

# **PUBLIC OPINION AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY**

**23 – 27 March 2012**

**Convened by Philip Towle and Peter Dixon**

In traditional societies foreign policies were controlled by oligarchies and the peasants knew little about matters of state. With urbanisation, mass education, the growth of civil society and the development of the media the situation has been revolutionised across most of the world. Those who had traditionally held power frequently despised and feared the mass of the people, and resented and often repressed their demands for influence. The political class derived their opinions about popular views from press reports, chance encounters and demonstrations. It was only in the 1930s that polling made more accurate assessments possible in the United States and Britain and it was some decades before these were properly analysed. It was not until around the millennium that Pew, Gallup and other organisations began to carry out polls across most of the world.

The lectures trace this voyage of discovery and examine the miscalculations commentators and statesmen made in the past about popular views. It looks at the latest analyses of the ways in which we learn in childhood about international affairs from parents, schools and the media. This produces dramatic contrasts in views between various nationalities even amongst six and seven year olds. The course also looks at the way in which analysts have shown how educational attainments, party affiliations and ages profoundly affect people's views on international affairs. Such analyses have demolished traditional prejudices about the fickleness, irresponsibility and xenophobia of the mass of people. The impact of sophisticated public relations campaigns on policy is considered and some of its problematic aspects highlighted. Finally the course examines popular attitudes towards the wars in Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere, and looks at the factors which change opinions as the wars continue and the ways in which we express our political views through civil society which in turns affects our attitudes.

## Course Aims

- To show the way in which politicisation occurs in traditional societies and expose the fears and errors which existed in the past (and sometimes continue today) about popular views.
- To demonstrate how the analysis of public opinion has changed since the development of polling.
- To expose the impact of early upbringing, education and the media on our views.
- To examine the social factors which influence our views on international affairs and particularly on conflict.

- To examine conscious, organised shaping of public attitudes and its impact on policy
- To show how public opinion has changed during wars from Vietnam to Afghanistan.

### **Assessment**

This course will be assessed by a three hour invigilated examination at the start of fourth residential session.

### **Introductory Reading**

Philip Towle, *Going to War: British Debates from Wilberforce to Blair*. 2009.

Philip Everts and Pierangelo Isernia, *Public Opinion and the International Use of Force*, 2001.

D Lemish and M Gotz, *Children and the Media in Times of War and Conflict*, 2007.

John Mueller's website

### **Politicisation and the Reaction of the Oligarchies**

J.A. Hobson, *The Psychology of Jingoism*, 1901.

Caroline E. Playne, *The Neuroses of the Nations*, 1925.

Daniel Lerner, *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East*, 1958

Edward Dicey, 'War and Progress', *Macmillan's Magazine*, Volume XV1, May 1867-October 1867, pp. 167-176.

### **Elites and Masses**

Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion*, (1922) reprinted 1997.

Julien Benda, *The Treason of the Intellectuals*, (1928) reprinted 1979.

J Ortega y Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses*, (1930) reprinted 1963.

Robert W. Oldendick and Barbara Anne Bardes, 'Mass and elite foreign policy opinions', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 1982, pp. 368-398.

## **First Assessments**

Tom Harrison and Charles Madge, *War Begins at Home*, 1940.

Hadley Cantril, *Gauging Public Opinion*, 1944.

Angus Calder, *Britain by Mass-Observation*, 1986

*Public Opinion Quarterly*, Princeton for the wartime years or look in

Hadley Cantril and Mildred Strunk, *Public Opinion 1939-1946*, 1951.

G H Gallup, *The Gallup International Public Opinion Polls: Great Britain 1937-1975*, 1976.

## **Recent Analyses**

John Mueller, War, *Presidents and Public Opinion*, 1973.

A Raviv et al, *How Children Understand War and Peace*, 1999.

Philip Everts and Pierangelo Isernia, *Public Opinion and the International Use of Force*, 2001.

D Lemish and M Gotz, *Children and the Media in Times of War and Conflict*, 2007.

Morris Fraser, *Children in Conflict*, 1973.

Leo Bogart, *Silent Politics: Polls and the Awareness of Public Opinion*, 1972.

Tom W Smith, 'The polls: gender and attitudes towards violence', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 1984, pp. 384-395.

R Sobel, *The Impact of Public Opinion on US Foreign Policy since Vietnam*, 2001.

S Ashford and N Timms, *What Europe Thinks*, 1992.

Brian Lai and Dan Reiter, 'Rally Round the Union Jack?' *International Studies Quarterly*, 2005.

## **Recent Wars**

Edward A Suchman et al, 'Attitudes towards the Korean War', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 1953, pp. 171-184.

Jean Owen, 'The polls and newspaper appraisal of the Suez Crisis', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 1957-8, pp. 350-354.

Hazel Erskine, 'The Polls: Is War a Mistake?' *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 1970-71, pp. 134-150.

John M Benson, 'The Polls: US Military Intervention', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 1982

The Falklands War- The Falklands Panel, MORI,  
<http://www.mori.com/polls/trends/falklands> panel.shtml

John Mueller, 'Public Opinion as a constraint on US foreign policy', March 2000, Mueller website.

John Mueller, 'The Polls-A Review: American Public Opinion and the Gulf War', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 1993, pp. 80-91.

John Mueller, 'Reflections on the Vietnam anti-war movement and on the curious calm at the war's end', Mueller website <http://psweb.sbs.ohio-state.edu/faculty/jmueller/BRAESTRU.htm>

'War of Afghanistan Poll' 11 October 2001  
MORI [http://www.mori.com/polls/2001/granada\\_top.shtml](http://www.mori.com/polls/2001/granada_top.shtml)

Paul D Williams and Alex J. Bellamy, 'The Responsibility to Protect and the Crisis in Darfur' *Security Dialogue* March 2005 vol. 36 no. 1, 27-47

Marc Gustafson, 'Rethinking Darfur', *Foreign Policy Briefing No 89*, Cato Institute June 2010

Clifford Bob, 'Marketing Rebellion: Insurgent Groups, International Media, and NGO Support', *International Politics* **38**: 311-334, September 2001

Pew Research Center, 'America's image further weakens', 18 March 2003,  
<http://people-press.org/reports/print.php3?PageID=683>.

'Global unease with major world powers', *Pew Global Public Attitudes Project*, 27 June 2007, <http://pewglobal.org/reports/display.php?ReportIS=256>

Connie de Boer, 'The Polls: Terrorism and Hijacking', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 1979, pp. 410-418.

## **Lecture One**

Politicisation, democratisation and the fear of public influence

### **Seminar One**

Do the public have 'the right' to influence foreign policy in a democracy?

How strong was the opposition to popular political influence in the country where you live?

Can you think of occasions where public pressure has caused international relations disasters?

## **Lecture Two**

The early years of opinions polls and academic analyses of polls

### **Seminar Two**

Can the public make decisions about international affairs when they are often ignorant of the facts?

Is Mueller right to argue that political prejudice, age and educational level are the factors which determine attitudes towards international politics? Is this true outside the United States?

Are newspapers a good guide to public opinion?

## **Lecture Three**

How do children learn about politics and international affairs and what do they learn?

### **Seminar Three**

Should parents and broadcasters try to protect children from watching programmes about conflict and war?

Should governments and media censor the news to encourage balance and for reasons of taste?

How far should teachers try to influence children's views on politics and conflict?

## **Lecture Four**

Attitudes towards warfare from Suez to Iraq in 2003

## **Seminar Four**

Did public opinion play any part in beginning or ending the Suez campaign?

Did the media really drive the United States out of Vietnam?

Is there any evidence that European or US public opinion is intrinsically more robust or pacifistic?

## **Lecture Five**

‘Responsibility to protect (R2P)’ and the impact of organised public opinion

## **Seminar Five**

To what extent has ‘progress’ towards R2P been influenced by public opinion?

How accurate and complete is public perception of crises?

How easily can public opinion be shaped to impact policies?

## **Lecture Six**

Commentary on public opinion and conflict from the Crimean War to Afghanistan

## **Seminar Six**

Is it true to say that commentary has become more sophisticated about public opinion but that the public have not absorbed what the experts have been saying?

Can the public be trusted by governments to guide their decisions on conflict?