

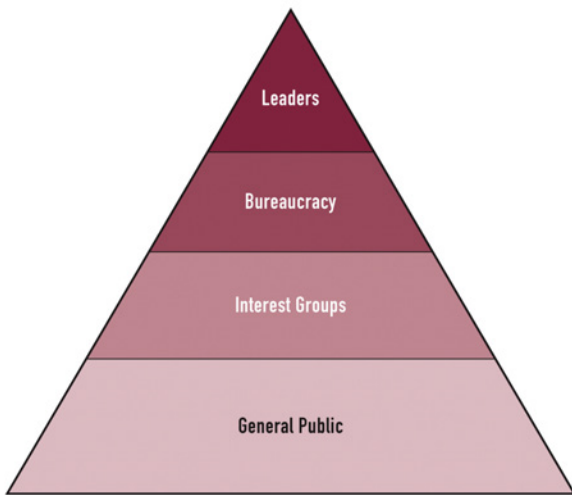
Applications: Domestic Interests and War

Bargaining model shows war is possible with rational unitary states.

But states aren't unitary, and constituent actors aren't necessarily rational.

Should we make the model more realistic?

FIGURE 4.2 *Key Domestic Actors in Foreign Policy*



Leader incentives for war

Leaders of states have many interests of their own:

- ▶ Ideological beliefs, personal motivation, the desire to stay in power, etc.

Strategic politicians can use their control of policy to alter their political restraints.

- ▶ May use war to enhance their hold on power

Leader incentives for war

Rally effect: people become more supportive of their own government during a crisis.

- ▶ Approval ratings for a leader often jump at the onset of a war.
- ▶ After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, President George W. Bush's approval rating jumped 35 percent

Leader incentives for war

Because people “rally around the flag,” international conflicts can:

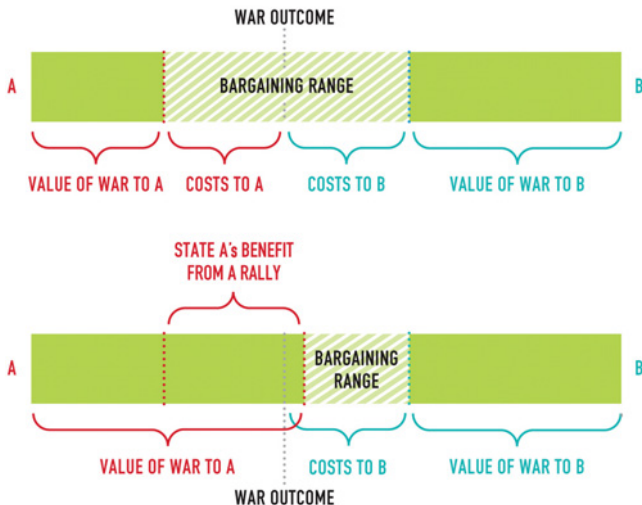
- ▶ Increase patriotism
- ▶ Ease criticism of the government
- ▶ Create a diversion from other problems
- ▶ Allow leaders to blame the country’s problems on foreigners

Diversionary incentive: A temptation to spark an international crisis in order to rally public support at home

Gambling for resurrection: Taking a risky action, such as starting a war, when the alternative is certain to be very bad

Leader incentives for war

FIGURE 4.3 *Rally Effects and the Bargaining Range*



Leader incentives for war

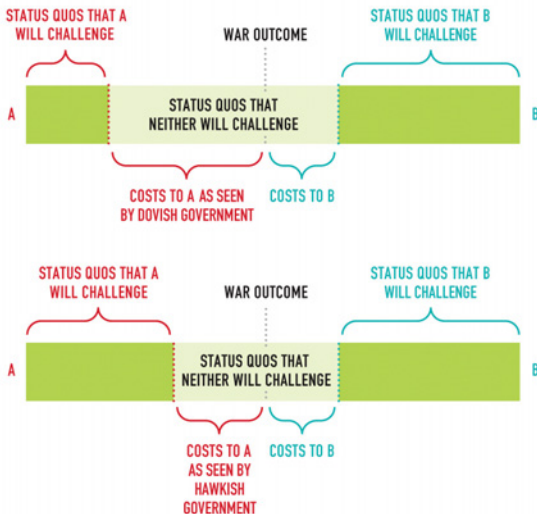
There may be hawkish or dovish actors in the bureaucracy or interest groups.

- ▶ Arms manufacturers
- ▶ Ethnic lobbies
- ▶ multinational firms

How do small groups have big effects?

Leader incentives for war

FIGURE 4.5 *Domestic Interests and International Bargaining*



Leader incentives for war

War can also impose domestic political costs.

- ▶ Public support for war changes as the costs increase.
- ▶ Popular support for WWII and the Persian Gulf War throughout
- ▶ Deep declines in others

Leader incentives for war



Leader incentives for war

FIGURE 4.4 *U.S. Battle Deaths and Public Support for War*

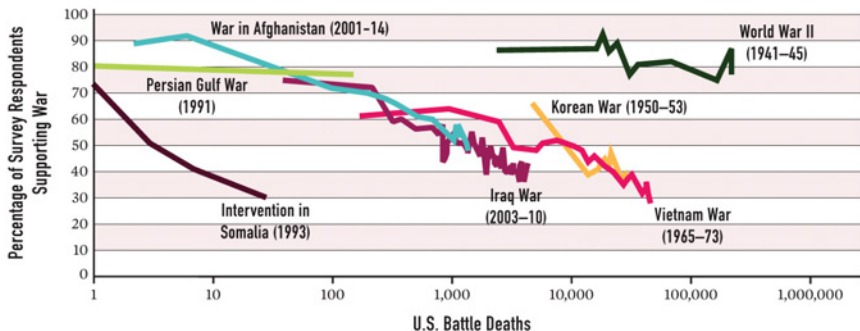


Figure source: Numbers for World War II, Korea, Vietnam, the Gulf War, and Somalia come from Eric V. Larson, *Casualties and Consensus* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1996). Other poll numbers come from Gallup, http://www.gallup.com/file/poll/183590/Mistake_Going_into_Iraq_and_Afghanistan_150612.pdf (accessed 11/22/17). Casualty figures for Iraq and Afghanistan are from www.icasualties.org (accessed 01/20/15).

Leader incentives for war

Leaders who fight losing or costly wars are more likely to be removed from office than those who win wars.

→ Leaders should see war as a gamble not only for the state, but for their political interests.

What do these things imply for:

- ▶ The types of wars we should see?
- ▶ If a leader was guaranteed to stay in office, would they start fewer wars or more?
- ▶ The bargaining model of war (**whose costs** are being represented?)

Public Opinion

Who constrains the leaders? Hopefully the public.

- ▶ Public opinion: “Those opinions held by private persons that government finds it prudent to heed” (V.O. Key)

- ▶ Values, Ideologies, and Attitudes
 - ▶ Values = basic principles
 - ▶ Ideology = Cohesive set of beliefs that form a philosophy about the role of government
 - ▶ Attitudes = Specific issue position (often a function of values and ideology)

Where Do Opinions Come From?

Socialization

- ▶ Family
- ▶ Schools
- ▶ Churches
- ▶ Peers, Workplace
- ▶ Professors?

Experiences

- ▶ e.g., Experiences living under certain political leaders and institutions

Elite opinions

- ▶ politicians, public officials, celebrities

Measuring Public Opinion

Polling is the main measurement strategy:

- ▶ **Sample:** a small proportion of people who are chosen in a survey to be representative of the whole
- ▶ **Sampling Error:** the level of confidence in the findings of a public opinion poll
- ▶ **Random Sampling:** select participants randomly (e.g., random digit dialing) so everyone has equal probability of being selected for the sample.
- ▶ **Survey Weighting:** some people will be harder to get into your sample than others, so when you get them, assign them more weight so your survey is representative of your population.

Measuring Public Opinion

- ▶ Telephone calls (but hard now bc. of cell phones)
- ▶ Internet (are internet users different than non-internet users?
how do we poll my Granny?)
- ▶ Focus groups (small N)
- ▶ Survey experiments: randomly assign different frames/question wording
- ▶ Exit Polls: polls of people as they leave the voting booth;
used to predict election day winners

Measuring Public Opinion

- ▶ Question wording makes a difference: different words elicit different responses
- ▶ Question ordering affects responses

Why? Shouldn't opinions be fairly stable?

Sources of Stability in Public Opinion

Ideology (liberal-conservative)

- ▶ Conservatives oppose many types of foreign aid because it is an intervention of government in economy
- ▶ Liberals tend to oppose free trade because undercuts distributive ability of the state

Group based considerations

- ▶ Policies that promote interests of outgroups are opposed due to ingroup-outgroup competition
- ▶ Material interests (e.g., outsourcing)

Sources of Instability in Public Opinion

Receive-Accept-Sample model (John Zaller):

- ▶ People receive information.
- ▶ People decide whether to accept it.
- ▶ Sample from these ideas when they report their opinions.

Individuals do not always have fixed opinions and instead sample from those most available.

- ▶ Views about Iraq war can change depending on association and opinions about George W. Bush

Influence of elite opinions mediated by political awareness.

Berinsky: event vs. elite driven public opinion

Motivating Question: **What drives public support for military deployment?**

- ▶ Cost/benefit analysis based on war events (e.g., casualties)?
- ▶ Elite opinions (especially those of elites in your party)?
- ▶ Rally around the flag?

Importance of Topic:

- ▶ Ability to continue wars is contingent on public support

Berinsky: event vs. elite driven public opinion

Methods of Empirical Analysis

- ▶ Iraq (2003): uses surveys and survey experiments
 - ▶ Test for public's casualty awareness and impact on support
 - ▶ Examine party affiliation and impact on war support
 - ▶ Test of level of political information (proxy for awareness of elite discourse) and its impact on war support

Berinsky: event vs. elite driven public opinion

Conclusions: **Elites, not events, matter**

- ▶ Iraq: Event awareness is limited and not significant
- ▶ Little knowledge of actual death counts
- ▶ Partisan ties matter: Bush provides cues for both parties but in **opposite directions** and most significantly for individuals with high amounts of information
- ▶ Even if death counts provided through survey to correct mistakes, no statistically significant effect on support for war

How to square with declining support as casualties rise?

Early studies — Optimistic.

Today's dominant view is that people are: uninformed, unengaged, uninterested, unconnected

- ▶ Can politicians take advantage of an uninformed public?
- ▶ Would we see different foreign policies if the public were more informed?

Conclusion

Public opinion is important in democracies (maybe non-democracies), either as a driver of politics or a reflection of elites, or both!

While some theories of international relations, especially systemic ones, see public opinion as irrelevant, liberal theories argue they it is more important.

Interactions between leaders and the public matters.

Next class, we'll look at a specific model of leader-public interactions: Selectorate Theory

MIT OpenCourseWare
<https://ocw.mit.edu>

17.41 Introduction to International Relations
Spring 2023

For information about citing these materials or our Terms of Use, visit: <https://ocw.mit.edu/terms>.