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Public Opinion and the International Use of Force

Edited by Philip Everts
and Pierangelo Isernia



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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.

The participants to the workshop in Warwick whose papers were not included in this book for various reasons were helpful, nevertheless, through their comments and suggestions, which should be acknowledged here. They include: Gulnur Aybet, Kjell Engelbrekt, Ljubica Jelusic, James Meernik and Michael Rodins.

Others that deserve our gratitude include: Teresa Ammendola for making and adapting graphs and tables and for other assistance, Maurizio Cotta for his mental and organisational support, Steven Everts for his thorough comments and suggestions for improving Chapters 1 and 10, Costanza Paulone and Philip Curnow for editing the text and correcting any poor English, and our anonymous colleagues for being such kind referees on the original book proposal.

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, inter-state 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 norma-

tive 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 pre-specified 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 assess-

ments 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 uni-directional 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.