The Media and Military Intervention:
The Relationship Between Media Frames and Individual Beliefs

1 August 2000

Abstract

How do issue frames (e.g., the definition of a problem and the identification of evaluation criteria) influence an individual's willingness to support military intervention? Some observers argue that individuals possess strong foreign policy beliefs which render them impervious to the framing of issues in public debate. Others argue that individuals are very susceptible to the framing by the media and foreign policy elite because they tend to construct opinions spontaneously rather than retrieve pre-existing views from memory. Using an experimental design, we find an interactive effect. Strong realists were much more likely to support military intervention when presented with a security frame. Both strong idealists and realists were impervious to frames that conflicted with their underlying belief system. We also find that vivid video images have a more powerful impact than pallid newspaper text as long as the images reinforce the frame in the accompanying audio track.

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Introduction

Why do citizens support or oppose the use of military force to resolve international political disputes? Since the end of the Cold War, the number of United Nations' military operations has exploded from five in 1980 to fourteen in 2000. In the current year, 26,600 United Nations troops from 82 countries can be found in India/Pakistan, Cyprus, Golan Heights, Lebanon, Middle East, Iraq/Kuwait, Bosnia/Herzegovina, Croatia, Georgia, Kosovo, Sierra Leone, East Timor, Western Sahara, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. As international conflicts and crises emerge, citizens throughout the globe are implicitly or explicitly asked a question of paramount importance: do you support or oppose the sending of troops to the distant lands?

How do citizens decide whether to support or oppose military operations abroad? One school of thought argues that the public has little interest in, and knowledge about, foreign affairs (Lippmann 1922, 1925; Almond 1950, Converse 1964). Asking members of the public about dispatching troops to Somalia or East Timor is akin to asking them to explain the relationship between quarks and hadrons. Although they might designate a response category out of courtesy to the interviewer or respect for the survey researcher, the response is likely to be off the top of their heads and extremely unstable over time.

A second school argues that individuals often have strong and fixed opinions about key foreign policy issues. While they might not be able to recall the members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization or the Warsaw Treaty Organization (Nincic 1992:28) or the name of the current Secretary of State (Page and Shapiro 1992:11) when asked such specific questions completely out of context, they typically have an opinion on whether or not an alliance aimed at balancing against the Soviet Union is a good idea (Page and Shapiro 1992:202) or if the Unites States should take an active part in international affairs (Chicago Council on Foreign Relations 1998:30). From this perspective, individuals retrieve fixed opinions *if* the question wording is correct, the format is appropriate, and the context is adequate.

A third school of thought argues the support for or opposition to a policy proposal is intimately linked to the presentation of the issue. Most information transmitted to individuals has a particular "frame" that helps define the issue and identify important evaluation criteria. The military intervention in the Persian Gulf in 1990 could be framed as protecting the sovereignty of a member of the United Nations (George Bush 1990) or ensuring the flow of cheap oil to the western industrialized economies (Bandow 1990). Politicians frame issues in order to persuade the public to support their views; media organizations frame issues to create enticing stories, promote an ideological perspective, or conform with organizational routines (Shoemaker and Reese 1996; Tuchman 1978). In its most basic form (and in stark contrast with the second school of thought), this school of thought views individuals as easily manipulated and extremely passive. If the media presents a negative (or positive) frame, individuals will oppose (or support) the policy.

A fourth school of thought, which combines the insights of the second and third schools, argues that public opinion is the product of an interactive process linking issue frames and individual beliefs. This school rejects the notion that individuals are passive consumers of framed messages. Rather, individuals actively interpret incoming information in light of their pre-existing beliefs. Individuals are more likely to receive and process messages framed in a manner consistent with existing beliefs. Conversely, individuals are likely to be less receptive to messages framed in a manner contrary to existing beliefs (Zaller 1992).

This paper examines the merits of these four schools of thought using an experimental design. Subjects responded to a 45-question survey designed to measure foreign policy beliefs. Several weeks later subjects were presented an intervention scenario that varied in format (newspaper text versus video) and media frame (security versus humanitarian). The results support the fourth school of thought: realists were much more receptive to the security media frame and idealists were somewhat more receptive to the humanitarian frame. While we focus on the extensive American public opinion literature and employ American subjects in the experiment, we believe the process we describe is generalizable across time and space because it is the product of standard cognitive processes.[1]

Public Opinion and Foreign Policy

Four schools of though purport to explain the relationship between public opinion and foreign policy.[2] The *No Opinion School* claims that the public lacks both knowledge of international affairs and a coherent belief system to guide opinion formation. Walter Lippmann, writing in the aftermath of World War I (and in his opinion the destructive Versailles Treaty), questioned the utility of using public opinion to shape foreign policy.

> If the voter cannot grasp the details of the problems of the day because he has not
> the time, the interest, or knowledge, he will not have a better public opinion
> because he is asked to express his opinion more often." (1925: 36-37; cited in
> Page and Shapiro 1992:4)

The proliferation of survey research in the decades after Lippmann's critique only served to reinforce the belief that the public lacks even rudimentary knowledge of public affairs in general and international relations in particular.[3] Forty years later, Robinson finds little to undermine Lippmann's dismal assessment: "The shocking ignorance of American citizens on issues of vital political and personal concern testifies to the limited fruitfulness of the interaction between the mass media and the public in the government process" (1972: 87). Subsequent researchers repeatedly find that citizens have limited knowledge of politics and current events (Verba and Nye 1972; Neuman 1986). Looking more specifically at knowledge about foreign affairs, a number of scholars have concluded that American citizens are neither well informed nor interested in international issues (Erskine 1963; Free and Cantril 1968; Simon 1974).

The *No Opinion School* also emphasizes the absence of a coherent belief system among members of the public.[4]

> Where public policy impinges directly on their interests, as in questions of local
> improvements, taxation, or social security policy, they are more likely to develop
> views and opinions resting on some kind of intellectual structure. But on
> questions of a more remote nature, such as foreign policy, they tend to react in
> more undifferentiated ways, with formless and plastic moods which undergo
> frequent alteration in response to changes in events. … American attitudes
> toward world politics tend to be formless and lacking in intellectual structure
> (Almond 1950:53-56).

Converse (1964) found that to the extent that people do hold some opinions on international affairs, the opinions lacked coherence or structure. An overarching structure would allow you to predict that if the respondent believed X, they were very likely to believe Y. Or that if the respondent believed X and Y, they were very likely to support policy proposal A. Converse argued that with the exception of a narrow stratum of the educated elite, respondents lacked structure among beliefs. Overall, the findings culminate in the three propositions of the "Almond-Lippmann consensus." First, public opinion is unstable (Almond 1950). Second, public opinion lacks any coherence or structure (Converse 1964). Third, public opinion should not (Lippmann 1922, 1925) or does not (Miller and Stokes 1963:56) have an important impact on foreign policy.[5]

The *Fixed Opinion School*, which emerged in the 1970s, challenged the prevailing view that Americans had very few, if any, fixed opinions about international affairs. Reexamining the panel data used by Converse, Achen (1975) found that the instability of opinion was due to measurement error in the survey questions rather than randomly shifting beliefs. Fuzzy questions rather than fuzzy citizens led Converse astray.

Wittkopf (1981, 1986, 1987, 1990) and his associates (Maggiotto and Wittkopf 1981; Wittkopf and Maggiotto 1983a, 1983b) challenged the belief that public opinion was unstructured in the foreign policy realm. Wittkopf isolates two dimensions (cooperative and militant internationalism) which give

rise to four category typology of public opinion (accomodationists, hardliners, internationalists, and isolationists). Using the quadrennial mass-elite surveys sponsored by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, Wittkopf finds both structure (Maggiotto and Wittkopf 1981) and stability (Wittkopf 1984). Moreover, the Wittkopf research "demonstrates that ideology is an important predictor of Americans' foreign policy beliefs. Liberals tend to support cooperative internationalism and to oppose militant internationalism, while conservatives manifest precisely the opposite tendencies (Wittkopf 1986, 427)."

Hurwitz and Peffley (1987) argue that pioneering work by Converse erred by focusing on a narrow definition of constraint. Hurwitz and Peffley contend that a hierarchy of attitudes allows a relatively ignorant public to locate and express a foreign policy position. The hierarchy, which consists of broad core values (e.g., the morality of warfare) and general postures (e.g., militarism and anti-communism), is strongly correlated with specific policy positions. Hurwitz, Peffley, and Seligson (1993) extend this analysis into a cross-national setting and suggest that general beliefs (images of other countries in particular) constrain foreign policy belief systems and play a role in citizens' evaluation of foreign affairs. "We have learned that attitudinal structure is quite likely to be functional in the sense that it develops to meet the particular needs of a particular citizenry. Citizens of the United States have had to deal…with a variety of national security and military issues, thanks in large part to the prominent global role played by their government. In response, North Americans have relied very heavily on the militarism dimension to structure their more specific policy attitudes (Hurwitz, Peffley, and Seligson 1993:264)." While the specific structure (core values and general postures) may vary from culture to culture, a hierarchy of beliefs makes opinion – even opinion based on little information – more consistent and stable than early research suggested.

Paige and Shapiro (1992) present an extensive analysis of American public opinion from World War II through the "New Cold War" of the 1980s. They conclude that the evidence "simply does not support the notion that collective public opinion concerning foreign policy is random or meaningless or incoherent…. Nor does public opinion change in a vacillating, capricious, or whimsical fashion (1992:281)." While opinion does shift (sometimes abruptly), the changes represent "rational" responses to an evolving domestic and international environment.

In his analysis of public opinion and aid to the Contra rebels, Sobel (1993) found public opinion important but not determinative. Public opinion, which was quite stable with respect to general principles, defined broad boundaries within which decision makers were free to set specific policies. While public opposition to aid to the Contras did not stop support entirely, it prevented the Reagan Administration from expanding the program as they desired. A persistent effort by a popular and charismatic President was not sufficient to alter public opinion on this issue.
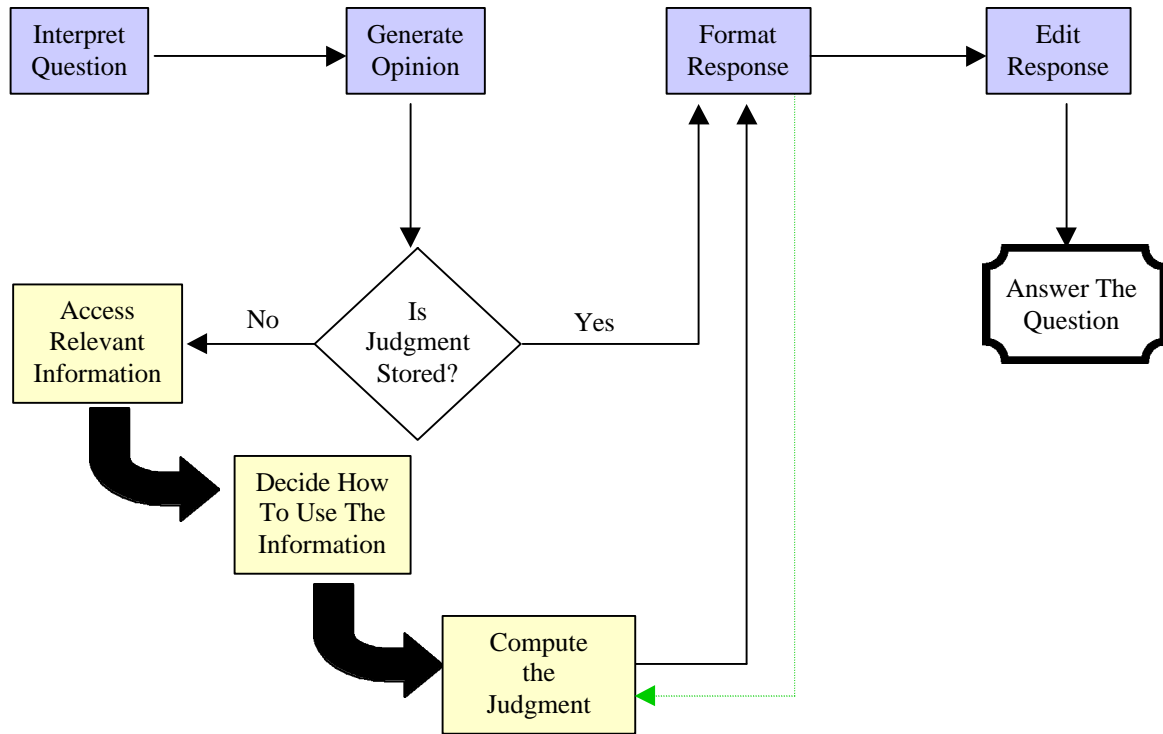
In sum, recent analysis challenges every component of the "Almond-Lippmann Consensus": opinion is often stable, it possesses structure, and it has an impact on foreign policy.

A third school of thought, which we label the *Framing School*, rejects the notion that individuals simply retrieve fixed opinions from storage when confronted with a policy question. It also questions the notion that fixed beliefs give rise to very consistent opinions. Drawing on the advances in cognitive psychology beginning in the 1970s, this school of thought argues that many opinions are constructed by the individual spontaneously or "on-the-fly" -- i.e., when the individual is confronted by a new question. Figure 1, which is based on a model developed by Sudman et al. (1996: 58), outlines the cognitive process. Individuals begin by interpreting the question posed by the survey researcher; different interpretations will lead to very different results. Individuals then generate an opinion. If the opinion is simply a stored judgment, the response is retrieved, compared to response categories, and edited for social acceptability. Factual questions (e.g., how many brothers and sisters do you have?) and strongly held beliefs (e.g., do you support or oppose a woman's right to have an abortion?) often follow this simple retrieval path.

In contrast, most opinions are not simply retrieved from memory. Should North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) expand its membership? Should the United States support the Chinese application for membership in the World Trade Organization (WTO)? Should the United Nations

intervene in East Timor? These complex questions often force an individual to construct responses by drawing on information in memory, sorting relevant from irrelevant factors, and computing a judgment. For example, with respect to Chinese membership in the WTO, the individual must access information (e.g., human rights, Taiwan, trade relations, military balance), decide which are relevant (e.g., trade but not human rights), and compute a judgment (e.g., two considerations in support and one in opposition = support for policy).[6]

Figure 1: Construction of Opinions

This cognitive model of opinion formation has fundamentally altered the field of survey research. Rather than simply reporting that survey responses are sensitive to question wording (Schuman and Presser 1981), researchers have experimentally demonstrated how a particular question wording can make some information salient and some evaluation criteria more important (Sudman et al. 1996). While instability can still occur, researchers can often predict when it is most likely (e.g., individuals with an even distribution between supporting and opposing considerations (Zaller and Feldman 1992)).
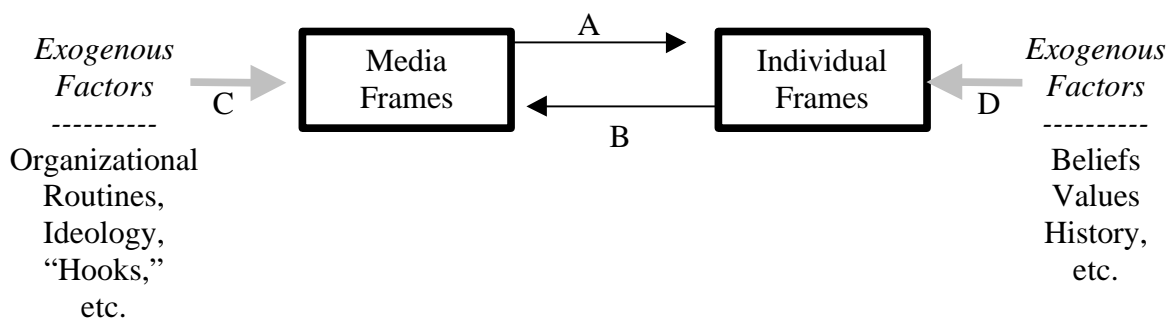
The cognitive model has been used either implicitly or explicitly to explain agenda setting, framing, and priming.[7] The experimental work by Iyengar and Kinder (1987) demonstrated that television news has an "agenda setting" power by making some topics more salient than others. For example, subjects shown television news segments which included 4 stories on civil rights over five viewing days were 17 % more likely to identify civil rights as an important national issue (1987: 23). Iyengar and Kinder also suggested that priming changes "the standards that people use to make political evaluations" (1987:63). Individuals viewing defense stories were much more likely to use their evaluation of the President on defense issues for their overall assessment of presidential performance. By making certain topics and decision criteria salient or readily available, the television news coverage had the power to alter public opinion and, ultimately, the democratic process.[8]

The pioneering work of Iyengar and Kinder has been extended in several directions. Krosnik and Kinder (1990) report on a natural experiment that supports the laboratory findings of Iyengar and Kinder. Fortuitously, the Iran-Contra story broke in the middle of the data collection effort for the 1986 National Election Study. Krosnik and Kinder found that the importance of foreign affairs in the assessment of the performance of President Reagan rose after the story broke. Moreover, the impact of the priming was much more pronounced in the assessment of presidential performance than in the assessment of presidential character. Mendelsohn (1996) replicated the Iyengar and Kinder experiment during a 1988 Canadian election. He concluded that media priming determines the evaluation criteria used by citizens to evaluate candidate performance. In the Canadian campaign, media priming focused voters on leadership characteristics rather than party identification. Domke, Shah and Vackman (1998a, 1998b) examined framing using simulated newspaper articles about an election contest. The authors conclude that the framing of issues in moral or ethical terms can prime voters to make attributions about candidate integrity and can encourage voters to evaluate other political issues in ethical terms.

A fourth school, which we label the *Interaction School*, questions the malleability of public opinion predicted by the *Framing School*. Are individuals simply passive receivers of information and interpretations? Can politicians, interest groups, and media organizations successfully frame an issue in any manner they please? Or are there real limits on the power of external frames and priming? The *Interaction School*, as the name suggests, argues that there is an interaction between external frames and internal beliefs. This interaction makes certain individuals susceptible to some frames but not others. The conditional power of frames allows the *Interaction School* to make very precise predictions when frames are likely to alter opinion.

Scheufele (1999) argues there is a reciprocal relationship between media frames and individual frames. Media frames define the issue and identify relevant information and decision criteria. Individual or personal frames are mentally stored clusters of ideas that help individuals process incoming information and formulate opinions. Scheufele categorizes the diverse framing literature into four groups based on the independent and dependent variables examined in the study (e.g., in Category "A" media frames change individual frames or opinions). For our purposes, the key insight of Scheufele is the interactive relationship between media frames and individual beliefs, values, and opinions. Media frames are filtered through existing belief systems.

Figure 2: Scheufele's Reciprocal Model

Neuman, Just and Crigler (1992) suggest that in the process of "making sense" of the world people use a "wide range of information, strategies, conceptualizations, values, and beliefs" (1992:15). In order to comprehend conversations and media content, individuals drawn from traditions, cultural norms, routines, past experiences and knowledge of events. This background information serves as the schemata that maps or structures how people react to, process, judge and use the information. In other words, making sense of the world around us has much to do with what we already know and can differ

significantly from the media's portrayal of an event. Using a multi-method design that included experimental research, in-depth interviews, content analysis and survey research, they suggest that audiences frame issues quite differently from the news media, often using personalized languages of private thought and discussion rather than the official public discourse that dominates the language of politicians or reporters.

In his discussions with blue collar workers about the Arab-Israeli conflict, affirmative action, nuclear power and troubled industries, Gamson (1992) concludes also that the equation is not necessarily weighted on the side of media discourse and often experiential knowledge and "popular wisdom" can be more influential in interpretations. "On certain issues – nuclear power and Arab-Israeli conflict, for example – media discourse is typically their first resort. Even on these issues, though, they find more than one frame available, leaving them at least a partial choice…They control their own media dependence, in part, through their willingness and ability to draw on popular wisdom and experiential knowledge" (1992:179).

Zaller (1992) develops an interactive model of opinion change based on four axioms. The "reception" axiom states that individuals with higher levels of political awareness are more likely to receive a media message than individuals with low awareness. The "resistance" axiom states that the possession of beliefs and values that conflict with the media message decreases the probability of acceptance of the message. The "accessibility" axiom states that available or salient considerations are more likely to be included in the decision process. Elite debate and the media can make some considerations more accessible than others. Finally, the "response" axiom states that individuals average available considerations in order to formulate a final opinion. For example, when asked their opinion on capital punishment an individual may recall five salient considerations and then average across them (e.g., two favorable and three unfavorable) to reach a final "oppose" capital punishment position. From this simple model, Zaller deduces both traditional hypotheses (e.g., media frames can influence opinion) and innovative hypotheses (e.g., a curvi-linear relationship between political knowledge and opinion change). Zaller's model is clearly interactive in that existing values, which are rooted in "personality, philosophy, ideology, gender, experience, religion, ethnicity, occupation, or interest," interact with the media frame (1991:1216).

In sum, each of the authors falling within the fourth school of thought emphasize the interactive nature of media frames and internal beliefs. While the framing of issues and the priming of considerations remain possible, their power is intimately linked to the beliefs held by the individual.

Does Public Opinion Matter?

At this point, some critics are likely to be thinking: "so what?" For these critics, the relationship between public opinion and foreign policy is both a normative and empirical question. From an empirical perspective they argue that the public has little if any impact on foreign policy (Miller and Stokes 1963); from a normative perspective they argue that the public should stand aside in favor of professional diplomats (Lippmann 1925). If one accepts the "empirical" finding and concurs with the normative assessment, then this paper has little if anything to say about foreign policy.

We contend that this critique is misguided for three reasons. First, in democratic countries the public plays an important role in foreign policy. In the United States, Presidents are constantly using opinion polls to determine and shape policies (Tenpas 1999). Major policy speeches are routinely tested with focus groups and new policies are accompanied by large-scale public relations efforts directed at **both** the Congress and the public. Foreign policy leaders clearly believe public opinion matters (Mueller 1994). Second, understanding how the public understands foreign affairs is an interesting question in and of itself. We are interested in the cognitive processes that determine how citizens interpret, store, retrieve, and process information (see Rousseau, Miodownik, and Lux 2000). Third, and most boldly, we believe the process articulated in the previous discussion applies to all people. While the foreign policy elite may have more extensive information, greater interest, and more integrated belief systems, the interaction between frames and choices is likely to take place in a similar manner. While the source of the frame might not be the mass media (e.g., a respected fellow Senator on the Foreign Affairs Committee, a trusted

advisor, or a researcher from a highly regarded think tank), the information is likely to have a particular frame and this frame is likely to interact with pre-existing beliefs. Given that Senators and Assistant Secretaries are unlikely to volunteer for experiments and are typically reluctant to fill extensive questionnaires, the generalizability of the process to political elite will have to await further examination.[9]

Research Design

We test the competing views on the relationship between individual beliefs and media frames using three hypotheses. Although we focus on military intervention to test these hypotheses, we contend that the results are generalizable to a wide variety of foreign and domestic issues.

> **H1**: Individuals with strongly held realist beliefs are more likely to support intervention than individuals holding idealist beliefs.

> **H2**: Individuals viewing a vivid "video" scenario are more likely to support intervention than individuals viewing a pallid "textual" scenario.

> **H3**: Individuals with strong realist beliefs are more likely to support intervention after viewing a media frame that defines the issue in security terms; conversely, individuals with strong idealist beliefs are more likely to support intervention after viewing a media frame that defines the issue in humanitarian terms.

The first hypothesis argues that individuals with strongly held realist beliefs are more likely to support intervention than individuals with idealist beliefs. Many realists argue that states have right and duty to intervene in order to promote the national interest and check the power of rivals (Gulick 1955; Morganthau 1948). In contrast, idealists are often constrained from supporting intervention by their need to elicit approval of international organizations, to act within international law, to promote self-determination, and to protect human rights. Although "crusading" idealists exist (i.e., idealists who support military intervention to promote democracy and protect human rights), they represent a distinct minority.[10] Strong support for Hypothesis 1 severely undermines the credibility of *No Opinion School* of thought that contends public opinion is fickle and unrelated to underlying belief systems.

The second hypothesis contends that individuals viewing a vivid "video" scenario are more likely to support intervention than individuals viewing a pallid "textual" scenario. Social psychologists have argued that individuals are more likely to receive, store, and recall vivid messages than pallid messages (Nisbett and Ross 1980, 51). Jervis (1976) argues that foreign policy decision makers are more receptive to vivid information. Kaufmann (1994) finds support for this hypothesis by comparing the effectiveness of vivid personal communications to pallid textual communications during the First Moroccan Crisis in 1905. We argue that viewing vivid pictures such as refugees from war torn areas will have a much more powerful impact on the individual than a relatively sterile newspaper article. Although Iyengar and Kinder (1987) did not find support for their vividness hypothesis, they defined "vivid" as a "personalized story" (i.e., the television news story on unemployment focused on the plight of a specific individual rather than the presentation of aggregate unemployment statistics) and they never compared video formats to newspaper formats. In contrast, we define "vivid" as simply the same scenario accompanied by visual images.[11]

The third hypothesis contends that there is an interactive relationship between media frames and individual beliefs; neither the media nor beliefs alone determine an individual's position on any particular issue. Rather, the media frame is filtered through existing beliefs. We predict that individuals with strong realist beliefs are more likely to support intervention after viewing a media frame that defines the issue in security terms. Conversely, individuals with strong idealist beliefs are more likely to support intervention after viewing a media frame that defines the issue in humanitarian terms. Strong results for Hypothesis 3 undermines the *Fixed Opinion School* that contends that

opinion is fixed and impervious to media frames and the *Framing School* that contends that media frames alone can determine opinion.

This experiment was conducted over the course of one semester at the University of Pennsylvania with a sample of 143 undergraduates enrolled in an international relations class. In a pre-test survey, subjects responded to a broad 45-question survey on international relations. Nine of these questions (reproduced in Appendix A) were used to create a 21-point realist-idealist index. Several weeks later the subjects were presented with a hypothetical scenario depicting an Iranian supported guerrilla uprising in Oman. The 2x2 design varied the *format* (newspaper text versus video) and the *frame* (security versus humanitarian). The security frame emphasized Iranian control of both sides of the vital Persian Gulf waterway through which a significant portion of the world's oil flows every day. The humanitarian frame emphasized the suffering of refugees displaced by the civil war. Subjects were randomly assigned one of the four variants of the scenario and then asked whether or not they supported American participation in a United Nations military action to stop the fighting in Oman. The text of the humanitarian and security scenarios appears in Appendix B. The non-italicized text is constant in both scenarios. Our goal was to make as much of the information as possible constant across the two scenarios. And in fact, only the second of the four paragraphs differs across the two scenarios. The survey, video and newspaper scenarios as presented to the subjects are available on-line at www.ssc.upenn.edu/~rousseau/media.htm.

Results

Figure 1 displays the distribution of beliefs on the Idealist-Realist continuum created using the responses to the 9 questions reproduced in Appendix A. The distribution is clearly shifted toward the idealist end of the continuum; the undergraduate students are on average more idealist than realist. However, the shift does not undermine the generalizability of the results; we recognize that undergraduates tend to be more liberal than the general population. We simply predict that those with more realist views will respond differently to particular frames than those with more idealist views. For the purposes of this study, we define "strong realists" as the 25% of respondents falling in the right tail of the distribution and "strong idealists" as the 25% of respondents falling in the left tail of the distribution. The middle category making up 50% of the respondents have "mixed" views.

Table 1 displays the spread of opinion on the central question of the study: "Would you support or oppose a military intervention in support of the government of Oman?" As the Table indicates, the subjects overwhelmingly supported military intervention in the hypothetical Omani conflict. 7% strongly support and 59% somewhat support the use of military force. In contrast, only 13% somewhat oppose and 5% strongly oppose a use of military force.

The results for Hypothesis #1, which predicts that realists are more supportive of military intervention, are displayed in Table 2. Although strong realists appear more supportive of military intervention (84% versus 62% for strong idealists), the difference is not statistically significant. It is also interesting that realists appear more certain about the decision to intervene. While 19% of idealists took a neutral position on the question, only 4% of realists did so.

The results for Hypothesis #2, which predicts that vivid video will have a more important effect than pallid newspaper text, are displayed in Table 3. Once again, the results fail to support the hypothesis. While the table indicates that subjects viewing newspaper texts were far more likely to support military intervention (75% versus 59%), this difference was not statistically significant at conventional thresholds.

Finally, the results for Hypothesis #3, which predicts that realists will be receptive to a security frame and idealists will be receptive to a humanitarian frame, are displayed in Table 4. The results strongly support the hypothesis. While 39% of strong idealists viewing the security frame supported military intervention, a full 61% of strong idealists viewing the humanitarian frame supported an intervention. For strong realists, the exact opposite was true. Strong realists were much more likely to support military intervention after viewing the security frame (67%) than the humanitarian frame (33%). Clearly an interaction is taking place. Realists are not simply more likely

to support military interventions; they support interventions that are framed in a manner that reflects their belief system. Similarly, idealists are not unconditional opponents of military intervention; if the intervention is framed in a manner that coincides with idealists beliefs, they are more likely to support intervention. These differences are statistically significant at better than the .068 level.

Exploration of the data reveals that the framing effect was much more powerful for strong realists than strong idealists. For example, when restricting the analysis to strong realists (i.e., strong realist vs. all others), we find that 93% support intervention when viewing a security frame but only 54% support intervention when viewing a humanitarian frame. This relationship is statistically significant at the 0.016 level. A similar analysis for idealists produces only minor differences in favor of humanitarian intervention (56% vs. 61%; not significant). The difference between realists and idealists appears to be due to the inadvertent incorporation of "mixed" or conflicting frames into the humanitarian scenario. In order to isolate the impact of framing, we kept both the humanitarian and security scenarios identical save for the second of four paragraphs (see Appendix B). We also kept the video segments identical save for the video shown during the reading of the second paragraph. Unfortunately, a reexamination of the video after the experiment revealed that overall the images conveyed a sense of conflict and violence; military images (e.g., aircraft, artillery, guerrilla troops, regular soldiers) were shown during 58 seconds of the 1 minute 31 second humanitarian video. For the security frame, the video images reinforced the message in the audio segment. For the humanitarian frame, the video images introduced a counter frame (i.e., humanitarian intervention is likely to lead to military conflict) that reduced rather than increased support for intervention among idealists. In the scenarios using a newspaper text format, support for military intervention was *stronger* for idealists because they did not receive a simultaneous conflicting frame. In future research, we believe the video and audio segments should be consciously treated as separate frames that could be complementary or conflictual.
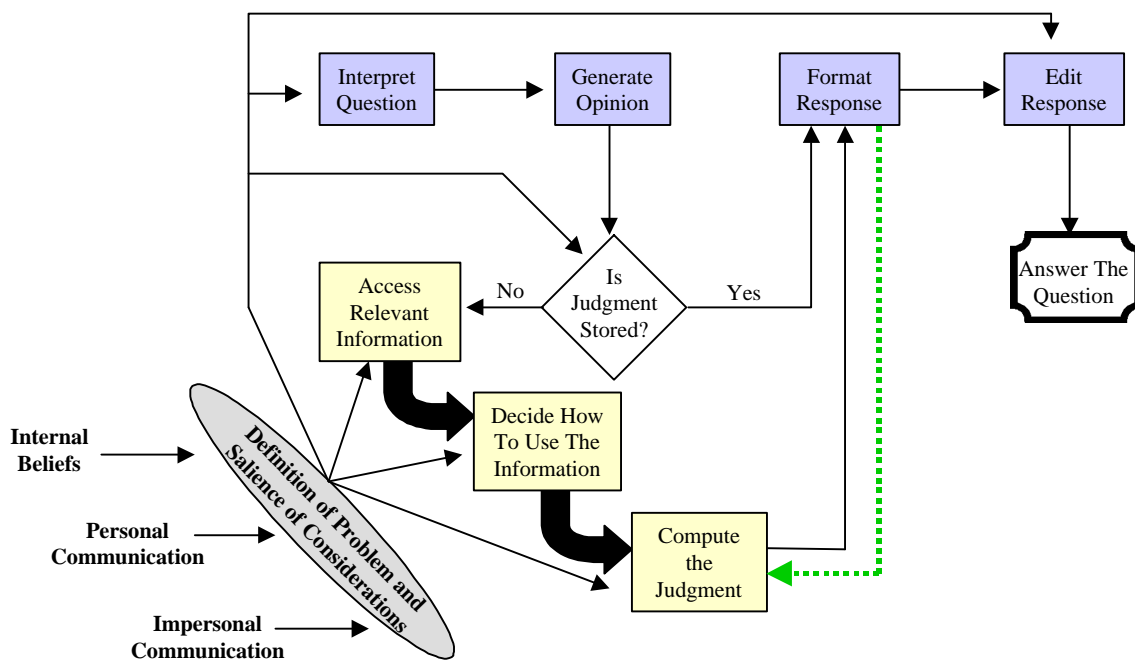
Conclusion

While other authors have explored the impact of framing (Iyengar and Kinder 1987) and the relationship between beliefs and military interventions (Hermann and Shannon 1999), our work bridges the two literatures by experimentally linking media framing to support for military intervention. The linkage is not merely an abstract academic exercise. Since the end of the Cold War, calls for military interventions to halt civil wars and ethnic conflicts have grown exponentially. Simultaneously, the technological revolution in media has brought conflicts in Iran, Somalia, Rwanda, Bosnia, and Kosovo into the homes of viewers and listeners throughout the world. The *opportunities* for framing military interventions and the *power* of framing have increased enormously over the last two decades. As the intervention in Kosovo and the non-intervention in Rwanda demonstrate, the decision to (or not to) intervene can impact the lives of literally hundreds of thousands of people.

Our findings indicate that media frames are not all powerful. The message in the frame interacts with the individual's preexisting beliefs. The security frame in the hypothetical Omani intervention increased support for military intervention among strong realists. In contrast, the humanitarian frame had no impact on strong realists. In addition, the results indicated that the visual frame and the audio frame should be conceived as independent transmission mechanisms. The mixed message in the humanitarian frame (i.e., humanitarian audio and militarist video) almost completely undermined the impact of the frame.

The findings also point toward a revised theoretical model that is depicted in Figure 3. The figure, which reproduces the cognitive information model developed by survey researchers, aids us in isolating *where* priming and framing alter the thought process. The revised model indicates that internal beliefs, personal communications (e.g., discussion with friends, family, and acquaintances) , and impersonal communications (e.g., newspapers, televisions, and interest group newsletters) can influence the definition of problems and the salience considerations. Realists beliefs make certain considerations (e.g., relative power) salient. Discussion with a significant other over breakfast can

make other considerations salient. Finally, watching the nightly news, reading the paper, surfing the internet, and listening to National Public Radio make still other considerations salient.

Figure 3: Revised Model

The revised model raises a number of new and interesting hypotheses. First, we predict that priming (or framing) should have little or no effect for attitudes that are stored in memory. This hypothesis could be tested using a latent response analysis (i.e., measuring how long it milliseconds it takes the respondent to reply to the question). While responses tapping stored beliefs should be recalled quickly, responses requiring the construction of an answer should take more time to develop. Second, we predict that priming (or framing) will have a distinct impact on each step in the cognitive process, including interpreting the question, accessing relevant considerations, determining relevant considerations, weighting considerations, and editing a response. The impact of priming in each step could be isolated through the use of concurrent or retrospective verbal protocols (Schwartz and Sudman 1996). For example, specially trained interviewers could prompt the respondent to explain why they chose "strongly support" military intervention in the hope of identifying considerations and weights. Similarly, interviewers could probe how subjects interpret questions to determine if beliefs systematically influence interpretation. Third, the model will allow us to probe deeper into the relationship between beliefs and priming. Do general beliefs, for example, define the universe of possible considerations and priming the selection of specific considerations from this universe? Or are the beliefs and priming much more independent? Fourth, the model will allow us to investigate the power of impersonal communication relative to personal communication. We predict that personal communication will have a much more powerful and lasting impact because the vivid exchanges are likely to be more accessible from memory.[12] Finally, we predict that the salience of considerations decays as a function of conformity with beliefs, vividness of presentation, and time since reception. These hypotheses could be tested with a staggered panel design in which subjects were randomly assigned to groups which are re-tested one day, one week, and one month after the initial stimulus.

If framing is an inevitable part of the opinion formation process, is it necessarily dangerous or even bad for public opinion to influence foreign policy? We believe framing is a natural process that poses no danger to the polity *as long as two conditions are met*. First, the public must be constantly reminded of the power of media frames and complex nature of public opinion. Second, no single source should dominate news coverage. In the Invasion of Grenada and Persian Gulf War, the government used its monopoly on news to frame events in a manner which supported government policy (MacArthur 1992; Gottshalk 1992). Similarly, the emergence of media giants, which seek to monopolize both distribution networks and media content, could drastically reduce the number of independent news sources and policy perspectives available to citizens. We suspect (and hope) that the internet will prove to be a highly decentralized information source which encourages the proliferation of news sources and competition of ideas so essential to a democratic system.

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APPENDIX A: Survey Questions Used To Develop The Realist-Idealist Index

6. In general, the use of military force only makes problems worse. [Strongly Agree, Somewhat Agree, Neutral, Somewhat Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Not Sure]

8. The following statement is often made with respect to national security: "The best defense is a strong offense." The statement implies that increasing the quality and quantity of US weapons systems always enhances US security. Do you agree or disagree with this perspective? [Strongly Agree, Somewhat Agree, Neutral, Somewhat Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Not Sure]

11. Respond to the following statement: The U.S. may have to support some military dictators or authoritarian regimes because they are friendly toward the U.S. and opposed to states which threaten U.S. security. [Strongly Agree, Somewhat Agree, Neutral, Somewhat Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Not Sure]

13. It is essential for the United States to work with other nations to solve problems such as overpopulation, hunger, and pollution. [Strongly Support, Support, Neutral, Oppose, Strongly Oppose, Not Sure]

16. The best way to ensure peace around the globe is through American military strength. [Strongly Agree, Somewhat Agree, Neutral, Somewhat Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Not Sure]

17. We are faced with many problems at home and abroad, none of which can be solved easily or inexpensively. For the following programs, please indicate whether they should have their budgets and/or scopes expanded, cut, or maintained at current levels. (Aid For Education; Defense Spending; Farm Subsidies; Military Aid Abroad; Economic Aid Abroad; Domestic Welfare Programs; Support for the U.N.; Peace-Keeping Operations) [Expand Significantly, Expand Slightly, Maintain, Cut Slightly, Cut Significantly, Not Sure]

19. Some observers of the international system believe that states generally share similar goals and that by working through international organizations such as the United Nations and supporting international law the global community can effectively control the handful of renegade states in the system. [Strongly Agree, Somewhat Agree, Neutral, Somewhat Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Not Sure]

23. Although most people would agree that all of the following goals are important to some degree, sometimes we have to choose one goal over another. If you had to choose between the following goals, which is more important:
    a. Strengthening the United Nations OR b. Avoiding international entanglements?
    a. Protecting human rights abroad OR b. Maintaining cordial relations?
    a. Protecting jobs of American workers OR b. Promoting democracy abroad?
    a. Containing Russia OR b. Protecting weak states from aggression?
    a. Combating world hunger OR b. Protecting U.S. business interests abroad?

APPENDIX B: The Security (top) and Humanitarian (bottom) Scenarios

Security

Intensive fighting in Oman continued today as Iranian backed rebels expanded control of rural areas and began a push towards the capital city of Muskat. At an emergency meeting of the United Nations Security Council the Omani ambassador to the UN called on the council to authorize the use of military force to end the fighting. Iran has denied supporting the rebel movement.

Oman is located at the mouth of the strategic Persian Gulf waterways. Each year 40 percent of the world's oil flows through the gulf on its way to the major industrial economies of Western Europe, Asia, and North America. Should Iranian rebels take control of the country, Iran would have control of both sides of the narrow waterway. Oman also possesses significant oil reserves following the discovery of the Al Capei oil field by the Oman Oil Company, a joint venture between BP and Mobile.

The Government of Oman lead by Sheik Kaboos Bin Said seems paralyzed in the face of the escalating crisis. The poorly equipped and trained Omani soldiers seem to be no match for the Iranian backed forces. Although the government has requested military assistance from regional neighbors such as Saudi Arabia and great powers such as the United States and Great Britain, no foreign troops have been dispatched to aid the government soldiers. The sheik has not made a public appearance since the start of the crisis.

The key question remains – will the United Nations Security Council support the call for military assistance. Though the Council met well into the night it failed to reach a decision. Pentagon sources indicated that planning for a joint American, British and French military operation is currently underway. The operation, which would involve the American One Hundred and First Airborne Division, the UK First Airborne and the French Foreign Legion, could be implemented within hours of UN Security Council approval.

For CNN this is Emma Peters in Muskat.

Humanitarian

Intensive fighting in Oman continued today as Iranian backed rebels expanded control of rural areas and began a push towards the capital city of Muskat. At an emergency meeting of the United Nations Security Council the Omani ambassador to the UN called on the council to authorize the use of military force to end the fighting. Iran has denied supporting the rebel movement.

The fighting has created a humanitarian crisis. Tens of thousands of Omanis have been driven from their homes and villages as rebel forces have driven back government troops. The Red Cross has been shipping in food and tents to help the refugees, however only a trickle of aid has reached the starving and exhausted refugees because of frequent airport closures and a lack of security for Red Cross personnel at the food distribution sites.

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For CNN this is Emma Peters in Muskat.

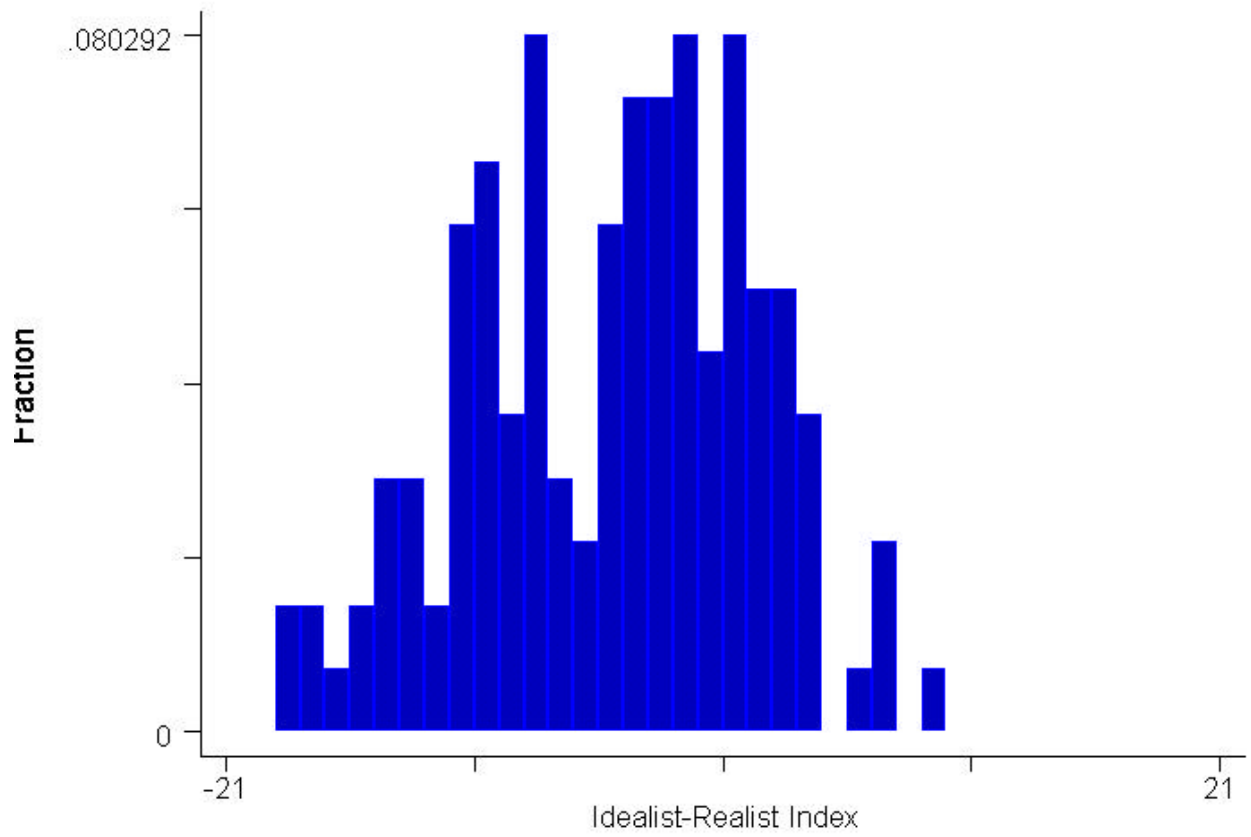**Figure 1: Distribution of Beliefs on Idealist-Realist Continuum**

Table 1: Support for Military Intervention

	Percentage of Respondents
Strongly Support	7%
Somewhat Support	59%
Neutral	11%
Somewhat Oppose	13%
Strongly Oppose	5%
Don't Know	5%

n=143. Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Table 2: The Impact of Beliefs on Support for Military Intervention

	Strong Idealist	Mixed Views	Strong Realist
Support	62%	68%	84%
Neutral	19%	10%	4%
Oppose	19%	22%	12%

n=130; Chi square =5.1; Probability < .276
Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Table 3: The Impact of Format on Support for Military Intervention

	Newspaper Format	Video Format
Support	75%	59%
Neutral	9%	16%
Oppose	16%	24%

n=136; Chi square =3.6; Probability < .165
Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Table 4: Interaction Between Media Frames and Individual Beliefs: Support for Intervention

	Security Frame	Humanitarian Frame	Total
	--------------	--------------	--------------
Strong Idealist Beliefs	39%	61%	100%
Strong Realist Beliefs	67%	33%	100%

n=44; Chi square =3.3; Probability < .068

End Notes

[1] The cognitive process should be as relevant in autocratic societies as democratic societies. While autocratic states often attempt to socialize members to accept a very narrow set of beliefs, some diversity continues to exist even in the most totalitarian states. Similarly, while autocratic governments attempt to control both personal and impersonal communication, competing perspectives often emerge. Even in the Soviet Union, a state in which the government exercised an enormous amount of control over the media and socialization process, alternative perspectives on the military intervention in Afghanistan emerged within the elite and general public (Mendelson 1993).

[2] There are obviously many ways to categorize the foreign policy public opinion literature (e.g., fixed vs. constructed opinions, stable vs. unstable opinions, elite vs. mass views, and integrated vs. chaotic beliefs). Given our emphasis on issue frames and military intervention, we find the four-category typology useful. For works that fall in more than one category, we have selected the category which we believe reflects the main thrust of the work.

[3] For a discussion of the expansion of survey research in the 1930s and 1940s, see Converse (1987).

[4] The terms beliefs, attitudes, values, opinions, and considerations are often used interchangeably. While the terms overlap to a degree (e.g., you can express an opinion about a deeply held belief), we will employ the terms in a consistent fashion in order clarify our argument. Beliefs are statements about subjective interpretations of reality. Beliefs can be factual (e.g., the American economy is larger than the Chinese economy) or causal (e.g., democracies are less war prone than autocracies). Attitudes are beliefs that contain an affective component (e.g., Neo-nazis disgust me or I do not like North Korea). Values reflect the ranking of items (including abstractions, objects, experiences, behaviors, personal characteristics, states of being, etc.) according to social desirability, worth, or goodness. You may value small government more than aiding the poor or justice more than personal gain. Opinions can simply be the verbal (or written) expression of beliefs, attitudes, or values. Opinions can also be policy positions which are based on a combination of beliefs, attitudes, or values. Do you support or oppose food aid to North Korea? The subject's opinion may reflect beliefs (food aid does not solve economic problems), attitudes (North Korea is evil), or values (spending on domestic education is more important than foreign aid). We typically use opinion to refer to a policy position. Finally, the term consideration, which is employed by Zaller (1992) and incorporated into the logic of our model, refers to any belief, value, or opinion included in the decision making process. For a discussion of these terms see Johnson (1995) and Stang and Wrightsman (1981).

[5] See Holsti 1992 for a more complete discussion of these three points.

[6] Tourangeau and Rasinski (1988) argue that answering an attitude question involves a four-step process: interpreting the question; retrieving relevant beliefs and feelings; applying beliefs and feelings to render an appropriate judgment; and using the judgment to select a response. Responses to survey questions are, therefore, a balance between an individual's opinion and social cues. Uninvolved respondents may retrieve nothing from long-term memory, implying that they are relying entirely on immediate cues as to how they should answer a question.

[7] The terms agenda setting, priming, and framing have been defined in a wide variety of ways (Scheufele 1999). We view them as closely related phenomenon that are associated with the salience of information in the cognitive model. Agenda setting increases the salience of "topics" in the decision process (e.g., What are the most important topics facing the country today?). Priming increases of salience of specific decision criteria or considerations used in the evaluation of people and policies (e.g., Why do you believe Bill Clinton is doing a good job as President?). Framing increases the salience of certain problem definitions and decision criteria (e.g., Do you support or oppose the United Nations military intervention in the Persian Gulf which was designed to protect the sovereignty of a member state?). For a discussion of definitions and an attempt to link individual frames and media frames, see Scheufele (1999).

[8] For a general discussion of the availability heuristic in the decision process, see Kahnamen and Tversky (1982). For the incorporation of the availability heuristic into the process of opinion formation and opinion change, see Zaller (1992).

[9] An elite opinion study, such as those conducted by Holsti and Rosenau (1990) and the Chicago Council for Foreign Relations, employing a split ballot design could begin to probe this third point.

[10] Layne (1996:198) argues that if you accept the democratic peace argument (i.e., that democracies do not go to war with other democracies), you must endorse a crusading idealist position. This argument is logically flawed. If democracy is a "home grown" phenomenon, attempts to impose democracy on the end of a bayonet will not produce stable democratic states in the long run. In fact, it will in all likelihood produce unstable anocracies that Maoz and Abdolali (1989) and Mansfield and Snyder (1995) find to be particularly war prone. Even if we were to accept a monadic and dyadic impact of democracy, it does not logically follow that we should support military interventions to *promote* democracy.

[11] The issue of format is particularly important during the current era of rapidly changing modes of communication. In future research we hope to explore whether an individual's primary source of news information is changing (newspaper, television, radio, and internet) and if the primary source of news is related to the effectiveness of the format.

[12] See Mutz (1998) for a discussion of personal versus impersonal communication