

## ELITES AND INCREASED PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR U.S. MILITARY SPENDING\*

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*In this paper we examine the transformation during the 1970s of U.S. public opinion from opposition to support of increased arms spending. This transformation is related to changes among political and other elites in their support of increased military spending, as documented in government actions, party statements, and systematic surveys. Linkages between the public and the elites, changes in the international situation, and trends in possibly-related attitudes are analysed for the 1970s. We find that the correlates of the public's support for arms spending changed and that elite consensus was high, declined, and increased, during the decade. We found evidence of autonomy and mutual influence between the public and elites. The analysis reveals shifts in the bases of public support for expanding military spending, particularly associated with confidence in institutional leaders.*

A basic issue in discussions of government policy making is the relationship between the policy preferences of elites and of the public (Dye, 1979; Hughes, 1978; Kriesberg, 1979:211-216; Mills, 1956; Rose, 1967). In this paper we examine that relationship in the area of military defense expenditures during the 1970s. How unified were various elite groups about defense spending during the 1970s? Did some groups change earlier than others? How differentiated was the public and was that differentiation related to differences among the elite groups? The answer to those questions will enable us to assess to what extent groups in the U.S. develop opinions autonomously in response to their experiences and to what extent they influence and constrain each other.

The transformation of U.S. public opinion in the 1970s from favoring arms expenditure reduction to opposing it provides a good case for analysis. Because of the significance of the topic, relatively detailed information is available from many sources and for many years. Our analysis uses surveys of samples of the U.S. public and of elites, public statements made by elite groups, actions taken by elite groups in the U.S. and abroad, newspaper accounts, scholarly analyses, and personally-conducted interviews with the U.S. and Soviet officials.

### CHANGES IN PUBLIC VIEWS OF FOREIGN POLICY

In the 1950s the proportion of the public favoring less arms spending never

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rose to 20 percent. Then in the later 1960s, there was a dramatic rise in this proportion (Russett, 1975). Beginning in the early 1970s, public opinion shifted again from opposing increased arms spending towards supporting it. This is documented in the many national surveys which included questions asking whether the respondents thought the U.S. government was spending too much money, too little, or about the right amount on various programs. A national sample in the spring of 1973 replied to National Opinion Research Center (NORC) interviewers as follows: 40 percent said we were spending "too much", 45 percent, "about right", and 26 percent, "too little." In the spring of 1980, the transformation was huge: only 12 percent said "too much", 28 percent, "about right", and 60 percent, "too little."

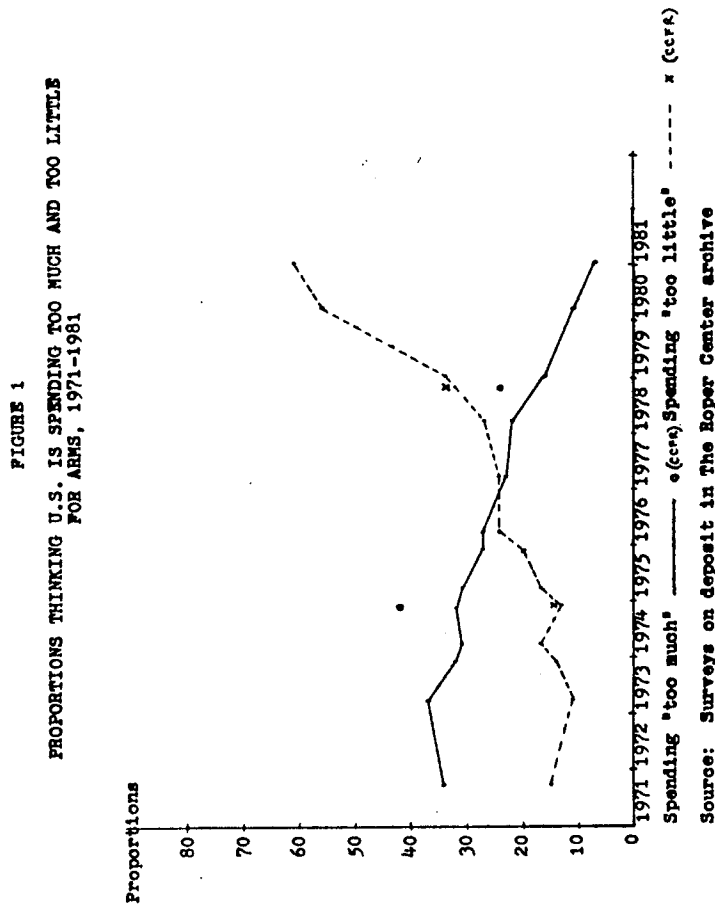
As can readily be seen from Figure 1, there was a strong, steady decline in opposition to increased arms between 1971 to 1976. In 1976 and 1977 the proportion of the people thinking we were spending too much was about equal to the proportion saying we were spending too little. The proportion saying we were spending too little gradually rose until the very sharp upward thrust at the end of 1979. In other national surveys the pattern of responses was the same. The proportion saying we were spending too little declined sharply from 1969 to 1975, then declined more gradually until the strong decline of late 1979 and 1980 (Russett and DeLuca, 1981).

The fundamental transformation of public opinion on this question in 10 years is not matched by changes in values or beliefs among the public about threats to the United States. In assessing the trends in public opinion about possibly related beliefs and values, we rely largely on our analyses of the NORC General Social Survey and two studies conducted for the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations (CCFR). The NORC surveys were conducted each spring between 1972 and 1978 and then biannually beginning in 1980. The CCFR surveys were conducted at the end of 1974 and of 1978 (Rielly, 1979). The extensive interviews about U.S. foreign policy were conducted with a cross section of the adults in the U.S. and with a sample of governmental, trade union, church, voluntary association, and business elites. The first survey was conducted by the Harris and the second by the Gallup organization; although all the questions and samples are not identical, some comparisons can be safely made.

Shifts in policy preferences about arms spending might be attributable to changes in preferences about U.S. foreign policy goals, or in beliefs about the nature of the international system, or in evaluations of possible adversaries. Previous analysis (Kriesberg, 1981) has indicated that the U.S. public generally supported defensive objectives (e.g. keeping the peace and defending national security) and not expansionist ones (e.g. "promoting the development of capitalism abroad"). Generally, there was little change in goals between 1974 and 1978. The only large shift was the increase in the proportion who thought worldwide arms control was important (from one third to two thirds of the sample).

Beliefs have not changed massively in accordance with the policy preferences about arms spending. There has been no trend toward increased expectations of war nor of perceived decline in the role of the U.S. in the world. The public was divided in 1974 between thinking the U.S. was less important, more important, or just as important as it had been 10 years earlier and these proportions were not greatly different in 1978. Negative evaluations of Communism as a form of government and of Soviet Russia have increased; but the shifts have not been large.

Assessing the relationship between shifts in opinions of the public and the elite requires considering the extent to which each is differentiated. Insofar as people socially differ because their experiences and social relations are shaped by varying life-cycle roles, social ranks, and institutional affiliations, they are likely to differ in their foreign policy views. People also vary in general orientations which predispose them to react differently to external events: they may respond dissimilarly to appeals and other inducements proffered by would-

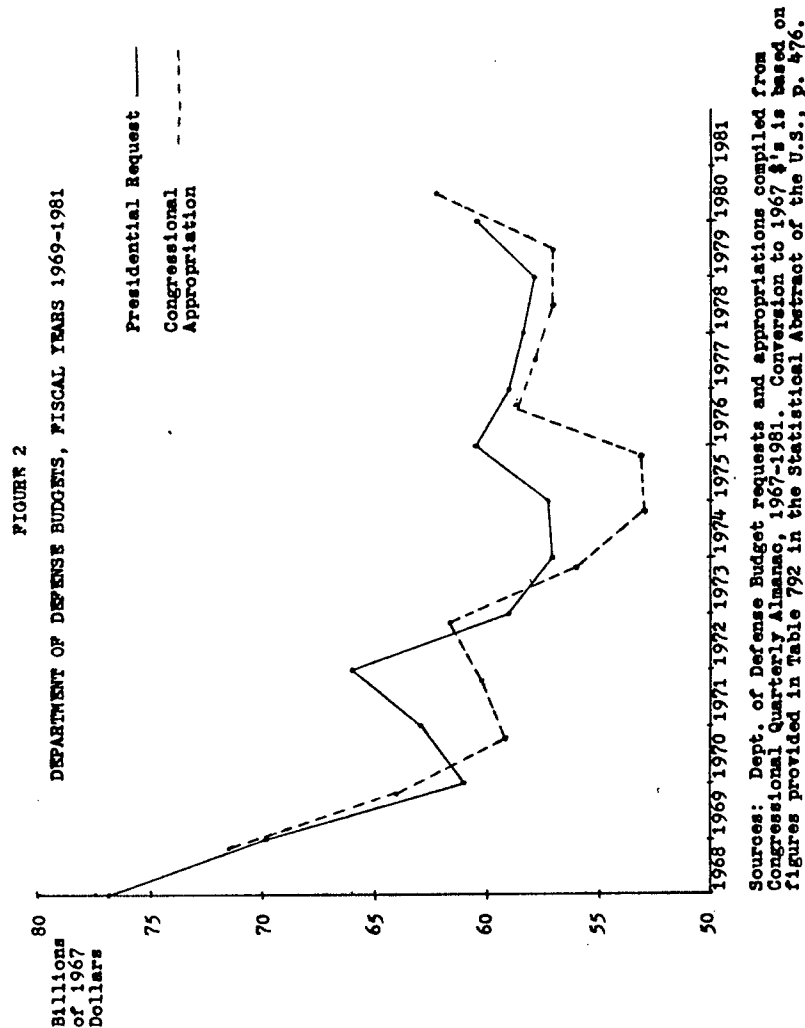


be leaders, and their interests are variously affected by alternative foreign policies. Research on correlates of foreign policy views indicate that people in unlike social structural positions differ about many foreign policy issues (Hamilton, 1968; Gamson and Modigliani, 1966; Kriesberg, 1982).

### CHANGES IN ELITE VIEWS OF FOREIGN POLICY

In describing the trends and variations in elite views about foreign policy and particularly defense expenditures, we focus on governmental and political party officials and examine Presidential Defense Department budget requests, congressional appropriations, and national party platforms during presidential campaigns. These represent collective positions of government leaders and groups of political leaders. We also examine responses by members of different elite groups to survey questions asked of them in 1971, 1974, and 1978.

*Presidential and Congressional Budgetary Positions.* Figure 2 graphically



presents the Presidential requests for Department of Defense (DoD) appropriations and the amounts appropriated by Congress in constant (1967) dollars. In constant dollars there has been a general decline in DoD budget requests and appropriations for DoD since 1968 when the requests and votes for the 1969 fiscal year budget were made. Even in current dollars, President Nixon in January 1969 requested less than had President Johnson in January 1968; only in January 1974 did the current dollar amount requested exceed the amount requested in January 1968. Note too, that in every year except 1980 the Congressional appropriations were less than the initial Presidential requests.

Although there has been a general decline in constant dollars in the appropriations for DoD until 1980, the pattern of fluctuation is noteworthy. The budget requests of President Nixon declined greatly in the first two years of his first term and then increased somewhat. After his reelection, the budget requests again declined markedly and then rose somewhat in the two years preceding the 1976 elections. President Carter's requests were less than President Ford's and decreased until the 1980 election year.

*Political Party Platforms.* Party platforms may not predict the policies pursued, but they reflect the balance of contending groups within each party at the nominating convention and the perceptions of those groups about what the electorate wants and/or needs to be told. In July, 1972 the Democratic Party Platform, on which George McGovern was to run, included the following passages:

Military strength remains an essential element of responsible international policy. . . . But military defense cannot be treated in isolation from other vital national concerns. . . . Unneeded dollars for the military at once add to the tax burden and preempt funds from programs of direct and immediate benefit to our people. Moreover, too much that is now spent on defense not only adds nothing to our strength but makes us less secure by stimulating other countries to respond (Facts on File, July 9-15, 1972:546).

The Republican Party Platform was formulated in August, 1972 and contained the following passages:

To the alarm of free nations everywhere, the New Democratic Left now would undercut our defenses and have America retreat into virtual isolation, leaving us weak in a world still not free of aggression and threats of aggression. . . . We will surely fail if we go crawling to the conference table. Military weakness is not the path to peace; it is an invitation to war (Facts on File, Aug. 20-26, 1972:662-663).

The platform statements of 1976 were less distinguishable in policy positions, but the differences paralleled those of 1972. In 1972 and 1976, both parties stressed the importance of military strength and eschewed waste. However, the Republican Party statements emphasized their readiness to spend more on defense while the Democratic statements promised budgetary savings without impairing defense strength.

*Elite Interviews.* In order to assess additional possible variations among elites in a variety of nonpolitical as well as political institutions, we examine responses to survey questions posed at the end of 1974 and 1978. In 1974, 330 leaders in the following institutional areas were interviewed: 1. political, 2. education, 3. labor union, 4. religious, 5. communications, 6. business, and 7. voluntary organizations. In 1978, 366 persons were interviewed from the same

institutional settings, except that instead of voluntary organizations there were two categories: (1) foreign policy organizations and (2) other voluntary organizations (including fraternal and ethnic). The persons in each setting were high ranking office holders: For example from *politics*, senators, representatives, and officials from State, Treasury and Defense departments; from *business*, presidents and international vice presidents of large business corporations as well as leaders of business associations; from *communications*, editors and publishers of major newspapers, wire service executives, and television broadcasters; and from *education*, presidents and scholars from major colleges and universities. The composition of the elite sample differed to some degree in the two periods and to maximize comparability, we compare only similarly defined categories within each sample. We will also use findings from a study of elites conducted in the second half of 1971 and the first quarter of 1972 (Barton, 1974-1975).

Members of the several categories of elites varied significantly on many issues of foreign policy. For example, in 1974 and in 1978 everyone was asked, "Do you think that the United States ought to play a more important and powerful role as a world leader ten years from now than it does today, a less important role, or about as important a role as a world leader as it does today?" In 1974 67 percent of the trade union leaders said the U.S. should play a more important role while only 29 percent of the educators and communications leaders so replied. Among the other categories, between 39 and 44 percent gave that response. The pattern was little changed in 1978, except that a much larger proportion of the business leaders (72 percent) said the U.S. should play a more important role. When asked how important they thought various foreign policy goals were, in 1974 the following percentages regarded containing Communism a very important goal: trade union leaders, 55; business, 42; education, 28; and communications, 23. In 1978, most categories of persons were much more likely to regard containing Communism a very important goal: among trade union leaders, 83 percent said it was very important; among business leaders, 57 percent; only among educators did the percentage regarding that goal as very important decrease in 1978 (to 20 percent).

In Table 1, the responses to the question about cutting back or expanding arms spending are displayed for each elite category in 1974 and 1978. In 1974, only among the business leaders did a smaller proportion say defense spending should be cut back than said it should be increased; this is a somewhat smaller ratio of opposition to increased arms spending than among the general public at the time. Trade union leaders were twice as likely to say cut back than to say expand, which was about the same ratio as that for the public at the time. All the other groups, particularly religious and minority leaders, overwhelmingly favored cutting arms spending. Even in late 1978 when the public had shifted so that more favored increasing arms spending than reducing it, most elite categories still were more likely to favor cutting than increasing defense spending. The pattern was different most notably among the business leaders and to a lesser degree among political leaders.

The 1971-1972 study used a somewhat different question about defense

TABLE 1

## VIEWS ABOUT DEFENSE SPENDING BY ELITES, 1974 AND 1978

Elites	1974			1978		
	Proportions Responding		(N)	Proportions Responding		(N)
	Cut back	Expand		Cut back	Expand	
Political	70	2	(59)	21	43	(81)
Educational	66	4	(50)	33	19	(54)
Labor union	52	26	(23)	32	26	(19)
Religious	81	0	(32)	46	14	(57)
Mass media	58	13	(60)	33	30	(64)
Business	18	22	(55)	11	44	(54)
Voluntary organizations	50	9	(14)	-	-	-
Minorities, Dissident	86	0	(14)	-	-	-
Foreign policy and Special interest organizations	-	-	-	30	36	(33)

Question: "Do you think that we should expand our spending on national defense, keep it about the same as it is now or cut back our defense spending?"

Source: Surveys conducted for the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations

spending: "In the next five years, should the real level of defense spending be raised substantially, by more than 25%; raised somewhat, less than 25%; kept about the same; reduced somewhat, less than 25%; or reduced substantially, by 25% or more?" Given more gradations of expansions and reductions, the proportion saying "About the same" is likely to be smaller than when only three alternatives are posed. With this wording 62 percent of the business leaders said reduce spending. This compares to 72 percent for labor union leaders and 78 percent for mass media executives and professionals.

In 1973 Russett (1974) surveyed a larger sample of business leaders and also high-ranking military officers enrolled in the five U.S. war colleges. Many questions posed in the 1971-1972 study were used again. Russett reports that 51 percent of the business leaders and only 12 percent of the military leaders said the U.S. should reduce defense spending.

On the whole, there appears to have been considerable support to reduce arms spending in 1971 among the major elite groups (Dye, 1979). In late 1974, there was less consensus, with some groups, particularly businessmen, being opposed to decreasing arms spending. By late 1978 a new consensus seems to have emerged, with only about one-third of each elite group supporting cutbacks (except that 46 percent of the religious leaders favored cutting back and 11 percent of the business leaders did).

Consistent with the party platforms, political party affiliation was very highly related to these preferences within each elite category. (In the 1978 survey, however, political affiliation is not available for the political leaders and none of the union leaders in 1974 nor in 1978 identified themselves as Republicans.) For example, among business leaders, in 1974, 12 percent of the Republicans and 50 percent of the Democrats favored cutting arms spending; the percentages were the same in 1978. Among religious leaders, in 1974 none of the Republicans favored cutting military spending and 92 percent of the Democrats did; in 1978, 30 percent of the Republican religious leaders and 55 percent of the Democratic ones did. As indicated by the party platforms, political party leaders differed markedly on this issue in 1971: 73 percent of the Democratic party leaders favored reducing defense spending, compared to 43 percent among Republican leaders. In 1974 the differences were greater: 92 percent compared to 50 percent.

Elite groups' views of each other's role in foreign policy making as it affects their preferences also indicates how unified the elites are. In 1974 and in 1978, within each of the elite groups, except business leaders, those who thought the military had a very important role in foreign policy decision making tended to oppose expanded military spending. Furthermore, only among business leaders was there a positive (although weak) relationship between favoring more arms spending and thinking the military *should* have a more important role in foreign policy.

In 1974, views about the role of U.S. business in U.S. foreign policy determination were not clearly associated with views about arms spending among any elite groups. In 1978, within each elite group, believing that U.S. business had a very important role in foreign policy determination was negatively associated with favoring increased arms spending. But thinking business *should* be more important is associated with support for increased spending among the religious, political, labor and communication elites.

Views about the role of labor in foreign policy making were less clearly related to preferences about arms spending. There was no appreciable association between perceptions about the *actual* role of labor leaders and preferences about arms spending among any of the elite groups in the surveys of 1974 or of 1978. In 1978, those who thought unions *should* play a larger role tended to favor increased spending. In 1974, this was much weaker.

*Elite Organizational Activities.* Particularly relevant for the present analysis are changing U.S. governmental and nongovernmental estimates of Soviet military expenditures and efforts to mobilize support for increased U.S. expenditures. In the spring of 1976, President Ford, concerned about Ronald Reagan's emphasis upon national security in the Republican primaries, appointed a group of outsiders (Team B) to make an assessment of Soviet strength (Wolfe and Sanders, 1979). Team B consisted of persons who were

known for their hard-line positions. In October, 1976 the C.I.A. published new assessments of Soviet defense spending: calculating that the Soviet defense industries were even less efficient than they had previously been judged to be, the C.I.A. increased the percentage of the Soviet GNP devoted to defense from 6 or 8 percent to 11 or 13 percent (Cox, 1980). The Team B report, leaked to the news media in December, 1976, interpreted this and other information to conclude that the Soviets were engaged in a large-scale military expansion.

After the election in 1976, the Committee on the Present Danger (CPD) was formed, consisting of prominent Democratic and Republican personages associated with previous Cold War struggles. The CPD began issuing policy papers warning of the Soviet danger and helped in organizing and waging the struggle against SALT II. They tried to alter Carter's position on defense and when they did not, supported Reagan against him (Sanders, 1981).

### RELATIONS BETWEEN VIEWS OF ELITES AND PUBLICS

Having described the basic trends and variations among elite groups and the general public regarding opinions about arms spending, we can examine the interaction between elites and segments of the public. Our analysis will be presented in four parts. First, we examine the relations between the trends in opinions of the elites and the public. Second, we note the elites' views of the role of public opinion. Then we examine the changing relationships between the public's opinions regarding arms spending and characteristics of respondents, giving particular attention to the possible linkages between segments of the population and different elite groups. Finally, we utilize a multiple regression approach to investigate changes in influences on opinions and changes in the domestic and international political-military context.

*Relations Among Trends.* The trends of public support for increased arms spending do not correspond with the pattern of governmental preferences as expressed in Presidential requests and Congressional appropriations for the Department of Defense. Budgetary requests and appropriations for DoD seemed to fall during a period of generally rising public support for increased arms spending. Nevertheless, requests rose in the year or two years prior to presidential elections, as if government officials thought this would be popular or perhaps be an economic stimulator.

Positions about defense spending, as expressed in presidential party platforms, had many similarities over time and even the differences between them persist. Thus, in 1972, when the public was still much more likely to think we were spending too much than too little on the military, the Republican party platform spoke out against cuts in defense spending and the Democratic party platform held out that promise. Again, in 1976, when the public was divided in its support and opposition toward increased arms spending, Carter's Democratic party platform called for cuts in defense spending while Ford's Republican party platform did not. These patterns do not suggest a public attuned to party leaders on this issue nor party leaders so attentive to the prevailing public opinion that they simply tried to reflect that opinion.

Many elite groups were much more likely to support cutbacks in defense spending than was the public in late 1974 and even in 1978. Only the business and military leaders were far ahead of the public in their support for increased

military spending. The political elite in 1974 was more likely to be opposed to expanding arms spending than was the public, but by late 1978 the distribution of their responses was similar to the public's. These findings do not suggest that the public was following the opinions of high office holders in the major institutions of the U.S. Nor, however, does it indicate that the leaders of those institutions were trying to keep in step with the public, with the possible exception of the governmental leaders.

*Elite Attentiveness to Public Opinion.* Although our analysis is focussed on explaining the change in public opinion, it is helpful to consider to what extent elite groups regard the public as important and autonomous or as reflective of elite foreign policy views. In the CCFR elite surveys of 1974 and 1978, respondents were asked how important they thought public opinion was in determining foreign policy and whether it *should* be more or less important or remain about the same. In 1974, the modal response for all the elite categories was that public opinion is hardly important and that it should remain the same. The leaders in labor and in communications were particularly doubtful that public opinion played any significant role and the religious leaders were most likely to think the role was very important (22 percent so responded). Voluntary organization, labor, and religious leaders were most likely to feel that public opinion should be more important; education leaders were least likely.

Interestingly, in 1978 in every elite category, the proportion believing that public opinion played a very important or somewhat important role had increased; the modal response was that public opinion was somewhat important. In 1974, 59 percent of the political leaders said it had hardly any importance; in 1978, only 22 percent so responded. Furthermore, there was an increase in the proportion of the elites who thought public opinion should be more important. These differences between 1974 and 1978 are surprising, since the impact of public opinion in foreign policy may have seemed particularly strong in the ending of the Vietnam War. But it may be that the elites felt that the public in the 1970s had become more differentiated and more volatile on foreign policy issues and that shifts in public opinion were being responded to by office holders with responsibility in foreign policy areas.

Elite views of what the role of the public is or should be in determining foreign policy are not related to their preferences regarding arms spending. We may not expect that the leaders in major institutions will be influenced to prefer one or another policy alternative because that is what the public in general or their specific constituency prefers. Yet leaders' perceptions about the prevailing thought of the people they would lead must provide a set of constraints and opportunities for them. This is most obviously the case for political leaders, but it may also be true for others who would wish to shape national policy.

The public opinion surveys we have been examining were available to the leaders at the time they were conducted. Indeed, many polls documenting the trend in public opinion being analyzed here were conducted by and for news media and the findings were reported fully. Publicly available surveys including questions about preferences about arms spending tended to increase during the 1970's, from 1 in 1970, 3 in 1971, 2 in 1972, 4 in 1973, to 7 in 1974, 3 in 1975, 6 in 1976, 2 in 1977, 5 in 1978, 4 in 1979 and 7 in 1980. The media reports about the trend in public opinion made that trend a social fact to which elites referred in

inter and intra elite debates (Sanders, 1981).

The memoirs of Nixon (1978), Ford (1980), Kissinger (1979), and others include many references to public opinion and to public opinion polls. For the Presidents, the overall approval ratings were obviously closely followed. The polls are usually mentioned to refer to after-the-event public assessments, but the pressure of public opinion is also sometimes mentioned. Although these officials do not acknowledge acting in compliance with public opinion, the public's autonomy is generally assumed while the necessity of trying to influence public opinion is also noted. Even institutionalized arrangements would tend to make public opinion more salient in the minds of officials. Thus, State Department officials prepared memoranda assessing public opinion on foreign policy issues, including changes in public support for increased arms spending. Of course, such information could be used to assist major office holders in leading public opinion, at the same time that it suggested directions in which to lead.

*Subgroup Relations:* The inferences made thus far can be further tested and specified by examining characteristics of members of the public that possibly relate to the elites. We begin this portion of the discussion by considering possible changes in persons' locations in the social structure. Age, gender, and social rank are related to experiences and interests that might affect policy preferences about arms spending.

The age, gender, social rank or personal characteristics of the U.S. population cannot have changed in composition to account for the dramatic shift in preferences about arms spending. But differently located and oriented persons might react varyingly to elites and to foreign and domestic events. Our analysis shows no consistent pattern associated with gender. In regard to age, we examined two different social meanings of age: generational and chronological. Generational refers to the idea that historically significant events occurring at the time people become socially mature have a lasting effect on their orientations (Mannheim, 1952). Chronological age is an approximation of the changing life cycle of persons in a society. Our analysis indicates that the Vietnam generation was particularly likely in the early 1970's to believe that the U.S. was spending too much on arms, but by the end of the 1970's this was no longer discernable (Kriesberg and Klein, 1981). There is evidence that it is the very young who are least supportive of increased arms spending. If the reason is that support for increased arms spending is a kind of social convention and expressive of solidarity with the society, then as support for increased arms spending becomes socially more widespread, the association between age and support for it should increase during the 1970's. It does increase slightly, taking into account other variables in a multiple regression.

As previously noted, higher ranking persons in the society are more attentive to what public officials say and more influenced by them than are lower ranking persons. In this case, the public officials and elites have not been unified and consistently asserted that the U.S. should increase or should cut military spending. Nevertheless, the overall decline in opposition to arms spending might itself be construed to set a standard. We expect that persons with more years of schooling and with more income would be relatively sensitive to those shifts and alter their views more readily than the less educated and lower

income persons. Again, this seems to be the case.

Despite the supposed conservative movement in the U.S. during the last decade, the changes as expressed in national surveys do not indicate a large shift toward conservative identification or support for conservative policy positions. Thus, the NORC general social surveys found a slight decline in the proportion who identify themselves as liberals, from 30 percent in 1974 to 25 percent in 1980, and a decline in opposition to the death penalty for persons convicted of murder from 34 to 28 percent in the same period. Both these variables have been somewhat related to opinions about arms spending during the same period.

We examine four possible direct linkages between the public's and the elites' views: political party, union, business, and military. As previously noted,

TABLE 2

PERCENT FAVORING CUT-BACK IN DEFENSE SPENDING  
BY POLITICAL PARTY IDENTIFICATION AND BY PERCEIVED RELIABILITY OF OWN  
POLITICAL PARTY LEADERS ABOUT FOREIGN POLICY NEWS  
1974 AND 1978

	1974		
	Very Reliable	Somewhat	Hardly
Republican	18 (22)	29 (140)	30 (90)
Independent	21 (24)	42 (166)	40 (157)
Democratic	29 (77)	34 (304)	38 (194)
	1978		
	Very Reliable	Somewhat	Hardly
Republican	12 (66)	13 (252)	15 (178)
Independent	14 (69)	18 (478)	20 (278)
Democratic	14 (100)	17 (419)	19 (295)

Source: National surveys conducted for the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations Surveys

Republican and Democratic party leaders have consistently differed about military spending during the decade; furthermore, within the elite samples surveyed, party identification was highly related to opinions about arms spending. Among the public as a whole, however, there was only a slight relationship between political party identification and opinions about arms spending (Belknap and Campbell, 1951-1957; Mueller, 1973). The CCFR surveys enable us to examine more closely the possible linkage between political party identification, political party leaders, and opinions about arms spending. In 1974 and 1978, respondents were asked how reliable is foreign policy information from many specific sources, including leaders of their own political party. As can be seen in Table 2, in 1974, Democratic respondents were somewhat more likely than Republicans to favor cutting back on defense spending, but the differences was not any larger among those who thought their party leaders were reliable than among those who did not. Indeed, regardless of their own party identification, respondents who thought their political party leaders were not reliable disproportionately favored cutting back arms spending. In 1978, party differences almost disappeared, but there still was a slight tendency for those who thought their party leaders were reliable to be less likely to favor arms spending cutbacks. This hardly suggests that political party leaders directly influence their party adherents about arms spending.

It has been reasonably argued that Republicans were restrained in their support for increased arms spending as long as Nixon and Ford were Presidents and pursuing a policy of detente. Once Carter was elected, Republicans were free to shift and join those Democrats who supported increased arms spending, forming an extensive coalition (Wolfe and Sanders, 1981). This may be the case within the realm of high political officeholders, but the analysis of national public opinion survey data does not support it, and analyses comparing data for years with Carter as President and those without him are inconsistent with the proposition.

Although political party leaders may have little direct influence on rank and file party identifiers, the public's confidence in the executive branch was somewhat related to support for increased arms spending. Thus, in the NORC surveys, having confidence in the executive branch was moderately positively related to supporting arms spending in the early 1970's, but this relationship declined and became negative by the end of the decade. This too suggests that support for arms spending in part reflects trust and confidence in governmental authorities. By the end of the decade, other considerations were more overwhelming in affecting support for expanded arms spending. The change in the Presidency may also have contributed to this shift. Prior to November, 1976, respondents who said they had great confidence in the executive branch were slightly more likely to say that we are spending too little on arms than were those who had little confidence. During Carter's term in office, this was reversed. However, no comparable change occurred for those who said we were spending too much.

Trade union leaders are relatively antagonistic to Communism, although not strikingly more likely to support increased arms spending. We can examine how union membership and attitudes about participation of labor unions in foreign policy making affect support and opposition to military spending. In the

CCFR surveys, only a quarter of the respondents thought unions actually played a very important role in determining foreign policy and only 17 percent thought they *should* play a *more* important role; this was the same in 1974 and 1978.

Respondents who thought labor unions were very important or somewhat important in determining foreign policy were only slightly more likely to favor increased arms spending in 1974 and 1978. Respondents who thought labor should be more important were slightly more likely to favor increased arms spending in 1978 but there was no relationship in 1974.

We also compared union and non-union members to discern any relationship between membership and opinions about arms spending. We found no significant relationship during this time period, even taking into account many other variables. On the whole, the evidence that we have does not indicate that union leaders influenced the public on this issue during the 1970's.

Of the elite groups interviewed in the CCFR surveys, the corporate leaders were most likely to favor increased arms spending. It is reasonable to hypothesize that persons in the public who think "American business" plays a large role in determining U.S. foreign policy and who think it should play a more important role would tend to favor increased arms spending, if the business elite is a source of influence for the public. In 1974 and 1978, 41 percent of the U.S. public thought business played a very important role in determining U.S. foreign policy (compared to 39 percent for Congress in 1974 and 45 percent in 1978). In 1974, 21 percent of the public thought business should play a *more* important role and 27 percent so thought in 1978 (compared to 48 and 43 percent for Congress).

In 1974, respondents who thought business played a very important role were actually slightly *less* likely to support increased arms spending; the public might have been reacting negatively to business leaders' views. Those who thought that business *should* play a more important role tended to favor increased arms spending in 1974 and 1978. The effects of people's beliefs and preferences about the role of business differ in 1974 and 1978. In 1974, persons who thought business was very important in determining foreign policy and who thought it should play an even more important role were relatively likely to favor expanding arms spending (24 percent did), while those who thought it was very important but wished it would have a lesser role were relatively unlikely to favor increased arms spending (9 percent did). In 1978, the pattern had changed. Persons who thought business did play an important role or who thought it should play a more important role tended to favor increased spending. The relationships are not very great, but they are in the direction indicating public susceptibility to business leaders' influence to support increased arms spending.

Using the NORC series of questions on public confidence in leaders of business we also found a small positive relationship between having confidence in business leaders and favoring more arms spending. The degree of correlation fluctuates over time, but there was no general trend through the decade. The Pearson correlations were: 1973, .13; 1974, .15; 1975, .11; 1976, .08; 1977, .01; 1978, .03 (not statistically significant at the .01 level); and 1980, .11.

The evidence presented thus far suggests that business leaders in the

1970's could have been somewhat influential with the general public in the increasing public support for arms spending. On the other hand, regression analyses reported later show the effect of confidence in business does not remain significant after controlling for other factors.

In accounting for shifts in support for arms spending, the relations with the military establishment should be very important. We have several different kinds of data to test this idea. First a large proportion of the public (36 percent in 1974 and 40 percent by 1978) believed that the military played a very important role in determining foreign policy. Between 1974 and 1978, the proportion of the public who thought the military should play a *more* important role increased (19 to 29 percent). Although there was no clear relationship between beliefs about the role the military does play and preferences about defense spending, there was a strong relationship between thinking the military *should* play a more important role and supporting increased military spending. For example, in 1978, 57 percent of the respondents who thought the military should have a *more* important role favored expanding arms expenditures, compared to 31 percent among those who thought the military should have a *less* important role.

Using the NORC series of questions about confidence in military leaders, we found a relatively high correlation between having confidence in military leaders and supporting increased defense spending. The association, however, declined during the decade (in 1973, the Pearson correlation was .33 and in 1980 it was .16). The decline is largely due to the change among those who have little confidence in the military; the proportion of them who say we are spending too much on defense greatly decreased during the decade. Again, this suggests that by the end of the 1970's, factors affecting support for increased spending had shifted away from expressions of confidence or lack of confidence in authorities and particularly military leaders.

If elites have influence within their institutional structures, people exposed to those institutions will tend to share beliefs and values with the institutional leaders. We found that veterans of U.S. military forces are somewhat more likely to support increased arms spending than are non-veterans. This small, but statistically significant relationship, does not change in the course of a decade. We also found that members of veterans organizations tended to favor increased arms spending, compared to non-members of veterans organizations. This relationship exists, even among veterans.

All this evidence suggests that military leaders have a potential constituency who can be influenced to favor increased arms spending. The changing nature of the relations also indicate, however, that antagonism toward military leaders or lack of confidence and trust in them can result in rejecting their influence.

*Changes in Influences upon Views of Public.* We regressed preferences about arms spending by a variety of social structural, attitudinal, and group membership data. Table 3 summarizes the results of a regression equation predicting opinion about arms spending (NATARMS) from social structural (AGE, EDUCR), attitudinal (CONARMY, CONBUS, CONFED, POLVIEWS, CAPPUN), and group membership (UNIONMEM, REPUB, MEMVET) variables using NORC data from 1974, 1975, 1977, 1978, and 1980. The

TABLE 3  
THE RELATIONSHIP OF DEMOGRAPHIC AND GROUP MEMBERSHIP VARIABLES  
WITH OPPOSITION TO ARMS SPENDING BETWEEN 1974 AND 1980

Variable	First Order Correlation		Main Effects Only		Full Equation, Including Interactions with Year	
	B	F	B	F	B	F
AGE	-.150		-.069	29.3	-.013	0.2
EDUCR	.138		.089	49.0	.111	18.1
YEAR	-.301		-.309	682.8	.143	2.9
CONARMY	.223		.192	222.3	.290	121.3
CONBUS	.110		.032	6.3	.022	0.8
CONFED	.069		-.011	0.8	-.061	5.7
POLVIEWS	-.167		-.083	44.5	-.081	10.2
CAPPUN	-.169		-.106	78.2	-.034	1.9
UNIONMEM	-.029		-.019	2.6	.001	0.0
REPUB	-.084		-.038	9.9	-.013	0.3
MEMVET	-.077		-.052	19.2	-.07	9.5
AGE * YEAR					-.106	6.6
EDUCR * YEAR					-.042	1.0
CONARMY * YEAR					-.195	19.0
CONBUS * YEAR					.012	0.1
CONFED * YEAR					-.147	9.0
POLVIEWS * YEAR					.006	0.0
CAPPUN * YEAR					-.105	11.3
UNIONMEM * YEAR					-.024	1.0
REPUB * YEAR					-.026	1.0
MEMVET * YEAR					.025	1.1
R <sup>2</sup>		.201				
F		.199				
R <sup>2</sup>		.199				
df		11,5807			21,5797	

variables are defined in the legend to Table 3. The equation includes the variable YEAR (year of interview) and, in the full equation columns the interaction terms for each of the independent variables with year. The main effects equation gives results controlling for year but assuming that the relationship between the independent variables and NATARMS does not change over the years. As can be seen under this assumption, all social structural and opinion variables except for confidence in the executive branch (CONFED) and in business (CONBUS) in the table are significantly related to NATARMS. Of the three group membership variables, only self identification as a Republican (REPUB) and membership in a veterans organization (MEMVET) are significant at the .01 level. Note that the proportion of variance explained (R<sup>2</sup>) is .201.

Within the main effects equation, the trend toward support for arms spending was so strong that the year (YEAR) in which respondents were asked

Table 3 (continued)

LEGEND

B = standardized regression coefficient

F = F statistic for B; F 3.84 means p .05; F 6.64 means p .01

AGE = age of respondent, YEAR = year of interview (range from 1973 to 1980)

EDUCR = education of respondent, 5 categories: grades 0-8 = 1; 9-11 = 2; 12 = 3; 13-15 = 4; 16+ = 5.  
(Derived from the NORC variable EDUC)

CONARMY = lack of confidence in military: 3 = little confidence, 1 = great deal of confidence

CONBUS = lack of confidence in business

CONFED = lack of confidence in executive branch "

POLVIEWS = conservatism of political views: 1 = extremely liberal 7 = extremely conservative

CAPPUN = opinion of capital punishment: 1 = favor 2 = oppose

UNIONMEM = member of labor union: 1 = yes 0 = no (a composite of NORC variables UNION AND NONUNION)

REPUB = member of Republican Party: 1 = yes 0 = no (values 5,6 of PARTY ID)

MEMVET = member of Veterans Organization: 1 = yes 0 = no

The dependent variable is NATARMS = opinion of military spending: 1 = too little, 2 = too much

All variables are derived from: NORC, GENERAL SOCIAL SURVEYS, 1972-1980: Cumulative Codebook. Unless otherwise specified, variable names are the same as those used in the Codebook.

R<sup>2</sup> = R<sup>2</sup> adjusted for degrees of freedom

Equation includes data for 1976, 1975, 1977, 1978, and 1980

The years 1973 and 1976 are excluded due to missing data on MEMVET

about their preferences is the best predictor of their responses. But what is it about time that produces this effect? Are people responding to external events or to mobilization efforts of hardline segments of the elite or are they responding to other domestic developments and changes in their own predispositions and attitudes? We must consider how time interacts with other variables and how other variables' correlations with NATARMS changes over time.

The second set of columns gives results when the relationship between the independent variables and NATARMS is allowed to change over the years in a linear fashion. With respect to the social structural variables, AGE has a significant interaction with YEAR, indicating that, controlling for all other factors, the tendency for older age to be associated with increased support for arms spending has increased over the years. Years of schooling (EDUCR) has a significant main effect but no interaction, indicating that when controlling for other variables, more education is associated with less support for arms spending, and that this relationship has not changed over the years.

With respect to institutional orientation variables, CONARMY has a significant main effect and a significant interaction with YEAR, indicated that confidence in the army is associated with support for arms spending, but that this relationship has declined significantly over the years. Confidence in the executive branch (CONFED) shows a similar pattern. The fact that the CONFED\*YEAR interaction is significant while controlling for CONARMY indicates that the effect of CONFED occurs over and above that of CONARMY. Confidence in business (CONBUS) shows a significant first order correlation, but it is not significant when controlling for other factors.

The ideological orientation variable conservatism (POLVIEWS) is significantly related to support for arms spending, but this relationship does not change over the years. Support for capital punishment is significantly related to NATARMS, and this relationship increases over the years. With respect to group membership, only MEMVET shows a significant relation to support for arms spending, and this relationship does not change over the years.

In the full equation, the strong relationship between CONARMY and NATARMS and the large decline in that relationship over time obscures the changes over time which can be seen in the bivariate correlations between EDUC and NATARMS. Education, as noted earlier, can be an indicator of many concepts: the more educated may tend to have a "dovish" orientation, they may tend to be more attentive and more likely to follow elite views, and they may also tend to hold views which seem to express solidarity in conventional ways with the national society. In the early 1970's, the more educated were much more likely than the less educated to oppose increased defense spending perhaps because all these various effects coincided. By the end of the decade, this was not true and the more educated were more similar to the less educated.

Other variables, not included in enough surveys to be employed in the regression presented in Table 3, deserve discussion. Table 4 gives results of three separate regression equations predicting opinions about (NATARMS) in 1974, 1977, and 1980. Each equation includes the same variables: age, education, confidence in the army (CONARMY), support of capital punishment (CAPPUN), political conservatism (POLVIEWS), and dislike of

communism (COMMUN).

As can be seen, the relative predictive power of the variables changes considerably over the years. In 1974, CONARMY was overwhelmingly the best predictor of support for arms spending, with a beta of .28. By 1977, it was still the best predictor, but other variables, CAPPUN and COMMUN, had also become significant at the .01 level. By 1980, AGE, CAPPUN, and COMMUN had all become better predictors than CONARMY. The direction of the individual

Table 4

## The Relationship of Social Structural and Attitudinal Variables

With Opposition to Arms Spending, 1974, 1977, 1980

Variables	1974			1977			1980		
	r	B	F	r	B	F	r	B	F
CONARMY	.35	.28	102.3	.26	.21	60.7	.14	.09	10.5
AGE	-.17	-.08	8.3	-.16	-.06	4.1	-.19	-.14	22.8
EDUCR	.20	.08	8.6	.16	.07	6.0	.10	.03	0.9
CAPPUN	-.15	-.07	6.3	-.20	-.15	33.8	-.18	-.14	26.8
POLVIEWS	-.16	-.06	5.0	-.20	-.12	18.5	-.13	-.06	4.3
COMMUN	.15	.04	2.1	.23	.14	27.5	.19	.13	21.9
			$R^2 = .155$			$R^2 = .163$			$R^2 = .100$
			N = 1220			N = 1236			N = 1208

## Legend

r = first order Pearson correlation coefficient

B = standardized regression coefficient

F = F statistic for B;  $F > 3.84$  means  $p < .05$ ;  $F > 6.64$  means  $p < .01$ 

For definitions of variables, see legend of Table 3.

relationships, however, did not change over the years. More confidence in the army, older age, less education, approval of capital punishment, political conservatism, and dislike of communism are all associated with support for increased arms spending in all three years (although the relationships are not all significant in all three years). It is also noteworthy that the percent of variance explained is low and decreased somewhat (from about .16 to .10) by 1980. In sum, Table 4 shows that the direction of the relationships has not changed during the 1970's, but that the relative importance of the predictors has changed in that period.

Confidence in military leaders, age, education, and ideology were particularly important in the early 1970's. Later, evaluations of Russia and of Communism became much more important while confidence in military leaders and education contributed less in accounting for opinions about arms spending.

### CONCLUSIONS

We have sought to account for the transformation in public opinion during the 1970s from support for reducing arms spending to support for increasing arms spending. We examined the role of U.S. elites in accounting for the shift, considering the ways different segments of the public and the elites may influence each other and considering the many other factors affecting public opinion.

The analysis leads us to several conclusions. First, it is important to recognize that the elites and the public share many values, beliefs, and perceptions about the international situation. Despite variations, the shifts of many groups in the society have been parallel during the decade. Underlying assumptions about the importance of strength, presumably coercive strength in international affairs, are widely shared. For example, in 1974, but not in 1978, the public and leaders samples in the CCFR surveys were asked several questions about the role of power in international relations. In one question, they were asked whether they agreed strongly, agreed somewhat, disagreed somewhat, or disagreed strongly with the following statement: "The only way peace can exist in this world is when a country like the United States who wants peace is strong enough to back up warnings to possible aggressor nations that they can't get away with aggression." Forty-nine percent of the public strongly agreed and 25 percent agreed somewhat; only 12 percent disagreed somewhat and 5 percent disagreed strongly. Among the elites, too, there was overwhelming agreement with the statement; 93 percent of the business leaders agreed strongly or somewhat, as did 82 percent of the labor leaders and 77 percent of the educational leaders.

We have also seen evidence that several social factors affect opinion formation of the public. For example, general ideological predilections sustain varying policy preferences and probably for some people significantly shape their opinions about arms spending. This is the basis for some persisting differences within the society.

People also try to make sense of the international situation and support policies that they believe are reasonable given their perceptions, beliefs, and values. Such factors provide the basis for autonomy in many persons' policy preferences. In addition, people are linked to networks of personal relationships

and to some institutional leaders. Furthermore, many people are generally attentive to the prevailing ideas of the society and especially of the society leaders; these people tend to accept the authority of leaders in the foreign policy area, especially insofar as there is agreement among the elites. These factors provide the basis for the public's susceptibility to influence from the elites.

The data about elites indicate periods of relatively high and low consensus about defense spending. There also is considerable consistency over time in the relative ranking of elite groups' support for reducing arms spending. This suggests that within each institutional order persistent interests and orientations predispose differential support for arms spending. We have also noted that political party and associated ideological differences divide and also coincide with some institutional elite groupings. All this indicates the basis for autonomy and mutual influence and reaction.

These findings are the bases for the conclusion that a complex interactive process accounts for the transformation of public opinion in the 1970s. In the first two years of the decade, the opposition to the Vietnam War as it was waged and the lack of trust in the military and other institutional leaders was expressed in the public's prevailing, but historically unusual, opposition to increased arms spending. The elites, except the military, concurred. As the salience of the Vietnam War decreased in the mid 1970s, sentiments of national solidarity, conventional patriotism, and tough-mindedness could be expressed by supporting increased arms spending. For some people this was a return to normalcy after the Vietnam war. The elites generally were still in favor of cutting back defense expenditures, except for the business elite. Political party identification was important among the elites, with the Democrats favoring cutting back defense spending.

By the later 1970s a new constellation had emerged. Public opinion had shifted in favor of increasing arms spending. The political elite had shifted and other elites had also moved toward more support for increased arms spending, but some elites were still more likely to favor cutting back defense spending than increasing it. For some segments of the elites, the downward drift in arms spending and the rising public preference for increased arms spending provided an opportunity for gaining more power by mobilizing support for a military buildup. Preferences for greater arms spending in the public at large were now becoming more highly related to disliking Russia and thinking Communism is the worst form of government. Continuing governmental efforts to sustain detente, as in the SALT negotiations, were increasingly placed in the context of U.S. - Soviet hostility. Soviet leaders were not consistently receptive or responsive to detente efforts: they pursued their own antagonistic interpretation of U.S. government actions.

At the end of the decade, the events in Iran and Afghanistan were like matches put to material dried and stoked to burn. Although increased U.S. arms spending is not obviously an appropriate response to the seizure of U.S. diplomats in Teheran, the previous developments made that interpretation appear reasonable. Few voices were raised in making alternative interpretations. A new consensus had emerged.

The momentum of more and more people agreeing that the U.S. should increase arms spending does tend to induce ever more people to agree through a bandwagon effect. But the factors noted earlier that provide a basis for

autonomy among various segments of the public and the elites also mean that the steadfastness of those joining the bandwagon is weaker than it was earlier. This argument is supported by the answers to a series of questions in the 1974 and 1978 CCFR surveys. Respondents who said they thought arms spending should be kept the same or expanded were then asked if they would change their minds and favor cutbacks if they were sure the U.S. would not fall behind the Soviet Union. In 1978, 62 percent of the respondents who said we should expand or keep arms spending about the same said they would favor cuts under those circumstances. This suggests that they favored increased spending or wanted it to be the same because they were concerned about the balance of power with the Soviet Union. But earlier, in 1974, only 40 percent of the respondents said they would change their minds. This suggests that supporters of arms spending in 1978 were less firm and more vulnerable to arguments than were the smaller number of supporters in 1974.

Conversely, respondents who initially said we should cut back, were asked if they would change their minds if cutbacks meant that the U.S. would fall behind the Soviet Union. In 1978, only 44 percent of the believers in cutting back said they would change their minds, compared to 67 percent in 1974. In 1978, apparently, it was the supporters of cutting back who were firm and not vulnerable to arguments about the balance of power with the Soviet Union.

Finally, we note that these findings refer to changes in public opinion over a long period of time and about a foreign policy issue in which national security and economic considerations are relatively important (Hughes, 1978). In such cases it is likely that members of the public would be involved and have some autonomy in forming opinions. Many elites are also likely to become engaged and even compete among themselves and among elite factions in order to gain wider public support. Members of the public then can find more alternatives presented by elites and this in turn helps produce a more varied citizenry which is therefore more susceptible to opinion changes. This produces further opportunities for competition among elites and elite factions and for popular movements. However, on foreign policy issues in which decisions are made in a short time and in which national security or economic considerations are relatively unimportant, the public is less likely to become engaged and its opinions are more likely to reflect actions taken by a few elites or elite factions or as the result of routine organizational procedures.

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