, moreover, is very much, or even essentially, a matter of perceptions. Not only those of governments, but also the perceptions of public opinion by both the foreign policy elites and the military (as far as decisions on the international use of force are concerned), will therefore have to be brought into the equation. In this connection the role of the media, not only in forming but also in expressing public opinion and presenting images of what it is in specific cases, deserves more careful consideration.

It seems evident in this connection, that conclusions reached for the American situation cannot be simply generalised across countries, even liberal democracies.

Different political cultures lead to different ideas concerning the relevance of particular manifestations of public opinion. As Thomas Risse-Kappen (1994) pointed out, the nature of the impact of public opinion on the policy process is very much context dependent. According to him, for instance, while the United States is a society-dominated domestic structure allowing for a strong impact of public opinion on foreign policy decisions, France, on the other hand, with comparatively centralised political institutions and a strong national executive, constitutes a state-dominated domestic structure in which public opinion have but a marginal role (Risse-Kappen 1994:255).

Especially in the American case, the study of public opinion as mass opinion has tended to overlook the role of parties and interest groups in shaping and mediating the connection between mass opinion and foreign policy. The role of these actors is much wider in the European context than in the American one. What additional role the mass media have in this context has not yet been determined. More generally, in the debate, the crucial role that the mass media play in the interaction between public opinion and policy making, and the extent to which changes in the international landscape have affected this newly appreciated relationship between and among public opinion in both its non-organised and organised form, the mass media, and the making of foreign policy have generally not received sufficient attention.

Contrary to what is common in American studies, and rather than focusing on public opinion in a presidential system, the concept of public opinion should be refined and a more 'sociological' and 'discursive' conception of public opinion adopted (Everts 1996a; Isernia 1996) in which emphasis is put on the more diffuse and different roles public opinion might play in parliamentary, multi-party systems, where strong political parties and interest groups shape and mediate the connection.

Finally, one may ask: why should one still concentrate on governments and their activities at all, if others, like the institutions of civil society, are becoming more relevant as international actors? Do governments still matter to the same extent?

The characteristics of public opinion: a new approach

As we have already stressed when examining the normative debate on the desirability of democratic control of foreign policy, the opposing normative views rest on different empirical assessments of the quality and suitability of public opinion in the making of foreign policy. Apart from the theme of content, on which we come to speak in the section on the use of force below, these different assessments have generally focused on four dimensions or characteristics, each of which relates to the nature and quality of public opinion either at the aggregate or the individual level.

At the aggregate level, the two crucial questions that have been asked concern (1) the degree of stability of public opinion; and (2) its rationality. Stability is a

temporal aspect that measures the changes in the distribution of attitudes and opinions over time. Rationality refers to whether opinion reacts in predictable ways (that is, in accordance with some prespecified values) to new information and changing circumstances.

At the individual level, the two crucial questions relate to (1) the question of why people think the way they do—the determinants or sources of opinions—and (2) the ways in which people come to think about foreign issues, and for that matter domestic ones as well. With respect to the sources of opinions, the debate has been focused in general on the relative weight of personal, individual or cognitive factors versus the more sociological and political ones. As to how people form their opinions, the debate has revolved primarily around issues of consistency or inconsistency. Consistency refers to whether survey items on related issues are responded to coherently: for instance, to favour neutrality and to also favour joining NATO would be considered inconsistent, as would pressing one's government to take military action and refrain from the consequences simultaneously. Whether anything of this nature is inconsistent or not is, of course, partly subjective and partly dependent on the way we expect people to structure their opinions, e.g. in a hierarchical or horizontal way. Both the how and why are also related to the question of the impact of the level of knowledge displayed in public opinion. Knowledge relates to whether the public in general displays an awareness of policy issues as opposed to randomly expressed statements.

Each of these characteristics has been for some time now the topic of fierce debates of both an empirical and normative nature. The academic study of public opinion started in the 1950s and 1960s, especially in the US where an unusually lengthy democratic tradition has caused many Americans to feel for a long time that public opinion does and should have some impact on governmental foreign policy. On the assumption that this is, or should be, the case, the first set of questions mentioned above, concerning the content and nature of public opinion, has generated a great deal of interest among academics as well as policy makers.

The study of these phenomena received a new impulse in the 1970s, due to the impact of the domestic controversies over the war in Vietnam. Indeed, it was the fear that public dissent on Vietnam policy would prevent the Nixon administration from successfully achieving 'peace with honour' that supposedly led Nixon's Secretary of State Henry Kissinger to request the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations (CCFR) to study American public and elite opinion on foreign affairs more thoroughly (Holsti 1997: 83). The data from these studies, which have been collected every four years, beginning in 1974, still constitute the primary data source for academic research on American public opinion on US foreign policy.

For theoretical, methodological as well as political reasons, a new research programme dealing with these same questions has rapidly emerged in recent years and this has led to new conclusions, sharpening the debate between the so-called revisionists and traditionalists. Its outcomes have challenged some of the

conclusions reached in the 1950s and 1960s on such aspects as the volatility of public opinion, the coherence of political beliefs, and the impact of opinion on policy.³

The nature and content of public opinion on foreign policy

The most important claim of the traditionalists is that the average citizen is scarcely able to make rational decisions in this policy area as he is usually indifferent to the topic, ill-informed and often led by irrational impulses (Bailey 1948; Cantril 1967; Key 1961; Kriesberg 1949). Earlier studies indeed stressed, moreover, the ‘moodiness’ and volatility of public opinion at the mass level (Almond 1950, 1960; Converse 1964; Lippmann 1922, 1925). Opinions on foreign affairs would often be merely random reactions (Converse 1964). It was therefore considered irrelevant to those who made policy (Cohen 1973) or even dangerous. Normatively, the conclusion was drawn that foreign policy should be left to the experts. Reacting to public opinion could only increase the risk of making the wrong policy choices. Threats could, for example, easily be ignored or lead to overreaction (Kennan 1951:65–6).

Contrary to the traditionalists, the revisionists are convinced that the population is fairly well informed (Graham 1988:319–34) and rational. Consequently, so it is argued, citizens can draw measured, rational and differentiated foreign policy and security related conclusions (Jentleson 1992; Jentleson and Britton 1997), and at times they can even moderate extreme and possibly dangerous official policy (Nincic 1988). Indeed, it has become almost a truism today to challenge the traditional view—also called the Almond—Lippmann consensus (Holsti 1992)—of public opinion on foreign and security policy matters as being whimsical, unstructured and incoherent, and thus as a negative input to a proper process of policy making. A number of studies carried out in the last two decades suggest, quite convincingly, that when sufficiently sensitive means of measurement and more refined analytical tools are used, collective attitudes emerge as quite stable and rational (Caspary 1970; Hinckley 1992; Holsti 1996; Nincic 1992; Page and Shapiro 1988, 1992). This conclusion is not only valid for the United States but also for other countries, such as France, where Cohen also concluded that the public is ‘capable of expressing a structured and coherent opinion’ (Cohen 1996:11), as well as Italy and Germany (Isernia *et al.* 1998). Furthermore, some scholars go so far as to maintain that ‘when collective policy preferences change, they almost always do so in understandable and, indeed, predictable ways, reacting in a consistent fashion to international events’ (Page and Shapiro 1992: ch. 9).

Despite the undeniable fact that in most Western democracies, and in particular the US, popular interest in such matters is usually not as high as the level of interest in all domestic political problems combined, it was demonstrated that interest in international affairs has been high during what most observers would, in retrospect, acknowledge as key periods in the consolidation or change of the

national foreign policy (Russett 1989: 89–90). Moreover it has been argued convincingly that the public is ‘rational’, ‘prudent’ and meaningful in the foreign policy process (Holsti 1992; Holsti and Rosenau 1984; Oldendick and Bardes 1982; Page and Shapiro 1988, 1992; Wittkopf 1990).

But the replacement of the Almond-Lippmann consensus by a new one entailing a more positive view of public opinion in terms of stability and coherence, and attributing greater political influence to it in Western democratic systems, was not accompanied by a similar agreement on the content aspect. To put this somewhat differently, no conclusive empirical evidence has thus far been presented concerning the most important question of whether the broad public is basically war-prone or peace-oriented, and more interventionist or more isolationist, especially in the post-Cold War situation, and particularly in comparison with the decision-making elite. Russett, for example, maintains that the American populace is often inappropriately bellicose. He notes, in particular, the ‘rally ‘round the flag’ phenomenon, which, he says, works most clearly when there are international threats or when military force is actually used internationally.⁴ According to this analysis, in such cases aggressive policies and policy makers are expected to gain greater public support than compromising ones. Bringing together a variety of research findings comparing the attitudes of the American public to those of its elite, Russett concluded that the latter tend to be less interventionist and, in particular, more internationalist, than the broader public (Russett 1990:115). In his comparative study of European security perceptions in the 1980s, Eichenberg (1989) drew a more complicated picture. He maintained that European societies in the 1980s were divided with respect to the use of force, nuclear weapons in particular, by traditional ideological schisms, apparent in all age and educational groups, and that the political left was clearly more sceptical concerning the use of force as a solution to national and global security problems than those on the right. In countries like France or Italy, where the left—right cleavage is highly visible, it was (and to some extent still is) therefore practically impossible to talk about the position of the ‘general’ public on these matters.

Another question related to content is whether public opinion has been affected by such major events as the American Vietnam experience and the end of the Cold War. These are widely believed to have had profound effects on public opinion with respect to issues of foreign policy. So far, however, analysts of US public opinion have been unable to demonstrate such strong effects, and elsewhere change has been equally elusive. For example, Holsti (1997) reports that in US public opinion polls since the end of the Cold War there has been a greater degree of continuity than of change in content and direction. This issue is addressed again in some of the chapters that follow. Most of the results reported seem to confirm the impression of continuity rather than change. The political implications of this need careful consideration. In this connection, the role of the media in the formation of public opinion cannot be overlooked. We need to study more carefully, therefore, such issues as how the media’s treatment of new

events like those in Bosnia, Somalia, Albania, and the Gulf War have shaped public attitudes concerning the way foreign policy should be conducted, and whether these events changed attitudes on a short- or long-term basis. To what extent have changes in the media's framing of the international environment been reflected in new patterns of change and stability in public opinion towards international affairs?

As pointed out already, one of the present limitations is the fact that much of the research is still being conducted in the United States and refers primarily to the situation in that country. European studies, even if more recent, are few and far between, with the exception of those concerning European integration, on which much more information has become available (due to the prevailing interest of the Eurobarometer). The studies that are available, however, tend to support American findings with respect to consistency and stability (e.g. Eichenberg 1989; Everts 1992, 1996a; Flynn and Rattinger 1985; Isernia 1996; Isernia *et al.* 1998; Niedermayer and Sinnott 1995; Rattinger 1996; Sinnott 1998a, 1998b).

It may be, however, that the established consistency of opinion was an artefact of the basically stable Cold War situation. Hence, this would not be characteristic in today's more uncertain circumstances. More research is necessary to provide answers to these questions. More specifically, more research is needed concerning the impact of the end of the Cold War. While some countries, such as Israel, are still faced with the problem of war in its traditional form and with the use of force to protect or pursue vital national interests, for many other countries the image and meaning of military missions have profoundly changed following the end of the Cold War (Cohen 1996). For the latter, the classical concept of the defence of national and allied territory and of large-scale warfare has been pushed into the background by such concepts as 'crisis-management' and 'peacekeeping'. The prediction of military sociologist Morris Janowitz that the military would develop into a 'constabulary force', seems to become reality, and public opinion seems to be sustaining this trend (Everts and van der Meulen 2000).

With respect to the topic of the alleged changes in the role of military forces (including its consequences for the question of public support), it is a serious matter of dispute among politicians, military professionals and (social) scientists whether the changes in the international situation indeed justify or even necessitate a new perspective, and whether military organisations are sufficiently (or overly?) equipped for these new roles.

Explaining the structure and correlates of foreign policy beliefs

A similar degree of change is observable with respect to what we know about the degree of structure in popular attitudes. Again, American studies still predominate (e.g. Chittick *et al.* 1995; Hurwitz and Peffley 1987; Kinder 1983

for a review; Wittkopf 1990). But there is also an increasing interest on this question among European scholars (e.g. Everts 1995; Rattinger 1996; Ziegler 1987).

Prior to the Vietnam War most analysts accepted Philip Converse's dictum (1964) that American public opinion on foreign policy was unstructured. Converse found that only a slim minority could be qualified, under the most tolerant assumption, as 'ideologue', while for the rest of the people one should rather speak of 'non-attitudes' (Converse 1964). However, Converse's arguments were later attacked from both the methodological and theoretical viewpoint. On the one hand, Nie *et al.* (1979) claimed that the lack of structure was rather a reflection of the de-politicised period of the 1950s than a constant characteristic. Opinion analysts began to find evidence of patterns in public opinion on foreign policy during the Vietnam War period. Nie's conclusions were then criticised as well as being based on faulty measurements. On the other hand, Converse's conclusions were also attacked because they rested on an excessively narrow definition of structure. It is obvious that most people are less interested and less knowledgeable about foreign affairs in comparison with domestic problems. It has also been shown that most (American) citizens lack the necessary information on foreign affairs to form fact-based evaluations. This does not imply, however, that the answers given in opinion surveys are simply guesses or fit a random pattern (Sinnott 1998a, 1998b). Being an ideological 'miser' does not imply that one is not able to form opinions, based on cognitive short cuts and inferential simple rules. The schemata literature has shown that public opinion at the individual level is quite apt to reach reasonable conclusions on what to think about complex issues. In fact, public opinion has now been demonstrated to be highly structured (for details see [Chapter 2](#)). This opened a debate on how best to capture the underlying structure of these opinions. At first, there was a strong tendency to interpret this structure in Converse's terms, that is, in terms of a uni-dimensional political ideology continuum. For example, Mandelbaum and Schneider (1979) interpreted the results of the first Chicago Council on Foreign Relations (CCFR) survey (1974) as showing that American opinions on foreign policy were loosely clustered into two or three typical positions, ordered along a single dimension: conservative internationalism, non-internationalism, and liberal internationalism (or possibly realism vs. idealism). The notion of a single dimension appealed to the traditionalist American foreign policy community because it supported a mood theory of public opinion formation emphasising the instability of public judgement. Most scholars continued to suspect that party identification and especially political ideology might be the most important sources of differences of opinion on foreign policy in America (Holsti 1997:183).⁵

Subsequent analyses of the same CCFR and other data have suggested, however, that American public opinion on foreign policy has a more multidimensional structure.⁶ Overall, there has been some considerable resistance to accepting a more complex view of public opinion on foreign policy.

Most analysts have followed Wittkopf as well as Holsti and Rosenau, who claim that foreign policy opinion is structured along two dimensions, which Holsti now associates with realism and liberalism respectively (Holsti 1997; Holsti and Rosenau 1990, 1993; Wittkopf 1990, 1997). Chittick *et al.* (1995 and [Chapter 2](#) of this volume) have argued, however, that foreign policy opinion is structured along three primary dimensions. Most recently, Richman *et al.* (1997) have argued that a four-dimensional structure is most plausible. Some of this discrepancy can be attributed to the methods the analysts use to interpret their data. However, most scholars have opted for less complicated interpretations, at least in part because they lacked a theory of public opinion formation which might have warranted a more complex approach. This issue is taken up again in [Chapter 2](#) by Chittick and Freyberg-Inan where a theoretical justification is given to the hypothesis that foreign policy opinions are structured along three dimensions corresponding to variances in individuals' three basic motivational dispositions.

Another line of development attacks the very possibility of dimensionality. Jon Hurwitz and Mark Peffley (1987), who first introduced a hierarchical model into the study of foreign policy and security beliefs, argued that in the analysis of attitude structure it is necessary to limit oneself to specific policy domains. Otherwise one would hardly be able to detect the underlying structures where the average citizen makes no mental connections. Moreover, Hurwitz and Peffley maintain that people are cognitive misers, who constantly try to keep the costs of information as low as possible. Therefore, they look for short cuts in the formation of their attitudes. On the bases of these assumptions, Hurwitz and Peffley describe a hierarchical model of attitude structure, which differentiates between three levels of generality: core values, postures and attitudes towards specific issues. Within this model it is further presumed that the values have a direct impact on the postures and these again on the assessments of specific issues. That is the reason why a person, who has not made up his mind on a new policy issue, can use his postures and values as a short cut to find out his position. The question of the hierarchical nature of the structure of opinion is raised in [Chapter 3](#) of this volume by Juhász, who finds confirmation for the case of Germany in the hypotheses developed by Hurwitz and Peffley (1987).

The opinion-policy connection

Compared to the other issue areas discussed, least efforts have been made to increase our understanding of what difference public opinion makes to the outcomes of the foreign policy process. What role has public opinion in both its organised and unorganised forms come to play in the calculations of decision makers in the area of foreign and security policy? Is public opinion a decisive factor, or does it merely set the broad context or bounds in which decision makers make their calculations about the available and feasible policy alternatives; or does it play no role at all?

This is, in fact, the most complex of the questions mentioned above. As pointed out earlier, the relationship between public opinion and public policy is at the very core of representative democracy. Even so, and despite efforts to fill the gap, studies in this field continue to be characterised by ‘the relative void at the point where the problem gets interesting’, as was already noted by Cohen (1973: 8) a long time ago, namely at the point of specifying the processes that connect public opinion and public policy.

While there may be a critical mass of empirical studies that point to a connection, many conceptual and methodological problems and uncertainties still hamper any detailed, systematic account of it. Several different and competing methodologies have been tried to decipher this opinion—policy relationship. A conventional approach is to juxtapose the evolution of public opinion (in its various, organised and non-organised manifestations) and that of the decision-making process and search for possible indications or suggestions of cause—effect relationships. The successful demonstration of a correlation is often complicated, however, by the lack of necessary data to test hypotheses derived from any interactive model. Longitudinal data that can be matched against policy decisions to distinguish causal dominance are not commonly available and such analysis does not, in any event, constitute proof.⁷ Plausibility is often the best we can hope for in terms of proof. However, we should try to probe deeper.

Since it is not always possible or appropriate to rely on statistical significance or correlations between changes in opinion and changes in policy, other methods are called for and have been used. These include: historical research methods,⁸ statistical associations⁹ and interviewing elites.¹⁰ When Key (1961:59) defined public opinion as ‘those opinions held by private persons which governments find it prudent to heed’, he not only pointed to the role of public opinion as perception, but also to the concomitant central research task: ‘If one is to know what opinions governments heed, one must know the inner thoughts of presidents, congressmen, and other officials’. Along this line Holsti argued that:

in order to develop and test competing hypotheses about opinion—policy linkages, there are no satisfactory alternatives to carefully crafted case studies employing interviews and, if possible, archival research, designed to uncover how, if at all, decision-makers perceive public opinion; feel themselves motivated or constrained by it; factor it into their identification and assessment of policy options; and otherwise take it into account when selecting a course of action, including a decision not to take action.

(1996:59)

This is exactly what, for instance, constitutes the core of the evidence presented in the chapter by Natalie La Balme, which is based on in-depth interviews with both civil and military foreign policy decision makers.¹¹ Though time-consuming, this research technique offers a valuable tool for penetrating the

institutional black box of policy making. Indeed, case studies, preferably comparative, of decision making are indispensable in penetrating the opinion-policy nexus. Unfortunately, however, while the use of historical, archival and interview material may be the only way to proceed, this is not common practice in this area of study.

Whatever the method, the problem of causal inference often remains. Given the many other factors involved, it is indeed very difficult to disentangle the processes that produce policies and to determine whether it was the public that influenced a policy decision or the other way around.

In spite of the many conceptual and methodological problems, progress in understanding has been made in recent years. Updated analyses show that governments and administrations do indeed take public opinion into account when making foreign policy, rather than that policy makers see themselves as the omniscient trustees of the public good and therefore exempt from taking their constituencies' preferences into account when shaping national policies (Graham 1994; Wittkopf 1990). Recent studies in the US tried to demonstrate—with some success—that foreign policy making is not as impervious to public influence as had once been thought (Graham 1994; Page and Shapiro 1983; Russett 1990; Sobel 1993). Moreover, it appears that the public's beliefs and attitudes do guide or, at a minimum, constrain government policy (Graham 1994; Powlick 1990; Russett 1990; Sobel 1993). Cohen's conclusion in 1973 that the US State Department is insulated from the public has, for instance, been rejected by Powlick (1991, 1995a). He found the State Department to be more responsive to public opinion. Nincic (1992) stressed that public opinion helps to stabilise the country: when there is a dovish president it forces him to be more active militarily; when he is hawkish it operates as a restraint. Furthermore, statistical studies have shown, at least in the American case, that there is a substantial congruence between changes in policy preferences followed by changes in policies (Page and Shapiro 1983, 1992).

A more positive assessment of the nature of the public's foreign and security attitudes has led to changes in the formerly dominant view of a one-way—top-down—flow of influence where policy making is concerned. The acknowledgement of a two-way, bottom-up/top-down, flow of influence has contributed much to the fact that the wall separating foreign and security affairs from domestic influences has come crumbling down. Today, analysts argue that the old foreign policy establishment is losing both its bearings and its sway and is more susceptible than ever to grassroots pressures and influence (Clough 1994).

Yet, we should be careful. The modelling of opinion and policy in unidirectional rather than interactive ways has led to many empirical investigations that are either too democratically idealistic and naive, or too deterministic in their conception of opinion as wholly the result of elite messages conveyed from the policy makers. A more appropriate approach is to view opinion and policy as partly constituted by each other and partly constituted by

other factors. The research task remains to establish whether opinion or policy is causally dominant, taking the effects of other factors into account.

To sum up, we may have become increasingly convinced that public opinion is a vital factor in understanding the foreign policy process but we still do not know how precisely it affects this process. In general, our understanding does not stretch much further than general notions like ‘permissive consensus’ and ‘restraints on governments’ freedom of action’. A much greater and systematic cross-national effort, including case studies, is clearly needed to increase our understanding of the crucial relationships between public policy and public opinion in international politics across a wider spectrum of democratic political regimes (see also Holsti 1996).

The use of force and the ‘casualty hypothesis’

A central question in this book is concerned with who is leading whom in the decisions to undertake (or not) a military operation abroad. The starting point seems to be a general consensus that public opinion on questions of foreign and defence policy—or what passes for it—is usually passive and has primarily a legitimising function. On most foreign policy issues the public tends to follow its leaders, at least most of the time. Therefore, governments usually enjoy the considerable freedom of a ‘permissive consensus’. They are also usually capable of increasing support for forceful policies in the short run in the initial phases of an international conflict. This is referred to as the ‘rally ‘round the flag’ effect. Yet, it seems evident too that they also face clear limitations with respect to their freedom of manoeuvre, especially concerning the commitment of armed forces when the costs and risks involved could be considerable. At least this appears to be a fairly generally shared view in many countries. It is often argued today in this context that the public, at least in Western, democratic countries, has lost the willingness and endurance to fight and carry the consequences. It therefore often manifests allegedly fundamentally contradictory attitudes with respect to the use of military force. Especially in the case of humanitarian crises, the public would first of all put pressure on their governments ‘to do something’ (meaning usually: to do something military), but when the risks of military actions in the form of casualties become evident it would recoil at this prospect. This alleged tendency towards risk avoidance is often referred to as the ‘casualty hypothesis’ or the ‘body-bag syndrome’. The phenomenon is often mentioned by politicians and in the media as if it were an evident and established fact of life.¹² The military themselves are often said to be affected too by the virus of the ‘refusal to die’, an unwillingness to take any military risks. One observer wrote, for instance:

We [that is: Americans] have grown ever more sensitive about casualties—our own military casualties, opponent and neutral civilian casualties, and even enemy military casualties—and we seek to avoid them.

(Sapolsky and Shapiro 1996:122)

The emergence of this new, limited concept of the legitimate use of force has undoubtedly much to do with the dissolution of the bipolar global system and the subsequent groping for a 'New World Order' following the collapse of the Eastern bloc, the emergence of the United States as the sole superpower and the increased frequency of humanitarian intervention operations in Europe, Africa and other parts of the world. These developments have accompanied and reinforced the emergence of both a greater and understandable desire by the public to be involved in decisions to launch military operations and a generally reduced legitimacy of the use of force. The latter was taken by certain politicians and academics as a sign of a declining willingness by Western publics to support any foreign and security policy that involves the use of force and, therefore, the loss of soldiers' lives (Kohut and Toth 1994). This perception, often entitled the 'zero-dead option', presumably dominates public opinion in the democratic 'peace zone' today.¹³

The view that the public has a very limited tolerance of military operations has become deeply rooted, and this is what merits our attention and close analysis. It has constituted a significant impediment in the way decision makers launch or take part in operations that involve military risks. In anticipation of a reduced or total absence of public support for military actions and pleas for the withdrawal of troops, the governments of the countries concerned are inclined to avoid, and in the case of Kosovo in 1999 actually refuse to risk, such a public reaction. Rather, total reliance is put today in the effectiveness of military technology, 'smart weapons' and 'air power'. The suggestion of a 'war without bloodshed'—at least on one's own side—is cherished.¹⁴ This *zero-dead doctrine* has become particularly popular in the United States, but is not restricted to that country alone (Boëne 1994).

Various explanations have been given for these alleged changes in attitudes towards violence and the existence of a body-bag syndrome. Some of these possess indeed, at least at first sight, a certain plausibility (van der Meulen 1997; Wallerstein 1995:13). One explanation is a declining willingness in the United States to invest lives in hegemonic power (Wallerstein 1995:28). Others, however, should be considered with scepticism, such as the argument of Luttwak (1994) who maintains that, unlike in the past, present-day small families can no longer afford emotionally the loss of one or more sons.¹⁵

Apart from the influence of the media, which frame issues and policies and bring every war into our living rooms, an important factor is certainly the change in the character of the armed forces. They have changed from the mass and conscript-based armies of the first half of the twentieth century into the much smaller professional *constabulary forces* of today. Police-like 'crisis management' is their most important assignment, characterised by a high technological profile (Burk 1994).

Before we address the question of the causes of the phenomenon, however, it is proper to ask, as we do in this book, whether there is any convincing evidence of the existence of the body-bag syndrome at all. Theory can, and has to, come later. Several empirical studies have shown that the public's 'cost aversion' as far as casualties are concerned is, in fact, considerably weaker than assumed. This matter is taken up again in the following chapters by van der Meulen and de Konink, Isernia, Kull and Ramsay, and Everts. The relevant evidence is partly the result of studies into the evolution of public support in a number of past American wars¹⁶ and also some more recent cases.¹⁷ In addition, proponents of the casualty hypothesis refer to the results of mass opinion surveys. However convincing *prima facie*, the most serious shortcoming of such surveys remains that most of them consist of quasi-laboratory experiments, covering hypothetical situations in which behaviour may differ considerably from real life.¹⁸

Some surveys of this type, both in the abstract form and focused on specific conflicts, seem at first sight to offer remarkable confirmation of the alleged reduction in support in the case of impending or actual casualties, especially when 'national interests' are not directly and obviously involved, as is the case in peacekeeping operations.¹⁹ We have, for instance, data with respect to the conflict in Bosnia from the Netherlands (Everts 1996b; Schennink and Wecke 1995)²⁰ and Italy (Bellucci and Isernia 1998, 1999) with confirmatory evidence. That there is also room for doubt, however, and that there is no simple linear relationship is suggested by other data. For example, in one earlier study it was concluded that the events surrounding the defeat at Srebrenica, for which the Dutch contingent in UNPROFOR bore responsibility and where the moral equivalent of casualties occurred, showed that while the immediate effect of this affair indeed confirmed the casualty hypothesis in terms of sudden and strongly diminished mission support, this effect was extremely short-lived. Support recovered quite quickly and dramatically afterwards (Everts 1996b, 2000). This issue is taken up again by van der Meulen and de Konink in [Chapter 5](#) of this book, where the intervening role of perceived success (or failure) and mission support, in the case of the various international operations in the former Yugoslavia, is emphasised. This suggests that the matter is more complicated than the average journalist or politician usually cares to admit, and it forces us to conclude that convincing evidence, let alone proof for the casualty hypothesis—at least in its simple and generalised form—has yet to be produced.

But there is more. To begin with the general level, available data suggest that the end of the Cold War has had no lasting effect on public support for the existence, effectiveness and actual use of the armed forces in general, even when there are no evident direct threats or immediate national interests requesting such use. In most countries there is also widespread support for the shift from a preoccupation with deterring immediate threats to the national territory towards more diffuse and less immediate security problems, crisis management and humanitarian concerns.²¹ One condition for supporting such action is, however,

the participation of others in sharing the international burden (Kull *et al* 1997; Manigart 1996; Segal and Booth 1996).

With respect to the specific problem of casualties, critics of earlier studies already argued that the duration of a conflict, and more particularly the lack of apparent success, are often more important in explaining the erosion of public support than the incidence of casualties. That would explain the relative unpopularity of the long and inconclusive wars in Korea and Vietnam, compared to World War II. Thus Record concludes:

This suggests casualties per se are not a reliable predictor of American tolerance for wars, protracted or not. What distinguished Vietnam from World War II and to a lesser extent the Korean conflict, was in Vietnam casualties were being sustained with no apparent progress toward victory.... The American People will support even a costly war for a just cause, but they will withdraw their support when they no longer see a reasonable chance for realising a preferred or acceptable outcome.

(1993:137)

Schwarz concluded also that casualties had rather the opposite effect than assumed in the body-bag syndrome:

Once committed, regardless of its opinion concerning the initial decision—and regardless of costs incurred—the public shows little inclination to quit an intervention and instead strongly supports an escalation of the conflict and measures it believes are necessary to win a decisive victory.

(1994:18)

Larson (1996), who included not only World War II, Korea and Vietnam in his analysis but also post-Cold War conflicts like Panama, Somalia and the Gulf War, criticised Schwarz for his thesis that the public invariably seeks victory. He argued too that the public shows considerable resilience in response to fatalities because the effect of casualties is mediated by a means-end calculus, and is thus rather indirect. Perceived benefits, prospects of success and political consensus, all play a role. Sensitivity to casualties is not a new phenomenon. Nor is support automatic or unconditional. However, the idea that the public will reflexively seek immediate withdrawal once ‘the going gets tough’ is, he concludes, most probably a myth.

It is a myth, incidentally, which politicians and military leaders tend to use as an alibi, in order to avoid taking responsibility themselves. Thus, public opinion is blamed twice: first for forcing the politicians into (dangerous) action and then for an alleged unwillingness to face up to the consequences.

Larson’s conclusion, incidentally, is supported by other studies. Burk (1995, 1996) concluded that public support for military action is not unconditional, but he also emphasised that the average American does not run away from its

responsibility. Burk sees perceived effectiveness and purposefulness of the action as decisive. His study is the more interesting since it covers the most often quoted examples of the existence of the body-bag syndrome: the alleged rapid decline of support, forcing the US government into an overhasty withdrawal of the troops in the cases of Lebanon (1983) and Somalia (1993) after the incidence of some gruesome casualties that hit the TV evening news. Burk concludes, however,

But it [public support] is not conditioned by a knee-jerk reaction to casualties. Judging from the responses we have seen to Lebanon and Somalia, it is conditioned rather by the demand that casualties be incurred for some clear and worthy purpose.

(1995:21)

Incidentally, one may wonder whether outcomes relevant to the United States, if they suggest high sensitivity for casualties, can be generalised to other countries and cultures. In this connection Garnham emphasised the importance of transcultural comparisons that look beyond the United States (Garnham 1994). Hermann (Chapter 7) and La Balme (Chapter 8) in this book suggest that the problem may, for instance, look very different from an Israeli or, for that matter, French perspective.²² Thus, many members of the French elite who were interviewed concluded: ‘if zero deaths is the objective, the mission is bound to fail’. This is not to say that the French are ‘trigger happy’. They generally support military engagement ‘à la française’ with limited means ‘which favours a dissuasive attitude to that of confrontations, appeasement to escalation, and which tries to limit casualties’ (Cohen 1996:42). There is also no ‘compassion fatigue’.

Finally, there is the most recent impressive study of Kull and Destler (1999). They not only demolish the evidence for the casualty hypothesis with carefully developed poll data, especially with regard to often quoted illustrations concerning both concrete and more hypothetical cases, but also show how and why the American foreign policy elite and journalists have a totally misleading view concerning American public opinion.²³ Consequently, in refusing to embark on risky military operations leaders anticipate a non-existent situation.

Kull and Destler conclude with respect to the impact of casualties from their own and other poll data that:

polls show little evidence that the majority of Americans will respond to fatalities by wanting to withdraw US troops immediately, and, if anything, are more likely to respond assertively. (1999:106)

In various polls in which respondents were confronted with the incidence of specific numbers of casualties and could choose among alternative reactions, certain respondents usually do choose ‘withdrawal’, but most others choose

options such as ‘strike back hard’, ‘bring in reinforcements’ or ‘just continue’. This was the case as regards Somalia and Bosnia (SFOR) but also, more hypothetically, in the most recent conflict in Kosovo (as illustrated in [Chapter 10](#) by Everts). This result comes out even more strongly if the polling questions deliberately refer to a successful outcome of the military action (see also Kull and Destler 1999:106–9).

For the time being, the conclusion should be that casualties are of course relevant but not the only and major factor in shaping the evolution of public support. There is no linear relationship between casualties and support. Among the factors influencing tolerance of casualties are also such elements as:

- the perceived interests involved and the general legitimacy of the goals of the action
- the expectations of the population in the countries on the receiving end of armed interventions and peacekeeping operations
- the effect of the free rider syndrome and temptation (‘pourquoi mourir pour Danzig?’)
- the sense of (potential) success or, in its opposite form, the sense of futility that ‘nothing can be done’
- in the case of casualties: the wish for revenge and the desire to see to it that ‘they did not die in vain’.

The body-bag syndrome in its simple straightforward form is largely a self-serving creation of politicians and journalists, whatever the results of laboratory type polls and experiments suggest. The case of Kosovo provides us with interesting additional confirmatory information, as Everts shows in [Chapter 10](#) (see also Everts 1999).

Outline of this book

As was said at the beginning, this book intends to contribute to the filling of gaps in three main fields: the structure of opinion as it is related to the use of force in foreign operations, the nature of attitudes towards the use of force, with particular reference to the role of casualties in affecting the degree of support for foreign military operations, and the nature of the relationships between public opinion and policy making.²⁴ These issues will be dealt with in an intentional cross-country, cross-time and cross-level comparative analysis. For this reason, we strove for a diverse set of countries, to cover a longer time period and to include analyses at both the individual and aggregate level. As to the countries, by any means a representative sample of democratic countries, we included countries different in size, geopolitical importance, international activism, and political cultures. Apart from the US, whose public opinion attitudes are examined at both the individual and aggregate level, we included medium-sized countries, such as France, Germany and Italy and small countries such as the

Netherlands, Ireland and Israel. Some chapters, such as those on the United States, Germany, Italy and Ireland, exploiting the secondary sources available, examine public attitudes on the use of force during the Cold War and after, to see whether the remarkable changes at the international system level affected (and to what extent) attitudes on the use of international force. Finally, these issues are tackled both at the individual and aggregate level, to see whether conclusions reached at one level are compatible with those arrived at from a different level.

Along these lines, the book is divided into two parts. It moves from individual level analyses of the determinants of support for the use of force, passes through aggregate level analyses of both the evolution of attitudes over time and their impact on policy making, and arrives at examining the impact of public opinion, as perceived by individual decision makers, on the actual policy-making process. In this context, **Part I** is devoted to contents, determinants and correlates of the support of the use of military force, while **Part II** deals with case studies on public opinion and policy making on the use of military force. The first two chapters of **Part I** are devoted to the way in which public opinion is structured. **Chapter 2**, ‘The impact of basic motivation on foreign policy opinions concerning the use of force: a three-dimensional framework’, by William O. Chittick and Annette Freyberg-Inan, offers a critique of the motivational assumptions of three major schools of foreign policy theory—realism, liberalism, and constructivism—for the overly restricted assumptions they make about human motivation. The chapter then offers an alternative analytical framework that establishes three dimensions of motivational disposition, thus suggesting that the complexity of foreign policy motivations can be broken down into three variables which together determine individuals’ dispositions towards different foreign policy options. Both elite and mass opinion data are presented which show that taking into account these three dimensions of motivational disposition improves our ability to account for and predict foreign policy opinions in general, and public opinion concerning the use of force in particular.

In **Chapter 3**, ‘German public opinion and the use of force in the early 1990s’, Zoltán Juhász investigates how the changes in the country’s foreign and defence policy since 1990 have affected the willingness of the population to actively defend the country and especially the attitudes towards out-of-area missions. This chapter also addresses the central question of what determines the degree of support on these issues and the structure of foreign policy attitudes in this area, and to what extent the cognitive structure has changed over time with the collapse of the East—West divide.

The last two chapters of **Part I** move from individual level motivations of support for or opposition to the use of force to aggregate level analysis of support for the use of force in Italy and the Netherlands respectively. In **Chapter 4**, ‘Italian public opinion and the international use of force’, Pierangelo Isernia examines the support for several peace operations and crises in which the use of force was, at least verbally, considered to be an option during both the Cold War and the post-Cold War period. Tracing the differences in support to the

context in which the use of force is considered, the chapter examines the role political cleavages, success for the mission, interests involved, casualties and several other considerations play in explaining the differential degree of support for the use of Italian armed force.

Turning towards one of the central questions of this book—the role of casualties and the fear of them in shaping public support for military actions—the ‘casualty hypothesis’ is tested more empirically for the case of the Netherlands in [Chapter 5](#), ‘Risky missions: Dutch public opinion on peacekeeping in the Balkans’, by Jan van der Meulen and Marijke de Konink.

The chapters in [Part II](#) examine the relationship between public opinion and foreign policies, using different approaches. The first two chapters in this part are devoted to studies of countries that, despite obvious differences, share the problem that the use of force presents itself in a context that is rather different from that of the NATO countries, the latter struggling with the transition from collective defence to crisis management and humanitarian operations. Both countries concerned also share the difficulty of adaptation to changes in the international environment. [Chapter 6](#), ‘Ireland: neutrality and the international use of force’, by Karin Gilland, addresses the problem of adaptation of Irish public opinion to the fact that the Irish neutrality, the traditional cornerstone of its foreign and security policy, no longer has the same meaning and implications that it had during the Cold War, and in a situation where the likelihood of collective action by European Union in the realm of security was remote. [Chapter 7](#), ‘Moving away from war: Israelis’ security beliefs in the post-Oslo era’, by Tamar Hermann, focuses on the critical turning point in Israel’s formal position regarding the Middle East conflict constituted by the signing of the Oslo Accords in summer 1993 and its impact, or lack thereof, on Israeli attitudes on the use of force. Both chapters examine public opinion and policy trends, and they try to trace back the policy postures to mass public opinion evolution. Both point to an overlooked consequence of the stability thesis so popular in the 1990s: the viscosity of attitude change at the aggregate level, even in the presence of radical contextual changes. Public opinion is perceived as—and in the Israeli case it actually is—an obstacle or a brake to more radical and far-fetched policy changes.

The next two chapters aim to shed some light on this very problem, tackling the opinion-policy connection issue from a different viewpoint, that of the decision makers. [Chapter 8](#), ‘The French and the use of force: public perceptions and their impact on the policy-making process’, by Natalie La Balme, briefly describes public attitudes towards the use of force in France, and then examines the public’s influence on the decision-making process with respect to both initial decisions and the conduct of military operations, tracing it through a series of extensive elite interviews. On the basis of several examples, La Balme arrives at a typology of ways through which decision makers try to cope with and respond to public opinion, either anticipating it, or being spurred by it or rather symbolically responding to its demands. [Chapter 9](#), ‘The myth of the reactive

public: American public attitudes on military fatalities in the post-Cold War period', by Steven Kull and Clay Ramsay, deals squarely with the issue of how policy makers perceive public opinion. To do so, they first discuss the US policy makers' beliefs that the public will respond to military fatalities by wanting to withdraw immediately, and the media's characterisations of the public in this regard. Evidence is provided that these beliefs about the public are influencing policy. Kull and Ramsay then examine the polling evidence on the public's responses to actual military fatalities in the cases of Somalia, the Gulf War, Saudi Arabia, and Lebanon, and conclude that the image of the public as highly reactive to fatalities is not sustained by available evidence. If anything, the public is more likely to want to respond assertively. The critical determinant of the public's response is not whether US vital interests are involved, but whether the operation is perceived as likely to succeed.

The last substantive chapter, 'War without bloodshed? Public opinion and the conflict over Kosovo', by Philip Everts, brings the analyses in the book up to date with a descriptive and analytical comparative study of primarily European but also American public opinion data on the conflict in Kosovo, which took place in the spring of 1999. Support for the NATO air campaign as well as for sending ground troops is explored as are the conditioning role of expected success, interests involved and the expected casualties.

In the Conclusions, 'What have we learned and where do we go from here?', Pierangelo Isernia builds on the results of the book to address the question of what we have learned from this diversified set of countries, cases and periods, and what gaps of knowledge and new problems these results and the new available evidence reveal.

Notes

- 1 This chapter draws extensively on various theoretical parts, originally included in different draft chapters for this volume. We are grateful for the willingness of the authors of the drafts to agree to the integration of these paragraphs in this general introduction to the theme of the book and the individual chapters that follow. We acknowledge their intellectual contributions.
- 2 It has been argued that the undemocratic conduct of foreign policy has led to wars that could have been prevented by more democratic procedures for the formulation of foreign policy, on the one hand. On the other hand, it has been argued that foreign policy requires a degree of insight and flexibility that democratic procedures can never hope to meet and that democratic decision making in the foreign policy sphere is a liability for the prospects of peace (Goldmann 1994:95–9).
- 3 For an overview see Holsti (1992, 1996); Nincic (1990); Russett (1992); Russett and Graham (1988).
- 4 For a different view see Burbach (1995).

- 5 More recently, Peter Trubowitz has argued that sectional economic interests trump partisanship and political ideology in accounting for opinions on American foreign policy. See Trubowitz (1998).
- 6 See Bardes and Oldendick (1978); Holsti (1979); Holsti and Rosenau (1979); Oldendick and Bardes (1982); Holsti and Rosenau (1984); Wittkopf (1986); Hurwitz and Peffley (1987); Chittick and Billingsley (1989); Holsti and Rosenau (1990); Wittkopf (1990); Holsti and Rosenau (1993); Chittick *et al.* (1995); and Richman *et al.* (1997).
- 7 External pressure rather than public opinion may have been the crucial factor, for instance.
- 8 For example Graham (1994).
- 9 For example Monroe (1979); Page and Shapiro (1983); Russett (1990).
- 10 Examples can be found in Cohen (1963); Gowing (1994); Powlick (1990).
- 11 For a more extensive version of this study see La Balme (1999).
- 12 For numerous illustrations of (American) perceptions of this phenomenon see Kull and Destler (1999:88–91). Less than one in six of the members of the foreign policy elite interviewed for this study felt that the general public was prepared to accept casualties in cases of controversial use of military force.
- 13 ‘The key to understanding the real world order is to separate the world into two parts. One part is zones of peace, wealth and democracy. The other is zones of turmoil, war and development’ Thus begins Singer, M. and Wildavsky, A. (1993) *The Real World Order. Zones of Peace/Zones of Turmoil*.
- 14 For a review of the literature and critique see Erdmann (1999).
- 15 Luttwak’s thesis can be refuted on demographic grounds. See H.L. Wesseling, ‘Nooit meer oorlog?’, *NRC Handelsblad*, 23 April 1998. The large families referred to by Luttwak had already become a rarity by 1914.
- 16 One of the most well known, well executed and often quoted studies has been made by J.E. Mueller (1971, 1973). Mueller argued that support for war declines with the logarithm of the numbers of casualties, because deaths earlier in the conflict have a stronger impact than later on. This finding has been criticised by Gartner and Segura (1998), who show that taking marginal casualties provides a better fit between casualties and support.
- 17 See e.g. Mueller (1993, 1994).
- 18 It is of course a regrettable obstacle for science that there has been no real possibility to perform an empirical test in recent years, although probably also a blessing for the countries concerned.
- 19 See e.g. Wecke (1994). The material dates from longitudinal surveys of enemy images held by Studiecentrum Vredesvraagstukken, KU Nijmegen, held in 1979, 1986, 1990 and 1991.
- 20 See also survey by NIPO for Stichting Maatschappij en Krijgsmacht and Studiecentrum Vredesvraagstukken, Nijmegen, August 1995.
- 21 See e.g. comparative surveys (1997) for Stichting Maatschappij en Krijgsmacht in the Netherlands, France, Germany and the United Kingdom.
- 22 See for the case of France also Cohen (1996). The French are not *trigger happy* and rather inclined to avoid risks, but a body-bag syndrome does not exist.
- 23 Kull (1995) concluded earlier that American casualties in the Gulf War (1991) had no effect on the level of public support.

- 24 Most of the chapters in this book were originally presented as papers for the Workshop 'Democracy, Public Opinion and the Use of Force in a Changing International Environment', Joint Sessions of the European Consortium for Political Research, University of Warwick, 23–28 March 1998. They have all been revised and—where necessary—brought up to date since then. Chapters 1, 4, 9, 10 and 11 were prepared especially for this book. Authors and editors are glad to acknowledge their indebtedness to colleagues and reviewers for suggesting changes and improvements. The responsibility for the result is entirely that of the individual authors.

Part I

Determinants and correlates of support for the use of force

2

The impact of basic motivation on foreign policy opinions concerning the use of force

A three-dimensional framework

William O. Chittick and Annette Freyberg-Inan

Introduction: the role of motivation in foreign policy opinion formation

In [Chapter 1](#) three sets of questions concerning the relationship between public opinion and foreign policy were formulated. These revolve, respectively, around the content and nature of public opinion, the determinants and correlates of public opinion, and the relationship between public opinion and foreign policy. This chapter addresses both the first and the second of these sets of questions. Our interest in this chapter is to study the impact of basic motivation on public opinion concerning issues of foreign policy in general and those involving the use of force in particular.

We suggest that individuals' basic motivational dispositions towards foreign policy issues vary along three dimensions.¹ These same three dimensions can be seen to structure public opinion concerning issues of foreign policy, an observation that is in accordance with our expectation that a distribution of specific opinions should be structured in accordance with the structure of more basic dispositions. We suggest that information concerning individuals' positions on the three dimensions of motivational disposition is helpful in predicting specific opinions. We thus identify the structure and nature of individuals' underlying motivational dispositions as important determinants of the structure and nature of public opinion on issues of foreign policy.² We believe that knowledge of its psychological determinants is a prerequisite for studying the impact of public opinion on the foreign policy making process, which is the third and perhaps the most difficult task attempted in this volume.

The structure of foreign policy attitudes

Most progress in the study of the general nature of public opinion with respect to issues of foreign policy has been made in the examination of its structure. This does not mean that there remain no differences of opinion, particularly concerning the extent to which individuals' opinions on a range of foreign policy

issues show a consistent pattern. If there is no structure to public opinion in general, we are left to study the causes of issue-specific opinions and opinion-fluctuations, remaining largely incapable of prediction. If there *is* structure to public opinion, however, we may be able employ its characteristics as dependent variables in the search for general determinants of public opinion formation. Thus, the identification of structure is a prerequisite for the systematic study of the general sources of public opinion, with which this chapter is primarily concerned.

As was shown in [Chapter 1](#), a consensus has gradually emerged that foreign policy attitudes are indeed structured and that their structure is multidimensional, although various analysts differ on the nature and number of primary dimensions. While most analysts support the claim that foreign policy opinion is structured along two dimensions, Chittick, Billingsley and Travis have argued that foreign policy opinion is structured along three primary dimensions (Chittick *et al.* 1995). Some of this discrepancy can be attributed to the methods the analysts use to interpret their data. However, most scholars have opted for less complicated interpretations at least in part because they lacked a theory of public opinion formation, which might have warranted a more complex approach. Thus, in the second section of this chapter, we will clarify the theoretical bases for our suspicion that foreign policy opinion is structured along three dimensions which correspond to variances in individuals' basic motivational dispositions. In sections three and four, we employ public opinion data to explore the plausibility and usefulness of our framework for assessing the impact of basic motivation on foreign policy opinions.

The role of motivational dispositions

We conceive of public opinion with respect to foreign policy issues as a set of dependent variables at least partly determined by individuals' basic motivational dispositions. We establish a three-dimensional model of the structure and operation of motivational dispositions with respect to issues of foreign policy. By examining the structure and operation of such dispositions, this chapter explores one of the possible sources of differences of opinion on foreign policy issues in general, and concerning the use of force in particular. We suggest that our three motivational dimensions can be employed simultaneously to classify individuals with respect to the basic components of their general orientation towards issues of foreign policy. Our ultimate hope is that knowledge of the nature and operation of relevant motivational dispositions can be used to help predict public opinion across foreign policy issues.

In order to determine the effects of public opinion on foreign policy it is necessary to look not only at its contents, but also at the robustness and the saliency of the relevant views. In addition, it requires the mapping of channels of communication between public and elites, the examination of decision-making mechanisms at the elite level, as well as the consideration of feedback effects.

We are here only concerned with employing information on the sources of public opinion towards the explanation and prediction of its structure and contents. This should be viewed as a first step towards a more complete assessment of its general nature, which would have to include additional sources, and as a prerequisite for the proper understanding and judgement of its impact.

Our approach is general. It transcends specific political contexts, thus offering possibilities of accounting for and predicting public opinion on issues as of yet unforeseeable. It is applicable across time and place, thus offering guidance to attempts to overcome the exaggerated reliance of empirical studies on the public opinion—foreign policy nexus on US data from the Cold War. It also does not distinguish between elites and the public at large, since we do not expect the structure of motive dispositions or the nature of their impact to vary across social strata.

Motive dispositions

Motives are commonly conceptualised to be activators of behaviour. In fact, in the words of psychologist K.B.Madsen (1974:13; see also McClelland 1985), ‘it is not possible to understand, explain or predict human behaviour without some knowledge of “motivation”—the “driving force” behind behaviour’. Motivation is usually studied as a part of the human organism, or human nature. It interacts with environmental factors insofar as the environment can facilitate or restrict the operation of motives and insofar as it provides stimuli for what psychologists refer to as ‘motive arousal’. Motives are aroused by internal or external stimuli, such as hunger or provocation, and determine how human beings will react to such stimuli. Motive arousal may be explained as a function of three main variables: motive dispositions, or needs, such as physical drives, characteristics of the incentive, that is, the opportunities which present themselves to fulfil these needs, and expectations of the attainability of goals, or the difficulty and likelihood of taking advantage of those opportunities.

It is useful to conceptualise the process of motivation as has been suggested by Russell Geen (1995); see also Heckhausen (1991). Actors are always simultaneously confronted with their own needs and with external situations which affect what is achievable. Both need and situation determine which behavioural incentives the actor will perceive. The actor then defines his goals accordingly, and will take action in order to achieve these goals. As David McClelland (1996:443) confirms, ‘A need in combination with a situation creates an incentive, which leads to a goal, which leads to action to attain the goal.’ We are here specifically interested in examining the impact of motive dispositions, the most fundamental psychological component in the process of motivation. In the complex reality of opinion formation, basic motive dispositions constitute only one relevant factor. However, we believe it is useful to concentrate on such dispositions, since we take them to be fundamental to both more general political orientations and specific opinions. In other words, we

believe that they may be conceptualised as the highest level variables in a hierarchically constructed process of opinion formation.

The expression of public opinion, as a form of goal-oriented behaviour, is generally believed to be affected by both dispositional and situational factors. While situational characteristics, such as opportunities and constraints, and their interaction with dispositions are crucial in accounting for action, we believe that our focus on the formation of behavioural preferences justifies a primary concern with the impact of basic needs or dispositions towards basic goals. Such dispositions have an effect both indirectly, through their impact on perceptions of the relevant situations, and directly on preferences towards various behavioural options. We suspect that, since they are more fundamental, basic motive dispositions might be as important as or even more important than the traditional sociodemographic and political variables in predicting foreign policy opinions and support for or opposition to government policies in general and the use of military force in particular.

Basic motivation as a source of foreign policy opinions: an analytical framework

Even a cursory examination of the psychological literature reveals a plethora of individual motives, which psychologists believe to be operative in different contexts. However, a thematic approach to motivation has been developed, primarily by psychologists H.A.Murray (1938) and David McClelland (1985), which categorises motivation according to the primary need acknowledged: power, affiliation, or achievement. Power may be broadly defined as the desire for control over one's environment, affiliation as the desire to associate with and be respected by others, and achievement as the desire to accomplish personal goals. The practice of classifying motivation in this way has become common across disciplines and issue areas.³ For example, Abraham Maslow (1973) employs these three motives in his hierarchy of needs, where he places survival and safety (power) at the bottom; belonging and love (affiliation) in the middle; and respect and self-esteem (achievement) at the top of his list of basic needs. Foreign policy analysts have also employed this classification system. Richard Cottam (1977) identifies as many as fifteen different types of foreign policy motives, but he classifies them as: governmental (power), communal (affiliation), and economic motives (achievement). Similarly Arnold Wolfers (1962) identifies three basic kinds of foreign policy goals: security (power); milieu (affiliation); and possessional (achievement). Finally, empirical studies by David Winter (1973, 1993) as well as Peterson *et al.* (1994) have successfully employed McClelland's motivational categories in attempts to link varying patterns of motivation to specific types of foreign policy decisions.

Perhaps the most interesting observation with respect to the existence of these three motivational themes in the foreign policy literature is that the main theoretical paradigms in foreign policy analysis each emphasise one of these

basic themes or motives. The realist school has traditionally defined the concept of the national interest in terms of power.⁴ Power is generally emphasised as the central means to realise the most basic goal of the survival of the nation-state and to achieve all other possible interests. In the words of neo-realist Kenneth Waltz (1979:118), states 'at a minimum, seek their own preservation, and at a maximum, strive for universal domination'. John Mearsheimer (1994/95:10–11) supports this view, claiming that 'the most basic motive driving states is survival' and that this makes it necessary for 'states in the international system [to] aim to maximise their relative power positions over other states'.

Liberal theories, in comparison, tend to emphasise the importance of the achievement motive by stressing the economic and political-cultural needs of actors in the international realm. The work of Karl Deutsch (1957) on the development of pluralistic security communities, Ernst Haas's theories on regional integration in Europe (Haas 1958), and Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye's *Power and Interdependence* ([1977] 1989) are among the central contributions to the growing strength of liberal approaches to the study of foreign policy. These approaches emphasise the possibility of expanding the potential for cooperation among nations, which share common interests. They generally stress the importance of opportunities for achievement, which may operate as a driving force for concerted action, in opposition to the realist emphasis on the international competition for power.

Finally, a third and more recent approach to the study of foreign policy, constructivism, contributes insights into the role of the motive of affiliation.⁵ According to constructivists like Alexander Wendt, the fundamental structures of international politics are social, rather than material. These structures not only constrain the behaviour of individuals, but they are directly involved in shaping individuals' identities and interests (Wendt 1995). Recent work in the field of social cognitivism illuminates the mechanisms by which individuals develop goals and strategies through social interaction.⁶ Constructivist approaches in general help explain the importance of actors' need to belong to a larger community as well as the consequences of this need for political strategies and outcomes.

What is especially intriguing about the three bodies of literature sketched above is that none of these approaches can make a persuasive claim that the other two do not also make a significant contribution to the study of international relations and foreign policy choice. As soon as analysts attempt to apply their understanding of international politics to particular states in the context of specific situations, they discover that they cannot account for decisions solely in terms of their preferred motive. Instead, it is commonly found that any meaningful treatment of particular cases requires an examination of the operation of all three motivational themes. For instance, in *International Relations Theory and the End of the Cold War*, a volume edited by Richard Ned Lebow and Thomas Risse-Kappen (1995), various chapters by realist, liberal, and constructivist theorists create the impression that the end of the Cold War can only be sufficiently explained through the combined efforts of all three

approaches. In addition, critiques of one or the other school of thought commonly include the observation that that school finds itself in need of ‘a continual adoption of auxiliary propositions to explain away flaws’ (Vasquez 1997:899).⁷ The introduction of *ad hoc* propositions to cover areas where the theoretical approach has generated unsatisfactory explanations or predictions may well be viewed as an indication of an incomplete assessment of reality—perhaps stemming from an overly confining view of human motivation.

Three dimensions

Given the fact that the three motivational themes of power, achievement, and affiliation are so embedded in the literature on both human psychology and international relations as well as foreign policy, we suspect that opinions concerning foreign policy goals and strategies might be explained in terms of these three basic motives. We believe that we can use insights from the extant, partial approaches to model those factors which are most influential in shaping dispositions with respect to the motive central to each approach. Our framework for the general assessment of the role of motivation in foreign policy opinion formation combines these insights. It associates each of the three motivational themes identified with one general foreign policy goal—security, prosperity, and community, respectively. Systematic differences among individuals are modelled to form one primary dimension of variance for each of these basic goals. We thus posit that resulting opinions are structured in terms of perceptual and preference orientations which can vary along three dimensions. Each of these dimensions can be described in terms of polar differences: (1) in an actor’s basic perceptions concerning the relevant characteristics of its environment; (2) in the actor’s preferences with respect to strategic goals; and (3) in the actor’s preferences with respect to strategic means. The core tenets of our framework model the effects of variation on these dimensions of motive disposition on opinions concerning specific foreign policy issues.

The power motive compels human beings to seek security in the form of protection from and advantage in conflicts with others and ensures immediate physical survival. Actors perceive their security environment to be more or less competitive. We hypothesise that the more competitive an actor perceives the relationship between its community and those threatening its security, the more salient the power motive. Vice versa, the more co-operative an actor perceives the relationship between its community and those representing potential threats, the less salient the power motive.

The positions foreign policy actors take towards possible security threats depend on whether they perceive the relationships between themselves and the relevant others as essentially competitive or co-operative. Actors’ choice of strategic security goals thus reflects preferences analogous to the competitive—co-operative perceptual dimension. We hypothesise that if an actor perceives a potentially threatening situation to be highly competitive, then the actor is more

likely to seek superior relative power, domination at the extreme, as its strategic goal. If the actor perceives a potentially threatening situation to be less competitive, then the actor is more likely to accept symmetric power relationships and to seek a mutual understanding or even accommodation as its strategic goal. We thus expect the security goal preferences of individuals to range from domination based on power superiority on the one hand to accommodation based on a symmetry of power on the other hand.

An actor's choice of strategic security goals also affects its preferences for the means used to obtain security. If a foreign policy actor believes that domination of a potential enemy is necessary for its security, that actor will be more prepared to use or threaten force, that is to adopt militarist policies. If an actor seeks accommodation, that actor will prefer non-coercive, non-militarist methods of dealing with security issues. Those who seek a mix of assertion of power and accommodation are likely to pursue more complex strategies, which involve both military and non-military actions.

Whereas the power motive arises from a perception of threats, the achievement motive arises from a perception of, or need for, opportunities. This motive inspires the pursuit of all those resources which, as, for example, money, education, or personal rights, are expected to better human beings' life circumstances. The prosperity goal is thus to be understood not in a narrow, strictly material sense, but, analogous to liberal conceptions of individual preferences, as a broader conception of the national interest.

Those perceptions most relevant to the pursuit of achievement concern an actor's own status and capabilities relative to those of the other relevant actors. We hypothesise that, generally, if an actor perceives itself as superior to those others, then the actor will be prepared to continually interact with them. If an actor perceives itself as inferior in capabilities to those others, then it will be hesitant to enter arrangements which institutionalise interaction. Foreign policy actors' responses to opportunities for achievement depend on their perceptions concerning their relative strength. Such perceptions thus affect the strategic goals actors pursue with respect to the basic foreign policy goal of prosperity. We hypothesise that if an actor perceives itself to be inferior in capabilities to relevant others, it will be more likely to pursue a foreign policy of non-involvement, isolation at the extreme. Vice versa, if the actor perceives itself to be in a superior position, it will favour a foreign policy of entering interactive arrangements, which increase interdependence.⁸

The socio-economic goals ranging from isolation, on the one hand, to interdependence, on the other, also affect the relevant strategic means preferred by foreign policy actors. An actor who pursues an isolationist policy will be more likely to employ policies protecting the goods, services, money and ideas it already possesses. One example would be protectionist trade policies. More generally, anti-involvement policies avoid exposure to the effects of the foreign policies of other international actors. An actor who favours a policy of interdependence, on the other hand, will strive for active involvement in the 'free

trade' of goods, services, money and ideas. It will be more prepared to enter into institutionalised arrangements, such as international organisations or alliances, as well as informal commitments with other international actors.

The affiliation motive inspires actors to attempt integration into a community, which can provide more protection and comfort than any actor would be able to secure for itself. In order to be part of such a community, actors accept and internalise, at least to some extent, that community's norms and rules of behaviour and, in turn, become able to shape the nature and conduct of the collectivity. Those perceptions most relevant to the pursuit of affiliation concern the conditions for communal identification with other relevant actors. Actors perceive their communities to be more or less exclusive. We hypothesise that if an actor emphasises those values which make its own community unique, then that actor will feature an exclusive identity that clearly separates the community from its environment. If, on the other hand, an actor stresses values its community holds in common with others, that actor will exhibit an inclusive identity, which accentuates the similarities between the community and the environment.

With respect to their strategic goals, foreign policy actors who portray more exclusive identities will be more likely to seek recognition through independence. Those actors who hold more inclusive identities will be more likely to pursue integration, unification at the extreme. In terms of strategic means, foreign policy actors who seek independence tend to prefer unilateral initiatives, as they would be hesitant to compromise their independent position by having to consult with others. Foreign policy actors who seek integration into a larger community instead tend to act on a multilateral basis. This is because consultation among all affected parties is likely to lead to more concerted action and to strengthen communal bonds.

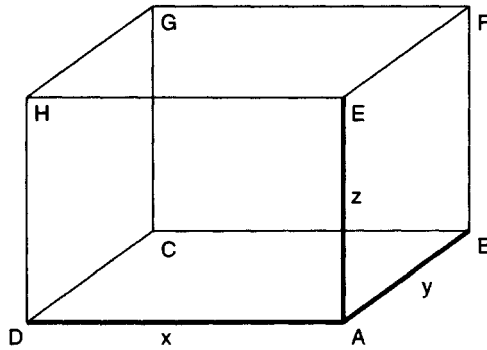
Our framework is comparable to the approach developed by Rattinger and Juhász (1998) to examine the impact of 'international postures' on opinion formation. Rattinger and Juhász argue that 'international postures' are concerned with three basic questions: To what extent should the state get involved internationally? (our pro-involvement—anti-involvement dimension) How should it get involved? (our militarist—non-militarist dimension) Should it act alone or with partners? (our unilateralist—multilateralist dimension). Their finding for the case of Germany, that the 'international postures' captured by the degrees of isolationism, multilateralism and militarism exhibited by the public emerge as the strongest predictor for opinions concerning international security arrangements, supports our belief in the relevance of these types of motive dispositions in opinion formation.⁹

In the following discussion, we will centre on strategic dispositions towards the three basic foreign policy goals, since such dispositions can be most closely identified with actual preferences towards behavioural options. We will explain how our understanding of the structure and impact of motive dispositions can contribute to a better understanding of the structure and development of such

preferences. We contend that all three of the above basic motives need to be taken into account in order to explain or predict actors' opinions concerning any foreign policy issue. If we, for example, wish to predict public opinions concerning a possible military action, we must not only consider whether the polled individuals are more or less militarist, but also take into account the other two motivational dimensions. For example, a rabid militarist might still be opposed to military action because he is also a unilateralist and the action is to take place under UN command. Similarly, the public might cease to support a military operation over time, because it is anti-involvement and therefore disinclined towards long-term international commitments.¹⁰

All three dimensions need to be considered to account for and predict public opinion on any foreign policy issue, including issues of using force. If we do so, we can establish a classification system of eight ideal types, each of which captures a different combination of extreme positions on our three dimensions of motive disposition. In order to make this model of explanation more accessible, we might ask the reader to imagine a cube whose sides are defined by the three dimensions (see [Figure 2.1](#)).¹¹

Together, these three dimensions represent all possible motivational dispositions towards basic foreign policy goals and strategies. Real individuals' dispositions may fall anywhere on the surface or within this cube. The eight corner points of our cube, however, constitute ideal types A through H. Type A individuals are: militarist, anti-involvement and unilateralist. While they generally support the use of military force to achieve foreign policy goals, they are disinclined towards multilateral ventures. In addition, they tend to oppose lasting international involvement. Type B individuals are: militarist, pro-involvement and unilateralist. They support both international involvement and the use of military force, while preferring unilateral action. Type C individuals are: non-militarist, pro-involvement and unilateralist. They generally do not support the use of force to achieve foreign policy goals, but support long-term international involvement, while preferring unilateral initiatives. Type D individuals are: non-militarist, anti-involvement and unilateralist. They generally oppose both the use of military force and international involvement. They prefer foreign policy initiatives to be of a unilateral nature. Type E individuals are: militarist, anti-involvement and multilateralist. They support the use of military force, prefer foreign policy initiatives to be conducted on a multilateral basis, and oppose long-term international involvement. Type F individuals are: militarist, pro-involvement and multilateralist. They support the use of military force, international involvement, and multilateral initiatives. Type G individuals are: non-militarist, pro-involvement, and multilateralist. They do not support the use of force, but do support international involvement and prefer multilateral initiatives. Finally, type H individuals are: non-militarist, anti-involvement, and multilateralist. They generally support neither the use of military force nor long-term international involvement. They also prefer foreign policy initiatives to take a multilateral form.



where x = Security
 y = Prosperity
 z = Community

and

Type A = militarism, anti-involvement, unilateralism
 Type B = militarism, pro-involvement, unilateralism
 Type C = non-militarism, pro-involvement, unilateralism
 Type D = non-militarism, anti-involvement, unilateralism
 Type E = militarism, anti-involvement, multilateralism
 Type F = militarism, pro-involvement, multilateralism
 Type G = non-militarism, pro-involvement, multilateralism
 Type H = non-militarism, anti-involvement, multilateralism

Figure 2.1 The construction of eight ideal types from three dimensions.

The construction of the above eight types allows us to group the foreign policy opinions of individuals who share similar outlooks by their relative proximity to one or the other of these extreme corner positions. In addition, plotting the positions of individuals on all three dimensions could allow us to estimate the likelihood that the individual's opinions will approximate that of any ideal type.

Examining the structure of public opinion

In the previous section we have argued that foreign policy analysts tend to structure their thinking about international relations and foreign policy around three basic approaches, each of which focuses on a different basic foreign policy goal and the accompanying motive. We have further contended that the motivational assumptions made in each approach are more usefully thought of as dimensions (variables), allowing individuals to express different perceptions and preferences with respect to both foreign policy ends and means. We believe that all three of these dimensions must be taken into account in explaining and predicting foreign policy opinions, as all three motivational themes play important roles in foreign policy choice. In this section, we offer some empirical evidence that these same three dimensions structure foreign policy opinion, as

expressed in public opinion polls. In the next section, we will show how these dimensions may be employed as independent variables in order to predict specific foreign policy opinions.

The CCFR data

Ideally, we would employ public opinion data from a wide variety of countries on a range of foreign policy issues and spanning the Cold War as well as the post-Cold War period, in order to test systematically the propositions which can be derived from our model. Unfortunately, the necessary consistently collected general data are available only for the United States, and even these do not include the kinds of policy-relevant responses, which would closely capture our dependent variables. The best Cold War data come from the four elite and four public opinion surveys, conducted mostly by Gallup for the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations (CCFR) between 1974 and 1986.¹² Three additional data sets on elites collected by Holsti and Rosenau in 1976, 1980 and 1984, and one elite data set collected by Chittick in 1982 were also used in the following analyses.¹³

In order to establish the existence of a three-dimensional structure to foreign policy opinion, Chittick, Billingsley and Travis have analysed the answers given to all the foreign policy goal questions used in the above-mentioned interviews and surveys between 1974 and 1986 (Chittick *et al.* 1995). If public opinion concerning foreign policy issues were unstructured, no consistent pattern should emerge from factor analyses of responses to these foreign policy questions. If it were true that respondents take either a realist or an idealist stance on foreign policy issues, then a single factor should emerge in which some individuals (realists) will answer most questions one way and the others (idealists) will answer them the opposite way. If it were true that respondents consider foreign policies simultaneously from both a realist and a liberal perspective, then a two-factor solution should emerge. In order for our framework to be supported, a factor analysis of the responses should produce three distinct factors, representing the three dimensions we have stipulated. Figure 2.2 illustrates the pattern which would result from a hypothetical situation in which, every time a question was used in one of the twelve surveys and interviews, the answers defined the primary dimension we have associated with each basic foreign policy goal.

In order to construct this hypothetical situation, all questions were first placed into one of the three goal domains of community, security, and prosperity. The three columns representing the target matrix in Figure 2.2 correspond to the three dimensions (I=unilateralism—multilateralism; II=militarism—non-militarism; III=anti-involvement—pro-involvement). A shaded box in a column indicates that the corresponding question defines that dimension, where the degree of shading indicates the number of times this occurred.¹⁴ In this ‘perfect’ factor matrix, each question defines the expected dimension, and no other. For example, the questions labelled ‘C’ deal with foreign policy issues we associate with the

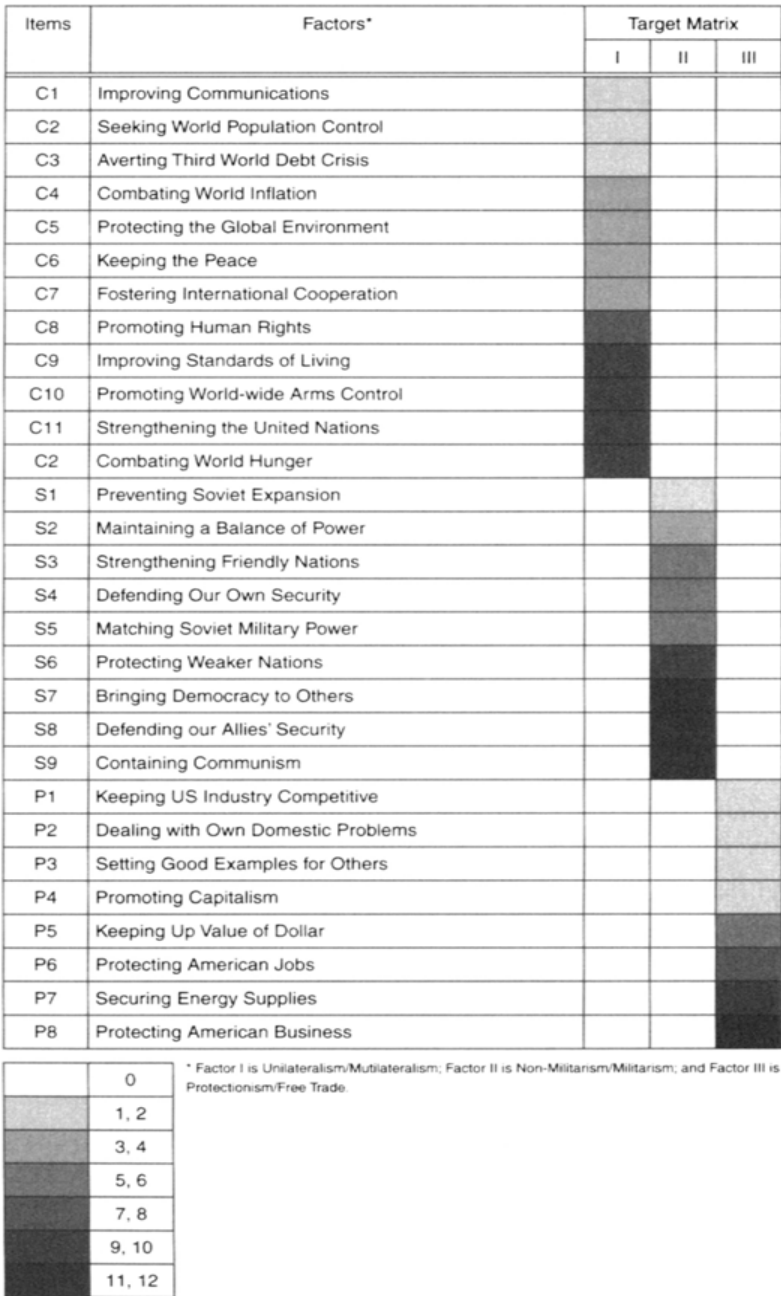


Figure 2.2 Number of times each question is expected to define factors in the target matrix.

community goal. We expect differences of opinions on each of these questions to define a unilateral-multilateral dimension. That is, a person who answers one of these questions in a particular way is likely to answer all questions in the ‘C’ group the same way. Another respondent with dissimilar views should answer these questions in the opposite way. This pattern in the answers given suggests that, even though each question in the community goal domain involves a specific issue, all of these issues are judged according to the respondent’s position on one underlying motivational dimension, in this case the dimension of unilateralism—multilateralism.

The analysis

In the actual analysis, the survey responses to each question were analysed in twelve separate principal component factor analyses followed by VARIMAX rotations.¹⁵ The results of all four public surveys and all eight elite surveys are summarised in Figure 2.3. Each time a question defines a factor, this finding is graphically represented by shading the box in the appropriate column. For example, if the empirical results in one of the twelve analyses show that question C10 defines the unilateralism—multilateralism dimension, then the box in Column I corresponding to that question will be shaded. If the empirical results show that that question defines another dimension, then the appropriate box in one of the two other columns will be shaded. Once again, the degree of shading indicates the number of times a question defines the dimension in question. The overall results across all twelve separate analyses can quickly be discerned by comparing Figures 2.2 and 2.3.

A comparison of the target and composite matrices reveals a striking similarity, indicating that our suggested three-dimensional structure is indeed plausible. Chittick *et al.* find that the three dimensions identified above do appear as factors, which account for patterns in survey responses. The authors show that questions dealing with ‘promoting human rights’, ‘improving standards of living’, ‘promoting world-wide arms control’, ‘strengthening the United Nations’, and ‘combating world hunger’ define a community factor; that questions dealing with ‘maintaining military strength’, ‘strengthening friendly nations’, ‘defending our own security’, ‘defending our allies’ security’, and ‘containing communism’ define a security factor; and that questions dealing with ‘keeping up the value of the dollar’, ‘protecting American jobs’, ‘securing energy supplies’, and ‘protecting American business’ define a prosperity factor. Squaring the factor loadings associated with each question under each factor delivers the per cent correspondence between the responses to each question and the hypothesised factor or dimension.

The minor deviations of the composite from the target matrix can be explained by the fact that some questions more closely define one particular dimension than do others. For example, we expect that Question S6, which concerns the protection of weaker nations, will be interpreted as involving a security issue. Figure 2.3 shows that many respondents did indeed interpret the question that

Items	Factors*	Composite Matrix		
		I	II	III
C1	Improving Communications			
C2	Seeking World Population Control			
C3	Averting Third World Debt Crisis			
C4	Combating World Inflation			
C5	Protecting the Global Environment			
C6	Keeping the Peace			
C7	Fostering International Cooperation			
C8	Promoting Human Rights			
C9	Improving Standards of Living			
C10	Promoting World wide Arms Control			
C11	Strengthening the United Nations			
C2	Combating World Hunger			
S1	Preventing Soviet Expansion			
S2	Maintaining a Balance of Power	**		
S3	Strengthening Friendly Nations			
S4	Defending Our Own Security			
S5	Matching Soviet Military Power			
S6	Protecting Weaker Nations			
S7	Bringing Democracy to Others			
S8	Defending our Allies' Security			
S9	Containing Communism			
P1	Keeping US Industry Competitive			
P2	Dealing with Own Domestic Problems			
P3	Setting Good Examples for Others			
P4	Promoting Capitalism			
P5	Keeping Up Value of Dollar			
P6	Protecting American Jobs			
P7	Securing Energy Supplies			
P8	Protecting American Business			

	0
	1, 2
	3, 4
	5, 6
	7, 8
	9, 10
	11, 12

* Factor I is Unilateralism/Multilateralism; Factor II is Non-Militarism/Militarism; and Factor III is Protectionism/Free Trade.
 ** It is possible for an item to define more than one factor at the 0.40 level or higher.

Figure 2.3 Number of times each question actually defines factors at the 0.40 level or higher in the composite matrix.

way. However, some people considered this question to involve a community issue. Perhaps the difference in interpretation is a consequence of ambiguity in the language—if emphasis is placed on the words ‘protecting’ and ‘aggression’, the question may elicit opinions towards the use of military force, which is primarily an issue of security; if emphasis is placed on the words ‘weaker nations’, the question may elicit opinions towards US relations with less developed countries, which is more of a community issue. It is important to keep in mind that individuals are always generally motivated to pursue all three basic foreign policy goals and thus their positions on all three dimensions of motivational disposition may play a role in shaping their opinions. That is why, in order to predict such opinions, it is advisable to consider all three dimensions of motivational disposition.

Efforts to replicate the above results using more recent survey data have been frustrated by the fact that the CCFR has changed some of the questions asked in its surveys. Such modifications, which are intended to capture expected changes in opinions after the end of the Cold War, make it difficult to compare the results of analyses based on survey data from different periods. By dropping key questions in 1990 and 1994 the CCFR has made it impossible to determine to what extent differences in findings concerning the structure of responses are caused by actual changes in basic foreign policy dispositions resulting from the new post-Cold War situation and to what extent they depend on the particular mix of questions asked in each year.¹⁶

Chittick and Billingsley have analysed the 1994 public survey data, again using principal component factor analysis followed by a VARIMAX rotation.¹⁷ This analysis is based on the responses to sixteen foreign policy goal questions. The results are shown in [Table 2.1](#).

These results are interesting, because the factor analysis now produces four factors rather than the three expected. The security factor, which had usually been strong, emerges here as weak and divided. Factor I is labelled community; Factor II prosperity; Factor III global security; and Factor IV national security.¹⁸ Since this survey was taken in late 1994, some time after the end of the Cold War, it is interesting not only to examine which questions are associated with each basic motive but also to compare some of the items in this solution with the same items used in the solutions obtained during the Cold War. As many of the questions used here have a history, as shown in [Figures 2.2](#) and [2.3](#), we can identify some of the specific changes which have occurred in this most recent factor matrix. With respect to the prosperity factor, two of the individual items, ‘protecting American jobs’ and ‘protecting American business’ are old items which habitually define this factor. But two new items have been added, which has led to a strengthening of the factor. It is interesting that both ‘illegal drugs’ and ‘immigration’ are defined as economic issues.

Most change has occurred with respect to the security dimension. Two questions that have a history of simultaneously defining both the community and the security dimension (Factors I and IV respectively) continue to do so. These

are the questions on 'protecting weak nations' and 'bringing democracy to others'. The 'weak nations' question (S6), as mentioned above, is particularly susceptible to varying interpretations. The question on 'democratic government', however, is in some ways the most interesting of all, because of its mixed history. In 1974 (Vietnam) the public viewed it as a security question and in 1978 (Carter) as a community question. In 1982 and 1986 (Reagan) the question defined both security and community with the loading on security slightly higher. These, of course, were the days when democracy was contrasted with communism in the context of the Cold War security stand-off.¹⁹ Now, in the post-Cold War context, the question clearly defines the community dimension (Factor I). This mixed history suggests that such 'ideologically loaded' questions might be used as 'marker' variables to identify the most salient dimensions or factors at a given time.²⁰

One question, 'United Nations', that has consistently defined the community dimension (Factor I) now defines the new global security dimension (Factor III). We can explain the new interpretation of the 'United Nations' question in terms of international events. In the three years prior to this survey, the United Nations launched more peacekeeping missions than it had in the previous four decades of the Cold War. It is not too surprising then that this issue now defines global security almost as well as community. It is also noteworthy that the 'environmental' and 'energy' questions now contribute to the definition of the new global security dimension (Factor III). The 'environment' question had not been used in public surveys prior to 1990, but in elite surveys it had consistently defined a community dimension (Factor I). The 'energy' question has had a mixed history, defining the prosperity dimension in 1974 and 1982, and the security dimension in 1978 and 1986. This may be because, while the reference to energy suggests a prosperity issue, the term 'securing' suggests a security dimension. The fact that both of these questions now best define a global security dimension (Factor III) may indicate that the concept of security is being redefined in order to encompass new threats which may be considered just as worrisome as the traditional military concerns captured in Factor IV.²¹ Finally, it is not surprising that 'military power' and 'nuclear weapons', new questions, and 'allies' security', an old question, define the security factor. However, it is interesting that the 'trade deficit', a relatively new question, which had previously defined the prosperity dimension, is now also viewed as a security issue.

The above four-factor solution does not produce a simple structure. That is, the factor scores produced by this factor matrix include at least five items that define more than one of the factors at the 0.30 level or higher. Since some respondents are reading all five of these questions differently at least, their inclusion in subsequent analysis would pose difficulties for the interpretation of results. In order to attain a simpler structure, the authors eliminate the five questions that do not discriminate clearly between factors.²² When the eleven

Table 2.1 Rotated factor matrix based on 1994 CCFR public data on foreign policy goals

	<i>Factor I</i>	<i>Factor II</i>	<i>Factor III</i>	<i>Factor IV</i>
Helping to improve the standard of living of less developed nations	0.71937	-0.01038	0.04998	-0.02285
Promoting and defending human rights in other countries	0.66861	-0.12232	0.10449	0.10076
Combating world hunger	0.66710	0.11685	0.10414	-0.06670
Protecting weaker nations against foreign aggression	0.58965	-0.04535	-0.02126	0.43109
Helping to bring a democratic form of government to other nations	0.58667	0.11290	-0.03736	0.37862
Strengthening the United Nations	0.42234	0.20483	0.38283	0.06555
Protecting the jobs of American workers	0.02005	0.77221	0.11020	-0.00511
Stopping the flow of illegal drugs into the US	0.02898	0.66933	0.09995	-0.09113
Controlling and reducing illegal immigration	-0.11742	0.60851	0.14487	0.23493
Protecting the interests of American business abroad	0.15135	0.58047	-0.05165	0.24891
Preventing the spread of nuclear weapons	0.12286	0.03263	0.68389	0.11085
Reducing our trade deficit with foreign countries	-0.05351	0.07167	0.63294	0.16870
Improving the global environment	0.45101	0.03815	0.58523	-0.26345
Securing adequate supplies of energy	0.02211	0.27554	0.48020	0.33588
Maintaining superior military power world-wide	-0.03613	0.17159	0.15266	0.70673
Defending our allies' security	0.27589	0.03527	0.22990	0.61745
Per cent variance explained	21.9	12.8	7.5	7.1

Table 2.2 Rotated factor matrix, using reduced foreign policy goal questions for CCFR 1994 public data

	<i>Factor I</i>	<i>Factor II</i>	<i>Factor III</i>
Protecting the jobs of American workers	0.78304	0.02021	0.07147
Stopping the flow of illegal drugs into the US	0.67018	0.01867	0.02155
Controlling and reducing illegal immigration	0.60476	-0.19084	0.28039
Protecting the interests of American business abroad	0.59493	0.13856	0.10996
Combating world hunger	0.13806	0.75904	0.02221
Helping to improve the standard of living of less developed nations	0.00541	0.75292	0.04477
Promoting and defending human rights in other countries	-0.09133	0.67848	0.18656
Maintaining superior military power world-wide	0.19251	-0.04462	0.62713
Defending our allies' security	0.05148	0.26678	0.61679
Preventing the spread of nuclear weapons	0.04596	0.16047	0.60989
Reducing our trade deficit with foreign countries	0.09009	-0.02623	0.59315
Per cent of variance explained	21.8	15.8	10.0

remaining questions are analysed, using the same method, they define three factors as expected. The results are shown in [Table 2.2](#).

The resulting factors generally represent our three dimensions: Factor I is pro-involvement—anti-involvement in the prosperity domain; Factor II multilateralism—unilateralism in the community domain; and Factor III militarism—non-militarism in the security domain. The 1994 solutions ([Table 2.2](#)) thus generally reconfirm that we can identify three basic dimensions in foreign policy opinion, which we can relate to our three motivational themes. Second, this analysis demonstrates that the issue contents of the three goal domains change over time as people redefine issues in terms of their changing circumstances. The instability of the initial factor matrix ([Table 2.1](#)) illustrates the extent to which key items used during the Cold War, as for example the question on ‘containing communism’, may lose their meaning as a result of changed circumstances. Others become interpreted in terms of different goals. This

underscores the need to include multiple and varied items in order to define our goal domains. It also serves to remind us that individuals' positions with respect to all three basic foreign policy goals should be considered when attempting to predict their reactions to novel situations or events.

Predicting the content of public opinion

The ultimate goal of the framework presented here is, of course, not only to determine the structure of foreign policy opinion in general, but also to use the resulting factor scores to predict specific opinions. Since both the Cold War and the post-Cold War data analyses have produced independent factors, some might argue that we can explain the opinions expressed in the security domain, for example, mainly if not exclusively with reference to the factors measuring militarism—non-militarism. However, that loses sight of the fact that although these factors are independent of one another, they measure different aspects of foreign policy motivation in the same human beings. Recall that foreign policy analysts who assume the operation of only one type of relevant motive are soon compelled to consider other types of motives as well. Thus, we foresee the need to use all three factors in accounting for foreign policy opinions regardless of how we might classify a particular issue.

Using factor scores derived from an analysis of the CCFR elite and public data sets for 1982, Chittick *et al.* have shown that all three dimensions are useful in predicting individuals' behavioural intentions involving hypothetical situations during the Cold War.²³ Responses to the following questions were used as dependent variables: (1) 'Do you think giving military aid to other countries generally helps our own security?' (2) 'Would you favour or oppose the use of US troops if the Arabs cut off all oil shipments to the United States?' and (3) 'Do you think it will be best for the future of our country if we take an active part in world affairs or if we stay out of world affairs?'²⁴ The response sets were, respectively, 'yes', 'no', and 'don't know'; 'favour', 'oppose', and 'don't know'; and 'active part', 'stay out', and 'not sure'.

The authors employ logit analyses to compare the utility of models based on one-, two, and three-factor solutions for predicting the opinions of individuals on each of these three foreign policy issues. They are able to show that per cent prediction error is consistently reduced by employing models that include all three dimensions. Thus, statistical analysis indicates that all three dimensions contribute significantly to an explanation of the polled individuals' opinions.²⁵ This confirms our expectation that actors' positions on all three dimensions should be taken into account when trying to explain or predict foreign policy opinions—any other approach which is more limited in scope will produce inferior explanations and predictions. Chittick and Billingsley have updated this kind of analysis by showing that factor scores derived from the factor matrix shown in [Table 2.2](#) can predict responses to policy-relevant questions asked in 1994 (Chittick and Billingsley 1995). Using one-way analysis of variance with

F 1.15** (129)***	G 1.17 (149)	C 1.38 (128)	B 1.30 (170)
E 1.16 (299)	H 1.22 (216)	D 1.52 (196)	A 1.38 (217)

* The F ratio is 18.3656 with an F probability of 0.0000.

** Weighted cases with scores of +0.2 to -0.2 on the identify dimension were filtered out.

*** 753 cases were considered missing because they either had no opinion or volunteered that it depends on the circumstances.

Figure 2.4 Mean differences among individuals favouring (+1) or opposing (+2) 'US taking part in UN peacekeeping efforts', using one-way analysis of variance* (number of cases in parentheses).

positive and negative scores on each of the three factors shown in [Table 2.2](#), they find that all three dimensions are significant in accounting for the differences among individuals' opinions on most issues. We will briefly summarise the main results of the analyses of responses to those two questions, which deal specifically with foreign policy issues involving the use of force.

The first of these questions asked whether or not the US should take part in UN peacekeeping efforts. Respondents could either favour (1) or oppose (2) taking part.²⁶ The results are shown in [Figure 2.4](#). As we should expect, the results show that multilateralists (Types E, F, G and H) are more likely than unilateralists (Types A, B, C and D) to recommend that the US take part in UN peacekeeping operations. Also, militarists (Types A, B, E and F) are more likely than non-militarists (Types C, D, H and G) to favour US participation in UN peacekeeping actions. Finally, not surprisingly, those who are pro-involvement (Types B, C, F and G) are more likely than those who are anti-involvement (Types A, D, E and H) to favour US participation in UN peacekeeping operations.

The second question asked whether or not respondents favoured using US troops if Russia invaded Western Europe. Those who favoured such action received a score of 1; those who opposed, a score of 0.²⁷ The results are shown in [Figure 2.5](#). As expected, militarists (Types A, B, E and F) are more willing than non-militarists (Types C, D, G and H) to favour using troops. Those who are pro-involvement (Types B, C, F and G) are more likely than those who are anti-involvement (Types A, D, E and H) to favour using troops. There is no apparent difference between unilateralists (Types A, B, C and D) and multilateralists (Types E, F, G and H).

F 0.75** (173)***	G 0.43 (203)	C 0.41 (185)	B 0.71 (226)
E 0.63 (449)	H 0.36 (381)	D 0.36 (273)	A 0.61 (324)

* F Ratio is 27.7354 with an F probability of 0.0000.

** Cases with scores between +0.2 and -0.2 were filtered out on the security dimension.

*** 175 weighted respondents were not including because they were #8216;not sure'.

Figure 2.5 Mean differences among individuals favouring or opposing 'Using US troops if Russia invades Western Europe', using one-way analysis of variance* (number of cases in parentheses).

These results confirm our suspicion that political opinions concerning the use of force are based on complex dispositions, involving at least two of the three motives stipulated in our framework. In general, those individual relationships between motivational dispositions and foreign policy opinions, which have been statistically observed, are in accord with our theoretical expectations.

Conclusion

We believe that individual differences with regard to basic motivational dispositions are the source of a three-dimensional pattern, which can help define the content of public opinion regarding foreign policy. As demonstrated above, it is at least plausible to think of public opinion with respect to foreign policy issues as structured along three dimensions which are explicable in terms of motivational dispositions towards three basic foreign policy goals. We are also able to show that it seems useful to consider all three of these dimensions when predicting both public and elite opinions. We emphasise the importance of a theory-guided and empirically defensible judgement of the structure of public opinion, as it is becoming more commonplace for analysts to use structural factors, rather than the usual demographic variables such as age, gender, and income, in order to explain foreign policy opinions. Information on the structure of public opinion is also considered relevant for predicting opinion change.

It was argued in [Chapter 1](#) that much of the recent interest in the relationship between public opinion and foreign policy stems from the notion that both American and European public opinion have been affected by dramatic changes in the international situation, although such an impact could not yet be demonstrated.²⁸ It is at least possible that dramatic events such as the end of the Cold War may be able to cause more significant changes in public opinion on foreign policy than most opinion analysts have found so far. Unfortunately, the true nature and causes of such changes are impossible to determine without the data necessary for crossperiod comparison. For example, answers to questions

concerning the impact of the Vietnam War on US public opinion have not been entirely satisfactory because of the insufficiency of pre-Vietnam base-line data.²⁹ Another possible problem has been conceptual. Changes in opinion are usually conceptualised as linear. Where data are available, the most common method for gauging changes in public opinion is to look for marginal variance in the percentage of persons expressing a given opinion on the same question at two different points in time. However, we suspect that dramatic changes can occur, and not become observable this way. We believe that in order to demonstrate that little or no opinion change has occurred one must show that there has been no significant change in the underlying structure of opinions (Chittick and Billingsley 1990).

Motive dispositions are a relatively stable factor in the formation of specific opinions, since they are fundamental in a person's basic orientation towards the international environment. However, such dispositions may still change, not only across generations, but also in response to dramatic events and developments. In such a case, individuals' positions can be thought of as shifting along one or more of our dimensions.

It seems, for example, at least worthwhile pondering the possibility that the initial popularity of the 'new' types of military involvement—peace-enforcing, peacekeeping, and peace-supporting missions—partly reflected a popular simultaneous shift towards multilateralism and pro-involvement. However, we suspect that the actual experience with such missions in Bosnia and elsewhere may have led some individuals to reconsider the effectiveness of such measures, and to prefer prolonged negotiations before any use of force. Thus, all three of our dimensions may affect individuals' views and changes in public opinion concerning the collective use of force outside NATO.

We expect that if the salience of policy goals changes in political discourse, be it through the manipulations of political decision makers trying to garner support for their policies or otherwise motivated strategies involving the dissemination of information to the public, so may public opinion fluctuate. Thus, for example, if a sector of the population which supports a military intervention for humanitarian reasons (community goal) becomes convinced that in truth the war is being fought for military influence (security goal), those within that sector who are non-militarists will become more likely to withdraw their support. Research on the 'casualty hypothesis' might profit from this somewhat more complex view of public opinion, as it might help explain why public support can be withdrawn during the course of military involvement.

Finally, our perspective has some implications for the controversy between the 'realist' and 'liberal' approaches to the judgement of the proper role for public opinion in the foreign policy decision-making process. 'Realists' or 'traditionalists' are concerned about mood swings in public opinion that could prevent decision makers from pursuing the best foreign policy in a given situation. Ironically, one of the best examples for such a mood swing occurred in the late 1970s in the US, when the Committee on Present Danger and the

Coalition for Peace Through Strength convinced many Americans that the Soviet Union was spending more on defence than the United States, and would soon overtake them in the arms race (Skidmore 1993). By 1983, however, public resistance to a strongly unilateralist, militarist, and pro-involvement foreign policy led the Reagan administration back towards moderation. In the Gulf War, the Bush administration led the American public to focus on the acceptability of using force against Iraq (community issue) rather than its ultimate military effectiveness and likelihood of success (security issue). Although this strategy proved effective in marshalling public support in the short term, it did not help build long-term public support.³⁰

Both of these examples involving the manipulation of public opinion illustrate how a multidimensional structure provides public opinion with a greater degree of underlying stability than a one- or even two-dimensional structure. While it is certainly possible to distort public opinion in the short term, such efforts are not likely to change underlying perceptions of the international environment or orientations towards basic foreign policy goals or strategies, and may even be counterproductive in the long term.

Since the structure of elite and public opinion is similar,³¹ there is at least some hope that the relationship between the opinions of the general public and the choices of foreign policy decision makers in mature democracies can be characterised by a degree of mutual understanding and predictability. However, we cannot expect the consideration of public opinion in foreign policy making to have a beneficial effect if we fail to understand its nature. Nor can we govern in accordance with democratic expectations if we fail to understand the general sources of public opinion and the rules by which opinions change. Our study of the role of basic motivation in the formation of foreign policy opinion attempts to make a small contribution to the development of such an understanding.

Notes

- 1 Chittick, Billingsley and Travis have alluded to the fact that each of our three dimensions is explicable in terms of a basic human motive. See Chittick *et al.* (1995). This chapter develops the idea more fully.
- 2 We conceive 'public opinion' to consist of views on specific foreign policy issues, as they can be measured through public opinion polling. Specific opinions are determined by more general psychological dispositions. Such dispositions take many forms, which we might refer to, for example, as 'attitudes', 'beliefs', or 'motivations'. They cannot be measured directly but have to be inferred from expressed opinions or from observations of behaviour.
- 3 See, for example, McClelland and Steele (1973). On the motive of power see especially Winter (1973) and McClelland (1975). On the motive of achievement see especially McClelland *et al.* (1953) and Atkinson (1966).
- 4 See, most prominently, Morgenthau (1993).

- 5 Some prefer to think of constructivism as a methodology rather than a substantive theory. It can be both, insofar as it includes both epistemological and ontological tenets. We are here more interested in the latter.
- 6 See, for example, Kennedy (1998).
- 7 Vasquez critiques the balance-of-power research programme of Waltzian neorealism.
- 8 It is important to keep in mind that the goal of isolation is pursued with reference to prosperity interests. This is of course not to say that weak nations will not often conclude alliances with friendly stronger ones in pursuit of increased security.
- 9 See also [Chapter 3](#) by Zoltán Juhász in this volume.
- 10 As suggested, for example, by Karin Gilland's study of Irish neutrality in [Chapter 6](#) of this volume, a lack of clear distinction between analytical categories such as unilateralism and nationalism, or multilateralism and internationalism, serves to 'muddle' such concepts, rendering them useless as tools for explanation or prediction.
- 11 The authors acknowledge Lee Ann Pingel's valued contribution to the image of the cube in [Figure 2.1](#).
- 12 See [Chapter 1](#).
- 13 See Holsti and Rosenau (1984) for a description of the Holsti—Rosenau data and Chittick and Billingsley (1989) for a description of the Chittick data.
- 14 The same questions were not asked in every survey.
- 15 The foreign policy goal questions used in each individual survey and the results of each separate analysis are shown in Appendix A in Chittick *et al.* (1995).
- 16 The question on 'combating world hunger' was dropped in 1990, and the questions on 'containing Communism' and 'worldwide arms control' were dropped in 1994, weakening the militarism-non-militarism factor. As a consequence, it has been impossible to compare the factor structures derived at these two points in time with those derived earlier, since comparison requires that identical items be used and because the number of identical items was already at the minimum threshold. See Chittick and Billingsley (1990).
- 17 Chittick and Billingsley (1995).
- 18 Richman *et al.* (1997) obtain similar results, but they label their factors quite differently.
- 19 The factor matrices for each of the four public surveys may be found in Chittick *et al.* (1995).
- 20 At this time we know of no other ways of identifying the relative importance of factors irrespective of the number and kind of survey questions asked.
- 21 It is at least possible that after a period of redefinition, factors III and IV might once again merge to represent a new overall conception of security.
- 22 These are the questions on weak nations, the environment, securing energy, United Nations, and democratic government.
- 23 Chittick *et al.* (1995). The best simple factor structures were achieved using the 1982 data.
- 24 No data from elite interviews were available on this question in 1982.
- 25 See also Chittick and Billingsley (1996). The authors conducted a survey among participants in the APSA Convention in Chicago in 1995, just after NATO employed air strikes against Serbian forces near Sarajevo. In this case the factor scores used to measure the three dimensions are based on only a few questions,

limiting the analysis to the two dimensions of community and security. Using multiple regression analysis, Chittick and Billingsley find that both of these factors are significant in accounting for opinions on NATO air strikes.

- 26 A total of 753 responses were considered missing because respondents either professed no opinion or answered that the acceptability of US participation in UN peacekeeping efforts depends on the circumstances.
- 27 A total of 175 respondents were excluded because they were 'not sure'.
- 28 For example, Ole Holsti reports that in US public opinion since the end of the Cold War there has been a greater degree of continuity than of change. See Holsti (1997). See also [Chapter 7](#) in this volume, in which Tamar Hermann finds little change in Israeli attitudes towards the use of force since the Oslo Agreement.
- 29 The most detailed study of these questions is Holsti and Rosenau (1984). Unfortunately, the authors were forced to ask their respondents to indicate retrospectively what their opinions were at the beginning of the war.
- 30 It should be recognised that both the US Congress and the public were divided on the issue of the use of force right up until the 15 January 1991 Security Council deadline.
- 31 See Chittick *et al.* (1995).

German public opinion and the use of force in the early 1990s

Zoltán Juhász

Introduction

Since 1990 German foreign and security policy has increasingly been emancipated from the inheritance of German history and the Cold War era. The repeated participation of German military forces outside the NATO alliance territory is a clear indicator of these fundamental changes. The most recent step in this almost ten-year-old development of out-of-area missions of the *Bundeswehr* was the decision of the German parliament to support the KFOR troops in Kosovo with up to 8,500 German soldiers. This decision is particularly noteworthy, since it was agreed upon by a left-wing coalition government, whose members until recently were strongly opposed to German out-of-area missions. Moreover, this change in policy outlook took place in the context of a war against Yugoslavia that was not sanctioned by the United Nations. Finally, in the Kosovo conflict German soldiers were not only deployed in supplying humanitarian aid and to support the military allies, but they also actively participated in actual fighting, that is to say, in about 390 sorties they tried to destroy Serb communication centres. Altogether this means that, ten years after the end of the Cold War, out-of-area missions of the *Bundeswehr* are endorsed by almost every political party in Germany.

The support for the use of force was, however, not limited to the political elite but also widespread among the population. One reason for the strong acceptance was probably the declared goal of this mission, namely the intention to end a humanitarian disaster. Accordingly, the public approval of the NATO bombing in Yugoslavia remained around 60 per cent almost during the whole period of the war in Kosovo.¹ This high agreement is so much more remarkable when one considers that at the beginning of the air attacks the majority of the population was rather uncertain whether the air strikes would eventually lead to the retreat of Yugoslavia; and even in the later phase of the conflict, public opinion remained divided in this respect. Although there seems to be a basic approval by the German population of out-of-area missions, the degree of support can easily be affected. The damage caused by NATO forces to the uninvolved and the civilian population, for example, had a detrimental effect on the public's approval.

The short-term but noticeable decline in public support after the inadvertent NATO bombings of the Chinese embassy or of civilian targets is a clear indication of this dependence. The support for foreign military engagements is, however, even more likely to be related to the expected and actual own losses in material and human lives. This is suggested by the large majority of Germans who opposed any deployment of ground troops to enforce the war goals in Kosovo. Another hint of the impact of expected human losses on the support is the decline of public approval for the air strikes, as well as for the dispatching of ground troops whenever the involvement of German soldiers was explicitly mentioned.² Therefore, it seems that the high support for German out-of-area missions so far can be explained by the fact that the *Bundeswehr* was involved in foreign missions for the 'right reasons' and because no German military personnel have been killed in action yet. The overall public approval should not obscure the fact, however, that opposition predominated and still prevails in certain segments of the German population. The latest bombardment of Yugoslavia was, for instance, less supported in the eastern states, and among the supporters of the PDS (*Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus*) it was overwhelmingly scorned. Also, despite the direct responsibility of their party for the actual military deployments, many members and supporters of the *Bündnis 90/Die Grünen* vehemently rejected the German military involvement in Kosovo, since they still felt obligated to their pacifist tradition.

This short overview of recent developments helps to raise the major questions discussed in this chapter. First of all, the impact of the changes in the foreign and defence policy situation since 1990 will be analysed. In the descriptive part, the perceptions of the population towards the new foreign and security policy challenges will be investigated. Then, changes in the support for the compulsory military service and in the general willingness to defend the country will be outlined. Of particular interest will be the public's attitudes towards specific out-of-area missions.

The second major task will be to identify the relevant determinants of public support for the use of force and for out-of-area missions. For this purpose, a hierarchical model of attitude structure will be introduced. An empirical examination of all these questions will be carried out on the basis of data from the early 1990s. Several arguments support this decision. Foremost, the available data for this period are rather extensive. Furthermore, the historical setting in this time period includes several out-of-area missions of the *Bundeswehr* and probably the most intensive discussion about the use of force publicly and in the media since unification. Finally, this period also seems to be well suited to the investigation of possible differences and processes of convergence in the contents and structure of the foreign and security attitudes among the citizens in the eastern and western parts of Germany. Before the underlying theoretical arguments of the study and the presentation of the empirical results are discussed, a short overview of the historical setting will be given.

Overview of German out-of-area missions

Due to the particular historical, political and geographical situation of Germany, public attitudes towards the use of force were hardly of any concern until the reunification in 1990. For decades German foreign and security policy was shaped by the East—West conflict and all governments had to adhere to the interests of the Western allies. Nevertheless, the question of German involvement in solving international conflicts by military means was raised earlier. Already in 1982, Germany signed the Wartime-Host-Nation-Agreement with the US, after the Americans demanded a stronger military engagement from their European partners. This agreement granted German civil and military support for American troops in case of US out-of-area operations. Shortly after the signing of the agreement, Chancellor Schmidt asked for a legal study to clarify the permissibility of German participation in out-of-area missions. This report concluded that the constitution (*Grundgesetz*) did not forbid the military involvement of the *Bundeswehr* outside the NATO territory when and if such a mission were carried out within the framework of a system of collective security. Despite this report, the prevailing defence policy consensus ruled out direct German involvement for the time being. During the first Gulf War between Iran and Iraq, the discussion about German out-of-area engagements intensified again, however. Again, the Western allies demanded from Germany active participation in the Persian Gulf. Direct involvement was disapproved, but as a symbolic gesture of solidarity, Germany deployed naval units in the Mediterranean.

With the breakdown of the GDR regime in 1989 and after the reunification of Germany in 1990 the political situation changed fundamentally. Germany regained full sovereignty and its foreign and security policy had to be re-oriented. The need for a rapid redefinition of German foreign and security policy was also fostered by a major challenge within a year. When the UN Security Council condemned the annexation of Kuwait by Iraq and decided on a military intervention, Germany had to decide on its role in this conflict. Direct deployment of German military personnel in the Gulf region was rejected once again because of the still unclear constitutional situation. To make up for insufficient active military involvement Germany promised financial and material help. Furthermore, air force units and missile defence systems were relocated to Turkey, army units provided humanitarian help within the framework of the action ‘Kurdish Help’ and later the navy participated in the international mine clearing action in the Arabian Gulf. This German reluctance was nevertheless disapproved of as opportunistic by some of the alliance partners.

During the intense public debate about the German role in the Gulf War, an ‘Independent Commission for the Future Tasks of the *Bundeswehr*’ presented its final report, in 1991. On the one hand, it confirmed the constitutionality of out-of-area missions, but on the other hand it demanded a broad political consensus for such actions. The deployment of medical personnel of the *Bundeswehr* to

Cambodia in the framework of the UN mission formed the beginning of the German blue helmet activities. Soon afterwards the involvement of German soldiers began in former Yugoslavia. At first, German airforce planes brought aid to Sarajevo and navy ships helped to control the UN embargo against Yugoslavia in the Adriatic. These measures led to an intense domestic political discussion about the future of German foreign military deployments. Apart from the conflicts in the Balkans, and the request of the UN for a German rapid reaction force, the programmatic discussions within the various political parties contributed to the intense public debate. The then ruling conservative government turned down the UN request, even though in principle it was positively disposed to an active German role. In contrast, the opposition parties remained firmly opposed to any German out-of-area involvement.

Despite the domestic controversies, the Federal government decided to participate with German soldiers flying AWACS planes in control of the no-fly zone over Bosnia-Herzegovina. This decision was the first reason for a complaint from the SPD and the FDP at the Constitutional Court (*Verfassungsgericht*) on grounds of unconstitutionality. Notwithstanding this complaint, the government complied with the request of the United Nations in the same month also to send *Bundeswehr* units to Somalia to support the supply of humanitarian aid, and to provide logistic assistance to the Italian troops. At the request of the SPD this decision was also submitted to the Court. Thus, the wars in the Balkans and Somalia gave a new urgency to the question of the constitutionality of the participation of the *Bundeswehr* in out-of-area missions. The Constitutional Court had to decide on three different cases within a short period of time: the deployment of the navy in the enforcement of the trade embargo against Yugoslavia in the Mediterranean; the involvement of German soldiers in AWACS reconnaissance flights in control of the no-fly zone over Bosnia-Herzegovina; and finally, the involvement of *Bundeswehr* units in the UN operations in Somalia (März 1993; Bähr and Biner 1994).

The Court first dealt with the issue of the deployment of German soldiers in AWACS reconnaissance flights in April 1993, although it did not immediately rule on the constitutionality of this mission. The demand for a temporary injunction was turned down as the lives of German soldiers seemed hardly threatened, while a withdrawal of German air force personnel could have led to a considerable loss of trust by the international community. For the Somalia decision of June 1993, the Constitutional Court decided on a requested injunction, as human losses among the German soldiers could not be ruled out. More important than the temporary injunction was, however, its ruling on the question of its institutional competence. It determined that deployments of German military abroad would only be constitutional after previous agreement of the parliament. The general decision on the constitutionality of out-of-area missions was decreed in July 1994. Most importantly, it decided that out-of-area deployments of German forces by the government are covered by the constitution. Article 24/2 of the constitution permits such engagements, if they

take place in the context of a system of collective security. At the same time, the Constitutional Court also required that parliament needs to decide on the issue before any deployment of forces can take place. Almost all political parties welcomed the ruling of the *Verfassungsgericht*. It also closely corresponded to public opinion in the early 1990s, since only a small minority of the population approved of deployment decisions being made by the government alone. The great majority of the citizens even felt that the parliament should require a two-thirds majority to take such decisions.³

All of these developments indicate that since 1990 Germany has quickly taken over a new role with respect to international crises. The wars in the Gulf, in the Balkans and in Somalia also left little time for prolonged considerations and adjustments. Since the 1990s the extent of German involvement has risen gradually. In the beginning, Germany carried out more or less only symbolic actions, then it concentrated on humanitarian aid, and recently it has been involved in actual combat. The decision of the Constitutional Court as well as the changes in the position of the political parties and the public contributed to this rapid development.

While a remarkable readiness to support out-of-area involvements of the *Bundeswehr* developed among the political elite and the general public, there are at least two factors that could in practice impede or prevent future foreign deployments of German military forces. First of all, the equipment of the *Bundeswehr* appears not to be fully suitable to carry out world-wide missions. The UN request in 1994 for the deployment of a German medical unit to Rwanda, for example, had to be turned down by the government due to the lack of ready-to-use equipment. In view of tight budgets, the build-up of a powerful, rapid reaction force is also rather improbable in the near future.

Furthermore, the willingness of the German government to engage in dangerous military missions is surely limited by the expected public reaction. This fear of public disapproval can be illustrated by several events. In 1993 the government decided to temporarily stop the German involvement in the air bridge to Sarajevo after the shooting down of an allied military plane. Also, its clear rejection of sending ground troops into Kosovo to carry out NATO's war aims was motivated by the fear of human losses. This seems to indicate that public opinion on the use of force has a considerable impact on the formulation and execution of out-of-area missions.

The study of foreign policy and security attitudes

Before 1990 relatively little effort was made to examine systematically the content and structure of German security attitudes, in spite of the fact that the German public is among the most often surveyed populations with regard to foreign and security policy attitudes (e.g. Jacobsen 1975; Zoll 1979; Meyer 1983; Rattinger and Heinlein 1986; Szabo 1983; Rattinger 1985, 1991; Schweigler 1985; Eichenberg 1989; Brooks 1990; Rattinger *et al.* 1995).

This is regrettable because, as was pointed out in [Chapter 1](#), recent research has shown both the need for and the relevance of taking public opinion into account in the study of foreign policy and foreign policy making.⁴ As was also pointed out, the earlier widely spread pessimistic assessment of the role of public opinion has been questioned by numerous newer studies. The so-called revisionists also maintain that the public is well prepared to play an important role in the foreign and security policy decision-making process

In the first paragraphs it was argued that it is now generally accepted that, even if the level of specific knowledge is low, political attitudes are well structured. This was argued and demonstrated, for instance, by Hurwitz and Peffley (1987). The hierarchical model of attitude organisation, which was first applied in the context of foreign policy attitudes by Jon Hurwitz and Mark Peffley, will guide the analytic part of this contribution. These authors criticised the assumptions of the traditionalists particularly for two reasons. First, they argued that it would be necessary to limit the analysis of attitude structures to specific policy domains; otherwise it is hardly possible to detect any underlying mental connections. Moreover, if one does not restrict oneself to a particular domain, one might interpret spurious relationships between attitudes that are in fact mentally unconnected. Second, it is argued that one should differentiate among attitudes according to their level of generality. The reason for this resides in their presumptions about human nature and information processing. Hurwitz and Peffley see most people as cognitive misers in their information processing. That is to say, they constantly try to keep the costs of information gathering as low as possible. Therefore, the average citizen tries to find short cuts in the generation of his attitudes.

On the bases of these two hypotheses Hurwitz and Peffley propose a hierarchical model of attitude structure which differentiates between three levels of generality. On the most general level we find the so-called *core values*, which contain basic human values, such as the morality of warfare or ethnocentrism. It is assumed that almost everybody has rather firm and stable core values that strongly influence the different standpoints of the individual, in particular the so-called *postures*, which are found on the next level of abstraction. Postures, such as militarism and internationalism, depict the general strategies in obtaining the core values. Again, most people are supposed to have, for instance, a fairly clear idea whether they support international involvement or rather military means to solve conflict on a general level. Finally, on the lowest level of abstraction, we find *opinions on specific policy issues*. On this level, many people might not have the necessary information to form clear and stable attitudes. Therefore, it is presumed that there is a causal link between the different levels. Hurwitz and Peffley assume that the core values directly influence the postures and these in turn affect the assessments of specific issues. Accordingly, a person who has not yet made up his mind on a specific policy issue can use his postures and in an indirect fashion his core values as guidance to form his opinion. If, for example, a person is asked to offer his opinion on the deployment of German ground

forces in Kosovo he does not need to obtain detailed information about the goals of the mission, the type of deployment or the chances of success. For the formation of an attitude it might be enough to check one's more fundamental views about the use of military force, or whether one is generally in favour of the involvement of national forces in solving international conflicts. But even among those who are not dependent upon the formation of their opinions from more general convictions, usually a fairly close relationship between values, postures and specific issues exists, due to the general tendency of people to strive for consistency in their attitudes.

Before the underlying hierarchical model for the empirical analysis is described in greater detail, a few critical comments should be made. It is in fact highly plausible to expect close relationships among attitudes from a narrowly defined domain area. But how narrow should a domain be? Do highly correlated attitudes towards a confined issue area (e.g. deployment of forces abroad) constitute convincing evidence for the existence of a well-organised belief system? One could also argue that political sophistication is primarily determined by the very fact that attitudes towards diverse policy areas are organised consistently by taking into account their different trade-offs.

The second major assumption of the hierarchical model can also be questioned. Apart from the often discussed controversy about top-down and bottom-up causation, it seems also quite plausible that the major determinant of an attitude is not necessarily an attitude from a higher, but one from the same, or even a lower level of specificity. If a person has to evaluate the use of force in a specific case, he might, for instance, also be heavily influenced by historic analogies. Therefore, the general attitude towards the use of military force is probably highly influenced by specific international events. Thus, memories of the appeasement policy of the 1930s might, for example, encourage the use of force in order to prevent greater damage, while the experiences of the Vietnam War might cause one to be cautious in getting involved in a guerrilla war in the Third World.

Finally, the model by Hurwitz and Peffley does not discuss a direct link between core values and specific issues. This implies that values have at most an indirect effect. This assumption is similarly questionable, since, if this were true, then it would be unnecessary to consider them in the explanation of specific issues at all. Notwithstanding these critical comments, the assumed hierarchical organisation of foreign policy and security attitudes is an interesting and promising model.

According to the hierarchical model, attitudes are grouped together on several levels, in keeping with their level of generality. On the lowest level of abstraction the following attitudes will be included in our model: the *attitudes towards the support for the compulsory military service*, the *readiness to defend one's country* and a number of opinions on *specific out-of-area missions*. These attitudes will be considered as the dependent variables. That is to say, they are dependent upon the attitudes from all higher levels of abstraction. In this respect

the underlying model used here is different from the one described above, since variables from all levels are considered as potential determinants of the specific issues. Moreover, the variables with the greatest generality are assumed to have the potentially greatest effect, since they can exert a direct as well as an indirect effect on the attitudes on the lowest level of abstraction.

The independent variables are grouped together according to their generality. The level above the specific issues consists of three postures. These postures include the strategies, which relate to the 'whether', the 'how' and the 'with whom' in the implementation of foreign and security policy. *Internationalism* measures the general willingness to become involved in the solution of international conflicts. Indicators for this dimension are the demand for an active role for Germany in world politics or the disapproval of the opinion that Germany should worry primarily about its own problems. *Militarism*, as the second posture, concerns itself with the basic position towards the preferred means to settle international conflict. It is operationalised by the degree of belief that there is a fundamental need for military forces and on the general support for the use of military force. The third posture, *unilateralism*, finally indicates whether working together with other partners is preferred in foreign and security policy. A unilateralist is identified by his agreement with the argument that Germany should only worry about its own security.

At the highest level of abstraction, two core values, *nationalism* and *morality of warfare*, are grouped together with the *perception of threat* and *ideological orientation*. 'Nationalism' primarily indicates the strong identification with one's people and political system. It is operationalised by the conviction that Germany deserves a leading role in the world and by items which gauge the strength of patriotism. The core value 'morality of warfare' describes the degree of conviction whether it is at all possible to justify war. The acceptance of the legitimacy of war under certain circumstances and the view that killing in war is not murder are indicators for this core value. The 'perception of threat' and 'ideological orientation' have no direct relation to foreign policy attitudes. Nevertheless, they were included on this highest level of abstraction, since they are supposed to stand in close relationship to basic foreign policy beliefs. Threat perception was measured by the evaluation of the past and the future overall security situation and by the expectation of war within the next ten years, while the ideological orientation was ascertained by the self-placement of the respondents on the left-right scale. The only exogenous variables in the model on the third level are three social-structure variables (sex, age and education). They serve as basic control variables for the social-psychological variables of the model.

The hierarchical conceptualisation of foreign policy attitude structure implies a strong relationship between specific issues and postures and core values. Since the direction of causation is assumed to be unidirectional, core values can affect both postures and specific attitudes, while postures can only influence the opinions towards specific issues. Of course, not all core values and postures are

equally relevant for the explanation of particular attitudes. ‘Morality of warfare’ might, for example, be more effective in influencing an attitude towards an actual military action than towards a humanitarian mission of the *Bundeswehr*. Therefore it is one of the major aims of the empirical analysis to determine the relative impact of the different general attitudes on each specific attitude. The estimation of the effects will, however, depart from Hurwitz and Peffley’s model, where primarily the effects between attitudes on neighbouring levels of generality were calculated. In the model underlying the following empirical analysis, first the total effects of the attitudes on the most general level will be estimated, before the explanatory power of the attitudes on the next level is determined. Furthermore, the hierarchical model also implies that specific issues will not be considered as potential causes of other specific issues.

Data and method

The database for the empirical analyses consists of a three-wave panel study, which was carried out in the early 1990s at the University of Bamberg within the framework of a DFG-funded research project. The main aim of the study was to broaden the database for the study of foreign and security policy attitudes. The almost 300 items that were put in each of the three waves referred directly to this policy field. Most questions were put repeatedly, but a number of additional items were included in the second and third wave to cover new events. The first interviews took place in the summer of 1992 (June, July), the second wave in early 1993 (February, March), and the last in autumn (October) of the same year. Altogether 2,089 people were questioned on the first occasion, of whom 1,111 could still be reached by the third series of interviews. The proportions of respondents from the eastern and western states were about equal in all three waves, although only about a fifth of the total German population lives in the eastern part of the country. This over-sampling of the population from the ‘new states’ was necessary to allow for more detailed comparisons between sub-samples of the population in the east and the west.

The empirical analysis is divided into a descriptive and analytic part. In both sections, all results will be reported separately for the respondents from the east and the west. If one is interested in the results for Germany as a whole, the results for the west are, due to the distribution of the population, a good approximation. Whenever possible, the temporal stability of the attitudes was also considered. A continuous differentiation according to the temporal stability was, however, not possible, as several questions were not repeated. Whenever the temporal dimension of attitude change was not possible or was of no major concern, then all the available data have been utilised in the analysis. That is to say, if information was present from more than one wave of the panel, then the repeated answers of the respondents were used as multiple indicators of their attitude. However, only those respondents were included into the analysis, who repeatedly provided a valid answer to the respective question. This approach has

been used for the descriptive as well as the analytic examinations. Consequently, the regression analysis was based on all those cases where individuals offered repeatedly valid information for the dependent variable, while all missing cases for the independent variables were substituted with the respective means.

Whenever possible, the indicators for the different concepts were composed of several items (see Appendix). For this purpose it was necessary to identify first substantially related questions and then test their empirical correlation. Once the substantial and empirical relationship was established, all the constituting variables were re-coded to the same value area and added together. The newly created dimensions were therefore additive compositions of the constituting items. All variables, no matter whether they were representing a single variable or an additive composition, have been further re-coded to a common value area, in order to ease the interpretation of the results. In the descriptive part of the chapter, the computations of the mean approvals were always based on variables with a value area between -1 and $+1$. Accordingly, a positive mean indicates approval whereas a negative mean implies disapproval. Similarly, all the dependent variables in the regression analysis have also the same value area between $+1$ and -1 . Contrary to the dependent variables, all independent variables were re-coded to a value area between 0 and $+1$. These two values represent the extreme positions on the respective independent variable. This standardisation of the value areas allows us to ascertain the total effect of each independent variable by the unstandardised regression coefficients, and thereby also allows a cautious comparison of these coefficients. An unstandardised regression coefficient of 1 , for example, shows a change between the extreme positions of the independent variable, which can be compared in terms of its extent to a change between indifference and complete agreement. At each comparison, it is, however, important to keep in mind that the reported unstandardised regression coefficients always refer to the results in the stepwise regressions where the variable was first entered into the equation.

The estimation of the effects of the different determinants on the approval of foreign deployments was carried out by step-wise regression analyses. By using step-wise regressions instead of other statistical procedures, the model receives a few desirable properties. Although the hierarchical structure remains untouched, estimating the effect of the single variable always controls for the impact of other variables on the same level of generality. Also, it need not be assumed that all the explanatory power of a basic variable has to be completely transmitted through variables on less general levels. The step-wise inclusion of groups of independent variables was chosen to model the hierarchical attitude structure on four levels. In the first step, the total effects of social-structure variables were determined. In the second step threat perceptions and three basic attitude dimensions were included in the equation: 'ideological orientation', 'nationalism' and 'morality of warfare'. In the last step, the remaining effects of the three postures, 'militarism', 'involvement', and 'unilateralism', were calculated.

Findings

The future foreign and defence policy tasks

Table 3.1 Adoption of more responsibility by Germany

	<i>Approval</i> ^a		<i>Importance</i> ^b	
	<i>West</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>West</i>	<i>East</i>
Environmental protection	0.63	0.75	47	54
Battle against poverty	0.43	0.50	17	18
Economic assistance for eastern Europe	0.35	0.38	12	14
European integration	0.24	0.17	7	5
UN peacekeeping	0.17	-0.04	17	10
N ^c	883	1079	865	1056

a Mean rating on a scale from -1 (disapproval) to 1 (approval).

b Proportion of respondents in per cent.

c Results are based on data from the second and third wave.

The post-Cold War situation forces all international actors to redefine their policies. As a fully sovereign state, Germany had also to adapt its foreign and security policy to the new circumstances. The *Bundeswehr* has to find a new role and to be restructured after the major enemy disappeared, and even the Atlantic Alliance as a whole has to find new tasks to justify its existence. The population seems to be well aware of these changes. On a general level the adoption of more German responsibility in five new foreign policy fields was supported almost without exception (Table 3.1). The demand for more engagement in world-wide environmental protection was consensual among an overwhelming majority of the population. Many respondents also strongly supported the intensification of the struggle against poverty in the Third World. Assistance to the eastern European countries in the reconstruction of their economies and the intensification of European integration were also considered by sizeable majorities to be an important future task, even though Germany had traditionally already been rather active in these policy fields. Finally, the adoption of more responsibility in securing peace world-wide by UN missions was also favoured by the average German. A clear majority in favour of international peacekeeping missions was, however, only present in the west. In the new states the respondents were more or less divided on this issue. The other differences between public opinion in the east and west were less pronounced. In the new states dedication to European integration was somewhat less developed than in the old states. In return, the easterners approved more of the improvement of environmental protection, of the battle against poverty and the reconstruction of the economy in eastern Europe.

Table 3.2 Future roles of the Bundeswehr

	<i>Approval</i> ^a		<i>Importance</i> ^b	
	<i>West</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>West</i>	<i>East</i>
Environment protection	0.64	0.73	22	21
Catastrophe help at home and abroad	0.61	0.68	28	28
Overseeing of cease-fires	0.32	0.24	10	6
Support of the police forces	0.32	0.36	11	17
Reconstruction of the east	0.20	0.53	9	17
UN missions to repress aggression	0.17	-0.08	9	5
Humanitarian UN missions	0.10	-0.09	5	5
World-wide missions to secure western interests	0.07	-0.25	5	2
N ^c	919	1073	1003	1152

a Mean rating on a scale from -1 (disapproval) to 1 (approval).

b Proportion of respondents in per cent.

c Results are based on data from the second and third wave.

The level of support for a new foreign policy task does not necessarily say anything about the perceived importance of this task. Nevertheless, there is a relationship between approval and perception of relevance. The more a foreign policy task was favoured, the more it was also considered to be important. Extended activities in environmental protection were not only the most accepted new policy for Germany but were also considered by about every other respondent as important. Compared to this, the weaker support for the intensification of the European integration process was rated relevant by about every twentieth respondent. The only exception to this pattern of relationship consists in the attitudes towards the use of the military in the framework of UN missions to secure peace. Although the adoption of more responsibility in this policy area had overall the least approval, it was considered relatively more important than some other more valued issues. In both parts of the country peacekeeping was considered more relevant than European integration and in the west even more than economic assistance to eastern Europe. This finding underscores the awareness of this truly new task in the post-Cold War world.

The perceived future foreign and defence responsibilities of Germany correspond to a large degree with the views about the expected new tasks of the *Bundeswehr* (Table 3.2). Apart from the real duty of every military force, which is to guarantee the protection of the country from attack, deployment in environmental protection and the provision of help in case of a catastrophe also received widespread approval. The participation of the *Bundeswehr* in UN missions in the form of monitoring ceasefire agreements and the assistance of the police forces by the *Bundeswehr* were also supported in both parts of the country.

Table 3.3 Most important tasks of NATO (in %)

	<i>Region</i>	
	<i>West</i>	<i>East</i>
Protection of member-states from attack	45	57
Out-of-area	39	32
Overseeing of arms control agreements	14	18
Overseeing of cease-fires	9	6
Creation of peace in civil war regions	9	6
Securing western interests world-wide	4	1
Securing western supply of resources	3	1
World-wide co-ordination	16	11
Co-ordination of economic policy	6	2
Co-ordination of foreign policy	4	4
Planning of defence expenditure	3	2
Co-ordination of aid for eastern Europe	2	2
Joint development of arms systems	1	1
N ^a	1389	1663

a Results are based on data from all three waves.

The approval of these tasks was, however, noticeably weaker. The reconstruction of the eastern part of Germany received even less support, although the support in the east was remarkably high. With respect to the evaluation of future out-of-area missions of the *Bundeswehr*, support dropped even further. While the population in the west still approved of the different options, the average respondents from the east opposed them. They rejected the repression of aggression by UN missions as well as humanitarian missions, which could involve armed arguments. The disapproval became even more notable when world-wide deployments of the *Bundeswehr* to secure western interests were mentioned.

Despite a few irregularities, a relationship between approval and perceived importance also exists for the evaluations of the future tasks of the *Bundeswehr*. It is, for example, remarkable that the adoption of police tasks and especially the help in reconstructing the east were considered an important new field of activity for the *Bundeswehr* by an unexpectedly high proportion of citizens from the east. This finding suggests the desire of the respondents from the east to quickly improve economic and social conditions in the new states. Of course, such *Bundeswehr* missions are highly unlikely to take place, since they are not legally permissible.

The rating of the tasks concerning out-of-area missions is of special interest in this chapter. Each single option was considered as rather unimportant in both parts of the country. If all four options are added together, however, the relevance of military missions of the *Bundeswehr* becomes much more impressive. In the west about 30 per cent of the respondents decided on these

options as most important, and in the east the respective proportion was still around 18 per cent.

Not only Germany and the *Bundeswehr*, but also the Western Alliance faces new challenges. Accordingly, the respondents were also asked about the most important future tasks of NATO (Table 3.3).

Quite naturally, the protection of member states from attack was mentioned most often. Overall, about every other respondent saw this as the most important task. The relevance of defence was rated, however, about 10 percentage points higher in the east than in the west. This difference probably refers less to a different evaluation of NATO's primary task, but indicates a greater awareness of the diversity of potential future tasks in the west. That is to say, the respondents in the west were more familiar with NATO, and were therefore more willing to opt for the remaining options. Despite this regional difference, the next three most important tasks were all related to deployments of military forces outside the NATO territory in both parts of the country. Overseeing of arms control agreements and cease-fires were considered by many as very important potential future assignments. In fourth position, presumably with foresight of future conflicts, peacekeeping in the civil war regions of eastern Europe and the Balkans was regarded already at that time as an important task. These results again stress the fact, that already at the beginning of the 1990s, many German citizens were well aware of the consequences of the changes in the international system. When the various options are viewed as a whole, almost 40 per cent in the west and about one-third of the respondents in the east selected those tasks related to out-of-area assignments as the most important. Compared to the number of respondents favouring military options, only a minority, 16 per cent in the west and 11 per cent in the east, considered NATO primarily as an organisation, which helps to co-ordinate the foreign, defence and economic policies of the member states.

For all investigated international actors a number of new foreign policy tasks were all more or less approved and considered important. That is to say, the German public acknowledged Germany's new international responsibility and the need to find a new role for the *Bundeswehr* and NATO. Among the different policy options, approval for involvement in out-of-area military missions was present most of the time. Of course, a clear pattern of east—west differences also appeared. Whenever the use of force in out-of-area missions had to be evaluated, respondents from the east were less supportive than their counterparts in the west. The recent rejection of the German involvement in Kosovo seems to indicate that this regional difference might have persisted over the years.

The willingness to defend the country

Compulsory military service was introduced in Germany in 1956. For a long time the defence of the country was considered more or less the only task of the *Bundeswehr*. Today, this picture might change somewhat, due to the frequent German involvement in out-of-area missions. In this connection it has been

Table 3.4 Approval of compulsory military service and willingness to defend the country (in %)^a

Panel	Compulsory military service						Willingness to defend					
	West			East			West			East		
	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
Approval	55	55	57	49	50	53	60	61	69	55	56	60
Indifference	20	18	19	26	26	25	21	22	19	22	25	24
Disapproval	25	27	24	25	24	22	20	18	12	23	18	16
N	1013	681	503	1016	721	583	995	678	495	1005	714	583

a Due to rounding errors, percentages do not always add up to 100.

questioned whether the traditional structure of the national forces is still adequate to meet the new challenges. Although until now only career and voluntary soldiers were involved in foreign deployments, the idea of a military that relies on the system of compulsory military service is difficult to reconcile with the idea of forces that operate world-wide. Therefore, the traditionally strong approval for the draft system might undergo a change. It is conceivable that approval will decrease as more and more citizens consider the compulsory military service as inappropriate to meet the challenges of global military engagements.

In the early 1990s the view that compulsory military service is an important civil duty was supported by more than half of the Germans (Table 3.4). Between 1992 and 1993 this support increased (slightly) even further. Most of this effect was due, however, to increasing support for compulsory military service in the east. In all three series of interviews, about one-quarter of the respondents in the new states were undecided in this respect, compared to less than 20 per cent in the old states. Despite this difference, compulsory military service was not only not unsettled by the new situation, but it even won somewhat in approval in the early 1990s. In the long run, however, decreasing acceptance cannot be ruled out, since the size of the *Bundeswehr* is likely to reduce further, and the new international tasks might require more specially trained soldiers. Therefore, these tendencies have the potential to undermine the support for the draft system. The repeated public discussions about the need to alter the structure of the *Bundeswehr* are a clear indication of potential changes.

The acceptance of the draft should not be directly equated with the willingness to defend one's country, since this readiness is logically not related to the domestic structure of the military forces. In Germany, the willingness to fight for one's country was widespread. About 60 per cent of the respondents agreed that everybody who is able should fight for his country in the event of war. Less than a fifth of the population disagreed with this statement. Even though the willingness to fight is not directly related to the attitudes towards the draft, the

Table 3.5 Support for out-of-area missions (in %)^a

Panel	<i>Bundeswehr</i>						<i>NATO</i>					
	<i>West</i>			<i>East</i>			<i>West</i>			<i>East</i>		
	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
Approval	32	34	28	12	18	17	22	24	19	9	15	9
Indifference	14	16	15	8	12	10	18	22	23	14	18	17
Disapproval	55	50	57	80	69	73	60	54	58	77	67	74
N	992	666	496	1014	713	576	993	653	467	1002	709	583

a Due to rounding errors, percentages do not always add up to 100.

distributions of opinions and development of these two attitudes were rather similar. The willingness to defend the country was less widely dispersed in the east, and the proportion of undecided was likewise higher in the new states. Altogether, the willingness of the German population to defend their country and to support compulsory military service was high and even increasing. At least in the case of the evaluation of compulsory military service, the moderate changes also resulted in an alignment between east and west.

Support for out-of-area missions

With respect to public support for the deployment of military forces outside the territory of the Atlantic Alliance, one can distinguish between the general approval of such out-of-area missions and the support for actual deployments. According to the previous findings, one might expect at least some support for such deployments in the west. If the respondents, however, are confronted with the choice between the option of a world-wide deployment of the *Bundeswehr* to secure western interests and the option of the exclusive task of the *Bundeswehr* to defend Germany against an attack, then a strong scepticism towards foreign deployments was revealed. In the west, a third at most of the respondents tended towards such deployments, and in the east less than 20 per cent was ready to support such measures (Table 3.5). A clear trend is not recognisable for the early 1990s. Rather, the fluctuations between the interviews suggest the dependence of these attitudes on concrete events. Nevertheless, a slight convergence of the attitudes between east and west is observable, although the differences remain large. Therefore, it is safe to conclude that an unmistakable disapproval of foreign deployments of the *Bundeswehr* prevailed in the eastern states. The low number of undecided respondents in the east also supports this conclusion. The sceptical assessment of out-of-area missions was not limited to the deployment of the *Bundeswehr*. Likewise, a clear majority of the citizens were also convinced that NATO should be kept out of conflicts outside the NATO territory. The same pattern of differences appeared between east and west and over time.

Table 3.6 Attitudes towards UN missions (in %)^a

	<i>Iraq</i> <i>1</i>	<i>Iraq</i> <i>2</i>	<i>Somalia</i> <i>1</i>	<i>Somalia</i> <i>2</i>	<i>Bosnia</i> <i>1</i>	<i>Bosnia</i> <i>2</i>	<i>Bosnia</i> <i>3</i>
	<i>War</i> <i>justified</i>	<i>Military</i> <i>attacks</i>	<i>UN</i> <i>deploy-</i> <i>ment</i>	<i>German</i> <i>deploy-</i> <i>ment</i>	<i>No-fly</i> <i>zone</i>	<i>Deploy-</i> <i>ment of</i> <i>troops</i>	<i>Bombard-</i> <i>ment</i>
<i>Panel</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2&3</i>	<i>2&3</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>2&3</i>	<i>2&3</i>	<i>2&3</i>
<i>West</i>							
Approval	61	66	70	52	58	51	40
Indifference	20	18	16	18	24	22	22
Disapproval	20	15	14	30	18	27	38
N	989	1133	1153	482	1118	1134	1142
<i>East</i>							
Approval	44	48	70	32	45	33	19
Indifference	24	21	18	28	23	19	19
Disapproval	32	31	13	40	32	49	67
N	959	1236	1281	551	1233	1255	1271

a Due to rounding errors, percentages do not always add up to 100.

The disapproval of NATO engagements outside the territory of the member states was high, especially in the east, and no clear trend or process of alignment took place.

At the beginning of the 1990s in particular, three specific military conflicts stimulated the public debate about the deployment of military units abroad. During the fieldwork of the present study, between early summer 1992 and late autumn 1993, the Gulf War had already ended. However, this conflict affected the reflections of people about out-of-area missions, since Iraq had to be repeatedly asked to observe the no-fly zones. During the fieldwork the second conflict developed in Somalia, and its end could already be expected at the end of 1993, when the last interviews took place. The conflict in the Balkans was already in full swing at the time of the first series of interviews of the summer of 1992. During the next one and a half years the war became hardly less intense.

Looking back, the majority of the German population assessed the war against Iraq as justified (Table 3.6/Iraq 1), even though many people might have been concerned about the huge collateral damage. Military attacks by the Gulf War allies, which were carried out because of Iraq's disregard of the UN resolutions after the war, found an even higher approval (Iraq 2). Yet, a clear-cut east—west difference surfaced. The approval rate to both questions was up to 20 percentage points less in the new states. Nevertheless, it is remarkable that the sceptical views on the general idea of foreign deployments of the *Bundeswehr* and NATO

are replaced by approval for actual out-of-area missions. People probably want to avoid such deployments, but once they recognise the legitimacy of a specific military action they are also ready to support it. They probably also approved of operation 'Desert Storm'. This mission could altogether be considered a success, since German soldiers were not fully excluded, and since there were no human losses on the German side. The fact that the general approval of the Gulf War turned out to be somewhat weaker than the support for the latter specific military actions need not surprise us, since the bombings were primarily carried out to enforce the no-fly zone in order to protect the Kurdish population.

The overwhelmingly positive assessment of the deployments of UN troops in Somalia was probably due to the mainly humanitarian character of this mission. In fact, this mission was very closely associated in the minds of most people with the saving of starving children. As a consequence, people in both east and west shared very similar views. About 70 per cent of the respondents supported the military protection for the distribution of aid goods (Somalia 1). At the same time, the proportion of those who also approved the German involvement, was much lower (Somalia 2). In the west it sank by about 25 per cent and in the east by more than 50 per cent. This weakening of approval for a German deployment can be explained by at least two factors. First, the German public might very well recognise the need for military action to end a cruel civil war, but it might not be prepared to shoulder the corresponding responsibility. In addition, the decline in support might also be explained by the fear of human losses. In particular, the news about the killing of Pakistani UN soldiers by Somali rebels, shortly before the question about German participation was asked, might have further reduced the support for German involvement.

In the context of the Bosnian War, three items are available for comparison. They differ mainly with regard to the threat of concrete military violence. The first question measures the approval of the military enforcement of the UN-imposed no-fly zone over Bosnia (Bosnia 1). The next one asks about the support for a massive troop deployment in Yugoslavia to end the war (Bosnia 2). The last one measures the approval for the bombing of Serb troops in Bosnia-Herzegovina (Bosnia 3). The findings suggest that the relatively limited and less dangerous actions receive more approval. Consequently, the support for the supervision of the no-fly zone was the highest of the three. In comparison, fewer people approved a massive deployment of troops in the former Yugoslavia, and the threat of immediate use of force found least support. Again, the citizens living in the eastern part of the country were clearly less inclined to give their approval for these military actions. It is also notable that the difference between east and west further increased with the decreasing approval to the single questions. While the approval in the east reached about 75 per cent of the western level on the question of the no-fly zone, it sank to less than 50 per cent of the westerners on the question about the bombing of Serb troops.

Altogether, the willingness to fight for the country and the support for the draft in Germany have not been weakened by the recent changes in the

international climate. Also, the population has recognised the new foreign and security policy challenges and supports the necessary measures most of the time. Although, on a general level, Germans are sceptical about out-of-area missions, they do not refuse their support for specific UN missions. Of course, this support is dependent on a number of factors, such as the success of the mission, the major goals, and probably also upon the expected or real losses of material and especially human lives.

Table 3.7 East-west differences among the independent variables

	<i>West</i>		<i>East</i>	
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>N</i>
Threat perception	0.56	1989	0.54 ^a	2131
Ideology	0.50	2204	0.59 ^b	2346
Core values				
Nationalism	0.49	2067	0.38 ^b	2147
Morality of warfare	0.45	2146	0.44	2269
Postures				
Internationalism	0.50	2138	0.47 ^b	2280
Militarism	0.54	2125	0.47 ^b	2272
Unilateralism	0.58	2167	0.60	2311

a $p < 0.01$.

b $p < 0.001$.

Determinants of the willingness of active defence and support of foreign deployments

To explain the willingness to defend the country and the support of out-of-area missions, three social structure variables and seven attitude dimensions will be considered. Before the discussion of the direction and the strength of these variables is presented, it is worthwhile looking at the levels of agreement on these dimensions and at potential differences between east and west. Table 3.7 contains the means for the seven attitude dimensions.

Values around 0.5 indicate a neutral position, while zero and 1 stand for extreme positions. In the early 1990s there was a slight tendency to perceive the international situation as somewhat more threatening in the west compared to the east. Of course, the overall level of fear was not high. Unlike the weak east-west difference in this respect, people had substantially different ideological orientations. While the average person in the west had a preference for the political centre, people in the east leaned ideologically to the left. The citizens in the new states were also notably less nationalistic, which was probably still the

result of the only recently completed unification. Yet, the presumably different political socialisation in both parts of the country did not affect the moral evaluation of warfare. People from both parts of the country shared a scepticism about the moral justification of warfare. This agreement did not hinder them, however, from judging the military preparedness quite differently. On average, people in the west had a positive disposition towards the military, while in the east the attitudes were less supportive. Westerners were also more inclined to become involved internationally. In their assessment of the co-operation with other countries on security questions, both population groups were united again. The most notable differences between the east and west therefore existed with regard to the ideological orientations, and to nationalism and militarism. That is to say, citizens from the east were ideologically oriented to the left, they felt less affection for the nation, and they were less supportive of the military than the westerners.

Table 3.8 summarises the effects of the different independent variables on the indicators for the willingness to actively defend the country and the support of foreign deployments. A comparison of the first two columns shows that the effects of the independent variables on the willingness to fight for the country, and the acceptance of compulsory military service are very similar in both parts of the country. Among the three independent variables, age seemed to have the greatest impact. The willingness to defend and the approval of compulsory military service generally increased with age and declined with higher formal education and among females. While the effects of sex and education were comparable in both parts of the country, age played no statistically significant role in the explanation of the willingness to defend among respondents in the new states. This is somewhat surprising, since getting older is usually related to more militaristic orientations. However, the elderly in the east were more likely to have had higher positions in the GDR, thus being on the side of the losers in the unification of Germany. Therefore, their attachment to the country and their willingness to fight for it might not have developed so much.

When the effect of perceptions, ideology and core values is considered, after controlling for the social structure variables, the strong impact of moral persuasions with regard to warfare and nationalism shows up first. In particular, a firm attachment to the nation appears to be a guarantee of a pronounced willingness to fight and to strongly agree with compulsory military service. In contrast to the core values, threat perceptions had no effect in the west, and in the east perceiving the international climate as dangerous merely strengthened the willingness to retain compulsory military service. Political ideology also had a comparably minor impact. In the new states it was not a contributory explanation, while in the west the willingness to defend and the support for compulsory military service declined with left ideological positions. Despite the strong impact of core values, the postures had an additional explanatory power. Especially changes in attitudes towards the military caused a difference in the

Table 3.8 Determinants of the willingness to actively defend the country and of attitudes towards out-of-area missionsa

	<i>Draft</i>	<i>Defence</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Bundes- wehr</i>	<i>NATO</i>	<i>Iraq</i> <i>1</i>	<i>Iraq</i> <i>2</i>	<i>Somalia</i> <i>1</i>	<i>Somalia</i> <i>2</i>	<i>Bosnia</i> <i>1</i>	<i>Bosnia</i> <i>2</i>	<i>Bosnia</i> <i>3</i>	<i>Mean</i>
<i>West</i>													
Sex	-0.09	-0.10	-0.10	-0.04	-0.07	-0.07	0.13	0.04	0.08	-0.17	-0.05	0.16	0.09
Age	0.39	0.20	0.30	0.02	-0.09	0.06	0.07	0.04	-0.09	0.05	-0.04	-0.06	-0.02
Education	-0.20	-0.23	-0.22	-0.03	0.02	-0.23	-0.24	-0.03	-0.05	-0.12	-0.22	-0.27	-0.13
Perception	0.07	-0.08	-0.01	0.44	0.19	0.57	0.22	0.41	0.28	0.18	0.15	0.41	0.32
Ideology	-0.32	-0.21	-0.27	-0.45	-0.12	-0.52	-0.11	-0.07	-0.21	0.03	-0.15	-0.14	-0.16
Morality of war	0.53	0.28	0.53	0.12	0.24	0.05	0.14	0.22	0.27	-0.10	-0.05	-0.17	0.08
Nationalism	0.85	0.79	0.82	0.46	0.18	0.87	0.53	0.04	0.45	0.59	0.82	0.87	0.53
Internationalism	0.27	0.00	0.14	0.64	0.54	-0.13	-0.04	0.45	0.72	0.32	0.12	0.15	0.31
Militarism	0.50	0.52	0.51	0.42	0.03	0.67	0.49	0.39	0.49	0.40	0.33	0.43	0.41
Unilateralism	-0.02	0.15	0.07	-0.06	-0.27	0.31	0.08	0.09	0.05	0.00	-0.03	-0.21	0.04
N	1471	1459		1447	1414	989	1133	1153	482	1118	1134	1142	
<i>East</i>													
Sex	-0.10	-0.15	-0.13	-0.12	-0.12	-0.23	-0.13	0.03	-0.17	-0.13	-0.09	-0.13	-0.12
Age	0.40	-0.02	0.19	-0.20	-0.26	-0.14	-0.21	-0.05	-0.34	-0.25	-0.40	-0.27	-0.24
Education	-0.14	-0.16	-0.15	-0.06	-0.06	-0.44	-0.38	-0.14	-0.17	-0.16	-0.22	-0.15	-0.19

	<i>Draft</i>	<i>Defence</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Bundes- NATO</i>	<i>Iraq</i>	<i>Iraq</i>	<i>Somalia</i>	<i>Somalia</i>	<i>Bosnia</i>	<i>Bosnia</i>	<i>Bosnia</i>	<i>Mean</i>
				<i>wehr</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	
Perception	0.22	0.01	0.12	0.26	0.15	0.64	0.50	0.56	0.50	0.09	0.24	0.36
Ideology	-0.08	-0.08	-0.08	-0.16	-0.19	-0.93	-0.06	-0.25	-0.15	-0.40	-0.17	-0.31
Morality of war	0.42	0.42	0.42	0.23	0.28	0.12	-0.02	0.23	0.05	-0.02	0.02	0.15
Nationalism	0.87	0.73	0.80	0.49	0.34	0.60	0.15	0.59	0.74	0.98	0.98	0.62
Internationalism	0.21	0.25	0.23	0.60	0.47	0.00	0.17	0.60	0.28	0.13	0.22	0.30
Militarism	0.77	0.57	0.67	0.38	0.27	0.79	0.27	0.55	0.37	0.25	0.29	0.41
Unilateralism	-0.05	0.03	-0.01	-0.28	-0.31	0.00	-0.02	-0.12	-0.16	-0.03	-0.08	-0.14
N	1717	1705		1703	1703	959	1281	551	1233	1255	1271	
R² change per variable on each step (entries are multiplied by 100)												
<i>West</i>	Step 1	2.5	1.6	2.1	0.1	0.2	0.8	0.1	0.2	0.9	1.1	0.6
	Step 2	3.6	2.7	3.2	1.8	0.5	4.3	0.1	1.3	1.3	2.3	1.7
	Step 3	1.1	1.2	1.2	2.2	2.3	2.5	1.5	2.5	1.1	0.4	1.6
<i>East</i>	Step 1	2.4	0.8	1.6	0.8	1.2	2.8	0.3	1.7	0.9	1.3	1.3
	Step 2	3.4	2.5	3.0	1.6	1.2	4.7	1.2	2.9	2.5	3.1	2.6
	Step 3	2.0	1.4	1.7	3.4	2.9	1.4	0.5	2.8	0.9	0.2	1.6

a Entries are unstandardised regression coefficients.

readiness to fight for the country. This relationship is quite obvious, since one would expect a person who accepts the general need for a national military force also to be ready to fight for his country. Contrary to militarism, the impact of internationalism and unilateralism is less obvious. In fact, internationalism exerted a weaker influence and unilateralism had almost no effect. In the east, a positive attitude towards international involvement was consistently related to both indicators of the readiness to defend, while in the west it was not related to the willingness to fight for one's country. Altogether, it can be presumed that in both parts of the country a strong national feeling, the acceptance of war as a political means, and agreement as to the use of force, are the most important determinants of the willingness to fight and the views on compulsory military service.

The remaining coefficients in [Table 3.8](#) describe the effects of the independent variables on the different indicators for out-of-area missions. First, it is notable that the combined independent variables exerted clearly more often a statistically significant influence in the new states compared to the old ones. From the total of 90 coefficients only half were significant in the west compared with two-thirds in the east. One possible substantive explanation of this difference might be that people in the new states were more dependent on so-called short cuts, due to their presumably lower level of information and their lesser integration into the German society. There are, however, also more noteworthy differences in the explanatory power of the different independent variables between east and west. Among the social structure variables, the effect of age differed the most. In the west no single statistically significant relationship existed among the different indicators for the support of foreign deployments, while in the new states people support foreign deployments less as they are getting older. While also willingness to defend increases with age, support of foreign deployments sinks with age, at least in the east. It appears on the one hand that later in the life cycle attachment to one's own country becomes stronger while people become more isolationist at the same time. The effect of both other social structure variables points in the already described direction. Women and better-educated persons were less willing to support out-of-area missions. However, the disapproving stance of the better educated only increased with respect to specific foreign deployments. On the general question of the involvement of the *Bundeswehr* and NATO in solving international crises, the effect of formal education remained nil.

The perception of the international environment had a remarkable impact on the agreement for out-of-area engagements. The more dangerous the world was perceived to be, the more respondents were ready to become involved internationally. This relationship was particularly clear for the evaluations of specific foreign deployments. Therefore, while the willingness to fight for the country is more or less independent of threat perceptions, agreement to foreign deployments is obviously dependent on such perceptions. Also, the effect of ideological orientations is noteworthy. In the old states ideological standpoints

are often linked with pacifist persuasions. Accordingly, the willingness to fight as well as the involvement of military forces in world-wide deployments is usually refused by people with leftist orientations, and supported by citizens with right ideological positions. In the judging of concrete military deployments the connection between ideology and agreement becomes less clear. One reason for this blurring might be the fact that most out-of-area military missions were framed as humanitarian aid, which is presumably supported by everybody. In contrast, the situation in the new states looks somewhat different. In the east, citizens with leftist orientations are generally less biased against the military. Accordingly, ideology does not play a role in the questions of military defence and the overall judgement of the military. It is, however, more often a determinant of the views on foreign deployments.

Among the two core values 'nationalism' was again constantly a strong factor in explaining the different attitudes towards foreign deployment in both parts of the country. Presumably, the call for more power in the world for Germany, which is one important aspect of nationalism, contributes to this strong relationship. In contrast, the second core value had an overall weaker impact. With the acceptance of the 'morality of warfare' agreement of the general judgements of foreign deployments increased, yet for the estimation of concrete deployments these values were only meaningful in the west by exception, and in the east they only helped to explain attitudes towards the Gulf War. One explanation for this might be that among the three international crises, people might associate only the UN mission in Iraq with a real war, since UN ground troops were not involved in extended fighting during the missions in Somalia and Bosnia.

The additional effect of the postures on the judgement of foreign deployments is substantial, also after accounting for social structure variables, ideology, threat perceptions and core values. The agreement on the general questions about foreign deployment of the military and NATO increased with those who spoke out against a unilateral direction of German foreign policy, those who had a positive evaluation of the military and especially those who showed a willingness to engage themselves internationally. The great impact of internationalism is in accordance with expectations, since out-of-area missions are always associated foremost with an internationalist orientation. These orientations were, however, less relevant for the judgement of actual foreign deployments. Especially in the case of the wars in the Gulf and in the Balkans, the assessments of the military were dominant. The exception to this pattern showed up in the case of Somalia. The strongest predictor of the attitude towards German involvement in Somalia was internationalism.

Taken together, these results are compatible with the assumption of a hierarchical structure of foreign and security attitudes. The explanation of the willingness to fight for the country, the support for compulsory military service as well as the different indicators for the attitudes towards out-of-area missions improved at each level. In the lower part of [Table 3.8](#) the amount of the average

explained variance per independent variable is reported for each level. These figures confirm that the variation in the dependent variables was reduced with the inclusion of each new group of independent variables. The strongest reduction of variance was achieved by the variables on the second level, and among these the core values were probably the most important, as the investigation of the unstandardised coefficients has shown. The impact of postures was always weaker, but of course internationalism, militarism, and unilateralism were entered after all the other independent variables had been taken into account.

There were not only more statistically significant unstandardised regression coefficients for the east but the relative improvement of prediction was also higher for the new states. The variance in the willingness to defend and the support of compulsory military service was reduced by the three social-structural variables by about 2 per cent on average. The four basic attitudinal variables on the next level improved the relative prediction by at least an additional 3 per cent each. The postures finally added on average 1.2 in the west and 1.7 in the east to the explanation. Overall, the full model reduced the variance in these two variables by 22 per cent in both parts of the country. Contrary to the variables dealing with the readiness to defend the country, the variance in the attitudes towards out-of-area missions could not be reduced as much. Also the impact of the core values, ideology and threat perceptions was less pronounced. While they were important in explaining variance in the attitudes towards specific out-of-area deployments, they were less suited to improving prediction of the general views on foreign deployments. The variance in the latter group of dependent variables was strongly reduced by the postures. On average, each posture improved the relative prediction of the opinion on the role of the *Bundeswehr* and NATO in out-of-area missions by about 3 per cent.

Summary

A great number of important foreign and security policy events and developments and an intense public debate about out-of-area deployments of German forces took place in the early 1990s. The German population was aware of the potential consequences of the changing international environment. In this early phase of foreign and security policy reorientation, the willingness to defend the country and especially the support for the present structure of the *Bundeswehr* did not decline. At the same time the public anticipated new regional conflicts. At least in principle, it supported the demand for international military involvement and considered the preparedness for out-of-area missions as an important task. Nevertheless, the general support for out-of-area engagements of NATO and the *Bundeswehr* was not widespread. However, once the public had to decide on concrete out-of-area deployments, sizeable majorities usually approved of them.

Shortly after unification, it was not surprising to find a number of significant differences in the foreign and security policy attitudes of the citizens from the eastern and western parts of the country. The common assumption that the different dominant political socialisation and life situations in east and west do have a notable effect on the political attitudes of the population was confirmed. A different outlook between easterners and westerners surfaced, for example, in their evaluations of future foreign and security policy tasks. Easterners were overall more sceptical towards out-of-area missions and they were more in favour of a foreign policy orientation towards eastern Europe. The differences referred not only to levels but also to the relationships between foreign policy attitudes. Especially age, ideological orientation and the perception of threat had different effects in east and west on the attitudes towards out-of-area missions. Future studies will have to show whether a convergence has taken place since the early 1990s. These remarkable differences should of course not distract from the fact that within the domain of foreign and security policy attitudes, the direction and even the relative strength of the effects of the basic foreign and security policy orientations on the attitudes towards specific issues were rather similar in both parts of the country.

The examination of the determinants of the attitudes towards out-of-area missions was guided theoretically by a modified hierarchical model. It could be demonstrated that variables from each level of generality have additional explanatory power. Furthermore, the direction and relative strength of the relationships confirmed common expectations. Therefore, the results generally support the assumptions of the existence of a foreign policy belief system and a hierarchical organisation of the respective beliefs. Of course, the empirical examinations also revealed substantial differences between the explanatory power of the independent variables in east and west. The most striking difference referred to the considerably stronger relationships between the foreign policy and security attitudes in the east. This also seems to suggest that the assumption of a hierarchical organisation of attitudes might not be equally appropriate for all populations. Since the model was more powerful in the east, it might be hypothesised that such hierarchical attitude organisations are particularly widespread among individuals who know relatively little about the respective attitude domain and do not consider it overly important.

Notes

- 1 Survey data issued by the Ministry of Defence and gathered by the EMNID survey institute.
- 2 Survey data collected by the EMNID survey institute in the first few days of April and published by the private TV-network n-tv.
- 3 This information is extracted from the same panel study on which this chapter is based.
- 4 For a summary of the different schools of thought see Holsti (1992).

Appendix

*Independent variables**

Threat perception

- In the last five years the world has become much safer.
- In five years the world will be much safer than today.
- Please tell me, according to this scale, how probable you think it is that Germany will become involved in a war in the next ten years (0: completely improbable; 10 highly probable).

Ideology

- In politics people often speak of 'left' and 'right'. By using this scale from 0 to 10 where would you place yourself, if 0 is left and 10 is right?

Morality of warfare

- War is sometimes necessary to protect a country's interests.
- Each soldier is a potential murderer.

Nationalism

- Germans should have more national pride, because we have all reason to be proud of our country.
- The highest objective of German politics should be to provide Germany with the power and the authority that correspond to its importance in the world.

Internationalism

- Germany should play a more active role in world politics.
- Germany should not concern itself with matters of world politics, but rather concentrate on the problems at home.

Militarism

- Even if there is no other country that poses a large military threat for Germany, it is still reasonable to have a strong Bundeswehr for defence.
- Every independent and sovereign nation has to have its own defence forces.

Unilateralism

- Germany should take care of its security on its own.

*Dependent variables****Defence**

- Naturally nobody wants war. If war arose, however, each person who is capable should fight for his country.

Draft

- Compulsory military service in the *Bundeswehr* is an important civic duty.

Bundeswehr

- Should the *Bundeswehr*, together with our allies, be involved in operations to protect Western security interests around the globe or should it only exist for the defence of the Federal Republic in case of an attack? (1: world-wide missions; 7: only for defence)

NATO

- NATO should stay out of conflicts outside of the NATO area.

Iraq 1

- The war against Iraq was justified because Kuwait had to be liberated.

Iraq 2

- The military strikes of the Gulf War allies as a reaction to the disregard of the UN resolutions by Iraq were correct.

Somalia 1

- The deployment of troops in Somalia to secure the distribution of aid is correct.

* Unless otherwise indicated, all composing variables had the same question format. The respondents were asked to indicate their approval to the statements on a five-point scale: 1: disagree completely; 2: disagree somewhat; 3: undecided; 4: agree somewhat; 5: agree completely.

Somalia 2

- The German UN participation in Somalia is correct.

Bosnia 1

- The no-fly zone over Bosnia-Herzegovina, issued by the UN, should be enforced militarily.

Bosnia 2

- The UN should end the war in former Yugoslavia by a massive deployment of troops.

Bosnia 3

- The UN should order the allied airforces to bomb the positions of the Serb attackers in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Italian public opinion and the international use of force

Pierangelo Isernia

Introduction¹

Since the end of the Second World War Italy has, in all respects, ceased to play a role as a major power in the international political system. Instead, it has adopted enthusiastically a ‘trading strategy’ (Rosecrance 1986) to promote its national interests. The Fascist attempt to shape Italian fighting character not only missed the mark completely, leading to the tragic experience of the army’s collapse in 1943, but it also backfired. National symbols and appeals were seen as politically incorrect and were widely unpopular in the post-world war Republic. The utter failure of the Fascist experience brought home at least two important lessons. First, it was realised that Italy lacked the organisational capacity, the economic resources and the ‘martial’ spirit needed to pursue a great power strategy. Second, the close association established by Fascism between the nation and the Fascist regime discredited patriotic values among the leading political currents of Italian political culture, to the point of making the Italians the most ‘European’ in Europe, largely because of the bad reputation of Italian public institutions.

The alleged unwillingness of Italians to fight has to do with a more general and crucial bone of contention in democratic theory: the alleged reluctance of democracies to use force even when this would be amply justified (since Munich 1938 this is pejoratively known as ‘appeasement’ policy). This chapter explores the veracity of this assumption by focusing on Italian support for the international use of its military force in the pursuit of foreign policy goals, under various conditions. Does Italian willingness to fight change with international conditions?

This chapter addresses the impact of the fundamental changes in the problems of war and peace briefly outlined in [Chapter 1](#) on the willingness to fight by comparing specifically the Cold War and post-Cold War environment.

Potential explanatory factors

The analysis will proceed on the assumption that the willingness to use force is shaped by a number of specific factors, including: (1) the nature of the event in

which the use of force is contemplated (international crisis, war or peacekeeping operation), (2) the actual or rather the prospective use of force, (3) the duration (both actual and expected), (4) the perceived interests involved (threats to national security, humanitarian mission or respect for international law), (5) the ‘closeness’ to the country (in both geographical and political terms), (6) the immediacy of the threat, (7) the role of real or expected casualties, (8) the prospect of success and (9) the bilateral or multilateral nature of the operation. Of course, not all these factors are operative in each of the cases involved. Yet, it is expected that, on the basis of a comparison between this widely different set of experiences, some conclusions can be drawn on the conditions under which Italians are more, or rather less eager to support the use of military force.

Support for the use of force in nine historical cases

In order to examine Italian attitudes on the use of military force, the available survey data on all cases of crises and interventions in which Italy was actually involved since the end of the Second World War were collected. This chapter focuses only on operations abroad. Cases in which the Italian armed forces have been used for domestic problems, either to help in natural calamities, or for domestic order in connection with the struggle against organised crime in the southern regions, have been excluded from the analysis.² The absence of data on many cases implies that only a subset of those instances in which the use of the armed forces was decided or considered in the period under review can and will be considered here.

Restricting us to only survey data explicitly referring to the use of *Italian armed* force and directed to measure the individual preference for the use of force, nine cases could be selected. They refer to both the Cold War and post-Cold War period. The set spans from the early 1950s up to the Kosovo War of 1999. Only one case is from the 1950s: the Trieste crisis of 1953; three are from the 1980s: Libya, the patrolling of the Gulf by the Italian navy and the use of force to ensure the flow of oil; and five are from the 1990s: the Gulf and Serbia/Kosovo Wars, as well as the peacekeeping operations in Somalia, Albania and Bosnia.

Support for the use of force in different situations

Based on the nature of the cases involved we have, fundamentally, three sets of cases: wars, crises and peacekeeping operations. During the Cold War, Italy has never fought a war.³ The first and only actual wars in which Italian armed forces have been involved since 1945 are in the post-Cold War international system: the Gulf War and the Serbia/Kosovo War. However, in both wars Italy participated only with its air forces, be it more limitedly (only eleven aircraft) in the Gulf War and more extensively (around fifty) in the Serbia/Kosovo War. Italy moreover has been directly involved in only one bilateral international crisis,⁴ the

Trieste crisis of October—December 1953, in which the use of force was only threatened. In three Libyan—United States crises during the 1980s over the Gulf of Syrte, Italy was only involved as a concerned spectator.⁵ However, in the second of these crises following the American air attack, Libyans fired a missile against the tiny Italian island of Lampedusa (although it missed its target and ended in the sea close to the island). As far as the third category is concerned, Italy participated in several peacekeeping operations, and increasingly so after the end of the Cold War. Altogether, Italy took part in thirty-one peacekeeping or peace-enforcing operations between 1949 and 1999, of which the operation in East Timor of 1999 is the most recent.⁶ Of all operations in this group, survey data are only available on the Somalia, Albania and Bosnia operations. In addition, two miscellaneous cases are included in [Table 4.1](#). One question was asked in 1988 about the Italian navy participation in the re-flagging of Kuwaiti oil tankers and its contribution to keeping sea-lanes open to allow for oil to reach Western countries. Another question, in which the military option was explicitly mentioned, was asked in 1984 on a theoretical case: what to do in case of a blockade by oil-exporting countries. Following Jentleson (1992), a 'mean support score' based on the available surveys was calculated for each case and reported in [Table 4.1](#), in which the cases are ranked according to the mean support score.⁷ All questions concern the use of force and do not include other and different policy options (e.g. economic sanctions or boycotts).

[Table 4.1](#) shows quite clearly that support for the use of force, in those cases for which data are available, varies considerably, depending apparently on the kind of crisis and the interests and goals involved. Measured by the level of support, we can distinguish three kinds of situations. In the first group support for the use of force is clearly a minority option, because, on average, no more than one-fourth of the population supports it. Four cases fall in this category: one peacekeeping (or rather peace-enforcing) operation: Somalia in 1994; two quite different international crises (Trieste and Libya) and one hypothetical situation: the oil blockade threatening to strangle the flow of oil to Italy.

In a second set of cases majorities were in support of the use of force. This group consists of both wars in which Italy has been involved in the 1990s: the Gulf War (1990–91) and Kosovo (1999). Unlike the former cases, it is characteristic of this group that almost everybody took a position in these two situations. Indeed, these two operations were carefully monitored by Italian public opinion, which was well aware of the conflicts.⁸

The third group of cases consists of those in which a majority of the respondents favoured Italian participation. In this category we have two recent peacekeeping operations, Albania and Bosnia, and the patrolling of the Gulf at the end of the 1980s.

Table 4.1 Support for the use of force in different conflict situations (Italy) (average support in %)

	<i>Type of conflict</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Without Dks</i>
<i>Minority support</i>			
Oil (1984) (1) ^a	–	6	6
Trieste (November 1953) (1) ^a	crisis	8	18
Somalia (1994) (1)	peacekeeping operation	13	29
Libya (1986) (3) ^a	crisis	15	–
<i>Plurality support</i>			
Kosovo (1999) (29) ^a	war	38	41
Gulf war (1990–91) (9) ^a	war	47	51
<i>Majority support</i>			
Gulf patrolling (1988) (1)	peacekeeping operation	58	62
Albania (1997) (1)	peacekeeping operation	59	61
Bosnia (1993–96) (16) ^a	peacekeeping operation	69	74

Mean support score in per cent; the number of surveys is given in parentheses.
 a Cases analysed in detail in the text.

Some case studies of public support

In order to explain differences and similarities between these three sets of cases and to establish which factors explain the different degree of support, it is necessary to examine them in more detail. Of the nine selected cases three do not allow such an in-depth examination of the motivations behind support or opposition for lack of sufficient survey data. They are: the naval patrolling of the Gulf in 1988,⁹ the Albania operation and the Somalia mission. Let us now look at each of the six remaining individual cases, starting with the case of Trieste.

Trieste

Trieste, on the contested eastern border between Italy and Yugoslavia, was one of the most important problems of Italian foreign policy at the end of the Second World War. The Italian peace treaty of December 1946, on the suggestion of the French Foreign Minister Bidault,¹⁰ divided the border area into two Zones, A and B, entrusted respectively to the Allied forces and to Yugoslavia, and it internationalised Trieste, creating the Free Territory of Trieste (in Italian the TLT). Lacking an agreement among the four Big Powers over the name of the Governor, the United States and Great Britain transformed the military administration into the Allied Military Government (AMG). At first (1948), the three Western Powers declared their intention to return the TLT to Italy.¹¹ But when Yugoslavia was expelled from the Cominform in June 1948, its position changed in the eyes of the Americans. Under Western Allied pressures, Italy and

Yugoslavia started talks between November 1951 and January 1952 which, however, led nowhere. In May 1952, after clashes between the Allied police and the Trieste population, Italy, Great Britain and the United States enlarged the Italian administrative responsibilities in Zone A.

After elections in June 1953, the new Italian government (in which Prime Minister Pella also held the Foreign Affairs portfolio) adopted a more militant and nationalistic posture on the problem of Trieste, which affected Yugoslav attitudes in return. In August, Tito announced a possible annexation of Zone B to Yugoslavia, stirring Pella to urge the Allies to prevent any unilateral move from Yugoslavia and to threaten to occupy Zone A. Early in September, Tito moved 250,000 partisans into Zone B. On 8 October 1953 a bipartite declaration by the US and the United Kingdom terminated the Allied Military Government in Trieste and passed the administration into the hands of Italy. Two days later, Tito lodged a formal protest, closed the frontier and threatened to enter Zone A if Italian troops took it over. In return, the Italian government moved three army divisions onto the eastern frontier and deployed anti-air guns along the Isonzo river. At this point, the UK and US governments decided to postpone their withdrawal. After clashes had taken place between the Italian population and the AMG police in Trieste, killing and injuring a number of inhabitants, Pella sent new troops to the eastern borders. The Allied Powers, relaunching their diplomatic efforts, put forward a proposal for a tripartite conference on Trieste, which Italy accepted. This relaxed the Italian-Yugoslav tensions. The conference led to the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between Italy and Yugoslavia in October 1954, which finally produced a settlement by dividing Zone A and B between the countries.

There is no question that Trieste was a very important issue for the Italian political forces and, to a more limited extent, for public opinion as well. Polls at the time showed that the majority of the public was both interested and informed on this matter.¹²

At the time of the October-November 1953 confrontation, DOXA carried out a national survey to probe preferences for a solution to the Trieste problem if a return of the whole territory to Italy were not possible. Only 8 per cent mentioned the use of force (the proportion going up to 18 per cent if one excludes those who did not know); 31 per cent mentioned other diplomatic or political solutions (e.g. plebiscite or a division of the two Zones), while 57 per cent were uncertain or not willing to accept any solution other than a return of both Zones to Italy. Support for the military solution was concentrated among extreme right-wing voters, with low or no education. While only 7 per cent of the Communists and 18 per cent of the Democratic Christian supporters would take Trieste by force, as many as 45 per cent of the neo-Fascist supporters would do so.¹³

The dramatic events in early November 1953 had only little impact on the attitudes towards the use of force. Support for the military solution moved from 15 per cent to 20 per cent after the clashes between Trieste population and the

AMG police, and to 19 per cent after the Pella speech in which he announced that more troops would be sent.¹⁴ This small increase is within the margin of random error. However, this general outcome hides a difference between two subgroups of the population. Among those with no more than a secondary school diploma, support for the use of force went up from 16 per cent to 23 per cent. Among the better educated there was no change. There was, in other words, a certain 'polarisation of commitment' (Larson 1996:53) among the less educated, asking for 'escalation'. They were likely propelled by the harsh consequences of the clashes to ask for more of a military action. This polarisation had a slightly negative impact, however, on the overall assessment of the government's policy towards Trieste. Public approval of it declined over time, from 65 per cent before the clashes to 56 per cent after 7 November. The critics of the government's position split between 35 per cent, who asked for more energy (i.e. the use of military force) and 29 per cent who were rather worried about the possible risks of escalation. However, these percentages hide a reversal of attitudes among those who did not approve. Among the respondents who did not approve of the government's position, those worried about a possible escalation of the crisis changed from 48 per cent before the crisis to 25 per cent after 8 November. An opposite trend can be found among those who wanted more action. In other words, support for the government position declined as a consequence of polarisation and a demand for escalation among the less educated and more right-wing voters.

Overall, the Trieste crisis was a case in which the use of force was generally not seen as an appropriate instrument to solve the crisis. Diplomatic solutions were thought to be more adequate, even though a strong majority had no clear idea of what kind of solution was really feasible. Moreover, the government position gained vast support among the mass population, and those who were negative about the government's stance consisted mostly of people who wanted the government to have a more aggressive position rather than a more conciliatory one. However, this was also the group that was more volatile in its attitude, being mostly composed of respondents with little education, ready to stiffen their position as soon as Italians started being beaten by the AMG police in Trieste.

The Middle East and Libya

In the 1980s the problems of the Middle East and Libya especially, and the threats emerging from these areas, were high on the list of the Italian public's worries. Thus in one poll, of September 1987, concerning perceived threats to Italian security, 31 per cent mentioned Libya first, 12 per cent Iran, and 10 per cent, more broadly, countries of the Middle East or Persian Gulf.¹⁵ These views persisted in 1988 through to 1991. In 1990, with the USSR at a low of 6 per cent, not surprisingly Iraq was at the top (20 per cent), followed by Libya (8 per cent) and the Middle East countries in general (11 per cent).¹⁶ In January 1991, the Middle East had certainly replaced the Soviet Union as the most threatening area

for Italian security.¹⁷ Moreover, there is no question that these threats were related to issues that were important in the eyes of the public. We shall discuss two of these specific issues in more detail below. In February 1984 it was asked whether a stop in the flow of oil from the Persian Gulf would hurt Italy: 83 per cent of those interviewed thought that an oil embargo would hurt the country very much or somewhat.¹⁸ Even though interests involved were very high and the perception of the threat quite acute, the popularity of the use of force to defend these interests or to cope with such a threat was extremely low. In the oil case (which, as has to be stressed again, was a hypothetical and not an actual situation) the low popularity of a military option was probably due to a low assessment of its effectiveness compared to other kinds of, especially diplomatic, actions, rather than to any superficial attitude. Only 6 per cent thought that Italy should threaten or actually use force if the need should arise (evenly divided between the two options),¹⁹ while 80 per cent thought that Western Europe should react with diplomatic action in such an event.²⁰

The Libyan threat and the possible responses were also discussed in the framework of the threat of terrorism, a crucial concern for Italians at the time. In June 1986, as many as 95 per cent of the Italians thought terrorism to be a serious or very serious threat to Italian security. There was also no doubt as to the perceived linkage between terrorism and Libya. No less than 84 per cent thought that Libya was supporting terrorist groups in Italy.²¹

Among the options for dealing with continuing support for terrorist activities by the Libyan government, the use of force was not very popular, however. In June 1986, two months after the second Gulf of Syrte crisis between Libya and the United States, in which the United States made a series of air raids against Tripoli and Benghazi, probably aimed at killing Qaddafi as well, Italians were asked whether they would support military actions against Libya, if it did not stop its support of terrorism. On that occasion only 11 per cent chose the military option. In the same survey it was asked whether, in case of a new missile attack against the Italian island of Lampedusa, Italians would support military reprisals against Libyan targets. Again, only 18 per cent supported this option. In assessing a wider set of policy response to Libyan terrorism, Italian public opposition grew as one moved from American non-military actions towards Italian military actions. A slight majority (56 per cent) would support an American blockade of Libyan ports, but as soon as either military action or Italian involvement entered the question, support dropped. Other American military options found even less support. Only 16 per cent would approve if Italy joined the United States in military operations against Libya.

Sanctions found slightly more approval, even though there were apparent divisions on their merit. In June 1986, only 42 per cent would approve if the Italian government imposed economic sanctions on Libya, with 45 per cent disapproving and 13 per cent with no opinion. The most frequently mentioned option was to sever economic, diplomatic and political links to Libya. One should notice that it was not a matter of reluctance to use *Italian* force only.

Italians also opposed the use of force by the United States. Only 30 per cent approved (very much or somewhat) the recent American air raids against terrorist targets in Libya; 66 per cent did not approve (very much or somewhat). Still in June 1986, 67 per cent would not have supported renewed American bombing of Libyan airports in the case of repeated terrorist attacks supported by this country.²² Even in the case of evident Libyan involvement with terrorist activities, approval of an American military operation would rise only to 42 per cent, while 26 per cent would disapprove very much or somewhat and 25 per cent gave no answer. This limited support for the military options is possibly dependent on three considerations. First, a pessimistic view of the ability of air raids to reduce terrorist activity and, more generally, of the appropriateness of the military hand to deal with terrorism (only 24 per cent thought that the April 1986 air raid would succeed in reducing terrorist activity. 33 per cent believed it would rather increase this activity and 34 per cent thought it would have no effect). Italians tended to emphasise that they were against the use of force as such to combat terrorism; 41 per cent thought for one reason or another that military means were not the best way to deal with terrorists. Only 13 per cent would use force if all the other measures did not succeed. This shows a quite stable opposition to the use of force in this case.

A second possible reason for the opposition was the indiscriminate killing of innocent people that the air raids involved, which may find its origins in the memories of the severe Allied air bombing of Italian cities in the Second World War; 29 per cent of those who opposed a new air raid did so because they feared that this would kill innocent civilians. Third, fear of escalation on their doorstep was a factor in play; 51 per cent believed that a new American attack would make a wider war more likely.

The cases of Trieste and Libya were both crises in which the use of force was never really at the forefront of the political discussion. In the Libyan crisis the government was apparently caught by surprise by the missile that nearly struck Lampedusa and no real discussion of a military option ever took place. In Trieste, again, the government adopted a more nationalistic and militant policy, but there is no convincing evidence that it even considered the idea of actually using force to expel the AMG or, worse, to enter Zone B. In the latter case, apparently, the government increased slightly the proportion of those who were willing to use force, but this had no positive effect on its popularity, because this same proforce group became more and more dissatisfied with the government's position because it was too diplomatic. What we know is that a large majority of the population was against any military intervention in both cases, and the government's decisions reflected this mood.

Two cases of war

The two cases that will be examined next implied a direct participation of Italian armed force in a war. The Gulf and Kosovo Wars, the two wars in which Italy

has been involved since the end of the Second World War, show a quite different picture. In these wars support for the use of Italian armed forces was higher and found among a greater number of the population. Overall, 46 per cent of the Italians supported the use of force in the Gulf War (1991) and 46 per cent in the conflict over Kosovo (1999). However, the overall mean score overlooks two radically different trends in support for the two wars. In both wars, support for the employment of Italian armed forces was low at the beginning. In the Gulf War, however, it grew over time, reaching a majority when the ground operation started. In the case of Kosovo, support stayed low and slowly eroded even further. Let us examine first the Gulf War trends.

The Gulf War

In the Gulf War, as [Figure 4.1](#) clearly shows, attitudes towards the employment of Italian forces shifted considerably during the conflict. At the beginning of the crisis, Italians were mostly opposed to the idea of direct participation by the deployment of the military as well as the actual use of force to repel Iraqi aggression. On 7 August 1990 58 per cent of the Italians were in favour of an intervention by Western countries, but first in their mind were diplomatic pressure and economic sanctions (48 per cent), followed by a peacekeeping force (34 per cent) and only 4 per cent would have supported an armed intervention. They were not opposed, however, to the show of force in principle. Contrary to the Libyan case, the American decision of 7 August to deploy military forces in Saudi Arabia met with the support of 65 per cent of Italians.²³ Moreover, when Iraq took hundreds of foreigners as hostages in August 1990, 49 per cent were in support of military action against Iraq to get them out and 57 per cent favoured an economic boycott against oil and other Iraqi products.²⁴ In December 1990, DOXA found that 59 per cent of those interviewed approved the UN Security Council Resolution 678 authorising ‘the use of all necessary means’ to secure Iraqi compliance with all previous resolutions and setting 15 January as the final deadline for the Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait. At the same time, 49 per cent also approved the Bush decision to send the troops in the Gulf and in February 1991—with the war going on—63 per cent approved this American deployment.

What made the Italians more wary in their attitude was the idea of using *Italian* force to secure Iraqi compliance with the array of UN resolutions. At the beginning of the crisis (7 August 1990) only one out of five Italians (22 per cent including and 24 per cent excluding those who gave no answer) was in favour of Italian participation in the expeditionary force. On 4 January 1991, when the US-led coalition was almost completely deployed but diplomatic initiatives were still on the move, only 36 per cent supported Italian participation in the multilateral force. The actual war started on 16 January and in the first post-attack poll, on 18 January, only just a majority of Italians were in support of the war (45 per cent including and 48 excluding the don’t knows). Support for the war hovered around that level until 26 February, two days after the ground attack, when

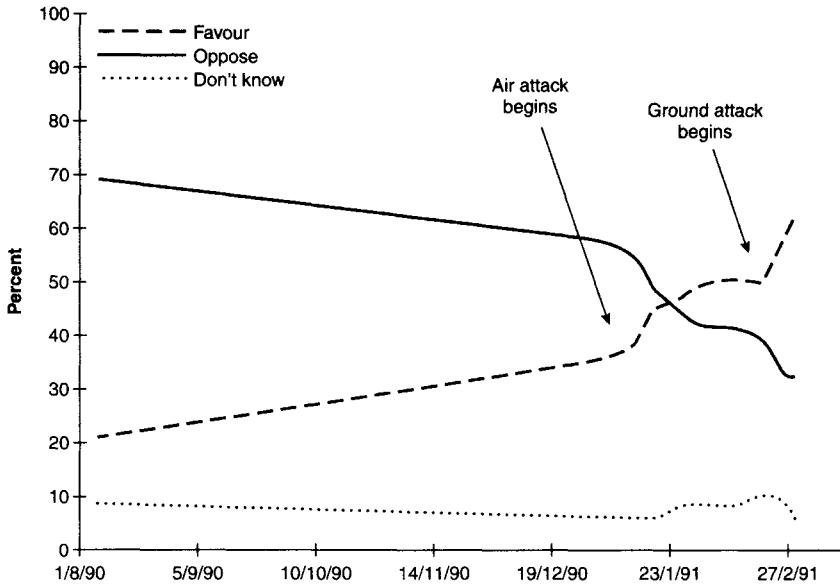


Figure 4.1 Support for Italian participation in the Gulf War.

Source: SWG Gulf War Polls. CIRCaP Public Opinion and Foreign Policy Archive.

support climbed to 59 per cent. At the end of the war 62 per cent were in favour of Italian participation, thus demonstrating a certain 'halo' effect.²⁵

Italian public opinion was very prudent. There was only a narrow majority in favour of war when it started and support increased only when it appeared clear that a victory could be achieved at low costs and without risk of escalation. Supporters became a clear majority only in the second half of February, after almost a month of air raids and with the approach of the ground operation.

In the period from August 1990 to mid-January 1991, Italians showed themselves strong supporters of diplomatic initiatives, of deploying force as a deterrent against Saudi Arabia and as an incentive for Saddam to negotiate, but rather cool on the idea of the actual use of force. Between 4 January and 14 January 1991, three surveys were carried out that shed some light on Italian attitudes before the outbreak of actual hostilities.²⁶ Apparently, the failure of the last, unsuccessful, meeting between the American Secretary of State Baker and the Iraqi Foreign Minister Aziz on 9 January did not affect the Italian willingness to negotiate. On 4 January, 80 per cent were in favour of negotiations and on 14 January this figure became 79 per cent. At the same time, Italians were not ready to give in to the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait. On 4 January, asked under what conditions they would deem a suspension of the UN deadline for the use of force justified, 53 per cent chose a total Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait. Only a quarter of those interviewed felt that an international conference on Kuwait would be

enough to postpone the deadline. Nevertheless, 62 per cent of those interviewed on 14 January felt that negotiations should continue after the ultimatum's expiration. Only slightly less than one-fifth thought that a military attack should follow upon the ultimatum's expiration. This stubborn inclination to negotiate at any cost is also shown in other survey data (13 January) which show that, even among those 47 per cent who felt that Iraq was most to blame, no more than 40 per cent were supportive of Italian participation in the intervention.

Belief in negotiation at all costs declined as the war proceeded and the final defeat of Iraq appeared inevitable. In a set of questions asked between 25 January and 26 February (Table 4.2), those who wanted to continue the attack up to the complete defeat of Saddam Hussein went from 29 per cent to 34 per cent ten days later, and ended, via 46 per cent on 20 February, at 58 per cent when the ground war started.

This is quite a reversal from the majority opinion of 5 January, when, to a hypothetical question on what to do in case Saddam Hussein offered to stop fighting in exchange for his withdrawal from Kuwait, 74 per cent would have chosen a truce and only 23 per cent would have supported continuation of the fighting.²⁷ The number of those who favoured a negotiated solution of the crisis declined steadily over time, even though it was quick to increase again as soon as an opportunity for negotiations arose.

To examine more carefully the determinants of support for the use of Italian force in the Gulf War, I shall use poll data from 25 January 1991.²⁸ This was a good period in which to examine the mood of the people because war had started more than ten days earlier, but at the same time it was not completely clear how long it would last. So, it was a period of genuine uncertainty, in which considerations of duration and possible consequences most likely affected the interview more than at the end of the war—when it was clear that it would end soon—or at the very beginning—when the expectations were high that it would finish quickly. Three factors possibly affecting the calculation of costs and risks of war were explored, together with a set of control variables. (This being a secondary analysis of data produced for other purposes, it is not possible to assess in detail all the different factors impinging on the decision whether to support the use of armed forces discussed in the Introduction to this chapter, such as, for example, the impact of possible casualties.) The three factors are: the possible consequences of the war, the expected duration and the effectiveness of bombing Iraq. As to the consequences, three questions were asked, having to do with the personal, day-to-day activities of the respondents, as well as the risk of escalation to either a world war or to a Middle East war (including Israel). Of the three questions, only the latter is included as significant, since only 29 per cent thought that the Gulf War could possibly escalate to a world war on the scale of the Second World War.

Second, the effect of the possible duration of the war on the support for the use of force was examined. It is hypothesised that support is inversely related to the expected duration of the war. Third, a question was asked on the perceived

Table 4.2 Support for attack or negotiation (in %)*25 January 1991*

At this point of the Gulf War, do you think it is better to intensify military action or to negotiate?

Intensify military action	28
Negotiate	65
Don't know	6
Total	100
(N)	(1000)

1 February 1991

At this point in the conflict, according to you, should we:

Offer Saddam a truce in exchange for his withdrawal	28
Stop the fighting only if Saddam withdraws from Kuwait	30
Continue the war until the complete defeat of Saddam	29
Don't know	14
Total	100
(N)	(800)

At this point of the war, if you had the power to decide what to do, you would aim at which of the following goals?

	<i>11–12 February</i>	<i>20 February</i>	<i>26 February</i>
The complete defeat of Saddam	34	46	58
Stop the fighting only after Saddam's withdrawal	22	na	na
Negotiations	30	37	28
A unilateral truce	6	8	7
Don't know	8	9	8
Total	100	100	100
(N)	(800)	(800)	(800)

na=not asked.

Sources: SWG Gulf Polls. *CIRCaP Public Opinion and Foreign Policy Archive*.

effectiveness of bombing Iraq (which was in full swing at the time of the survey). An assessment of the role of this factor in explaining support is relevant because the appropriateness of bombing was at the core of the argument in support of air strikes: their surgical character and the reduced risk of friendly casualties. Finally, sex, age and education were used as controls. [Table 4.3](#) shows the results of a logistic regression on support for the Italian participation as a dummy variable, with and without introducing background controls.

The results of the regression show that, independent of the use of age, education and gender as control variables, duration, bombing and the risks of escalation all exert a significant impact on the support of Italian participation in the war. Looking at the coefficients without controls, the expectation of war duration has the strongest impact. Among those who expect the war to last between fifteen days and two months, the odds of favouring Italian participation are 2.62 times higher than for those who think the war will last more than 6 months. Among those who expect the war to last between two and six months, the odds are 1.62 higher. Comparing those who expected that the war would ignite a Middle East conflict with those who did not expect such consequences, the odds of favouring Italian participation in the Gulf War for the latter group were 0.46 times those of the former. Clearly, the risks of escalation depressed support for Italian participation, as much as the moral revulsion or ineffectiveness of air strikes. When bombing is deemed morally acceptable or militarily useful, the odds of favouring Italian participation are higher than among those who thought that the bombing was either morally unacceptable or military ineffective. Introducing controls, only gender appears to exert an autonomous significant effect. Among women, the odds of favouring Italian participation are half that of men.

Using for sake of simplicity the second equation (without controls),²⁹ Figure 4.2 shows the impact of war duration on the likelihood of supporting Italian participation, among those who deemed bombing immoral and were worried about an escalation in the Middle East, on the one hand, and those who deemed bombing useful and were not worried about an escalation, on the other.³⁰ War duration has a quite different impact on the likelihood of supporting Italian participation in these two groups. Among those who saw bombing as immoral and perceived a risk of escalation of the conflict in the Middle East, the likelihood of supporting the war is highest when they expected the war to last between fifteen days and two months (by the way, the expectation closest to the real evolution of the war). On the other hand, for those who perceived the bombing as useful and saw no risk of escalation in the Middle East, the likelihood of supporting Italian intervention was highest if they expected the war to last between two and six months. In other words, for those who deemed bombing immoral and perceived a risk of escalation, support for Italy's participation increased only if they thought the war would be quite short (around one to two months). For those who thought the bombing useful and saw no risk of escalation, support grew with the expected duration.

Contrary to common expectations, people apparently calibrated their support for the use of force on the basis of their own assessments of the expected duration, the likelihood of escalating the conflict and the perceived benefits—either moral or political—of the instruments employed. This does not only confirm the reasonableness of the people in these matters, but it also points to a more complex picture of the factors involved in the support for the use of force than that depicted by the bivariate casualties-support thesis. As in the case of

Table 4.3 Determinants of support for Italian participation in the Gulf War logistic regression 25 January 1991; Maximum Likelihood Estimation

<i>Variables</i>	<i>With control</i>		<i>Without control</i>	
	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>SE</i>
Intercept	1.17	0.638	1.27 ^b	0.434
Bombing depends	-0.181	0.399	-0.166	0.389
Bombing not acceptable	-1.42 ^c	0.387	-1.56 ^c	0.379
War last 2–6 months	0.457	0.241	0.485 ^a	0.231
War last 15 days–2 months	0.924 ^c	0.266	0.962 ^c	0.258
War last less than 15 days	-0.524	0.451	-0.666	0.434
Middle East uncertain	-0.639	0.393	-0.943 ^a	0.369
Middle East involved	-0.739 ^c	0.243	-0.766 ^c	0.234
Age 26–35	-0.044	0.301	–	–
Age 36–45	-0.307	0.310	–	–
Age 46–55	0.381	0.367	–	–
Age 56–65	0.007	0.396	–	–
Age > 65	0.374	0.494	–	–
Gender (female)	-0.527 ^b	0.197	–	–
Education low–high school	0.873	0.323	–	–
Education high school	0.953	0.321	–	–
Education university	1.312 ^c	0.389	–	–
	N = 554		N = 554	
	$\chi^2=131.36$		$\chi^2=104.46$	
	Significance = 0.000		Significance = 0.000	
	Model log-likelihood = -316.58		Model log-likelihood = -330.03	
	Pseudo R ² = 0.172		Pseudo R ² = 0.137	

Support: 0=No; 1=Yes.

a $p < 0.05$, one-tailed.

b $p < 0.01$, one-tailed.

c $p < 0.001$, one-tailed.

Source: SWG, Trieste.

Libya, we find that the air instrument is deemed, among Italians, more debatable than in other countries (e.g. the United States). What is crucial is not only the effectiveness of the bombing, but also its morality dimension, a consideration generally overlooked by those who consider the air weapon a ‘tech-fix’ to the problem of the Western public reluctance to use force.

Kosovo

The Kosovo War has been the most important engagement of the Italian armed forces since 1945. Several navy units and a total of 54 aircraft went into action (approximately 10 per cent of the total allied air contribution, excluding the United States). Italy made available twenty air and naval bases to the allies. A special and costly humanitarian mission, called *Missione Arcobaleno*, was started

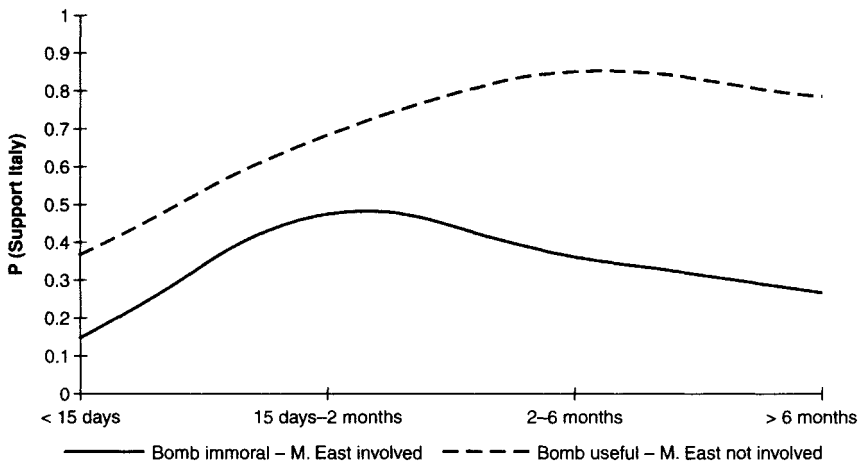


Figure 4.2 Likelihood of support for Italian participation in the Gulf War by expected duration.

Source: SWG, Trieste, January 25, 1991.

to help the Albanian and Macedonia governments deal with the refugee problems. Finally, Italy deployed 2,287 men of the Garibaldi brigade in the eastern Kosovo area of Italian competence in the framework of KFOR.

The Kosovo War had never been popular, however, among the Italian public, as shown in Figure 4.3, with respect to participation in the bombing in Serbia or to a military ground operation. On average, only 44 per cent of the Italians favoured NATO bombing of Serbia and Kosovo and 45 per cent opposed it, with 11 per cent that did not know. On the question of whether Italian troops should take part in a NATO ground operation in Kosovo, on average only 33 per cent were in favour, 63 per cent opposed and only 4 per cent gave no answer. Of course, there are effects of question wording to be considered. Apparently, shifting the wording of the question from supporting bombing only to supporting the bombing by NATO increases support by some 10 percentage points. These effects will be mentioned when deemed relevant for the interpretation of data.

The time series available on both the bombing and the ground force questions shows on the one hand a remarkable stability over time, with 6 percentage point standard deviation in the bombing question and 4 in that on the ground operation. On the other hand, there are different trends for the bombing and the ground troop questions. The support of bombing shows a slight decline as time goes by. With regard to support of a ground operation, the opposite is visible with a slightly positive trend.³¹ Before examining these somewhat puzzling outcomes in more detail, especially if compared to other countries as reviewed by Everts in Chapter 10, let me first describe the evolution over time.

Our bombing time series starts on 23 March, one day after the failure of the final attempt by the special American envoy Richard Holbrooke to convince

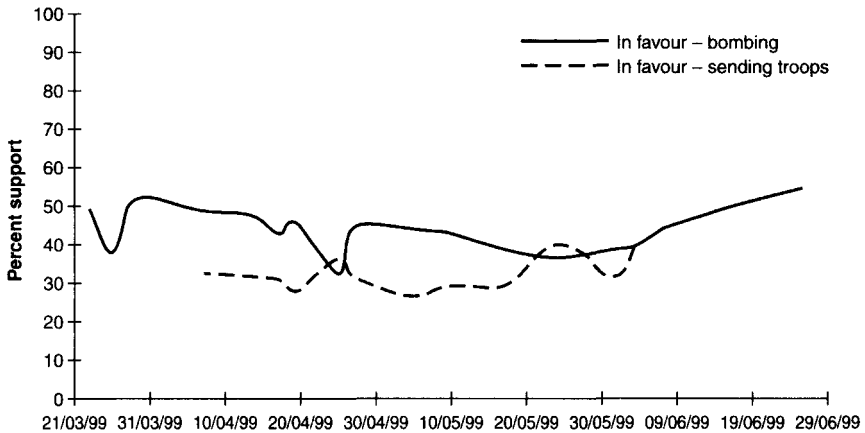


Figure 4.3 Support for Italian bombing and deployment of ground troops in Kosovo.

Source: Various SWG surveys.

Question wording:

Bombing question wording: 23 March: 'If NATO decided to bomb Serbia, should Italy according to you support the NATO action; oppose it or do you not know?'; 26 March and 7, 13, 19, 27 April, 5, 10, 17, 24, 31 May: 'As to the war in Serbia and Kosovo, NATO is bombing Serbia. Should NATO according to you be definitely supported or opposed, or do you not know?'; 15–25 April 'Are you very much in favour, somewhat in favour, somewhat opposed, or very much opposed to NATO bombing in Serbia and Kosovo?'; 25 June 'As you might know, Serbia has accepted the NATO peace proposal. In view of this, do you think that the NATO decision to bomb Serbia and Kosovo was a mistake or not?'

Ground operation question wording: 7, 13, 17, 19, 27 April, 5, 10, 17, 31 May: 'Presently the possibility of sending NATO ground troops in Kosovo is being discussed. Are you in favour or opposed to the Italian participation in such a mission?' 15–25 April, 24 May: 'In regard to the possible Italian participation in such an operation [ground operation], are you very much in favour, somewhat in favour, somewhat opposed or very much opposed?'

Milosevic to agree to the NATO terms and the rejection of these by the Serb parliament. On the evening of 23 March, a survey was made, asking whether NATO should continue to search for diplomatic solutions or whether more drastic measures were needed: 68 per cent favoured further diplomatic efforts, while 27 per cent deemed more resolute means necessary and 5 per cent did not know.³² However, in case NATO should decide to strike Serbia, a majority of 49 per cent felt that Italy should support NATO, while 33 per cent thought Italy should oppose it and 18 per cent did not know.

Acting on the basis of activation orders agreed upon earlier, the NATO council decided to launch an air attack against Serbia. NATO planes from eleven countries and nearly 100 sea- and air-launched cruise missiles hit about forty military targets. The first post-war survey is of 26 March. The net result of the strikes was to strengthen the support for a negotiated solution among Italians. In

fact, two days after the war started, 72 per cent were in favour of giving space to a diplomatic effort and only 22 per cent supported continuing air strikes until Milosevic signed the peace agreement. Moreover, only 38 per cent thought that NATO should be uncritically supported, while 29 per cent felt that Italy should assume a critical position in NATO and 18 per cent definitely opposed the NATO decision. One of the effects of the initiation of the air strikes was progressive reduction of the proportion of those uncertain (explaining in all likelihood the increase in the proportion of the public willing to support NATO action). On 29 March, in fact, those who thought that NATO should be supported at any cost moved to 52 per cent (14 percentage points more than three days before), while those who thought either that Italy should have a critical position (27 per cent) or that Italy should refuse NATO policy (14 per cent) stayed at the same level as three days before. Between the end of March 1999 and the beginning of May the proportion of those who were in support of the NATO policy declined steadily from the height of 52 per cent to the low of 24 May.³³ Apparently, the hitting of civilian targets and the killing of civilians did not affect support for the war. Opposition to NATO and support for diplomatic efforts did not increase after a series of incidents creating 'collateral damage' between 7 and 17 April.

Cool attitudes towards the war are not a consequence of the perceived risks of being involved in an escalation of the conflict. Asked on a scale from 0 to 100 how likely it would be for Italy to become involved in the war, on 26 March 21 per cent thought this likely (more than 50 per cent likelihood), 10 per cent did not know and 69 per cent thought it not likely (less than 50 per cent). These proportions changed respectively to 16 per cent, 5 per cent and 79 per cent on 29 March. Nor is it a question of sympathy for Milosevic. There is no question in the Italians' mind that the war aimed to stop a brutal repression against the ethnic Albanians. To a question about the main motivations behind the NATO attack against Serbia 36 per cent mention stopping massacres in Kosovo, 27 per cent toppling the Milosevic regime and 19 per cent pushing the Serbs into serious negotiations over autonomy in Kosovo.³⁴ Only 13 per cent chose the Serbs' expansionist military threat, pointing to the fact that this was not perceived as a war in which direct Italian interests were involved. In another poll, 65 per cent of those sampled agreed with the statement that 'the decision to bomb Serbia is needed to stop repression in Kosovo'. The main reason for Italians' opposition to the war seems to be the conviction that negotiations could have been more effective in bringing the repression to a stop. Support for a diplomatic solution was the most preferred option.

However, Italians were not ready to support any step in the direction of a negotiated peace. Thus, 56 per cent of those interviewed agreed with NATO's rejection of the Serb proposal of a unilateral truce on the occasion of the Orthodox Easter of 6 April, while 34 per cent opposed it. More than one month and a half later, when the air campaign was dragging on, support for a NATO unilateral suspension of air strikes was much higher. In a poll of 24 May 1999, 68 per cent expressed support for such a move. Tied to an acceptance by

Milosevic of the withdrawal of Serbian troops from Kosovo, support for a unilateral NATO suspension of air strikes even went up to 90 per cent. Hence it is no surprise that in the week between Milosevic's acceptance of the NATO peace proposal and the final halt of the air strikes (3–9 June 1999) only 15 per cent wanted to continue bombing if Serbia did not stop repression against ethnic Albanians; 70 per cent then wanted to start peace negotiations and 15 per cent favoured sending ground troops. Contrary to the Gulf War, the conviction of many Italians that the war was not worthwhile remained even after the war. There are contradictory results on a possible 'halo effect' in the Kosovo War. On the one hand, when asked in June whether NATO bombing had been a mistake, 41 per cent answered yes, 46 per cent no and 12 per cent did not know.³⁵ On 24 June 1999, to the same question the figures were 33, 55 and 12 per cent respectively. On the other hand, on 24 June, to a question as to why the war had ended, 53 per cent mentioned that a diplomatic solution was found, 22 per cent attributed it to the bombing and 13 per cent to both causes. Underlying these attitudes was a basic uncertainty about the entire process. To the question as to who won the war, 58 per cent simply answered that they did not know, while only 17 per cent mentioned NATO and another 11 per cent the United States.

In the Kosovo War, opinions were quite clearly divided from the very beginning and there is evidence to show that they became even more polarised as the war went on. The group of supporters of the bombing probably formed the basis of support for *any* kind of NATO action. On 7 April, 34 per cent wanted NATO to continue bombing until Milosevic signed for peace; 33 per cent favoured a ground operation, 33 per cent were in favour of Italian participation, and 29 per cent (31 per cent excluding 'don't knows') were in favour of this even in the event of casualties among Italian soldiers. The likelihood of casualties does indeed not make much of a difference. On 24 May, 38 per cent were in favour of bombing (and 41 per cent thought that NATO should be supported in its bombing actions), while 42 per cent were in favour of sending Italian ground troops if NATO should decide to send troops in the event that Milosevic did not withdraw. Asked then to consider what to do if repression were stopped but ten Italian soldiers killed, 41 per cent were still in support of sending Italian troops. The data of 24 May point to a possible polarisation of attitudes among the Italian public. While a sizeable minority was apparently prepared to go 'all the way', on the other side of the spectrum as the war was dragging on and lacked a clear deadline, a growing proportion, but still a minority, of the sampled population, was at the same time becoming disillusioned with the bombing and began to think that either a ground operation or a negotiated peace was the solution.

Bosnia

In the Bosnia case, the evolution of support differed from both the Gulf and Kosovo Wars.³⁶ The available surveys show clearly that Italian public opinion, as that of other European publics (Sobel 1996), quite early supported greater

commitment in the Bosnia crisis and was strongly disappointed with the way international organisations and national governments were dealing with the conflict there. In November 1992, 67 per cent of the Italians thought that both the European Community and the United States were doing too little to stop the fighting in Yugoslavia. In June 1994, 72 per cent deemed that the European Community and 70 per cent that the United Nations were doing too little to stop the struggle, but only 57 per cent considered that Italy was not doing enough. This harsh judgement on the commitment of the multilateral bodies is linked to two factors. On the one hand, it was felt that international organisations have a real influence on the political situation in the former Yugoslavia. In February 1994, in one poll (DOXA) 73 per cent thought that if international diplomacy made a real effort, it had many or some possibilities to stop the war in Bosnia. In May—June 1994 to a question on who should resolve the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, the UN, European Union and NATO were all given first place by a majority. Only one country reached a similar position: the United States, with 55 per cent of the interviewed thinking it had a role in solving the crisis.

On the other hand, there was a genuine desire to see peace established in that area at (almost) any price. The slow and progressive engulfing of Yugoslavia in the civil war slowly convinced Italians that a more active military intervention, not only for humanitarian purposes but also to actually end the conflict, was a desirable option. In September 1991, at the beginning of the Yugoslavia crisis, a sample of Italians was asked what action Western countries should have taken to solve the Yugoslavian conflict.³⁷ Only 6 per cent chose the military option; 75 per cent preferred the diplomatic solution, and 17 per cent flatly answered that it was none of our business. In March 1993, however, 92 per cent of those interviewed favoured the use of multilateral military force to protect humanitarian aid and 79 per cent were in favour of such use to impose a solution, no matter what. In June 1994, 53 per cent were in favour of 'decisive military intervention for a definite solution of the present situation in Bosnia'. In 1994 no more than 7 per cent on average favoured letting things continue and no more than an average of 34 per cent were in favour of withdrawing troops. Two-thirds of the polled population felt that force should have been used to ease the passage of the humanitarian aid convoys.

A slightly different question was asked immediately before and after the mortar attack of 5 February 1994, in the Sarajevo market square, which killed at least 68 and wounded up to 200.³⁸ It allows an examination of the impact of an increase in the level of violence on the resolve of public opinion. The mortar attack increased the number of supporters of an armed intervention by UN troops to stop the fighting in Bosnia by 6 percentage points (from 51 to 57 per cent). The data suggest that the major impact of the mortar shelling was on the uncertain rather than on those opposing it. The effect of the indiscriminate killing on support for Italian intervention is much greater among those who are already in favour of multilateral intervention: 73 per cent of those favouring an armed intervention were also supportive of the idea of sending Italian troops on 31

January. The support for Italian intervention, four days after the Sarajevo market shelling, increases among these to 85 per cent. In other words, if you support an intervention, you want Italy to be part of it as well.

Since March 1993 the Italian public had been in favour of military intervention by the United Nations, and by the end of December 1994 this resolve had stiffened and widened. In November 1994, 54 per cent of the population polled wanted to end the war by any means if it were to continue until Spring next year, and 68 per cent were against removing UN troops if, following an arms embargo, war should escalate. The level of support increases if the question mentions explicitly that the troops are sent to implement a peace agreement.

The war also had an effect on the support for NATO air strikes, and it shows the willingness of public opinion to go along with the UN decision to threaten air strikes to deter attacks against the UNPAs (United Nations Protected Areas). Between February and June 1994, no more than one-third of public opinion was in support of launching air attacks. However, in one poll 67 per cent of those interviewed expressed support for NATO air strikes on Bosnian Serb forces around Gorazde. This support was related to the conviction that strikes would be effective in stopping the fighting: 61 per cent thought that these would be more likely to lead to peace than prolonging the fight in Bosnia.

Looking at the evolution of support of Italian (participation in) armed intervention, we find, as in earlier cases, a remarkable stability, as shown in [Figure 4.4](#). Although questions are not always worded identically, the overall trend is overwhelmingly positive. The only change occurs in the middle of 1995, when the gloomy situation of the UN troops taken as hostages and the patent inability of the UN to curb Serbian attacks on Sarajevo seems to have temporarily depressed the level of support for an intervention.

The data show a strong support for an armed intervention and this contradicts the image of the public that was held by the Western political elites (Sobel 1996). But how strong was this support? Since the beginning, in fact, Western politicians claimed that public support for an armed intervention was not only shaky, but would also drop as soon as casualties occurred. At a first glance, as shown in [Figure 4.5](#), which brings together the Albania, Bosnia and Kosovo cases, support for Italian armed intervention seems indeed to decrease as the level of sacrifice required increases. This trend is similar to that observed in other countries (Everts 1996a). The degree of support is crucially affected by the actual possibility of the use of force, the likelihood of casualties among friendly and enemy troops and eventually the willingness to sacrifice oneself for the country.

[Table 4.4](#) explores the issue of casualties from another angle. A slightly biased question was asked in two different formats to a split-half sample of Italians. Support for an armed intervention moves down from 28 per cent when the issue of Somalia (1984) is mentioned to 34 per cent when Bosnia (1994) is the case. This is not surprising in view of the conflicts underlying these operations and the

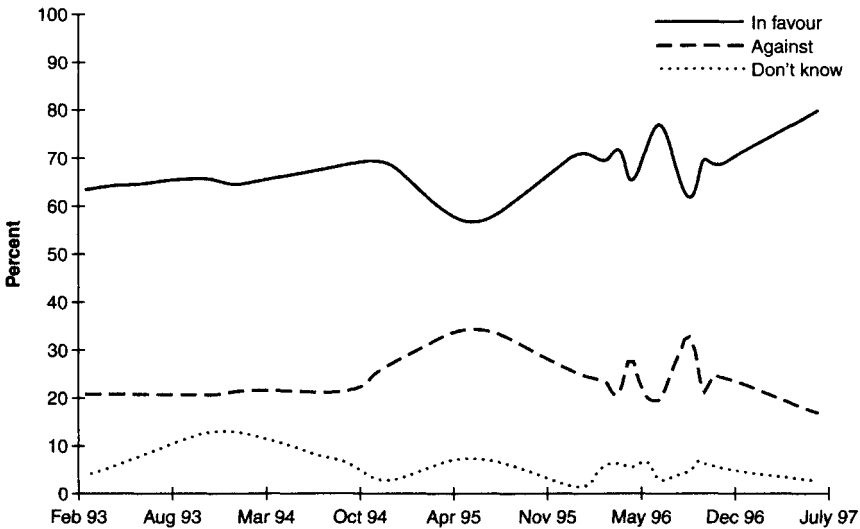


Figure 4.4 Support for Italian armed intervention in Bosnia (in %).

Source: Various DOXA, UNICAB and SWG surveys.

risks involved. When the risk of casualties was mentioned specifically, support drops to 17 per cent and 25 per cent respectively, but still the difference between the two cases remains the same. This indicates that, even when casualties are brought into the picture, the public is able to differentiate between cases and whether risking lives is worthwhile or not.

Concluding observations

In the Introduction several factors potentially affecting the willingness to support the use of force were spelled out. Comparing the six cases, three factors stand out as relevant in shedding some light on the different degree of this support: the nature of the situation in which the use of force is contemplated (international crisis, war or peacekeeping operation), the nature of the interests involved (threats to national security, humanitarian mission or respect for international law), and the prospect of success, as seen by public opinion. Other factors do not play a clear role in explaining differences in support across cases. Support for the use of force is high both when force is actually used and when it is not. And in the two cases in which force is used (namely Kosovo and the Gulf) there are significant differences. The duration of the operation does not affect the support either. Bosnia dragged on quite extensively (and it is still going on as far as the Italian troops are concerned), but support never wavered. Kosovo was shorter than the Gulf War, but support during the war was much lower. In the Gulf, the average support score during the war (79 days) was 52 per cent. In Kosovo it was 38 per cent. Also the historical period (Cold War or post-Cold War) does

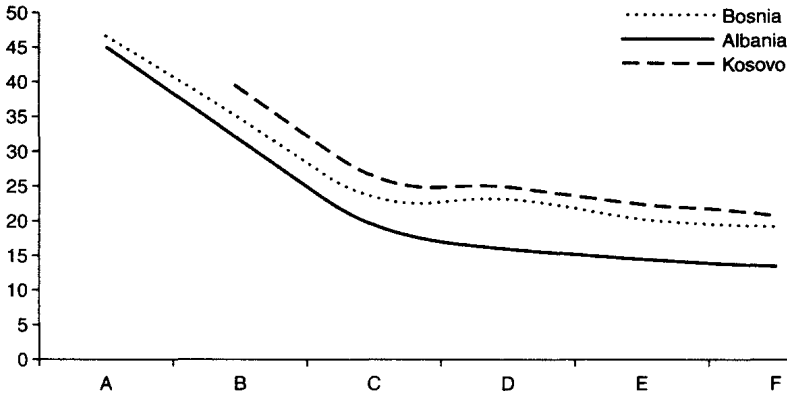


Figure 4.5 Support for use of force in different conditions in the Gulf War, Bosnia and Kosovo.

Source: Difebarometro 4, 5 and 6.

Question wording:

Bosnia: A=Do you consider the threat to use force by the Italian contingent in Bosnia justified? B=Do you consider the use of force by the Italian contingent in Bosnia justified? C=And do you consider such use of force by the Italian contingent justified if this would lead to losses of human life among Kosovars? D=And do you consider such use of force by the Italian contingent justified if this would lead to losses of human life among the soldiers? E=And do you consider such use of force justified if this would lead to losses of human life among your friends or family? F=And do you consider such use of force by the Italian contingent on Bosnia justified if you would risk losing your own life?

Albania: A=Do you consider the threat to use force by the Italian contingent in Albania justified? B=Do you consider the use of force by the Italian contingent in Albania justified? C=And do you consider such use of force by the Italian contingent justified if this would lead to losses of human life among the Albanians? D=And do you consider such use of force by the Italian contingent justified if this would lead to losses of human life among the Italian soldiers? E=And do you consider such use of force justified if this would lead to losses of human life among your friends or family? F=And do you consider such use of force by the Italian contingent on Albania justified if you would risk losing your own life?

Kosovo: B=In case there would be a military ground operation, would you consider the use of force by an Italian contingent in Serbia justified? C=And do you consider such use of force by the Italian contingent justified if this would lead to losses of human life among the local population? D=And do you consider such use of force by the Italian contingent justified if this would lead to losses of human life among the Italian soldiers? E=And do you consider such use of force justified if this would lead to losses of human life among your friends or family? F=And do you consider such use of force by the Italian contingent on Kosovo justified if you would risk losing your own life?

not show a clear pattern. In general, use of force in the Cold War is less supported than during the post-Cold War period, but in this latter period there is a wide margin of variation. The bilateral or multilateral nature of the operation makes a difference in the sense that support for bilateral operations seems lower than for multilateral ones; but this variable quite perfectly matches with the Cold War—post-Cold War distinction and the nature of the situation (being that

Table 4.4 Support for an armed Italian intervention in Bosnia and Somalia with or without casualties

Question: 'Looking at the Somalia [Bosnia] situation, are you in favour or against an Italian armed participation to a mission in a country with severe domestic problems?'

	<i>Somalia</i>			<i>Bosnia</i>		
	<i>Without losses</i>	<i>With losses^a</i>	<i>Difference</i>	<i>Without losses</i>	<i>With losses^a</i>	<i>Difference</i>
Very favourable	8	4	-4	13	9	-4
Somewhat favourable	20	13	-7	21	16	-5
Somewhat opposed	28	32	+4	23	27	+4
Very much opposed	44	51	+7	43	48	+5
Total	100	100		100	100	
(N)	(603)	(603)		(619)	(619)	

a Only those who answered: 'Very or somewhat favourable' were asked: 'Would you continue to be favourable if the mission implied Italian casualties?'

Source: CeMiSS, 7-20 January 1994.

peacekeeping operations and wars are all of a multilateral nature). Geographical closeness is difficult to assess but clearly does not exert a clear-cut role. Trieste is the closest event we have and still force is much less enthusiastically supported than the patrolling of the Gulf, the farthest mission away from Italian borders. As to the threat's immediacy, there is not enough variation among our cases to allow for a conclusive answer. Assuming that the Libya incident in 1986 and the Trieste crisis of 1953 are the two closest to a threat to national security, it turns out that this variable plays no appreciable role in increasing support.

Three factors stand out as of more relevance. First, the humanitarian nature of the mission. Italians, like French public opinion examined by La Balme in this book, find in humanitarian considerations a powerful motivation to support the use of force by Italian armed forces. International law considerations also play a role, as the Gulf War showed. The clearer the humanitarian considerations behind an operation, the higher the support for it. Albania in 1997 is a possible example. A mission to bring rescue and comfort to Albanians in a difficult political transition, together with the consideration that it is better to assist a population in need before they become refugees (especially if they tend to search for a refuge in Italy), bring support for the use of force to 59 per cent. In Bosnia, months of massacring and violent internecine strife brought the support for a mission to bring an end to this to 69 per cent. International law considerations play a somewhat weaker role, even though they are still one of the issues behind support for the use of force. When the humanitarian issues are not clear, seem a rationalisation for other purposes, or are altogether absent (as in Libya and Trieste), support is much lower. In other words, Italians seem inclined to consider

the possibility of using force when a clear and persuasive humanitarian argument can be made. Where there is a lack of clear and present dangers to Italian national security, other considerations do not elicit that much support. Two other considerations, however, are important in explaining support for the *Italian* participation in such an operation: the expected duration and the likelihood of success.

Of course, this conclusion has to be reached with prudence because of the limited number of cases involved. As an example, the inclusion of Somalia would shed some doubt on the influence of the humanitarian considerations. Somalia was a peacekeeping (and then peace-enforcing) mission with humanitarian reasons. This would lead us to expect a higher level of support than that actually recorded. Nevertheless, the Somalia data are not a very reliable measure of the actual level of support to take under consideration. On the other hand, the case of Albania, which I did not analyse either, comes out according to expectations: high level of support for a peacekeeping humanitarian mission, with clear and quite promising prospects of success.

These conclusions bring us to a second set of considerations: the exact scope of this 'permissive mood'. The results show that Italians are, at least in principle, ready to support force for humanitarian considerations. The question that immediately arises is how strong and stable is this commitment. The available evidence points to three factors that might possibly affect the support for the use of force in these missions. First, Italians have a lower level of tolerance to casualties than public opinion in other countries. The role of casualties in peace operations is difficult to assess because they were all operations without casualties (excluding two Italians killed in an accident at the beginning of the SFOR mission). [Table 4.5](#) shows to what extent Italians were willing to support hypothetical casualties in a foreign military intervention, applied to three military operations in which Italian armed force was actually employed: Bosnia (1996), Albania (1996) and Kosovo (1999). The Italian data are also compared with an analogous question asked in 1991 (four months after the Gulf War) in the United States, having in mind a generic military operation (Larson 1996).

On the basis of [Table 4.5](#), it appears quite clear that Italians are not willing to support more than ten casualties altogether, while among Americans only 34 per cent identify that number as an acceptable threshold for casualties.³⁹ Moreover, as shown in [Figure 4.5](#), often the real issue at stake is the sacrifice of human life, no matter on which side of the conflict. [Figure 4.5](#) shows quite clearly that the most dramatic drop in support for the use of force is when you move from the threat of use of force to the real use of force, i.e. killing people. Having your relatives, Italian soldiers, enemy soldiers or civilians killed does not affect the level of support for the use of force that much.

Second, Italian governments do not benefit from any 'rally round the flag'. For several reasons linked to the nature of the Italian parliamentary system, once the Italian government decided to participate in a mission or once the actual fighting breaks out, there is no dramatic jump in support. Otherwise put, once

Table 4.5 Number of Italian casualties deemed acceptable in Bosnia, Albania, Kosovo (in %)

Questions:

For Italy: 'In particular, how many Italian casualties would you be ready to accept before thinking it necessary to withdraw from such operation?'

For US: 'I would like to get some idea of what you think "too much loss of life" is in a military intervention. What would be the rough figure you would use as an acceptable number of US deaths?'

<i>Casualties</i>	<i>Italy Bosnia (1996)</i>	<i>Italy Albania (1996)</i>	<i>Italy Kosovo (1999)</i>	<i>US Generic</i>
Less than 10	84	80	77	36
10-100	11	15	10	27
101-1000	3	3	8	17
1001-10,000	1	1	2	11
More than 10,000	1	1	3	9
Total	100	100	100	100

Sources: For Italy: Difebarometro 4, Difebarometro 5, Archivio Disarmo/SWG/Università di Siena, 1999. For United States, *American Talks Issues* as quoted in Larson 1996, Table A.1, p. 107.

the mission gets going Italians have to be thoroughly convinced to take action. And this relates to the last consideration.

Third, the quality of the information and the rational nature of the arguments seem to make a lot of difference in persuading the public to support an operation. In this connection the Gulf and Kosovo Wars are useful to compare, even though the Gulf was not considered primarily a humanitarian mission but rather an attempt to restore national sovereignty and to affirm respect for international law. Support for the use of force is more or less at the same level at the beginning, but then it shows different trends. In the Gulf War, it becomes progressively higher; in the Kosovo War it stays low throughout the conflict (with an increasing polarisation of positions at later stage). Several factors could possibly explain the two different trends. Particularly relevant appears the prospect of success and the nature of the mission. The purpose at hand in the Gulf War was quite clear from the very beginning. To liberate Kuwait was the clear and well-defined paramount goal of the entire operation. The operation was well planned and executed after all diplomatic alternatives were explored. Prospects of success were quite high from the very beginning and they became progressively even brighter as the war progressed. Italian reluctance at the beginning of the war was mainly due to the fear of escalation, the possible duration and, for some, the strategy involved (bombing). However, as the war

progressed and the fears were allayed, support became stronger, ending up with a clear 'halo effect' after the war.

Much different was the situation in Kosovo. No such clarity of purpose was perceived among the public in the Kosovo War. The lack of clarity of goals affected the prospect of success as well. As the bombing strategy evolved, extending progressively to civilian targets and less discriminating hits, frustration for the bombing strategy increased, leading to a polarisation in public attitudes among those against and pro NATO intervention. The pro-interventionists were asking for more, namely the ground operation, and those opposed to intervention were increasingly sceptical about the feasibility of the 'bombing and talking' strategy of the Italian government. Moreover, the flood of refugees leaving Kosovo owing to the bombing and the apparent stability of Milosevic confused the humanitarian reasons behind the Kosovo War.

This also raised some interesting considerations on the interaction between public opinion and political elite in foreign policy. Public opinion can be seen by policy makers either as a resource or as a constraint. In the first case, public opinion can be exploited to increase the power and influence of political leaders against opponents both in their own government or in the political opposition. In the second case, public opinion limits the room for manoeuvring of politicians in their political bargaining. To what extent public opinion is one or the other depends, of course, on the preferences of politicians, but also on other considerations that are factored in the politicians' calculations. Among these considerations, for a medium-size power like Italy, are the policy positions of the United States and other Western European countries on the issue at stake. Taking these facts into account, the cases examined show different ways through which politicians interacted with public opinion.

Trieste, Libya and the oil cases are situations in which public opinion's reluctance to use force, lack of clear preferences of the main allies and the Italian government's position basically coincide. It is not far from the truth to say that on these occasions Italian governments followed public opinion. On the other hand, Bosnia is a situation in which public opinion was clearly a resource. Italians had since 1983 a 'permissive mood' towards the use of force in the former Yugoslavia. The Italian governments, for several domestic reasons, were not willing to exploit such a resource and the European allies, even though willing to see Italy more involved in the UN operation in Bosnia, did not press that much. This is a case in which public opinion and the political elite basically did not interact (Russett and Graham 1989).

Finally, Kosovo and the Gulf are two situations in which public opinion constrains Italian political leaders. Support for the use of force in these situations is low at the beginning. Italian governments do not benefit from the 'rally round the flag' syndrome. However, the government reacts differently in the two cases. In the Gulf War, there is an attempt to follow a narrow path conciliating the public mood with the political need to participate in the US-led coalition. The result is a symbolic participation in the war with only a few planes. In Kosovo,

where both the logistic exigencies brought about by the geographical closeness and the greater American pressure make a symbolic participation impossible, Italy builds its position—negotiation and bombing—taking expressly into account the public mood.

Notes

- 1 I thank Teresa Ammendola for allowing me to use her data on both domestic and foreign Italian armed forces operations. I am also grateful to Archivio Disarmo-Polimettrica and SWG, Trieste for allowing me to use the Difebarometro series and data on the Gulf War, Bosnia and the Kosovo War. All other Italian surveys used in this chapter have been made available by the Public Opinion and Foreign Policy Archive at the Centro Interdipartimentale di Ricerca sul Cambiamento Politico (CIRCaP), Department of Political Science, University of Siena.
- 2 The Italian government employed armed forces to support the police in eight operations between July 1992 and the end of 1997.
- 3 Italy participated in the Korean War—after a long political debate—with a single medical unit, operating in Seoul with the mandate of aiding only Koreans and *not* the military units fighting in Korea. Small and Singer (1982) are correct in not reporting Italy among the participants.
- 4 All information on Italian participation in international crises is drawn from Brecher *et al.* (1988), Brecher and Wilkenfeld (1997) and the ICB Project Data Bank.
- 5 Brecher and Wilkenfeld (1997) record three Libyan—US crises. The first lasted from 12 August to 1 September 1981; the second from 24 March until 21 April 1986; and the third from December 1988 until 12 January 1989. Italian polls data are available only for the second Syrte crisis in 1986.
- 6 Of those, twenty took place under the United Nations' aegis: Somalia (February 1950–July 1960, Trusteeship administration); Palestine (June 1958, in progress, UNTSO); Lebanon (June–December 1958, UNOGIL); Kashmir (June 1959, in progress, UNMOGIP); Yemen (July 1963–September 1964, UNYOM); India–Pakistan (August 1965–February 1966, UNIMOP); Lebanon July 1979, in progress, UNIFIL); Afghanistan (March 1989–October 1990); Iran–Iraq (August 1988–February 1991, UNIIMOG); Namibia (March 1989–April 1990, UNTAG); Iran (February 1991, in progress, UNOSGI); Iraq–Kuwait (April 1991, in progress); Iraq (May 1991, in progress, UNSCOM); Iraq–Kurdistan (May 1991–October 1991, Humanitarian aid missions 'Airone 1' and 'Airone 2' within the 'Provide Comfort' operation); Western Sahara (July 1991, MINURSO); Cambodia (May 1992, UNTAC); Somalia (August 1992–April 1994); Mozambique (December 1992–October 1994, missions 'Albatros 1' and 'Albatros 2' within UNOMOZ); El Salvador (August 1991, ONUSAL); Albania (March–August 1997). One operation was a European Union mission: Mission of observers of the European Union to control the cease-fire between the Republic of Yugoslavia and the Republics of Bosnia, Croatia and Slovenia (July 1991, in progress). One operation was a NATO mission: the NATO IFOR-SFOR mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina to control the Dayton agreement (January 1996, in progress). Five operations were

bilateral initiatives at a foreign request: Malta (August 1973, in progress, military-technical assistance); Morocco (January 1977, in progress, military-technical assistance); Kuwait (September—December 1991, de-mining assistance); Albania (September 1991—December 1993, Humanitarian aid ‘Pellicano’); Somalia (June 1983—September 1990, military-technical assistance). Two operations were multilateral operations: Lebanon I and II (August 1982—April 1984) and Rwanda (March 1994, Operation ‘Ippocampo’ to rescue civil personnel in Rwanda during the civil war). Two operations were autonomous initiatives of the Italian government. They were both directed either to rescue Italian citizens as in the Somalia-Ethiopia conflict (January 1991 and March 1991 respectively in Somalia and Ethiopia) or to rescue Rwandese children (operation ‘Entebbe’) in June 1994.

- 7 Contrary to Jentleson, mean scores excluding the so-called ‘halo effect’ were not calculated (even though in at least one case, the Gulf War, this is clearly present).
- 8 UNICAB, P.065.
- 9 In July 1988 DOXA (S.88110) asked whether those interviewed were in agreement with the use of Italian navy to help with guaranteeing freedom of sea lanes and security of Italian ships in the Persian Gulf: 58 per cent were in agreement with such a government decision, while 35 per cent opposed it and 7 per cent did not know.
- 10 Quartararo claims (1986:90) that the source of this proposal was the Italian government, who put it forward the first time in a meeting between the Italian and American ambassadors in Moscow, after the election of 2 June 1946.
- 11 Quartararo (1986:204–6) again claims that the Italians asked for a Western powers’ statement (apparently on 1 March) in a meeting between the Italian foreign minister, Sforza, and the American ambassador to Italy, Dunn, (Quartararo 1986: 226) and that the Americans (contrary to the French, who would have preferred a statement referring to the entire TLT) left it to Italy to choose whether the declaration should make reference to the entire TLT or to Zone A only.
- 12 DOXA, October 1946, N=5013.
- 13 DOXA, S326, S327, S328.
- 14 These figures were computed excluding the don’t knows.
- 15 DOXA, S87100.
- 16 UNICAB, P065.
- 17 UNICAB, P105.
- 18 UNICAB, P105.
- 19 If we include those who answer that Western European governments should react with all the listed actions (including therefore the use or threat of use of force), the proportion of those in favour of the military option would rise to 8 per cent.
- 20 DOXA, S84022.
- 21 DOXA, S86070.
- 22 DOXA, S86070.
- 23 UNICAB, P065.
- 24 UNICAB, P065.
- 25 In a vivid example of *post hoc* rationalisations, following the question on their attitude towards Italian armed participation to the war, respondents were asked on 1 March if ‘now that the war stopped, you are of the same opinion as before, you changed it in favour of the participation of Italian military forces in the Gulf War or changed it in opposition to the intervention’. 85 per cent answered that they had

been of the same opinion all along, only 6 per cent declared that changed his/her opinion positively and 2 per cent negatively.

- 26 Surveys held by SWG of Trieste.
- 27 UNICAB, P105.
- 28 Telephone survey carried out by SWG, Trieste on 25 January 1991 (N=781).
- 29 Testing whether the model with controls significantly improves upon the simpler model without controls, the additional coefficients are barely significant at the 0.01 level.
- 30 The equation is $L_s = 1.27 - 0.17X_{s1} - 1.56X_{s2} + 0.49X_{s3} + 0.96X_{s4} - 0.67X_{s5} - 0.94X_{s6} - 0.76X_{pa7}$. Where, X_{s1} =bombing depends; X_{s2} =bombing immoral; X_{s3} =war last 2–6 months; X_{s4} =war last 15 days—2 months; X_{s5} =war last 15 days; X_{s6} =Middle East uncertain; X_{s7} =Middle East involved.
- 31 The regression of support for air strikes against time is $Y = 44.6 - 0.018$ (days). Excluding the time points in June, when Yugoslavia accepted the peace plan proposed by the Russian and EU envoys, the declining trend in support for the bombing becomes starker, with a regression equation as follows: $Y = 48.6 - 0.72$ (days). On the contrary, support for the ground operation is related to time as follows $Y = 30.3 + 0.088$ (days). Excluding again the June time points, the positive trend is depressed as follows: $Y = 30.9 + 0.048$ (days).
- 32 Telephone survey by SWG (N=607).
- 33 The drop in support of 25 April is, in all likelihood, due to the different wording of the question.
- 34 SWG, 25 April 1999.
- 35 Poll of 10–13 June 1999.
- 36 This section draws on a chapter of the Italian case written together with Paolo Bellucci for a book edited by Eric Shiraev and Richard Sobel (forthcoming).
- 37 UNICAB, P163.
- 38 DOXA on 31 January and 9 February 1994.
- 39 Of course, several elements make the Italian and American questions not exactly comparable. Most of the issues raised elsewhere in this book by van der Meulen and Konijk on the complexity and ambivalence of questions on prospective casualties apply here as well.

5

Risky missions

Dutch public opinion on peacekeeping in the Balkans

Jan van der Meulen and Marijke de Konink

Introduction: a new rationale

In the waning years of the Cold War public opinion in the Netherlands showed unmistakable signs of a changing perception of the armed forces. For decades the latter were considered 'necessary' by some 80 per cent of the public. Measured year by year, gradually this figure declined, down to 66 per cent in 1989: still a considerable majority, but the downward trend was telling.

Confidence in the armed forces also dropped, from 43 per cent in 1981 to 32 per cent in 1990. Though not very high to begin with, again the trend was suggestive. Less money for the military also appealed more and more to the public, especially when budget cutting entailed a choice between different policy-goals. In 1989 almost 60 per cent (1982: below 40 per cent) favoured a relatively deep cut in the defence budget.

Ten years later, the public's priority still lies very much with 'health care', 'education', 'fighting crime', rather than with 'peacekeeping'. The preference for financially curtailing the armed forces, though, is less outspoken. In 1999 34 per cent of public opinion opts for a bigger share of defence money in overall budget cutting, which represents a drop of more than 20 per cent compared to 1989. Moreover, in the meantime, the necessity of the armed forces has recovered to a stable-looking 70-plus per cent backing. On top of that, confidence has risen again to 72 per cent! While at the end of the 1980s a vacuum, if not a crisis of legitimacy, seemed at hand, it looks as if by now new meaning has been ascribed to the military. No doubt this has a lot to do with peacekeeping and the like. In June 1999, crisis management and peacekeeping were judged to be the most important tasks of present-day armed forces by 44 per cent of the Dutch population. Humanitarian assistance was 'chosen' by 16 per cent and the classical task of national and allied defence was seen as the most important one by 30 per cent.

Though not visible immediately at this level, in fact support for a changed rationale for the military came about rather quickly and smoothly. The way in which the public accepted the abolition of the draft system of recruitment is a very good indicator of the direction and the speed of this process. Typically,

when asked to choose pro or contra conscription, in late 1989 a majority of Dutch public opinion favoured maintaining it: 50 per cent versus 36 per cent. Within three years, however, a complete turnabout had taken place: 18 per cent versus 70 per cent! This near consensus, at the end of 1992, antedated the government's decision to abolish conscription, which became official in the spring of 1993. Though not the only reason for doing away with conscription, the consideration that it would be wrong to send draftees on out-of-area missions had weighed heavily. During the Gulf War, for instance, 72 per cent of public opinion in the Netherlands took that view, while 65 per cent said professional soldiers should be obliged to go, even if they did not like it.¹ So an all-volunteer force made fit for new military missions can be said to be very much in accordance with Dutch popular preferences as these developed after the Cold War.

In the meantime, Dutch soldiers have participated in quite a number of missions, from Cambodia via Angola to Haiti, to name but a few. Definitely the most conspicuous of these has been, and still is, peacekeeping in the former Yugoslavia. Under the less than successful aegis of UNPROFOR lessons have been learned the hard way. The failure to protect the 'safe area' of Srebrenica and the dramatic consequences of the fall of this town still haunt Dutch military and society to this very day. In a way this makes it all the more remarkable, as the above figures suggest, that in principle there is no turning away from new missions. The big question is of course: how risky dare these missions become?

In this chapter we will analyse how Dutch public opinion evaluated the potential and actual risks of military deployment on the territory of former Yugoslavia from 1992 onwards. In the next few paragraphs we focus on the period before, during and immediately after the deployment of UNPROFOR. We will scrutinise the public 'tolerance for casualties' and its relationship to the support for this particular mission, together with some other variables, which are likely to pertain to mission support. We will also test how tolerance and support interact with the perception of mission success. This entails a testing of correlations between three key variables. The following section is more descriptive and interpretative. The public evaluation of risks, especially during IFOR, will be juxtaposed with mission justifications. In fact this harks back to what was hinted at in the Introduction: the development of new post-Cold War notions about the necessity and rationale of armed force(s). In a short conclusion we present some recent data on Dutch public opinion about casualties in the context of the Kosovo crisis of 1999, in order to update the chapter with respect to risky missions in the Balkans.

UNPROFOR: the first test

In this section we will analyse and interpret the results of two sets of survey questions: first, those directly pertaining to casualties among Dutch soldiers, and second, those referring to general support for participation by Dutch soldiers in UN peacekeeping in Bosnia. Surveys have been held in the period from August

1992 to December 1995, covering the deployment of UNPROFOR and including the beginning of IFOR. All surveys were held among representative samples of the adult Dutch population.

In general, differences among surveys caused by differences in question wording present serious obstacles to reliable comparisons. In this particular case, however, in one way or another, all questions come down to something like: would you find casualties among Dutch soldiers acceptable, yes or no? Looked at in this way, comparisons are both possible and justified. [Table 5.1](#) gives the data from nine surveys (for the precise question wordings, see the notes to this table).

All questions, except those from July 1995, refer to the *possibility* of casualties among Dutch soldiers. This means that the results must be interpreted as the *professed*, not the actual, public tolerance for casualties. Even though, during the period in question, five Dutch soldiers died while in Bosnia (through accidents, mines and ‘in combat’), and many of them were wounded, we hesitate to interpret answers as a reflection of these fatalities—again, also given the way in which questions were phrased. It is fortunate of course that in this particular case (just as in other comparable missions) professed tolerance for casualties cannot be tested against real acceptance. In a way, this is what the whole issue is about. As was also pointed out earlier, public opinion research also teaches us to be careful in interpreting answers to hypothetical scenarios. With these provisos in mind, we think that scrutinising data from the available surveys can still be telling.

As shown in [Table 5.1](#), over time the number of people accepting possible military casualties as a consequence of peacekeeping in Bosnia fluctuated between two extremes: from 80 per cent to 30 per cent. Accordingly, the number of people finding casualties ‘unacceptable’ ranged from 14 per cent to 64 per cent. Apparently, at the beginning of UNPROFOR people were more willing to accept possible casualties than at the end of the mission (and the beginning of IFOR). A dip in tolerance showed itself in the summer of 1995. Thereafter acceptance of possible casualties rose again, but it did not reach the 80 per cent level of the summer of 1992.

It is noteworthy that the one and only question referring directly to the actual death of a Dutch soldier in July 1995 resulted in the lowest number of people (30 per cent) accepting (more) casualties. By itself the latter result seems to support the casualty hypothesis at its simplest: one casualty causes an immediate drop in tolerance. In the context of other results this is a premature conclusion however. In the period before the death of this particular soldier, during the fall of Srebrenica, the number of people professing to accept risks and possible casualties was already declining. In fact, as far as the data can tell us, tolerance for casualties had already been declining since the end of 1993. This suggests that the acceptance of casualties is not just a consequence of actual fatalities. Moreover, one to two months after ‘Srebrenica’, the number of people accepting casualties had increased again. So, in as far as there was a shock effect, it did not last. As we will see below, this must be interpreted in the context of general mission support.

Table 5.1 Evolution of the acceptability of casualties (risks) among Dutch soldiers in the UNPROFOR mission in former Yugoslavia (in %)

<i>Date</i>	<i>Accept- able</i>	<i>Unaccept- able</i>	<i>No opinion/ Don't know</i>	<i>N; survey-method</i>	<i>Source</i>
Aug. 92	76	17	7	not available	AVRO/NIPO ^a
Dec. 92	66	20	14	1093; face-to-face	SMK/NIPO ^b
April 93	80	14	6	not available	AVRO/NIPO ^c
Dec. 93	57	29	14	1135; face-to-face	SMK/NIPO ^d
Dec. 94	48	39	13	1005; face-to-face	SMK/NIPO ^e
June 95	34	47	19	709; face-to-face	SMK/NIPO ^f
July 95	30	64	6	505; telephone	RTL/INTOMART ^g
Aug. 95	52	30	18	829; face-to-face	SMK/SVV/NIPO ^h
Sept. 95	55	23	22	1035; telephone	SMK/Telepanel Marktonderzoek ⁱ
Dec. 95 ¹	54	33	13	933; face-to-face	SMK/NIPO ^j
Mean	56	32	13		

1 Concerns for IFOR mission, the continuation of UNPROFOR under NATO command.

Text of the questions:

a 06/08/1992, AVRO/NIPO

'Inevitably losses will be suffered in the case of a military intervention in former Yugoslavia. Under the circumstances, do you find it acceptable or unacceptable that Dutch soldiers could be killed as well?'

b 21/12/1992, SMK/NIPO

Introduction: 'In Yugoslavia a civil war has been going on for some time. Do you think a peace-force of the UN will succeed in keeping the fighting parties separated? If this does not work out (that is keeping the fighting parties separated), do you think the UN should intervene by using military force? Should the Netherlands participate in such an intervention also when it is almost certain that our own soldiers would be killed or wounded?'

c 04/1993, AVRO/NIPO

'It is inevitable losses will be suffered in the case of a military intervention in the situation in former Yugoslavia. Under the circumstances, do you find it acceptable or unacceptable that Dutch soldiers could be killed as well?'

d 20/12/1993, SMK/NIPO

Introduced by the question: 'What do you think of the risks Dutch soldiers are running in former Yugoslavia? Do you think they are very big, rather big, neither big nor small, rather small or very small?' 'Do you find these risks acceptable or unacceptable?'

e 03/12/1994, SMK/NIPO

'Do you find the risks Dutch soldiers are running at the moment in former Yugoslavia acceptable or not acceptable?'

f 24/06/1995, SMK/NIPO

'Do you find the risks Dutch soldiers are running at the moment in former Yugoslavia acceptable or not acceptable?'

g 12/07/1995, RTL/INTOMART

'Last weekend a Dutch soldier died in Bosnia. Do you think the UN attempts in Bosnia to protect the civilian population justify the risk of more Dutch soldiers being killed?' 'Do you find the risks Dutch soldiers are running at this moment in Bosnia acceptable or not acceptable?'

h 22/08/95 SMK/SVV/NIPO

‘According to you is it justified to use military force, if there is a chance that many soldiers will be killed or wounded?’

i 03/09/1995, SMK/Telepanel Marktonderzoek

Table 5.2 Acceptability of casualties

Question: ‘If Dutch soldiers get involved in combat situations in Bosnia, what number of casualties do you think is acceptable?’

<i>Number of casualties</i>	<i>%</i>
Less than 10	2
10	2
20	2
30	2
40	1
50	0
60	2
70	–
80	–
90	0
100	–
110 to 149	0
More than 150	–
None	2
Don’t know	4

n=742.

Source: IKON/SVV, September 1993.

‘In the night from Tuesday August 29 to August 30 NATO planes have begun to attack targets of the Bosnian Serbs. In addition to these air attacks the Bosnian Serbian positions were fired upon by ground-forces from the so-called rapid reaction force. About 100 marines are involved in the shootings by the rapid reaction force, that consists mainly of French and British soldiers. These shootings are done by means of ground weapons. What is your opinion on the deployment of Dutch soldiers in this action by the rapid reaction force? Do you find it acceptable that Dutch forces are deployed in hostilities in which the risk of casualties on the Dutch side is huge (for instance in a ground attack)?’

j 19/12/1995, SMK/NIPO

‘To what extent do you agree or disagree if the NATO forces use force to enforce the implementation of the peace-agreement? Do you find the use of force acceptable or unacceptable if there is a good chance that Dutch soldiers will be killed or wounded?’

One particular question about casualties is not shown in [Table 5.1](#) because of very different wording. In a September 1993 survey, the Dutch public was asked about the actual *number* of military casualties it would find acceptable during peacekeeping in Bosnia. [Table 5.2](#) gives the results.

Almost half of the sample (42 per cent) said they would not accept one single casualty. Respondents saying casualties were acceptable (31 per cent) can be found mainly in the category 'less than 10' (22 per cent). A relatively high percentage reacted with 'don't know' (26 per cent).

In retrospect, knowing the course of events in Bosnia, we might comment that at the time the public apparently somewhat underestimated its own tolerance for casualties. Generally speaking, however, one may wonder whether this kind of hypothetical 'body count', really makes sense as a question. For one thing, respondents have to choose absolute numbers of casualties, while their relative meaning is unknown. Depending on man-power strength, ten casualties could mean that 1 per cent of all troops would be killed, but it could also mean 5 or 10 per cent. For another thing, asking about acceptable numbers of casualties can 'deter' people. Nobody *wants* any dead soldiers. Even though this is a problematic question, we don't want to push it aside and overlook its results. They do underscore the fact of sensitivity towards casualties, in general as well in the case of Bosnia. Also, this question strongly reminds us how much difference wordings in questions can make.

Yet, looking at the data in [Table 5.1](#), without forgetting about those from [Table 5.2](#), we arrive at a number of related conclusions. One, for the whole period under review a majority of the population professed a zero-plus-tolerance for casualties: on average 56 per cent said it would find casualties 'acceptable', while an average of 32 per cent answered 'unacceptable'. Two, the trend towards declining acceptance, which reached its lowest point in July 1995, did not prove to be irreversible. Third, fluctuations in acceptance of casualties cannot be explained exclusively by fatal incidents themselves—though probably the perception of 'numbers' does make a difference. It seems reasonable to expect that general mission support must be taken into consideration. The latter expectation will be tested below.

Determinants of mission support

[Table 5.3](#) shows the responses of the Dutch public to various questions on support for military participation in peacekeeping missions in Bosnia. The wording of the questions in August 1992 and April 1993 was identical. The questions put forward in December 1993 and 1994, as well as in June 1995 and August 1995 were identical also. The questions in the survey of December 1995 referred to the then freshly starting operation IFOR.²

Between 1992 and 1995 an average of 66 per cent of the Dutch population supported military participation in Bosnia. The average opposing it was 17 per cent. According to the polls the highest level of support (almost 90 per cent!)

could be found in the summer of 1992. From December 1993 until June 1995 support for Dutch military participation dropped from 68 per cent to 41 per cent. The very time support was lowest (July 1995) opposition had not grown proportionally. Relatively many people had become undecided.

At the fateful moment after the fall of Srebrenica (and the death of one Dutch soldier) the public was asked directly whether or not Dutch soldiers should stay (see Appendix). Apparently a majority (57 per cent) felt that they should withdraw. Undoubtedly events in this period caused a drop in support, but most likely they did not trigger the decline. The decline in support seems to have started already quite some time before the summer of 1995, just like the decline in the acceptance of casualties. From August 1995 onwards a majority of the public again were in favour of participating in Bosnia.

The relationship between tolerance for casualties and mission support seems clear: as [Figure 5.1](#) shows, the trend in the latter paralleled the trend in the former.

A correlation between tolerance for casualties and general mission support does not necessarily imply that less acceptance for casualties *causes* a decline in support. In a way, this is a debate about what comes first. Our educated guess is that the reverse is more plausible: because support for the mission declined, tolerance for casualties declined as well. Support for the mission also depends on factors like the goal, the effectiveness and the length of the mission; on the credibility of political leadership and the degree to which people are involved with the situation. This in turn has its impact on people's tolerance for casualties. Of course one can imagine that when there are large numbers of casualties, the effectiveness of the mission will become more unlikely in people's perception. This means there is an interaction between all these factors. Which factor will be decisive for another will vary from one mission to another.

In the next section we will explore some determinants of the support for Dutch participation in the mission in former Yugoslavia. For this we use the survey data of December 1995, just before the NATO troops (IFOR) were stationed in Yugoslavia. This choice is mainly made for practical reasons, namely the variables that are present in this survey. In general, the variables in the different surveys cannot be compared. In the survey of December 1995 we have a variety of variables at hand that could be expected to have an influence on mission support. At some points we will refer to other surveys, as in the case of sex, age, education and political affiliation. The following variables will be used in the analysis:

Dependent:

- *Participation in peacekeeping mission:* 'To what extent do you agree or disagree with the participation of the Dutch armed forces in the NATO forces that will be stationed in former Yugoslavia?' (strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree).

Table 5.3 Support for Dutch military participation in the UNPROFOR mission in former Yugoslavia (in %)

<i>Date</i>	<i>Favour</i>	<i>Oppose</i>	<i>No opinion/ Don't know</i>	<i>N; survey-method</i>	<i>Source</i>
Aug. 92	87	8	5	not available	AVRO/NIPO ^a
April 93	88	8	4	not available	AVRO/NIPO ^a
Dec. 93	68	14	19	1135; face-to-face	SMK/NIPO ^b
Dec. 94	53	26	21	1005; face-to-face	SMK/NIPO ^b
June 95	41	26	34	709; face-to-face	SMK/NIPO ^c
July 95	33	57	10	505; telephone	RTL/INTOMART ^d
Aug. 95	62	18	20	829; face-to-face	SMK/SVV/NIPO ^b
Sept. 95	52	30	19	1035; telephone	SMK/Telepanel Marktonderzoek ^e
Dec. 95	69	12	20	933; face-to-face	SMK/NIPO ^f
Dec. 95	71	12	17	505; telephone	NOS ^g
Mean	66	17	18		

Text of the questions:

a 06/08/1992 and 04/1993, AVRO/NIPO

'Do you think that in the case of a military intervention (in Yugoslavia) Dutch soldiers should be deployed as well?'

b 20/12/1993, 03/12/1994, 22/08/95 SMK/SVV/NIPO

'To what extent do you agree or disagree with the participation of the Dutch armed forces in the UN mission in former Yugoslavia?' (strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree)

c 24/06/1995, SMK/NIPO

'To what extent do you agree or disagree with the participation of the Dutch armed forces in the UN mission in former Yugoslavia?' (strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree)

d 12/07/1995, RTL/INTOMART

'Tension is building up in Bosnia. This afternoon the NATO has executed air-attacks on the Serbs around Srebrenica. The Serbs have invaded Srebrenica this afternoon. The Dutch UN soldiers have retreated to the UN headquarters in Srebrenica. Do you think the Dutch soldiers should stay in Bosnia to keep the fighting parties separated or do you think they should not stay?'

e 03/09/1995, Telepanel Marktonderzoek

'To what extent do you agree with the following statement: the Netherlands should continue contributing troops to the UN peace-force in the former Yugoslavia, if the UN ask the Netherlands for it' (agree, more agree than disagree, neither agree nor disagree, more disagree than agree, disagree)

f 19/12/1995, SMK/NIPO

'To what extent do you agree or disagree with the participation of the Dutch armed forces in the NATO forces that will be stationed in former Yugoslavia?' (strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, disagree strongly)

g 12/1995, NOS (*Kijk en Luisteronderzoek*)

'The Netherlands should contribute to the NATO peace-force that should see to it that the peace-agreement in Bosnia will be fulfilled.' (Agree, partly agree/disagree, disagree, don't know/no answer)

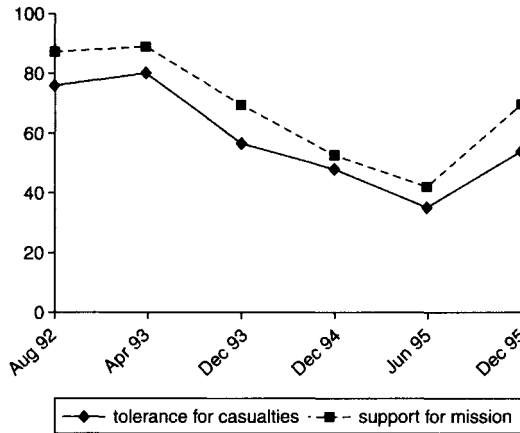


Figure 5.1 Trends in mission support and tolerance of casualties in the Netherlands.

Independent:

- *Casualties*: ‘Do you find the use of force acceptable or unacceptable if there is a good chance that Dutch soldiers will be killed or wounded?’ (coded 1=unacceptable, 2=acceptable);
- *Use of force*: ‘To what extent do you agree or disagree if the NATO troops impose the implementation of the peace-agreement by force?’ (strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree);
- *Likelihood of success*: ‘Do you consider it likely or unlikely these troops will succeed in ensuring the fulfilment of the peace agreement?’ (very unlikely, unlikely, neither unlikely nor likely, likely, very likely);
- *Importance of armed forces*: ‘How important do you find the armed forces for the Netherlands?’ (very unimportant, rather unimportant, not important/not unimportant, rather unimportant, very unimportant);
- *Task of armed forces*: ‘Which of the following tasks do you consider the most important for the Dutch armed forces?’ (defence of national and allied territory (35 per cent), world-wide crisis management (23 per cent) or humanitarian assistance (34 per cent));
- *Age*: (coded 1=18–24 years, 2=25–34, 3=35–44, 4=45–54, 5=55–64, 6=65 years and older);
- *Sex*: (coded 1=male, 2=female);
- *Education* (1=primary education, 2=primary vocational training, 3=lower general secondary education, 4=secondary vocational training, 5=higher general secondary education+pre-university education, 6=higher vocational training, 7=university);
- *Political affiliation*: we distinguish the Christian democratic party (CDA), the social democratic party (PvdA), the right-wing liberal party (VVD), the left-

wing liberal party (D66), the leftist green party (GroenLinks); a rightist side consisting of the small religious parties; other parties and non-voters.

Table 5.4 Determinants of peacekeeping missions. Uncontrolled and controlled regression-effects on support for Dutch military participation in IFOR, December 1995

	<i>Uncontrolled</i>		<i>Controlled</i>	
	<i>b</i>	β	<i>b</i>	β
Constant				
<i>Sex</i>		-0.13*	1.65*	-0.2
<i>Age</i>		-0.09*		-0.10*
<i>Education</i>		0.12*		0.07*
<i>Political affiliation:</i>				
CDA	0.23		0.13	
PVDA	0.16		0.14	
VVD	0.39*		0.25*	
D66	0.27		0.19	
GroenLinks	0.14		0.09	
Religious	-0.04		-0.11	
Other parties/ non-voters	0.05		-0.006	
<i>Most important task of armed forces:</i>				
Defence	-0.46*		-0.37*	
Crisis management	-0.47*		-0.15	
Humanitarian assistance	-0.64*		-0.33	
<i>Importance of armed forces</i>		0.21*		0.19*
<i>Casualties</i>		0.27*		0.10*
<i>Likelihood of success</i>		0.45*		0.37*
<i>Use of force</i>		0.30*		0.13*
<i>R² (adjusted)</i>			33%	

*=significant at 0.05 level.

We will use linear regression analysis to explore the relationships between these variables.³ Table 5.4 shows the results.

First, we look at the direct effect of the variables. It appears that women were less supportive of Dutch military participation in IFOR than men. People in the older age groups were less supportive of Dutch military participation than younger people. As regards education, it appears that the higher educated were more in support of Dutch military participation. The effects of age and education are generally found. Those in older age groups and people with a lower education are usually less supportive of Dutch military participation in military missions (see Table A.1 in Appendix).

Women are usually less in favour of military participation in missions (Table A.2), but this does not necessarily imply that they are more against it. Rather, they are over-represented in the response category 'don't know'. With regard to tolerance for casualties, there is a big difference between men and women (Table A.2). Men are much more inclined than women to accept possible casualties among Dutch soldiers.

People who would vote for the right-wing liberal party (VVD) were more in support of Dutch military participation than people who would vote for the leftist green party (*GroenLinks*). This has not always been the case. Before December 1995 the reverse was true: *GroenLinks* voters were more in support of Dutch military participation than VVD voters (see Table A.4 in Appendix). What has brought about this change? Maybe these responses mirror the standpoint of the different political parties. Maybe the fact that IFOR would be under NATO command, with a mandate other than the mission under UN command UNPROFOR, caused this change. In Table A.5 in the Appendix we see that tolerance for casualties among *GroenLinks* voters also was above average except in December 1995. Again support for the mission and tolerance for casualties seem to go hand in hand.

People who consider 'crisis management' to be the most important task of the armed forces agree more with Dutch military participation in IFOR than people considering 'defence' or 'humanitarian aid' to be the most important task. Also the more importance given to the armed forces, the more agreement with Dutch participation in IFOR. Again, the direction of the relationship is not clear. Perhaps people who consider the armed forces to be important anyway are, therefore, more in support of the mission. Or, because of the mission, the armed forces become more important in the perception of people. The same can be said about the question as to which task people consider the most important.

The positive effect of tolerance for casualties means that people who accepted possible casualties were more supportive of military participation. As the agreement with the imposition by force of the implementation of the peace agreement grew stronger, support was generally higher. Finally, a higher perceived likeliness of success goes together with higher support for Dutch military participation. These variables do not, as stated before, necessarily *cause* higher or lower support, but the correlation is present.

After controlling for other variables, the effects of age, education, importance of the armed forces, tolerance for casualties, agreement with the use of force and the perceived chance of success remain. Also, VVD voters remain more in favour than *GroenLinks* voters and people who consider defence the most important task remain more opposed than people who consider crisis management the most important task.

The strongest influence is that of the perceived chance of success, followed by the importance of the armed forces, then the extent to which one agrees with the use of force, and, finally, the acceptance of casualties. Effects of the independent variables are controlled for the other independents. This means for instance that

the effect of age cannot be explained by smaller tolerance for casualties among older age groups.

If tolerance for casualties were the only independent variable, the percentage of variance explained would be 7 per cent. After adding the other independent variables the explained variance increases to 33 per cent. Tolerance for casualties was accompanied on the individual level by support for Dutch military participation in Bosnia, but other variables also influence support. And these effects do not disappear because of lower or higher tolerance for casualties.

Mission support and mission success

It is not too far-fetched to expect that the *success* of a mission affects both variables: tolerance for casualties and mission support. To be more precise, the implication is that on the *individual level* perceived mission success will affect support for mission participation and tolerance for possible casualties. This sounds quite logical: public support will be lower to the same degree that mission accomplishment seems more difficult in advance. In line with that, the acceptance of casualties will decline when the prospects for success are perceived as dim. In the survey of December 1995 the following question was phrased: 'Do you think it probable or improbable that NATO troops will succeed in implementing the peace agreement?' This question indicates a perception of the chance of success ascribed to IFOR, UNPROFOR's follow-up mission. [Table 5.5](#) clearly suggests that the correlation between tolerance for casualties and mission support depends to a degree on perceived mission success.

When we look at the group of respondents who think the likelihood of success is low, more than half of the people who do not accept casualties are against Dutch participation. Among those who accept casualties, slightly more than a quarter are against participation. Among the neutral group, more than 80 per cent of those who do not accept casualties are in favour of mission participation. When we look at those who think success is probable, mission support is almost 100 per cent, regardless of tolerance for casualties. In the latter case there is no significant correlation between mission support and tolerance for casualties.

To conclude this part of the analysis: the expressed tolerance for (possible) casualties correlates with people's support for Dutch military participation in Bosnia. On the individual level the results support the idea that sensitivity to casualties becomes less important as the aim of the mission looks easier to achieve and it is probable that troops will fulfil their task. So both tolerance and support are dependent on the perceived success of the mission. Of course all variables are interdependent: if tolerance for casualties decreases, the perceived chance of success is likely to decline as well. And with a decline in perceived mission success, tolerance for casualties will also decline. Support will probably evolve accordingly.

Table 5.5 Relationship between tolerance for casualties and support for Dutch military participation in the mission in Bosnia, controlled for the expected success of the mission, December 1995 (% of those in support)

	<i>Casualties unacceptable</i>	<i>Casualties acceptable</i>	<i>Correlation</i>
Chance improbable (27%)	41	73	0.32*
Chance neutral (30%)	83	94	0.17*
Chance probable (43%)	97	95	-0.045

*=significant at 0.01 level.

IFOR: a quiet mission

Following the chronology of events in former Yugoslavia, with the last question we move to the next phase. In terms of acronyms for the forces: UNPROFOR made way for IFOR. Throughout 1996 the latter mission has been closely followed through a number of surveys. In this paragraph we will analyse part of the data from these surveys, especially with respect to risks, its micro-dimensions and its macro-context. As said above, this part of the chapter is more descriptive and interpretative, in comparison to the empirical test of the second section.

Right from the start, participating in IFOR received ample public backing. But why again were we there? 'What is the main justification for the participation of Dutch troops [in IFOR]?' 'Dutch interest' said 2 per cent; 'European security': 24 per cent; 'NATO obligations': 13 per cent; 'human rights in Bosnia': 50 per cent. ('No justification' and 'don't know': 11 per cent.) It is a telling answer pattern, revealing as much about the justification that apparently does not count ('Dutch interest') as about the one that clearly prevails ('human rights'). Taken together, the other two justifications, 'European security' and 'NATO obligations', count for almost 40 per cent of the answers. This is not a percentage to be overlooked. Besides, these categories are related implicitly to national interests. Still, the impression that idealistic motives for participating in IFOR dominate seems to be warranted. This fits in with the general priorities ascribed to present-day armed forces, as hinted at in the Introduction. Put another way: in the eyes of the public it is *not* primarily for reasons of classical national defence that troops are being deployed in Bosnia.

Bringing to justice those suspected of having grossly violated human rights, to the point of 'ethnic cleansing' and genocide, has been part of the Dayton agreement. The active pursuit of suspects, however, was not within the IFOR mandate. As [Table 5.6](#) suggests, public opinion in the Netherlands was rather divided about this constraint.

In April 1996 most people (49 per cent versus 41 per cent) said they could understand why IFOR did not chase Karadzic and company. In July percentages

Table 5.6 Trace war criminals (in %)

Question: 'It is not part of the mandate of the troops in Bosnia to actively trace persons who are suspected of war crimes. What do you think of this restriction?'

	<i>April 1996</i> <i>N = 756</i> <i>(face-to-face)</i>	<i>July 1996</i> <i>N = 835</i> <i>(face-to-face)</i>	<i>November 1996</i> <i>N = 761</i> <i>(face-to-face)</i>
Understandable	49	41	44
Not understandable	41	50	44
Don't know	10	9	12

were reversed: 50 per cent versus 41 per cent could *not* understand this policy. Eventually, in November opinions were perfectly split: 44 per cent on both sides. Evidently, the public was strongly ambivalent about something that from a human rights standpoint should be done, but that for other reasons was given low priority. Decision makers feared the effects of arrests on the fragile peace process in Bosnia, but also, in line with earlier moments during the conflict, were afraid that their own constituencies would not tolerate casualties. As for the latter argument, they may have been overcautious (as they were before). In November when IFOR had almost completed its mission, when asked whether the 'active pursuit of suspected war criminals should be part of the SFOR mandate, even if the lives of NATO soldiers were at risk', 30 per cent of Dutch public opinion said 'definitely yes', 33 per cent 'probably yes', 15 per cent 'probably no', 9 per cent 'definitely no', while 13 per cent 'did not know'. Of course, this leaves the question open as to whether it would be wise to do so in view of the peace process. Decision makers have been wrestling with both arguments, as well as political effects and home-front morale. Our prediction is that public opinion would applaud the arresting of Bosnian-Serbian top dogs, even if a number of NATO soldiers were (fatally) harmed, because the event as such would be considered a success in terms of human rights.

Risks

Given the way IFOR evolved, practically from start to finish, it comes as no surprise that a majority of the Dutch people considered the risks soldiers were running as 'acceptable'. In April 1996, however, the moment when we came up with this question, the majority was a bit larger than in November of that year. The numbers considering risks 'acceptable' dropped from 66 per cent in April to 56 per cent in November. The minority considering risks as 'not acceptable' grew proportionally: from 25 per cent to 34 per cent. IFOR did suffer some casualties, especially because of incidents with mines and car accidents. A number of Dutch soldiers were wounded, but none of them fatally. It is possible that incidents and

Table 5.7 Biggest risk for soldiers in Bosnia (in %)

<i>Question: 'What do you think causes the biggest risk for soldiers in Bosnia?'</i>		
	<i>April 1996</i> <i>N = 756 (face-to-face)</i>	<i>November 1996</i> <i>N = 761 (face-to-face)</i>
Mines	41	32
Stress	21	29
Combat accidents	15	18
Accidents	12	10
Don't know	10	11

accidents such as these did have some impact and can help explain why more people judged risks as not acceptable. It is also possible that ongoing publicity about peacekeeping in general and about the blue helmets of UNPROFOR in particular, generated some extra sensitivity about risks. In this context it is interesting to see how different kinds of risk were assessed by the public, and how this question also did show some change between April and November 1996.

As can be seen in Table 5.7, at both moments the ascribed sequence of risks stayed the same: mines, combat, psychological stress, accidents. 'Mines' however dropped from 41 per cent to 32 per cent as biggest risk, while 'stress' rose from 21 per cent to 29 per cent. The latter finding especially gives some (extra) plausibility to the speculation that debates about post-mission effects of peacekeeping (again: UNPROFOR in particular), may have had some impact. There is also some additional, indirect evidence: in April 48 per cent of public opinion thought Dutch soldiers were 'hardened enough' to cope with 'extreme circumstances', while 35 per cent did not consider them hardened enough. In November these percentages were respectively 43 per cent and 42 per cent. (In both polls 'don't knows' were around 16 per cent.)

Even though the degree (if not the direction) of change is rather similar in these three thematically related questions (acceptable or not, kinds of risk, hardened enough or not) we should beware of overestimating its meaning. Though significant, the difference is relatively small and its explanation can only be speculative. One way or the other, risks connected to IFOR did stay limited, and as far as the Dutch soldiers are concerned, there were hardly any accidents receiving high-profile publicity. Taking this into consideration, the least one can say is that the public does not lack risk awareness. Moreover, it appears to have a stock of knowledge at hand which makes sense and which, however weighed, reflects 'realities' of this particular mission as well as of peacekeeping in general.

Opinions about IFOR have confirmed what might be called the public's dedication towards 'new' military missions. While interpreting answer patterns to a number of specific questions we have repeatedly emphasised that public

opinion can be looked upon as informed and consistent, making sense of the realities of peacekeeping in Bosnia during 1996 one way or the other. In a way of course this has been a ‘quiet mission’ which, unlike UNPROFOR, did not suffer major setbacks and which could fulfil most of its mandate without being frustrated, let alone humiliated, by the conflicting parties. From the outside it might look as if the mere presence of IFOR was quite enough to deter any obstruction. Evidently, this smooth implementation of the military side of the peace agreement hardly tested the public’s sustainability to the utmost. Whether the latter would have been tough enough to stand major setbacks, including casualties among NATO troops, remains an open question. Our research, however, suggests again that it would be wrong to underestimate public opinion and to assume that it would necessarily be susceptible to easy and immediate panic. For that to happen its aggregate motivational pattern looks too well knit.

Kosovo: no conclusion

In December 1998 a question was asked that had been formulated in almost the same way six years earlier. Back then it was about Bosnia and the UN, now about Kosovo and NATO: ‘Suppose a military intervention by NATO in Kosovo will be decided upon. Should the Netherlands participate in such an intervention, even when it is almost certain that its own soldiers would be killed or wounded?’ In 1992, 66 per cent of Dutch public opinion had said yes, 20 per cent no, while 14 per cent did not know. In November 1998, 58 per cent answered yes, 26 per cent no, and 16 per cent did not know. This comes as no surprise after the empirical findings we have seen so far. Still, the similarity in the answer pattern is striking. When the intervention started even more people said they would accept casualties. ‘Should the Netherlands go on participating in actions against Yugoslavia, also when casualties occur among its own soldiers?’ ‘Yes’: 67 per cent, ‘no’: 16 per cent, ‘don’t know’: 17 per cent (NIPO, June 1999) (see [Table 5.8](#)). This pattern remained throughout the Kosovo conflict.

Table 5.8 The impact of casualties (in %)

<i>Question: ‘Should the Netherlands go on participating in actions against Yugoslavia, also when casualties occur among its own soldiers?’</i>		
	<i>April 1999</i> <i>N=980</i>	<i>June 1999</i> <i>N=897</i>
Yes	68	67
No	14	16
No opinion	18	17

General mission support was evident and the reason why this is so fits in with another pattern we pointed out. Military intervention for the sake of Kosovo was

looked upon by public opinion as a human rights issue (71 per cent), far more than as a matter of European security (12 per cent), let alone NATO prestige (8 per cent) (NIPO, April 1999).

All in all, the consistency of Dutch public opinion is very evident indeed, from the reasons given for military missions to the risks considered to be acceptable. In reality, to what degree and for how long casualties would actually be accepted cannot be predicted with any kind of certainty. On the one hand, our analysis suggests very strongly that the stereotype of public zero-tolerance is misguided. That is an important conclusion, especially with an eye to decision-making. On the other hand, there also seems hardly a *carte blanche* for casualties, no matter how important the stakes are in terms of human rights. If, for example, risky ground missions had materialised in Kosovo, the perception of their success at short notice would undoubtedly have been a critical factor in sustaining public support, and in the latter's acceptance of casualties.

Discussion

Decision makers have been criticised, especially in the case of former Yugoslavia, for underestimating the sustainability of public opinion. Politicians' perceptions of the latter's 'lack of stomach' seemed to serve as an alibi for non-intervention policies, to such a degree as to create a self-fulfilling prophecy. Earlier analyses of Dutch public opinion with regard to Bosnia as well as in general⁴ suggested that this criticism was justified: as a rule the public did and does *not* react in some kind of volatile and feeble way towards new military missions. Rather, the public's mandate seems to provide room to political and military elites for a (pro-)active posture, risks included. As elsewhere in the domain of international security and military defence, the public can in principle be looked upon as 'rational'. Aim, length and effectiveness of a mission apparently play an important role in the acceptance of casualties. Likewise, credibility, courage and consensus in the political arena do have their impact. This chapter underscores the mission-related part of this argument by showing how support, success and tolerance for casualties interact. It strongly suggests, again,⁵ that there is neither an unconditional zero-tolerance for casualties, nor an irrevocable call for retreat, once the 'first body-bag comes home'.

Generally speaking, we think one should beware of extrapolating back and forth similar public opinion patterns, without taking into consideration the context of very different conflicts, societies and military organisations. Put otherwise, if this chapter adds to the evidence that there is a zero-plus tolerance for casualties among Western publics, we are really talking in the context of present-day military missions, i.e. peacekeeping and peace-enforcing. Likewise, we are talking about military establishments that have become, in the classic words of Morris Janowitz, 'constabulary forces': continuously prepared to act, committed to the minimum use of violence and seeking viable international relations rather than victory.⁶ These are catchwords that elegantly fit post-Cold

War conceptions about intervention and crisis management. More specifically, commitment to the minimum use of (meaningful) force fits civil—military relations, centring on professional militaries and suiting the mood of the public.

Clearly, the latter set of assertions does go beyond the empirical and analytical scope of this chapter. It calls for much more theory and empirical research.

Appendix

Table A.1 Correlations of age and education with mission support and tolerance of casualties

	<i>December 1994</i>	<i>June 1995</i>	<i>August 1995</i>	<i>December 1995</i>
	Support	Support	Support	Support
Age	-0.23*	-0.12*	-0.20*	-0.09*
Education	0.16*	–	0.15*	0.12*

*=significant at 0.05 level.

Table A.2 Mission support by sex (in %)

	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>
<i>December 1993</i>		
Favour	75	61
Oppose	12	12
<i>December 1994</i>		
Favour	58	50
Oppose	28	23
<i>August 1995</i>		
Favour	70	55
Oppose	18	16
<i>December 1995</i>		
Favour	75	62
Oppose	10	13

Table A.3 Tolerance of casualties by sex (in %)

	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>
<i>December 1992</i>		
Acceptable	77	56
Unacceptable	15	25
<i>December 1993</i>		
Acceptable	67	48
Unacceptable	24	33
<i>December 1994</i>		
Acceptable	56	41
Unacceptable	34	43
<i>August 1995</i>		
Acceptable	64	40
Unacceptable	24	33
<i>December 1995</i>		
Acceptable	69	42
Unacceptable	21	41

Table A. 4 Support for UNPROFOR and the beginning of IFOR in former Yugoslavia by political affiliation (in %)

	<i>CDA</i>	<i>PvdA</i>	<i>VVD</i>	<i>D66</i>	<i>GroenLinks</i>	<i>Religious</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Non-voters</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Dec. 1993</i>									
Favour	75	67	68	82	75	67	71	58	68
Oppose	8	14	18	6	11	6	10	19	14
<i>Dec. 1994</i>									
Favour	54	55	56	67	60	52	40	44	53
Oppose	25	25	29	17	26	13	34	29	26
<i>June 1995</i>									
Favour	34	47	42	51	50	55	13	33	40
Oppose	24	17	31	22	21	34	40	28	26
<i>Aug. 1995</i>									
Favour	62	68	58	68	85	82	50	51	62
Oppose	17	15	23	13	10	15	50	17	18
<i>Dec. 1995</i>									
Favour	65	70	83	73	68	66	57	60	69
Oppose	11	10	7	12	11	7	23	15	12

Table A.5 Tolerance of casualties by political affiliation (in %)

	<i>CDA</i>	<i>PvdA</i>	<i>VVD</i>	<i>D66</i>	<i>GroenLinks</i>	<i>Religious</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Non-voters</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Dec. 1993</i>									
Acceptable	58	50	66	71	68	70	60	48	57
Unacceptable	24	34	30	21	22	22	33	33	29
<i>Dec. 1994</i>									
Acceptable	47	45	50	57	59	49	30	45	48
Unacceptable	38	43	39	33	35	38	53	38	39
<i>June 1995</i>									
Acceptable	27	40	40	28	48	48	17	28	34
Unacceptable	53	39	41	52	36	45	53	52	47
<i>Aug. 1995</i>									
Acceptable	53	54	58	57	54	67	63	39	52
Unacceptable	29	32	26	32	39	19	25	29	29
<i>Dec. 1995</i>									
Acceptable	51	57	66	58	47	51	57	45	54
Unacceptable	36	34	24	28	43	33	27	37	33

Notes

- 1 The data mentioned here are derived from annual polls published in the bimonthly *Maatschappij en Krijgsmacht* [Society and Armed Forces].
- 2 In order to make the picture more complete the outcomes of a number of related survey questions are given below: 03/09/1995, *Telepanel Marktonderzoek* 'To what extent do you agree with the following statement: the Netherlands should withdraw all its forces from the former Yugoslavia and should not deliver new troops for missions of the United Nations in the former Yugoslavia?'

Agree	25%
More agree than disagree	16%
Neither agree, nor disagree	18%
More disagree than agree	20%
Disagree	21%

03/09/1995, *Telepanel Marktonderzoek*

'About 100 marines are involved in the operations by the rapid reaction force, that consists mainly of French and British soldiers. These operations are carried out by means of ground weapons. What is your opinion on the deployment of Dutch soldiers in this action by the rapid reaction force?'

Positive	44%
More positive than negative	26%
Neither positive, nor negative	20%
More negative than positive	5%
Negative	4%

19/12/1995, *SMK/NIPO*

'To what extent do you agree or disagree that the NATO forces should use force to enforce the fulfilment of the peace agreement?' (strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, disagree strongly)

Strongly agree	12%
Agree	47%
Neither agree, nor disagree	16%
Disagree	14%
Strongly disagree	3%
No opinion	8%

'Do you consider it likely or unlikely that these troops will succeed in ensuring the fulfilment of the peace agreement?'

Very unlikely	4%
Unlikely	20%
Neither unlikely, nor likely	36%

Likely	35%
Very likely	5%

‘How important do you find the armed forces for the Netherlands?’

Very important	23%
Rather important	43%
Neither important, nor unimportant	14%
Rather unimportant	12%
Very unimportant	6%

- 3 We did a test for linearity for the variables age, education, importance of the armed forces, casualties, use of force and chance to succeed to see if their relationship with the dependent variable could be interpreted as linear. This appeared to be the case. Furthermore, we tested for multicollinearity of the independent variables by using the COLLIN-procedure in SPSS. According to the collinearity-diagnostics we do not have to worry about multicollinearity.
- 4 Van der Meulen (1997b); Everts (1996b, 2000).
- 5 See also Burk (1995); Larson (1996); Mueller (1994).
- 6 Janowitz (1960).

Part II

Public opinion and policy making on the use of force

6

Ireland

Neutrality and the international use of force

Karin Gilland

Introduction: the concept of neutrality

Unlike neutrality in other European countries, Irish neutrality must be understood not so much as a principled response to the geopolitical realities of the Second World War and the Cold War, as a manifestation of sovereignty particularly in the context of relations with Ireland's powerful neighbour Britain.¹ Irish neutrality was the behaviour of a small state anxious to assert itself against a domineering neighbour, from whom Ireland had won its independence as recently as 1922. The character of Irish neutrality since at least the Second World War is contained in the notion of military neutrality. It is a political rather than legal concept that allows Irish governments to take political, ideological and moral stands on international developments, but prevents membership of any military alliance.²

Military neutrality has guided the Irish approach to the international use of force in the post-war era. Its most significant feature in this respect is that it is seen as permitting a strong commitment to the United Nation's (UN) peacekeeping missions. Ireland joined the UN in 1955 and its involvement in peacekeeping began three years later in the Lebanon. Over the 40 odd years of Irish peacekeeping with the UN, neutrality and peacekeeping have been universally considered complementary sources of pride. Unlike other European neutrals, Ireland joined the then European Economic Communities (EEC) as early as 1973.³ The post-Cold War acceleration in European security and defence integration and the new configuration of organisations for regional security in Europe have necessitated a new set of policy responses also from neutral states in the post-Cold War era and many new policy questions have become relevant: is neutrality the best way to achieve goals in the new world order? Will neutrality continue to be complementary to peacekeeping? What, indeed, does neutrality mean in the context of intra-state, ethnic conflict, European integration, and an end to bi-polarity?

Politicians may have been aware of these hard questions for some time. However, the evolution of neutrality in their hands indicates that such awareness

is coupled with a reluctance to debate neutrality critically. Military neutrality is not static: since the end of the Cold War an increasing range of activities has become recognised by policy makers as appropriate for Ireland as a neutral. Yet, despite this evolution, the height of political debate is a virtual cross-party repetition of the mantra ‘this does not have any implications for neutrality’ directed at each other and at the Irish public. Public opinion on neutrality is generally favourable, although the available survey data indicate that ordinary people have a poor grasp of the meaning and implications of neutrality. This is not surprising in view of politicians’ similarly diffuse understanding of it and their long-standing failure to critically examine the mantra behind which they hid from public opinion.

This chapter will open with an account of the political handling of neutrality, with particular emphasis on the changing range of activities that has been deemed complementary with neutrality before and after the end of the Cold War (1989–91). The focus subsequently turns to public opinion, to inquire what, if anything, neutrality means to the general public. These two levels of society are finally considered together. Their interaction is the core of representative democracy, yet these processes are difficult to pinpoint. It is assumed *a priori* that opinion and policy interact dynamically and thereby at least partly constitute each other. The task becomes one of assessing to what extent opinion (policy) affects policy (opinion) relative to other factors in the political and institutional context. The data are not sufficient to make strong claims about the mechanisms through which this occurs. Some sketches can be drawn, however, though they are necessarily suggestive rather than conclusive.

Irish neutrality in a changing international context

The international context in which foreign, security and defence policies are formulated and played out has changed considerably from that of bipolar conflict and tension that characterised the Cold War era. To review the developments that are relevant to Irish neutrality is an effective way of illustrating its flexible nature. There are party differences on neutrality, but the differences tend to be obscured. Fianna Fáil, historically the state’s most dominant party, and the most nationalist among mainstream parties in independent Ireland, is more strongly associated with neutrality. The second biggest party, Fine Gael, has appeared more favourably inclined towards international involvement and alignments, but as will be seen Fine Gael has not always pursued such policies freely.⁴ Despite the rhetoric, neither of these two parties in government has ever pursued anything other than the limited notion of military neutrality. The Labour Party has been highly critical of their handling of neutrality, partly because it took longer to square the circle of neutrality and integration than either Fianna Fáil or Fine Gael. The circle was nevertheless squared relatively soon after Ireland’s 1973 accession to the EEC, and Labour has contributed to military neutrality in several coalition governments (though always as junior coalition partner).

Significantly, Labour has not used its numerous spells in governments as opportunities to pursue a more demanding notion of neutrality than non-membership of military alliances.⁵ The small centre-right Progressive Democrats is a member of the European ELDR party group that favours a single European foreign policy, but this is not seen by the party to necessitate a change of neutrality. The Green Party and Sinn Féin, neither of which can be described in left-right terms, both remain highly critical of integration and its implications for neutrality, which they see as inherently negative.

The history of neutrality

How did Irish political parties arrive at the meanings they attach to neutrality today? In the context of other European neutral countries, Ireland is found at the minimalist end of a continuum that describes different interpretations of neutrality. The history of Irish neutrality from the Second World War explains why this is so. Neutrality became an outward symbol of sovereignty during the war, and in the decades that followed neutrality became intertwined with the national question: independence was still recent, and British rule continued in the six counties of Northern Ireland. Neutrality became a powerful symbol of Irish national identity. Although initially a reactive and pragmatic policy, neutrality took on some of the characteristics of a principle—but not, significantly, a principle based on a philosophy of international relations or international law. On occasion, a politician or political party in government has presented neutrality as a principle, but no government has pursued more than the minimalist notion of military neutrality. As a consequence, the range of activities that is seen as compatible with neutrality is rather wide in Ireland. Compared with Finland and Sweden which abstained from EU membership for over two decades longer than Ireland (significantly, until the end of the Cold War), and the legal basis of neutrality in Austria and Switzerland, there is a certain latitude in determining the meaning of Irish neutrality.⁶ Ireland's defence effort has moreover been relatively small compared to other neutral European states.⁷ The overall consequence is that political elites have been able to respond to international developments and simultaneously sustain the claim that their actions 'protect' neutrality—for one easily gets the impression that neutrality, rather than peace and security, is the object to be safe-guarded.

Neutrality and membership of the EEC

Throughout the Cold War the partition of Ireland was allowed to linger as a cause justifying neutrality (though this argument rarely appeared in official statements); meanwhile, the pressure from NATO to join the Western alliance was minimal.⁸ Because partition was—and is—Ireland's unfinished national question, the links between neutrality and national identity were not dispelled. As European integration appeared on the Irish political agenda in the early 1960s,

there was nevertheless a clear understanding at the highest political level that EEC membership might compromise neutrality.⁹ Notably, this was long before the EEC had any objectives in this area of policy. The Irish application to join the EEC was made without formal reservations about neutrality, and the remainder of the 1960s saw continuous statements of reassurance towards the EEC on this matter. At home, Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael argued that neutrality was not a blanket policy that applied in all circumstances.¹⁰ Labour, the main opponents to the EEC, claimed that membership was the end of neutrality, but this view was given short shrift in the 1972 White Paper *The Accession of Ireland to the European Economic Communities*. It stated categorically that ‘the Treaties of Rome and Paris do not entail any military or defence commitments and no such commitments are involved in Ireland’s acceptance of these treaties’ (Ireland 1972). But as the 1972 referendum on accession came closer, political statements became noticeably more careful and guarded. A certain amount of lip service was almost certainly paid to the European audience throughout the 1960s, but domestically Irish politicians appear to have been aware of the care needed in relation to neutrality if the referendum on accession were to be passed. On a ‘see no evil, hear no evil’ rationale, no military commitment could be envisioned even in the relatively long term, and hence neutrality was not construed as a problem in the 1972 White Paper.

The first decade or so of Irish membership did not restrict the Irish ability to decide on foreign policy, but towards the end of the 1970s some impact of European Political Cooperation (EPC) was visible. EPC provided member states with procedures for discussing and co-ordinating their foreign policy positions, and for acting in concert on matters of foreign policy, when they considered it appropriate. On issues where this was not the case, such as disarmament and decolonisation, Ireland continued to pursue its own goals. In the early 1980s a number of factors made neutrality a salient party conflict issue. At a time of international tension and domestic political instability (manifested in three general elections in an 18-month period in 1981–82), it was suggested that a British withdrawal from Northern Ireland might be possible in exchange for unspecified concessions on neutrality. During this time, Fianna Fáil was at times closer to Labour’s maximalist view of neutrality than the military neutrality formula that Fianna Fáil had shared with Fine Gael for some time. A Fianna Fáil—Fine Gael competition for domestic consumption as to who was the ‘most neutral’ ensued, involving critical examinations of each others’ credentials as guardians of neutrality (while the Labour Party argued that neither was suitable for the job). Yet, neither party responded to the suggestion (endorsed by Labour) that neutrality should be in the constitution (Keatinge 1984:29–32).

The Irish handling of the Falklands War demonstrates military neutrality in action at this time. At the outset Irish officialdom denounced Argentina and, in the interest of EEC solidarity, approved economic sanctions. As the agreement about sanctions expired Ireland (and Italy) did not renew it; because as a neutral Ireland would not take part in economic sanctions that were part of an overall

campaign including the use of force. The Community ranks were broken, as Irish political parties could not afford to be seen in their own country to compromise neutrality.

The Cold War made NATO the undisputed location for West European security; and therefore the codification of the EPC under the auspices of the European treaties made no reference to defence. After some controversy a referendum was conducted in order to ratify the Single Act in Ireland. On the campaign trail the opportunity for Ireland to promote 'its' values under the proposed treaty amendments was highlighted, while infringements on neutrality were denied (Ireland 1986). Both neutrality and integration were popular with the general public, and could ostensibly continue as if unrelated to each other. Nevertheless, the ratification delivered by the Fianna Fáil government to the Italian presidency of the European Council subsequent to the referendum was supplemented by a declaration which made clear the limitations of demands that could legitimately be made upon a neutral by its European partners.¹¹

The end of the Cold War and its aftermath

Nonetheless, in the years that followed, the changing international context brought pressures for a reassessment of Ireland's situation. The end of the Cold War in 1989–91 led to new foreign policy considerations world-wide, and though its origins are unrelated to the Cold War structures of international politics, Irish neutrality began to evolve. The range of permissible activities has widened as a result. This could be observed already in the Gulf War of 1990–91. In a distinct break with previous behaviour, the Irish government (Fianna Fáil and the Progressive Democrats) approved the use of force by the international community. The facilities at Shannon Airport were used for refuelling Allied aircraft, which the government denied was an act of war. This has been called a 'defining event' (Keatinge 1992:82), a reinterpretation of the Irish commitment to the UN. Fine Gael supported the government, which faced criticism from the parties of the left. The criticism grew stronger when the Minister for Foreign Affairs 'observed' a ministerial meeting of the Western European Union (WEU) in relation to the EC's involvement in the former Yugoslavia.¹² As the international context changed, so did the meaning of neutrality. By implication, Irish contributions to the international use of force changed, too.

Ireland and the European security architecture

The end of the Cold War also led to an impetus for European integration, while NATO was grappling with the new role it had to find for itself. In November 1993 EPC was replaced by the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) under the Maastricht Treaty, this time including the word 'defence'. However, the limits of the politically possible were also recognised, and CFSP's potentially far-reaching implications were curtailed by a level of ambiguity that challenged

neither NATO's standing as the primary regional organisation for security, nor Ireland's neutrality.¹³ On 9 June 1992, in the context of the Maastricht Treaty referendum campaign, the leaders of Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, Labour and the Progressive Democrats promised a referendum on neutrality prior to any future changes to it. The Maastricht referendum passed with ease; yet again the political parties had argued convincingly that integration had no implications for neutrality.¹⁴ This formula worked also in the referendum on the Amsterdam Treaty (1998), where the European partners agreed to a 'progressive framing of a common defence policy'.¹⁵ In real terms, Amsterdam brought the so-called Petersberg Tasks (humanitarian and rescue tasks, peacekeeping, and tasks of combat forces in crisis management (including peace enforcement)) under the auspices of the treaties, to be carried out by the WEU.¹⁶ To diminish fears that neutrality was on a slippery slope the Petersberg Tasks, bar peace enforcement, were said to be 'fully in line with our commitment to UN peacekeeping'¹⁷ and neutrality was therefore unaffected by the new Treaty.¹⁸ Some went so far as to claim that Amsterdam effectively enshrined neutrality in the constitution for the first time.¹⁹ This was in stark contrast to the Green Party and Sinn Féin, who claimed that Ireland was sleepwalking into a military alliance,²⁰ and that the Treaty clearly undermined neutrality.²¹

Between Maastricht and Amsterdam the first Irish White Paper on Foreign Policy was published (1996). It is notable that this, the most comprehensive statement on foreign policy in Irish history, affords neutrality a prominent place in Ireland's approach to its external environment. The White Paper is characteristic of the Irish debate in that perceived threats are threats to neutrality rather than to peace and security. However, it does not rule out peace enforcement as a matter of principle, but makes it a question of organisational mandates and structures.²²

Simultaneously, Ireland's involvement in UN-sanctioned missions has taken a new turn through the removal of the limitation on Irish peace-keeping personnel to partake only in 'duties of a police character'.²³ This facilitated Irish participation in UNOSOM II, the UN's Somalian peace-enforcement mission, and attracted only minimal political opposition, from the small Democratic Left.²⁴ In 1997, Irish peacekeeping reached another important juncture, in the NATO-led peacekeeping mission SFOR in the former Yugoslavia. SFOR's peacekeeping mandate was complemented with peace-enforcement equipment, should it be required.²⁵ Regional subcontracting may be the predominant model for future UN missions and, to be able to participate in such missions, Ireland must have a relationship with NATO despite neutrality.

Ireland and NATO

Irish participation in SFOR means that a *de facto* relationship already exists, but the Partnership for Peace (PfP) emerged in the late 1990s as a context in which this relationship can be formalised. PfP requires countries to sign an individually

formulated agreement with NATO to undertake joint ventures, suited to the level and degree of commitment of each individual country. The commitment concerns consultation and preparation for undertaking joint missions in peacekeeping, air and sea rescue, and humanitarian missions, but does not extend to undertaking missions *per se*. While Fine Gael has promoted PfP since the mid-1990s, Fianna Fáil characterised it as ‘second-hand membership of NATO’²⁶ and as incompatible with neutrality (therefore requiring a referendum, should PfP ever be seriously considered) until early 1999. At this time, Fianna Fáil took a policy U-turn on PfP, and the Fianna Fáil—Progressive Democrat government maintained that PfP was not a military alliance, that participating in it would in fact affirm the basic principles of Irish foreign policy, that no referendum would be required to sign an agreement with NATO, and that changing international circumstances—now with an emphasis on international peacekeeping and conflict resolution—require adaptation:

Those of us who are attached to the maintenance of meaningful Irish neutrality must be prepared to adapt it to new situations. Partnership for Peace will allow us to keep credible, viable and constructive neutrality, which I think has always been the character of our foreign policy.²⁷

A flexible concept

There is both change and continuity in this statement. PfP is presented as a new way of pursuing and nurturing neutrality, not as a threat to it. Other European neutrals see PfP and neutrality as compatible, so there is nothing unique about this. In the Irish case, however, the traditional reluctance to ask what neutrality means, entails and prohibits seems to be particularly strong. In contrast, Swedish and Finnish foreign policy discourse now uses the term neutrality with serious qualifications, because it is no longer felt to describe accurately the current policies.²⁸

Neutrality in Ireland is clearly a flexible concept that can be imbued with different meanings in different circumstances (which is probably not a uniquely Irish feature). Often, the meaning appears to depend on whether a party is in government or in opposition. However, the value of neutrality *per se* is rarely questioned publicly. Whether it is a means or an end, or both, remains unclear. If it is a means, what is it supposed to achieve? If it is a goal, what is the value of it? Politicians hesitate to raise these questions, fearful that they might offend the notion that neutrality is superior to all thinkable alternatives. Critical questions are therefore rare and there are, *ipso facto*, no thinkable alternatives. Irish troops now participate in models of peacekeeping that diverge significantly from the traditional UN model. PfP is no longer viewed as a threat to neutrality by the mainstream political parties, but as a normal part of a neutral’s commitments and activities. In summary, the post-Cold War meaning of being a neutral state appears to be contained in the semblance of a foreign, security and defence policy, which

in the last resort is independent. This may or may not entail a commitment of troops for the international use of force, but if it does, then that decision must be the prerogative of the Irish government. To be neutral is to stand outside *permanent* military alliances, with which Ireland can nonetheless interact on a frequent, regular and institutionalised basis.

A wider range of organisations and activities has become available since 1989–91, and policy makers have been reactive rather than proactive in their handling of how Ireland should relate to these organisations and activities. That neutrality is a defining feature of Irish foreign, security, and defence policy is often assumed; but does the assumption withstand scrutiny? After all, neutrality has been described as ‘non-belligerence at best, and at worst an exercise in self-delusion’ (Salmon 1989, cited in Keatinge and Laffan 1996:27). In accordance with the Irish constitution, the Dáil decides how and when Ireland becomes involved internationally.²⁹ This is done on an ad hoc, case by case basis, and a formal end to the policy of neutrality would not as a matter of course alter either the substance or the procedure of the decision making. This begs an additional question: if neutrality is a form without apparent substance, why the collective inability among politicians and political parties to ask critical questions about neutrality? The remainder of this chapter suggests that a general fear of public opinion is the reason behind the unwillingness to do so.

Public opinion: neutrality and peacekeeping

As was explained in [Chapter 1](#), views on the quality and suitability of public opinion in the making of foreign policy have focused on four criteria: the level of knowledge, and its stability, consistency and rationality. The case of Ireland is no exception to the rule that the problems of research into these characteristics are compounded by the presence of measurement problems that always qualify claims about the public’s wishes and preferences.

What would we expect to find if Irish public opinion is stable, consistent, rational, and based on high levels of knowledge? We would need to know, first of all, whether people are sufficiently interested and concerned about the international use of force to have formed an opinion (*knowledge*). Then we might look at a time-series to see whether opinion appears *stable* over time, at least at the aggregate level (though this may hide individuallevel instability). In parallel, it would be necessary to consider whether any new information or changes with implications for values underlying public opinion had occurred during the period in question. If so, then a change in opinion to reflect the new information’s effect on the values would be expected. If not, the expectation would be for no changes over time in opinion (*rationality*). Finally, if our data demonstrated such excellent qualities, we would also expect to find that responses to different survey items would show that respondents were able to recognise what states of the world are complementary and contradictory with each other (*consistency*, clearly related to *knowledge*).

The policy of neutrality is the conceptual framework within which the international use of force as a political issue exists in Ireland; but is neutrality an underlying value in the usual sense, as discussed in [Chapter 1](#)? At the level of policy makers, the answer is clearly ‘yes’. Among the public, this also appears to be true. At least one author has argued at length that Ireland has never been neutral in the proper sense of that term (Salmon 1989). However, data show that in the public mind Ireland is definitely committed to the idea of neutrality. Survey respondents have been asked in a number of different ways how they feel about neutrality and its potential alternatives. Five surveys between 1991 and 1996 show that anywhere between 55 and 69 per cent of respondents want to retain it.

The five surveys include two that use the same question wording, thus yielding a total of four differently worded questions. Stability is thus hard to estimate. All question wordings include the word ‘neutrality/neutral’, but only two refer explicitly to a ‘common European defence union’ as an alternative (surveys 1 and 3). These two did not have noticeably different response rates than the other three: 64 and 59 per cent. Surveys 2 and 4 moreover offer response categories with explicit mentions of common defence arrangements, and elicited 55 and 65 per cent, respectively, in favour of neutrality. Notably, the survey that elicited the highest level of support for neutrality (survey 5) is the only one that makes no mention whatever of alternatives to neutrality.

Questions about specific conflicts, however, show that [Table 6.1](#)’s relatively low levels of support for wider European security arrangements may be misleading. When asked ‘Currently, the world is worried about the crisis in the Persian Gulf provoked by the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq. Please tell me if you tend to agree/disagree that, in order to deal effectively with such crises, the European Community should...’ (Eurobarometer 34 (1990)), 57 per cent of Irish respondents agreed that the Community should speed up its political, economic and military integration; 59 per cent agreed that it should form a common defence organisation; and 40 per cent agreed that a European rapid deployment force should be set up. It is true that the question did not specifically ask whether Ireland should participate in these potential activities, but this is nonetheless an indication of some inconsistency.

The meaning of neutrality

The indication grows into a suspicion if we turn to survey items on the meaning of neutrality. The question ‘What does neutrality mean to you?’ was asked in 1985 and 1992, with some interesting results (see [Table 6.2](#)).

In 1985, 25 per cent thought it meant ‘no involvement in wars, no nuclear weapons here, not involved in Second World War’. This figure had increased to 35 per cent in 1992. The response category ‘no military alliance, not in NATO’ lost 12 percentage points and went from 23 per cent in 1985 to 11 per cent in 1992. In fact, in both years of polling there were more people who did not know

Table 6.1 Support for neutrality in the 1990s (in %)

<i>Response</i>	<i>1991</i> <i>1</i>	<i>1991</i> <i>2</i>	<i>1992</i> <i>3</i>	<i>1992</i> <i>4</i>	<i>1996</i> <i>5</i>
<i>Keep neutrality:</i>					
Remain neutral/stay out of EC defence	64	29	59	55	69
Remain neutral in all circumstances	*	36	*	*	*
<i>Drop neutrality:</i>					
Change policy of neutrality	*	*	*	*	20
Drop neutrality/join EC defence/join political union	25	24	*	19	*
Drop neutrality/join in wider European security	*	*	*	20	*
Become part of common European defence union	*	*	28	*	*
<i>No opinion:</i>	10	11	14	5	11

Text of the questions:

1 'Should Ireland drop its neutrality to take part in a common defence policy in the EC (European Community)?' (*MRBI/Irish Times* 3/1/91).

2 'Which of the following statements comes closest to your opinion on neutrality?' (*MRBI/Irish Times* 15–16/4/91).

3 'Which of these two options would you personally prefer: that Ireland remains neutral or that Ireland becomes part of a common European defence union?' (*Lansdowne/Sunday Press* 29/5–8/6/92).

4 'Which of these statements comes nearest to your own opinion on neutrality?' (*MRBI/Irish Times* 8/6/92).

5 'There has been some discussion of Ireland's policy of neutrality. Do you think Ireland should maintain its policy of neutrality or should it be changed?' (*MRBI/Irish Times* 24–25/9/96).

what neutrality meant to them than people who associated it with military alliances (31 and 21 per cent, respectively).³⁰ Nonetheless, only 6 and 8 per cent thought neutrality would mean nothing in a nuclear war, that neutrality in fact does not exist. The same numbers were recorded for 'independent, safe, peaceful, Irish'.

What can be learnt from these tables? If we turn to [Table 6.1](#) first, all figures show clear majority support for neutrality. However, we might ask whether a 14 percentage point difference (69–55) is a sign of stability or instability. On the one hand, there may be an underlying, stable level of support that the polling techniques fail to establish conclusively. On the other hand, the figures may reflect real fluctuation in support for neutrality. As a crystallised meaning of neutrality among the public does not exist, instability may be expected; however, there is also evidence of a great deal of stability. This view is substantiated by data relating to the Gulf War and the conflict in Bosnia.

Table 6.2 The meaning of neutrality (in %)

<i>Response</i>	<i>1985</i>	<i>1992</i>
No involvement in wars/no nuclear weapons here/ not involved in WWII	25	35
No military alliances/not in NATO	23	11
Independent, safe, peaceful, Irish	6	8
Should be in NATO, back EEC	4	6
Would mean nothing in nuclear war, does not exist	6	8
Don't know	31	21

Table 6.3 Public opinion on the Gulf War

<i>Response</i>	<i>% agreeing</i>
Ireland should provide troops for UN peacekeeping force in the Gulf	75
Sending troops to help US and its Allies	35
Ireland should align with US/Allies to resolve crisis	35
Ireland should participate in UN military effort to force Iraqi withdrawal	34
Ireland should NOT be neutral in the Gulf	29
Ireland should give further help to the UN if asked	42
Refuelling US aircraft	54
Efforts of the US/Allies to force Iraq from Kuwait	67
Provision of financial aid for US/Allies	36

Source: Marsh (1992:5); MRBI/Irish Times 8/6/92.

Table 6.3 shows that 67 per cent of survey respondents agreed with the Allies' efforts to force Iraq from Kuwait. Curiously, a slightly higher number of people, 75 per cent, thought that Ireland should provide peace-keeping troops. The figure dropped to 34 per cent as to whether Ireland should participate in UN military efforts to expel Iraq from Kuwait. The 75–34 per cent difference indicates some awareness of the distinction between peacekeeping and peace enforcement; 54 per cent furthermore agreed with the government policy of refuelling aircraft at Shannon, and 36 per cent agreed with financial aid to the Allies. Only 29 per cent, the lowest percentage of all the response categories, agreed that Ireland should not be neutral. In other words, 71 per cent of respondents thought Ireland should be neutral but still agreed with Irish participation in one of a range of peace-restorative capacities in the Gulf. Asked whether Irish troops should engage in peacekeeping (as in the Lebanon) or in peace enforcement (as in Somalia), 33 per cent responded positively to peace enforcement whereas 56 per cent did so to peacekeeping (11 per cent did not know).³¹ The data are not as detailed in relation to Bosnia. 71 per cent of respondents agreed that Irish troops should be part of NATO-led peace-enforcement efforts (18 per cent disagreed).³² This figure is comparable to the 75 per cent support for Irish participation in the

Table 6.4 Neutrality and European integration (in %)

<i>Question</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>No opinion</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>
1	7	33	37	20	3
2	7	27	33	29	4
3	*	16	*	*	*
4	*	18	*	*	*
5	*	34	*	*	*

Text of the questions:

1 Will the Single European Act 'bring us close to joining NATO, the military alliance?' (MRBI/Irish Times 14/5/87).

2 Will a yes vote in the Single European Act referendum 'weaken our neutrality?' (MRBI/Irish Times 14/5/87).

3 What do you feel are the major issues which will be involved in the referendum on the Maastricht Treaty to be held on June 18?: 'Neutrality' (MRBI/Irish Times 8/6/92).

4 Why will you vote against [the Maastricht Treaty]?: 'Will weaken neutrality' (MKBI/Irish Times 8/6/92).

5 Why did you vote no against the Amsterdam Treaty?: 'Neutrality' (RTE/Prime Time exit poll, 22/5/98).

Source: Irish Opinion Poll Archive, http://www.tcd.ie/Political_Science/cgi/

Gulf War effort, thus indicating some aggregate-level stability and consistency in public opinion. However, it is notable that while the Gulf War data registered that support for peace enforcement is much lower than support for peacekeeping, no such distinction appears to have been made by respondents to the Bosnia question.

Neutrality and European integration

European integration has also generated data that help complete (or complicate) the picture of Irish opinion. Irish polling organisations have collected data at the Single European Act, Maastricht, and Amsterdam referenda. The data generated at the times of the referenda (1987, 1992, and 1998, respectively) (see Table 6.4) show that the mass public have no clear view of how integration affects neutrality despite the solid mainstream party insistence that there are no implications. In the run-up to the 1987 referendum a poll asked whether the Single European Act would 'bring us closer to joining NATO, the military alliance'.³³ A total of 40 per cent of respondents agreed (33 per cent) or strongly agreed (7 per cent) that this would be the case. At the time, there were no significant European-level developments of this kind, and viewed in this context the 40 per cent figure is remarkably high. Almost as many, 37 per cent, had no opinion (which might be a reflection on the referendum campaign, which has been characterised as unsuccessful, non-stimulating, and unfocused (Gallagher 1988)); 20 per cent and 3 per cent, respectively, disagreed or strongly disagreed

with the statement. Another survey question in the same poll inquired whether ‘a “yes” vote in this referendum will weaken our neutrality’: 7 and 27 per cent strongly agreed or agreed; 33 per cent had no opinion; and 29 and 4 per cent disagreed or strongly disagreed. A sizeable section of the Irish population was apparently suspicious of the political parties’ denials that integration infringed neutrality; given the poor standard of the campaigns, opinion about the Act’s implications for neutrality may have been based on a distrust of politicians rather than knowledge of the issues at hand.

Nonetheless, in relation to the 1992 Maastricht Treaty referendum only 16 per cent of respondents felt that Ireland’s neutrality was the major issue of the referendum, and 18 per cent cited neutrality as the reason why they intended to vote against the Treaty.³⁴ The 18 per cent had turned into 34 per cent by 1998.³⁵ This is entirely what might be expected in view of the accelerated development of an international political identity for the EU in this time period. It demonstrates rationality and knowledge in public opinion: on the basis of new information and developments pertaining to neutrality, aggregate public opinion moved against that which constituted a threat to the value in question, neutrality.³⁶ An additional factor may be the effects of the Referendum Act (1998), a new regime of rules governing referenda which has the effect of promoting minority and peripheral views at the expense of mainstream views. In the case of neutrality, it meant that the persistent claim that integration did not affect neutrality was challenged by an equally prominent alternative view, which claimed that neutrality was affected by integration.

Consistency, too, is evident if the referendum data are compared with Eurobarometer data. The Eurobarometer regularly examines whether specific policies should be handled at the European or at the national level of government, according to mass publics across Europe. Foreign, security, and defence policy in different configurations are part of this survey item. The Irish respondents’ views on security and defence policy (sometimes combined, sometimes separate in the response categories) indicate a stable trend of preferring the national level; 65–69 per cent, occasionally breaking the 70 per cent barrier, are typical levels of support for national-level decision making in the 1990–98 period.³⁷ However, on the single occasion when foreign policy formed a separate response category, it elicited a 63 per cent preference for the European level of decision making, and a mere 25 per cent for the national level.³⁸ We are again reminded of the influence that seemingly innocuous word changes can have, as well as the limited view of neutrality that apparently exists among the Irish public.

The Partnership for Peace might be expected to be viewed more negatively than European integration, due to the Partnership’s connection with NATO, and due to the EU’s relatively undeveloped security and defence capacities. However, the limited existing data indicate that there is widespread support for putting relations between Ireland and the Partnership on a formalised footing. Asked whether Ireland should be ‘prepared to join the NATO-led Partnership for

Peace programme for the purpose of engaging in joint peacekeeping exercises'³⁹ 77 per cent agreed, whereas 13 per cent did not. Three years later, 62 per cent were in favour, and 25 per cent against (13 per cent 'no opinion').⁴⁰

Organised public opinion

Public opinion can also be organised into issue or interest groups. These groups exist on the borderline between elites and the public, as they may be outside the realm of policy making in the strict sense but nonetheless act as opinion leaders and sources of information about political issues. Groups with a specific concern with neutrality are active in Ireland, and it was the efforts of a veteran anti-European campaigner (Mr R. Crotty) that brought about the 1987 Supreme Court ruling which established the subsequent need for referenda for Ireland to ratify amendments to European treaties. This was the first of many successful interest group attempts to change the political structures through which the public (and interest groups) may access and influence the decision-making processes at policy level. The Peace and Neutrality Alliance (PANA) was established in 1995 as an umbrella organisation for groups that oppose the transformation of the EU into a 'nuclear-armed federal superstate'.⁴¹ PANA states its objectives very clearly. First, it campaigns for the UN and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe as the appropriate organisations for Ireland's security concerns. Second, 'Ireland should pursue a positive neutrality and independent foreign policy and not join or form an association with any military alliance, such as the WEU or NATO.' Third, disarmament and demilitarisation are to be the objectives of Irish policies. Fourth, co-operation with (or the condoning of) the actions of nuclear groupings are opposed. Fifth, the UN is the only organisation under whose auspices Irish peacekeeping is to take place.⁴² These objectives have been pursued by PANA by a document series ('European Defence Debate') in which current developments at EU-level are analysed and put in the context of neutrality.⁴³ The National Platform for Employment, Democracy, and Neutrality stands for a Europe of the nations, as opposed to a supranational EU.⁴⁴ It is a member of PANA but also has an independent record of action. Its leader, Mr Anthony Coughlan, secured a 1998 High Court ruling one month before the Amsterdam Treaty referendum which prevented Radio Telefis Eireann (RTE, public broadcasting service), from repeating the 'unfair allocation of airtime'⁴⁵ in previous referenda. The ruling laid down that free broadcasts must be allocated equally to pro- and anti-campaigns in constitutional referenda, irrespective of whether the campaigning bodies were parties or interest groups or combinations thereof. The Green Party has associated itself with these two groups in relation to neutrality and other European issues. Green MEP Ms Patricia McKenna has also sought redress through the courts for a perceived unfairness in referenda. Her case led to the Referendum Act (1998). Under the Act a Referendum Commission was established

[to] explain the subject matter of the referendum to the population at large, as simply and effectively as possible, while ensuring that the arguments of those against the proposed amendment to the Constitution and those in favour are put forward in a manner that is fair to all interests involved.⁴⁶

While the groups have been successful in changing the formal structures that surround referenda, they have not been successful in securing anti-European voting results, despite campaigning. In 1972, the Common Market Study Group focused on sovereignty and neutrality as well as the future of traditional industry and small-scale farming, all-important aspects of traditional values in Irish life and society (Common Market Study Group 1970). In 1987, neutrality as well as sovereignty, anti-nuclear arguments and conservative Catholic principles motivated interest groups (Gallagher 1988:79). In 1992, neutrality and abortion were major anti-Maastricht themes that nonetheless lost out to campaign promises of £8b transfers to Ireland from the EG budget in the coming financial perspective, if the referendum were passed. The National Platform was the main coordinator of anti-Maastricht groups (Holmes 1993:107). In 1998 neutrality formed the mainstay of the interest groups and Green Party campaigns, together with issues of sovereignty and democracy.⁴⁷

The opinion—policy relationship

The conceptual point of departure here is that opinion and policy are connected interactively, and thus partly constitute each other. Methodological considerations nonetheless prevent strong claims about the nature of this interactive connection, as the necessary data for that do not exist. The remainder of the chapter therefore contains sketches of the opinion—policy connection. The way to proceed here is to consider why neutrality, whose formal status does not differ from other areas of public policy, is treated as a quasi-constitutional policy by policy makers. Yet, paradoxically, they have rarely seriously considered constitutionally embedding neutrality. As a consequence, a political, as opposed to a constitutional, expectation was allowed to grow that only a referendum legitimises any changes to a policy that is no different from policies on education, health, agriculture, etc. in terms of its formal status, and in relation to which no expectation of referenda exists. The political promise of a referendum has undoubtedly served to defuse a sensitive issue by, in a sense, removing responsibility from the political parties to the public. The public, by all accounts, liked having this responsibility and reacted angrily to the Fianna Fáil—Progressive Democrat government's decision in 1999 not to conduct a PpP referendum: 71 per cent felt that a referendum should be held, whereas 18 per cent did not (11 per cent had 'no opinion').⁴⁸ This is a sign that political parties are able to take the lead, but it can also be read as a sign that they are ever fearful of public opinion. The Fianna Fáil—Progressive Democrat government of the day did not trust the people to make the

'right' decision in a referendum although we have seen that there is every indication that the public favours PfP.

The decision not to hold a referendum on PfP is a deviation from the tendency to use neutrality as a battering ram from the opposition benches, followed by complacency when occupying the government benches. Party competition is only an intervening variable, however, in so far as it would not occur unless it was thought to influence public opinion. Public opinion has also acted as a legitimising factor for Irish policy makers in external and domestic politics. The 1987 declaration attached to the Irish ratification of the Single European Act is a point in case, as is the more recent Fianna Fáil turnround on PfP. In 1996 the party leader stated that the Irish people 'attach great importance to our neutrality', and that any association with NATO would 'represent a substantial change in defence policy, if not immediate implications for our policy of neutrality', which he and his party opposed. In 1999, the same party leader (now Taoiseach)⁴⁹ took the opposite view, but still inferred that public opinion was behind him.

Thus far representation from below. What about the impact of policy and policy makers on public opinion? Political parties are the vehicles of democracy as we know it, which has been modelled as a system of two or more competing parties as unitary actors that present the electorate with distinguishable policy packages at election time. The essence of elections, in turn, is to serve as public evaluations of the government's achievements as compared with the potential of the opposition (Dalton 1996:246–54; Esaiasson and Holmberg 1996:3–4; Rose 1984:10–14). The range of political preferences available to the public is consequently limited to the preferences of the parties contesting an election. The result is that

in all modern representative democracies, it is the electorate that responds in a more or less active manner to the elites' policy initiatives, thus indeed having some 'power'...to hold the elites responsible within a policy framework set by elites rather than by the citizenry.

(Eulau 1987:212)

The meaning of neutrality has evolved among policy makers. In the post-Cold War era a new set of activities, previously ruled out, has emerged as complementary to neutrality. Public opinion data give no conclusive indication of the public's response to this. Table 6.2 shows a shift in favour of 'no involvement in wars, no nuclear weapons here', whereas 'no military alliances, not in NATO' has lost out at the aggregate level, between 1985 and 1992. However, considering that NATO is a military alliance with nuclear capacity, thus connecting the two response categories, it is questionable whether this represents a shift in meaning at all. If so, it still remains unclear how this can be interpreted in relation to policy: no political party has suggested that Ireland should join a military alliance, nuclear-armed or not. The effects of policy on opinion are no clearer in data on specific

events. Table 6.3 shows that 54 per cent agree with the refuelling policy that the government enacted during the Gulf War. It is impossible to estimate how this figure differs from the figure that would have been obtained had this policy never existed as more than a survey response category. Had refuelling been opposed by the government on the grounds that it offended neutrality, then the 54 per cent figure would presumably have been lower. But this remains an assumption.

However, parties do not only enact policies, they are also one of the public's primary sources of information about political issues. The public would therefore not be expected to have clearer, more crystallised opinions than political parties. The data reviewed here provide reasonable grounds for the argument that large parts of the public react rationally to new information provided by the parties: no neutrality-related action undertaken by an Irish government has been opposed by a majority of the public. However, we need to consider the quality of this information. In brief, if political parties do not take a clear stand on neutrality, how can the public be expected to know what's what? If rationality is understood as opinion based on the best information available, Irish public opinion is rational in so far as it reflects the political handling of neutrality. The absence of a critical, public debate on neutrality is not a constructive context for stable, consistent, rational and knowledge-based public opinion. The main blame must be laid at the doors of the political parties.

This raises two questions. First, do the parties deliberately avoid public debate on neutrality? Second, have they a correct reading of public opinion?⁵⁰ The first question can be answered at several levels. At one level, all parties engage with neutrality in the public domain, which indicates a willingness to debate the issue. At another level, the nature of this debate is such that neutrality is virtually never questioned. A truly critical debate on neutrality would require the contributors to set out Ireland's objectives in foreign policy and only then consider whether neutrality is the policy most likely to achieve those goals. Consequently, the parties are not avoiding debate per se but they are economical about availing themselves of opportunities to raise the really hard questions.

This leads to the second question. Naturally, all parties like to think that they represent public opinion. The post-Cold War developments in Ireland's commitment to the UN as well as in European security have occurred with public approval, suggesting a correct reading of public opinion on the part of the parties. However, the apparent public approval of the PfiP makes the refusal to hold a PfiP referendum an unnecessary precaution, unless the Fianna Fáil—Progressive Democrat government distrust surveys or expect the public to turn against its proposal in the course of a campaign. Fine Gael, on the other hand, not only cite the 1996 figures in their policy document *Ireland and the Partnership for Peace* (1997), but in fact base much of their argument on these figures.

Finally, there is the interest group factor to consider. Their collective impact on political structures is clear but it is not clear how, if at all, they may have affected policy or policy makers beyond the effects of public opinion in general.

Ireland's direct involvement in the international use of force appears less and less guided by the objectives advocated by these groups despite their successes in relation to referenda, broadcasting time and the Referendum Act. Their views do not appear to have been modified by the changing external context and conditions, nor by domestic party political responses to new circumstances for peacekeeping and security. Although interest groups ostensibly represent the ideal of public opinion in terms of stability, consistency, etc., it must also be kept in mind that at times change is more rational than stability.

Conclusion

It was remarked in the 1980s that no doctrine of Irish neutrality exists in the sense of a 'clearly stated comprehensive set of guidelines, widely understood and acted on throughout the political system' (Keatinge 1984:6). The continued validity of this remark is clear. Irish neutrality escapes precise definition, and remains 'an ill-defined but potent element of the state's political culture, a symbol of its sovereignty, [and] part of the currency of party politics' (Keatinge 1993:160).

However, there is change as well as continuity. Policy responses to the changes in Ireland's international environment have redefined the range of activities that Ireland as a neutral can undertake. While policy on the international use of force is formally made with neutrality as a touchstone, it is also the case that neutrality is regularly reformulated to facilitate favoured policy alternatives. Neutrality is malleable in the hands of governments (and oppositions). Public support for neutrality appears stable despite the lack of any clear understanding of what neutrality means or entails, and it responds rationally and with some degree of consistency to new information and changes. This may be a reflection of the political parties' long-standing reluctance to engage intelligibly on this issue rather than a sign of enlightened public opinion. The outcome is a poorly thought-out policy, perfectly mirrored in largely uninformed public opinion. Under such circumstances, 'the policymakers' problem becomes more one of finding what actions will be acceptable within the existing range of opinion than of dramatically transforming opinion in the direction they prefer' (Russett 1990:106). But Irish parties lead from the front when it suits them, too. With regard to the international use of force, then, neutrality matters more in terms of its domestic significance than as a basis for principled judgements about Irish participation.

Notes

- 1 I am delighted to acknowledge the generous help from Dr Michael Marsh and Prof. Patrick Keatinge of Trinity College, Dublin, and Dr Ben Tonra of the University of Wales at Aberystwyth. Remaining faults are, as ever, entirely of my own making.

- 2 Except in reference to other countries, neutrality and military neutrality are used interchangeably in this chapter, for ease of expression.
- 3 Maher (1986) provides a comprehensive account of the developments that led to Ireland's EEC membership.
- 4 The decision by the Fine Gael-led coalition government of the day to reject NATO membership in 1949 is an early demonstration of guardedness in this respect.
- 5 Labour's resolution of the neutrality—integration tensions may not survive the merger of Labour and Democratic Left in 1998. While Democratic Left (such as it was at the time of the merger with Labour) is a recently converted proEuropean, it showed unease about the future of neutrality in the changing international context including European integration.
- 6 Though it is also true that 'neutral' Finland signed the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance with the Soviet Union in 1948; and that 'neutral' Sweden took a number of secret measures in the 1950s and 1960s in order to prepare for assistance from NATO (Sweden 1994).
- 7 Ireland's defence spending as per cent of GNP is not remarkably low, but the size of its armed forces is less than half than any of the other neutral European states (1982 figures, reported in Salmon 1989:55).
- 8 When Foreign Minister Sean MacBride approached the US for a bilateral security arrangement in 1951, in total contradiction of neutrality (Salmon 1989:167), the US showed no interest.
- 9 Dáil Eireann Official Report 199 (1963) 1149.
- 10 Dáil Eireann Official Report 230 (1967) 1104; 241 (1969) 1986; Salmon (1989: 221).
- 11 *Ireland Today* (Bulletin of the Department of Foreign Affairs), May—June 1987.
- 12 The WEU developed in 1954 on the basis of the 1948 Brussels Treaty (signed as a defensive alliance against Germany). During the Cold War it withered as the 'weak arm' of NATO but it is currently experiencing a (temporary) revival as the gradual development of the EU's defence component progresses.
- 13 Art. J.4.1, *Maastricht Treaty*.
- 14 See Ireland 1992 for an extensive version of this argument.
- 15 Art. 17.1, *Amsterdam Treaty*; as with previous EU-related referenda, the government issued a White Paper in 1998 (Ireland 1998). However, the so-called McKenna judgement (*McKenna v. An Taoiseach* [1995] 2 IR 10) made the Amsterdam White Paper a strictly informative document rather than an instrument of party policy. It has therefore been left out of the analysis.
- 16 Art. J.7; J.7.2, *Amsterdam Treaty*.
- 17 Mr David Andrews TD, Minister for Foreign Affairs, speech at the launch of the White Paper on the Amsterdam Treaty at the Department of Foreign Affairs, Dublin, 26/1/98.
- 18 'Five of the Main Party Leaders Call for a Yes Vote', *Irish Times*, 15/5/98.
- 19 Fine Gael 'Mr Gay Mitchell TD speech at the EU Commission sponsored debate on the Amsterdam Treaty: Neutrality to be Enshrined in Irish Constitution of Amsterdam Treaty Passed', Dublin 13/2/98.
- 20 'Ireland Sleepwalking Into Military Alliance', *Irish Times*, 15/5/98.
- 21 'SF Urges No Vote', *Irish Times*, 15/5/98.
- 22 Ireland 1996 Art. 7.31.
- 23 Cited in Ireland 1996: Art. 7.11.

- 24 Democratic Left merged with Labour in early 1999.
- 25 'Bosnia Bound to Team Up with Nato Forces', *Irish Times*, special supplement The Defence Forces: 40 Years with the United Nations', 17/12/98.
- 26 *Dáil Eireann Official Report* 463 (1996) 1294.
- 27 Speech by the Taoiseach Mr Bertie Ahern TD on a Private Member's Motion, Concerning Partnership for Peace, *Dáil Eireann*, 28/1/99.
- 28 Keatinge (1993:163–9); Luif (1995:245–6, 251); 'Heady Days for Finland's EU Affair', *Irish Times*, 30/5/98.
- 29 Bunreacht na hEireann: Art. 28.3.
- 30 This survey item (cited in Marsh 1992:5) also contained some additional response categories, not all of which appear well suited to the question: 'should be in NATO, back EEC' and 'should stay as we are'.
- 31 'United Nations troops have two roles: (i) a policing role to keep the peace as Irish troops have been doing in the Lebanon, and (ii) a more active role of enforcing peace as UN troops are doing in Somalia. Should the government vote to change the role of the Irish troops from a peace-keeping role as in the Lebanon, to a peace-enforcing role as they would have in Somalia?', *MRBI/Irish Times*, 1–2/7/93.
- 32 'At the moment, there are various ways in which both neutral and non-neutral states in Europe co-operate together in the military field. Do you agree or disagree that Ireland should: Be prepared to serve in such places as Bosnia in a NATO-led peace-enforcement effort?', *MRBI/Irish Times*, 24–25/9/96.
- 33 *MRBI/Irish Times*, 14/5/87.
- 34 'What do you feel are the major issues which will be involved in the referendum on the Maastricht Treaty to be held on June 18?', *MRBI/Irish Times*, 8/6/92.
- 35 'Why did you vote no against the Amsterdam Treaty?', RTE/Prime Time exit poll, 22/5/98.
- 36 Though notably, this movement occurred despite elite assurances that integration posed no threat to neutrality.
- 37 Eurobarometer 34, 35, 36, 38, 39, 40, 43, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49.
- 38 Eurobarometer 44 (1996).
- 39 'At the moment, there are various ways in which both neutral and non-neutral states in Europe co-operate together in the military field. Do you agree that Ireland should: Be prepared to join the NATO-led Partnership for Peace programme for the purpose in joint peace-keeping exercises?', *MRBI/Irish Times*, 24–25/9/96.
- 40 'Do you agree or disagree that Ireland should be prepared to join the NATO-led Partnership for Peace to engage in joint peace-keeping exercises?', *MRBI/Irish Times*, 10/5/99.
- 41 Peace and Neutrality Alliance Information Bulletin [no date].
- 42 Peace and Neutrality Alliance 1998.
- 43 As an indication of PANA's view, consider: 'The Amsterdam Treaty: From Positive Neutrality to Nuclear Insanity' (PANA Amsterdam Treaty campaign leaflet).
- 44 National Platform 1998.
- 45 JR 209 [1997] Coughlan, Broadcasts Complaints Commission and RTE; see also 'Unfair Airtime Says Judge', *Irish Independent.*, 25/4/98, 'RTE Found Guilty of Imbalance in Referendum', *Irish Times*, 25/4/98.

- 46 Referendum Commission 1998:4; the McKenna judgment (*McKenna v. An Taoiseach* [1995] 2 IR 10) established that public funds may not be used to promote one-sided referendum campaigns.
- 47 'Common Defence Policy will Dominate Referendum Campaign', *Irish Times*, 27/1/98; 'Greens Reject Undertakings on Neutrality', *Irish Times*, 27/1/98; 'Opponents Highlight Alleged Threat to Neutrality', *Irish Times*, 27/1/98; 'Greens Anti-Treaty Drive Focuses on Neutrality', *Irish Times*, 24/4/98.
- 48 'Should there or should there not be a referendum on the issue of Ireland joining the NATO-led Partnership for Peace programme?', *MRBI/Irish Times*, 10/5/99.
- 49 Taoiseach is the Irish term for Prime Minister, meaning 'chieftain'.
- 50 I am obliged to the editors for bringing these two questions to my attention.

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For references to secondary sources in the text see the integrated bibliography at the end of this book.

Moving away from war

Israelis' security beliefs in the post-Oslo era

Tamar Hermann

Introduction: coping with change

Since its embryonic days and well into the fifth decade of its existence as an independent state, the Israeli polity has been involved in a protracted, often violent conflict with the Arab world surrounding it.¹ Both sides in the conflict have developed a zero-sum definition of the relations between them, thereby investing the army and the effective use of force with maximal weight. Such an emphasis on the military and on the use of force is particularly paradoxical in the case of the Jewish/Israeli side in the conflict, as it is in sharp contrast with the usually docile traditional way of life the Jewish people had followed for almost two thousand years. Their subjugation in the countries of the Diaspora made the idea of physical resistance to existential threats so completely non-realistic that 'quietism', a passive acceptance of pogroms and other manifestations of physical abuse, became an integral part of the Jewish exilic culture.² The physical weakness of the Jewish people in exile produced an exceedingly and profoundly 'civilian' national culture that was devoid of any military aspects.

However, the situation which the Zionist newcomers encountered when they arrived in Palestine necessitated the development of a way of thinking that was inherently different from the one they had brought with them from their countries of origin. Reacting to the power relations between their neighbours and themselves, the use of force came to play a central role. What began as a need was soon translated into an ideology, and the ability to defend the Jewish population by military means became part of the Zionist movement's goal of 'normalisation', a vital change that would turn the Jewish people into 'a nation like all the nations'.

As will be described in more detail below, violent confrontations between Jews and Arabs erupted every few years from the late 1920s to the early 1990s.³ Thus, the Israeli security outlook that attached so much importance to its military capabilities remained virtually unchallenged for all these years. However, as will be discussed in the next section of this chapter, several critical developments unfolded and matured in the late 1980s-early 1990s, resulting in changes so significant and potent that a re-examination and reshaping of this outlook were

called for. The first formal move in this direction by the Israeli side was made in 1991 with its participation in the Madrid Conference. The agreement of the Israelis (and, in fact, of the Arabs as well) to take part in this international peace conference was given reluctantly under tremendous American pressure.⁴ Despite its immediate meagre results, this conference led to the opening of unprecedented direct negotiations between the protagonists in the Middle East conflict. Less than two years later, in the summer of 1993, the first Oslo Declaration of Principles was signed by Israel and the Palestinians. By doing so, the two principal sides in the conflict openly acknowledged—for the first time—the possibility of resolving their protracted hostilities by political rather than military means. This obviously necessitated a far-reaching transformation of both the strategic policy and the strongly rooted mind-set of each of the two sides.

And indeed, by signing the Oslo Accords, the Labour government, headed by Yitzhak Rabin, had to cross two very bright security-related red lines. The first was Israel's recognition of the Palestinians as legitimate partners for peace negotiations and, thereby, as a nation with a rightful claim to at least certain parts of the 'Land of Israel'. Second, and even more problematic in the eyes of many Israelis at that time, was the admission of a readiness to make considerable territorial compromises in return for peace—and not only with the Palestinians but also with Syria. Such compromises negated the long-held perception that territorial depth is the major strategic means for protecting Israel from the ever-present danger of being invaded and destroyed by the Arab states around it. The Israeli government's weighty undertaking was based on then Prime Minister Rabin and Foreign Minister Peres's conclusion that a peace agreement, even at the cost of far-reaching territorial concessions, would in the long run prove more effective than the greatest military strength and the most extensive strategic territorial depth in guaranteeing Israel's national security. Rabin and Peres translated this evaluation into Israel's new security policy.

The thrust of this chapter is that it was extremely difficult for large segments of the Israeli public to accept, promptly and without further ado, the rapid strategic transformation made by Prime Minister Rabin's government in 1993–95—which history may well mark as both courageous and far-sighted. Characterised by a high level of interest in foreign and security matters, and embracing quite firm opinions in these realms, it is not surprising that the Israeli public did not automatically and immediately follow its leaders in this instance (Hermann and Yuchtman-Yaar 2000). Many Israelis hesitated then—and more than a few still balk today—at the very idea of abandoning the long-held security outlook that viewed ongoing conflict as the Middle East's 'state of nature', and of replacing it with what they considered a not yet proven set of assumptions about the Arab world's change of intentions along with insufficiently secured guarantees for non-belligerency. In other words, the deeply rooted security-oriented national outlook—that was fostered prior to the 1990s by all Israeli governments and parties, Left and Right⁵ (except perhaps for the Communist party and the tiny peace movement)—boomeranged and impeded for several years the mobilisation

of broad enough public support within Israel for the government's new peace policy. The time-lag between the Rabin—Peres government's perceptual transformation and the broad public's recognition of the new reality contributed greatly to Peres's defeat and Netanyahu's victory in the 1996 elections, for Netanyahu had retained and proclaimed his view that relations between Israel and the Arab world were, and remained, fundamentally confrontational. However, the recent sweeping electoral victory of Ehud Barak of Labour in the 1999 national elections, after an intensive campaign in which he had stressed his commitment to a peace policy quite similar to that of the Rabin—Peres government, suggests that this gap has gradually closed, or at least considerably narrowed. It thus seems that in the second half of the 1990s a cognitive transformation in this direction has taken place in the Israeli public's perceptions.

Public opinion and foreign and security policy making

In [Chapter 1](#) it was argued that recent research has been very critical of the earlier 'Almond—Lippmann consensus' on the nature of public opinion on foreign and security policy matters and on its lack of impact on policy making. It has, rather, been demonstrated that public opinion tends to be both stable and consistent and, further, that it plays a role in the decision makers' calculations. It thus constitutes a force to be reckoned with in normative terms. Recent analyses have shown that governments and administrations do take public opinion into account when formulating foreign policy and that policy makers do not see themselves as the omnipotent trustees of the public good and, therefore, as exempt from taking into consideration their constituencies' preferences when shaping national policies (Wittkopf 1990). The acknowledgement of a two-way, bottom-up/top-down, flow of influence has contributed much to the disintegration of the wall separating foreign and security affairs from domestic influences. Today, more and more analysts admit that the old-fashioned foreign policy establishments are now outmoded; they have lost both their bearings and their sway and are more susceptible than ever to grassroots pressures and influence (Clough 1994).

An insufficient amount of attention, both theoretical and empirical, has been paid to the effects of stable and coherent public opinion on the official policy makers' ability to make strategic changes in a state's foreign and security policy. While in the revised theoretical analyses of the linkage between public attitudes and policy making, citizens' attitudinal stability and coherence are viewed overall as a positive phenomenon, its potential to rigidify an existing outlook in an objectively changing environment has been largely ignored. It is suggested here then that the general public is more concerned than its leaders with, and averse to, the costs involved in a strategic transformation than with its potential gains. In this sense, therefore, under the conditions of a participatory democracy an involved and effective public may play a 'negative' role insofar as the transition from war to peace is concerned. The arguments presented here

challenge then in a sense the prevalent assumption that 'domestic factors have "tamed" the aggressive impulses of many states [...] thus creating a disposition to see war as at best a necessary evil' (Jepperson *et al.* 1996:36, footnote).

The potentially negative role of the public will be elaborated further in this chapter on the basis of the case of Israeli public opinion although, as argued in [Chapter 1](#), the problem of reconstructing the pillars of a long-held national security doctrine in times of critical changes in the international environment is universal. It usually surfaces when the leaders of a nation realise that the external situation has changed to such an extent that the overall national security outlook should be revised, while the public, whose support for political changes has become more and more indispensable, is often slower to respond to the new realities.⁶ The Israeli case study presented here—due to its unique location in a 'zone of turmoil', its clearly delineated time-frame and parameters of change and, in addition, the vast amount of available empirical evidence on the public's reactions to it—constitutes a good 'laboratory' in which to examine the process through which fundamental changes in the national security policy are generated and then accepted or rejected by the public, and to develop a sober assessment of the realistic prospects and time frameworks for such practical and cognitive changes to take root.

In order to meet these goals, this chapter will first discuss in brief the historical background to the development of the Israeli security outlook; second, it will analyse the basic characteristics of the Israeli mainstream's security outlook, including the use of force. Last but not least, we will try to assess, against this background, the extent to which Israeli public opinion on national security has constrained the policy makers' latitude of manoeuvre in either promoting or retreating from the peace process.

Israeli security outlook: a brief historical background

It is almost a truism to state that a nation's security outlook is the product of its historical experience and operative context.⁷ Yet, its historical background and operative context carry exceptional weight in the Israeli case because throughout the state's brief but eventful history there has been one over-arching issue: the persistent and often violent conflict with the countries surrounding it. Its history has thus provided Israeli society with no other, more benign experience of neighbourly relations. Furthermore, it is only against this historical background that it is possible to get to the roots of the ostensible disparity between Israel's objectively superior military capabilities and achievements, on the one hand, and, on the other, the pervasive and ever-present sense of existential threat in the national security outlook. And indeed, as some outside observers have not fully contemplated the significance of this historical background, the centrality of the security issue has led them to maintain that both the Israeli public and the decision-making system are overly obsessed with it, and that this preoccupation frequently has little to do with the objective circumstances.

The first phase of the Israeli—Arab conflict relevant to this discussion began with a flow of Jewish immigrants to Palestine at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. Although clearly propelled by the mounting anti-Semitism in Eastern Europe, including a series of deadly pogroms, the strongest motivation to migrate to the Middle East was enthusiasm with the Zionist idea; national revival in the land of their forefathers was the vision around which the expanding Jewish-Zionist community in Palestine rallied from its earliest beginnings. This enthusiasm, typical of other national revival movements, led the Zionists, leadership and adherents alike, to be quite blind to the presence of another people on the same land, with its own deep sense of belonging to it.⁸ The Jewish—Arab inter-communal conflict thus began virtually unnoticed by the Jewish side until the 1920s, and it continued to gain momentum with no preventive steps taken by anyone until it was too late and violence had already broken out. Great Britain's Balfour Declaration in 1917, which promised the Jewish people 'a national home', laid bare the conflictive nature of Jewish—Arab relations in Palestine. It elucidated the fact that the Jewish community in Palestine, and the Zionist movement at large, had political aspirations, plans and interests, and that these were incompatible with those of the Arab inhabitants of the land. An even greater flow of Jewish immigrants, the emergence of a broad network of Jewish political and social institutions, massive purchases of Arab-owned lands by Jews, and the intensification of economic activities, from which the Arabs were often excluded, led to a series of violent Arab attacks on Jewish neighbourhoods, villages and towns in the late 1920s. The first Jewish self-defence units were formed as a result. Inattentive to the implications of their national revival endeavour for their Arab neighbours, the Jewish Zionist pioneers came to see themselves since then as the innocent victims of a groundless Arab hostility that forced them to resort to the use of arms against their will. This definition of the situation constituted the basis of the still prevalent Israeli 'defensive heroism'⁹ myth, a perception that precludes the interpretation of any security-related move taken by Israel as aggressive in nature. This interpretation of their situation as innocent victims of Arab animosity was reinforced by the unmistakable demographic gap between the large Arab populace and the small Jewish community in Palestine. Their different cultures, languages and religions constituted additional crucial negative inputs into what was already a rapidly deteriorating set of relations between Jews and Arabs. Although, already at that time, some small Jewish 'peace groups' emerged and tried to warn their fellow Jews of the negative consequences that would inevitably result from the inculcation of a zero-sum perception of the inter-communal relations, their ominous predictions fell on deaf ears (Hermann 1989).

The sense of being under a constant threat to their very existence, shared by all sectors of the Jewish community in Palestine (the *Yishuv*), was undoubtedly intensified in the late 1930s and early 1940s by the open support of several important Arab leaders for Nazi Germany. The virtual annihilation of European Jewry by the Nazis reinforced the pessimistic view that should the Arabs achieve

military superiority, physical destruction could be the fate of the Jews in Palestine as well. When World War II ended, the British authorities attempted to mitigate the growing Jewish-Arab tensions in Palestine by preventing the entry of tens of thousands of Holocaust survivors into the country. This policy, as could be expected, evoked a very negative Jewish reaction and led, in the late 1940s, to the launching of a virtual armed national liberation struggle against the British authorities which ended in 1947 with United Nations resolutions to terminate the British Mandate to govern Palestine and to partition the country into two separate entities, Arab and Jewish.

The attack of the Arab countries surrounding the new State of Israel following its declaration of independence on 14 May 1948 led to a war which lasted until mid-1949, and ended only with the signing of ceasefire agreements negotiated by the UN. The Israeli—Arab negotiations of 1949–50 failed, however, to secure peace agreements. It is hardly surprising then that in the mid-1950s regional tensions increased again. Although Israel was now much stronger than it had been in 1948, the national feeling was one of political and military isolation, of having no dependable ally in the region or elsewhere (Israel's special relations with the US developed only after the 1967 War). The situation was exacerbated by the Soviet Union's massive supply of arms to Nasserist Egypt in the mid-1950s. The 'second round' of Israeli—Arab confrontation took place in 1956, when Israel co-operated with Britain and France in a tripartite attack on Egypt. Although Israel captured the entire Sinai Peninsula in this short campaign, it was unable to keep this territorial gain because of extreme pressure from the American administration, a stand that was taken as a further proof of indifference or even malevolence towards the Jewish State.

Almost eleven quite turbulent years passed until the third round of the Israeli—Arab military conflict erupted. Several weeks of mounting tension and intensive diplomatic activity in May 1967 preceded the Six-Day War. The UN's immediate compliance with the Egyptian order to evacuate its peacekeeping units from the area was taken by Israel as another indication of its international isolation, and public anxiety rocketed. The co-ordinated Arab war preparations led the deeply worried leaders of Israel to launch pre-emptive strikes on the armies of Egypt, Syria and Jordan. As is well known, this war ended with a stunning Israeli military victory, and with the West Bank, Sinai, the Gaza Strip and the Golan Heights in Israeli hands. Although most Israelis were euphoric following the relief and the territorial expansion this victory brought, the deepening conviction that the Arabs would never come to terms with Israel's existence and would always resort to the language of force mitigated their joy. This apprehension was strengthened by the bloody 1969–70 War of Attrition. Some individuals and groups disagreed with the general perception of the situation and suggested that Israel translate its victory into an attempt to convince the temporarily crushed Arab states to make peace. These voices, however, were limited, and they were not heeded. It took the shock of Syria's and Egypt's strategic surprise attack in 1973, to indicate that military superiority and

territorial depth would not suffice to prevent deadly wars from breaking out. Although Israel emerged from this war victorious from the purely military point of view, its self-confidence was shattered. Arab confidence and pride, on the other hand, were restored, thus enabling a relative calm in the regional relations. The most visible turning point in this direction was the signing of the peace agreement between Israel and Egypt in 1979. The Israeli-Egyptian agreement would, finally, cast some doubt on the zero-sum definition of the overall Arab-Israeli situation. However, for almost fifteen years this course of rapprochement had no follow-up. Moreover, relations between Israel and Egypt did not then, nor later, transcend a state of 'absence of war only', and to this day remain at the level of a 'cold peace'.¹⁰ Thus, no real motivation emerged to change the basic Israeli security view that military power plays a crucial, and perhaps the decisive role in the regional relations.

The next war broke out in mid-1982, with Israel's invasion of Lebanon. According to the government's pronouncements this incursion was meant only to destroy the growing Palestinian military presence in South Lebanon that imperilled the lives of Israeli civilians residing in the Galilee, the area bordering on Lebanon. However, this time the national interest in the planned use of military force was not manifestly evident, as it had been in the past, and for the first time in Israel's history the public did not 'rally 'round the flag' when the guns began to fire. The opposition to what many Israelis considered to be an unnecessary and even counter-productive war grew even more in late 1982 and 1983. In 1984–85, the government had to order the army to pull most of its forces out of Lebanon (although the last Israeli soldier left Lebanon only in June 2000). Since then, it has become quite clear that automatic public support for the security policies fostered by the Israeli government is no longer fully guaranteed.

The outbreak of the Palestinian uprising (the *Intifada*) in December 1987, which was met by a harsh Israeli response, and was followed by Palestinians' indiscriminate, often fatal, stonings of Israeli vehicles on the roads, and of usually mortal knifings of Israeli civilians on the streets of Israeli towns and cities. These attacks had a strong but differential impact on the perceptions of many Israelis regarding the efficacy of the use of military force to guarantee national and individual security. While some concluded that force was the only way to deal with the *Intifada*, others reached the opposite conclusion: that the circle of violence must and could be stopped. The 1991 Gulf War, which proved that in the era of 'Star-Wars' weaponry even a strong military power such as Israel is incapable of protecting its citizens from an external attack, strengthened the realisation that there was a need for some modification in the national security agenda. This changing perception facilitated the launching of the Oslo Process in 1993, following which a reevaluation of the collective security outlook became clearly unavoidable.

The Israeli security agenda

It is against this problematic historical background that the pre-eminence of foreign and security matters in the Israeli public discourse throughout the years must be understood. The security issue, including the question of when and how to use military force, has overshadowed almost all other concerns—social, political and economic.¹¹ Security matters, it should be emphasised, have been equally central to the agendas of both major political camps—the Right and the Left. Moreover, as will be shown below, the two camps have traditionally shared a number of core security concepts, a commonality that contributed to the formation of a highly homogenous national security consensus. The launching of the Oslo peace process, however, presented the participants in the public security debate with a new, unfamiliar situation, which in a sense was more problematic for many Israelis to deal with than the eruption of another armed confrontation. For the first time, the State of Israel was faced with a real alternative, and this necessitated an examination of certain core national security beliefs: whether to make peace, but at the price of painful territorial compromises and other significant security risks, or to go on dealing with the well-known external threats, perhaps as successfully as in the past but, due to the changes in the overall internal and external environment, possibly much less so. Paradoxically, it was those same changes in the environment that enabled the launching of the Oslo Process. The heated domestic debate generated by this dilemma splintered the national security consensus to the point of critical fragmentation, as was manifested by the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin in November 1995 by an Israeli extremist of the Right. The attack was a misguided attempt to forestall what this assassin—and others with similar opinions—viewed as the inevitable catastrophe the government's peace-oriented policy would lead to.

The debate over the Oslo Process exposed the fact that Israeli public security outlook encompasses, at one and the same time, two different security-belief structures. The first structure, created under the pressures and constraints of the ongoing violent Israeli-Arab conflict, and shared by almost all Israelis, of the Left and the Right, dominated Israel security thinking up to the launching of the Oslo Process and is still quite powerful today. It consists of the decades-old and slow-to-change core security beliefs (hereafter: strategic beliefs structure).¹² The distribution of most beliefs included in this structure usually takes a uni-polar shape.

The second security-belief structure, which has gained much greater saliency since the launching of the Oslo Process, is composed of more concrete beliefs (hereafter: operative beliefs structure). This structure reflects various possible solutions to the security dilemmas defined by the strategic beliefs structure. The beliefs included in this operative beliefs structure often take the form of a bi-polar distribution that epitomises the wide gap between the opinions of the parties and groups of the Left and those of the Right in Israel.

It is argued here that this disparity constitutes the major obstacle to the transformation of the public's collective war-oriented mentality into a peace-oriented mind-set. Together with the rapidly changing external circumstances, this perceptual disparity also severely reduced the pertinence of the highly consistent national security consensus that preceded Oslo. The discussion below follows the line of demarcation between the strategic beliefs structures and the operative beliefs structures and tries to bring to light the practical political implications of this division.

The strategic beliefs structure

The strategic beliefs structure relates to the basic 'rules of the game' in the international arena, and more specifically to Israel's position vis-à-vis the Arab world. In general, although most Israelis are not well versed in the concepts and discourse of international relations theory, by instinct nearly all of them are 'political realists'. As such, they regard the international and regional environments as basically confrontational in nature. The strategic beliefs structure is therefore not beneficial, by and large, insofar as the promotion of the peace process is concerned.

The core of Israeli thinking on national security matters is based on the asymmetry with the Arab world in terms of both population and territory, or as it is often perceived metaphorically, on the image of a tiny Jewish island in the midst of an Arab ocean. Israel's inferiority in both size and numbers created several strategic imperatives: to establish an accumulative deterrence, including the development of nuclear capabilities; to wage only short wars; to deliver the battle outside of Israeli territory; and to achieve a qualitative edge by developing high-technology weapons. Furthermore, under this framing of the situation, any step taken by Israel's neighbours is almost reflexively seen as offensive, whereas the military measures adopted by Israel are self-perceived as basically defensive. Thus, almost every war in which Israel was involved, and even the 1967 War in which Israel struck the first blow, are seen from this perspective as 'wars of no choice'.¹³ The name of Israel's army, 'Israel Defence Forces' (IDF), also reflects this perception.

While outsiders tend to see Israel as a regional middle-power with highly skilled and well-equipped military units, and with conventional and non-conventional capabilities, the prevalent self-perception is that of a 'nation that dwells alone' (or, in the words of a popular Israeli aphorism, 'the whole world is against us'). In fact, the events of the last hundred years in the Middle East are usually interpreted through the prism of the long Jewish history of persecution by the gentiles (Bar-Tal and Jacobson 1998: 27). All developments on the regional level are interpreted in the light of this view. For example, in the Middle East of the 1990s, two contending courses are seen: moderation and accommodation on one side, and extremism and fundamentalism on the other. Israeli thinking has considered the latter combination as a much more potent factor in a situation

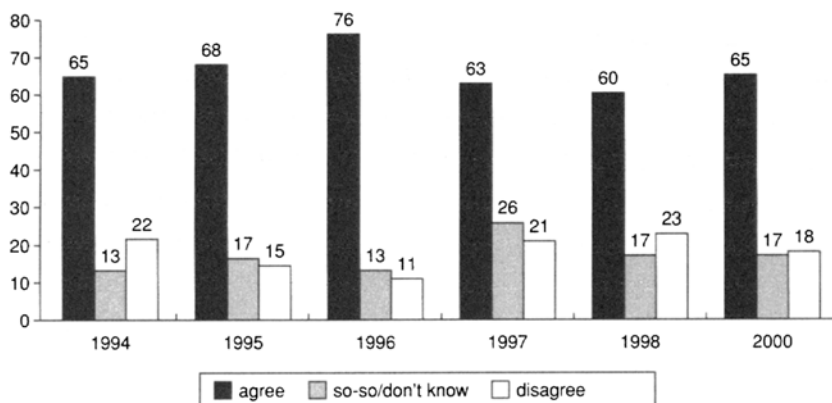


Figure 7.1 Distribution of answers to the question: 'Do you agree that most Arabs have not come to terms with Israel's existence and would destroy it if they could?' (in %).

evaluated as particularly life-threatening to Israel, the only non-Islamic state in the region. As shown in [Figure 7.1](#), even after the signing of the Oslo Accords most Israelis' assessments of the basic intentions of the Arabs are negative. Only a minority disagrees with the statement that the ultimate aim of the Arabs is to destroy Israel if they could.

These perceptions apparently account for another prevalent assessment i.e. that a 'New Middle East' is not going to prevail in the foreseeable future. As [Figure 7.2](#) suggests, Israelis' scepticism in this regard has increased rather than decreased in recent years. While this can be attributed to the disappointment caused by the slowdown in the peace negotiations during Netanyahu's tenure as prime minister, it is probably influenced by other factors as well: recurrent Iraqi military threats; the thus-far 'cold peace' with Egypt; the frequent military encounters that take place in South Lebanon where the Hizbullah activities are clearly supported by Syria and Iran; and so on.

Ever-impending war is also a determining factor in Israeli security thinking. Even in 1995, when the peace process was making its most rapid progress, about 47 per cent of the Israelis maintained that should the peace process stop for some reason, a war between Israel and the Arab world would break out before long.¹⁴ Only 27 per cent thought that a war scenario was unlikely to develop in the foreseeable future (the remainder had no clear opinion). In 1997, after almost a year of a virtual freeze in the peace process, the figures were not much different: 44 per cent assessed that war was likely to break out within a short time should the process stop, while 26 per cent believed that the chances of war were minimal.¹⁵ In other words, with or without a forward-moving peace process many Israelis still perceive an imminent danger of war. It is not surprising then that the notion of a 'just war' is central to the Israeli security consensus and, as [Table 7.1](#) shows, this includes more than an unequivocally defensive war, as shown by the following empirical findings of a public opinion survey (Arian 1997).

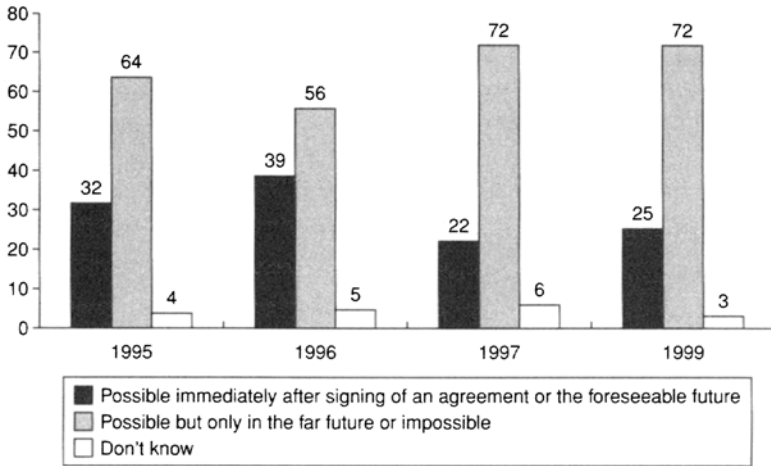


Figure 7.2 Distribution of answers to the question: 'Is it or is it not possible that, after peace agreements between Israel and all Arab countries are signed, a "New Middle East" is established?' (in %).

Table 7.1 'Is it justifiable for Israel to initiate war in each of these situations?' (% saying 'yes')

In defence, to prevent the destruction of the country	94
To prevent or stop a war of attrition	72
To destroy terrorist infrastructure aimed at Israel	72
To prevent the enemy from taking over territories that Israel occupied in the past	68

One of Israel's most closely kept secrets has to do with its nuclear military capability. Although the Israeli government has never acknowledged it, most experts—and apparently the majority of the Israeli public—are convinced that Israel has nuclear weapons. Thus, some surveys tried to ascertain the circumstances under which Israelis think that such weapons should be developed and utilised, if they are indeed available. In 1998, 92 per cent believed that Israel should develop nuclear weapons, similar to 91 per cent in 1991 and over 87 per cent in 1987 (Arian 1998b: 31). In other words, support has grown along with the peace process, perhaps in reaction to the Iraqi missile attacks on Israel during the first and threats during the second Gulf crises as well as in response to the fears caused by the past and future territorial compromises prescribed by the peace process. Although there were significant fluctuations in the percentages of those justifying the use of nuclear weapons, it is quite clear that the great majority of the Israeli public considers the nuclear option a legitimate one. Furthermore, while in 1986 only 36 per cent recognised circumstances under which the use of nuclear weapons was permissible (e.g. in

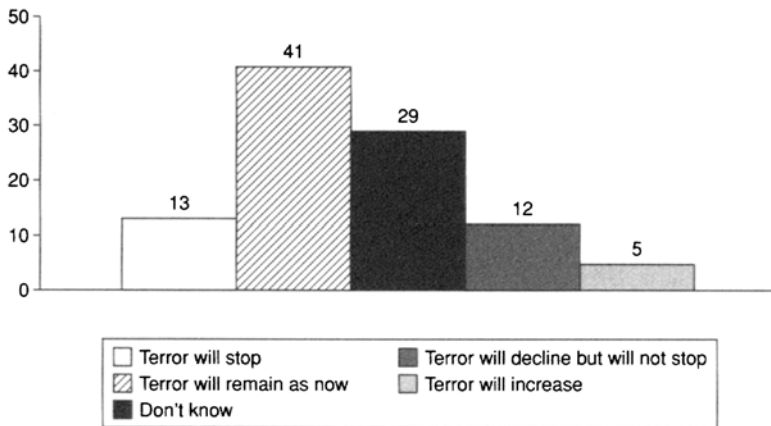


Figure 7.3 Distribution of answers to the question: 'In your opinion, how will Arab terror against Israeli targets be influenced by the signing of peace agreements between Israel and all Arab states and Palestinians?' (in %).

response to a nuclear, biological or chemical attack or in a desperate military situation), shortly after the Gulf War in 1991 this number increased dramatically, to 88 per cent. Since 1993 it has settled at about 65 per cent (Arian 1995:70–1).

Moving from the level of national security to that of personal security, the signing of the documents that marked different stages of the peace process has not thus far improved significantly the feelings of most Israelis. Personal security is still assessed by the vast majority as a major cause of anxiety (Arian 1998a). The percentage of 'worried' or 'very worried' respondents was 85 per cent when first measured in January 1993, that is before the Oslo Process was launched, and this figure has decreased only slightly in the years 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997:76, 85, 78 and 77 per cent respectively. The concern for personal security is clearly a sweeping one, and it crosses the lines between the major political camps. This is quite understandable in view of the considerable number of violent and very lethal attacks on civilians carried out since the peace talks were launched, by Palestinian organisations, mainly the Islamic Jihad and Hamas, both of which oppose the Oslo Process. This sense of insecurity goes hand in hand with the prevalent view that even the conclusion of peace agreements with all the Arab states and with the Palestinians will not put an end to Arab terrorism in the foreseeable future (see Figure 7.3).¹⁶

Such attacks were not a new phenomenon, but for several reasons Israelis viewed those carried out from the early 1990s onwards as being different from those of the 1960s and 1970s. First and foremost, they occurred against the background of the peace dialogue and not in the context of an ongoing armed conflict. Thus, public opinion surveys indicate that most Israelis believe that a significant majority of Palestinians support violent attacks on Israeli civilians.¹⁷

Second, the openly declared targets of these violent acts were Israeli citizens, regardless of their age, sex, political views or places of residence. Third, the number of casualties in these attacks was much higher after 1993 than in the past. And last but not least, most of them were carried out within the 'Green Line', that is, within the pre-1967 War borders of Israel, areas which are not negotiable even in the eyes of the strongest supporters of the peace process in Israel.

The concerns and perceptions described above explain why all means to prevent future terror attacks are seen as legitimate by most Israelis. These include, for example, the use of military force within the areas controlled by the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), an action which clearly transgresses the norms of international law and halts, at least temporarily, all negotiations with the Palestinians.¹⁸ These attitudes also explain why no real public opposition emerged in Israel when the systematic use of torture by Israel's security forces to extract terror-related information from Palestinian detainees was made public.

The psychological stress generated by the common belief in the ever-present danger of war and terrorist attacks is further aggravated by the difficulty most Israelis have in identifying a trustworthy external power able and willing to assume responsibility for the security of the country, a belief which in its turn has put self-reliance at the top of the scale of national security priorities. The United States is the only external actor that is recognised as Israel's ally. When asked in 1998, during a standstill in the peace process, whether they were for or against deeper involvement of various different countries, the West European countries, Egypt, or Russia in order to push the process ahead, the number of those favouring such involvement was 77 per cent for the US, but only 43 per cent for West European countries, 37 per cent for Egypt, and 26 per cent for Russia. And yet, even the US is not considered unconditionally pro-Israeli: 50 per cent of the respondents in the same survey thought that the US is an impartial arbitrator in the Palestine-Israel peace negotiations, while 24 per cent, less than half, said that it is essentially pro-Israeli (20 per cent that it is more pro-Palestinian, and 6 per cent had no opinion).¹⁹

The constant sense of national and personal insecurity contributed to the development in Israel of a strongly positive and trusting attitude towards the military. Public opinion surveys have repeatedly shown that although, for various reasons, it has in recent years lost some of its past highly luminous aura (Poper 1998), the IDF is regularly rated higher on the public's confidence scale than Israel's various political institutions, religious bodies and the media. For example, in the summer of 1996, 77 per cent of the respondents in a public opinion survey expressed full confidence in the IDF, compared to 62 per cent who felt this way towards the High Court, 60 per cent towards the General Security Services (the *Shabak*) 46 per cent towards the police force, and 22 per cent towards both the Israeli Parliament (the *Knesset*), and the government. The media got 15 per cent and the political parties only 6 per cent.²⁰ It is important to note that the IDF has maintained a highly positive image in both major political

camps. Paradoxically, even some peace activists base their political recommendations on their military experience.

The inevitable question that arises is: Does this belief structure make Israel a militaristic society? Certain critical historians and social scientists maintain that Israel is indeed at least a militarised, if not a militaristic society, and as such can move only very slowly from war to peace. In the eyes of these scholars the prevalent concept of 'a nation in uniform' is a manipulative notion that is used by the political and military elites to mobilise the Israeli Jewish population for war and for the fashioning of a reality that obfuscates the distinction between wartime and peacetime (Ben Eliezer 1995; Kimmerling 1993). However, mainstream historians and social scientists contend that Israeli society is not and has never been a militaristic one. It has never adopted a highly offensive security doctrine and an ethos that sustains policies that are substantially unrelated to the country's objective's strategic situation; neither war nor heroism were ever glorified; and the army has never been the supreme formative factor or regulator of social norms in the political, economic and the cultural realms (Lissak 1998). Moreover, in recent years, the civilian character of Israeli society, it is argued, has become even more strengthened: the share of the national budget dedicated to defence expenses has been reduced, the military-industrial complex has shrunk considerably, and anti-militarist and openly civil orientations have become much more prevalent at both the elite and the grassroots levels.

The operational beliefs structure

As said before, while the distribution of attitudes on these strategic security beliefs is quite homogeneous (uni-polar), the distribution of the operative beliefs is fairly heterogeneous, indeed often bi-polar. The citizens of Israel are apparently divided in their assessments of the efficacy of political negotiations as compared with military means for enhancing national security. In a series of public opinion surveys seeking to ascertain Israeli preferences between peace talks and military strengthening in order to avoid war with the Arabs, a preference for peace talks was expressed in 1998 by only 54 per cent of the respondents (Arian 1998b:16). It is interesting to note that prior to 1994 between two-thirds and three-quarters of the respondents consistently espoused peace negotiations. However, in 1994, with negotiations already under way, only 52 per cent chose peace talks, while in 1995 a small majority of respondents even preferred military capacity over peace talks. How can these changing proclivities be explained? First, it is possible that in the late 1980s and early 1990s the respondents' inclination towards the option of peace negotiations was influenced by their reaction of shock to the forcefulness of the Palestinian *Intifada*, which laid bare the ineptitude of the military in dealing with such under-conventional security threats. As the first startling impact of the *Intifada* diminished, and under the devastating impression of the Iraqi missile attacks on Israeli cities, the former predisposition towards the security policy of military strengthening re-

emerged. Furthermore, the alternative of a negotiated peace, that looked so appealing to many Israelis when viewed on a theoretical level in the late 1980s, seemed considerably less attractive when the complex realities and practical costs began to become visible in the 1990s.

A similar division in opinions emerges when one examines the public's views on how Israel should react to Palestinian terror attacks. While around 60 per cent believed that a long-range solution was attainable only through negotiations with the Palestinians, about 40 per cent thought that such negotiations were bound to cease immediately with any instance of a Palestinian terror attack (Arian 1997:5). A similar even division of opinions was found in the respondents' answers to the question of whether the peace process should be halted if Arafat unilaterally declared the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.²¹

This leads us to the next and perhaps most cardinal operative policy on which Israeli public opinion is presently divided: the Oslo Process. Several studies have correctly indicated that, when the 1970s or the 1980s are taken as the point of departure, a significant downtrend can be observed in the formerly widespread opposition in Israel to territorial compromises in return for peace, as well as a decline in the past unwillingness to recognise Palestinian national rights and the PLO as a legitimate partner for peace negotiations (e.g. Shamir and Shamir 1993). However, when the data gathered after the peace process with the Palestinians was launched in the early 1990s are examined, a different picture emerges. The stability of the division between supporters of the process and those who oppose it or are undecided is quite indicative. Although it can be stated that the Israeli public is generally slightly more supportive of the Oslo Process than against it (the average support for the Oslo Process between mid-1994 and early 1999 was 52 points on a scale of 0–100),²² it is also obvious that many Israelis have not yet come to terms with it. The average scores of the level of support for the Oslo Process, as measured monthly between June 1994 and April 1999, are presented in Figure 7.4. The upper line on the graph represents the monthly averages of support for the 'Middle East regional peace process', which, due to its greater ambiguity, gets higher levels of support.

Figure 7.4 suggests that Israeli public opinion in this respect is fairly stable in both structure and content. Neither the ups and downs in the negotiations in the years 1993–95 nor the prolonged standstill since mid-1996 seem to have significantly affected the basic structure of Israeli attitudes. The impact of several lethal terror attacks has also proved to be short-lived as far as attitudes towards the process are concerned.²³ The *Peace Index* surveys also indicate that the number of those who 'strongly support' the Oslo Process is in most cases considerably lower than those who only 'fairly support' it, while the number of those who 'strongly oppose' the process outnumber those who only 'fairly oppose' it. Furthermore, a striking incongruity between the two security beliefs structures is revealed among the supporters of the Oslo Process. When the two issues are cross-tabulated it appears that a noticeable number of the supporters of Oslo believe that most Arabs have not abandoned their fundamental desire to

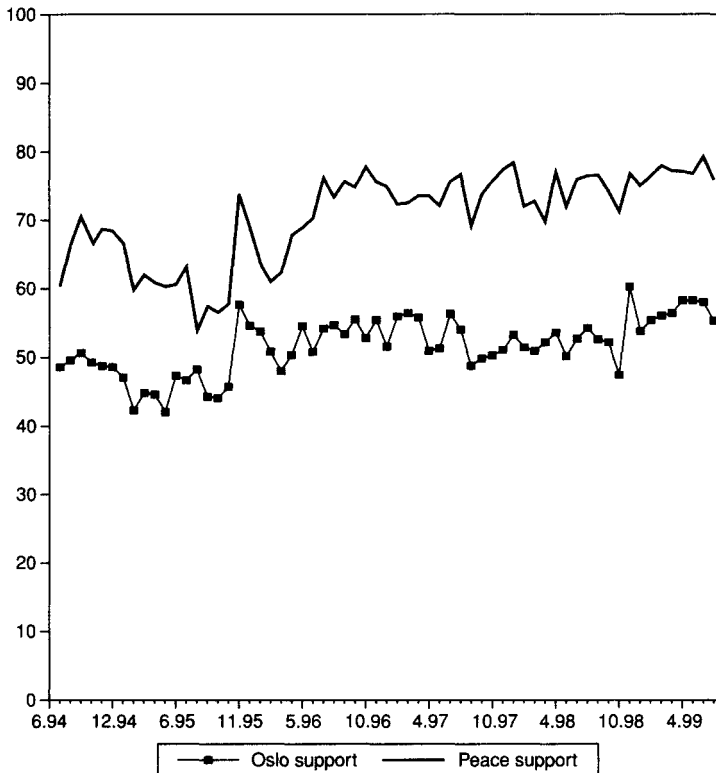


Figure 7.4 Scores of peace support and of Oslo support (monthly averages: June 1994–April 1999).

destroy Israel. (No such incongruity complicates the opposition to the peace process; the strategic belief regarding the Arabs' basic hostility towards Israel goes hand in hand with opposition to the peace process.) Another and perhaps stronger indication of the incongruity between the two security beliefs structures is manifested in the different levels of support for the Oslo Process on the one hand and the levels of belief in the prospect of its bearing fruit in the foreseeable future on the other, as shown in Figure 7.5. The level of support is noticeably and constantly higher than the belief in the feasibility of the process (average support—52 points; average belief—45.2). In other words, it is not unusual to find Israelis who support the Oslo Process but who are also fairly or very pessimistic about its results.

The fragmented operative belief structure has other dimensions as well. The pattern of an even division is seen, for example, in Israeli attitudes towards territorial compromises. The number of those preferring 'absolutely no return' reached 44 per cent in 1998, after it was already as low as 31 per cent in 1997. This was paralleled by a sharp drop in the number of those who thought that

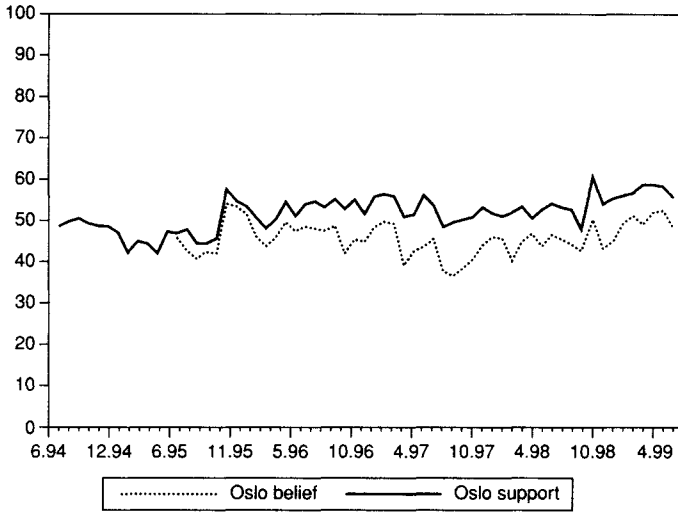


Figure 7.5 Oslo belief and Oslo support (monthly averages: June 1994–April 1999).

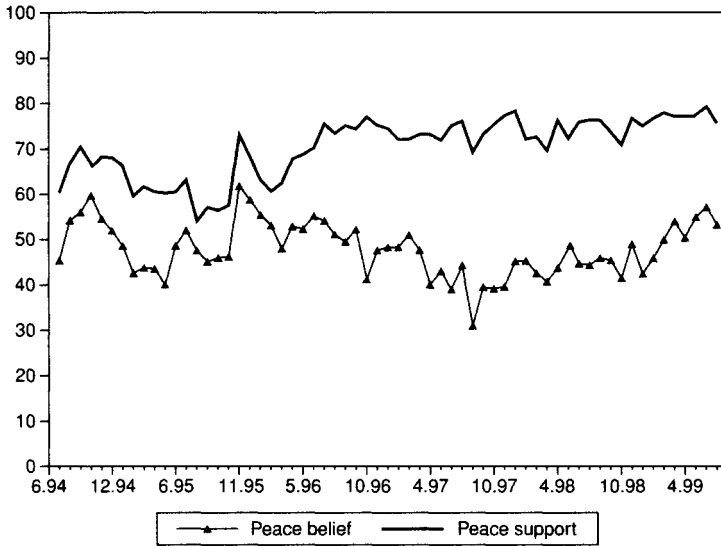


Figure 7.6 Monthly scores of peace support vs. peace belief (June 1994–April 1999).

Israel should return at least parts of the Golan Heights to Syria, from 66 per cent in 1997 and 61 per cent in 1995, to 48 per cent in 1998 (Arian 1998b:30).

It should be noted, however, that a uni-polar shape of distribution also characterises certain attitudes, which are part of the operative belief structure. Yet, these consensual operative beliefs are often non-conductive to peace building.

Perhaps the most notable example of this is how Israelis view the functionality of Israeli—Palestinian physical separation. Because their dread of terrorist attacks and the mistrust of Palestinian intentions are so great, the vast majority of Israelis would like to see the two peoples separated by a closed and clearly demarcated border, even if and when a peace agreement is reached. The figures of those favouring such a physical separation have hardly changed over the years, with 83 per cent favouring such separation in 1999.²⁴

Moving away from war?

Against the historical background outlined above, and in the perspective that the analysis of the Israeli security agenda hopefully provides, an interim assessment of the developments in the Israeli security outlook since the signing of the Oslo Agreements seems both possible and in place. This in turn may constitute something of an answer to the question of whether there are any signs of an Israeli collective movement from a war mentality to a peace mentality. And, if so, what does this imply in terms of the political leaders' latitude of manoeuvre?

Since 1993 the Israeli—Arab conflict has been managed, by and large, in non-violent or sub-violent ways. However, security has not ceased to be a major issue on Israel's national agenda. As of mid-1999 Israel still faced a broad range of security concerns that separately and together contribute to its citizens' unabated sense of vulnerability: the Southern Lebanon impasse, the untiring efforts of Iran to attain a nuclear capability, open Iraqi hostility, and so on (Bar-Tal and Jacobson 1998:30). Although perhaps a cause-and-effect cycle in certain respects, Israelis' strong sense of threat remained undiminished, as reflected in the strategic security beliefs structure discussed above, and national attitudes towards the external environment have therefore remained highly distrustful. As a result, and despite the dramatic change in relations with the Arab world arising from the Oslo Process, the assessed functionality of the military option did not decline significantly.

Admittedly, the imperative, following the launching of the Oslo Process, to transform their modes of thinking into terms of mutual or co-operative security instead of national security was a quite difficult challenge for Israelis, leaders and rank and file alike. It is very difficult, for example, to adhere to the requirement of the peace process to de-emphasise the traditional strategy of deterrence and pre-emption, which the Arab states perceived as constituting a permanent existential threat. Greater transparency regarding military capabilities and manoeuvres was also very difficult to adopt, although it is clearly essential as a confidence building measure with Israel's Arab partners in the peace dialogue. The hesitancy in making the strategic shift required by the Oslo Process as a step along the way to a permanent status agreement was intensified by the prevalent view in Israel that the Arabs' readiness to sit at the negotiation table was the successful result of the traditional, deterrence-based security

strategy, which for years had enabled the country to overcome many of the negative aspects of its threatening environment.

The desire to live in peace on the one hand, and the fear that the compromises required by the Oslo Process could prove to be disastrous, a fear rooted in the belief that the Arabs continue to have hostile intentions towards Israel, have created the incongruity of two security beliefs structures. In retrospect it would seem that the early 1990s indeed did not provide incontestable indications that the old, zero-sum-based security agenda was losing its relevance. This, at least, is one explanation for the deepening of the polarisation in the attitudes manifested in the operative beliefs structure regarding the concrete measures necessary for dealing with the Israeli—Arab conflict, and in particular the Israeli—Palestinian conflict, during this period. This polarisation left many Israelis not only quite bewildered, but also even resentful of any policy changes that could further aggravate this disturbing cognitive dissonance.

The highly visible and unmitigated distancing from the deeply-rooted zero-sum definition of the situation, which the Rabin government's innovative peace policy of 1993–96 entailed, needed more than a few months or even a year or two for the Israeli public to resolve. Israelis, however, were not allowed much time to internalise the new, non-confrontational definition of the situation, mainly because the successive Oslo Accords signed by the leaders determined that the first moves towards implementation, for example, the redeployment of the IDF forces in the occupied territories, would take place within a few months and the final ones in less than five years.

The pressure to act with considerable haste came not only from the outside, that is, from the American administration and Arab partners to the negotiations, but from some domestic imperatives as well. These had to do with the democratic electoral cycle.²⁵ Although the public clearly still needed time to adjust to the new reality, the Labour leaders had to produce some tangible results before the 1996 elections. Having to make a decision about priorities, however, they invested more efforts in the negotiations with the Palestinians and failed to deal with the problem of the attitudes of Israelis at home. They hardly addressed or tried to alleviate the fears of those opposed to the peace process, and to win their support. Instead, they denounced the opposition of the Right as irrational and fanatic. Thus, the small gap between the two roughly equal political camps widened, leaving the Labour leaders preaching to the converted half of the population, and the other half believing that their security concerns were being virtually sacrificed for a worthless piece of paper. At this point, more than ever, the use of force appeared to constitute in the eyes of some Israelis the means of avoiding a national catastrophe, as manifested by the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin. The recognition of the functionality of the use of force was observed mainly among those opposed to the peace process, but it could be noticed in the pro-peace camp as well: for example, when the Labour government launched the 'Grapes of Wrath' operation against Lebanon in April 1996, the pro-peace camp hardly protested.

The results of the 1996 elections suggest that a large part of the Israeli public accepted the Right's contention that the Labour government was buying peace from the Palestinians too quickly and at too high a price. As a result, Netanyahu, the right-wing Likud candidate who promised the voters 'Peace and Security', clearly part of an ongoing process of social construction of the security threat, defeated (albeit narrowly) the incumbent Peres, the Labour candidate who promised a 'New Middle East'. However, with the decrease in the frequency and fatality of Palestinian terrorist attacks in the mid-1990s, and with the gradual realisation that the entire peace process was in danger of collapsing under the leadership of Netanyahu, whose unconcealed resentment and distrust of the Arabs were growing in the eyes of many observers, a swing back to the non-military option reappeared. In the second half of the 1990s the advantages of political solutions to the basic security problems have apparently become more evident to wider public sectors within Israel than ever before. Regardless of the stand-still at the decision makers' level between June 1995 and May 1999 when Netanyahu was in power, there were some significant indications that Israelis' security-beliefs structures have been undergoing a major change.

It seems that a new and presently still nebulous assemblage of security beliefs has begun to emerge in Israel. This, for the time being is not much more than a 'public mood', and it is apparently the outcome of the Israeli public's cognitive effort to deal with numerous antithetical considerations: a strong desire for peace on the one hand and apprehension of the security risks it entails on the other; the realisation that although the intentions of the Arabs may still be hostile, it is they with whom peace must, at some point, be made; a strong attachment to and longing for the land of their forefathers and the realisation that parts of it must be given up in return for peace; the sense that territorial depth is essential to forestall any future surprise attack and the realisation that further territorial compromises, harmless or fraught with danger in terms of national security, are about to be made in the future because of external pressures or due to various legal obligations that Israel must fulfil, and so on.

The new 'mood' was translated into practice in the election of Ehud Barak as Prime Minister in May 1999. Formerly a bright military commander (like Rabin before him), Barak was elected on the basis of his advocacy of the peace process, undoubtedly a reflection of the Israeli public's accumulated fatigue from continuous engagements in military confrontations that seem to have no clear security benefits.

At the time of writing this chapter, about three months after the 1999 elections, the public political discourse in Israel is relatively sedate. This is probably because the peace/security agenda of the recently elected government is not yet quite clear and because the Right has not recovered thus far from the still fresh memory of its electoral defeat. It seems that the victory of Ehud Barak over Benjamin Netanyahu indeed indicated widespread readiness among the Israeli public to move ahead with the peace option and away from war. However, not at all costs. As was shown above, security considerations are no less dominant in the

agenda of the incumbent government than they were in that of the former, and the public is far from turning pacifist.

Are there any general conclusions to be learned from this case? First, it substantiates the model, first presented by Galtung, which predicted that the political periphery is often much slower than the political centre in replacing a war mind-set by a peace mentality (Galtung 1964). Second, it points to the perhaps unbridgeable gap between the need of politicians in democratic systems to react quickly to a changing environment (and to produce quick dividends in order to be relocated) and the much longer time needed for the public to build some confidence in its former enemies before sweeping changes are undertaken. Last but not least, it seems to prove the contested assumption that, today, the political top echelons and the rank and file no longer operate independently, and that the public, even if relatively less informed and less sophisticated politically than the decision makers, has indeed gained significant influence over matters of 'high politics' in general and in matters of foreign policy matters in particular.

Notes

- 1 The Arab—Israeli conflict has been the subject of political and academic interest throughout the world for the past four or five decades. Bernard Reich correctly observes that the bibliography alone of the vast literature written about this conflict would fill several volumes (Reich 1996:629).
- 2 For a discussion of this Jewish cultural trait see Breur (1978).
- 3 The single, though very important exception being the signing of the Israeli—Egyptian peace treaty in 1979.
- 4 In fact, even after Madrid, the Israeli Prime Minister, Yitzhak Shamir, was not convinced that the basically hostile intentions of the Arabs towards Israel had changed in any meaningful way. Thus, in a meeting with the press one year after Madrid, he summarised his view of the then-current situation compared to the pre-Madrid era by saying: 'Well, the sea is the same sea and the Arabs are the same Arabs', meaning that he saw no reason to replace the assumption of an existential threat that was the underlying principle of Israel's strategic outlook.
- 5 It should be noted that unlike the case in Europe, in Israel the Left—Right dichotomy refers not to differences in the two political camps' socio-economic agendas but mainly to their two antithetical security outlooks: the former, held by the left, considers the Israeli—Arab conflict solvable and therefore advocates the 'land for peace' formula, while the latter sees the conflict as basically zero-sum and hence opposes the making of significant territorial concessions by Israel, as these are taken to be highly risky.
- 6 Thus, as Alexander George (1980) skilfully demonstrated, in the early 1940s it took the shock of Pearl Harbor to enable President Franklin Roosevelt to convince the American nation that the US should revoke its isolationist policy and join the anti-German coalition, together with its formerly most frightening ideological rival, the Soviet Union. Roosevelt's successor, Harry Truman, on the other hand, found it equally difficult in the late 1940s and early 1950s to change this policy of

- cooperation again, and persuade the Americans of the need to withdraw from Roosevelt's friendly alliance with the USSR and support his Containment Doctrine. For an updated analysis of the perceptual gaps between the leaders and the general public see Page and Banabas (2000).
- 7 For the major significance of the environment to the state's identity see Jepperson *et al.* (1996).
 - 8 This reading of the situation is suggested by the 'New Historians' school. For such a view see, e.g. Pappe (1995). A sharp criticism of the 'New Historians' school can be found in Karsh (1997).
 - 9 For a detailed analysis of this myth see Shapira (1992).
 - 10 In a public opinion survey conducted in January 1999, twenty years after the signing of the Egypt—Israel peace treaty, the average mark given to Egypt by a representative sample of Israeli Jews aged 18 and above between 1 (full ally) and 5 (enemy) was 2.8 (*Peace Index*, January 1999). The findings of all surveys conducted since June 1994 in the framework of the Peace Index Project, headed by Prof. Ephraim Yaar and Dr Tamar Hermann, of the Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research, Tel Aviv University, can be found at <http://www.tau.ac.il/peace>, or requested by email from steinmet@ccsg.tau.ac. The samples include 500 interviewees each and represent the adult Jewish population of Israel. The questions cited here were originally presented in Hebrew.
 - 11 For a multi-faceted analysis of the influence of security concerns on Israeli political, social and cultural functioning see Bar Tal *et al.* (1998).
 - 12 Security beliefs or, rather, insecurity beliefs, are often defined as: 'an appraisal of a perceived danger in the environment by which a person feels threatened. [...] People form beliefs about being secure when they do not perceive threats or dangers, or even when they perceive threats or dangers but ones that can be overcome by them or coped with successfully' (Bar-Tal and Jacobson 1998:21).
 - 13 It should be mentioned here that, along the line of their overall criticism of the Zionist endeavour, which they consider colonialist, the New Historians challenge this common perception as well, and maintain that no war was really a 'no choice' one from the Israeli perspective.
 - 14 *Peace Index*, March 1995.
 - 15 *Peace Index*, March 1997.
 - 16 *Peace Index*, August 1997.
 - 17 See, for example, *Peace Index*, April 1997.
 - 18 *Peace Index*, September 1994.
 - 19 *Peace Index*, May 1998.
 - 20 *Peace Index*, July 1996, January 1997.
 - 21 *Peace Index*, March 1999.
 - 22 The support for peace with Syria in return for full Israel withdrawal from the Golan Heights is even lower, around 35 per cent. For a more detailed analysis of Israelis' perceptions of the unfolding peace process based on the *Peace Index* findings, see, e.g. Hermann and Yuchtman-Yaar (1997).
 - 23 In fact, only one significant change occurred between the end of October and early November 1995, when, following the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin on 4 November, support for the Oslo Process rose by almost 12 points (from 46.0 to 57.9). However, as can be seen in [Figure 7.4](#), this noticeable impact

dissipated within a few months, although support for the Oslo Processes has never returned to its low pre-murder levels. *Peace Index*, 8 November 1995.

24 *Peace Index*, February 1999.

25 On the issue of time as a factor in democratic functioning see Linz (1998).

8

The French and the use of force

Public perceptions and their impact on the policy-making process

Natalie La Balme

Introduction: the public and the use of force

Since the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, questions about the use of military force have more than ever become topical issues in France. French military forces have indeed been actively deployed more times to more places than in any comparable number of years during the Cold War. In December 1992, France sent 2,000 troops to Somalia as part of *Operation Restore Hope*. Since 1992, an average of more than 4,000 troops have been involved in the various UN and NATO peacekeeping operations in ex-Yugoslavia. In June 1994, under the auspices of the United Nations, 2,500 soldiers were deployed in order to bring assistance to the civilian population of Rwanda. Humanitarian aid is the common denominator of these post-Cold War military operations. Their main aim is not to serve the national interest but rather to allay civilian deaths and suffering in countries ravaged by civil war. Intra-state conflicts calling for peace operations have indeed replaced the more traditional inter-state conflicts prevalent prior to and during the Cold War.

Has public opinion been an element in the decisions to undertake these military operations? Proponents of the realist theory would argue that the decision to deploy French troops as part of military operations was taken without regard to popular attitudes, as these are merely an ill-informed, volatile and mood-driven force. Their contenders would respond that some of these decisions were taken under public pressure generated by televised images of human suffering. Régis Debray, for instance, a leading French intellectual, deems that France's foreign policy is today 'shaped by the television, the radio and the press'.¹

Are French policy makers thus impervious to public influence or are they, on the contrary, responsive to it? As was argued in [Chapter 1](#), while some progress was made to fill the gaps, our knowledge of the contents and determinants of public opinion is much more developed concerning the political system in the United States than with respect to European countries. In this chapter, an effort is made to improve this situation with respect to France. In particular, the aim is to determine to what extent, on what kinds of issues, under what circumstances, if

any, the French public played a role in recent decisions to undertake military operations. Did policy makers decide to participate in certain military operations because of a belief that the public demanded some form of action? Did they, on the contrary, rule out certain courses of action because of a belief that lack of support would reduce or eliminate the prospects of success of the mission? Did they revise their position because of public response to a given policy orientation?

In order to address these questions, we must first briefly analyse the public's attitude towards the use of force in general. In the first part of this chapter, we shall therefore determine whether the French favour contributing troops to military operations, notably peace operations, and, if so, identify what are the sources of this support. We will also determine whether the fundamental changes in the international system that began with the fall of the Berlin Wall have had an impact on the French attitudes towards the use of military force. We will then try to reveal, through the examination of case studies, to what degree public preferences have been incorporated into policy makers' decisions to use force, how they take them into account when selecting a course of action and whether and how they feel motivated or constrained by the public.

The public's attitude towards military operations

In order to determine how the French public perceives military interventions, we look at three different sources of information.² First, more than sixty surveys on the broad theme of the use of force, conducted since 1980, have been analysed.³ Individual in-depth interviews were then conducted with thirty-two opinion leaders. The members of this panel were selected according to their knowledge of the subject and of the French public. This panel was composed of members of the defence committee of the National Assembly, elected members of garrison towns, members of the media specialised in defence questions, humanitarian association and youth movement representatives.⁴ These interviews brought forth explanations of some of the trends revealed by the survey study. Finally, a thorough study of the press was carried out, since the media not only contributes to the formation of public opinion but also, at least partially, reflects it.⁵

General trends on the use of force

France's involvement and role in the international system have always been strong. From the Suez crisis to the French participation in the Gulf War in 1991, French military operations have indeed been numerous. Whereas some were conducted in accordance with defence agreements with African states, others can be assimilated with traditional war operations. Yet, since the end of the Cold War, the problem of war and peace has fundamentally changed. Specific dangers linked to the East—West ideological opposition have been replaced by diffuse risks entailing a variety of possible uses of the armed forces. Public perception of

Table 8.1 The acceptance of the event of war (in %)

Question: 'Some say that the event of war is so intolerable that it is better to accept the domination of a great power. What do you think?'

	Sept. 85	Sept. 86	Sept. 88	May 89	June 90	May 91	May 92	May 93	May 94	June 95	June 96	June 97	June 98
It is better to risk a war	48	51	49	49	51	61	58	56	58	52	53	49	46
It is better to accept domination	28	28	28	29	29	22	23	26	27	30	29	35	38
No opinion	24	21	23	22	20	17	19	18	15	18	18	16	16

Source: Baromètre SOFRES/SIRPA, Les Français et la défense nationale.

the use of force has nevertheless not dramatically changed, although in France, as in other European countries, since the plight of the Kurds following the Gulf War, a humanitarian consciousness that favours peace operations has emerged.

The overall stability of French public opinion on the principle of the use of force is indeed revealed by the following survey question which forms part of the regular SIRPA (*Service d'Information et de Relations Publiques des Armées*—recently renamed DICOD, *Delegation pour l'Information et la Communication du Ministère de la Défense*) barometer of the French Defence Ministry since 1985. It reads: 'Some say that the event of war is so intolerable that it is better to accept the domination of a great power. What do you think?' This question stresses the intolerability of the event of war in order to propose two options: the option of resistance, which entails the risk of war, and the option of submission. No concrete situation is referred to as this question tries to gauge the overall principle of the use of force. The results of this survey, shown in Table 8.1, reveal the stability of public perception.

A strong majority of the French (between 46 per cent and 61 per cent) consistently prefer the risk of engaging in war rather than accepting submission. Hence, although the level of 'no opinion' reveals the limits of such a general question—around a fifth of the population feels it cannot answer such a question, which is probably due to the absence of reference to a specific situation—close to or more than 50 per cent of the French population consistently prefer to call upon the use of military force in such a situation. The increase from 51 per cent in 1990 to 61 per cent in 1991 is probably a result of the 'Gulf effect'. This is in fact consistent with the attitude of the French public during the Gulf War.⁶ They indeed strongly favoured France's participation in the allied war effort if all negotiation efforts had failed.

What is different since the end of the Cold War is the emergence of a humanitarian feeling amongst the general public. Table 8.2 reveals that whereas in the late 1980s support for the various possible uses of armed forces stagnated

Table 8.2 The use of French military force (in %)

Question: 'For each of the following reasons, would you approve or disapprove of the use of the French military force?'

	May 88	June 90	May 91	May 92	May 93	May 94	June 95	June 96	June 98
<i>To preserve the life of nationals abroad</i>									
Approve	65	76	73	81	84	86	85	84	88
Disapprove	24	14	16	12	11	9	10	10	10
No opinion	11	10	11	7	5	5	5	6	2
<i>In case of a major economic aggression</i>									
Approve	50	47	55	58	64	59	58	59	68
Disapprove	36	37	30	28	27	29	32	30	29
No opinion	14	16	15	14	9	12	10	11	3
<i>To destroy a terrorist camp</i>									
Approve	70	72	74	76	83	81	84	83	88
Disapprove	20	16	16	15	10	12	11	10	11
No opinion	10	12	10	9	7	7	5	7	1
<i>To contribute to bring peace in a region of the world</i>									
Approve	58	60	70	73	72	75	73	75	78
Disapprove	27	26	20	17	18	17	20	16	20
No opinion	15	14	10	10	10	8	7	9	2
<i>To obtain the liberation of French hostages</i>									
Approve	63	74	79	84	90	87	91	89	89
Disapprove	27	17	13	10	6	8	6	7	10
No opinion	10	9	8	6	4	5	3	4	1
<i>To honour the defence agreements passed with a number of African countries</i>									
Approve	56	55	61	59	60	62	60	60	68
Disapprove	25	26	24	26	26	24	28	26	28
No opinion	19	19	15	15	14	14	12	14	4
<i>To assist a population in distress (famine, civil war)</i>									
Approve		73	79	81	81	83	78	82	87
Disapprove		14	13	11	11	11	14	12	12
No opinion		13	8	8	8	6	8	6	2
<i>To intervene under the auspices of the United Nations for the respect of international law</i>									
Approve			82	84	84	84	81	79	85
Disapprove			9	7	8	8	12	12	12
No opinion			9	9	8	8	7	9	3

Source: Baromètre SOFRES/SIRPA, Les Français et la défense nationale.

around 50 per cent to 70 per cent, by the mid-1990s this rate of approval reached between 58 and 91 per cent. Aside from the traditional support of the use of force in order to preserve the life of nationals abroad or to free French hostages, this evolution specially benefited the support of the use of force in order to fight terrorism (up to 88 per cent in 1998), to contribute 'to bring peace in a region of the world' (up from 58 per cent in 1988 to 78 per cent in 1998) or to 'assist a population in distress' (up to 87 per cent in 1998)—situations which often call for peace operations which have characterised the post-Cold War era.

Support for peace operations

The various peacekeeping or peace-making operations of the beginning of the 1990s, conducted under the auspices of the United Nations, have indeed gathered strong initial support. This initial support, based on humanitarian concerns, was granted in a particular historical context, i.e. the wake of the Gulf War, when the general trust in the capacity of the United Nations to handle multilateral military operations was at its highest. *Operation Restore Hope* in Somalia in December 1992, for example, enjoyed overwhelming support from the French public. As the troops arrived in Somalia in December 1992, a CSA/La Vie poll found 82 per cent support for France's participation in this UN-mandated operation to deliver humanitarian relief.⁷ The French were moved by the haunting images on television of starving people. Across the country, children even brought bags of rice to school for the young Somalians. The peacekeeping operation in Rwanda in 1994 was a little different and actually quite unusual. Questions on the actual motives behind *Operation Turquoise* were raised due to France's prior support for President Juvénal Habyarimana's regime, which was accused of the massacre of hundreds of thousands of Tutsis. The ambiguity of the situation transpired through the results of a poll taken at the very beginning of *Operation Turquoise* when 49 per cent of the respondents agreed with the following statement, itself quite ambiguous: 'France is in its role by intervening in Rwanda', while 35 per cent agreed with the opposite statement, no less ambiguous: 'France is assuming responsibilities that are not hers'.⁸ Yet, if this initial support seemed somewhat weak, the strong majority that approved the peacekeeping operation favoured France's initiative to address a pressing humanitarian problem. As for France's involvement in Bosnia, the level of support was always similarly strong. Survey results showed that support varied from 60 per cent to 70 per cent between 1992 and 1994. The support was at its highest in July 1993, a few weeks after General Philippe Morillon's actions towards the besieged population of Srebrenica. The atrocities of the ongoing ethnic cleansing drove the public to believe that France should take strong steps to stop it. In December 1992, 67 per cent felt that France should participate in a military operation in ex-Yugoslavia 'because it is intolerable to allow such a civil war to go on in Europe without reacting' and only 23 per cent considered that France should not participate in such an operation 'because it would be too risky for its soldiers'.⁹ Later 62 per cent of

Table 8.3 Individual motivation for the use of force (in %)

Question: 'For each of the following reasons, do you think that it is justified or not to fight at the expense of risking one's life?'

	May 88	June 90	May 91	May 92	May 93	May 94	June 95	June 96	June 98
<i>To defend our country against the invasion by a foreign army</i>									
Approve	82	80	83	85	83	82	83	80	82
Disapprove	13	12	10	9	12	13	13	14	18
No opinion	5	8	7	6	5	5	4	6	—
<i>To defend other French territories (Guadeloupe, Martinique . . .)</i>									
Approve	59	58	62	66	65	65	64	65	64
Disapprove	31	28	27	24	27	26	30	26	36
No opinion	10	14	11	10	8	9	6	9	—
<i>To defend the values of our society (freedom, human rights . . .)</i>									
Approve	74	72	73	74	77	77	77	73	73
Disapprove	16	17	17	15	16	16	17	18	27
No opinion	10	11	10	11	7	7	6	9	—
<i>To defend allied countries, like Germany, from an invasion</i>									
Approve	48	38	47	48	46	49	49	51	—
Disapprove	39	44	39	37	43	40	41	37	—
No opinion	13	18	14	15	11	11	10	12	—
<i>To defend countries with which France has passed defence agreements</i>									
Approve	32	31	32	34	29	30	29	29	37
Disapprove	53	52	54	52	60	58	60	59	63
No opinion	15	17	14	14	11	12	11	12	—

Source: Baromètre SOFRES/SIRPA, Les Français et la défense nationale.

respondents even agreed, in April 1993, that they would understand if their child or a member of their family were called to participate in an operation whereas only 30 per cent were opposed to such a contingency.¹⁰

Finally, the evolution of the public support for the NATO operation in Kosovo further reveals the public's sensitivity towards humanitarian issues. After a first period of doubt immediately following the launch of *Operation Allied Force*, probably due to a lack of information, a majority of the French were in favour of the NATO-led operation. Indeed, although 46 per cent of the public disapproved of NATO's air strikes at the end of March 1999,¹¹ by 6 April, 50 per cent,¹² and

17 April, up to 70 per cent of the public approved of NATO's military operation in Yugoslavia.¹³ This rapid structuration of the public was in fact largely due to the media coverage of the plight of the Kosovar refugees. Support for this operation was indeed essentially a moral and humanitarian reaction. Survey results were not, in that respect, the only illustration of this humanitarian emotion: donations were yet another expression. Hence, humanitarian values legitimised the interventions in Somalia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Kosovo. The importance that the French public grants to these humanitarian values and to the defence of the more general values that symbolise Western society (like freedom and human rights) in fact translates itself in [Table 8.3](#). The French are indeed overwhelmingly in favour of, at the expense of risking their own life, the use of force in order to defend these values.

The casualty hypothesis

Does this mean that the casualty hypothesis is not supported in the event of the international use of force, even when national interests are not directly involved, such as in peace operations? The 'zero casualties' concept is in fact implicitly refuted by the French population. It does not coincide with their perception of the role of the army. More than sixty French soldiers perished in the Bosnian conflict and the tolerance for casualties did not seem to diminish as the conflict continued. In February 1994, a few days before the expiration of the ultimatum addressed to the Bosnian Serbs requesting that they stop shelling the city of Sarajevo, a survey shows that 53 per cent of the respondents favoured a large-scale ground operation if the ultimatum was not respected.¹⁴ Similarly, in April 1999, 60 per cent of the public favoured French participation in a multilateral ground operation in the event that the NATO air strikes did not bring an end to the Serbian offensive in Kosovo.¹⁵ These results are significant as ground operations, by nature, are more costly in terms of human losses than air strikes. Opinion leaders interviewed on this subject also explicitly denounce the 'zero-dead doctrine'. They believe that it is 'absurd' and almost 'hypocritical'. They also underline its strategic incoherence: 'If zero deaths is the objective, the mission is bound to fail.' This does not mean that the French are trigger-happy nor that they are willing to sustain a large number of casualties. The threshold for deaths and casualties is indeed difficult to estimate. In fact, compared to the Cold War period where the security of the soldiers sent on military operations was not a worry—thousands of French soldiers perished during the war in Indochina accompanied by the total indifference of the French population—the French have become more sensitive to the security of the soldiers sent on military operations. French policy makers are aware of the duality and ambiguity of the French public: a desire for humanitarian operations, on the one hand, as well as the survival of its soldiers on the other. The French, in fact, support military engagement 'à la française' which uses limited means, 'which favours a dissuasive attitude to that of confrontation, appeasement to

escalation, and which tries to limit casualties'.¹⁶ Yet, they are also well aware and rather realistically accept that as soon as the military force is deployed, casualties are to be expected.

***An explanation for rising scepticism on the part of the public
about peace operations***

Support for the operation in Bosnia nevertheless began to erode in June 1994 and, in July 1996, only 54 per cent¹⁷ (down from 67 per cent in December 1992) of the respondents still favoured such a peacekeeping operation. What then can explain this manifest drop in support and does that reveal an overall scepticism towards peace operations? There are clear indications that the reasons for the drop in support towards the peacekeeping operation in Bosnia lie in the public's distrust of the United Nations and of the French government. The French public was indeed frustrated with the performance of the United Nations, and of the French government, in Bosnia. They felt that the UN peacekeeping operation was not very successful, not only in protecting the civilian population of Bosnia but also in ensuring the security of the UN troops involved. Survey results illustrate these reservations about the performance of the United Nations. In May 1993, 66 per cent of respondents considered the United Nations to be inefficient. This number rose to 76 per cent in May 1994 and 79 per cent in May 1995!¹⁸ This frustration did not only concern the United Nations; the French government was also affected. A survey, conducted shortly after General Philippe Morillon's mobilisation in Srebrenica, indicated that 52 per cent of the respondents considered that 'the French government is not making sufficient effort to try to stop the fighting in ex-Yugoslavia' whereas only 31 per cent considered that 'the French government is doing everything in its power to stop the fighting'.¹⁹ A survey, held at the time of the ultimatum addressed by NATO to the Bosnian Serbs, in February 1994, also shows that 52 per cent of the respondents disapproved of the way that the French president and the French government were handling the crisis.²⁰ The public tended to favour a firmer approach that would allow the troops to have the option of using force to stop the violence, whereas François Mitterrand always tried to prevent escalation. This dichotomy between the French government and the public on the question of which means to use in the peacekeeping operation in Bosnia reached its highest point during the hostage crisis in June 1995. The French felt humiliated at the sight of their soldiers brandishing a white flag as a sign of resignation. The assertive attitude adopted by the newly elected president Jacques Chirac (deployment of the *Force de Reaction Rapide*) was therefore largely approved. The media and opinion leaders applauded France's 'renewed vigour'. Yet, it should be noted that this restored trust in the French government's actions in Bosnia was short-lived. It did not extend to France's involvement in the NATO-led operation in Bosnia. Indeed, although the NATO Implementation Force has been more assertive than the UN operation was, a survey conducted in June 1996 shows that public

support remained at the 1995 level. Only 54 per cent of respondents in June 1996 approved of 'France's participation, under the auspices of NATO, in ex-Yugoslavia'.²¹ Explanation for this relatively unenthusiastic support is probably to be found in the difficulties encountered by the NATO troops in enforcing the Dayton peace agreement. This distrust of the United Nations and of the French government does not, however, reveal an overall scepticism towards peace operations. The French do not indeed question their moral imperative to assist a suffering population nor have the setbacks encountered by UN troops caused the French to be disillusioned by peacekeeping operations. It is in fact interesting to note that although 52 per cent of the public considered, on 17 April 1999, that the NATO air strikes against Serbian forces in Kosovo were inefficient, 70 per cent nevertheless still approved of the military operation.²² Similarly, since May 1991, between 70 per cent and 87 per cent of the respondents agree with the use of force 'to intervene, under the auspices of the United Nations, for the respect of international law', 'to assist a population in distress (famine, civil war...)', or to 'contribute to bring peace in a region of the world'. If the support for the humanitarian cause of 'assisting a population in distress' did drop (though very slightly) in 1995 (78 per cent down from 83 per cent in May 1994), it remained strong, recovered its initial level in June 1996 and rose to 87 per cent in 1998.

Hence, the French public has remained, overall, stable in its attitude towards military operations although there has been a general evolution in favour of peace-operations and operations led in order to respect international law. These attitude shifts are nevertheless not random, but are rather event-driven reactions to the ongoing situation. They respond to the evolution of the international situation and to the emergence of new forms of violence and conflict in the international arena. Results of this study therefore support the findings quoted in [Chapter 1](#) concerning the basic stability and coherence of mass public opinion.

The public's influence on the decision-making process

The question to address at this point is: do policy makers take public opinion into account when choosing a course of action? To what extent, on what kinds of issues, under what circumstances, if any, has the public had an influence on France's decisions to use force? Day after day during the Kosovo crisis of 1999, members of the media and political analysts raised this question of the public's influence on the political will of decision makers. Yet addressing this question is a little more delicate than describing the state of, or trends in, public opinion in view of the many methodological problems relating to the establishment of cause—effect relationships, some of which were already discussed in the introductory chapter. Research on the causal links between mass opinions and foreign policy decision making remains indeed scarce, especially in France.

For the purposes of this study, we have opted for methodological pluralism, based on the mixing of interpretative and historical approaches. We first relied on in-depth investigations of public opinion's impact on specific policies as

determined through a correlation of polling results and policy decisions. We followed up with a thorough analysis of policy makers' memoirs and/or biographies that provided interesting clues on how they perceived public opinion. Still, the central axis of this research lies elsewhere. Given the necessity to take the decision makers' perceptions into account and since this research technique offers a valuable tool for penetrating the institutional black box of policy making, we held a number of in-depth interviews with both civil and military foreign policy decision makers (such as Foreign Secretary, Defence Secretary, Prime Minister, senior military and civil service officers).²³ In the second part of this chapter we shall thus investigate, through the examination of case studies, to what degree public preferences have been incorporated into policy makers' decisions to use military force and how they have affected the conduct of the military operation. These case studies cover François Mitterrand's presidency and essentially apply to peacekeeping operations, although we shall also consider, for the interest of the study, the public's impact during the Gulf War.

Former UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali once stated that: 'For the past two centuries, it is law that provided the sources of authority for democracy. Today, law seems to be replaced by opinion as the source of authority, and the media serve as the arbiter of public opinion.'²⁴ Does public opinion today truly have such a powerful effect on policy making? A recent report from the Foreign Affairs Committee of the French National Assembly indeed concludes that 'one must admit the decisive influence of the media on both the decision to launch a military operation and in the way to conduct it'.²⁵ Yet, a detailed look at the opinion—policy nexus reveals a far more complex relationship.

***When decision makers try to anticipate the public's
reactions: the case of the Gulf War***

Policy makers certainly consistently try to anticipate public reaction. In his study, Philip Powlick (1990) revealed that 84 per cent of the foreign policy officials he interviewed for his study admitted trying to anticipate how the public was going to react.²⁶ It is thus feasible that policy makers can be constrained by their very apprehension of the public's possible reactions to a given policy option. François Mitterrand's attitude during the Gulf crisis is in fact revealing in this respect. In the autumn of 1990, as the Allies started preparing for *Operation Desert Storm*, a majority of the French public supported the eventuality of France's participation in the multilateral military operation. Yet François Mitterrand felt the urge to further mobilise the public. This urge explains his unprecedented communication effort. Between August and December 1990, he personally held six press conferences at key moments of the crisis (such as the hostage crisis or the violation of the French ambassador's residence in Kuwait). His main aim was 'to educate' and, as stated by former Secretary General,

Hubert Védrine 'to prepare the public for the inescapable consequences of the war logic initiated by Saddam Hussein'.²⁷ Unsure of how the public would react, and in order to prevent a possible uprising, François Mitterrand took the lead.

Once *Desert Storm* was launched, François Mitterrand also took the necessary measures in order to prevent the members of government from debating the opportunity of the war. Indeed, the French political class was very divided on the question as to whether France should or should not participate in the Gulf War. Jean-Pierre Chevènement's position is well known. As Defence Secretary, he strongly opposed France's participation in the Gulf war and resigned only a few days after the launch of *Desert Storm*. Many other close advisers and political figures also questioned the reasons for France's participation. Hence, from Monday 21 January 1991, the members of government were only able to express themselves on the Gulf War from the 'Centre Kléber'²⁸ and only once they had obtained permission from the Elysée Palace or from Matignon. The aim of this scheme was clear: to prevent any kind of protest and to 'unify the public speech'.²⁹

François Mitterrand's decision not to let draftees participate in the war effort also follows the same logic. On 10 November 1991, when Secretary of State James Baker was in France in order to obtain the President's support for a UN resolution authorising the use of force, the latter replied: 'How will I explain to the French farmers that I threatened the life of their children to restore a millionaire?'³⁰ When mothers started to express their fright on televised talk shows, François Mitterrand announced, during his last press conference prior to *Operation Desert Storm*, that no draftee would take part in the operation, on the front or on warships. His closest aides qualify this as a very 'personal' and 'political' decision that François Mitterrand announced without even prior notice to his Chief of Staff. Senior military officers still question today whether such a decision was justified, especially in the light of the logistic difficulties it generated on the warships. Yet, François Mitterrand nevertheless chose to take all options to limit a possible upheaval.

Hence policy makers can either abstain from or engage in a given action by anticipating what they perceive to be possible adverse reaction from the public. In this case, the President was constrained by his apprehension of the public and therefore took his time to prepare the French for the military operation in the Gulf. The public thus did have an impact on the policy process although it did not divert François Mitterrand from his principal objective: participate, in case of war, in the multilateral military operation.

Public opinion as a catalyst? Operation Restore Hope in Somalia and Operation Turquoise in Rwanda

Some observers feel that public opinion can also act as a catalyst in the decision-making process. Régis Debray indeed considers that The discussion on the judiciousness of a humanitarian military operation, in Africa for example, comes

to an end when it is known that 78 per cent of the French population approves it.³¹ We have revealed that a strong majority of the French public supports the idea of UN peacekeeping operations. The French feel they have a moral responsibility to assist suffering people and to allay civilian deaths in countries ravaged by civil war. Since May 1991, we have shown that between 70 per cent and 87 per cent of the respondents agree with the use of force: ‘To intervene, under the auspices of the United Nations, for the respect of international law’, ‘to assist a population in distress (famine, civil war...)', or to ‘contribute to bring peace in a region of the world.’³² Let us note that Graham (1994) in his model of public opinion impact considers that a preponderant level of public opinion (70–79 per cent) not only causes the political system to act according to its dictates but also deters political opposition from challenging the specific decision, and, in response to a nearly unanimous opinion (more than 80 per cent), decisions appear to be automatic. Yet, do policy makers really decide to undertake certain courses of action only because of a belief that the public demands some form of action? Let us look more closely at the decision to participate in the peace operations in Somalia and in Rwanda.

On 17 November 1992, the UN Secretary General’s proposal to deploy the French troops based in Djibouti to assist in the distribution of the humanitarian aid in Somalia was rejected.³³ The members of the French government were divided. The Defence Secretary at the time, Pierre Joxe, was against any type of humanitarian military operation. On the other hand, Humanitarian Aid Secretary, Bernard Kouchner, strongly favoured such action. In the following days, the French were moved by the haunting images on television of starving people. Across the country, children brought bags of rice to school for the young Somalians. The question of France’s participation in the peacekeeping operation was re-examined during a Cabinet meeting on 3 December 1992 in the President’s presence. François Mitterrand resolved the dispute. France was to take part in *Operation Restore Hope*. What led him to such a decision? Was it public pressure? Was it political pressure emanating from Francophone African states, which wanted to limit US influence on the African continent? Was it political pressure emanating from the US wishing France’s participation in the peace operation? Pierre Joxe explains that the President decided to participate in *Operation Restore Hope* upon receipt of a letter from George Bush. The Defence Secretary recalls that when he expressed his opposition to the mission, François Mitterrand answered: ‘You’re probably right, but we cannot say “no” to the Americans. They have committed themselves.’³⁴ Yet if François Mitterrand chose first and foremost to answer Bush’s call, he was also well aware of the public’s disposition towards peace operations. Most of the policy makers whom we interviewed agreed that *one* of the reasons for France’s participation in *Operation Restore Hope* was to prevent public disapproval had France remained idle. Hence, public opinion was not the exclusive reason for France’s participation in the peace operation yet it was factored into the decision-making process.

The situation in Rwanda was somewhat different. France's first reaction, upon learning of the death of President Juvénal Habyarimana on 6 April 1994, was to evacuate its nationals and not to intervene in the conflict. It was only when questions were raised in the media and amongst humanitarian associations about France's responsibility in the conflict that the French government started to consider a peace operation. Once again, the members of government were divided. Foreign Secretary at the time, Alain Juppé and the President's Personal Chief of Staff, General Christian Quesnot, were strongly in favour of this operation. François Léotard, Defence Secretary and Prime Minister Edouard Balladur were more reluctant. *Operation Turquoise* was nevertheless decided on 15 June. What led to this decision? 'The rise of public opinion pressure as it took the full measure of the massacres that were going on in that country', replied a close presidential adviser.³⁵ The President himself declared that, 'We could not see the images of what was going on in Rwanda which were brought into all the homes in Europe through the media, and let it be.'³⁶ Policy makers themselves, therefore, admit that public opinion acted as a catalyst to this peace operation. Yet, let us specify that the French public never expressed an outright request for a peace operation. There was no mass mobilisation, and the French were actually quite ambivalent towards the operation itself. It is in fact quite conceivable that what the political leaders feared most was that France be accused of complicity with 'genocide' or 'ethnic cleansing' at a time when the public was particularly sensitive to such terms. One of the aims of *Operation Turquoise* could very well have been to silence these accusations brought against France.

These two cases reveal that the cause and effect relationship between public opinion and the decision to participate in peace operations is thus more complex than what is often assumed. Indeed, in both cases, public opinion is factored into the decision makers' assessment of policy options, yet policy makers do not decide to participate in peace operations *only* because of a belief that the public demands some form of action. Public opinion can act as a catalyst, but it does not, by itself, have the power to force governments to launch these military operations. A detailed look at the opinion—policy nexus during the conflict in ex-Yugoslavia in fact further reveals that policy makers do not systematically respond to public opinion.

Symbolic actions to contain public opinion: François Mitterrand's partial concessions in ex-Yugoslavia

François Mitterrand did realise that the level of support for France's involvement in ex-Yugoslavia was always strong. He did therefore concede to a number of symbolic gestures in order to *contain* public opinion. A first example is his call in favour of the opening of a security corridor to Dubrovnik on 10 November 1991. This humanitarian act was led by Bernard Kouchner, Humanitarian Aid Secretary at the time, on 20 November. It was undertaken 'largely under public pressure' as stated by former Secretary General Hubert Vedrine.³⁷ It remained

purely symbolic, however, since no military peace operation was then considered. During the closing press conference of the European Council, on 27 June 1992, François Mitterrand made a second concession. He admitted that, ‘Serbia is today the aggressor in the Bosnian conflict even if its origin stems from faraway.’ According to a close adviser, François Mitterrand regretted having to make what he considered was too summary a presentation of the Bosnian situation, but he also wanted to finally silence the criticism that had emerged in the press after an interview he gave to the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* on 29 November 1991.³⁸ During this interview, he had refused to name the aggressors. François Mitterrand’s surprise visit to Sarajevo, on 28 June 1992, was yet a third symbolic gesture. He admitted the decisive influence of the outspoken intellectual Bernard-Henri Lévy on his decision to go to Sarajevo. Indeed, what prompted his decision was a letter that had been given to him by Bernard-Henri Lévy from President Izetbegovic.³⁹

Yet, although he did concede to these symbolic measures, he did not directly yield to public pressure. He was convinced that the conflict in Bosnia could only be resolved by a political solution. Hence, while the atrocities of the ongoing ethnic cleansing drove the public to become increasingly frustrated with the government’s performance in Bosnia and to favour the use of force—that is military violence—to stop the fighting,⁴⁰ François Mitterrand always refused ‘to engage France—especially alone—in any kind of war in the Balkans’.⁴¹ When several intellectuals criticised his political choices, François Mitterrand responded: ‘What do these personalities want? War? France and its army, alone, in a combat by nature deadly? Let me prefer other ways of doing things.’⁴² He maintained his political orientation despite this strong movement of intellectuals and despite survey results which revealed the public’s frustration. Similarly, despite a vivid debate between policy makers on the one hand, and outspoken intellectuals and journalists on the other, François Mitterrand refused to lift the arms embargo instituted on 26 September 1991 by UN resolution 713. He strongly opposed the American proposal of ‘lift and strike’, also upheld by French intellectuals (i.e. to lift the arms embargo on the Bosnian government and use air power against the Serbs), and chose not to yield even when this became an electoral issue during the European elections of 1994. Hence, this case study reveals that policy makers do not systematically respond to public opinion and can in fact choose to confront it when convinced of the judiciousness of their political choices.

The executive’s margin of freedom

This brief survey is by no means a comprehensive analysis of the role that public opinion plays in the decision to participate in military operations. It does, however, reveal the possible types of effects public opinion may have on the policy process and illustrates the general point that the public opinion—policy relationship is complex and variable rather than simple and constant. It

challenges both the assumption of a profound automatic cause and effect relationship between public opinion and foreign policy decision making and the total lack thereof. It also reveals the leeway for decision that the French policy makers have. Indeed, although François Mitterrand prepared the French for the Gulf War and chose not to let the draftees participate in the war effort, the public did not prevent him from engaging France in the multilateral operation. Similarly, in ex-Yugoslavia the public did not drive him to change his policy orientation nor to allow the French soldiers involved in the peace operation to adopt a more offensive posture, although François Mitterrand did choose to concede some symbolic measures in order to contain public pressure and to prevent popular uprising. In Somalia, finally, he was pressed to participate in *Operation Restore Hope*, but did so very cautiously, far from the troubles of Mogadishu.

This opinion-policy nexus is also more interactive and reciprocal than unidirectional. Indeed, if the above case studies reveal that public opinion is often a constraint for policy makers, a constraint that they must factor into policy decisions, there is also a whole other dimension that must not be omitted. Policy makers can also come to use public pressure as a political tool either to convince one's own entourage or international partners. A significant example of this is the mortar that hit the Sarajevo market on 5 February 1994 and the subsequent international response. It is indeed often assumed that the public's reactions to the horrific TV images determined the decision of the ultimatum on Sarajevo. A close analysis of the decision-making process reveals that the reality is quite different.

Indeed, long before Sarajevo's massacre, Alain Juppé, Foreign Secretary at the time, was determined to take firmer action in Bosnia. Even before Christmas 1993, Juppé 'had given US Secretary of State Warren Christopher a firm message that either the US must do more to become engaged or the EU would take tougher action alone'.⁴³ British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd also 'traveled to Washington in the week before the massacre to rein force the European pressure'.⁴⁴ Although the United States began to stiffen their position, the Clinton administration still resisted giving more political support to the peace efforts of the United Nations. The market massacre then occurred. The French government seized the opportunity of the emotion raised by the TV images to mobilise all its partners to demand that the Bosnian Serbs be threatened by air strikes. As White House Communications Director Mark Gearan explained, the market massacre 'helped the (French) argument'.⁴⁵ Graham Allison, Assistant US Defence Secretary at the time, confirmed that: 'France was pressing for action. The Sarajevo market massacre crystallised for the Clinton administration that it had to do something; that we could not do nothing. Those who wanted to do something seized on it'.⁴⁶ Four days later, Clinton backed NATO in issuing an unprecedented ultimatum to the Bosnian Serbs. Alain Juppé had used the alleged emotion this event sent throughout the public to convince his international partners of the necessity of an ultimatum.

Theoretical implications—conclusion

The common assumption that suggests that French policy makers are insulated from public pressure is thus invalidated. Public opinion is indeed not completely irrelevant in the foreign policy process in France. We have in fact demonstrated in this chapter that although public opinion is rarely the exclusive factor taken into account when selecting a course of action, decision makers can nevertheless be either constrained by or motivated by public opinion in their policy choices, and can also come to use it as a political tool.

At this stage of research, it nevertheless remains difficult to determine general theoretical rules that would govern this complex opinion—policy relationship. The public's influence indeed largely depends on a number of variables that are difficult to predict, such as the issue at hand, the extent of the media coverage and the strength of the consensus among representatives of the executive branch. Indeed, whether it be in the case of the Gulf War, Somalia or Rwanda, the public's impact increased as top decision makers (Prime Minister, Foreign Secretary, Defence Secretary) disagreed amongst themselves on the best conduct to adopt. According to Hubert Védrine, some empirical rules seem nevertheless to emerge: 'If the public does not have a fixed opinion on a subject, the government can convince it of the judiciousness of its action as long as the media are not actively hostile to it and that the government has a clear vision. If the public is *a priori* fixed and the media share the same opinion, the government will not be able to reverse the situation without a sustained effort. If the government does not know what it wants, or does not dare say it, it will suffer from the cumulated weight of the public and of the media, one following the other, or vice versa.'⁴⁷ This reference to the media is not surprising. French foreign policy officials are indeed very receptive to it and consider it to be the main operational source of public opinion, far more than opinion surveys, elites or elected officials.

Let us also note that, as revealed by Thomas Risse-Kappen (1994), the public's impact in France depends almost exclusively on the degree to which the top decision makers are prepared to take its views into account. Indeed, there are, in France, few institutionalised access points for societal demands on foreign policy issues to reach the political system. Hence mass public opinion affects policy only if it reaches top decision makers, and notably the President. It is in fact often he who decides whether or not to respond to the public's demands. Hence, French policy makers do retain the power to make policy choices and to lead. Strong will, clear vision and consensus within the executive branch are nevertheless a prerequisite. Public opinion *can* exert influence on the decision to participate in military operations but whether it does, and how it does, largely depends on the government's own assertive attitude.

Notes

1 Debray (1993:182).

2 The first part of this article is based on a team study carried out in 1995 and published in 1996. Cf. Cohen (1996).

- 3 Cf. Thiéblemont (1995).
- 4 Cf. La Balme (1995).
- 5 Cf. Bruneteaux (1995).
- 6 Cf. Dupoirier (1992).
- 7 CSA for *La Vie, Les Français et l'opération militaire en Somalie et une éventuelle opération a Sarajevo*, 10 December 1992.
- 8 TF1/7-7, 24-5 June 1994.
- 9 CSA for *La Vie, Les Français et l'opération militaire en Somalie et une éventuelle opération a Sarajevo*, 10 December 1992.
- 10 CSA for *La Croix, Les Français, les conflits armés dans le monde et leur résolution*, 16 April 1993.
- 11 CSA for *Le Parisien, La réaction des Français face aux bombardements de l'OTAN en Serbie*, 28 March 1999.
- 12 CSA for *Le Parisien, La réaction des Français a la situation de guerre en Serbie*, 6-7 April 1999.
- 13 IPSOS for *Le Journal de Dimanche, L'opinion des Français à l'égard de la situation en Yougoslavie*, 17 April 1999.
- 14 BVA for SIRPA, *Le conflit en ex-Yougoslavie: l'état de l'opinion au 18 février 1994*, 18 February 1994.
- 15 SOFRES for *Liberation, L'impact du conflit au Kosovo dans l'opinion publique française*, 27 April 1999.
- 16 Cohen (1996:42).
- 17 Baromètre SOFRES/SIRPA, *Les Français et la défense nationale*.
- 18 Baromètre SOFRES/SIRPA, *Les Français et la défense nationale*.
- 19 IFOP for VSD, *Les Français et les événements en ex-Yougoslavie*, 15 April 1993.
- 20 IFOP-GALLUP for *Le Journal du Dimanche*, GALLUP US for *CNN and USA Today, L'intervention militaire en Bosnie: l'opinion des Français et des Américains*, 10 February 1994.
- 21 Baromètre SOFRES/SIRPA, *Les Français et la défense nationale*.
- 22 IPSOS for *Le Journal de Dimanche, L'opinion des Français a l'égard de la situation en Yougoslavie*, 17 April 1999.
- 23 The interview sample consists of 37 foreign policy officials—two Prime Ministers, five Foreign Secretaries (one of whom later held the position of Prime Minister), three Defence Secretaries (one of whom later held the position of Prime Minister), six close Presidential advisers (Secretary General, Adjunct Secretary General, Spokesman, Special adviser), four Prime Minister advisers, four Foreign Secretary advisers, ten Defence Secretary advisers, three Presidential (personal) Chiefs of Staff and two Chiefs of Staff. These individuals were of course not chosen randomly but rather according to the responsibilities they held and the role they played within the foreign policy process. These interviews were conducted between 1996 and 1998.
- 24 Remarks made at the Freedom Forum Media Studies Center, New York, 19 March 1995. Cited in Strobel (1997:4).
- 25 Rapport d'information n°1950 de l'Assemblée nationale, *La politique d'intervention dans les conflits: éléments de doctrine pour la France* (1995:21).
- 26 Powlick (1990:213).
- 27 Védrine (1996:540).

- 28 The 'Centre Kléber' is an international conference centre situated in 'rue Kléber' in Paris. During the Gulf War, the French government used the facilities of this conference centre for most of its press conferences.
- 29 Interview with Jean-Louis Chambon, former member of the Elysée press service, 3 April 1997.
- 30 Favier and Martin-Roland (1996:465).
- 31 Debray (1993:183).
- 32 Baromètre SOFRES/SIRPA, *Les Français et la défense nationale*.
- 33 Institut des Hautes Etudes de Défense nationale 1993, rapport sur *L'intérêt d'un Conseil national de sécurité*, 45ème session, p. 22.
- 34 Cited in Cohen (1998:426).
- 35 Interview with Jean Musitelli, former Elysée spokesman, 1 April 1997.
- 36 Allocution de M. François Mitterrand, Président de la République, à l'occasion de la réception des ambassadeurs, Palais de l'Elysée, 31 August 1994.
- 37 Védrine (1996:615).
- 38 Interview with Jean Musitelli, former Elysée spokesman, 1 April 1997.
- 39 Kouchner (1995:39).
- 40 See Cohen (1996).
- 41 Védrine (1996:637).
- 42 Vendredi, *Hebdomadaire du Parti socialiste*, 21 January 1993.
- 43 Gowing (1994:71).
- 44 Gowing (1994).
- 45 Gowing (1994).
- 46 Gowing (1994:72).
- 47 Védrine (1996:65).

The myth of the reactive public

American public attitudes on military fatalities in the post-Cold War period

Steven Kull and Clay Ramsay

Introduction

Since the end of the Cold War a major portion of the American policy elite has perceived a major shift in the willingness of the American public to tolerate the loss of American soldiers in military operations. During the Cold War, virtually all military operations were in some way linked to the framework of the conflict with communism and thus were arguably linked to vital national interests. In the post-Cold War period, US troops have been used in a variety of operations for which the link is less direct or even arguably marginal. In such cases, it is widely believed among the US policy elite, public support for operations is, at best, tenuous and likely to collapse in the face of US troop fatalities. The public response to the deaths of eighteen US Rangers in Somalia in October 1993 is viewed as a key example. Most significant, this belief about the public appears to have had a significant impact on US foreign policy, leading policy makers to hesitate from using force when they might otherwise have done so, and when using force to do so in a more cautious fashion than would be ideal from a military perspective.

Our purposes in this chapter are two-fold. First, we will seek to demonstrate that this image of the public is indeed widespread in the American policy community and that it has had a significant impact on US foreign policy. We will make this case based on an interview study carried out with eighty-three members of the Washington foreign policy community in 1996, by public statements made by government officials, and by media interpretation of government behaviour.

Second, we will seek to demonstrate that this image of the public is largely a myth and is not sustained by available evidence. In fact, polls show little evidence that the majority of Americans are prone to respond to fatalities by wanting to withdraw US troops. If anything, the public is more likely to want to respond assertively. The critical determinant of the public's response is not whether US vital interests are involved but whether the operation is perceived as likely to succeed. This will be demonstrated by first analysing responses to actual fatalities in Somalia, in the Gulf War, in Saudi Arabia, and in Lebanon.

Second, we will analyse the response to perceived US troop fatalities in the peacekeeping operation in Bosnia. Third, we will examine the results of extensive polling that ask respondents to assess their responses to hypothetical scenarios involving US fatalities. Finally, we will also look at public responses to US conflicts during the Cold War that involved large-scale fatalities including the peace-keeping operation in Lebanon and the wars in Vietnam and Korea to assess what they may tell us about possible responses during the post-Cold War period.

Elite perceptions of public reaction to US troop fatalities

To assess elite perceptions, in addition to statements made on the public record, we will draw on a series of interviews conducted for a larger study that examined how the US policy-making community views US public attitudes on America's role in the post-Cold War world. Presented in greater detail in the book *Misreading the Public: The Myth of a New Isolationism* by Steven Kull and I.M. Destler,¹ these interviews were conducted in 1996 with eighty-three members of the policy community including twelve members and sixteen staff of the US Congress; nineteen officials of the executive branch (mostly State Department and National Security Council staff); eighteen journalists; and eighteen senior professionals at non-governmental organisations. They were chosen with an eye to representativeness and balance, but did not constitute a random sample of the policy community as a whole.

Belief that fatalities will result in majority demand to withdraw immediately

On the question of America's role in the world, three-quarters of interviewees expressed the view that the majority of Americans wants the US to disengage from the world. Respondents were also asked directly how they expected the public would react to US casualties in the course of participating in a UN peacekeeping operation, and how they believed the majority of the public had reacted after the deaths in Somalia.

The dominant response, given by two-fifths of all respondents interviewed and three-fifths of members of Congress and Congressional staffers was that if American troops are killed in the course of a peacekeeping operation, this would trigger a strong public demand for the immediate withdrawal of US troops. Others concurred with the view that there would be such a reflexive urge but believed that there were ways that it could be contained such as through strong leadership from Washington. Only one out of six said that the public could tolerate fatalities.

Those who held the view that the public would want to withdraw in response to fatalities stated it with considerable confidence. A prominent journalist said that in the event of fatalities, the public would want to 'remove them [troops],

yes, redeploy, whatever they call it, but remove them from danger'. A reporter thought that 'the threshold for deaths and casualties in peacekeeping is almost zero. It's not exactly zero, but it's pretty darn close.'

In the interviews, members of Congress made the strongest statements about the public's reactivity to casualties. One asserted that in the event of casualties 'there'll be a very strong call across the country to get our troops out of there. And the people who were opposed to it will be more energised in their opposition.'

This readiness to withdraw in response to casualties was seen as increasing in the course of operations. A former executive branch official said, 'The tolerance for casualties diminishes as a conflict continues and as it becomes less and less clear how we're going to finish it.'

In the interviews, peacekeeping in Bosnia frequently was cited as being vulnerable to shifts in public attitudes towards withdrawal. A congressional staff member said of Bosnia, 'If [it] suddenly heats up and suddenly we have people engaged in firefights and start getting a weekly death toll, then I don't think they'd like it at all', and went on to say that this would mean that they would want to withdraw. Another congressional staff member said that a clamour to withdraw would result after relatively few American casualties: 'God forbid, something does happen in Bosnia...and you sustain a number of US casualties—I don't even think it has to be...eleven... I don't know what the magic number would be.' An executive branch official did not even think the public could tolerate that many: 'One American soldier dies and we're all in trouble. I think it's the biggest worry some people have in the political system about somebody getting popped in Bosnia.'

All interviewees were also asked directly for their perceptions of how the public responded to the deaths of US soldiers in Somalia in October 1993. Almost three-fourths (including *all* media respondents) said that a majority had wanted immediate withdrawal. Very small minorities made different characterisations: a few thought the public had had a conflicted response, others said the president could have built support for the existing policy had he so chosen, and even fewer thought the public wanted to 'come on stronger' and use greater force.

The view that the public wanted to withdraw was expressed with little equivocation. Asked whether most Americans had wanted the United States to pull out, a reporter exploded, 'Absolutely! Absolutely! The next morning people looked at the morning paper and said, "That's it, get out, this is stupid, this makes no sense! [sarcastically] Great! Some of our best soldiers stuck over in this God-forsaken place trying to get this tinhorn warlord and doing something that we were never told we were going to do in the first place!"'

Another journalist responded, 'In Somalia? Get out. Period. They instructed Clinton, in their fashion, to get out immediately.' A third journalist agreed, 'My impression is that they wanted to withdraw the troops at the time, and I think that any time you are in a situation similar to that that you would probably see a

repeat of that sentiment’ A journalist went so far as to characterise the consensus for withdrawal as being nearly unanimous: ‘They were close to 99% saying, “Get out”.’

Congressional respondents described this perception as being pervasive within Congress at the time. Asked whether he thought a majority wanted to withdraw, a staff member replied, ‘Oh yes, absolutely. I was heavily involved on the committee’s work on that issue. Every member of the committee was overwhelmed with public revulsion—their own constituents’ revulsion at what happened.’ Likewise, a Democratic member of Congress, when asked whether a majority of the public had wanted to withdraw, groaned, ‘Oh! God, we handed the Republicans the biggest issue that they could ever have asked for.’

The case of Somalia was cited as a key example of how an operation can have initial public support but evaporate at the sight of blood. A congressional staff member said,

Probably the biggest paradigm...way the Somalia thing turned out.... If you recall, Somalia was initiated as a humanitarian thing, you saw the starving people on TV again... People are inclined to say, ‘Yeah, gee, we need to do something.’...However, as soon as you make it somewhat more ambitious, to start chasing warlords around and all kinds of things, we get people killed, we say, ‘Well, the hell with that’

Assertions about such public reactions have been widespread in the press. For example after the Mogadishu battle, it was widely asserted in the press that the American public was responding by wanting to withdraw US troops immediately. ‘A Common Cry Across the U.S.: It’s Time To Exit’, headlined the *New York Times* three days after the battle.² Editorials spoke of ‘public pressure for instant withdrawal’, ‘insistent popular...demands to get out of Somalia fast’, and ‘the crumbling of home support for any American mission at all in Somalia’.³

What is particularly interesting is how press reports about public attitudes have been immune to polling data to the contrary. As we will see below, polls did not show majority support for immediate withdrawal after the fatalities in Somalia. Nonetheless, on 8 October 1993, the *New York Times* reported that ‘Public opinion polls taken since Sunday indicate that most Americans favor withdrawal now.’ Just as flatly, a *San Diego Union-Tribune* article on the 10th declared: ‘Should America’s contingent...be pulled out sooner rather than later? Public opinion polls, congressional sentiment, and a flood of angry constituent phone calls...were answering the latter question in resounding terms. Enraged by the sickening spectacle in Mogadishu, a solid majority of Americans and many of their representatives in Congress wanted US troops out, now.’⁴

Assumptions about public attitudes have been used to discount polls that find majority support for an operation. In October 1994, when US troops were in Haiti in a UN-sanctioned operation, some signs of success were evident and polls indicated modest majority support. An opinion piece in the *Phoenix Gazette*

(that, incidentally, decried American vulnerability to casualties and argued for a more robust attitude) discounted the support this way:

Sen. John Glenn suggested the case for intervention could not pass the ‘Dover Test’, the televised return of body-bags from Port-au-Prince to the Air Force base in Dover, Del.... According to polls, a slim majority of Americans currently supports the operation to restore Father Aristide to power in Haiti. But Sen. Glenn is right, at least in the analytical sense: It’s a near certainty the crowd will turn ugly when the mission’s cost makes itself known.⁵

The assumption that public unwillingness to risk US troops in peace-keeping operations is embedded in a broader view that the public is going through a phase of isolationism. This view is so strong it has at times led reporters to be remarkably immune to contrary poll findings even when they have been produced by the reporters’ own newspaper and, at least in one case, even when the contrary poll findings are mentioned in the article itself! Under the heading ‘Cold Shoulder’ an 28 October 1993 *Wall Street Journal* led with the headline ‘As Global Crises Mount, More Americans Want America to Stay Home: Images From Somalia, Haiti, Revive Isolationist Mood, Put Clinton Plans at Risk’. Written from Elwood, Indiana, Wendell Wilkie’s hometown, the reporter unequivocally asserted that in the wake of the Cold War the typical Americans of Elwood had returned to their ‘isolationist’ roots. Then, oddly, deep in the back pages of the article, surrounded by anecdotes from colourful local characters spouting isolationist rhetoric, were two short paragraphs that reported poll findings, sponsored by the *Wall Street Journal* itself, showing that 71 per cent favoured contributing US troops to UN peacekeeping and that 67 per cent favoured using them to prevent large numbers of people from starving. No poll numbers were offered to support the isolationist image. Most significantly, there was no effort to integrate the poll findings into the article, which ended with the same unequivocal assertion of rampant isolationism with which it began.⁶

In at least one case a reporter even asserted the existence of mythical polls. In an 8 June 1995 *New York Times* article that discussed the possibility of using US troops to redeploy UN peacekeepers in Bosnia the reporter referred to ‘recent polls’ showing that ‘the American people’ were opposed. Of the four polls that had asked this question, one found a bare majority of 45 per cent opposed, while three others found a solid majority of 65–67 per cent in favour.⁷

Press reports have also taken poll questions that do not ask about casualties—for instance, questions about how closely news is being followed—and adduced them as evidence of the assumption that the public cannot withstand casualties. A September 1993 column about Bosnia in the *Los Angeles Times* (written before Mogadishu) made this amalgam: ‘Public opinion is unambiguously signalling its disinterest in accepting the costs and casualties that come from involvement in

regional conflicts—in a recent poll, only 19% of respondents admitted to a close interest in Bosnia.⁸

Belief that national interest is key to public support

In the interviews, the most common explanation given for why the public wanted to withdraw was that the public saw no link to the national interest and therefore could not accept casualties. One executive branch official said that, in the event of fatalities, demand for withdrawal is ‘certainly the initial reaction.... If it’s a peacekeeping mission in Africa, and all of a sudden the bodies pile up in Somalia, and there’s clearly a perception that this really doesn’t engage our fundamental interests, then yeah, I think that the majority of people are going to say, “Get the heck out of there”.’ Another executive branch officer explained the reaction of calling for withdrawal after the deaths in Somalia saying, ‘we sort of perceived that we didn’t have any interest, and that this was just the UN’. A member of a non-governmental agency said, ‘As we saw in Somalia, it was not perceived to be in the vital interest, and eighteen American soldiers were killed in one operation, and [Americans] said: “Bring them home”.’ However, he also believed that in theory ‘if Americans are told and explained to by their president that this is a vital interest of the United States, and [the leadership] can give a compelling argument, they’ll withstand the casualties’.

This kind of reactivity was seen as being a relatively new phenomenon. A member of Congress said, ‘In World War II and in other wars, they accepted casualties. Now if, like in Somalia, twenty-something people get killed, they’re ready to call it off. They’re just not willing to accept the price of these things, as they used to.’

Effect on policy

The interviews and press reports suggest that policy makers’ assumptions about public reactivity to fatalities does indeed influence policy. This was particularly vivid in press accounts around the time of the war in Kosovo. A widely noted example was the fact that Army helicopters based in Albania were never deployed. The *New York Times* quoted a Pentagon official as saying, ‘The Army’s concern is that this is a very dangerous mission.... No one thinks the mission can’t be done, but in an age when the American people believe we’re in a zero-defects war, there’s a real apprehension we’re going to bring soldiers back in body-bags.’⁹

After the war, some voices in the Clinton administration were explicit that fear of public reaction to casualties had driven military strategy. A ‘senior defence policy maker’ told the *Washington Post*, ‘We have gotten into this mentality where we feel the American public will cut and run if we have any casualties, and therefore we have to operate in a manner that absolutely minimises military losses.’ He went on to suggest that for the future US forces need to be structured

accordingly, 'If you think that future conflicts are going to be like Kosovo, where the American public isn't very engaged, and the political types will be supportive only if things don't get messy, then you need a different force structure so that you never have losses and can conduct some very conservative campaigns.'¹⁰

Press analysis has also been pervaded by the assumption that US actions are constrained by such thinking. A *Washington Post* article titled 'Soldiering On in a War on Constraints: NATO's Top General Works Around Politics' stated, 'Eighteen army soldiers perished in a botched operation in Somalia in 1993, leading Clinton to pull out US forces. The public reaction has framed Pentagon, White House and congressional views of foreign operations ever since.' It went on, 'The first [restriction] was that it could produce few allied casualties, a calculation NATO leaders made to hold public support....As a result, [pilots] could not fly over Kosovo much in the beginning.'¹¹

In the interviews numerous policy makers expressed concern that the policy makers' belief in the public's reactivity was having a deleterious effect on policy. A member of Congress said:

I'm really concerned about this. I think it's really a major development in the United States...because leaders can no longer get by in engaging US in international initiatives, like wars, and expect to sustain it—because the people back home won't, and...if the going gets tough, they'll demand you quit.

Another member said, 'That's a dangerous circumstance, for us to have that kind of quick reaction to casualties.' Another member of Congress said that he had 'facetiously proposed to some of our colleagues...that I'm going to introduce a bill outlawing war, because the American people are not willing to accept casualties'.

At the time of the fatalities in Somalia members of Congress were perceived as shifting their positions in response to public outcry. For example, a *Washington Post* report on the views of African-American members of Congress, generally supportive of the Somalia effort, emphasised that they 'also were affected by...public cries for a quick end to US involvement', and quoted Congressman Ronald Dellums: 'At the end of the day, [Black] caucus members are elected officials like everybody else. They respond to public opinion too.'¹²

In the press, the strategies and tactics of military adversaries have often been described as devised to take change US policy by taking advantage of the US public's inability to withstand casualties. 'In Somalia, Gen. Mohammed Farah Aidid sought to drag out the American engagement and wait for public opinion to turn against military involvement. General Aidid's strategy worked. After 18 Americans died in an Army Ranger raid, the Americans pulled out', stated a *New York Times* article a year after the event.¹³ Just before the Haiti operation began, a Gannett News Service article quoted a policy expert: 'The Haitians know this.

They know they don't have to win battles—all they have to do is kill a few dozen Americans.'¹⁴

In sum, the assumption found most often in the policy community is that a small number of casualties in a military operation would rapidly vitiate public support. A majority of those interviewed said that casualties would simply make most people desire an immediate withdrawal. Some respondents indicated their belief that support would be more stable if there was a direct connection to US interests. On the other hand, others made remarks implying that public support was fragile in any type of military operation.

Implicit in many of the comments was the idea that such public reactions in favour of immediate withdrawal would create an imperative to respond accordingly. Respondents described the public reaction as worrisome, not just because it could be problematic politically but because it would presumably lead to government actions that were less than optimal. The force of public opinion was portrayed as having the potential to 'overwhelm' the considered judgement of policy makers. The public's response was also seen as shaping policy inasmuch by appropriately prompting policy makers to refrain from getting involved in military operations that might lead to fatalities, because the public reaction might require the US to make a hasty and embarrassing retreat.

Evidence that the public is more resilient to fatalities than supposed

We now turn to polling data to address the question of whether the public is indeed as reactive as many members of the policy elite assume. In fact polls show little evidence that the majority of Americans will invariably respond to fatalities by wanting to withdraw US troops. If anything, the public is more likely to want to respond assertively. The critical question that will determine the public response is not whether US vital interests are involved but whether the operation is perceived as likely to succeed. This pattern of response can be observed when the public has reacted to actual US fatalities in Somalia, in the Gulf War, and in Saudi Arabia; when the public responds to (mis)perceived fatalities in Bosnia; and when the public responds to hypothetical scenarios for fatalities in Bosnia, Rwanda, Haiti and Kosovo.

Actual fatalities in Somalia, the Gulf War, and Saudi Arabia

Since the end of the Cold War US troops have died from hostile fire in three operations: the peacekeeping operation in Somalia, the Gulf War, and in Saudi Arabia.

Somalia

Because the reaction to the fatalities in Somalia is seen as the quintessential case of the post-Cold War type of response we shall start with that case. Shortly after

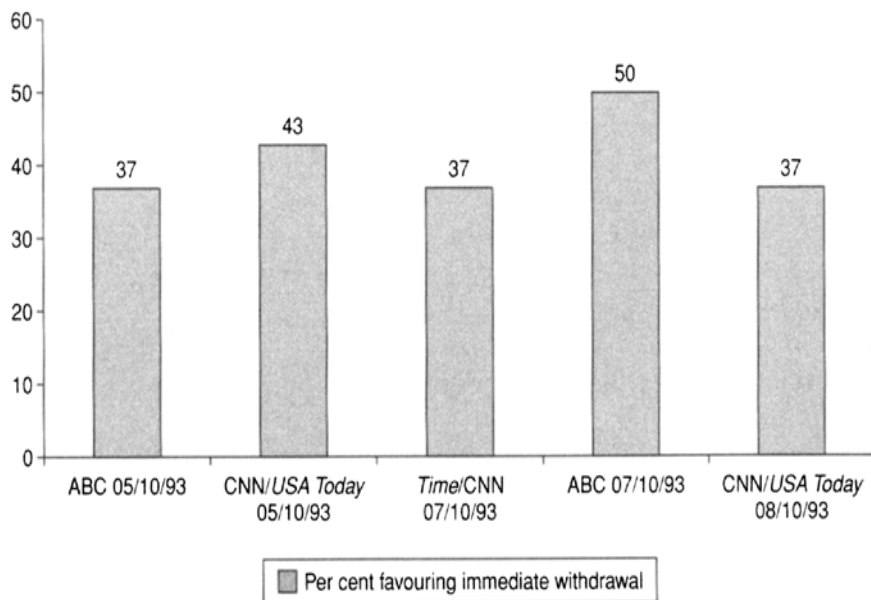


Figure 9.1 Public reaction to fatalities in Somalia, October 1993.

eighteen American soldiers were killed in a Somalia firefight in October 1993, television networks broadcast graphic pictures of dead GIs being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu.

The very evening following the news reports of the deaths, with these images still fresh in the minds of the American public, polls taken by ABC and CNN/USA Today, only 37 per cent and 43 per cent of respondents, respectively, said they wanted US troops to withdraw immediately. Three other polls taken over the next week produced similar results (see Figure 9.1).¹⁵

Moreover, it appeared that a majority of Americans favoured *increased* involvement after the firefight, at least in the short run. In polls by CNN/USA Today, ABC, and NBC, respectively, 55 per cent, 56 per cent, and 61 per cent supported sending more US troops. Seventy-five per cent favoured retaliating against Somali warlord Mohammed Farad Aidid with 'a major military attack' if American prisoners could not be released in a timely manner through negotiations, ABC found.

Several polls showed that a majority did want to withdraw at some point and did not want to stay in until the country was fully stabilised. A PIPA poll taken 15–18 October found that only 28 per cent wanted to withdraw immediately, 43 per cent supported the president's plan of withdrawing in six months, and only 27 per cent did not want to withdraw 'until we have stabilised the country, even if it takes longer than six months'. Some polls found as many as 65 per cent saying that the US should withdraw from Somalia, though when asked specifically

whether this meant that the US should withdraw now, less than a majority felt such urgency.

However, it does not appear that this desire to eventually withdraw was prompted primarily by the fatalities. Earlier polls show that it was already in place before the fatalities occurred. In September 1993, 57 per cent favoured stopping US involvement in combat with Somali warlords (CNN/USA *Today*). Similarly, when CNN/Time asked, 'Do you think the US troops in Somalia should be responsible for disarming the rival warlords there, or should the US troops only be responsible for making sure that food is delivered to the areas affected by the famine?' only 22 per cent said troops should be responsible for disarming rival warlords, while 69 per cent said they should only protect famine relief. Thus it is not clear that the fatalities had the effect of changing attitudes, though they may have consolidated them.

Furthermore, there is evidence that after the fatalities occurred, the reason for wanting to withdraw eventually was not necessarily prompted by an unwillingness to suffer casualties, but rather by a belief that most Somalis wanted the UN and the United States to leave—not a surprising assumption after seeing the television images described above. In PIPA's October 1993 poll, 58 per cent believed that most Somalis wanted the UN and the United States to leave. When asked whether the US should leave if a substantial majority of Somalis wanted this, a resounding 88 per cent of respondents said yes (only 8 per cent said no). When asked how they would feel if most Somalis wanted the US to stay, 40 per cent still wanted to leave, but the majority, 54 per cent, said the US should remain.

Despite many Americans' doubts about the wisdom of getting involved in the civil war, and despite the fatalities, fairly strong majorities continued to support the mission. In two polls taken by CBS in October 1993 and one the following December, 64 per cent, 67 per cent and 62 per cent respectively said the US 'did the right thing' by going into Somalia. In PIPA's April 1995 poll, only 43 per cent retrospectively supported the effort to resolve the civil war, but 82 per cent affirmed the humanitarian operation.

Gulf War

Before the US began the ground war against Iraq there was widespread concern that if there were fatalities in such a war support for the war would collapse. Six weeks before the ground war began a *Washington Post* article asserted, 'Public opinion will not sustain a long and bloody engagement. If there is support for war, it is for a short one...[Americans'] gritty mood...is not likely to sustain a long, bloody or ambiguous struggle.' The authors made clear that this judgement was not based on the poll data they were reporting, but on the power of casualties to erode support. '*Post-ABC* polls have found that...about three out of four Americans would appear to favor Bush policies or harsher measures... How long will that support last? The answer to those questions may

lie less in what the polls currently measure than in how, if war starts, the military performs—and how many people, especially how many Americans, die... Analysts of public opinion disagree over exactly how much time Bush would have after the start of a war before he loses majority support. But almost all agree that he wouldn't have much.¹⁶ On 30 January 1991 eleven Marines were killed in fighting off an Iraqi incursion into Saudi territory. The *Boston Globe* reported that 'The toll prompted many at the White House, on Capitol Hill and in the military to question whether the public is ready to accept the rapid escalation in casualties that would likely result from increased ground combat,' The story quoted an expert saying: 'It doesn't matter whether we win or lose a particular battle. If the cost is heavy loss of life the American people are always going to question whether it was worth fighting.'¹⁷

One hundred and forty-eight American soldiers died in combat in the Gulf War, most of them immediately after the beginning of the ground war on 24 February 1991. These deaths had no impact on support for the war as it was progressing. During the war CBS/*New York Times* asked the trend question, 'Given the loss of life and the other costs of the war in the Persian Gulf, do you think the war to defeat Iraq is likely to be worth the cost or not?' In early February, 60 per cent thought the war would be worth the cost and 26 per cent did not. On 25 February—the day after the ground war began—those thinking the war would be worth the cost was up to 65 per cent (not worth cost: 22 per cent), and by 28 February those thinking the cost was worthwhile were up to 72 per cent (not worth cost: 17 per cent). Though this was the phase of the war when most casualties took place, during this phase support actually went up.¹⁸

Though concern for the public reaction to fatalities was high at the time, it is now common to see the Gulf War is as distinctly different from most post-Cold War operations because, due to its link to oil reserves, it had a stronger link to a narrow concept of US national interests. However, there is no clear evidence of this.

Two years later, in January 1993, when the US sent troops to Somalia support for this action was just as high as it was at the beginning of the ground war against Iraq, though there was little effort to rationalise the Somalia operation as addressing US vital interests. In January 1993 the *Los Angeles Times* found 84 per cent approving the president's decision to send US troops into Somalia; on 24 February 1991, Gallup found 84 per cent approving of the US decision to start the ground war against Iraq.

The argument that the Gulf War was popular due to its link with vital national interests, narrowly defined, is not supported by poll questions that asked about the reasons that justified military action. The principle of resisting aggression found more support in the public than the protection of energy resources as a reason to risk American lives. In November 1990—a low point in support for military action in the Gulf—the *Los Angeles Times* asked: 'Do you think it's worth risking the lives of American soldiers in order to demonstrate that countries should not get away with aggression, or not?' Forty-eight per cent (down from

53 per cent in August) said this was worth risking lives, while 44 per cent (up from 37 per cent) said it was not. But another question in the same poll asked, ‘Do you think it’s worth risking the lives of American soldiers in order to protect our oil supplies, or not?’ Only 29 per cent thought this was worth risking lives, while 65 per cent said it was not.

As the popularity of the Gulf War went up, the public’s perception that its vital interests motivated US action dropped. More important, increased support for the war was accompanied by a *lowered* sense of the war’s connection to a vital interest. Over 30 November–2 December 1990, ABC/*Washington Post* asked respondents to choose between two statements: ‘The United States has sent troops to the Middle East because of the moral principle that we cannot allow Iraq or any other country to invade another’, or ‘because of the economic reality that we cannot let Iraq or any other country gain too much control over the flow and price of Middle Eastern oil.’ A narrow majority of 48 per cent thought the US was in the Gulf because of oil, while 41 per cent thought it was there because of a moral principle. After December, support for action increased, and increased strongly once the air war began. When the question was asked again on 20 January 1991, 54 per cent said the US effort was based on the principle that no country should invade another, while only 35 per cent saw it as based on oil; on 1–4 March the responses were 56 per cent and 34 per cent, respectively.

It is commonly argued that because the Gulf War was a clear military success, the American public did not react to the US casualties suffered, and thus the Gulf War is an ‘exception that proves the rule’ of public reactiveness. However, this argument only supports the case that success (or its probability) is a more important factor in the public’s attitudes than casualties.

Saudi Arabia

One other key case in which US troops were killed in a military operation was in Saudi Arabia in June 1996. A truck bomb exploded outside apartment buildings in which US military personnel were lodged, near the Dhahran air base in Saudi Arabia, from which air patrols over Iraq were being conducted. Over 20 Americans were killed. Only one poll question (*Newsweek*, June 1996) on this subject is available—as follows:

Which one of the following statements best describes your own feelings after the killing of U.S. (United States) military personnel in Saudi Arabia this week? A. It was a mistake to send U.S. military personnel to a place like Saudi Arabia. B. It wasn’t a mistake to send them, but the right thing for the U.S. to do now is bring the remaining military personnel home. C. The right thing for the U.S. to do now is maintain a military presence and support our Saudi allies.

Only 15 per cent said that sending military personnel had been a mistake, while 21 per cent said it was not a mistake, but remaining personnel should be brought home. Fifty-five per cent said the US should maintain its military presence.

Unfortunately, no polling was done before the bombing so it is not possible to determine how much the bombing influenced support. But clearly the fatalities did not lead to a majority demand for the withdrawal of troops.

Lebanon

The incident in Lebanon in 1983, in which 241 American troops were killed by a terrorist truck-bomb, occurred during the Cold War and is thus outside the scope of this chapter. Nonetheless, the US was participating in a peacekeeping operation that was not directly related to the Cold War confrontation and thus may provide some analogy to the typical operations in the post-Cold War period—in fact the public at the time did not believe US participation was imperative for US interests. Also, it offers some information about how Americans might react to an incident involving hundreds of deaths.

Polls taken shortly after the truck-bomb attack on 23 October 1983 found that the majority did *not* react by wanting to withdraw—even though before the bombing, the Lebanon mission lacked majority support. On 26 October *CBS/New York Times* asked: ‘What do you think the United States should do now in Lebanon—withdraw the Marines, replace those who were killed and continue their current role there, or substantially increase the number of Marines so they can attack hostile forces?’ Thirty-six per cent wanted to withdraw, 16 per cent to replace the troops, and 33 per cent to increase their numbers substantially. (A second overnight poll on 27 October found 35, 26 and 28 per cent respectively.)

A strong majority did favour an assertive response. Harris (28–31 October 1983) asked about the US ‘finding out who really killed the more than 225 Marines in Lebanon, whether it was the Syrians or Iranians, and taking action against them to punish them for what they did?’ Seventy-four per cent favoured this course of action.

The same Harris poll found strong agreement with arguments in support of continuing the operation. Seventy-three per cent agreed that ‘If the US pulls the Marines out of Lebanon now, after we’ve had over 225 killed, it will look as though this country can be intimidated by terrorist tactics.’ Sixty-eight per cent also agreed with the argument that ‘If US Marines don’t stay in Lebanon, then the present Christian government, which is friendly to the US, will probably be overthrown and a pro-Syrian, anti-US government could take over.’

All these poll results, however, only show that the majority of Americans did not respond to sudden casualties by wanting to withdraw. Other polls show that before the bombing occurred, the majority was critical of the Lebanon operation, wanted to put a time limit on it, and saw it as basically unsuccessful. Before the truck-bomb attack (but after lesser casualties) Harris (September 1983) found 47 per cent in favour and 48 per cent opposed to ‘the US having Marines in

Lebanon as part of an international peacekeeping force'. In the same month CBS/*New York Times* found only 36 per cent in favour of 'the government sending troops to Lebanon' 'as part of an international peacekeeping force to try to prevent fighting there', with 53 per cent opposed. In Harris' late October poll, 54 per cent agreed and 37 per cent disagreed that 'While it made sense to send US Marines to Lebanon in 1982 to be sure the PLO got safely out of Beirut, it is not at all clear why the Marines should stay in Lebanon for the indefinite future.' In a September ABC poll 62 per cent thought 'Congress should set a time limit on how long Reagan can keep the Marines in Lebanon' (should not: 28 per cent), and when asked to suppose that Congress did set a limit, the median preference was to set it at six months.

Thus—even in the case of an operation that already *lacked* public support—a single incident in which the US suffered almost double the combat deaths suffered in the entire Gulf War did not cause a majority to want to withdraw.

Perceived fatalities in Bosnia

Although no American troops have been killed due to hostile fire in Bosnia, it appears that the majority of the American public believes they have. This offers a unique opportunity to see the effect of these perceptions on attitudes about the operation.

In February—March 1998 PIPA asked respondents 'Is it your impression that American soldiers have or have not been killed by hostile fire in Bosnia over the last year?' almost a two-thirds majority—63 per cent—said that Americans had been killed. In reality, as of this writing, no Americans have been killed by hostile fire. Only 22 per cent of respondents knew this, while 15 per cent could not answer the question. Among those who said American soldiers have been killed, when asked to estimate how many have been killed over the last year, the median estimate was 25 deaths. A substantial number of respondents also gave estimates in the hundreds, so that the average estimate of US fatalities was 172.

Nonetheless, these perceptions did not lead to a desire to withdraw US troops. In the same poll 65 per cent said that they supported US participation in the operation. Fifty-seven per cent supported extending the missions beyond the original deadline for withdrawal.

In May 1999 PIPA re-asked the question about fatalities in the previous year. Once again a majority, in this case 56 per cent, believed that US troops had been killed. The median estimate for the number of dead was 20. Nonetheless, though most Americans perceived that the US had suffered yet another year of substantial troop fatalities, support for the operation was statistically unchanged from the previous year: 63 per cent.

Presumably, if Americans are highly sensitive to casualties, the misperception that fatalities have taken place would be an important factor in shaping their other attitudes about the Bosnia mission, and their attitudes would differ from those who know that there have been no fatalities. This follows logically from the

original premise that the American public cannot withstand fatalities in an ongoing military operation. For this reason, PIPA did analyses to see if differences existed between the two groups.

What is perhaps most striking is that, in both years, there was no relationship between the perception of US fatalities and support for US participation in the Bosnia operation. Among those who believed fatalities had occurred, support was just as high as for those who believed there had not been. Also, there was no relation between the number of perceived fatalities and support. Even among those who believed that there had been more than 1,000 US fatalities support was no lower than for the general sample.

The 1998 study included a question which posed a battle scenario involving US fatalities and asked respondents what course of action they would support among four offered. According to the conventional wisdom, one might assume that those who think combat deaths have already occurred in the operation might be more inclined to cut further losses than would those who know no combat deaths have occurred. Virtually no reliable differences existed between the preferences of those who thought fatalities have really occurred, and those who knew they had not.

It could be assumed that those who believe that the Bosnia operation has already involved significant costs in American lives would be more wary of undertaking extra risks than those who know that no Americans have been killed. Respondents were asked in 1998:

There is a controversy about whether the NATO force in Bosnia should seek out and arrest the two Bosnian Serb leaders who have been charged with war crimes and turn them over to the World Court. Some say that the NATO force should arrest these leaders because they are responsible for the systematic killing of thousands of civilians. Others say that such an effort might lead to armed conflict as in Somalia, and some American troops might be killed. Do you favour or oppose having the NATO force carry out these arrests?

Again, no effect for perceived casualties was discernible. Those who believed that American troops had died in Bosnia under hostile fire were just as likely to favour the operations described in the question as were those who knew that US troops had not been killed in Bosnia.

The only case in which there was a significant difference was in the perception of the success of the Bosnia operation. In the 1998 study, among those who knew no casualties had taken place, the perception of success was 17 points higher.¹⁹ However, in the May 1999 study, there was no significant difference between those who thought deaths had occurred and those who knew they had not.

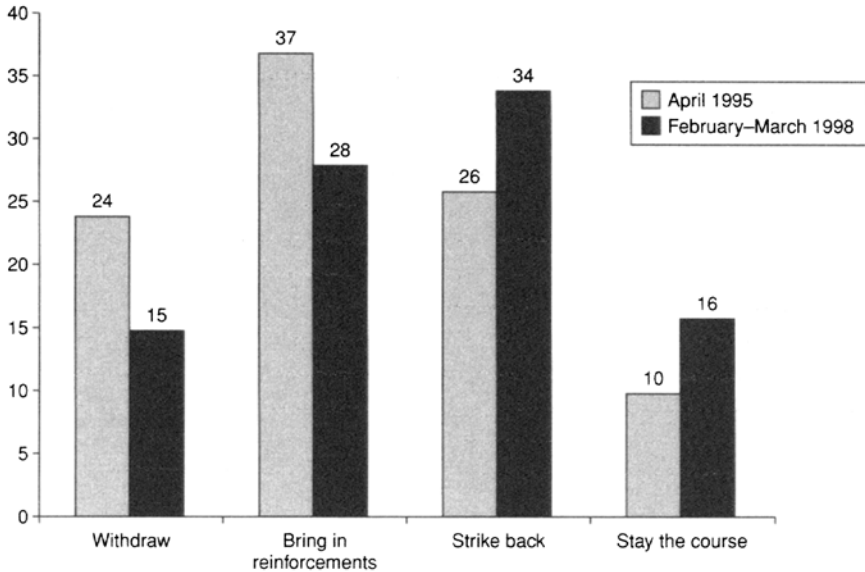


Figure 9.2 Public support for US response to a hypothetical scenario with US fatalities in a Bosnia operation (in %).

Hypothetical scenarios

When respondents have been asked to imagine how they would respond to a substantial number of fatalities in the course of a military operation only a small number—no more than 25 per cent—have said they would want the US to withdraw its troops. A majority has backed a vigorous response—either bringing in reinforcements or striking back at the attackers.

In a PIPA poll conducted in July 1994, respondents were asked to imagine that 25 to 100 American troops were killed in a UN peacekeeping operation in Haiti and to imagine that they had seen pictures of the soldiers' dead bodies on television. They were then asked whether they would then want to withdraw all American troops, strike back hard at the attackers, bring in reinforcements so that future attacks could be met with overwhelming force, or simply stay the course. Only 21 per cent opted for withdrawal. The majority favoured more assertive responses; bringing in reinforcements was chosen by 34 per cent, whereas 24 per cent said they would strike back hard. Also in July 1994, PIPA posed comparable scenarios for hypothetical UN operations in the civil war then in progress in Rwanda. The responses were almost exactly the same as for Haiti. No more than 21 per cent wanted to withdraw, and a fairly strong majority favoured active responses.

The situation in Bosnia has elicited similar responses. An April 1995 PIPA poll presented respondents with a scenario for a UN operation there in which 200

UN troops were killed, 100 of them American. Less than a quarter wanted to withdraw. In late winter 1998, when US troops were in Bosnia as part of the NATO operation, respondents were asked to consider a scenario with 20 US fatalities and even fewer favoured withdrawal (see [Figure 9.2](#)).²⁰

At the time of the Kosovo War in May 1999, when the option of invading with ground troops was widely discussed, PIPA posed questions like those discussed above. Respondents were asked to imagine that ‘in the course of carrying out a ground war, 50 Americans were killed in a battle’. Only 20 per cent said they would want to immediately withdraw us troops. The majority backed one of the two assertive responses. ‘Bring[ing] in reinforcements so that future attacks could be met with overwhelming force’ was selected by 33–35 per cent, and ‘strike back hard at the attackers’ was chosen by 19 per cent, while 19–21 per cent elected to ‘not react in any of these ways but to simply stay the course’.

Even if most Americans would not favour withdrawing troops in the event of fatalities, it is highly significant how they would feel about the original choice to undertake the operation if fatalities did ultimately occur. A number of poll questions have tried to get at this somewhat complex issue, sometimes by asking respondents whether they would be willing to sacrifice soldiers to achieve an end. Basically, it seems that most Americans are uncomfortable affirmatively answering a poll question where they are effectively being asked to make the choice for troops to die. Also, if Americans are presented with a scenario in which it is spelled out that troops will die but no other outcome is defined, this is not an attractive proposition. However, if Americans are asked to assume that the operation succeeds, then Americans will endorse the original decision even with a surprisingly high number of fatalities.

As a general rule, many Americans resist making the explicit choice to sacrifice the lives of soldiers, even when doing so is implicit in other positions they may take. On three occasions a modest majority (averaging 53 per cent) said it would not ‘be worth the loss of some American soldiers’ lives to help bring peace to Kosovo’ (ABC). When *CNN/Time* on 25 March asked, ‘How many American lives would you be willing to sacrifice to achieve US goals in Kosovo?’ 74 per cent said none.

These responses should not, however, be read to mean that most Americans would only support using ground troops in Kosovo if they were sure that no troops would be killed. In five polls conducted by four polling organisations over April–May (Pew, *NBC/Wall Street Journal*, *ABC/Washington Post* and *Newsweek*), majorities ranging from 65 to 71 per cent said they believed air-strikes would not be enough to achieve NATO objectives and that it would be necessary to intervene with ground troops. A *CNN/USA Today* poll also found an overwhelming 78 per cent predicting that US ground troops would ultimately be used. Asked how many soldiers would likely be killed, the median estimate was 15–24. Nonetheless, a substantial majority—73 per cent in a March MSNBC poll—said they would support going into Kosovo with ground troops if it was the

only way to stop the Serbs. Thus, it appears that the answer to questions about sacrificing lives is largely an artefact of the form of the question.

If the question limits the possible range of fatalities, or speaks of risking rather than sacrificing lives, this can shift the balance towards a majority (albeit slight) in favour of acceptance. Asked by Gallup on 6 April whether achieving NATO's goals in Kosovo 'is worth having a few American casualties in a limited military action', 50 per cent said that it was, while 42 per cent said that it was not. In an 8 April 1999 Louis Harris poll, 53 per cent disagreed with the statement, 'It's not worth risking American lives to bring peace in Kosovo' (41 per cent agreed). In late March, 54 per cent said it was 'worth risking the lives of American soldiers in order to demonstrate that Serbia should not get away with killing and forcing people from their homes' (*Los Angeles Times*).

When respondents are asked to evaluate a scenario in which it is spelled out that American troops would die in an operation but no other information is given about the outcome, majorities will tend to disapprove of it. In April 1999 NPR/Kaiser/Harvard asked those who favoured intervening with ground troops in Kosovo, 'Would you still favor sending ground troops if 100/500/1,000 American soldiers were killed?' Only a small minority in all cases said they would favour doing so. When no other information is given, the value of the lives of American troops is given precedence. Also, providing information only about fatalities and not about the outcome implies that the operation is not going well. However, if the operation is explicitly portrayed as succeeding, then the respondent is being asked to weigh the value of American lives and the value inherent in the goals of the mission. In this case majorities tend to opt in favour of the value inherent in the success of the operation. In May 1999 PIPA asked respondents to 'Imagine that over the course of the ground war, 250 Americans were killed but the operation succeeded in driving Serb forces out of Kosovo so that ethnic Albanian refugees could return. Do you imagine that you would think that NATO did or did not do the right thing by going into Kosovo with ground troops?' In this context, a substantial majority (60 per cent) endorsed the choice to pursue the mission, despite the 250 fatalities posed by the question (not right thing: 33 per cent).²¹

In the November 1995 PIPA poll conducted in the period when the Dayton accords were being drawn up, in anticipation of US troops being sent to Bosnia, respondents were asked 'Imagine that in the course of carrying out this operation over the next year, there is an incident in which 50 American soldiers die fighting in a confrontation with a rogue band that resists the peace agreement. But overall, the operation succeeds in maintaining the peace and stopping ethnic cleansing.' In this case, 60 per cent said they would feel that 'in contributing US troops to the operation' the US 'had done the right thing', whereas 32 per cent said they would feel that the US 'had made a mistake'.

Even when respondents were asked to imagine scenarios involving substantial US fatalities, a majority supported action if it would stop ethnic cleansing. In the April 1995 PIPA poll respondents were asked to imagine that in the course of

intervening to stop ethnic cleansing, 'the Serbs put up strong resistance and in the course of the conflict 10,000 UN troops were killed, 3,500 of them Americans'. But respondents were also told that the effort, notwithstanding these losses, ultimately succeeded in pacifying the region and stopping ethnic cleansing. In this case, 60 per cent said they would feel that the UN had 'done the right thing by threatening to intervene', while 29 per cent said they would feel it had been a mistake.

Conclusion

The conclusion of this analysis is not that Americans are unaffected by the loss of American troops. Indeed, Americans do care deeply about the lives of their soldiers. What it does demonstrate is that Americans do not and are not likely to respond reflexively to losses by wanting to withdraw from a military operation. As we have seen, support for continuing an operation is likely to be sustained provided that the public has support for the operation in the first place and believes that it is likely to succeed. If these conditions are not met, then it is possible that fatalities will contribute to a decline in support for the operation and even a desire to withdraw. However, even when confidence in a mission is low, this will not necessarily lead to a desire to withdraw. A majority has expressed a lack of confidence that the Bosnia mission will succeed; nonetheless, a majority supports US participation.

It is probable that fatalities will heighten public awareness of an operation and will lead to greater scrutiny and thus increase the likelihood that Americans will develop reservations. But it will not necessarily lead to a lowering of support even at high levels of casualties. John Mueller (1973) has analysed support for the wars in Korea and Vietnam and did find that support did decline, logarithmically, in tandem with increases in casualties. However, it is not clear that this is a direct relationship, as some have tried to argue.²² Large-scale fatalities did not diminish support in World War II even though the public was slow to support the original idea of entering into that war. In Korea and Vietnam it is more likely that support diminished as the public came to question the purposes of the wars and their likelihood of success.

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to examine all aspects of the US public's reaction to US troop fatalities. However, this review of existing evidence does severely challenge the widespread view that in response to US troop fatalities in a military operation that is not closely tied to a narrow definition of the national interest, public support for the operation will necessarily drop precipitously and a majority of the American public will reflexively respond by wanting to withdraw US troops.

Notes

- 1 The full detail of this study can be found in Kull and Destler (1999).
- 2 B. Drummond Ayres Jr, 'A Common Cry across the U.S.: It's Time to Exit', *New York Times*, 9 October 1993.
- 3 'Middle Course in Somalia', *Washington Post*, 8 October 1993; and 'Out of Somalia', *Washington Post*, 15 October 1993.
- 4 Douglas Jehl, 'Clinton Doubling U.S. Force in Somalia, Vowing Troops Will Come Home in Six Months', *New York Times*, 8 October 1993, A1; Robert J. Caldwell, 'Somalia: A Rescue Mission Turns Ugly', *San Diego Union-Tribune*, 10 October 1993, G1.
- 5 Jacob Weisberg, 'Zero Tolerance for Casualties in War; Nation Suffers from an Inability to Reason About Risk', *Phoenix Gazette*, 13 October 1994, B7.
- 6 Robert S. Greenberger, 'Cold Shoulder', *Wall Street Journal*, 28 October 1993.
- 7 Elaine Sciolino, 'Clinton's Policy on Bosnia Draws Criticism in Congress', *New York Times*, 8 June 1995. Polls referred to here are *NBC/Wall Street Journal*, 6 June 1995, 46 per cent opposed; *Newsweek*, 2 June 1995, 66 per cent in favour; *CNN/USA Today*, 6 June 1995, 70 per cent in favour; *Time/CNN*, 2 June 1995, 65 per cent in favour.
- 8 Jonathan Clarke, 'U.S. Manifest Destiny is Now at Home: But Policy-Makers are Stuck in Cold War Mentality, Seeking a Mission to Replace Communism', *Los Angeles Times*, 21 September 1993, B7.
- 9 Michael R. Gordon and Eric Schmitt, 'Pentagon Withholds Copters from Battlefields in Kosovo', *New York Times*, 16 May 1999, sec. 1, p. 1.
- 10 Bradley Graham, 'War Without "Sacrifice" Worries Warriors', *Washington Post*, 29 June 1999, A12.
- 11 Dana Priest, 'Soldiering On in a War of Constraints; NATO's Top General Works Around Politics', *Washington Post*, 30 May 1999.
- 12 Kevin Merida and Kenneth S. Cooper, 'As the Crisis Grows, the Support of Black Politicians Fragments', *Washington Post*, 9 October 1993.
- 13 Michael R. Gordon, 'Pentagon's Haiti Policy Focuses on Casualties', *New York Times*, 6 October 1994, A8.
- 14 John Omicinski, 'For Americans, A Haiti Invasion Would Be All About Casualties', Gannett News Service, 13 September 1994.
- 15 Co-ordinates for [Figure 9.1](#), Public reaction to fatalities in Somalia, October 1993: (1) ABC, 5 Oct. 1993 The ABC 37 per cent for immediate withdrawal is based on two questions: 64 per cent who said in the first question that the US should pull out its troops 'very soon' were then asked, 'Immediately, before the end of the year, or what?' Only 58 per cent of the subgroup said they wanted this to happen immediately. la. Question: Do you think the United States should keep troops in Somalia until there's a functioning civil government there that can run things, or do you think the US should pull its troops out of Somalia very soon, even if there is no functioning civil government in place there?

Responses:

Keep troops in Somalia	28 per cent
Pull troops out of Somalia	64
No opinion	8

1b. Question: How soon do you think US (United States) troops should be removed from Somalia—immediately, before the end of the year, or what?

Responses:

Immediately	58 per cent
Before the end of the year	38
Longer than year's end (into 1994)	2
No opinion	2

(Asked of those who said US troops should be removed very soon even if there is no functioning civil government (64 per cent))

Source: ABC News. National adult sample, N=509. Telephone survey, 5 October 1993. (2) CNN—*USA Today*, 5 Oct. 1993. Question: In your view, what should the United States do now in Somalia?: One: Withdraw US troops right away. Two: Gradually withdraw US troops. Three: Keep US involvement the same. Four: Increase US military commitment.

Responses:

Withdraw troops right away	43 per cent
Gradually withdraw troops	26
Keep involvement same	7
Increase military commitment	18
Don't know/Refused	5

Source: Gallup Organisation for Cable News Network, *USA Today*. National adult sample, N=525. Telephone survey, 5 October 1993.

(3) *Time-CNN*, 7 Oct. 1993. Question: Here are a few questions concerning the recent events in Somalia, in which US (United States) soldiers have been killed or taken prisoner by Forces controlled by a Somali warlord)...How should the United States respond to the fighting that has broken out in Somalia? Should the US send more troops to Somalia, keep the same number of troops, remove all its troops from Somalia within the next six months, or remove all its troops immediately?

Responses:

Send more troops	25 per cent
Keep current number of troops	6
Remove all troops in next six months	28
Remove all troops immediately	37
Not sure	4

Source: Yankelovich Partners Inc. for Time/Cable News Network. National adult sample, N=500. Telephone survey, 7 October 1993.

(4) ABC, 7 Oct. 1993 Question: What would be your preference—to have all US (United States) troops withdrawn from Somalia immediately, by 31 March (1994), or sometime after 31 March?

Responses:

Immediately	50 per cent
31 March	33
Some time after 31 March	9
Not at all (vol.)	3
No opinion	5

Source: ABC News. National adult sample, N=506. Telephone survey, 7 October 1993.

(5) CNN—*USA Today*, 8 Oct. 1993 Question: In your view, what should the United States do now in Somalia—One: Withdraw all US troops now, Two: Withdraw US troops over the next six months, or Three: Keep troops in Somalia until our humanitarian mission has been accomplished.

Responses:

Withdraw now	37 per cent
Withdraw in six months	27
Keep troops in Somalia	31
No opinion	5

Source: Gallup for *CNN/USA Today*. National adult sample, N=1019. Telephone survey, 8 October 1993. Source of this figure: Kull and Destler (1999: Fig. 4–3).

- 16 Richard Morin and E.J. Dionne Jr, 'Vox Populi: Winds of War and Shifts of Opinion', *Washington Post*, 23 December 1990, C1.
- 17 Stephen Kurkjian, 'Public Reaction: Marines' Toll Spurs Officials to Worry About Support', *Boston Globe*, 1 February 1991, 6.
- 18 John Mueller (1994:77) has argued that 'Actually, there is evidence to suggest that there was some erosion of war support during the course even of the Gulf War with its low casualties...the percentage calling American involvement in the conflict a mistake grew by some 5 percentage points between the beginning of the air war on January 16 and early February...This erosion was undone by a rally effect when the ground war was initiated on February 23.' He himself points out, however, that this possible decline in support is not borne out by trend questions which ask about approval or disapproval of having gone to war: these questions show high and stable support. Also, the 5–point drop in the one question on which Mueller bases this argument occurred during the air war phase, when casualties were few, while the rise in support occurred during the ground war, when casualties were greatest. Therefore, the 5–point drop in one question cannot be attributed to the erosion of support through cumulative casualties.
- 19 Perception of success was measured by response to the question: 'Do you believe that sending US and other NATO forces to Bosnia has improved the chances of

finding a way to permanently end the fighting there, or not?' In February-March 1998, 49 per cent said that it had improved the chances and 43 per cent said it had not; in May 1999, the figures were 47 per cent and 46 per cent respectively.

- 20 Coordinates for [Figure 9.2](#) *Public support for US response to a hypothetical scenario with US fatalities in a Bosnia operation*: (1) PIPA, April 1995 'I would like you to imagine that in the course of doing this one side put up a sharp resistance and a conflict ensued in which 200 UN troops were killed, 100 of them American. Imagine that you saw the bodies of the Americans on television. What do you imagine you would want to do in these circumstances?':

Withdraw all American troops	24 per cent
Bring in reinforcements so that future attacks can be met with overwhelming force	37
Strike back hard at the attackers	26
Not react in any of these ways but stay the course'	10

(2) PIPA, February—March 1998

'I would like you to imagine that at some point NATO peace-keeping troops have a confrontation with an organised group resisting the Dayton peace agreement. Imagine that this confrontation becomes violent and some NATO troops are killed including 20 Americans. Imagine you saw the bodies of the Americans on television. What do you imagine you would want to do in these circumstances: (Randomised order)

Withdraw all American troops	15 per cent
Bring in reinforcements so that future attacks can be met with overwhelming force	28
Strike back hard at the attackers	34
Not react in any of these ways but stay the course'	16

Source of this figure: Kull and Destler (1999: Fig. 4–4).

- 21 To test for effects from the number of casualties posed, half the sample heard 25 killed and half heard 250 killed. Among those who heard 25 killed, 65 per cent thought they would feel NATO had done the right thing (not done right thing: 32 per cent) (Kull 1999).
- 22 Erik V. Larson (1996) argues that the American public makes a cost-benefit analysis when assessing a mission and that casualties necessarily increase the costs and thus diminish the level of support. Steven Kull critiques this argument in a review of Larson's book in *Public Opinion Quarterly* (vol. 64, no. 4, December 1997, 672), pointing out that support for an operation can actually increase concurrent with fatalities as it did in the Gulf War, provided that the operation is perceived as succeeding. Also once troops are committed and losses are taken, this can create an incentive to make sure that the lives were not lost in vain.

War without bloodshed?

Public opinion and the conflict over Kosovo

Philip Everts

Introduction

The conflict over Kosovo in 1999 and the military actions undertaken by NATO and company in that context can be seen—as the critics would see it—as the last typical war of the twentieth century, but also as the first of the twenty-first—as NATO would like to portray it. In the former view it was only the most recent manifestation of a traditional struggle over power and influence in the Balkans, over competing nationalist claims and incompatible definitions of identity and nationhood. In the latter definition it is the first of a new kind of international use of force, not aimed at protecting or furthering traditional national interests, but at protecting people and their fundamental rights. Protagonists of this humanitarian interpretation like Messrs Clinton and Blair would like to see it as paradigmatic and as a model for the future. One essential condition for that to happen is that there should be public support for such military operations, which is what concerns us here. More than in any earlier recent conflict, the question of the degree of public support for the various options and strategies available has taken a central place in the public debate and the calculations of decision makers.

The evolution of international involvement in the crisis and conflict has clearly shown, again, the complexity of the relationship between public opinion and decisions to use military force. More generally, it has emphasised the intricate ways in which contemporary democracies deal with the eternal tensions between the demands of peace and the demands of justice. Clearly, the public, stimulated by media reporting, is horrified, be it often selectively, by real or perceived injustices and violations of human rights, and demands from their governments ‘to do something about it’. At the same time, there are enormous variations in what are seen as the best ways to deal with these problems, particularly when the question of the use of force arises. Governments may be mistaken in thinking that public opinion acts as a narrow constraint on the use of military force for purposes other than the protection of immediate national interests. But they can also be forgiven for thinking so since a superficial reading of the data often suggests the existence of a strong reluctance among the public to countenance the possible consequences of warfare. Whatever the case, this

perception can serve as a useful alibi to avoid taking responsibility for risky actions. It is here that public opinion research and the careful analysis and interpretation of available data such as on the conflict over Kosovo can be both theoretically and practically relevant. It helps us to understand the relationship between governments and citizens, and the degree to which, in general, public opinion acts as a constraint, a driving force, or rather as a permissive consensus and as a factor which can easily be manipulated or even neglected without fear of retribution or punishment in questions of war and peace. As was elaborated in more detail in [Chapter 1](#), in many aspects the issue has not yet been settled and the jury is still out, both in general and in the specific case of Kosovo, which shall be discussed below.

The analysis that follows below is based on available polling data.¹ Although an effort has been made to be as thorough and complete as possible in collecting the data, it is not unlikely that other polls have been held that were overlooked. These were therefore not included in the analysis below, although they could have thrown additional or perhaps even a very different light on the issues discussed in the following paragraphs. As in other cases, much more polling has been done on the issue of Kosovo in the United States than in Europe. As far as Europe is concerned, coverage is also in relative terms very uneven. This forces us to be selective with respect to the former and more speculative in the latter case. Also, to the extent that we shall compare and generalise across countries we shall have to bear in mind the possible disturbing effects of time or differences in question wording. With these caveats in mind, let us proceed.

Several distinct issues can be identified. They will be discussed in this chapter in the following order. First, there is the question of support for the various strategies that were available to—or actually employed by—NATO to force the government of Yugoslavia to stop its policy of ethnic cleansing and abide by NATO's demands. Available data focus primarily on the general support for the air strikes undertaken by NATO. Apart from discussing the support of air strikes, we will also have to pay attention to the related question of alternative strategies discussed at the time to deal with the problem: Should NATO, for instance, do more of the same or send ground forces, or rather continue or return to negotiations? From the beginning, critics questioned whether the military actions would be effective (and hence justified) without sending ground forces into the conflict, or at least showing a willingness to do so. It was argued repeatedly in this connection, however, that the public, while possibly supportive of air strikes, would not accept this extension of the war for fear of casualties and that, hence, NATO governments were operating under severe constraints. These questions and the alleged gap between support for the air strikes and for sending ground troops will be analysed first.

Others criticised the bombing for quite different reasons. Also, arguments were voiced from the beginning, becoming more intense as the conflict went on and bombing failed to have the intended results, that bombing should be replaced,

or at least accompanied, by further efforts to bring about a negotiated settlement. Available data on this question will be discussed next.

Following what was said before, in [Chapter 1](#), on the factors influencing the support of the use of military force, I shall analyse in the third section the actual or likely impact on the willingness to use force in the case of the conflict over Kosovo of three factors. It is hypothesised that this willingness decreases with the fear of casualties, also referred to as the ‘body-bag syndrome’. On the other hand, I suppose that it is influenced positively by two factors. One is the perceived effectiveness of the military force employed. The other consists of the perceived interests involved and the legitimacy of the goals pursued. Under this heading I shall also include attitudes to the content and origins of the conflict itself, which are of course closely related to how it could end, and what kind of solution should be sought. Here we also meet another actual or potential gap, i.e. between support for the legitimacy of certain strategies or courses of action and the degree of belief that such actions would also be likely to be successful. The available data on these three variables are analysed in that section.

Throughout I shall, wherever possible, also deal with the evolution of attitudes over time, as well as the often-remarkable similarities and differences that appear to exist between the various countries concerning the respective issues.

The NATO bombing actions and alternative strategies

Support for the air strikes

During 1998 efforts had been made to change Yugoslavia’s policy on Kosovo and international pressure in the form of threatened air strikes had been brought to bear. Although the use of force had not been authorised yet by the Security Council, the latter had continued to ask for fulfilment of the demands of the international community to stop the violations of human rights in Kosovo. When a last round of international negotiations held at Rambouillet failed to have the desired results, NATO decided at the end of March 1999 to carry out its threats to the government of Yugoslavia, under Milosevic, to punish it for the persecution of the Kosovars, and persuade it to change course and withdraw its forces.

If put in the form of a simple question concerning support for these actions, the public’s reaction in most of the countries involved was fairly straightforward with a two-to-one (61 versus 31 per cent) popular support across the eleven member countries surveyed, in one poll that was held early in the conflict (see [Appendix, Table A.1](#)).

Support stood at the two-thirds level in the US (68 per cent) and the UK (68 per cent), and was also very strong at the time in Denmark (74 per cent), Norway (64 per cent), the Netherlands (68 per cent)² and Canada (64 per cent). Germany found itself in a middle group, together with the more peripheral nations like

Portugal and Spain. Italy was the most reluctant of the 'older' NATO members: this and other polls found Italians almost evenly divided on the NATO attacks.³ While support remained stable over time, its general level was much lower than that in the more supportive countries and seldom reached the level of a majority. Greece, with its historical ties to Orthodox Serbia was clearly the odd man out. While the Greek government continued to go along with the NATO action, this policy was almost universally opposed at the mass level.

Among the three new NATO members, we find a range of opinions: the Poles favoured the military action by a margin of 54 to 31 per cent; the Hungarians were in favour by a more modest 48 to 41 per cent; and Czech citizens opposed the NATO action by a margin of 57 to 35 per cent.

As was also shown in other polls, the Russians, meanwhile, were nearly unanimous in opposing the NATO attack: 94 per cent of those polled objected. Vast majorities of Ukraine (89 per cent) and Slovak (75 per cent) citizens joined them. Mixed feelings were also evident in Sweden.⁴ On the other hand, there was considerable, if not majority support in at least two non-NATO member countries: Finland (50 vs. 35 per cent) and especially Croatia (an understandable massive 82 per cent endorsement).

Some of the data in [Table A.1](#), regarding the United States, are represented visually in [Figure 10.1](#), which gives a summary overview of the evolution of support for the air strikes. [Figure 10.1](#) also allows us to compare support for the two alternative strategies: bombing or sending ground troops, to be discussed in more detail below.

The general picture is one of increasing support up to mid-April, which could be seen as evidence of the often discussed 'rally 'round the flag' effect, and a slow decline afterwards, probably due to growing disillusionment at the lack of success. The same pattern is visible in France and Germany (see [Figures 10.2](#) and [10.3](#)).

The Italian case shows a different, almost reversed pattern with strong hesitations early in April and a tendency towards increased support towards the later phase of the conflict ([Figure 10.4](#)).

One interesting question is to what extent the expression of general support was indeed general, in the sense that respondents made a difference here between the actions undertaken in general and (less support for) participation by one's own armed forces. Sometimes, the poll data suggest that a distinction is indeed being made, with the result that could be expected. There are also data, however, that suggest no such effect or even the opposite, as in the French case. While, in a series of surveys the percentages of agreement with the air strikes in general were 57, 63, 72, 74 and 63 respectively, they were 59, 65, 73, 74 and 67 for the participation of France in the intervention.⁵ In another, similar, series they were 40, 50, 55 and 50 on the first question and 46, 58, 59 and 57 on the second respectively (see [Figure 10.2](#)).⁶ In still another survey 58 per cent expressed support for French participation in the international action, even though the question referred explicitly to 'on the side of NATO', which is traditionally

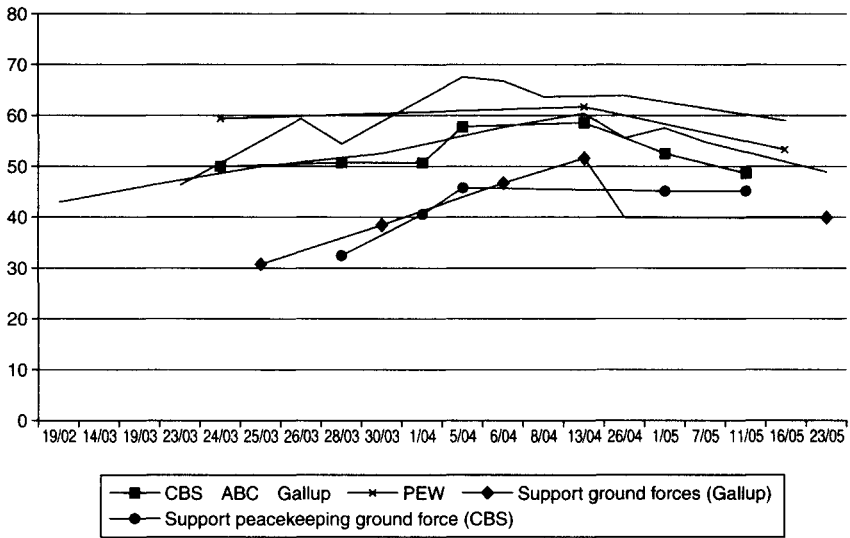


Figure 10.1 Support in the United States in 1999 for the air strikes and sending ground forces (in %).

controversial in France.⁷ One series of polls from Germany shows the same phenomenon. Although it was rejected by 61 to 28 per cent (55–31, 55–33 per cent respectively) that NATO should send ground forces into Kosovo, it was felt by 47 against 44 (48–45, 46–45 per cent respectively) that the *Bundeswehr* should take part in such a ground offensive if this came to happen.⁸ In the Netherlands too, while in one poll only 47 per cent supported the despatch of ground troops, 58 per cent agreed that the Netherlands should commit its troops if this should happen nevertheless.⁹ In Italy, before the air strikes 68 per cent preferred that the crisis should be solved through dialogue and only 27 per cent supported more drastic actions, but in the same poll 49 per cent felt that Italy should support NATO if it decided to bomb Serbia.¹⁰

Send ground troops?

Across NATO countries a considerable gap existed in general, at least initially but probably throughout the conflict, between the generally high support for the bombing actions and the much smaller support for the alternative or complementary strategy of sending ground troops, should bombing turn out to be ineffective. On average, this gap was about 10 per cent, but, as can be seen in Table 10.2, considerable differences existed among the various countries. The occurrence and size of the gap are apparently dependent, among other things, on the phrasing of the questions concerned.

Table 10.1 and the other data reported below suggest strongly that in those countries where support for the air strikes was (relatively) low there was not

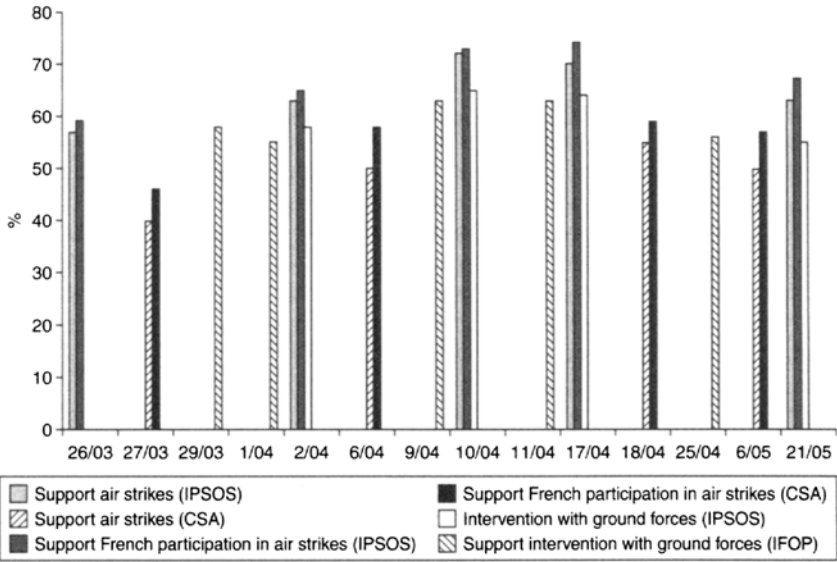


Figure 10.2 Support in France in 1999 for NATO intervention by air strikes and ground forces, and French participation in it (in %).

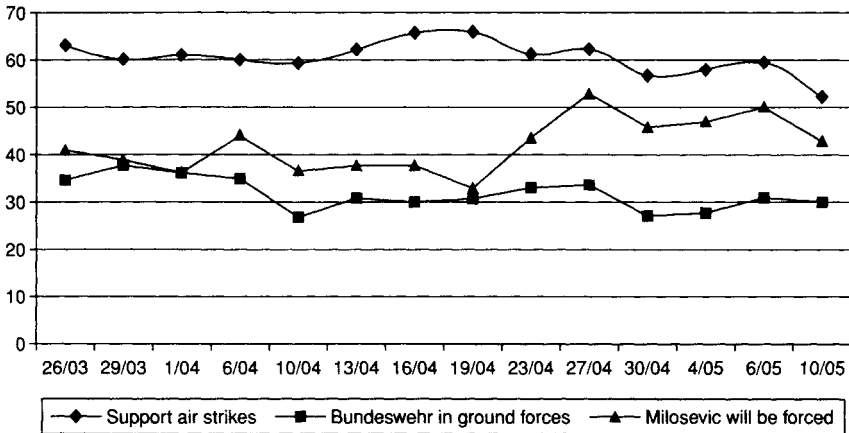


Figure 10.3 Support in Germany in 1999 for NATO air strikes, participation of Bundeswehr in action with ground forces and belief that Milosevic will be forced to yield (in % agreement).

much difference between the number of supporters of air strikes and of sending ground troops, because these were ‘hard core’ supporters who would be prepared to accept almost any (military) means, whereas the opposite was the case in countries with high levels of support for the air strikes, where supporters included those who really had mixed feelings and certainly wished to do no more than bombing. Hence the gap.

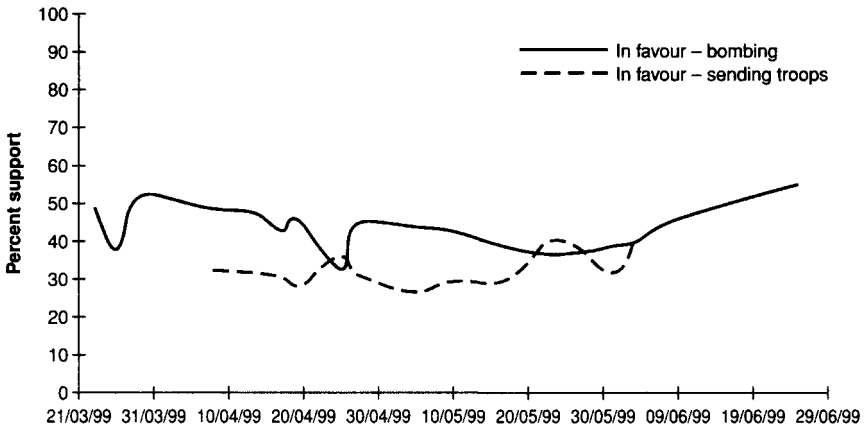


Figure 10.4 Support in Italy for Italian bombing and deployment of ground troops in Kosovo (in %).

Source: various SWG surveys.

Bombing question wording: March 23:

'If NATO decided to bomb Serbia, should Italy according to you support the NATO action; oppose it or do you not know?'; 26 March and 7, 13, 19, 27 April, 5, 10, 17, 24, 31 May: 'As to the war in Serbia and Kosovo. NATO is bombing Serbia. Should NATO according to you be definitely supported or opposed, or do you not know?'; 15–25 April: 'Are you very much in favour, somewhat in favour, somewhat opposed, or very much opposed to NATO bombing in Serbia and Kosovo?'; 25 June: 'As you might know, Serbia has accepted the NATO peace proposal. In view of this, do you think that the NATO decision to bomb Serbia and Kosovo was a mistake or not?'

Ground operation question wording: 7, 13, 17, 19, 27 April, 5, 10, 17, 31 May:

'Presently the possibility of sending NATO ground troops in Kosovo is being discussed. Are you in favour or opposed to the Italian participation in such a mission?' 15–25 April, 24 May: 'In regard to the possible Italian participation in such an operation [ground operation], are you very much in favour, somewhat in favour, somewhat opposed or very much opposed?'

According to other polls, the gap was 15 percentage points in Belgium,¹¹ 24 in Canada,¹² in Denmark 19, in the Netherlands 29 (21 and 24¹³ respectively in other polls), and in the UK 18 (in other polls, however, 15 and 39 percentage points respectively). In Italy it was between 11 and 17 percentage points.¹⁴ In France it was only between 5 and 8 points in various polls (see Figure 10.2), and in Spain it was non-existent.¹⁵ Whatever the width, this gap could be considered as *prima facie* confirmation of the existence of a pervasive fear of casualties. (The impact of this fear of casualties will be discussed in more detail below.) Yet, as evidence of this factor it should be treated with care, not only because of the effect of question wordings but also since other considerations might also play a role, such as the conviction that bombing alone would be sufficient, or

Table 10.1 Send ground troops? (% in favour)

Question: 'Now, if there is no settlement to end the war in Kosovo, would you support or oppose NATO sending ground troops in to fight against Yugoslav forces?'

	<i>All</i>	<i>France</i>	<i>Germany</i>	<i>Italy</i>	<i>UK</i>	<i>US</i>
Strongly support	22	12	10	15	30	27
Somewhat support	25	43	17	18	24	25
Somewhat oppose	17	18	15	23	14	17
Strongly oppose	29	14	48	40	16	28
Don't know/no answer	7	13	9	3	15	3

Source: Survey by Angus Reid group for CNN, in the period 22–25 April 1999 (N=about 300 per country).

that it would be unwise to send ground troops for reasons other than the risks involved.

One might think that the gap would have diminished over time, as it became evident that the bombing campaign did not have the immediate effects that were both expected and promised to the public by NATO, either in the form of decreasing support in general, or, inversely, in the form of mounting sympathy with the idea that ground troops would be necessary, both to shore up NATO's overall loss of prestige and to effectively provide protection on the ground to the persecuted Kosovars. Neither of the two happened, at least not in France, Germany or Italy, for which time series data are available (Figures 10.2 to 10.4). In Germany there was a consistent gap of some 30 per cent between the level of general support for the NATO actions and the willingness to contribute German ground forces, should this be necessary. The gap was much smaller in France, where, as mentioned above, there was only little difference (from 5 to 8 per cent) between support for the NATO actions in general (and/or French participation in it) and the willingness to eventually send ground troops (figures, moreover, which declined only slightly over time; see Figure 10.2).¹⁶

The existence of a gap is one thing, the absolute level of support for sending ground troops is another. Looking at Table 10.1 and Figures 10.1 to 10.4 one is struck (again) by the differences between, on the one hand, the United Kingdom, France and the US and, on the other hand, Germany and Italy. While there was clear majority support for sending ground troops if necessary in the former, there was only one-third or even less in the Italian case in favour of this, and in other countries a similar situation could be observed.

Figure 10.5 not only shows the relatively low, but stable level of support for sending ground forces in general, but also the relatively small impact of the fear of what this could imply for the risks involved for one's own soldiers. Indeed, the level of support for ground intervention is hardly affected by either the prospect of participation of Italian troops or the fear of casualties due to such participation.

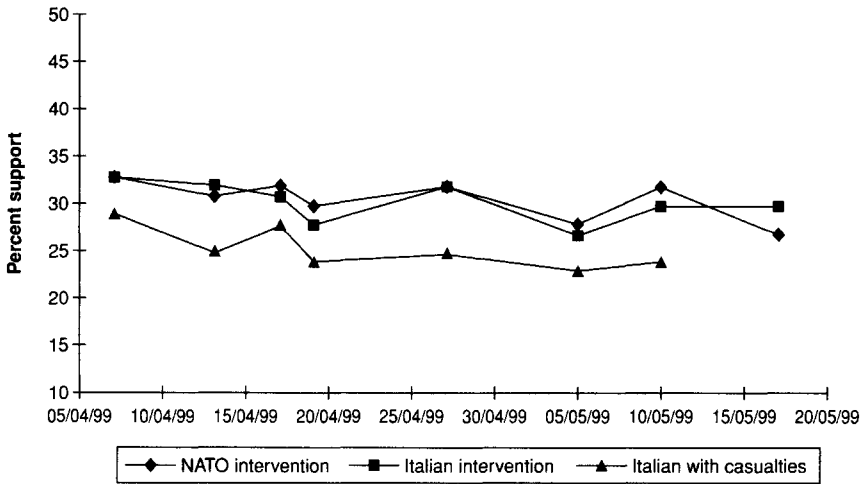


Figure 10.5 Support in Italy for sending ground forces, Italian participation in such an operation and if accompanied by the incidence of casualties (in %).

Source: Various SWG surveys.

Considerable opposition, though less strong than in Italy, also existed in Belgium, Canada and Norway, which took a middle position in this respect. The situation in the Netherlands, again, differed somewhat. While early in April a gap existed as mentioned above of some 20 per cent with 47 per cent in support of ground forces, there was a clear majority (58 per cent) that felt that if such a decision should be taken, the Netherlands armed forces should participate.¹⁷

Bombing or other strategies?

The poll results (Table A. 1) also show that we get a one-sided picture by asking only about support of the military action. Restricting oneself in this way could hide a significant public demand for other strategies, including a greater NATO emphasis on diplomacy. This is shown in other poll data from the first weeks of the conflict (Table 10.2).¹⁸ While only 14 per cent said NATO should reduce (4 per cent) or end (10 per cent) its involvement in the Kosovo conflict, when asked for their overall view of what kind of role NATO should try to play in the Kosovo conflict, a majority of 39 per cent of the polled citizens of NATO countries said ‘NATO should do more to seek a diplomatic solution, but should not send more troops’. This was the choice of at least a majority in each of the 11 NATO-member countries polled—ranging from 59 per cent in Italy and 51 per cent in France to a narrow 30 per cent in the US and 33 per cent in the UK. On the whole, one in five (22 per cent) NATO-country citizens, on the other hand, opted for sending more armed forces, but another one in five (21 per cent) said NATO should keep its involvement at current levels.

Table 10.2 Which role should NATO play in the conflict around Kosovo/Yugoslavia? (in %)

Question: 'Thinking now of the crisis in Kosovo in former Yugoslavia, which of the following comes closest to your views of what kind of role NATO should play there? Do you think NATO should send more armed forces in to the area; NATO should do more to seek a diplomatic solution but should not send more troops; NATO should keep its involvement at the current levels; NATO should reduce its involvement in Kosovo; or NATO should completely end any involvement in Kosovo?'

	<i>Send more armed forces</i>	<i>Keep present level</i>	<i>More diplomatic effort</i>	<i>Reduce involvement</i>	<i>End involvement</i>
<i>Original NATO members</i>					
Canada	30	19	35	4	9
Denmark	26	27	35	1	6
France	12	17	51	2	9
Germany	12	2	47	4	6
Italy	11	12	59	2	12
Norway	24	22	37	3	7
United Kingdom	29	23	33	2	7
United States	27	23	30	4	11
<i>New NATO members</i>					
Czech Republic	11	12	45	8	19
Hungary	19	14	38	6	16
Poland	18	10	48	6	8
<i>Other European countries</i>					
Croatia	39	21	19	1	2
Finland	20	7	56	4	7
Russia	–	1	40	4	50
Slovakia	4	8	55	5	26
Ukraine	1	4	43	5	39

Source: Angus Reid group, 25 March–17 April 1999.

That the public had mixed feelings became most evident in Italy. Apart from Greece, opposition to the actions was most pronounced in Italy: 43 per cent said that it should 'refuse to participate in military actions', while only 36 per cent were in favour. On the other hand, 52 per cent agreed with the policy of the Italian government, described in one question as 'to support the military operations but at the same time take autonomous peace initiatives'. Thus, when confronted with a number of alternative policy options, the most preferred (by 44 per cent) option was 'take part in the military actions decided by NATO but at the same time promote peace initiatives'; 37 per cent opted for 'remain in NATO, not participate in military actions but promote peace initiatives', while only 8 per cent opted for 'take part in the military actions decided by NATO' and an equal

Table 10.3 Bombing or return to diplomacy? Opinions in Italy (in %)

Question: 'President Alema has said that after the first bombing the moment has come to return to diplomacy, while Mr Clinton and Mr Blair want to continue the bombing until Serbia sign the peace agreement. Which position do you support?'

	26/3	29/3	7/4	13/4	17/4	19/4	27/4	5/5	10/5	17/5
Return to diplomacy	72	66	60	63	67	65	63	67	62	69
Continue the bombing	22	31	34	30	28	29	31	33	34	28
Don't know/ no answer	6	4	6	7	6	6	6	5	4	3

Source: Various SWG surveys.

number wanted to leave NATO altogether.¹⁹ The strong and stable support for the policy of 'return to diplomacy' in Italy comes out very clearly in [Table 10.3](#). In another Italian poll large majorities showed themselves in favour of a unilateral suspension of the bombing, especially if Milosevic indicated his willingness to withdraw Serbian troops from Kosovo if such were to happen.²⁰ This preference for diplomatic initiatives is in line with the strong scepticism about the wisdom or desirability of an intervention by ground forces in this country (shown in [Figure 10.5](#)). Understandably, more effort towards a diplomatic solution was also the preferred option across the six non-NATO countries as a whole (42 per cent)—except that Croatians tended to favour the commitment of more forces (39 per cent) and fully half (50 per cent) of Russians urged NATO to end its involvement entirely. This was confirmed by French polls in which 56 (and 58 per cent respectively) opted for the statement: 'stop bombing and start immediate negotiations'.²¹

Conditions of support for the use of military force

As was said above, the willingness to use military force seems to be conditioned by a number of factors, the most important of which appear to be: (1) the nature of the interests involved and the legitimacy of the action (positive); (2) the fear of casualties (negative); and (3) the effectiveness of the use of force (positive).

(1)

The nature of the interests involved and the legitimacy of the action

Attitudes on the legitimacy of taking action and the perceived interests involved are closely related to what are seen as the origins of the conflict, the question of

Table 10.4 The goals of the NATO operation (in %)

Question: '[Finally], do you feel that one of the goals of NATO's campaign should be to create an independent state of Kosovo, Or should NATO's goal be to simply keep Kosovo a separate governed province of Yugoslavia?'

	<i>All</i>	<i>France</i>	<i>Germany</i>	<i>Italy</i>	<i>UK</i>	<i>US</i>
Independent state	33	40	29	41	31	31
Separately governed province	48	42	45	47	37	53
Don't know/no answer	19	18	25	12	31	16

Source: Angus Reid Group for CNN, 22–24 April 1999 (N=1683 total).

who was responsible and to blame for the need to use force and the motives of the parties. Hardly any comparative data on the perceived origins of the conflict and responsibility for it are available. Yet, the outlines of a more general picture can be sketched. In France, at the beginning of the air strikes, a large majority (62 per cent) felt that President Milosevic was primarily responsible for the bombing (25 per cent felt that the Western countries were responsible).²² In another poll this was even more evident: 77 per cent. No wonder then that only 15 per cent agreed in that poll that Serbia was 'a sovereign state which is the object of aggression by NATO' and 70 per cent rather agreed that 'even if Serbia is sovereign, the strikes by NATO are justified to stop the massacre in Kosovo'.²³ In Germany 68 per cent of all respondents (72 per cent in the West and 54 per cent in the Eastern part of the country) thought that Serbia carried the main responsibility for the conflict; 5 per cent thought so for the UCK and 7 per cent put the blame on NATO (14 per cent in the East), while still another 5 per cent blamed 'all equally'.²⁴ Among the British, 69 per cent believed the allegations of ethnic cleansing and felt that NATO had the right to intervene. Only 23 per cent thought that the Kosovo crisis was an internal matter for Yugoslavia.²⁵ This sentiment was echoed in another poll, in which 69 per cent disagreed (21 per cent agreed) with the statement 'the problems of Kosovo are none of our business and Britain should not interfere'.²⁶ A general sentiment seems to have been that the decision to bomb Serbia was necessary to bring the repression in Kosovo to an end. This is illustrated by one poll from Italy, in which 62 per cent expressed agreement with this argument.²⁷ This is not to deny that this view was not also mixed with apprehension about possible ulterior motives of the United States, i.e. to reaffirm their own superiority in the world (54 per cent agreement) or even to divert attention from the internal problems of President Clinton (25 per cent agreement). In the same Italian poll the humanitarian argument 'to prevent further massacres in Kosovo' was also the most frequently chosen among a list of possible reasons to bomb Serbia.

Table 10.5 Milosevic a war criminal? (in %)

Question: 'Some people have accused President Milosevic of being a war criminal. They say that he started the war and that he has persecuted the Albanian people of Kosovo. President Milosevic strongly denies these charges. In your view, should President Milosevic be charged and tried as a war criminal?'

	All	France	Germany	Italy	UK	US
Yes	81	84	81	83	82	79
No	11	6	5	11	7	15
Don't know/no answer	8	10	14	6	10	6

Source: Angus Reid Group for CNN, 22–24 April 1999 (N=1683 total).

Table 10.6 Should Milosevic be removed from office? (in %)

Question: 'Now, as you may know, President Milosevic heads the government of Yugoslavia, which NATO accuses of starting the war in Kosovo. In your view, should a settlement in Kosovo require that President Milosevic be removed from office?'

	All	France	Germany	Italy	UK	US
Yes, should	82	77	86	78	83	82
No, should not	13	13	6	16	12	15
Don't know/no answer	5	10	7	5	6	3

Source: Angus Reid Group for CNN, 22–24 April 1999 (N=1683 total).

As is shown below in more detail, the public may have supported (strongly) the NATO action, purportedly aimed at stopping the persecution of the Albanian Kosovars, but it was—like NATO itself—uncertain about the political aims to be served by the use of force, or, in other words, about the future of Kosovo itself, particularly the status of the area. This can be seen in [Table 10.4](#).

A majority (or almost a majority) felt that Kosovo should stay an autonomous province, but about a third agreed that it should become independent. (The option to make Kosovo into a UN protectorate which elicited most support when a similar question was posed in the Netherlands²⁸ was not included in this question, however.) The public was much more unanimous, across Europe, as to the view that President Milosevic should be forced out of his job and be tried as a war criminal (Tables 10.5 and 10.6). In one remarkable British poll 63 per cent agreed that Britain and NATO should send assassins to kill Slobodan Milosevic.²⁹

In one poll in the US, questions about Kosovo were preceded by other, interesting, more general questions, testing agreement with often-used arguments in debates on these problems.³⁰ Fifty-three per cent agreed that it is inconsistent and problematic to intervene in Kosovo and not in Rwanda, and majorities also

found the argument 'Until we are ready to intervene in a consistent way, it is best to simply stay out of such situations' persuasive. At the same time, a majority of the respondents (56 per cent) also felt that it is not persuasive to argue 'Kosovo is far from the US and we have no real interest there. Therefore, it is wrong to risk the lives of American soldiers in a NATO operation there'. There is thus reason to doubt the strength of the impact of the factor of perceived interest on the willingness to fight.

(2)

Support for the casualty hypothesis?

The second, and most often mentioned factor influencing, in this case reducing, the degree of support of military action is the fear, or actual incidence, of casualties. In the case of Kosovo, the generally observable, understandable and reasonable gap between support for NATO's mission in general, almost in the abstract sense, and that for sending ground troops of one's own country, suggests indeed a considerable impact of the often-mentioned 'casualty hypothesis', already discussed in [Chapter 1](#). Supporters of that hypothesis can interpret this gap as confirmation of what they had thought all along. Its existence also suggests that the governments concerned were right in their caution about speaking openly about and preparing for the (apparently much more risky) use of ground troops, assuming that this could present them with costly electoral liabilities. Yet, there is ample reason for caution. Let us first look at the available data in some more detail and also inspect the evolution of the willingness to sustain casualties in the function of other aspects of the war.

Attitudes on casualties in Europe

In spite of all the public debate, in Europe not many relevant questions have been asked, and those that have do not provide much possibility of cross-national comparisons, nor can the outcomes be generalised with some confidence. One interesting outcome can be noted for the Netherlands. In October 1998 respondents were asked about a possible intervention in Kosovo. This found not only widespread support, but this was also not reduced if the prospect of casualties was raised.³¹ Arguably, such an outcome should be taken with some scepticism since we were dealing with a hypothetical situation. When the military actions began, the question was repeated in early April 1999, however, and then the same outcome was obtained; 68 per cent supported the NATO actions and the same number felt that the Netherlands should continue to participate in these actions, even if casualties were to be incurred among the NATO forces. Only 14 per cent felt it should not, and 18 per cent hesitated or would not reply. This figure was also obtained after the termination of the military actions in June.³² This was in stark contrast to the situation in the UK, where the level of general support was equally high, but the prospect of

Table 10.7 Worries about casualties in the US (in %)

Question: 'How worried are you that US troops in Kosovo might suffer casualties: very worried, somewhat worried, not too worried, or not at all worried?'

	24–28/3/99	15–18/4/99	12–16/5/99
Very worried	55	66	56
Somewhat worried	31	25	31
Not too worried	9	5	7
Not at all worried	3	3	3
Don't know/refused	2	1	3

Source: Pew Research Center Poll conducted by Princeton Survey Research Assoc. (N=1488).

casualties was also feared by many. In this country and according to one poll at the beginning of the actions, majorities were prepared to send ground troops as well as accept casualties (51 per cent).³³ Another survey at the same time, however, suggested the opposite when 56 per cent (and 57 per cent one week later) agreed that the protection of the Albanian Kosovars was 'not worth a single British life' and only 19 per cent agreed with casualties in the order of 1–1,000. Many, however, could or would not answer such a question (34 per cent at the end of March and 24 in early April).³⁴ Unfortunately, we do not have later figures for the UK.

In this respect Italy took a middle position. Towards the end of May the following question was put: 'Would you favour or oppose a hypothetical NATO intervention by ground forces that would succeed in ending the repression and allow the return of the Kosovars if this would entail the death of ten Italian soldiers?' While a slim majority of 51 per cent said 'no', still 41 per cent answered 'yes'.³⁵ Figure 10.5 has already illustrated the limited impact of the fear of casualties in the Italian case.

Attitudes on casualties in the United States

More figures are available for the US. Most of them by themselves suggest both concern and considerable reluctance to incur risks. Clearly, Americans were worried about possible casualties in the war, and these worries increased as the war was prolonged and an immediate end was not in sight (Table 10.7).

Expectations of losses went up in the following way: 68 (24 March), 78 (30 March), 84 (1 April) and 85 per cent (4/5/6 April).³⁶ Faced with the following question: 'In general, do you think the United States military should be able to win a war against a country like Yugoslavia without any American soldiers being killed or wounded, or do you expect that to win a war some American soldiers will be killed or wounded?' 16 per cent expected no casualties and 81 per cent

expected that soldiers would get killed. Asked, 'As of now, in the conflict in Kosovo, how many American soldiers would you expect to lose their lives—a lot, some, or hardly any?' 13 per cent replied 'a lot', 45 per cent said 'some' and 35 per cent said 'hardly any'.³⁷

Clearly too, although various polls gave varying outcomes, many Americans, at least before and in the beginning of the conflict, doubted whether it would be worth it to suffer casualties. To begin with, two polls suggested majorities would accept casualties just as the war started: 53 per cent disagreed with the statement: 'It's not worth risking American lives to bring peace in Kosovo'.³⁸ A clear majority also occurred when the question was formulated in the following appealing way: 'Do you think it's worth risking the lives of American soldiers in order to demonstrate that Serbia should not get away with killing and forcing people from their homes, or not?'³⁹ Some 54 per cent felt it would be worth it and 38 per cent said 'no, not worth it'. A similar effect occurred when reference was made to 'a limited military action': '[is]...this goal (withdrawal of Yugoslav forces) worth having a few American casualties in a limited military action?'. 'Yes' said 50 per cent and 'No' 42 per cent.⁴⁰ Prodded how many casualties would be acceptable, the degree of acceptance dropped off rapidly, however. Only 14 per cent said 'many casualties', 36 said 'only a few' and 42 stuck to the original 'not worth any casualties'. In the same survey about equal numbers were and were not prepared to allow a son of military age to get into a combat situation (46 per cent 'yes', 49 per cent 'no'). That the wording of the question may not be so relevant here after all is suggested by another poll, which showed an opposite outcome, in spite of the reference to 'if it could bring peace'. Only 7 per cent said now 'many', 26 said 'a few' and 56 per cent said 'none'.⁴¹ It is not clear whether fears increased or diminished over time. The information is contradictory, as shown in [Table 10.8](#), although it indicates how tolerance increased from just before to just after the beginning of the air strikes in March 1999. But, whatever the case, this table also shows rather clearly that, by and large, there was a rather critical opinion climate with respect to the acceptability of casualties. Whatever the case, one observer, looking at the available evidence, noted at the beginning of April: 'There is very little appetite for casualties [...] Support that exists now would evaporate if the spectre of a quagmire were to be evoked by Kosovo'.⁴² But others said that things might also turn out differently. One is tempted to agree with the comments of two observers, who added, looking at the data: 'The numbers are suggestive but not predictive. Public response to actual casualties in actual ground war remains to be seen'.⁴³

How the fear of casualties (which by itself diminished somewhat over time), and the number of them influence support for sending ground troops (at least in opinion surveys) is illustrated nicely in [Table 10.9](#).

The obvious dilemmas and possible trade-offs were explored in somewhat more detail in a set of other questions, dealing with the situation that arose when the bombing failed to realise the announced objectives. Respondents were asked:

Table 10.8 Would it be worth it to suffer casualties? (in %)

(1) 'Do you think peace in Yugoslavia is worth the loss of American life and the other costs of attacking Yugoslavia, or not?'

	24/3/99 N = 527	28/3/99 N = na		1/4/99 N = na	5-6/4/99 N = na	13-14/4/99 N = 878	
	All	Men	Women				
Worth it	34	43	26	36	31	44	32
Not worth it	52	46	58	54	52	45	52
Don't know/ No answer	14	11	16	10	17	11	16

(2) 'Please tell me if you agree or disagree with the following statement: It would be worth the loss of some American soldiers' lives if the United States could help bring peace to Kosovo.'

	23/3/99 N = 518	26/3/99 N = na	5-6/4/99 N = 1011	8/99 N = 1011	
				Men	Women
Agree (worth)	37	45	45	51	39
Disagree (not worth)	59	49	52		
No opinion	4	6	4		
On 5 April: '(IF WORTH) and worth if 100 soldiers killed?'				68	
On 6 April <i>idem</i>				70	

Sources: (1) CBS News Poll. (2) ABC News Poll/Washington Post.

'Given what you know right now, which would you prefer the United States and NATO to do in the conflict in Kosovo: (1) send ground troops OR (2) continue the air strikes but don't send ground troops, OR (3) withdraw its forces before becoming more deeply involved?' If the answer was 'send ground troops' another question followed: 'What if sending ground troops meant there would be a lot of American or NATO casualties? Then, what would you prefer: (1) send in ground troops, OR (2) continue the air strikes but don't send ground troops, or (3) withdraw forces before becoming more deeply involved?' Taken together, the following percentages were obtained:⁴⁴

Send ground troops	21	Then, if sending ground troops meant there would be a lot of American or NATO casualties:	
		Send ground troops	12
		Air strikes, no ground troops	7
		Withdraw forces	1

	Don't know/no answer	1
Air strikes, no ground troops	44	
Withdraw forces	30	
Don't know/no answer	5	
Total	100	

Table 10.9 Casualties and support for sending ground troops (in %)

Question: 'Suppose the bombing does NOT stop Serbia's military action in Kosovo. Would you support or oppose the United States and its European allies sending in ground troops to try to end the conflict in Kosovo?'

		<i>Support</i>	<i>Oppose</i>	<i>Dk/na</i>	
5/4	Send in ground troops	55	41	4	
6/4	Send in ground troops	57	39	5	
8/4	Send in ground troops	57	39	4	
	if some casualties*	44	50	5	
	if 100 casualties**	37	57	6	
	if 500 casualties***	31	62	7	
	if 1,000 casualties****	26	66	7	
26/4	Send in ground troops	56	40	4	
	if some casualties*	45	52	3	
16/5	Send in ground troops	52	43	2	
	if some casualties*	43	56	1	

Source: ABC/Washington Post.

* (If 'support' in question): 'Would you support or oppose sending in ground troops if there was a good chance that some US soldiers would be killed in the fighting?'

** (If 'some'): 'Would you support or oppose sending in ground troops if there was a good chance that up to 100 US soldiers would be killed?'

*** (If '100'): ...up to 500?

**** (If '500'): ...up to 1,000?

This was followed by two questions, which read: '...Is it better to restrict the bombing/ground troops even if it means a longer war or is it better to increase the bombing/ground troops even if it means risking American and NATO casualties in order to bring a quick end to the war?' The answers were (in %):

	Bombing	Ground troops
Restrict	48	57
Increase	42	33
Don't know/no answer	10	10
Total	100	100

Table 10.10 Reactions to casualties in Kosovo (in %)

Question: 'Imagine that in the course of carrying out such a ground war (a) 10 (b) 50 Americans were killed in a battle. Imagine that you saw their dead bodies on television. How do you imagine that you would react? Would you want to?'

	<i>Withdraw all American troops</i>	<i>Strike back hard at the attackers</i>	<i>Bring in reinforcements, so that future attacks can be met with overwhelming force</i>	<i>Not react in any of these ways, but stay the course</i>	<i>Don't know/ no answer</i>
(a)	21	19	33	21	7
(b)	20	19	35	19	8

Source: PIPA, May 1999.

It is yet possible to be more specific and consequently less pessimistic about the willingness to run risks. This is suggested by the outcomes of another, much more detailed survey on the war in Kosovo, conducted in May 1999, which, incidentally, also illustrates the usefulness of using a variety of questions including some that are deliberately one-sided.⁴⁵ First, some introductory questions were asked, including one in which an affirmative majority reaction appeared to the statement: 'The longer the NATO operations in Yugoslavia continue, the more likely it is that American soldiers will be killed. We should get out now before Americans come home in body-bags.' This is what supporters of the 'body-bag syndrome' would expect to find: 52 per cent found this argument convincing (42 per cent did not). Asked directly in this survey, 59 per cent opposed sending ground troops 'at this point'.

The survey quoted above also made a deliberate effort to link feelings about casualties to possible positive outcomes of the conflict and—which is rather exceptional—to present respondents with alternative options in deciding how to react if casualties actually occurred (which is what the 'body-bag syndrome' in the strict sense is about).

Two separate quarters of the sample were each confronted with one of two scenarios in which respectively ten (a) or fifty (b) Americans were killed. Respondents could react by choosing one of four reactions, including not only the option of withdrawal, but also that of doing the reverse, i.e. hitting back with all disposable means. The data in Table 10.10 show that only a minority of some 20 per cent manifested the gut reaction of the body-bag syndrome and that equal numbers would want to do the very opposite. It is remarkable that the number of casualties does not seem to play a role here.

Each of the two other quarters of the sample was confronted with one of two scenarios including the occurrence of casualties in a ground war but with a positive outcome of the actions. They were asked to state whether they would consider such actions to be right. The results are given in Table 10.11. It seems

Table 10.11 Casualties and success (in %)

Question: 'Imagine that over the course of the ground war (c) 25 (d) 250 Americans were killed but the operation succeeded in driving Serb forces out of Kosovo so that ethnic Albanian refugees could return. Do you imagine that you would think that NATO did or did not do the right thing by going into Kosovo with ground troops?'

	<i>Did the right thing</i>	<i>Did not do the right thing</i>	<i>Don't know/ no answer</i>
(c)	32	65	3
(d)	33	60	7

Source: PIPA, May 1999.

evident that casualties, and the number of them, do matter, but their impact is strongly mitigated by the purposefulness of the action. This suggests that the impact of the fear of casualties on action support is mitigated by the real or perceived effectiveness of the action. This brings us to the next factor: effectiveness.

(3)

The effectiveness of the action

In the poll quoted above some scenarios, including a reference to the effectiveness of the military action, were also submitted to the respondents.⁴⁶ The first sketched a situation in which a few American pilots were killed due to flying at low altitudes, but in which the bombing would also result in largely ending the ethnic cleansing: 51 per cent (against 44) would accept this and continue the action. The other half of the sample was confronted with the situation that five pilots would die, but President Milosevic would be persuaded to stop the ethnic cleansing and withdraw his troops. In that case 67 per cent would think it right that NATO had taken such a dangerous action. Still others heard the scenario, in which 50 pilots were killed but Milosevic was persuaded to stop the ethnic cleansing and accept the demands of NATO. This decreased support somewhat, but 52 per cent would still consider this form of risky bombing to be a right decision. Although, as mentioned above, 59 per cent rejected an intervention with ground troops, a similar number also accepted the argument: 'Whether or not NATO ultimately intervenes with ground troops, it needs to have that option in case bombing fails to make Milosevic stop the ethnic cleansing. A ground invasion is the only direct means of wresting control of Kosovo from his forces.' After other arguments against sending ground troops had been mentioned, respondents were now asked again whether they were on balance for or against sending ground troops: 53 per cent now agreed and 42 per

Table 10.12 'Has NATO done a good job?' (in %)

Question: 'Overall, do you feel that NATO has done a very good, good, poor or very poor job of managing its military campaign against Yugoslavia?'

	<i>All</i>	<i>France</i>	<i>Germany</i>	<i>Italy</i>	<i>UK</i>	<i>US</i>
Very good	10	7	6	8	9	13
Good	56	53	53	51	55	58
Poor	19	20	17	21	19	19
Very poor	6	6	4	13	7	6
Don't know/no answer	9	13	20	8	10	4

Source: Angus Reid Group for CNN, 22–24 April 1999 (N—1683 total).

cent were still against; 48 per cent were prepared to begin to do so 'now', a considerable increase over the original 'raw' figures.

One obvious shortcoming of these and other related poll questions is, of course, that they refer to hypothetical cases or abstract situations. They should therefore be complemented by what we know about (perceived) effectiveness and its impact on support of the action and it is to this that I turn now. In spite of the fact that by mid-April, when the survey in question was made, Serbia had not yet met the demands of 'the international community' (represented by the countries co-operating in the framework of the G8) and the end of the war was not in sight (indeed, worse was yet to come), the public in the various European countries was, with the exception of Italy, fairly satisfied with the results of the bombing campaign until then, as is shown in [Table 10.12](#).

Other data contradict this, however. The Hungarians, while strongly supportive of the air strikes in general, were, being closest to the conflict, most sceptical. A majority felt in April that the action had been a failure, and on 8 April 84 per cent (78 per cent one week later) felt that the region was now worse off than before.⁴⁷ The French were only slightly less sceptical. While two weeks after the beginning (9/10 April) only 29 per cent in France felt that the action would fail, this had increased to 52 per cent by 19 April and again on 21/22 April 1999.⁴⁸ In another poll, it was found that already by early April 59 per cent felt that the effect of the NATO action had been 'rather negative'.⁴⁹ And in still another poll, on 11 April, 64 per cent felt that the military intervention had been a failure rather than a success (21 per cent). In Germany similar doubts were expressed: 61 per cent thought by the end of February 1999 that the chances of success for an international force to restore peace in Kosovo were 'rather bad'.⁵⁰

Data from Germany also allow us to trace the evolution over time of the belief that NATO's actions would force Milosevic to yield. It is remarkable that throughout the conflict Germans on balance thought that the NATO intervention would not force Milosevic into compliance. Yet, probably at least partly out of

alliance loyalty, they still continued to support the actions and German participation in the air strikes (see [Figure 10.3](#)).⁵¹

Other data also suggest that one could well be in favour of the air strikes and also feel that they should continue, and yet not believe that they would be effective. Thus, to give one example from France, in one poll held on 11 April, 64 per cent felt that the military action had been a failure. Yet, in the same survey 56 per cent felt that it was necessary to continue the action until the Serbs gave in to NATO's demands; 42 per cent thought, however, that it would be better to stop bombing and start immediate negotiations. By 15 May, support for continuing bombing had decreased to 49 per cent and support for negotiations increased to the same level.⁵² As noted already, in Germany a similar effect occurred. While in one poll (5 April 1999) 50 per cent felt that the war NATO was waging against Serbia was justified, 64 per cent in the same poll said that NATO should 'now' introduce a pause in the bombing in order to achieve a negotiated outcome.⁵³

One other interesting assessment, showing the existence of considerably mixed feelings, was made in the Netherlands (June 1999). While 22 per cent (+57 per cent 'strongly') agreed that 'without the bombing Milosevic would never have agreed to the diplomatic settlement', 40 per cent (+12 per cent 'strongly') also agreed that 'the diplomatic efforts by Russia have been equally important as the bombing in reaching agreement'. Moreover, 40 per cent (+20 per cent 'strongly'), also felt that 'the people of Yugoslavia have been hurt too strongly in their daily lives'.⁵⁴

After the cessation of the bombing and the agreement of Serbia to the deployment of KFOR there was much more optimism. In Germany 65 per cent agreed that 'a political solution of the Kosovo conflict' would now be possible.⁵⁵

Some general conclusions

The available survey data concerning the war over Kosovo of 1999 illustrate a number of findings from earlier conflicts. First of all, many people see the problems concerned as being, in principle, 'faraway'. This means that it takes time before attitudes are crystallised and settled, but when they are, they evolve according to understandable and recognisable patterns. In this process various factors are at play: some initial willingness to 'rally 'round the flag', whatever the government decides, habituation to the use of force, crisis, fatigue, sense of revenge, sensitivity to, and fear of, the risks involved, in combination with positive or negative expectations about the outcome and success of the action.⁵⁶

The available data also show, once more, the effect of variations in the way questions are phrased. If one restricts oneself to one or two questions, it seems true that 'with opinion polls one can prove anything', but if differently phrased questions are juxtaposed, a much more detailed, differentiated and clearer picture emerges.⁵⁷

As far as the content of attitudes is concerned, it is remarkable how support for the NATO actions grew after the initial hesitations, and how NATO was able to sustain this support in spite of the widespread ‘collateral damage’ and the fact that results were not forthcoming until the very end of the conflict. But on the whole, the level of support was less than measured during the Gulf War of 1991, in which bloodshed on the part of the Western forces was equally relatively small.⁵⁸ Those NATO governments (almost all of them) that refused to countenance the use of ground forces for fear of a backlash from public opinion could find confirmation of their fears in the general gap between support for the air strikes and sending ground forces, particularly when the risks of such an operation were mentioned or suggested. It is understandable, therefore, that they hesitated to deviate from their initial course. Other data show clearly, however, that once confronted with casualties the public’s reaction would not be automatically to ask for withdrawal. In fact, the opposite might have occurred. Also, the fact that general support initially grew, and stayed at the same level in spite of strong scepticism as to the likely effects and outcomes of the actions combined with widespread disbelief in success at the same time, indicated the robustness of that support. It also suggests a potential for growth in support as well as potential support for more risky operations, provided that there would have been convincing leadership in the countries concerned and in the NATO alliance as a whole. Kohut may have been right when he argued that given the circumstances and the existing hesitations, a (much) larger degree of support for sending ground troops would have been required in political terms than could have been mustered even by decisive leadership.⁵⁹

Although, as was shown above, the data at first sight show considerable support for the casualty hypothesis in its simple form, there is additional reason for caution in this respect. First of all, we should remind ourselves that, as so often, we were dealing with a largely hypothetical possibility, which in actual fact had been ruled out deliberately in advance by many governments concerned. How people would actually react if and when a concrete decision to intervene with ground forces were taken, or after such a decision, remained to be seen. Precisely because in humanitarian cases, compared to those involving direct security threats or the wish for revenge, several and contradictory emotions play a role, it is difficult to anticipate how support would develop if sacrifices were actually at stake and called for. Moreover, public opinion is not really an independent variable that could not change under the impact of the same events and developments to which political leaders are also exposed. Nor is it insensitive to the policies of or, more precisely, the leadership displayed by their respective governments. Both support and the willingness to run the risk of casualties could be significantly influenced by such policies, and support could hence increase or decrease accordingly. The message of an absence of public support, as reported in the media, can—to some extent and within obvious limits—function as a self-defeating prophecy.

The public is certainly prepared to follow its leaders, at least initially. Thus, while support for the NATO actions tended to be somewhat hesitant in the beginning, it increased gradually to a steady level in the beginning of April. It was only when the success of the bombing campaign remained doubtful and the growing number of civilian casualties in Serbia became evident that doubts began to grow regarding the wisdom of the whole campaign. Thus, this was not a time to expect growing support for sending ground forces. In this light it is even more remarkable that support for sending ground troops as we have seen it, for instance, in the case of Germany, did not erode substantially over time, and in some countries even increased somewhat in the two months of the military campaign. There is reason to suggest that at least some among the public were sympathetic to the compelling logic for sending ground troops in view of the apparent failures of the bombings and the need to provide protection to the Kosovars.⁶⁰

The data also show that there were not only similarities among NATO countries such as the initial hesitations and the growing support in the early phases of the conflict—with respect to which the international news media undoubtedly played a homogenising role. There were also substantial differences. There was a group of countries where support was clearly more pronounced than elsewhere. This included the major protagonists, like the United States and the United Kingdom, but also countries like Denmark, the Netherlands and France. Support in Germany lagged behind, but within Germany there was hardly any evidence of opposition along (polarised) party-political divisions.⁶¹ There was relatively much more scepticism in the Eastern compared to the Western *Bundesländer*. Scepticism was also much in evidence in Italy as well as in the more ‘peripheral’ countries Portugal and Spain, not to mention the three new NATO member-states. It was evident that this was where the faultlines in the initially rather coherent NATO front would appear if the actions were to continue without visible positive effects.

Apart from the obvious reason that public opinion was willing to follow its leaders in supporting or even joining in NATO’s air strikes because of a basic feeling of solidarity with other countries in the Atlantic alliance, the most important parameters of the evolution of support for the military actions in their various forms seem to be: (1) the perceived legitimacy of the actions and the interests involved; (2) the perceived effects of the actions, i.e. perceptions of success or failure; and (3) the sustainability of the idea of a ‘clean war’, a war without bloodshed, first of all on one’s own side, but perhaps also with respect to civilian casualties on the other side. The public wanted to see a war that would be the equivalent of what President Clinton in another context, called ‘smoking pot without inhaling’.⁶² A fourth factor, finally, could be called ‘fatigue’. We often assume that support diminishes with the duration of a conflict, especially when the costs rise and success is not forthcoming. As the Kosovo war progressed, some signs of gradual (but limited) erosion of support did indeed become visible from mid-April onwards.

<i>Original NATO members</i>								
	<i>Belgium</i>	<i>Canada</i>	<i>Denmark</i>	<i>France*</i>	<i>Germany**</i>	<i>Greece</i>	<i>Italy***</i>	<i>Netherlands</i>
10 (SWG)							43	
10-11 (EMNID)					52			
14-15 (EMNID)					61			
17 (SWG)								39
18-19 (EMNID)						57		
21-22 (EMNID)						59		
21-22 (IPSOS)				63				
24 (SWG)								42
25-26 (EMNID)					57			
28-29 (EMNID)					62			
31 (SWG)							39	
31 May - 1 June (EMNID)					63			
<i>June</i>								
2 (Canal IPSOS)		42		62	54	2	51	
3 (SWG)						40		
4-6 (NIPO)								76
9 (SWG)							46	
25 (SWG)							55	
<i>New NATO members</i>								
	<i>Norway</i>	<i>Portugal</i>	<i>Spain</i>	<i>UK</i>	<i>US****</i>	<i>Czech Rep.</i>	<i>Hungary</i>	
<i>February</i>								
19-21 (Gallup)						43		
<i>March</i>								
14 (ABC)						26		
19 (Gallup)						46		
23 (ABC)						47		
24 (CBS)						50		
24 (PEW)						60		
24-29 (Gallup Britain)				58				
25 (Gallup)					50			
25 (Gallup Hungary)							61	
26 (ICM)				56				
25 March-17 April (Angus Reid)		64		68	68	35	48	
26 (ABC)				60				
28 (ABC)				50				
28 (CBS)				51				
30 (Gallup)				53				

<i>Original NATO members</i>								
	<i>Belgium</i>	<i>Canada</i>	<i>Denmark</i>	<i>France*</i>	<i>Germany**</i>	<i>Greece</i>	<i>Italy***</i>	<i>Netherlands</i>
10 (SWG)							43	
10–11 (EMNID)					52			
14–15 (EMNID)					61			
17 (SWG)								39
18–19 (EMNID)						57		
21–22 (EMNID)						59		
21–22 (IPSOS)				63				
24 (SWG)								42
25–26 (EMNID)					57			
28–29 (EMNID)					62			
31 (SWG)							39	
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<i>February</i>								
19–21 (Gallup)						43		
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24–29 (Gallup Britain)					58			
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25 (Gallup Hungary)								61
26 (ICM)					56			
25 March–17 April (Angus Reid)		64			68	68	35	48
26 (ABC)					60			
28 (ABC)					50			
28 (CBS)					51			
30 (Gallup)					53			

Notes for Table A. 1.

* For France see also Figure 10.2.

** For Germany see also Figure 10.3.

*** For Italy see also Figure 10.4.

**** For USA see also Figure 10.1.

Sources and texts of the questions:

ABC:

'Do you support or oppose the United States and its European allies conducting air strikes against Serbia?'

Angus Reid group:

International survey for *The Economist* in the period 25 March—17 April (N=500 per country): 'As you may know, NATO has recently taken military action in Kosovo. Do you support or oppose NATO's decision to carry out air and missile attacks against Serbian military installations?'

Archivio Disarmo:

'Are you much in favour, somewhat in favour, neither for nor against, somewhat against or much against the bombing actions by NATO on Serbia and Kosovo?'

Canal IPSOS: International survey for Liberation, 2 June 1999

'Do you personally approve or disapprove or oppose the military intervention by NATO in Yugoslavia?'

CBOS:

Text of question unknown

CBS:

'Do you favour or oppose the United States and NATO conducting air strikes against Yugoslavia?'

CSA:

'Do you agree (completely) or disagree (completely) with the air strikes against Yugoslavia?'

EMNID:

'Do you think it is right that NATO has intervened militarily in the Kosovo conflict with air strikes?'

Gallup Britain:

Text of question unknown

Gallup Hungary:

'Do you support the air strikes against Yugoslavia?'

Gallup USA:

'As you may know, the military alliance of Western countries called NATO has launched air and missile attacks against Serbian military targets in Yugoslavia. Do you favour or oppose the United States being part of that military action?'

ICM:

Text of question unknown

INRA:

'Are NATO air strikes necessary to stop the actions committed by Serbs in Kosovo?'

IPSOS:

'Do you personally approve or oppose the military intervention by NATO in Yugoslavia?'

MARPLAN:

Text of question unknown

NIPO-1:

'Do you support the military actions against Serbia?'

NIPO-2:

'For two weeks NATO has been carrying out air attacks against Yugoslav territory. When you think back to two weeks ago: did you then agree or disagree with the bombing of Yugoslavia?'

NIPO-3:

'What do you think about the decision to take military action against Yugoslavia: totally right, rather right, rather wrong, totally wrong?'

PEW:

'Do you approve or disapprove of NATO forces, including the United States, conducting air strikes against Serbia to force the Serbs to agree to the terms of the peace agreement and end the fighting in Kosovo?'

SWG:

'Are you much in favour, rather in favour, somewhat against of much against the bombing of NATO in Kosovo (somewhat and much in favour)?'

Notes

- 1 The author wishes to express his gratitude to all those who have graciously assisted him in collecting the available data.
- 2 One other poll (NIPO, end of March and 17–18 April 1999) even measured 78 per cent agreement with the actions.
- 3 See various polls by SWG, Trieste.
- 4 SIFO Research for *Aftonbladet*, 31 March 1999 (N=1000).
- 5 Canal IPSOS, 26–27 March, 2–3, 9–10 and 17 April and 21–22 May 1999.
- 6 CSA Opinion for *Le Parisien*, 26–27 March (N=1003), 6–7 April (N=1033), 17–18 April and 6–7 May (N=1002).
- 7 IFOP for *Dimanche Ouest-France*, 1–2 April (N=967). Text of the question: 'Vous personnellement, approuvez-vous ou désapprouvez-vous l'engagement militaire de la France aux côtés de l'Otan dans l'affaire du Kosovo?'
- 8 Polls for *Die Woche*, 1, 9 and 16 April 1999.
- 9 NIPO for 2 *Vandaag TV*, 7 April 1999 (N=251).
- 10 SWG for Palazzo Chigi, 23 March 1999.
- 11 INRA Belgium for *Le Soir*, 9–12 April 1999 (N=502).
- 12 *The Times*, 22 April 1999.
- 13 Legendijk for *Studiecentrum Vredesvraagstukken Nijmegen*, early May 1999.
- 14 Source: various polls by SWG for Palazzo Chigi.
- 15 *The Times*, 22 April 1999.
- 16 Canal IPSOS, 26–27 March, 2–3, 9–10 and 17 April and 21–22 May 1999. The figures are confirmed by a series of surveys held by IFOP in the same period (29 March, 1–2, 9, 11 and 25 April 1999) with 58, 55, 63, 63 and 66 per cent support respectively even though the question again referred explicitly to NATO. Text of the question: 'Dites-moi si vous seriez plutôt favorable ou plutôt défavorable à une intervention terrestre de l'Otan si les frappes aériennes de se révélaient insuffisantes pour faire cesser les massacres au Kosovo?' See for an example of decline CSA 17–18 April and 6–7 May 1999.
- 17 NIPO, 7 April 1999.
- 18 Angus Reid, 25 March—17 April 1999.
- 19 Archivio Disarmo/SWG, 15–25 April 1999 (N=1007).
- 20 SWG for Palazzo Chigi, 24 May 1999.
- 21 CSA 17–18 April and 6–7 May 1999.
- 22 CSA Opinion for *Le Parisien*, 26–27 March (N=1003).
- 23 CSA for *L'Événement du jeudi*, 2–5 April 1999 (N=957).
- 24 Infratest dimap, Deutschlandtrend, 31 March—1 April 1999 (N=1300). Text of the question: 'Who carries the main responsibility for the extension of the Kosovo

- conflict: Serbia, the independence movement of Kosovo Albanians UCK, or NATO?'
- 25 Gallup for *Daily Telegraph*, 24–29 March (N=700).
 - 26 MORI for *Mail on Sunday*, 26–27 March 1999 (N=606).
 - 27 Archivio Disarmo/SWG, 15–25 April 1999.
 - 28 NIPO, 7 April 1999.
 - 29 MORI for *Mail on Sunday*, 26–27 March 1999 (N=606).
 - 30 Poll of 13–17 May 1999 for Program on International Policy Attitudes (www.pipa.org/kosovq.html). For details about this research project see Kull and Destler (1999) and [Chapter 9](#) in this book.
 - 31 NIPO, October 1998.
 - 32 NIPO for Stichting Maatschappij en Krijgsmacht, 3–5 April and 4–6 June 1999.
 - 33 Gallup Poll of 24–29 March 1999 for *Daily Telegraph* (Gallup Organization, Poll releases, 30 March 1999).
 - 34 Survey by MORI on 26–27 March and 1 April 1999 for *Mail on Sunday*.
 - 35 SWG for Palazzo Chigi, 24 May 1999.
 - 36 Source: CBS polls.
 - 37 CBS, 5–6 April 1999.
 - 38 The Harris Poll. April 8–13, 1999 (N=1006). Perhaps this outcome was due to the double negation.
 - 39 The *Los Angeles Times* Poll. 25 March 1999 (N=544) adults nationwide.
 - 40 Gallup, 5–6 April 1999.
 - 41 Fox News/Opinion Dynamics Poll, 24–25 March 1999 (N=900). See also another outcome (Rasmussen, 8 April 1999 (N=1000)) 'Suppose you knew that to accomplish our mission in Kosovo, military action would lead to the death of 100 American soldiers. If this was the case, would you favor or oppose sending American ground troops into the region? 29 per cent 'favor', 54 per cent 'oppose', 17 per cent d.k/n.a.
 - 42 Andrew Kohut, Pew Research Center, cited by Dan Balz, *Washington Post*, 6 April 1999, p. A01.
 - 43 G.Langer and B.Fitzpatrick: http://abcnews.go.com/sections/world/Daily_News/kosovopoll990409.htm.
 - 44 CBS, 5–6 April 1999.
 - 45 Poll of 13–17 May 1999 for Program on International Policy Attitudes (www.pipa.org/kosovq.html).
 - 46 See previous note.
 - 47 Gallup Hungary, 8 and 15 April 1999 (N=510 and 601).
 - 48 Text of the question: 'All in all, do you consider that three/four weeks/two months after its beginning the military intervention by NATO is going to succeed or fail?' (CANAL IPSOS).
 - 49 Text of the question: 'Do you think today that the NATO action to find a just and durable solution in Kosovo has turned out to be positive or negative?' (CSA Opinion for *Le Parisien*, 6–7 April (N=1033)).
 - 50 EMNID, 26 February–2–3 March 1999 (N=2000).
 - 51 Like the French, the Germans made no distinction between support in general and German participation in the air strikes (Politbarometer Forschungsgruppe Wahlen—Mannheim, 12–15 April and 14 May 1999).

- 52 IFOP for *Dimanche Ouest-France*, 11 April (N=930) and idem, 15 May 1999, (N=952) for *Libération* (20 May 1999).
- 53 Poll for *Der Spiegel*, 5 April 1999.
- 54 NIPO for SMK. 4–6 June 1999.
- 55 Polls for *Bundesministerium der Verteidigung*, 11–12, 15–16 and 18–19 June 1999.
- 56 See for a similar conclusion also Giacometti, P. and Dupin, E. (1999), *Débat: intervention de l'OTAN en Yougoslavie: les déterminants de l'opinion publique* (www.ipsos.com).
- 57 See for a comparable conclusion A. Kohut (1999), 'Beware of polls on the war', *New York Times*, 8 April.
- 58 Frank Newport, 'Public support for US Involvement in Yugoslavia lower than for Gulf war, other foreign engagements', Gallup Poll releases, 30 March 1999 (www.gallup.com/poll/releases/pr990330.asp).
- 59 Kohut (1999).
- 60 See the EMNID polls reported in [Figure 10.3](#) and the data from Politbarometer Forschungsgruppe Wahlen, Mannheim, 16 April and 17–20 May 1999).
- 61 One wonders, however, what would have happened had there been a right-of-centre coalition government at the time with either SPD or the Greens, or both in opposition.
- 62 Hofland, H.J.A. (1999) 'De NAVO-bombardementen als investeringsruïne', *NRCHandelsblad* (Rotterdam), 29 May.

11

Conclusions

What have we learned and where do we go from here?

Pierangelo Isernia

Introduction

The previous chapters have addressed several issues and problems related to the nature and impact of public opinion on foreign policy: it is time to sum up and point to possible conclusions emerging from the research reported in them. Being aware, however, that as much as the blind men in front of the elephant we face a host of difficult methodological and theoretical problems: different cases, in different periods, seen under different perspectives. This, of course, limits the generalisability of our results as much as their very comparison. Philip Everts in the Introductory chapter mentioned three main sets of issues that this book was to address: the nature, content and structure of public opinion on foreign policy issues in a comparative and dynamic perspective; the impact of public opinion on foreign and defence policy making, and the empirical support for the so-called 'casualty hypothesis' or 'body-bag syndrome'.

Each of the chapters makes a contribution to one or more of these issues and the task here will be to summarise the main arguments used and the empirical evidence these chapters bring to bear on the three issue areas of interest. Before starting, one should consider that the levels of methodological sophistication, theoretical development and empirical solidity in each of these issue areas are quite different. In some areas we know far more than in others, even though it is still an open question as to how generalisable this knowledge is (underlining the relevance of our comparative approach). Much has been said and written of the nature, content and structure of public opinion on foreign policy, especially in the American case. However, much less research is being conducted on the question of what difference, if any, the radical changes in the structure of the international system might have produced in what we know of the above (see as an exception Murray 1996). Less is known of the impact of public opinion on foreign policy and this is the sector in which more developments are under way (e.g. Jacobs 1993; Shapiro and Jacobs 1989; Geer 1996; Foyle 1999), but again with some notable exceptions (Risse-Kappen 1991) mostly concerning the American case. And finally, still in its infancy, is our effort to understand the role casualties play in the support for the use of force in democracies.

Accordingly, the tentativeness of our conclusions varies as we move from firm ground to more shaky terrain.

Three domains of study

(1)

The content and nature of public opinion

Any discussion on the content of public opinions about the use of force and the nature of these very opinions should start out by mentioning a theoretical and methodological problem, which cuts across any effort in this direction. The issue at stake is the extent to which conclusions and considerations at the individual level are compatible or comparable with those at the aggregate level. Two puzzles are at work here. Starting from the individual level, a first puzzle concerns the character and specific content of individual beliefs about foreign policy issues. A second issue, starting from the aggregate level, concerns the nature and specific content of aggregate beliefs about foreign and defence policy issues. There is no way, by now, we can reconcile these two pieces of the puzzle and, even worse, there is no reason why we should even assume that they are pieces of a single puzzle. What I will do here, following the suggestion Dina Zinnes (1980) made to herself in approaching the evidence on the outbreak of war, is start playing with the different pieces, to look for what matches with what.

The piece of the puzzle I will start with is the traditional thesis mentioned by Everts in [Chapter 1](#), Introduction, that, at the aggregate level, mass public opinion is volatile, fickle and emotional and hence not to be taken seriously in foreign policy making. This now appears to be thoroughly demolished. In spite of an often appalling lack of knowledge and interest, public opinion should rather be accepted as basically stable, structured and to a considerable degree ‘rational’, and thus as an important factor in making and understanding foreign policy. With respect to this, almost all the chapters in this book, obliquely or squarely, concur with the stability thesis, generalising conclusions previously valid only for the United States. But these very chapters point to at least two further considerations to take into account.

First, they invite us to pause and think of the possible implications of stability for both public opinions and their impact on policy making. The idea of the aggregate stability of public opinion must not become a new orthodoxy and it should be considered with as much scepticism as the earlier ‘Almond-Lippmann consensus’. In fact, where stability has become the normal state of affairs, one can be concerned in normative terms, whether this may actually not present an undesirable obstacle to adapting to changed international circumstances. While in the revised theoretical analyses of the linkage between public attitudes and policy making, citizens’ attitudinal stability and coherence are viewed overall as

a positive phenomenon, their potential to rigidify an existing outlook in an objectively changing environment has been largely ignored. It is suggested here, then, that the general public is more concerned than its leaders with, and averse to, the costs involved in a strategic transformation than with its potential gains. In this sense, therefore, under the conditions of a participatory democracy an involved and effective public may play a 'negative' role insofar as the transition from war to peace is concerned.

In this connection, two pieces of evidence reported in this book should be taken into account. The first is the case of Israel in 1993–95. In Israel, a structured and attentive public opinion is reluctant to accept promptly rapid strategic transformations such as those made by Prime Minister Rabin's government in 1993–95. An insufficient amount of attention, both theoretical and empirical, has been paid to the effects of stable and coherent public opinion on the policy makers' ability to make strategic changes in a state's foreign and security policy.

The second is the impact of the end of the Cold War on international attitudes, with particular reference to the use of force. Contrary to expectation, and possibly in line with the evolution of the international system, the dramatic change in the international landscape produced both continuing stability in many areas but rapid and often considerable change in others. This is, of course, most evident in the former communist countries, but Western democracies also seem to be heavily affected, especially with respect to the conceptualisation of war and the conditions justifying the use of military force. The cases of France, Germany, Italy, the United States and the Netherlands show a distinct impact of the end of the Cold War on attitudes towards the use of force. In all these countries, public perception on the use of force and of the rationale of the armed forces has changed. More specifically, although with different speed, public opinion in France, Germany, Italy, the United States and the Netherlands has a new rationale; a need to see the armed forces involved in humanitarian missions for peacekeeping and peace-enforcing operations. In France, since the plight of the Kurds following the Gulf War, an additional humanitarian consciousness that favours peace operations has emerged. As La Balme shows, the French public bestows a great importance on these humanitarian values and on the defence of the more general values that symbolise Western society (like freedom and human rights). The French are indeed overwhelmingly in favour, at the expense of risking their own lives, of the use of force in order to defend these values. Van der Meulen and de Konink record a similar changing perception of the armed forces and of the rationale of the armed forces in the Netherlands. Similar trends are detectable in Italy, where support for the armed forces has been increasing in the 1990s to unprecedented levels, mainly due to the growing role of Italian armed forces in peacekeeping operations. Moreover, the first tests of force in which Italian armed forces have been involved (namely the Gulf War, Kosovo and Bosnia) show an Italian public far more permissive and less critically opposed than many domestic commentators expected or like to think. The

German case reflects much of the same, though the different Cold War experiences of the former GDR respondents affect attitudes towards the use of force among Germans of the west and the east. The question is then why public opinion is sometimes stable, while it changes in other conditions. Stability means different things at different levels. Aggregate stability may be very different from individual stability, meaning by the latter consistency of opinions and lack of contradictions between views and preferences. Either at the aggregate or the individual level, stability over time is different from stability across issues (in Converse's sense). We should not be overly concerned with stability, however. Sometimes change is a sign of sophistication and a natural and sensible reaction. The same goes for consistency. It is not always a positive sign. Life itself is full of contradictions. People are torn apart by opposing desires and dilemmas—we often want both, and this is only natural. It is healthy to recognise these opposing feelings of love and hate, fear and trust, etc. So, the reaction should generally be not 'how stupid' but 'how realistic'.

This set of questions leads us to our second piece of the puzzle as we move from the aggregate content of attitudes towards the use of force, to individual-level analyses. The authors found, using different methods in different cases, a remarkable stability in the structure of beliefs at the mass level. More specifically, Chittick and Freyberg-Inan, Juhász, and van der Meulen and de Konink show three things. First, facing the collapse of the prevalent Cold War image people struggle to adjust to new incoming information. Second, that in doing so, core dispositions, central beliefs, and values play a crucial role. Third, in a complex and changing environment, people are able to differentiate quite well between different conditions and situations. Chittick and Freyberg-Inan find that the contents of the three goal domains change over time as people redefine issues in terms of their changing circumstances. While some key items used during the Cold War, as for example the question on 'containing communism', may lose their meaning as a result of changed circumstances, others become interpreted in terms of different goals. Moreover, they stress the point that it may be more helpful in predicting foreign policy attitudes and support for government policies to know the basic world views, which shape attitudes over a limited number of dimensions, rather than the traditional political or socio-demographic variables. It is interesting and food for further reflection that the authors, using either hierarchical or multidimensional motivational models, reveal that, with the demise of the Cold War, cognitive orientations and values play a greater role in explaining the attitudes towards the use of military force than not only traditional sociodemographic variables but also postures and ideological reasoning. All the authors point to the information-context as the crucial variable. People, lacking factual information or clear-cut and ready available interpretations, draw more often upon their basic values. As an example, the relatively greater influence of the structure of beliefs among Germans in the east compared to the west might be due to the fact that people in the eastern states used to be more dependent on

so-called shortcuts, due to their presumably lower level of information and their lesser integration into German society.

Finally, the available evidence in this book shows also that the structure of beliefs interacts with foreign policy events. This is true, in particular, of the military dimension and connected items. The increasingly humanitarian role of armed force missions affects and changes the way we perceive the use of force. People discriminate between different uses of force and different considerations impinge upon the willingness to see it used. Juhász found that disposition towards the use of force in out-of-area missions involves considerations that differ from the willingness to fight for one's own country. Nationalism and the sense of attachment to the nation-state are more important in explaining willingness to fight; whereas the perception of international threats and attitudes towards the military have a greater role in explaining support for the use of force abroad. Moreover, the role of ideology blurs as we move from a general attitude to specific missions. The perception of the international environment had a remarkable impact on the support for the use of force. The more dangerous the world was perceived to be, the more respondents were ready to become involved internationally. This relationship was particularly clear for the evaluation of specific foreign deployments. In conclusion, willingness to fight for the country is more or less independent of threat perceptions, whereas agreement to foreign deployments is obviously dependent on such perceptions. These results point to the possibility that public opinion might be more reactive to the evolution of the situation in specific crises and so more prone to change if things turn out badly.

The interaction among beliefs and events, on the one hand, can weaken the ability of the structure of belief to shape policy orientation. As an example, in Germany Juhász found that ideology is linked to pacifist persuasion, but when we move to concrete military deployments the connection between ideology and agreement becomes less clear. One reason for this blurring might be the fact that most out-of-area military missions were framed as humanitarian aid, which is presumably supported by everybody. On the other hand, Chittick and Freyberg-Inan, examining both hypothetical and actual crisis situations, find that political opinions concerning the use of force are based on complex dispositions, involving at least two of the three motives stipulated in their framework. This complexity can explain the resistance to change at the individual level. A multidimensional structure provides public opinion with a greater degree of underlying stability than a one- or even two-dimensional structure. While it is certainly possible to distort public opinion in the short term, such efforts are not likely to change underlying perceptions of the international environment or orientations towards basic foreign policy goals or strategies, and may even be counterproductive in the long term. In other words, as Chittick and Freyberg-Inan argue in their paper, little or no opinion change has occurred after the end of the Cold War because there has been no significant change in the underlying structure of opinions (Chittick and Billingsley 1990).

Hermann offers another explanation for this resistance to change: the rigidity of public structure of beliefs, motivated by a strong desire for congruence between strategic beliefs and operative beliefs, and between the way we define political reality around us and the means deemed most appropriate to deal with it. The desire to live in peace on the one hand and the fear that the compromises required by the Oslo Process could prove to be disastrous, a fear rooted in the belief that the Arabs continue to have hostile intentions towards Israel, created an incongruity in the security beliefs structures. This incongruity left many Israelis not only quite bewildered, but also even resentful of any policy changes that could further aggravate this disturbing cognitive dissonance.

(2)

The opinion—policy relationship

Progress on the issue of impact of public opinion on policy making lags relatively behind. This area is methodologically the most complex in view of the variety of factors and actors to be taken into account. The preceding chapters confirmed on the one hand the complexity of the issues involved and on the other hand the extreme usefulness of a comparative selection of case studies.

It is evident that the relationship between public opinion and policy can be manifold: anticipation by governments, direct influence on policy makers (punishment), efforts to please by symbolic acts, and using public opinion as a tool. Relevant factors in explaining these different roles of public opinion include the nature of the political system (presidential vs. parliamentary), the role played by mass media, and the nature of the issue (use of force and which kind of use—peacekeeping versus war, neutrality and so forth). To bring some order to the different cases and approaches used in this book, one should look at three questions and the way the book informs about each of them: do decision makers try systematically to anticipate public opinion? Do they perceive it correctly? And do they tend to act on the basis of their perceptions?

As to the first question—whether it is true that in foreign policy public opinion is largely ignored, or rather that this lack of regard for mass opinion has been changing over time—the cases examined, i.e. France, Ireland, Italy and the United States, stress how common it is to take into account public opinion in the decision makers' calculations. In this connection, the Israeli case offers an appropriate contrast. Even though the Israeli people are characterised by a high level of interest in foreign and security matters, and embrace quite firm opinions in these realms, Rabin's government was severely constrained by its inability (or unwillingness) to take into account the reluctance of public opinion to abandon its previous security beliefs. In this connection it is not the mere neglect of public opinion that helps to explain the setback in the peace negotiations. Rather, the inability to read public opinion is, as Hermann suggests, due to the pace of democratic regimes, sometimes out of step with the pace of public opinion. In Israel, public opinion was not allowed much time to internalise the new, non-

confrontational definition of the situation, mainly because the successive Oslo Accords signed by the leaders determined that the first moves of implementation, for example for the redeployment of the IDF forces in the occupied territories, would take place within a few months and the final ones in less than five years. The pressure to act with considerable haste came not only from the outside, that is, from the American administration and Arab partners to the negotiations, but from some domestic imperatives as well. These had to do with the democratic electoral cycle. Although the public clearly still needed time to adjust to the new reality, the Labour leaders had to produce some tangible results before the 1996 elections. Having to make a decision about priorities, however, they invested more efforts in the negotiations with the Palestinians and failed to deal with the problem of the attitudes of Israelis at home. They hardly addressed or tried to alleviate the fears of those opposed to the peace process, and to win their support. Instead, they denounced the opposition of the Right as irrational and fanatic. Thus, the small gap between the two roughly equal political camps widened, leaving the Labour leaders preaching to the converted half of the population, and the other half believing that their security concerns were virtually being sacrificed for a worthless piece of paper. The outcomes of this study point to the perhaps unbridgeable gap between the need of politicians in democratic systems to react quickly to a changing environment (and to produce quick dividends in order to be re-elected) and the much longer time needed for the public to build some confidence in its former enemies before sweeping changes are undertaken.

In matters of foreign (e.g. neutrality policy) and security issues (e.g. the use of force abroad) decision makers struggle to make sense of what is in the public mind. Before seeing what they do once they have discovered what is in the public's mind, let's first see whether what they read is correct or not. Is there any systematic bias or proneness to misread the public?

The chapter by Kull and Ramsay shows persuasively that in the American case—the country with the most extensive and systematic use of polling in politics—decision makers do take public opinion into account. The problem is, however, that they misread it. Kull and Ramsay argue, first, that the image of the public as 'fickle' is indeed widespread in the American policy community (the media think the same and both media and politicians tend to discount dissonant information). The general view is that public opinion is as it is because it is isolationist and does not see a link between national interests and use of force. Second, they argue that this image has had a significant impact on US foreign policy. Third, that this image of the public is largely a myth and is not sustained by available evidence. Using data on the use of force and fatalities, they show how far elites are from a clear grasp of mass public opinion. Contrary to widespread expectation of quick and elastic negative reactions to casualties, in fact, polls show little evidence that the majority of Americans are prone to respond to fatalities by wanting to withdraw US troops. If anything, the public is more likely to want to respond assertively.

A similar process is at work in other countries as well. In particular, earlier analyses by Sobel (1996), Bellucci and Isernia (1999), and this book's chapters by Everts, van der Meulen and de Konink and Isernia show that, in the Bosnia and Kosovo case, decision makers underestimated the sustainability of public opinion. Politicians' perceptions of the latter 'lack of stomach' seemed to serve as an alibi for non-intervention policies, to a degree of setting a self-fulfilling prophecy. Earlier analyses of Dutch public opinion with regard to Bosnia as well as in general suggest that, as a rule, the public did and does *not* react in some kind of volatile and feeble way towards new military missions. Rather, the public's mandate seems to provide room to the political and military elite for a (pro-)active posture, risks included. This proneness to (mis)perceive public attitudes affects policy and affects it negatively. Decision makers tend to act under the assumption that public reactions in favour of immediate withdrawal would create an imperative to respond accordingly. Even more, the public's response was also seen as shaping policy by appropriately prompting policy makers to refrain from getting involved in military operations that might lead to fatalities, because the public reaction might require the US (or other countries involved) to make a hasty and embarrassing retreat. These results have at least two interesting implications. First, they raise again the issue of what exactly public opinion means for the political elite. Public opinion, like beauty, is often in the eye of the beholder. This suggests that public opinion may mean different things to different people. In particular, elites gather information on the distribution of attitudes through different instruments and through looking at different sources: mass media, editorials, parliamentarians, political advisers, their own electoral constituency, grass-roots movements, etc. Moreover, political systems differ in the preferred mix of intelligence-gathering sources (Jacobs 1993). The mix varies according to the nature of the political culture and the political appropriateness of mass surveys to gauge mass opinion (Cohen 1995). This raises the possibility that the misunderstanding of public opinion is due to the systematically higher attention to other sources of opinions in comparison with mass surveys. In parliamentary systems, with strong and well-organised party lines, party members and parliamentarians are considered a more appropriate source of public opinion than mass surveys (Bellucci and Isernia 1999). Second, this tendency to misunderstand the people as being systematically more fickle and shakier than shown by empirical evidence points to the possible existence and pervasive influence of a 'confirmation bias'. Decision makers tend to be 'realistic' in their foreign policy beliefs. One tenet of political realism in international politics is that public opinion is moody and too extremist (either too pacifist or too bellicose) to rely on. This central tenet of the realist perspective may shape the perception of incoming information, causing decision makers to discount dissonant information or contrary evidence. It is a question for further research to what extent this expectation about the public's nature shapes decision makers' perceptions of poll results and explains the reported misreading of the public on such crucial issues as the use of force abroad.

As to the third question—what do the decision makers do once they intentionally anticipate public opinion—the preceding chapters show a varied set of available strategies. The liberal-idealist interpretation stresses that public opinion does play a role and that governments do (and should) often try to give in and appease public opinion by taking certain actions to comply with public pressures, such as the decisions taken by some European governments (France, the Netherlands) to participate in UNPROFOR. The realist view of international relations generally stresses the limited role of public opinion and emphasises that governments have considerable leeway, perhaps more so in countries like France and Great Britain than in Germany or the United States (Risse-Kappen 1991), and that they use public opinion primarily as a rationalisation, a tool to be used to strengthen one's position. One might argue that when, and as long as, the elite is united, public opinion does not matter and can be discounted, whereas it can become a relevant force when the elite is divided.

La Balme suggests that three types of reactions by policy makers can be distinguished: (1) educating the public in anticipation of negative reactions, such as the efforts made by Presidents Roosevelt in 1940 and Mitterrand in 1990 on the occasion of the conflict with Iraq; (2) taking symbolic measures in reaction to pressures exerted by public opinion in order to appease it and to constrain its impact, for instance by responses such as those offered by France with respect to the war in Bosnia (1994); (3) using public opinion as a resource and as a catalyst, as happened in the case of Rwanda.

Along this line, three variables appear crucial in explaining what the decision makers might do: the salience of the issue for public opinion, the media position and the degree of cohesion among the political elite. La Balme (this book, p. 202) summarises the possible alternatives as follows:

If the public does not have a fixed opinion on a subject, the government can convince it of the judiciousness of its action as long as the media are not actively hostile to it and that the government has a clear vision. If the public is *a priori* fixed and the media share the same opinion, the government will not be able to reverse the situation without a sustained effort. If the government does not know what it wants, or does not dare say it, it will suffer from the cumulated weight of the public and of the media, one following the other, or vice versa.

In this context, Ireland shows what politicians have to do to count public opinion out of the foreign policy-making process in order not to suffer the cumulated weight of the public, media and events impact. Irish political elites and parties, caught between a changing international context and a consolidated foreign policy tradition (i.e. neutrality) acted as gatekeepers in order to avoid a political debate that they feared might lead the country to disavow its traditional foreign policy. The nature of the issue (such as neutrality) helps to blur political cleavages. Neutrality in Ireland, for instance, is clearly a flexible concept that can

be imbued with quite different meanings in different circumstances. Parties exploit this ambiguity. They are willing to debate the issue, but on the other hand frame it as a quasiconstitutional question that only a referendum might reverse, in order to avoid answering the really hard questions. The nature of the political debate, in a 'recoil effect' in reverse (Jacobs 1993), affects the quality of the information provided to the people and, in so doing, keeps low the level of interest and awareness on the same issue. If political parties do not take a clear stand on neutrality, how can the public be expected to know what's what? If rationality is understood as opinion based on the best information available, Irish public opinion is rational in so far as it reflects the political handling of neutrality. The absence of a critical, public debate on neutrality is not a constructive context for stable, consistent, rational and knowledge-based public opinion. The main blame must be laid at the doors of the political parties. This shows how manipulation might be a very subtle operation.

(3)

The 'casualty hypothesis'

A third issue addressed in our book concerns the collation of considerable evidence which established that the so-called 'body-bag syndrome' or 'casualty hypothesis', predicting a rapid decrease of the public support for the use of military force in the eventuality or fear of casualties, is, at the very least, a strong simplification. It serves better to establish alibis for fearful politicians than to offer scientific insight. In explaining variations of support a variety of factors, including the reason for which force is used and expectations of the success of the mission, should be brought into the equation. This finding has important theoretical, normative and policy considerations. Looking only at the first, the evidence presented in the relevant chapters in this book shows that we should move from the broad brush strokes of the general casualty hypothesis to 'increasingly complete accounts of the conditions that limit known findings', and to 'condition seeking' approaches, aimed at 'reducing the generalisability of an existing finding' (Greenwald *et al.* 1986:223). One puzzle to start with is the notable difference here between aggregate and individual level data. Aggregate data show, at least in the cases of Korea and Vietnam, that support is related to casualties. At the individual level no such clear-cut relationship emerges. Mueller (1973:63) notes that 'There was no clear tendency for high (or low) estimators to support or oppose the wars.' Larson (1996) is more subtle, but he concurs. Why is this so?

In part, it has to do with the distinction between actual and hypothetical situations. There are considerable problems of question wording related to the casualties that should be taken into account. In their chapter, van der Meulen and de Konink wonder whether the kind of hypothetical 'body-count' often used in questions really makes sense. They point to two problems of such questions. On the one hand, respondents have to choose absolute numbers of casualties, while

their relative meaning is unknown. Depending on manpower strength, ten casualties could mean that 1 per cent of all troops would be killed, but it could also mean 5 or 10 per cent. On the other hand, asking about acceptable numbers of casualties can 'deter' people. Nobody *wants* any dead soldiers. Even though this is a problematic question, we don't want to push it aside and overlook its results. It does underscore the fact of sensitivity towards casualties.

With respect to the nature of the relationship between support for missions and acceptance of casualties, we should first of all remember the 'dictum' 'correlation is not explanation'. A correlation between tolerance for casualties and general mission support does not necessarily imply that less acceptance for casualties *causes* a decline in support. In a way, this is a debate about what comes first. Several chapters in this book and elsewhere (e.g. Larson 1996) argue that the reverse is more plausible: when support for mission declines, tolerance for casualties declines as well. The crucial question then is what determines support for the mission and what impact this in turn has on people's tolerance of casualties. Of course, one can imagine that, when there are large numbers of casualties, the effectiveness of the mission will become more unlikely in people's perception. This means there is an interaction between all these factors. Which factor will be decisive for another will vary from one mission to the other. Van der Meulen and de Konink at the individual level, and Kull and Ramsay as well as Isernia using aggregate data, claim that the strongest influence turns out to be that of the perceived chance of success. It is not too far-fetched to expect that the *success* of a mission affects both variables: tolerance for casualties and mission support. To be more precise: the implication is that at the *individual level* perceived mission success will affect support for mission participation and tolerance of possible casualties. This sounds quite logical: public support will be lower to the degree that mission accomplishment seems more difficult in advance. In line with that, the acceptance of casualties will decline when the prospects for success are perceived as dim. The crucial question, which will determine the public's response, is not whether e.g. US vital interests are involved, but whether the operation is perceived as likely to succeed. Kull and Ramsay observed this pattern at work when the public reacted to actual US fatalities in Somalia, in the Gulf War, and in Saudi Arabia; when the public responded to (mis)perceived fatalities in Bosnia; and when the public responded to hypothetical scenarios for fatalities in Bosnia, Rwanda, Haiti, and Kosovo. Support for continuing an operation is likely to be sustained, provided that the public has support for the operation in the first place and believes that it is likely to succeed. If these conditions are not met, then it is possible that fatalities will contribute to a decline in support for the operation and even a desire to withdraw. However, even when confidence in a mission is low, this will not necessarily lead to a desire to withdraw. It is probable that fatalities will heighten public awareness of an operation and will lead to greater scrutiny and thus increase the likelihood that Americans will develop reservations. But it will not necessarily lead to a lowering of support even at high levels of casualties.

However, individual level considerations are not enough to disentangle the conditions affecting tolerance for casualties. Generally speaking, we think one should beware of extrapolating back and forth similar public opinion patterns, without taking into consideration the context of very different conflicts, societies and military organisations. Put otherwise, if the chapters add to the evidence that there is a zero-plus tolerance for casualties among Western publics, we are really talking in the context of present-day military missions, i.e. peacekeeping and peace-enforcing. Likewise, we are talking about military establishments that have become, in the classical words of Morris Janowitz, ‘constabulary forces’: continuously prepared to act, committed to the minimum use of violence and seeking viable international relations rather than victory.

Some concluding observations

The substantive chapters in this book show, again, that it is relatively easier to make progress in the realm of the description and explanation of popular political attitudes compared to establishing causal or even correlational links between attitudes (and attitude changes) and the outcomes of the policy-making process. In view of the conceptual and methodological issues involved this should come as no surprise. Yet, we have also shown that progress in this area *is* possible. We have also shown the usefulness—it is indeed indispensable—of moving beyond the confines and limitations of time and place and into the area of comparative studies. Too much earlier research has been constrained by the specific situation in the United States and the conditions of the Cold War era. It is evident that the many questions raised at the beginning of this book could not be solved within the limitations of one volume of studies, but it seems equally evident that the lines of research suggested above are sufficiently promising to expect that further research along these lines may indeed be fruitful. Increased insight into the relationship between public opinion and foreign policy is also necessary if one continues to believe, as we should, that while public opinion is not an alibi for whatever action or inaction chosen by governments, the same governments can, in the end, ignore or neglect the question of public support for their policies only at their own peril.

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