

Dissertation Overview

My dissertation consists of five chapters. The general theme of the dissertation is how the American public makes sense of foreign affairs and develops opinions about foreign policy. After a review of theoretical discussions on public opinion on foreign policy in the first chapter, the second chapter examines the effect of values on public opinion toward various anti-terrorism measures. The third chapter explores the origin of values and the public's change of values in reaction to political events. The fourth chapter analyzes how elites change their values in reaction to political events and compares their response to that of the mass public. The final chapter summarizes the findings and discusses their implications. The data in this dissertation are drawn from national surveys conducted by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations (CCFR) between 1974 and 2004.

Chapter 2: Core Values and Support for Anti-Terrorism Measures.

The first essay explores the impact of core values on Americans' support for a variety of anti-terrorism measures. I use the survey conducted by the CCFR in 2004 to address this topic. The traditional perspective in the public opinion field is that Americans know too little about foreign affairs to have an impact on public policy. A number of new studies, however, have argued against this view by contending that citizens can compensate for their lack of information by employing short cuts and simplified decision rules known as heuristics. Core political values in particular can play a significant role in constraining, organizing, and guiding public opinion toward public policy. Such core values as egalitarianism and individualism, for example, have been shown to define individuals' domestic policy preferences. Similarly, in the realm of foreign policy, political values such as ethnocentrism, militarism and internationalism help to explain Americans' policy preferences. Although these studies provide important clues for our understanding of how the mass public can make sense of politics and participate in the democratic process, they leave an important question unanswered: if citizens reason from values to policies, are they able to identify the policy alternatives that are consistent with their values? In other words, do citizens successfully choose the policy instruments that most effectively achieve the ends they desire? Or are they easily misled by elite rhetoric to support foreign policies that actually contravene those values?

To examine this question, I focused on the role of two core values that represent ideals of U.S. foreign policy: promoting democracy and humanitarianism. These two values share a similarity in that they represent traditional internationalist ideals, but they also represent substantial differences. While democracy promotion emphasizes more on ideals in the political realm, humanitarianism stresses compassion for human beings apart from political considerations. The Bush administration's emphasis on democracy promotion as a foreign policy goal and the pursuit of this goal through militant measures give us a chance to examine whether citizens can connect the proper means (i.e., policies) with the relevant ends (i.e., values). Additionally, studies have suggested two competing theories on the effect of sophistication on using values to form attitudes toward policies. I examine the hypothesis regarding the effect of sophistication. Thus, I draw and test three hypotheses. First, democracy promotion and humanitarianism will play a significant role

in defining citizens' attitudes toward anti-terrorism measures. Second, the direction of the impact of these two values on support for anti-terrorism measures will be different from one to the other. Third, the sophistication level will not differentiate individuals' use of values in explaining their support for the measures.

I found that both democracy promotion and humanitarianism have a significant impact on citizens' support for anti-terrorism measures. Furthermore, the analyses show that individuals who champion the idea of democracy promotion are more likely to support various militant anti-terrorism measures (e.g., using air strikes to attack terrorist training camps, sending troops to attack terrorists, assassinating terrorist leaders, and toppling unfriendly regimes). However, citizens' devotion to humanitarianism leads them to oppose most of the militant anti-terrorism measures. In addition, the level of sophistication fails to differentiate the use of values in explaining citizens' policy preferences. There is an exception to the lack of interaction between sophistication and attachment to values relative to accounting for policy preferences in the case of support for toppling unfriendly regimes.

The findings confirm the proposition that political core values play a significant role in explaining Americans' attitudes toward foreign policy. However, the means that individuals employ to achieve a goal are not always consistent with the values that they espouse. Also the lack of differentiation according to sophistication level suggests that citizens use values universally in defining their attitudes. These findings imply that citizens choose policies that can be incompatible with the values they pursue. This is especially the case when political elites make the values salient and attempt to mobilize the public in the name of certain values. Under these conditions, individuals tend to comply with the elites and are unable to see the disconnection between their attachment to values and their choices of policies to achieve those values.

This study contributes to our understanding of the role of values by identifying two values that play an important role in shaping Americans' attitudes toward foreign affairs. In addition, it modifies the sweeping argument that citizens can make consistent connections between means and ends by depending on values. Specifically, the strong positive impact of democracy promotion on support for toppling unfriendly regimes with force shows that political elites can make values salient to justify their policies and that citizens tend to follow the elites even if those policies contradict their values.

Chapter 3: The Impact of 9/11 and the Invasion of Iraq on Foreign Policy Values

This chapter examines the impact of political events on individuals' acceptance of values. Do individuals change their values in response to new information and environments? If they do, how do the characteristics of external events and individuals affect citizens' attachment to values? Studies suggest potential sources of values changes both at the collective and at the individual level. They show that social and economic changes induce values changes at the collective level. Similarly, values change when individuals face internal cognitive discrepancies. In addition, routine political events influence individuals' adherence to values and political predispositions (e.g., partisanship). In line

with these studies, I examine the way political crisis - e.g., war – affects individuals' adoption of values using surveys conducted by the CCFR in 1998, 2002, and 2004. These three surveys collectively straddle key crises: the 9/11 attack in 2001 and ensuing counter attack on Afghanistan and Al-Qaeda, and the invasion of Iraq in 2003. Thus the surveys capture the effects of external events on citizens' adoption of values. This is not exactly an experiment but is closer to a quasi-experiment, in that the two events are the major political crises which occurred during the time period under study. Previous studies on values change were mainly restricted to experiments with limited respondents or examination of the influence of routine political events (e.g., political campaigns) on values. This study takes advantage of a naturally occurring quasi-experiment by using three surveys that would allow us to examine the impact of a significant event on values. In addition, it contributes to our understanding of the impact of political events on values by extending the types of events that affect values. Previous studies focused on one-time events in exploring the impact of external conditions on values. They were mostly limited to simple dichotomous conditions of experiencing events or not: external stimulation, political campaigns, economic conditions, or wars. The surveys I use include two different types of wars that help more fully understand the effects of external events on values.

As an alternative to the theories of values change I propose an integrative interaction model which emphasizes the characteristics of political events and individuals. This model stresses the interaction of these two components in explaining individuals' value changes. According to this theory, a change in values occurs at the individual level as a result of interaction between events and the individuals' political dispositions. Thus, the same political events have differential effects on individuals, depending on their political dispositions. I argue that the influence of events on their attachment to values is affected by these political dispositions. Even if citizens experience wars, the impact of wars differs because they interpret the events subjectively, and during this process their own political dispositions intervene in the internalization process. In addition, this theory proposes that political predisposition and sophistication level will interact in defining individuals' acceptance of values. In other words, individuals who are highly motivated and knowledgeable tend to stick with their predefined perspectives in interpreting external events and new information. Thus, the level of sophistication and partisanship together will anchor citizens' beliefs in values in response to political events.

I draw three hypotheses from these theories and test them in this essay. The first hypothesis is that change of values happens when the events are relevant to individuals' values. Specifically, the 9/11 attacks and the invasion of Iraq will undermine citizens' attachment to humanitarianism and democracy promotion since both events would invoke isolationist tendency. Although both values share a similarity as internationalist values, they differ in their salience during these periods. Thus, citizens will be more likely to detach themselves from democracy promotion which has been salient and used to justify the invasion of Iraq. Second, individuals' political predispositions – partisanship and ideology – condition the effect of political events on their attachment to values. Partisanship and ideology will affect how individuals interpret political events and, in turn, change their adoption of values. For example, Democrats will differ from

Republicans in interpreting the invasion of Iraq and, thus, in adoption of values, specifically, democracy promotion. Finally, not only partisanship dictates the interpretation of events independently, but also it will have an interaction effect with sophistication level on individuals' acceptance of values. Specifically, individuals who are strongly partisan and have a higher sophistication level are more likely to filter external information, i.e., events, differently from those who are less partisan and less sophisticated. I expect that sophisticated Democrats and Republicans are different from both less sophisticated partisans and each other in interpreting events and changing their values.

The results show that the two events had differential effects on Americans' attachment to the values of democracy promotion and humanitarianism. While the 9/11 attack and consequent counter terrorism measures reduce citizens' attachment to values, the invasion of Iraq had a more significant impact on citizens' disenchantment with these values, especially democracy. Regarding the differential susceptibility among partisan individuals, Democrats, who originally showed strong attachment to democracy promotion, detached themselves from the value after the invasion of Iraq. In contrast, Republicans, who originally showed lukewarm support for democracy promotion, did not change their belief in this value even after the invasion of Iraq. This contrasting shift demonstrates that political predisposition and political events interact in explaining citizens' change of values. Finally, sophisticated partisans reveal sharply different reaction to the events and dynamics of change of values. While sophisticated Democrats reduced their support for democracy promotion in reaction to the invasion of Iraq and following developments in Iraq, sophisticated Republicans maintain their original level of support for democracy promotion even as they observed the negative aftermath of the war.

This study expands previous studies of the effects of political events on values shifts by covering two different types of political events. The first event – the 9/11 attack and ensuing counter attack against Afghanistan and Al Qaeda – differs from the second event – the invasion of Iraq and unfolding of war - in that it did not bring serious political divisions among citizens and elites, while the second event did. At the same time, both events share a commonality in that they both invoke the risk of engaging in international affairs. These two events allow us to overcome the limits of previous studies which capture only the effect of an isolated event. Furthermore, the findings elaborate upon the ways individuals adjust their values according to political events. Specifically, individuals' partisanship conditions the effect of political events in explaining their change of values. Finally, sophisticated partisans exhibit markedly different dynamics of values change in reaction to the same political events. The findings imply that individuals act as reasonable agents by updating information; but political predispositions and cognitive ability dictate the way they interpret external events.

Chapter 4: Elites and the Mass Public on Values Change

The fourth chapter explores how political events affect elites' beliefs in values in reaction to the 9/11 attacks and the invasion of Iraq. Further, it compares the elites' value changes with those of the mass public. As the three surveys by the CCFR in 1998, 2002, and 2004 include samples of elites from various sectors in the United States, I could also use that data to examine the impact of significant political events on elites' adoption of values. As it has been explained in chapter 3, the events provide us with a rare chance to examine the impact of political events on values change. Prior studies on public opinion suggest that in comparison to the public elites maintain tightly organized belief systems; that they tend to lead the mass public in accepting and disseminating political values; that they remain stable in their beliefs in values; and that elites are more homogeneous than the mass public.

This chapter analyzes some of these propositions. First, it examines whether elites adjust their beliefs in humanitarianism and democracy promotion in response to the 9/11 attacks and the invasion of Iraq. Second, it explores the dynamics of values change among elites by using the interaction model previously applied to the mass public. Specifically, this chapter explores the independent effect of partisanship and the role elites play in decision making. Furthermore, the effect on values of the interaction between partisanship, the role elites play, and the events is also examined.

Results of analysis show that elites maintain stability in their beliefs in the values after 9/11, but they began to show changes after the invasion of Iraq. While elites' support for democracy promotion decreased by 2004, their support for humanitarianism increased. First of all, consistent with the interaction model, elites who are highly knowledgeable and motivated are more likely to depend on their predisposition – partisanship - in adjusting their values in respond to the events. For example, Democrats are more likely than Republicans to be responsive to the invasion of Iraq by increasing their support for humanitarianism and reducing it for democracy promotion. In addition to partisanship, elites' roles in decision making differentiate the way that they adjust their values in reaction to the events. Decision makers (e.g., elites who are members of the Administration, the House, and the Senate) are more likely to be responsive to both events and strengthen their commitment to humanitarianism and democracy promotion.

In addition, the study shows that both elites' partisanship and role in the decision making process together define the effect of events in explaining their support for values. For example, Republican decision makers are sharply different from Republican non-decision makers in their change of values according to the events. While Republican non-decision makers retreated from their original support for democracy promotion in 1998 after they experienced the 9/11 attacks, Republican decision makers stepped up their support for the value after the same event. In addition, Republican decision makers strengthened their support for democracy promotion even after the invasion of Iraq and the unfolding of events in Iraq. Although Republican non-decision makers changed their minds and began to support democracy promotion after the invasion of Iraq, the level of support lagged significantly behind that of Republican decision makers.

The findings suggest that while elites maintain stability in their attachment to foreign policy values, they do adjust their beliefs selectively according to events. Although elites consist of a relatively homogeneous group of individuals, their partisanship and role in the decision making process affect the way they interpret political events and change their attachment to values. In understanding values change among elites, the interaction model, which captures the effects of characteristics of events and individuals, is effective. One of the findings relative to the differences between elites and the mass public in changing their values in reaction to events is that, in general, the mass public follows the elites' lead in accepting values; but the way the mass public follows depends on its partisanship and cognitive ability.