The influence of the public opinion on the American foreign policy towards Iraq 1990-2011

Ayman Nada

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The American University in Cairo
School of Humanities and Social Sciences

The Influence of the Public Opinion on the American
Foreign Policy towards Iraq (1990-2011)

A Thesis Submitted to
The Department of Political Science

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Master of Arts

By
Ayman Mansour Ahmed Nada

Under the supervision of
Dr. Ezzedine Choukri Fishere

May/ 2012
The American University in Cairo

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Has been approved by

Dr. Dr. Ezzedine Choukri Fishere

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-2-
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I owe many people a great deal in completing this thesis. I would like first to acknowledge and thank Dr. Ezzedine Choukri Fishere, my advisor and committee chair for his understanding; patience and constructive criticism that helped improve this project significantly. Sincere thanks also go to the two other committee members, Dr. Scott Hibbard of DePaul University, Chicago (USA), who provided a sympathetic ear and critical comments that helped develop this project from an abstract to a fully formed thesis and to Dr. Gamal Soltan, for his help despite his very busy schedule and his involvement in many projects related to the presidential elections in Egypt.

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between public opinion and American foreign policy towards Iraq since August 1990, when Iraq invaded Kuwait and the subsequent US and coalition war to force an Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait, until December 2011, when the American troops left Iraq. Specifically, this study attempts to provide answers to how much congruence there was between public opinion and American foreign policy in Iraq, and what factors and variables affected this relationship. To answer these questions this study uses secondary analysis as a major method and trend analysis as a minor method. This study analyzed a sample, obtained from the Archive of Roper Public Opinion Research Center at the University of Connecticut, of the most frequent questions about Iraq (14777 questions) and compared public attitudes towards American policies with the resulting policies. Results show that public opinion was not a decisive factor or a significant variable in determining the American Foreign Policy in Iraq. On the contrary, public opinion in most cases followed the position of the administration; partisan loyalty and the process of policy making have little influence on determining the direction of this relationship.
CHAPTER I

Introduction

The relationship between public opinion and foreign policy decision-making is a persisting and recurring debate in the United States, among professionals and academics alike. Despite this there is little certainty about the direction of this relationship or about the factors involved. In other words, “while the correspondence or correlation between public opinion and American foreign policy is apparent, the evidence that these represent genuine causal relationships is unclear and far from conclusive” (1). For researchers in public opinion and foreign policy, discovering or examining this relationship is challenging. It is difficult to determine “whether it was the public who influenced a policy decision, or vice versa, or whether other influences were at work” (2).

Similarly, there are ideological debates between Idealists / Liberals/ Democrats on the one hand, and Realists/ Conservatives/ Republicans on the other concerning the role that public opinion ought to have in the foreign policy decision-making process. The realist thesis is that “public opinion should

contribute very little to the effective conduct of foreign affairs” (3). Conversely, the liberal tradition “places public opinion at the centre of legitimate and effective public policy”. (4).

A third opinion is that foreign policy decision making is a “two-level game that state decision makers must play: a game of simultaneous play” between domestic politics and international politics. (5) According to this point of view, “decision makers are viewed as operating in a dual–aspect setting, resulting in apparently unrelated internal and external factors influencing the actions of decision makers” (6). Robert Putnam (1988) coined the term “Nested Game” or “two level” game to illustrate how the national leaders behave in the international arena (7). Laura Neack (2003) points out that the line between domestic politics and international politics is blurry. “Some researchers have called this blurring of distinction between international and domestic politics “Intermistic” to articulate the combining of issues and interests” (8). Public opinion is considered, alongside

(4) Ibid, P. 3
with numerous domestic factors, one of the most important domestic factors in influencing the foreign policy decision-making process (9).

Considering these three points of views, this study aims to explain the role that public opinion plays in shaping American foreign policy regarding Iraq and to determine the variables that constrain or enforce this role. Thus, the main purpose of this research is to offer an explanation for the public opinion – foreign policy nexus, and clarify the factors that influence this relationship regarding the American Iraqi relations 1990-2011.

The argument of this study is two-fold. Firstly, although there is robust evidence that public opinion has had significant influence in numerous American foreign policy decisions (Somalia and Bosnia for instance) (10), it has arguably had very limited influence in the case of Iraq (1990-2011). This is in part explained by the existence of more important domestic factors, such as interest groups, the media, and partisan politics that interacted with international factors and forced the American administration to lead and manipulate rather than follow the public opinion.

Secondly, although there are significant differences between each political group over the tools and ends of foreign policy decision making and about the role of public opinion in this process, analyzing American foreign policy

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(9) Ibid. P. 105
regarding Iraq shows that the policy stayed largely unchanged despite the fact that public opinion seemed to change dramatically over time. This begs the question; why did policy remain in place so long after support for it fell away? The argument, in this study, is that there were more important factors than public opinion that affected the American Foreign policy towards Iraq (1990-2011), and public opinion is not an essential part of this process. This study aims to explain the reasons for this.

**The Research Problem:**

Since Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, The United States’ foreign policy towards Iraq has been defined by a continuing effort to contain Iraqi ambitions in the region. George H.W. Bush (Sr.) declared war on January 1991 and Iraq was forced to withdraw from Kuwait. This was followed by a punitive settlement, which included a program of economic sanctions, U.N. weapons inspections, and the creation of “no-fly” zones in North and South Iraq. Clinton continued Bush’s policy of containment, and was involved in a series of confrontations with the Iraqi regime during his two terms (1993-2000). The September 11th attacks provided the opportunity for more aggressive policy toward Iraq. George W. Bush (Jnr.) (2001-2008) declared the ‘War’ on both terrorism and Iraq. This war ended in the fall of Iraq and the execution of Iraq’s president Saddam Hussein. However American fatalities in Iraq, the economic crisis in the last two years of Bush’s era, and demands inside and outside the U.S to withdraw
from Iraq were all factors in Obama’s decision to announce the American withdrawal of Iraq by December 2011.

Throughout this period American public opinion towards Iraq vacillated wildly. Initially, there was congruence between the American foreign policy and public opinion, but this was followed by periods of significant divergence. These inconsistent relations between public opinion and the American foreign policy regarding Iraq force us to ask about the nature of this relationship and how, when proven, public opinion influences foreign policy making.

Specifically, this study attempts to provide answers to how much congruence there was between the public opinion and American foreign policy in Iraq (1990-2011), and what factors and variables affected this relationship.

**Research Questions:**

1- How much congruence is there between foreign policy decisions regarding Iraq and public opinion?

2- Does this relationship change during the process of policy making? I.e. Before the action – during the action – after the action?

3- Do foreign policy decision makers’ partisanship affect this relation, specifically Democrats and Republicans?
Hypotheses and Claims

**H1.** There is congruence (correspondence) between American foreign policy decisions towards Iraq (going to war with Iraq, strikes, and withdrawal from Iraq) and public opinion of these decisions.

**H2.** There is a positive correlation between the approval rate of the President in his dealing with the specific issue (Issue Evaluation) and general Presidential approval rates (General Evaluation).

**H3.** The relationship between public opinion and foreign policy decisions varies according to the partisan belonging of the American Administrations (i.e. Republicans or Democrats).

**H4.** The relationship between public opinion and foreign policy decisions varies during the process of policy making; before – during and after the action.

**Importance of the Study:**

The importance of this research is based on a number of factors. It determines the essence of the relationship between the public opinion in the United States and the foreign policy decisions regarding Iraq.
In addition, this research follows prior international relations research that focused on the domestic factors that influence what states do internationally. There is a growing trend in international relations research that emphasizes the importance of the domestic realm in explaining international behavior (such as public opinion, the role of interest groups, the media, and partisan politics). Thus, this study of how public opinion affects foreign policymaking contributes to the burgeoning research on how domestic factors affect international behavior.

**Research Methodology**

To answer the questions of this study effectively and further explain the relationship between public opinion and American foreign policy regarding Iraq, this study utilizes and depends on secondary analysis as a major method and on trend analysis as a minor one.

Secondary analysis, in its simplest definition, is “the re-analysis of data for the purpose of answering the original research question with better statistical techniques, or answering new questions with old data” (11). It is also defined as “Any further analysis of an existing data-set which presents interpretations, conclusions, or knowledge additional to, or different from, those presented in the first report on the data collection and its results” (12). Perhaps the greatest benefit of secondary analysis “results from its potential contribution to theory and

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substantive knowledge of the social processes... These data provide an opportunity to study social change in ways that are impossible in present–day primary analysis”{(13)}.

Trend analysis is one of two main methods in secondary analysis, the other method being Cohort Analysis. In its simplest form, trend analysis “merely involves the laying side-by-side of research results that are comparable except for the date of gathering. In this way, change in some criterion variable can be assessed although actually only a surrogate for some more substantive factor, time becomes the independent variable in this analysis”{(14)}.

The Data

Public Opinion Polls Archives

There are many public opinion data archives that researchers depend on to obtain or download data about American public opinion polls. The biggest and most famous are:

- The Roper Public Opinion Research Center at the University of Connecticut.

- The Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR), located in the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan.


(14) Ibid. P. 259
- The Howard W. Odum Institute for Research in Social Science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
- Gallup Brain, at the Gallup International Organization
- The website of the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press
- The website of the University of California, San Diego.\(^{(15)}\)

However, the data used in this study was obtained and downloaded mainly from the Roper Center at the University of Connecticut, USA. According to its site, “The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research is one of the world’s leading archives of social science data, specializing in data from surveys of public opinion. The data held by the Roper Center range from the 1930s, when survey research was in its infancy, to the present. Most of the data is from the United States, but over 50 nations are represented”\(^{(16)}\). Their collections now include 17,000 datasets and about half a million questions that have been asked to the American people since 1935\(^{(17)}\).


\(^{(15)}\) Ibid. P. 254-245
\(^{(16)}\) The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University Of Connecticut. [http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/ipoll.html](http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/ipoll.html).
\(^{(17)}\) Ibid.

**Iraq in American Public Opinion Polls**

By searching for Iraq in the Roper Center database, 14777 questions have been found covering the period from January 1935 until December 2011. As shown in figures 1 and 2, 77.5% of the questions have been asked during George W. Bush’s era (2001-2008) (11458 questions), 13.9% have been asked during George Bush’s era (1990-1992) (2048 questions), 4.5% have been asked during Barack Obama’s three years in Office (2009-2011) (663 questions), and 3.5% were asked during Clinton’s era (1993-2000) (526 questions).

**The Selected Questions**

Three types of questions have been selected to be analyzed in this study:

1) **Questions about the public attitude and approval ratings of American foreign policies in Iraq.** These questions include:

   - “Do you think the United States made a mistake getting involved in the war against Iraq or not?” (19)

   - “Do you approve or disapprove of the United States having gone to war with Iraq?” (20)

- “Do you approve or disapprove of (…)’s decision to go to war with Iraq this past January 16 (1991)?” (21)

2) Questions about the public approval ratings of the American Presidents’ performance or dealing with the Iraqi situation. These questions include:

- “Do you think President (…) is doing a good or poor job in handling this crisis with Iraq?” (22)

- “Do you approve or disapprove the way (…) is handling the Iraq situation?” (23)

3) Questions about the public’s approval of American presidents. Nearly all the public opinion organizations use the following format to measure the presidential approval ratings:

- “Do you approve or disapprove of the way (…..) is handling his job as president?” (24)

(20) Ibid
(21) Ibid
(22) Ibid.
(23) Ibid.
(24) Ibid.
Distribution of Polls’ Questions about Iraq (1935-2011)
( N= 14777)

---|---|---|---|---
Percentage | 0.5 | 13.9 | 3.6 | 77.5 | 4.5

Figure 1-1 : Distribution of Polls’ Questions about Iraq 1935-2011

Distribution of Polls’ Questions about Iraq (1935-2011)
( N= 14777)

Figure 1-2 : Distribution of Polls’ Questions about Iraq 1935-2011
Concepts and Definitions

1- Foreign Policy

There are numerous definitions of foreign policy which try to reflect the essence of this field and explain its boundaries and goals. For example, Toma & Gorman (1991) indicate that the foreign policy is “a set of authoritative decisions taken in the name of the state that are intended to achieve certain goals in the international arena” (25). It is also a “policy pursued by a nation in its dealings with other nations, designed to achieve national objectives” (26). According to Christopher Hill (2003), foreign policy is “the sum of official external relations conducted by an independent actor (usually a state) in international relations” (27). According to Joshua Goldstein, foreign policies are “the strategies used by government to guide their actions in the international arena” (28).

2- Public Opinion

According to Erikson & Tedin (2005) “no one has yet advanced a definition of public opinion that satisfies a substantial number of students in this field” (29). However, it can be defined in its simplest form as “the preferences of the adult population on matters of relevance to government” (30). It is “the aggregate of individual attitudes or beliefs held by the adult population. Public opinion can also be defined as the complex collection of opinions of many different people and the sum of all their views” (31).

In practical terms public opinion can be defined as a “collective opinion of many people on some issue, problem, etc., especially as a guide to action, decision, or the like” (32) it is also, “a survey of public opinion from a particular sample. Opinion polls are usually designed to represent the opinions of a population by conducting a series of questions and then extrapolating generalities in ratio or within confidence intervals” (33).

3- American Foreign Policy towards Iraq (1990-2011)

The American-Iraqi relationship has been characterized by its complications and it has been subject to radical change throughout the last three

(30) Ibid
decades. The relationship is unique as America has changed its policy towards Iraq no less than five times and these policy doctrines imposed certain procedures that affected the nature of the relationship.

When the Iraq- Iran war began in September 1980, American and Iraq had no diplomatic relations (34). However, in the summer of 1982 mutual relations improved when the United States dropped Iraq from its list of states that supported terrorism and started providing it with intelligence information and armaments for Iraq’s war against Iran. Complete normalization of relations was realized two years later as a step in Reagan’s Doctrine (35).

The doctrine stated that instead of containing Communism and preventing its spread, the U.S should to eliminate it by providing support to guerrilla organizations and resistance governments (36). This same doctrine was applied regarding Iran; instead of containing Iran and preventing its influence from spreading in the Gulf, the United States supported Iraq to eliminate the threat completely. Additionally; according to numerous sources, the U.S. supplied Iraq with materials used to create weapons of mass destruction (37).

Reagan’s Doctrine led the foreign policy of the United States from 1980 until 1991, when George Bush changed the doctrine that would lead American

foreign policy(38). But not before the Bush Administration had provided Iraq (1989-1991) with high-tech sales and supported a series of guaranteed loans (39). This policy changed shortly after Iraq invaded Kuwait when Bush declared his new doctrine which he called the New World Order, “where the rule of law… governs the conduct of nations,” and “in which a credible United Nations can use its peacekeeping role to fulfill the promise and vision of the UN’s founders.” (40)

Based on this doctrine the US, leading a coalition under the supervision of the UN, waged war against Iraq in order to ensure an Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait. The war formally ended on April 6th 1991 when Iraqi troops left Kuwait and Iraq accepted a UN resolution that demanded that it destroy its weapons of mass destruction (41).

The key doctrine under Clinton was “Democratic Enlargement” of which humanitarian intervention was a part, though not the primary part of US foreign policy doctrine of Bill Clinton’s era (42). According to this doctrine, the U.S has the right to intervene in any part of the world to stop violations of human rights or to

(39) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_world_order_(politics)
(40) Ibid
(42) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clinton_Doctrine
protect American interests (43). This doctrine was used to justify the American involvement in various countries including Yugoslavia, Rwanda, and Somalia (44). It was on the basis of this doctrine that the United States, in cooperation with Britain, launched air strikes on Iraq (1993-1997-1998) to protect Kurds and Shi’a Muslims. During 1999 there were more than 100 air strikes against Iraqi targets. The U.S. also imposed economic and trade sanctions on Iraq. However, Saddam Hussein remained securely in power and there was no actual policy to remove him or change the Iraqi regime (46).

Preemptive war was a central element of the Bush Doctrine (47). This was a doctrine shaped by the ‘War on Terror’; Bush believed that “waiting to be attacked in the age of terrorism merely invited aggression, a lesson that had been learned at a terrible cost on September 11. The doctrine of preemptive war seemed tailor-made for the Iraqi situation” (48) as it fit the two major conditions of the doctrine: preemptive strikes are allowed against potential enemies and in order to promote democratic regime change (49). It took the US six months of preparation, after achieving its aims in Afghanistan, to launch a war on Iraq on March 19th 2003. The Bush doctrine played a major role in justifying this war. On April 9th 2003

(44) Ibid, PP.299-319
(45) http://thinkprogress.org/report/iraq-timeline/?mobile=nc
(47) Ibid
(48) Ibid
(49) Ibid.
Baghdad fell to the US and President Bush announced the end of the war on May 1\textsuperscript{st} 2003. However, the U.S. did not capture Saddam until December 14\textsuperscript{th} 2003. Saddam was tried and executed in December 2006\textsuperscript{(50)}.

The final doctrine which has been applied to the Iraqi situation is Obama’s Doctrine. His doctrine emphasizes “negotiation and collaboration rather than confrontation and unilateralism in international affairs”\textsuperscript{(51)}. Based on this doctrine, Obama promised to end the “war in Iraq responsibly” and declared on December 15\textsuperscript{th} 2011 the official end to war in Iraq with troop withdrawal. Only two U.S. bases and about 4000 troops remain in Iraq\textsuperscript{(52)}.

\textsuperscript{(50)}http://usiraq.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=000670
\textsuperscript{(51)} For further details about Obama’s Doctrine:
\textsuperscript{(52)} http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_the_Iraq_War
Table 1-1: Timeline, 1980-2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Main Event</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Iran – Iraq War</td>
<td>- No Diplomatic relations with Iraq and Iran. No direct intervention in the war.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>September 1980</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982-1988</td>
<td>Significant American aid to Iraq during the</td>
<td>- U.S. drops Iraq from its list of states that support and stand behind international terrorism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reagan Administration</td>
<td>- Normalization of U.S. - Iraqi relations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- The US provides Iraq with intelligence information about Iran and its army.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Provides Iraq with Arms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Participates in planning the war against Iran.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>The Bush Administration</td>
<td>- The Bush Administration supports financial and economic aid and addition to series of guaranteed loans to Iraq.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(53) I depended on many online sources in this point; I combined these sources together as shown in the above table:

- [http://www.time.com/time/specials/packages/0,28757,1967340,00.html](http://www.time.com/time/specials/packages/0,28757,1967340,00.html)
- [http://middleeast.about.com/od/iraq/a/me022708.htm](http://middleeast.about.com/od/iraq/a/me022708.htm)

-24-
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July 25, 1990</td>
<td>April Glaspie, the American Ambassador to Baghdad informs Saddam Hussein that the U.S. would not intervene in any Arab—Arab conflicts, such as the Iraqi border dispute with Kuwait.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 2, 1990</td>
<td>More than 100,000 Iraqi troops invade Kuwait.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 6, 1990</td>
<td>The UN condemns Iraq’s invasion, and imposes economic sanctions on Iraq (Resolution 660)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 9, 1990</td>
<td>American troops arrive in Saudi Arabia and launch operation Desert Shield.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 29, 1990</td>
<td>U.N. Security Council’s resolution sets January 15th, 1991 as a deadline for Iraq to withdraw its entire troops from Kuwait, or face military action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 16, 1991</td>
<td>An international coalition force led by the U.S. launches air strikes against Iraq.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 28, 1991</td>
<td>Iraqi troops withdraw from Kuwait. The war ends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 1, 1991</td>
<td>UN establishes a No-Fly Zone in Northern Iraq to protect Kurds and muslin Shiites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 6, 1991</td>
<td>Saddam Hussein accepts the UN’s conditions and signs a cease fire agreement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 13, 1998</td>
<td>The U.S. Congress passes the “Iraq Liberation Act of 1998” that allows all means necessary to capture and try Saddam and other Iraqi officials.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 29, 2002</td>
<td>Bush Administration includes Iraq in the axis of evil.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 14, 2002</td>
<td>The UN Security Council passes resolution 1409, which reaffirmed UN members’ commitment to maintaining the territorial integrity of Iraq.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 8, 2002</td>
<td>The UN Council votes for resolution 1441 calling for immediate and complete disarmament of Iraq.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 21, 2002</td>
<td>U.S. sends troops to the Gulf region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 25, 2003</td>
<td>Colin Powell presents the US government’s case against Saddam at the UN Security Council.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 17, 2003</td>
<td>Bush demands Saddam’s resignation and that he leave the country within 72 hours. Saddam rejects exile.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 19, 2003</td>
<td>The war begins with U.S and coalition forces launching air strikes against Iraq.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 9, 2003</td>
<td>Baghdad falls, and U.S. control the Iraqi Capital.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 1, 2003</td>
<td>End of major combat operations in Iraq.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 14, 2003</td>
<td>Saddam Hussein is captured in a raid on an isolated farm near Tikrit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 14, 2005</td>
<td>George Bush confesses that his administrations was manipulated regarding Iraq and the 2003 war is a result of faulty intelligence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-2008</td>
<td>Elections are held and a new government takes office. Saddam is tried and executed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 14, 2008</td>
<td>Iraq calls for U.S. withdrawal timetable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 27, 2008</td>
<td>The Iraqi parliament passes the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) requiring all U.S. forces to withdraw from Iraq no later than December 31st 2011.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-2011</td>
<td>February 27, 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 31, 2010</td>
<td>- Official end to U.S. combat operations in Iraq.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 15, 2011</td>
<td>- United States declares the end of war in Iraq and a final troop withdrawal. Only two U.S. bases and about 4000 troops remain in Iraq.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Work Plan

This thesis is divided into four chapters:

Chapter one includes the research topic, questions and hypotheses, and the methodology.

Chapter two is devoted to the theoretical framework of the research. It outlines the history of the relationship between public opinion and American foreign policy and theories that explain this relation such as the Constrain Theory, CNN Effect Theory, and The Cascading Activation Model. It sheds lights on the trends of research in this field through reviewing concisely the academic literatures.

Chapter Three includes the results of this research. It is divided into five parts; the first examines research questions during George Bush’s era (1990-1992). The second part is for Bill Clinton’s era (1993-2000). The third part is for George W. Bush’s era (2001-2008). The fourth part is for Barack Obama’s era (2009-2011). Finally, the Fifth part is devoted to testing the hypothesis of this study.

Chapter Four presents a discussion of the results, some explanations for the main ideas and themes emerging from these results, and conclusions about the relationship between public opinion and American foreign policy.
CHAPTER II

Public Opinion and Foreign Policy

This chapter includes three sections; a) A historical review of the relationship between public opinion and American foreign policy. b) A review of current literature. c) A review of the main theories and models of this relationship.

a) **History of the relationship**

The analysis of the relationship between public opinion and foreign policy in the United States has developed significantly since the booming of public opinion studies after World War II, and continued to develop in recent years, particularly after the war on Iraq in 2003. (54)

During the years between World War One and World War Two (1922-1945) the Lippmann – Almond thesis about the relationship between public opinion and foreign policy dominated both academic and professional arenas (55). Their thesis is that the relationship between public opinion and foreign policy is weak and invalid (56). In his famous book “Public Opinion”, published in 1922, Walter Lippmann argued that most of our thoughts about the world are just “pictures in our head”, and that we live in a “pseudo world”. These pictures, or

(56) Ibid.
stereotypes, according to Lippmann are not a reliable base or a valid source for shaping foreign policy (57). Similarly, Gabriel Almond (1950) in his book “The American People and Foreign Policy” argued that the public “are poorly informed, reacting to different events with indifference. Therefore, policy makers cannot depend on the public’s reactions to shape foreign policy” (58).

There was no significant challenge to the Lippmann – Almond thesis in the years between World War Two and the Vietnam War. On the contrary, academics conformed to these stereotyped ideas about public opinion and its weak relationship with foreign policy (59). The main thesis during this period was that “the American public, poorly informed about world affairs and indifferent to external events except in times of war or crisis, provide very weak foundations upon which to base the responsible pursuit of vital national interests” (60).

Since the end of the Vietnam War until nearly the end of the twentieth century, there has been a great deal of academic work empirically examining these hypotheses and ideas. Researchers have utilized numerous methods, tools and procedures to examine this relationship. The results of these studies revealed that although public opinion is, in general, stable and, to some extent, indifferent to

(58) Gabriel Almond (1950) The American People and Foreign Policy. New York, Praeger, P. 76
(60) Ibid
changing events, it is also “able to use its limited storehouse of information to make reasonably coherent sense of international developments”\(^{(61)}\).

The last fifteen years witnessed the inception of numerous theories and models that explain the relationship between public opinion and foreign policy, such as the Sobel’s constraint theory\(^{(62)}\), the CNN Effect\(^{(63)}\) and the Cascading Activation Model\(^{(64)}\), among others. The dominant theory of this last phase is that public opinion does have an effect on foreign policy; this effect is always indirect and interacts with other factors. Sometimes public opinion plays the independent variable; sometimes it plays the dependent variable and sometimes depends on other factors and variables.

**b) Review of current literature on the relationship between public opinion and foreign policy**

There are a significant number of scientific articles, papers, and books about the relationship between public opinion and American foreign policy. Generally, we can classify these works into the following four categories:

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(61) Ibid
Category 1: Public opinion as an independent variable: Public opinion as a shaper of foreign policy.

According to this research trend, public opinion plays an active role in shaping American foreign policy. It can enforce certain kinds of actions on the party of policy makers and can, at least, constrain or enforce limitations on the decisions policy makers can take. Douglas Foyle (1999) in his study about American presidents and public opinion pointed out that American presidents are not the same in their responses to public opinion on foreign policy issues. Some presidents are more responsive than others. For instance; while Bill Clinton was more receptive in the case of Somalia, George Bush preferred to lead rather than to follow the public opinion in the case of Iraq.\(^{(65)}\). Similarly, Leonard Kusnitz (1984) examined U.S. Chinese relations across three decades (1949 – 1979) and concluded that American public opinion had had a notable impact on American foreign policy towards China, regardless of other variables and influences\(^{(66)}\). Roland Hinckley (1992) examined the relationship between polls and policymakers, concerning national security issues, during the Reagan – Bush years, and argued that there was a positive relationship between the public’s attitudes on these issues and the actual policies\(^{(67)}\). Richard Sobel (1993) noticed


in his study of the Contra Aid controversy that there was a notable public influence on the policy-makers (68).

Finally, Ann Fishbach Rivilin (2008) concluded that public opinion plays a role in the foreign policy process by making political leaders be afraid of being punished for foreign policy failures at the next election... So when making foreign policy decisions, policymakers may contemplate the effect of their actions on future elections. (69)

**Category 2: Public opinion as a dependent variable: public opinion as a subject of manipulation and misleading information**

According to this research trend, foreign policy makers tend to take their foreign policy decisions with little consideration for public opinion. Public opinion is best described as “a source of emotional and shortsighted thinking that can only impede the effective pursuit and defense of vital national interests” (70). This reflects the typical Republican understanding of state interest, and foreign policy making.

The White House, in general, recognizes the political significance of public support but does not accept public opinion as a given factor. Rather, it attempts to

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shape public opinion in a manner that supports the positions the administration’s favored position (71).

There are many ways that American presidents manipulate public opinion; the most common being to misinform the public or provide them with false information. The Iraq War (2003) is a good example (72). Another method is to control all the sources of information about the issue, for example during the Gulf War (1991), the Secretary of defense controlled all information about the military operation in the Gulf (73). Another method occurs when the president already supports the public’s position and the presidential campaign seeks to increase both the media and public support for his policy (74).

Philip Powlick and Andrew Katz (1998) found that in Reagan and Clinton’s administrations there was a strong tendency to lead rather than to follow public


(73) For further details :-


-34-
opinion and there was institutional bias towards this tendency\textsuperscript{(75)}. Similarly, Douglas Foyle (1999) pointed out that, generally; American presidents, since Harry Truman (1945-1953) to Bill Clinton (1993-2001), have tended toward leading and not responding to public opinion in foreign policy issues\textsuperscript{(76)}.

Robert Shapiro and Lawrence Jacobs (2000) concluded from their review of literature that the dominant trend is towards less presidential responsiveness to public opinion and greater efforts to direct public opinion. However, this is not a rule that can be accepted automatically. On the contrary the personal characteristics and psychological traits of the presidents play a significant role in determining the direction and strength of this tendency\textsuperscript{(77)}.

\textbf{Category 3: The Reciprocal Relationship between the Public Opinion and Foreign Policy Decision-making}

According to this research trend the relationship is not a unidirectional. It is a mutual and reciprocal relationship, as each side affects the other and plays the two roles simultaneously. In addition, each side has a powerful influence over certain issues or stages and has a negligible influence on others. Thus, this relationship seems to be more dynamic rather than static.\textsuperscript{(78)} This evidence

suggests that, “a detailed look at the opinion-policy nexus reveals a far more complex relationship (...) and is very much context dependent” (79).

Shapiro and Jacobs (2000) in their critical review of literature mention some cases where presidents lead and direct the public opinion and some cases where presidents follow public opinion. For example, after 1965, Lyndon Johnson preferred to follow public opinion regarding the Vietnam War. On the contrary Bill Clinton chose to lead and direct public opinion to accept his administration health care reforms and related policy efforts from 1993 to 1994. The administration became responsive only in the lead up period to the 1996 presidential election (80).

Natalie La Balme (2000) has discussed the interactions between presidents and public opinion. One of these interactions is the process of anticipating public reaction; policymakers try to gauge public reactions. Thus, they can either abstain from or engage in actions depending on their anticipation of adverse public reaction. Public opinion can also act as a catalyst in a decision-making process. In the cases of Somalia and Rwanda, public opinion acted as a catalyst but it did not have the power alone to force governments into launching interventionist military interventions.

operations. Policymakers also use public pressure as a political tool to convince their own administration or international partners\(^{(81)}\).

**Category 4: Factors that mediate in this relationship**

Many researchers have shown that the relationship between opinion and foreign policy can be viewed as mediated by a variety of both stable and contingent conditions. Thus, the influence of public opinion on policy is not direct; rather it is conditioned by a mediating framework of variables\(^{(82)}\).

Page and Shapiro (1994) identified some of the most important factors that mediate this relationship; including the structure of the parliamentary system, the view of selected officials, presidential leadership, the effectiveness of elite communication, and the elite perception of public opinion.\(^{(83)}\) Eric Shiraev (2000) listed other factors “such as: the nature of the international problem under consideration, the nature of the proposed policy, the effectiveness of the communication between elite groups, the elite’s awareness of public opinion, the perceived level of public support for the policy, and the structure and timing of decision making”\(^{(84)}\).

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Natalie Balme (2000) suggested several factors that can effect when and how public opinion influences the policy process. These include; the level of the public support, the stage of the policy process, the effectiveness of elite leadership efforts, the context in which the decision is made, the type of issue under consideration, and the individual sensitivity of the policymakers (85).

Previous researches indicate that the influence of the public opinion varies according to the type of issue. Some issues are assumed to have a greater influence; these include policy problems that intersect directly with domestic concerns but have significant foreign policy implications (86). Alan Monroe (1998) found that the consistency between public opinion and policy decisions declined from 1980 to 1998. One of the largest drops occurs in foreign policy issues. However, defense policy did not exhibit this trend, rather the trend was reversed in this instance (87).

Research findings show also that the impact of public opinion varies according to the levels or stages of the issue. For Example, Thomas Graham (1994) analyses the impact of public opinion on seven American administrations. He focused on how American presidents respond at different stages of dealing with a foreign policy issue. Graham indentified four stages; the first is getting the issue ‘on the agenda’. The second is negotiating the issue, the third is ratification


-38-
and the fourth is implementation. According to his study American presidents respond differently to public opinion depending on the stage in the policy process. His findings show that in the first stage public opinion has an impact but in the final stages public opinion has little impact on American presidents. (88)

Finally, Holsti (2004) examines how presidents perceive public opinion and how this perception affects their responses. Although no president or elected representative can completely ignore public opinion, their reactions differ. For example, Reagan led public opinion and had a positive view of it and President Bush Senior, on the contrary, feared public opinion. (89).

c) Theories of Public opinion and American Foreign policy

(1) Sobel’s Constraint Theory

In his seminal book “the Impact of Public Opinion on U.S. Foreign Policy Since Vietnam”, in which he examines how officials in the White House over five administrations from the Vietnam war to the Bosnian war reacted to the public opinion, Richard Sobel (2001) introduces his Constraint theory of the relationship between Public Opinion and American Foreign Policy. The general argument of this theory is that:

“Public opinion constrains, but does not set, American foreign intervention theory. In other words, the public’s attitudes set the limits

(89) Ibid
within which policymakers may operate. Within those parameters of permissive consensus, decision makers may operate with less or more political costs and relative discretion about which policies to choose. That discretion is wider when conflicts are less salient and support is higher” (90).

According to this theory there are two main goals that public officials pursue regarding public opinion; the first is getting sufficient public support for their policies and the second ensuring re-election in subsequent elections. (91) Sobel explains the different motives that drive public officials to take public opinion into account in the decision making process:

“Presidents care about their popularity because it affects their ability to work their will with others involved in the policy process. National policymakers have to think of their standing with the public outside of Washington. Because policymakers think about it, public standing is a source of influence for them. In short, the more popular a president is, the more likely he is to accomplish his political agenda” (92).

Therefore indirect means of constraint such as public opinion affect on presidential approval rate is the most important means of constraint that public

(91) Ibid, P.11
(92) Ibid, P.15
opinion can impose on policy makers. \(^{(93)}\) To avoid negative impact on their policies or their careers due to public disapproval, public officials try to educate, lead, and even manipulate public opinion. \(^{(94)}\) Obviously, their reactions depend on “their view of the proper relationship between attitudes and policy decisions” \(^{(95)}\) and on their perceptions of the three different types of opinion environments’ which are: climate of opinion, presidential popularity or approval, and the specific attitudes toward government policy options. \(^{(96)}\)

Sobel concludes that the opinion – policy nexus is not unidirectional, from opinion to policy or vice versa. But rather it is reciprocal “Public opinion places limits on what policymakers can do, but leadership matters, too. Largely relying on the media, policymakers influence public opinion through education, leadership and manipulation” \(^{(97)}\)

(2) The Cascading Activation Model

This model is used to explain how the White House controls the feelings and thoughts of people through the frames which spread about the foreign policy issues in all mass media. The term “cascade” is fitting as it is emphasizes the top–down nature of the spreading of these frames as some actors are more able than others to push ideas and thoughts firstly in the media, in the minds of journalists,

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\(^{(93)}\) Ibid, P.24  
\(^{(94)}\) Ibid, P.22  
\(^{(95)}\) Ibid, P.11  
\(^{(96)}\) Ibid, P.14  
\(^{(97)}\) Ibid, P.22  

-41-
and then to the public (98), consequently, we can consider cascading model as a way of manipulation by controlling the ideas about the issue.

According to Robert Entman (2004) “The Cascade Model assumes that the concept of spreading network activation applies at each level of the system. The spreading activation of thoughts or nodes on a knowledge network within an individual’s mind (whether a Congress member, a reporter, or citizen) has parallels in the way ideas travel along interpersonal networks and in the spread of framing words and images across the different media” (99)

There are five sub-Hypotheses or claims deriving from this model:

1- The President will be most able to control the framing of foreign affairs when he is “dealing with the culturally congruent or incongruent” (100).

2- Journalists have a motivation to include opposition viewpoints of foreign policy in their stories. This is an opportunity most available to them when the event or issue is ambiguous. (101)

3- The political elite value their political survival; therefore they listen to public opinion. “When a large majority appears positively inclined toward

(99) Ibid,
(100) Ibid, P.17
(101) Ibid, P.18
the president, other leaders tend to fall silent and coverage of opposing views is unlikely to generate a coherent counter frame”. (102)

4- “In the post – Cold War period, if the White House mismanages its relationships with other elites and journalists, especially if it cannot find compelling schemas that support its line, a president may lose control of the frame”. (103)

5- The end of the Cold War paradigm “has made the public’s responses to foreign affairs less predictable” and this has increased the media’s influence. (104)

Figure 2-1 illustrates the cascading flow of influence that links each level of the system:

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(102) Ibid, P.20
(103) Ibid, P.20
(104) Ibid, P.21
CNN Effect Theory

The CNN effect is a “theory in political science and media studies that says that the establishment of the popular 24-hour international television news channel, CNN, had a major influence on states' foreign policy in the late Cold War period. And that CNN and other cable news organization have had a similar impact in the post-Cold War era”(105).

Giloba (2005) thesis is that Global television networks such as CNN and BBC have become a decisive factor in the formation of foreign policy. How these satellite channels represent the issues have an impact on decision making and how policy makers respond to issues. Sometimes they force policy makers and government to take action and this accelerates the decision making process. Now more than ever, the pressure of rolling news and the desire to fill airtime on 24 hour news channels means that the networks demand speedy decision making. (106)

Livingstone (1997) points to three functions of the media that fall under the wider term of the ‘CNN affect’. The first function of the media is their affect on the setting of the policy agenda. The second is that the media can be an obstacle to achieving policy aims and the third is that the media puts pressure on administrations to speed up the decision making process. (107)

(107) Steven Livingston (1997) Clarifying the CNN Effect: An Examination of Media Effects According to Type of Military Intervention. John Kennedy School of
It has been argued by politicians, officials, journalists and scholars that the CNN effect caused interventions in Northern Iraq, Somalia, Bosnia, and Kosovo\(^{(108)}\).

Neak says that the media forces some issues into the open, issues that policy makers would rather be kept quiet. This means that time to deliberate is lessoned and there is pressure to quickly find the most reasonable policy response\(^{(109)}\) the media broadcasts images of famine, ethnic conflict, or mass suffering, and this arouses strong emotions in the public. Then the public demand some a moral response from their elected leaders; they demand that officials “do something”. In turn elected officials, acting out of the motivations of political survival respond with some sort of intervention, military or humanitarian\(^{(110)}\).

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Government’s Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy at Harvard University.


(110) Ibid,
CHAPTER III

The Results

This chapter contains results of the general trends in American public opinion about Iraq from the beginning of August 1990 (the date of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and the U.S. decision to send American troops to the Gulf region for the Liberation of Kuwait), until the end of December 2011 (date of the withdrawal of almost all U.S. troops from Iraq). This period spans across four U.S. administrations; the administration of George Bush (1990 - 1992), the administration of Bill Clinton (1993 - 2000), the administration of George W. Bush (2001 - 2008), and Barack Obama's administration (2009 - 2011).

The results will be displayed in each stage in three sections:

1 – Attitudes of the public towards U.S. foreign policies in Iraq and the degree of public support for each policy. This aims to answer the key question: Does public opinion tend to approve or disapprove of U.S. foreign policy towards Iraq; the two wars, several attacks and strikes and eventual military withdrawal? This section also asks two subsidiary questions of whether these policies are perceived as right or wrong, and whether such policies are worth the sacrifices involved.

2 – Levels of public approval of the performance of each president and the approval of his handling of the situation in Iraq. This section looks at whether public opinion approved or disapproved of how the four presidents dealt with the
Iraq situation and the subsequent public evaluation of their performances regarding Iraq.

3 – The approval rates of each president during his years in office, and the relationship between these approval rates and their performance in Iraq.

Finally, this chapter includes testing of the four hypotheses about the relationship between public opinion and American foreign policies in Iraq, and whether the partisanship of each president and the stages of the foreign policy process effect this relationship or not. In addition, it tests and examines the relationship between the approval of presidents’ performances in Iraq and their presidential approval.
First Section: American Attitudes Towards Iraq During

George Bush’s Era 1990-1992

1- American public opinion about the war with Iraq. Did the U.S. make a mistake?

To measure American attitudes towards the First Gulf War and the public’s evaluation of this decision various questions have been used, such as:

- “Do you think the United States made a mistake getting involved in the war against Iraq or not?” (111)

- “Do you approve or disapprove of the United States having gone to war with Iraq?” (112)

- “Do you approve or disapprove of George Bush’s decision to go to war with Iraq this past January 16th (1991)?” (113)

In a series of polls carried out by CBS News and the New York Times, respondents were asked “Do you think the United States made a mistake getting involved in the war against Iraq or not?” (114). The results showed an overall positive response to this question. The majority believed that it was the right decision to go to war, as shown in figure 3-1. In a poll carried out on

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(112) Ibid

(113) Ibid

(114) Ibid
January 17th 1991, (N= 544), 78% of the respondents believed that it was the right decision.\(^{(115)}\) In another poll carried out on January 20th 1991, (N= 867) the percentage went up to 80\(^{(116)}\) and remained at this level in a subsequent poll carried out a month later on February 28th 1991 (N= 528)\(^{(117)}\). Even after nine months of the war in a poll conducted from 5th -7th October 1991 (N= 1280), 74% of the respondents believed that this decision was not a mistake.\(^{(118)}\)

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In another series of polls conducted by ABC News and the Washington Post during January and February of 1991, respondents were asked “Do you approve or disapprove of the United States having gone to war with Iraq?”[119]. The results showed the same trend of public support for the decision to go to war with Iraq as in the CBS News and the New York Times polls.

In a poll conducted on January 16th, 1991, (N= 545),(120) 53% approved of the war strongly, 23% approved somewhat, 7% disapproved somewhat, 15% disapproved strongly (Don’t Know 2%). In a subsequent poll from 8th -12th February 1991,(121) (N= 1011), 57% approved strongly, 21% approved somewhat, 10% disapproved somewhat, 7% disapproved strongly (Don’t Know 5%). In another poll conducted on February 27th 1991,(122) (N= 778), 69% approved of the decision to go to war strongly, 17% approved somewhat, 5% disapproved somewhat, 6% disapproved strongly (Don’t Know 2%).


In another series of polls conducted by Washington Post during January –
March 1991, respondents were asked “Do you approve or disapprove of the
United States having gone to war with Iraq?" This confirmed the trend of
public support for the war. For example, in a poll conducted from 23rd - 27th
January 1991 (124) (N=1015), 75% approved this action versus the 23% who
disapproved (DK 2%). In a subsequent poll from 8th - 12th February 1991, (125)
(N= 1011), 78% approved this action versus 18% who disapproved of it (DK


www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/ipoll.html .

www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/ipoll.html .
4%). In another poll conducted from 1st - 5th March, 1991,\(^{(126)}\) (N= 1006), 82% approved this action versus 11% who disapproved of it (DK 7%).

In another series of polls conducted by Associated Press, respondents were asked “Do you approve or disapprove of George Bush’s decision to go to war with Iraq this past January 16\(^{th}\) (1991)?”\(^{(127)}\). In a poll carried out from 23\(^{rd}\) - 24\(^{th}\) January 1991\(^{(128)}\) (N= 1015), 74% of the respondents approved the decision versus 24% who disapproved of it (DK 2%). In another poll carried out from 17\(^{th}\) - 21\(^{st}\) July, 1991,\(^{(129)}\) (N= 1002), 73% approved of the decision versus the 19% who disapproved of it (DK 8%). A year later from 2nd – 5\(^{th}\) January 1992,\(^{(130)}\) (N= 1004), 65% approved it versus 25% who disapproved of it (DK 11%).

Finally, in a series of polls conducted by CBS News and the New York Times, from January – February 1991, respondents were asked, “Given the loss of life and other costs of the war in the Persian Gulf, do you think the war to
defeat Iraq is likely to be worth the cost or not?\textsuperscript{131}. Results showed that Americans believed that the war against Iraq was worth the cost. For instance, in a poll conducted on January 17\textsuperscript{th} 1991,\textsuperscript{132} (N= 544), 64% believed it was worth the cost, versus the 23% who believed that it was not worth it (DK 14%). In another poll conducted on January 20\textsuperscript{th} 1991\textsuperscript{133} (N= 867), 61% believed it was worth it versus the 23% believed that it was not worth it (DK 16%). In a poll conducted on February 12\textsuperscript{th} and 13\textsuperscript{th}, 1991\textsuperscript{134}, (N= 1060), 60% believed it was worth it versus the 26% who believed it was not worth it (DK 14%). Finally, in a poll conducted on February 24\textsuperscript{th} 1991,\textsuperscript{135} (N= 687), 65% believed it was worth it versus the 24% who believed it was not worth going to war given the loss of life and other costs (DK 11%).

\textsuperscript{131} Retrieved March 19, 2012, from the i Poll databank. The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University Of Connecticut. \url{http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/ipoll.html}.


“Given the loss of life and the other costs of the war in the Persian Gulf, do you think the war to defeat Iraq is likely to be worth the cost or not?”

Figure 3-3

2- **American public opinion approval and assessment of Bush’s handling of the situation with Iraq**

Two types of questions have been used to evaluate the public’s assessment and evaluation of George Bush’s handling of the situation with Iraq:
- “Do you think President Bush is doing a good or poor job in handling this crisis with Iraq?”**(136)

- “Do you approve or disapprove of the way George Bush is handling the Iraq situation?”**(137)

In a series of polls sponsored and conducted by Time / CNN/ Yankelovich Clancy Shulman, from August 1990 to March 1991, respondents were asked, “Do you think President Bush is doing a good or poor job in handling this crisis with Iraq?”**(138) Results showed that the overall evaluation of the public was of a high opinion of the President at the beginning of the crisis. The public’s evaluation of the President’s handling of the crisis as good gradually decreased to poor from October to December 1990 and then went up sharply with the start of the war on January 16th 1991. A poll carried out on August 9th 1990**(139) (N=500) illustrates this; 83% of the respondents indicated that he did a good job versus 12% who indicated he did a poor job (DK 5%). In a subsequent poll carried out on September 13th 1990**(140) (N=500), 75% thought he did a good job versus 19% who thought he did a poor job (DK 6%). In another poll conducted on October

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**(137) Ibid

**(138) Ibid


10th 1990\textsuperscript{(141)} (N=500), 65\% thought he did a good job versus 27\% who thought he did a poor job (DK 8\%). In another poll conducted on November 14th 1990\textsuperscript{(142)} (N=500), 53\% thought he did a good job versus 36\% who thought he did a poor job (DK 11\%). In another poll conducted on January 24th 1991,\textsuperscript{(143)} (N=1000), 84\% thought he did a good job versus 10\% who thought he did a poor job (DK 6\%). In another poll conducted on February 7th, 1991,\textsuperscript{(144)} (N=1000), 85\% thought he did a good job versus 10\% who thought he did a poor job (DK 5\%). In another poll conducted on March 7th, 1991,\textsuperscript{(145)} (N=1000), 93\% thought he did a good job versus 6\% who thought he did a poor job (DK 1\%). This illustrates the gradual decrease and then increase in the public’s approval of the President’s handling of the crisis.


Figure 3-4

In another series of polls sponsored and carried out by Gordon Black / USA Today, respondents were asked “Do you approve or disapprove of the way George Bush is handling the Iraq situation?” The results confirmed the previous trend. For example, in a poll carried out from 12th -20th August 1990 (147) (N= 802) 83% approved of Bush’s handling versus 13% who disapproved of it (DK 4%). In another poll carried out on the 1st and 2nd December 1990 (148) (N= 704) 58% approved versus 30% who disapproved (DK 12%). In another poll

conducted by Los Angeles Times, 17th -18th January 1991 (149) (N= 1406) 88% approved versus 10% who disapproved (DK 2%). Finally, in a poll carried out by Los Angeles Times from 15th - 17th February 1991 (150) (N= 1822) 85% approved versus 13% who disapproved of how Bush was handling the Iraq situation (DK 2%).

![Figure 3-5]

3- George Bush’s Presidential Approval During the Iraq Crisis 1990-1992

Measuring the public’s assessment of the president’s performance is carried out systematically and periodically in the United States. Nearly all of the public


opinion organizations use the following format to measure the public’s approval of the President, “Do you approve or disapprove of the way (…..) Is handling his job as president?”(151)

From August 1990 to December 1992 tens of presidential approval polls of George Bush have been done. Before the Iraq invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, George Bush’s presidential approval ratings ranged between 67-76%. For instance, in a poll conducted by CBS News / New York Times from 13th-15th January 1990 (152) (N= 1557), the approval rate was 76%. In a poll carried out by Gallup from 15th -18th February 1990 (153) (N= 1235) the approval rate was 73%. In a poll carried out by Gallup from 19th -22nd April 1990, (154) (N=1239) the approval rate was 67%. In another poll conducted by Gallup from 15th - 17th June 1990 (155) (N= 1236) the approval rate was 69%.

From August 1990 until January 1991, Bush’s approval rate swung up and down. For instance, in a poll conducted by Gallup from August 30th – September

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2nd 1990\(^{(156)}\) (N= 1007), the approval rate was 74%. In another poll conducted by NBC News / Wall Street Journal from 30th - 31st October 1990\(^{(157)}\) (N= 507), the approval rate was 56%. In another poll carried out by Gallup from 13th -16th December 1990\(^{(158)}\) (N= 1019), the approval rate was 63%.

From January to April of 1991, Bush’s Presidential approval reached the highest points in his term. In a poll conducted by Gordon Black / USA Today on February 28th 1991\(^{(159)}\) (N= 622), the approval rate was 91%. In another poll conducted by Gallup from 25th – 28th April 1991\(^{(160)}\) (N= 1005), the approval rate was 72%.

After the war on Iraq, Bush’s Presidential approval decreased sharply. In a poll conducted by Gallup from 24th - 27th October 1991 \(^{(161)}\) (N= 1003), the approval rate was 62%. In another poll conducted by Withlin Quorum from 19th -


20th December 1991\(^{(162)}\) (N= 1000), the approval rate was 47%. In another poll conducted by Gallup from February 28th - March 1st 1992\(^{(163)}\) (N= 1003) the approval rate of the President was 41%.

![Diagram showing approval rates from January 1990 to December 1992. The graph displays the percent of people who approve, disapprove, and those who do not know (DK) about the way George Bush is handling his job as president.]

"Do you approve or disapprove of the way George Bush is handling his job as president?"

Figure 3-6

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Second Section: American Attitudes Towards Iraq During Bill Clinton’s Era 1993-2000

1- Public opinion attitudes towards American policies in Iraq 1993-2000

American foreign policies in Iraq during Clinton’s era varied and took numerous shapes including: increasing the American troops in the Gulf region, missile attacks on Iraq and an economic and trade embargo on Iraq. In general, the American public supported these policies and had a positive assessment of Clinton’s handling of the situation in Iraq. This is a short analysis of the reaction of the public towards each of these policies.

(1) Increasing the U.S. Military Forces in the Persian Gulf Area: October 1994

In a poll conducted by Gallup / CNN/ USA Today on October 11th 1994 (N=625), respondents were asked “As you know, over the past week president (Bill) Clinton has greatly increased U.S. military forces in the Persian Gulf area, after Iraq’s leader, Saddam Hussein, sent his military troops toward the Kuwait border, do you approve or disapprove of Clinton’s
decision to send additional U.S. troops to the Persian Gulf area? (164) The results show that 74% approved it versus 23% who disapproved (DK 3%).

In another poll conducted by Los Angeles Times, from 17th - 19th October 1994 (N= 1272), respondents were asked “Generally speaking, do you approve or disapprove of President (Bill) Clinton’s decision to send a substantial U.S. military force to the Persian Gulf in order to defend Kuwait against a possible attack by Iraq?” (165). Results showed that 72% approved versus 22% who disapproved (DK 6%). In the same poll, respondents were asked, “Do you approve or disapprove of the way (president) Bill Clinton is handling Iraq?” (166) The results show that 59% approved versus 30% who disapproved (DK 11%).

In another poll conducted by Time / CNN/ Yankelovich Partners on October 11th and 12th 1994 (N= 800), respondents were asked, “Do you think president (Bill) Clinton is doing a good or a poor job in handling the situation with Iraq?” (167). Results show that 61% believed that he was doing


(166) Ibid

a good job versus 25% who believed that he was doing a poor job (DK 14%).

(2) **U.S. Cruise-Missile Attack on Iraq: September 1996**

In a poll conducted by CBS News / New York Times, on September 3rd 1996 (N= 337) respondents were asked, “The U.S. cruise–missile attack on Iraq (September 3rd, 1996) was in response to Iraqi attacks on Kurdish cities in a zone in Northern Iraq created to protect the Kurds. Do you approve or disapprove of the U.S. cruise–missile attack on Iraq?” Results show that 66% approved it versus the 21% who disapproved of it (DK 13%).

In another poll conducted by ABC News on September 3rd 1996, (N= 515), respondents were asked, “As you may know, this weekend Iraq attacked Kurdish rebels in the United Nations protection zone in Northern Iraq. The United States says this violated the ceasefire that ended the Persian Gulf War, and the U.S. retaliated with a missile attack on Iraq early on Tuesday (September 3rd, 1996). Do you approve or disapprove of the U.S. missile...
attack on Iraq?\textsuperscript{169}). Results show that 79% approved of the attack versus the 16% who disapproved of it (DK 5%).

In another poll conducted by ABC News / Washington Post on September 3\textsuperscript{rd} and 4\textsuperscript{th} 1996 (N=1020), the previous question was repeated, and results show that 76% approved of the attack versus 16% who disapproved of it (DK 8%)\textsuperscript{170}).

In a poll conducted by CBS News from 16\textsuperscript{th} - 18\textsuperscript{th} September 1996 (N=1615), respondents were asked, “In its responses to Saddam Hussein and Iraq, so far do you think the Clinton administration has used the right amount of force, or should the Clinton administration use even more force against Iraq?”\textsuperscript{171}). Results show that 33% indicated that it was a right amount, 9% said that it was too much force and 44% thought more force should be used (DK 14%).

In a poll conducted by Los Angeles Times from 7\textsuperscript{th} -10\textsuperscript{th} September 1996 (N= 1522), respondents were asked “Do you think the military actions that have been taken against Iraq so far (this week / this past week) have been


too tough, not tough enough or just about right?" (172). Results show that 9% indicated that they were too tough, 30% said not tough enough and 46% thought they were about right (DK 15%). Respondents were also asked “Do you think President Clinton made the right or wrong decision in not waiting for the multinational coalition to get behind his decision… to launch air missiles at selected air defense installations in Southern Iraq?” (173) . Results show that 53% indicated it was the right decision versus 31% who indicated it was the wrong decision (DK 16%).

Finally, in a poll conducted by Gallup / CNN/ USA Today from 12th -14th September 1996 (N= 1253), respondents were asked, “Do you approve or disapprove of the way Bill Clinton is handling the situation in Iraq?” (174). Results show that 55% approved of it versus 24% who disapproved of it (DK 21%).

(3) **U.S. Military Strikes Against Iraq: December 1998 - March 1999**

In a poll conducted by Pew Research Center for the People and the Press between the 19th and 21st of December 1998 (N= 805), respondents were

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(173) Ibid

asked “Do you approve or disapprove of the U.S. military strikes against Iraq?”(175). Results show that 75% approved of the strikes versus 20% who disapproved of them (DK 5%).

In another poll conducted by Gallup on the 19th and 20th of December 1998 (N= 825), respondents were asked “As you may know, the United States and Britain have carried out an air attack against Iraq over the past few days, do you approve or disapprove of this attack?”(176). Results show that 78% approved versus 18% who disapproved (DK 4%).

In another poll conducted by ABC News / Washington Post on the 19th and 20th of December, 1998, (N= 1285), respondents were asked “Do you approve or disapprove of the US attack on Iraq?”(177). Results show that 78% approved versus 17% who disapproved (DK 4%).

In another poll conducted by Fox News / Opinion Dynamics on December 17th, 1998, (N= 613), respondents were asked “As you know, President (Bill) Clinton ordered air strikes against Iraq in response to their non-compliance with the United Nations weapons inspections. Do you support


or oppose President Clinton’s call for military action against Iraq?\textsuperscript{(178)}

Results show that 78% approved versus 15% who disapproved (DK 7%). In the same poll, respondents were asked “Do you support air strikes on chemical and biological weapons sites in Iraq, considering that countries like France, Russia and China object?\textsuperscript{(179)}” 66% of the respondents said yes versus 23% who said no (DK 11%).

In another poll conducted by CBS News / New York Times from 13\textsuperscript{th} - 17\textsuperscript{th} December 1998 (N= 1992), respondents were asked “Do you approve or disapprove of the way Bill Clinton is handling the situation with Iraq?\textsuperscript{(180)}” Results show that 72% approved of his handling versus 22% who disapproved of it (DK 6%). In another poll conducted by CBS News on November 16\textsuperscript{th} and 17\textsuperscript{th} 1998, (N= 1118), respondents were asked the same question, and results show that 67% approved of Clinton’s handling of the situation with Iraq versus 22% disapproved of it (DK 11%).\textsuperscript{(181)}


\textsuperscript{(179)} Ibid.


-68-
In a poll conducted by Gallup from 19th – 21st February 1999, (N= 1014), respondents were asked “Do you favor or oppose the U.S. and its allies taking all – out military action against Iraq until the situation is resolved?” Results show that 73% of the respondents favored all – out action versus 22% who opposed it (DK 5%). The respondents were also asked “do you approve or disapprove of the way Bill Clinton is handling the situation in Iraq?” results show that 66% approved versus 28% who disapproved (DK 5%).

In another poll conducted by Pew Research Center for the People and the Press from March 24th – 30th 1999, (N= 1786), respondents were asked “Over the past several months, there have been repeated U.S. and British air strikes against Iraq. In general, do you approve or disapprove of these air strikes?” results show that 68% approved versus 25% who disapproved (DK 7%).

In another poll conducted by NBC News / Wall Street Journal from March 4th - 7th 1999 (N= 2012), respondents were asked “Do you think the US
should or should not use American troops to overthrow Saddam Hussein?”

results show that 49% believed that the U.S. should use American troops to overthrow Saddam while 43% believed that the US should not use American troops to overthrow him (DK 8%).

(4) **Imposing Economic Sanctions on Iraq**

In a poll conducted by Los Angeles Times from 17th - 19th October 1994 (N= 1272), respondents were asked “Do you think the economic sanctions against Iraq should be lifted because of its undue hardship to Iraq’s people, or should they continue until Iraq agrees to the terms of the U.N. resolutions, or should they continue until Saddam Hussein is removed from power?”

The results showed that 5% believed that these sanctions should be lifted, 35% believed that they should continue until Iraq agrees to the terms of the U.N. resolutions, and 55% believed that they should continue until Saddam Hussein is removed from power (DK 5%).

In a subsequent poll by Los Angeles Times from 7th -10th September 1996 (N= 1522), respondents were asked, “What do you think is the best way to

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deal with Saddam Hussein’s militant behavior in the Mideast?”(187), 16% said economic sanctions, 9% said military operations, 58% answered both and 8% said ignore Saddam Hussein (DK 9%)

In a poll conducted by Gallup / CNN/ USA Today from 21st - 23rd of November 1997 (N= 1019), respondents were asked “Do you feel the United Nations should continue these sanctions until Saddam Hussein complies with all U.N. resolutions, or should the United Nations continue these sanctions as long as Saddam is in power, regardless of whether he complies with all UN resolutions?”(188) The results show that 55% believed that the UN should continue sanctions until Saddam Hussein complies, and 37% believed that they should continue as long as Hussein is in power, while 2% said that sanctions should be lifted now (DK 6%).

In a poll conducted by Zogby International, in May of 1998 (N= 969), respondents were asked “Should the U.S. engage in trade and maintain diplomatic relations with Iraq or should there be economic sanctions against


Iraq? (189). The results show that 14% preferred trade and diplomatic relations while 69% preferred economic sanctions (DK 17%).

In a poll conducted by Gallup / Chicago Council on Foreign Relations between October 15th - November 10th 1998 (N= 1507), respondents were asked “Do you favor or oppose the use of economic sanctions against Iraq?” (190), 67% favored economic sanctions and 22% opposed them (DK 11%).

2- American public approval and assessment of Clinton’s handling of the Iraq situation.

To measure the public’s evaluation of the way Clinton handled the situation in Iraq, American Public Opinion Organization used the following question “Do you approve or disapprove of the way Clinton is handling the Iraq situation” (191). Results showed that there was some level of approval most of the time as shown in the polls below.

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In a poll carried out by CBS News / New York Times on June 27th 1993 (N=622) 59% of respondents approved of his handling versus 21% who disapproved of it (DK 20%). \(^{192}\)

In a poll carried out by Los Angeles Times from 17th - 19th October 1994 (N=1272) there was 59% approval versus 30% disapproval for the way Clinton was handling the Iraq situation (DK 11%). \(^{193}\) In a poll carried out by CBS News / New York Times from October 24th - November 1st 1994 (N=1429) there was 61% approval versus 30% disapproval of Clinton’s handling of the situation in Iraq (DK 9%). \(^{194}\) In another poll carried out by Gallup / CNN/ USA Today from 19th - 26th September 1996 (N=1221), there was 52% approval versus 29% disapproval (DK 19%). \(^{195}\) In a poll carried out by CBS News on 23rd and 24th November 1997 (N=953), there was a 64% approval rate versus a 23% disapproval rate (DK 13%). \(^{196}\) In another poll carried out by NBC News/ Wall Street Journal from February 26th - March 1st 1998 (N=2004), there was a 67% 


approval rate of the President’s handling of the Iraq situation versus a 25% disapproval rate (DK 8%)(197). In a poll carried out by ABC News from 28th -29th June 1998 (N= 1021), 71% approved versus 19% who disapproved (DK 11%) (198). In a poll carried out by CBS News / New York Times on November 15th 1998 (N=762), 63% approved and 24% disapproved of the President’s decisions regarding Iraq (DK 13%) (199). In a poll carried out by CBS News on December 16th 1998 (N=413), 67% approved of his handling and 21% disapproved (DK 12%) (200). In a poll carried out by Gallup from 15th -17th January 1999 (N= 1009), 56% approved versus the 39% who disapproved (DK 5%) (201). Finally, in a poll carried out by Washington Post on from 12th -14th February 1999 (N= 1010), 63% approved and 31% disapproved (DK 7%) (202).


Figure 3-7

2- Bill Clinton’s Presidential Approval Rate 1993-2000

President Clinton is considered one of the most American popular presidents. He had the highest approval rate when he departed the Office in January 2001. Hundreds of polls have been conducted to measure his presidential approval rate during his two terms in office 1993-2000. The following are some examples of these polls.

In a poll carried out by Gallup from 24th - 26th January 1993 (N= 1000), the approval rate for Clinton was 58 \% \textsuperscript{(203)}. During 1994 Clinton’s Presidential approval ranged between 36\% and 53\%. In a poll carried out by Gallup/ CNN/ USA Today from 26th -28th February 1994 (N= 1015), the approval rate was

53\%^{(204)}$. In a poll carried out by Gallup / CNN/ USA Today from 25\textsuperscript{th} -28\textsuperscript{th} June 1994 (N= 1019), the approval rate was 44\%^{(205)}. In another poll carried out by PSRA / Newsweek on 29\textsuperscript{th} and 30\textsuperscript{th} September 1994 (N=745) the approval rate was 36\%^{(206)}. In a poll carried out by Gallup/ CNN/ USA Today from 28\textsuperscript{th} - 30\textsuperscript{th} December 1994 (N= 1010), the approval rate was 40\%^{(207)}.

During 1995 several polls were conducted regarding public opinion of the President. In a poll carried out by Time / CNN/ Yankelovich Partners on 29\textsuperscript{th} and 30\textsuperscript{th} March 1995 (N=1010), the approval rate was 49\%^{(208)}. In a poll carried out by Washington Post from June 28\textsuperscript{th} - July 2\textsuperscript{nd} 1995 (N= 1003), the approval rate was 51\%^{(209)}. In a poll carried out by News Interest Index from September 28\textsuperscript{th} - October 1\textsuperscript{st} 1995, (N= 1519), the approval rate was 45\%^{(210)}. In another poll


carried out by Gallup / CNN/ USA Today from 15th - 18th December 1995 (N= 1000) the approval rate was 51%\(^{(211)}\).

During 1996, there was no change in the general trend of approval for the President. In a poll conducted by ABC News / Washington Post from 27th - 30th June 1996, (N= 1011) the approval rate was 56%\(^{(212)}\). In another poll carried out by Gallup from 9th - 11th December 1996 (N= 813), the approval rate was 58%\(^{(213)}\).

During 1997 the general trend towards approval for the President also remained the same. In a poll carried out by Gallup / CNN/ USA Today from 26th - 29th June 1997 (N= 1013), the approval rate was 55%\(^{(214)}\). In another poll carried out by Gallup / CNN/ USA Today from 18th - 21st December 1997 (N= 1005), the approval rate was 56%\(^{(215)}\).

During 1998, Clinton’s approval rate went up. In a poll carried out by Time / CNN/ Yankelovitch Partners from June 30th - July 1st 1998 (N= 1024) the approval rate was 59%\(^{(216)}\).

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rate was 62%\textsuperscript{(216)}. In another poll carried out by Gallup from 28\textsuperscript{th} - 29\textsuperscript{th} December 1998 (N= 1055), the approval rate was 64\%\textsuperscript{(217)}.

During 1999 there was no significant change in his approval rate. In a poll carried out by Washington Post / Kaiser / Harvard University from June 30\textsuperscript{th} – August 30\textsuperscript{th} , 1999, (N= 4614), the approval rate for the President’s foreign policy was 61\%\textsuperscript{(218)}. In another poll conducted by Gallup / CNN/ USA Today on 20\textsuperscript{th} and 21\textsuperscript{st} December 1999 (N= 1031) the approval rate was 57\%\textsuperscript{(219)}.

Finally, during 2000 Clinton’s approval rate fluctuated. In a poll carried out by Pew Research Center for the People and The Press from 23\textsuperscript{rd} - 30\textsuperscript{th} June 2000 (N= 616), the approval rate was 49\%\textsuperscript{(220)}. In another poll carried out by Gallup / CNN/ USA Today from 15\textsuperscript{th} - 17\textsuperscript{th} December 2000 (N= 1011), the approval rate was 66\%\textsuperscript{(221)}.

“Do you approve or disapprove of the way Bill Clinton is handling his job as president?”

Figure 3-8

1. American public opinion attitudes towards launching war against Iraq: did the U.S. made a mistake?

Many questions have been used to measure American attitudes towards launching the war against Iraq. The most frequent questions will be shown here.

(1) “Do you support or oppose the United States going to war with Iraq?”

A poll, conducted by ABC News / Washington Post on March 20th 2003, (N=506) shows that 53% of the respondents strongly supported going to war with Iraq, 19% somewhat supported, 8% somewhat opposed and 18% strongly opposed the decision (DK 2%) (222). A poll conducted on March 27th 2003, (N=508) showed that 58% of the respondents strongly supported going to war with Iraq, 16% somewhat supported, 8% somewhat opposed and 16% strongly opposed going to war (DK 3%) (223). A poll conducted from 2nd - 6th April 2003 (N= 1030) shows that 57% of the respondents strongly supported going to war with Iraq, 20% somewhat supported, 10% somewhat opposed and 7% strongly opposed.

opposed (DK 7%)\(^{(225)}\). In another poll conducted on April 16\(^{th}\) 2003 (N= 504), the results show that 61% of the respondents strongly supported going to war with Iraq, 17% somewhat supported, 7% somewhat opposed and 13% strongly opposed (DK 2%)\(^{(226)}\). In the results of another poll, conducted by Pace University / Rock the Vote First Time Voters Survey, from 8\(^{th}\) - 20\(^{th}\) July 2004, (N= 622), showed that 30% of the respondents strongly supported going to war with Iraq, 18% somewhat supported, 16% somewhat opposed and 32% strongly opposed (DK 5%)\(^{(227)}\). In another poll conducted by Pace University / Rock the Vote First Time Voters Survey, from 14\(^{th}\) -21\(^{st}\) October 2004, (N= 600), the results show that 34% of the respondents strongly supported going to war with Iraq, 18% somewhat supported, 11% somewhat opposed and 34% strongly opposed (DK 4%)\(^{(228)}\).


(2) “Do you approve or disapprove of the United States taking military action against Iraq to try to remove Saddam Hussein from power?”(229)

In a poll conducted by CBS News from 24th - 26th February 2002, (N= 861), the results showed that 74% of the respondents approved taking military action against Iraq and 18% disapproved (DK 8%)(230). A poll, conducted by NBC News / Wall Street Journal from 5th - 7th April 2002, (N= 1005), shows that 63% of the respondents approved of the U.S. taking military action against Iraq and 28% disapproved (DK 9%)(231). In a poll conducted by CBS News from 6th - 7th August 2002 (N= 832 ), the results show that 66% of the respondents approved of taking military action against Iraq and 26% disapproved (DK 8%)(232). In a poll conducted by CBS News/ New York Times from 27th - 31st October 2002, (N= 1018), the results show that 64% of the respondents approved of taking military action against Iraq and 25% disapproved (DK 11%)(233). In another poll conducted by CBS News on January 24th 2003 (N= 638), results show that 67% of the respondents approved of taking military action against Iraq and 32%


disapproved of it (DK 1%)\(^{(234)}\). CBS News ran another poll on February 5\(^{th}\) and 6\(^{th}\) 2003, (N= 831), and the results show that 70% of the respondents approved of taking military action against Iraq and 21% disapproved of it (DK 9%)\(^{(235)}\). Again in a poll conducted by CBS from 15\(^{th}\) -16\(^{th}\) March 2003 (N= 1049) the results show that 67% of the respondents approved of taking military action against Iraq versus 29% who disapproved (DK 4%)\(^{(236)}\).

\begin{figure}[h!]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure3-9.png}
\caption{“Do you approve or disapprove of the United States taking military actions against Iraq to try to remove Saddam Hussein from power?”}
\end{figure}


(3) “All in all, thinking about how things have gone in Iraq since the United States went to war there in March 2003, do you think that the United State made the right decision in going to war in Iraq or did they make a mistake in going to war in Iraq?”

In a poll conducted by Associated Press / IPSOS - Public Affairs from 3rd - 5th August 2004 (N= 1001), the results show that 48% of respondents believed that the U.S. made the right decision in going to war in Iraq and 50% said that the U.S. made a mistake in going to war in Iraq (DK 2%) (238). In another poll conducted by the same organization from 20th - 22nd June 2005 (N= 1000), the results show that 42% said that the U.S. made the right decision in going to war in Iraq and 53% said that the U.S. made a mistake in going to war in Iraq (DK 5%) (239). Another poll, which was conducted by the same source from 5th - 7th June 2006, (N= 1003), shows that 38% of respondents believed that the U.S. made the right decision in going to war in Iraq while 59% said it had made a mistake in going to war in Iraq (DK 3%) (240). In another poll conducted by the same


organization from 5th - 7th January 2007 (N= 1004), results show that 35% said that the U.S. had made the right decision in going to war in Iraq while 62% said it had made a mistake in going to war (DK 3%)\(^{(241)}\). Another poll from the same organization carried out from 3rd - 5th December 2007 (N= 1009) shows that 38% thought the U.S. had made the right decision in going to war in Iraq, and 58% thought it had made a mistake (DK 4%).\(^{(242)}\)

\[\text{Figure 3-10}\]


(4) “Would you favor or oppose sending American troops back to the Persian Gulf in order to remove Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq?”

A poll, conducted by Gallup from 19th - 21st February 2001, (N= 1016), shows that 52% of the respondents favored sending troops back while 42% opposed it (DK 6%). A poll conducted from 26th - 27th November 2001, (N= 1025) shows that 74% of the respondents favored sending troops back while 34% opposed it (DK 7%). Finally, the results of another poll carried out from 17th - 19th June 2002, (N= 1005), show that 59% of the respondents favored it while 34% did not (DK 7%).

2- American Public Approval of George W. Bush’s handling of the situation with Iraq

The American public opinion organization measured the evaluation of George W. Bush’s handling of the situation in Iraq by using the following question; “Do you


approve or disapprove the way Bush is handling the Iraq situation?”. (247) The results showed fluctuation in the approval ratings as shown in Figure 3-11.

Before the war with Iraq there was a middling level of approval for Bush as the following examples show. In a poll conducted by Pew Research Center for the People & the Press on October 2nd 2002, (N= 1513) 56% of the respondents approved while 34% disapproved of Bush (DK 10%) (248). In another poll conducted by Fox News / Opinion Dynamics, from 17th - 18th December 2002 (N= 900), 53% approved and 21% disapproved (DK 26%) (249). The results of a poll conducted by Pew Research Center for the People & the Press from 8th - 12th January 2003, (N= 1218), show a 56% approval rating and a disapproval rating of 36% (DK 8%) (250). In a poll conducted by CBS News on February 24th and 25th 2003, (N= 681) 52% approved while 44% disapproved it (DK 4%) (251). Finally, in a poll conducted by ABC News, from 5th - 9th March 2003 (N= 1032), 55%

approved and 38% disapproved of the President’s handling of the situation (DK 8%)\(^{(252)}\).

During the first months of the war with Iraq, Bush’s approval was high, as the following examples illustrate. In a poll conducted by Pew Research Center for The People and The Press, from 20\(^\text{th}\) - 24\(^\text{th}\) March 2003 (N= 1495), 71% approved while 23% disapproved of the President’s handling of the situation (DK 6%)\(^{(253)}\). In another poll conducted by Los Angeles Times, on 2\(^\text{nd}\) and 3\(^\text{rd}\) April 2003, (N= 745), 74% approved and 24% disapproved (DK 2%)\(^{(254)}\). The results of another poll conducted by Pew Research Center for the People & the Press on March 28\(^\text{th}\) - April 1\(^\text{st}\) 2003, (N= 674), shows that 69% approved and 26% disapproved (DK 5%)\(^{(255)}\). In another poll conducted by ABC News / Washington Post, from 27\(^\text{th}\) - 30\(^\text{th}\) April 2003, (N= 1015), 75% approved and 22% disapproved (DK 2%)\(^{(256)}\).


While finally, in a poll conducted by CBS News, on the 27th and 28th of May, 2003, (N= 758), 72% approved and 20% disapproved (DK 8%)\(^{(257)}\).

Shortly after the war had formally finished at the end of May 2003, Bush’s approval rate of his handling the Iraq situation sharply decreased. In a poll conducted by Washington Post from 7th - 11th August, 2003 (N= 1003), 56% approved and 41% disapproved of Bush’s handling of the situation (DK 3%)\(^{(258)}\). In a poll conducted by CBS News / New York Times from 12th - 15th January 2004 (N= 1022), 48% approved while 46% disapproved of it (DK 6%)\(^{(259)}\). In a poll conducted by Gallup from 9th - 11th August 2004 (N=1017) 45% approved and 52% disapproved (DK 3%)\(^{(260)}\). In a poll conducted by Fox News / Opinion Dynamics on January 11th -12th 2005 (N=900), 44% approved and 51% disapproved (DK 5%)\(^{(261)}\).

During his second term in office (2005-2008), Bush reached the lowest approval ratings of his presidential era. In a poll conducted by CNN from 8th - 11th June


2006 (N= 1031), 33% approved and 62% disapproved (DK 5%)\(^\text{(262)}\). The results of a poll conducted by CBS News from 14\(^{th}\) - 16\(^{th}\) September 2007, (N= 706) showed that 25% approved and 70% disapproved (DK 5%)\(^\text{(263)}\). This is backed up by a poll conducted by CBS News / New York Times from 5\(^{th}\) - 9\(^{th}\) December 2007 (N= 1133), that showed that 26% approved and 69% disapproved (DK 5%)\(^\text{(264)}\). In a poll conducted by NBC News / Wall Street Journal from 20\(^{th}\) - 22\(^{nd}\) January 2008, (N= 1008) 28% approved while 67% disapproved (DK 5%)\(^\text{(265)}\). In a poll conducted by Quinnipiac University from 8\(^{th}\) - 12\(^{th}\) May 2008 (N= 1745) results showed that 29% approved and 67% disapproved (DK 4%)\(^\text{(266)}\). In a poll conducted by NBC News / Wall Street Journal from 4\(^{th}\) - 8\(^{th}\) December 2008, (N= 1009), 33% approved while 63% disapproved (DK 4%)\(^\text{(267)}\).


Do you approve or disapprove the way George Bush is handling the Iraq situation?

Figure 3-11

3- George W. Bush’s Presidential Approval 2001-2008

Hundreds of polls have been conducted to assess G.W. Bush’s presidential approval during his two terms in office (2001-2008). Figure 3-12 shows the general trend of his approval rates.

In a poll conducted by Fox News / Opinion Dynamics on 28th and 29th March 2001, (N= 905), the approval rate was 57%\(^{(268)}\). In a poll conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates/ Newsweek on 27th and 28th of September 2001 (N= 1000) the approval rate was 86 %\(^{(269)}\). In a poll conducted by Gallup / CNN/ USA


Today from 22nd - 24th March 2002 (N= 1011) the approval rate was 79 %\(^{(270)}\).

While a poll by Princeton Survey Research Associates / Newsweek from 26th - 27th September 2002, (N= 1011) put the approval rate at 65 %\(^{(271)}\). Another poll conducted by Gallup from 19th - 22nd December 2002 (N= 1007) showed the approval rate at 61%\(^{(272)}\).

The war on Iraq affected Bush’s presidential approval; initially the war increased his approval ratings but in the aftermath of the war approval ratings for Bush decreased sharply. In a poll conducted by Pew Research Center for the People and the Press from March 28th - April 1st 2003 (N= 674) the approval rate was 71%\(^{(273)}\). While in another poll conducted by Pew Research Center for the People and the Press from June 25th - August 3rd 2003 (N= 2925) the approval rate was


59%\(^{(274)}\). Lastly, in a poll conducted by Gallup / CNN/ USA Today, from 26\(^{th}\) - 28\(^{th}\) March 2004 (N= 1001) the approval rate appears at 53%\(^{(275)}\).

Although he won the presidential election in November 2004, Bush’s presidential approval rates decreased sharply during his second term years in office. In a poll conducted by CBS News, on 21\(^{st}\) and 22\(^{nd}\) March 2005, (N= 737), the approval rate was 43%\(^{(276)}\). A year later in a poll conducted by the American Research Group from 18\(^{th}\) - 21\(^{st}\) March 2006 (N=1100), Bush’s approval rate was at 37%\(^{(277)}\). In a poll conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates International / Newsweek on 28\(^{th}\) and 29\(^{th}\) March 2007, (N=1004), his approval rate was at 33%\(^{(278)}\). In another poll conducted by CBS News / New York Times from March 28\(^{th}\) - April 2\(^{nd}\) 2008 (N=1368), his approval rate decreases again to 28%\(^{(279)}\). In a poll conducted by CBS News from 27\(^{th}\) - 30\(^{th}\) September 2008


(N=1257), Bush’s approval rate was at 22 %\(^{(280)}\). Finally, in a poll conducted by Gallup / USA Today, from 12\(^{th}\) - 14\(^{th}\) December 2008 (N=1008), the approval rate for the President was 29 %\(^{(281)}\).

Figure 3-12


1- American Public attitudes towards the American withdrawal from Iraq by the end of December 2011

Obama’s key policy regarding Iraq was his pre-election promise to withdraw American troops from Iraq. He made this promise before being elected as president, and after being elected, again promised to pull American troops out of Iraq by the end of 2011. Numerous questions have been asked to the American people to know whether they approved or disapproved of this plan as shown in the following Figure.

Figure 3-13
In a poll conducted by NBC News / Wall Street Journal from February 26th - March 1st, 2009 (N= 1007), results show that 80% approved the decision versus 14% disapproved it (DK 6%)\(^{(282)}\). In another poll by the same source from 11th - 14th December 2009 (N= 1008), results show that 70% approved versus 23% who disapproved it (DK 7%)\(^{(283)}\). In another poll conducted by Pew Research Center for the People and The Press from 9th - 12th March 2009 (N= 1308), results show that 76% approved it versus 18% who disapproved it (DK 6%)\(^{(284)}\). In another poll conducted by Gallup on 29th and 30th October 2011 (N= 992) through telephone interviews, results show that 75% approved the decision versus 21% who disapproved it (DK 5%)\(^{(285)}\). In another poll conducted by Pew Research Center for the People and the Press / Pew Forum on Religion, Public Life & Politics from 9th – 14th November 2011, (N= 2001), 76% approved of Obama’s decision versus 18% who disapproved of it (DK 6%)\(^{(286)}\)


In another poll conducted by NBC News / Wall Street Journal from 2\textsuperscript{nd} – 5\textsuperscript{th} November 2011, (N= 1000), respondents have been asked “do you think President Barack Obama’s decision to withdraw all combat troops from Iraq by the end of December (2011) is the right decision or the wrong decision?”, results show that 71\% believed that it was the right decision, versus 24\% believed that it was the wrong decision (DK 5\%)\textsuperscript{(287)}.

In a poll conducted by CNN / Opinion Research Corporation from 3\textsuperscript{rd} – 5\textsuperscript{th} April, 2009 (N= 1023), respondents were asked “if you had to choose, would you rather see the US keep the current number of troops in Iraq for an indefinite amount of time, or withdraw all of its troops from Iraq as soon as possible?” results show that 35\% would have kept the current number of troops for an indefinite amount of time while 63\% who would have withdrawn all troops as soon as possible (DK 2\%). In another poll by the same source conducted from 6\textsuperscript{th} – 10\textsuperscript{th} August 2010 (N= 1009), 46\% preferred to keep the current number of troops for an indefinite amount of time and 54\% preferred to withdraw all troops as soon as possible.\textsuperscript{(288)}

In a poll conducted by ABC News / Washington Post on October 31\textsuperscript{st} - November 3\textsuperscript{rd} 2011, (N= 1004), respondents were asked “as you may know,


Barack Obama has said he will withdraw all U.S. forces from Iraq by the end of this year (2011). Is this something you support strongly, support somewhat, oppose somewhat or oppose strongly?”. Results show that 58% supported the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq strongly, 19% supported somewhat, 12% opposed somewhat and 9% opposed strongly (DK 2%)\(^{(289)}\)

2- American Public Opinion Approval of Barack Obama’s Handling of the Situation in Iraq

To measure and evaluate the public opinion of the way Barack Obama was handling the situation in Iraq, the American Public Opinion Organization used the following question “Do you approve or disapprove of the way Obama is handling the Iraq situation\(^{(290)}\). Results showed that there was a fluctuation in approval in the first two years (2009-2010) and then a slight increase in 2011 as shown in the following figure.


In a poll conducted by Gallup / USA Today from 11\textsuperscript{th} - 13\textsuperscript{th} September 2009 (N= 1030), 56% approved of Obama’s dealing with the Iraq situation versus 38% who disapproved of it (DK 7%)\textsuperscript{(291)}. In a poll conducted by CBS News / New York Times from 1\textsuperscript{st} – 5\textsuperscript{th} April 2009, (N= 998), 59% approved it while 25% disapproved it (DK 16)\textsuperscript{(292)}.

During 2010, there was no significant change in the general trend towards approval of Obama’s handling of the Iraq situation. In a poll conducted by Pew Global Attitudes Project, on April 15\textsuperscript{th} - May 2nd 2010 (N= 1002), 51%


approved of it versus 36% who disapproved of it (DK 13%)\(^{(293)}\). In a poll conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates / Newsweek, on June 23\(^{rd}\) and 24\(^{th}\) 2010, (N= 964), 41% approved of Obama’s handling of the Iraq situation versus 51% who disapproved of it (DK 8%)\(^{(294)}\). In a poll conducted by CNN / the Opinion Research Corporation, from 12\(^{th}\) – 26\(^{th}\) July 2010 (N= 1018), 49% approved of it versus 49% who disapproved of it (DK 2%)\(^{(295)}\). In a poll conducted by ABC News / Wall Street Journal, from 25\(^{th}\) – 26\(^{th}\) August 2010, (N= 1029), 51% approved of it versus 41% who disapproved of it (DK 8%)\(^{(296)}\).

During 2011, there was a slight increase in the overall approval for Obama’s policy concerning Iraq. In a poll conducted by CBS News / New York Times, from 19\(^{th}\) – 24\(^{th}\) October 2011, (N= 1650), 60% approved of it versus 30% who disapproved of it (DK 10%)\(^{(297)}\). In another poll conducted by Gallup from 3\(^{rd}\) – 6\(^{th}\) November 2011 (N= 1012), 52% approved of it while 41% disapproved of it.

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In a poll conducted by the Associated Press / GFK, from 8th – 12th December 2011 (N= 1000), 55% approved of it versus 43% who disapproved of it (DK= 2%) (299).

3- Barack Obama’s Presidential Approval 2009-2011

To measure Obama’s presidential approval, the following question has been used frequently “Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as President?” (300). The change in trends can be shown in the following figure.

Figure 3-15


During 2009, Obama’s presidential approval rating changed significantly. In a poll conducted by Gallup from 24th – 26th February 2009 (N= 1551), the approval rate was 63%\(^{(301)}\). In a poll conducted by Fox News / Opinion Dynamics, from March 31st - April 1st 2009, (N= 900), the approval rate was 58%\(^{(302)}\). In a poll conducted by Marist College Institute for Public Opinion, from 2nd – 7th December 2009, (N= 1034), the approval rate was 46 %\(^{(303)}\).

During 2010, Obama’s presidential approval continued to decrease. In a poll conducted by Fox News / Opinion Dynamics, from 18th – 19th May 2010, (N= 900), the approval rate was 45 %\(^{(304)}\). In another poll conducted by the same organizations, from 26th – 28th October 2010, (N= 1200), the approval rate was 41 %\(^{(305)}\).

During 2011, Obama’s presidential approval swung up and down. In a poll conducted by Fox News, from 7th – 9th February 2011 (N=911), the approval rate

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was 51% (306). In a poll conducted by New Models, on 29th and 30th June 2011 (N=1000), the approval rate was 46% (307). In a poll conducted by the same organization, on 29th and 30th October 2011, (N=1000), the approval rate was 45% (308). In another poll by the same organization, on 28th and 29th December 2011, (N=1000), the approval rate was 45% (309).


Fifth: Test of Hypotheses

H1: There is congruence (correspondence) between the American foreign policy decisions towards Iraq (going to war with Iraq, strikes, and withdrawal from Iraq) and the public opinion and attitudes toward these decisions.

This hypothesis is based on the following observations:

1- All American Administrations tend to prepare public opinion to accept their policies before any real implementation. They do that through mass media outlets and other methods of propaganda and persuasion. According to many studies, American Administrations cannot achieve any success on land or in reality unless they control the media and manipulate the people\(^{(310)}\).

2- As shown from previous findings, there have been positive and supportive attitudes towards taking military actions and aggressive procedures against Iraq since August 1990, continuing until 2011. Even when the United States decided to withdraw its troops from Iraq, public opinion approved of the decision, not because the American people disapproved of the War on ethical terms but because the costs associated with the war became so high, that they were convinced that it was no longer tenable.

\(^{(310)}\) Peter Kilfolye (2007) *Lies, Damned Lies and Iraq: An In-depth Investigation into the Case for War and How it was Misrepresented*. Harriman Home LtD. Hampshire.

The figure below shows the difference in public opinion towards the selected four Presidential Administration’s policies regarding Iraq, either by launching wars (1991-2003), launching several separated attacks (1993-2000), or total withdrawal (2011).

From the previous figure we can infer that American public opinion strongly supported all the differing policies towards Iraq, especially in the beginning of each action or policy.

During Bush’s era (1990-1992), the public appear to have strongly supported his decision to go to war against Iraq in January 1991. In a poll conducted by ABC News / Washington Post on January 16th 1991 (N= 545), results show that 75%
approved of the U.S. going to war with Iraq versus 23% who disapproved of it (311). In another poll conducted by the same organizations from 1st – 5th February 1999 (N=1008), 80% approved of it versus 16% who disapproved of it (312). During this period, Bush reached one of the highest levels of presidential approval in American history, in a poll conducted by Gordon Black/USA Today, on February 28th 1991 (N= 622) his approval rating was 91% (313).

In Clinton’s two terms in office the U.S. attacked Iraq several times. American public opinion supported Clinton in all these attacks. In a poll conducted by Los Angeles Times from 17th – 19th October 1994 (N= 1272), 72% of respondents approved of Clinton’s policy in Iraq versus 22% who disapproved of it (314). In another poll conducted by CBS News/New York Times on September 3rd 1996 (N= 337), 66% approved of it versus 21% who disapproved of it (315). In another poll conducted by Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, from 19th –


21st December 1998 (N= 805), 75% approved of his policy while still only 20%
disapproved of it\(^{(316)}\).

During George W. Bush’s era, public opinion supported his decision to go to war
with Iraq. In a poll conducted by ABC News on March 27\(^{th}\) 2003 (N= 508), 74%
approved of the war in Iraq while 18% disapproved of it\(^{(317)}\). In another poll
conducted by ABC News on April 16\(^{th}\) 2003 (N= 504), 78% approved of it versus
20% who disapproved of it\(^{(318)}\).

During Obama’s previous presidential terms, his administration decided to
withdraw most of the American troops from Iraq by the end of 2011. Public
opinion generally was in support of this decision. In a poll conducted by NBC
News / Wall Street Journal from February 26\(^{th}\) - March 1\(^{st}\) 2009 (N= 1007),
results show that 80% approved of the decision to withdraw troops from Iraq and
14% disapproved of it\(^{(319)}\). In another poll conducted by Pew Research Center for
the People and the Press / Pew Forum on Religion, Public Life & Politics from 9\(^{th}\)
– 14\(^{th}\) November 2011 (N= 2001), 76% approved of the decision versus 18% who

\(^{(316)}\) Pew Research Center for the People and the Press Poll, December 1998, retrieved
March 19, 2012, from The i Poll databank. The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research,

www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/ipoll.html.

www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/ipoll.html.

The i Poll databank. The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University Of Connecticut
disapproved of it\(^{(320)}\). Based on the above data, we approve the hypothesis that there is congruence between American foreign policy in Iraq and public opinion of these decisions.

**H2: There is a positive correlation between the approvals of the (President) in his dealing with the issue (Issue Evaluation) and his general Presidential approvals (General Evaluation).**

This hypothesis is based on and derived from the “Cognitive Priming Theory” which has been introduced and presented by both Shanto Iyenger & Donald Kinder in their notable book “News That Matters” (1987).\(^{(321)}\) According to this theory, people tend to use their evaluation of a specific issue to judge the overall performance of governments, presidents and candidates for public office. In general, people tend to rest on general information when forming opinion rather than thinking critically when they are invited to make decisions or evaluations of policy, as a result of their cognitive parsimony\(^{(322)}\). Many researchers use the term Cognitive miser in this regard “which refers to the idea that only a small amount of information is actively perceived by individuals when making decisions, and many cognitive shortcuts (such as drawing on prior


\(^{(322)}\) Ibid.
information and knowledge) are used instead to attend to relevant information and arrive at a decision”. (323)

As a consequence, we hypothesize that how American people evaluate and assess the Presidents in their handling of the Iraq situation may affect people’s overall evaluations and perceptions of the general performance of these Presidents.

To test this hypothesis, I merge and combine the data of both the approval rates regarding Iraq issue and the presidential approval rates for each of the four presidents as shown in the following figures.

![The Approval of Bush’s dealing with the Situation in Iraq and his approval as a president](image)

Figure 3-17

The Approval of Clinton’s dealing with the Situation in Iraq and his approval as a president

The Approval of G.W. Bush’s dealing with the Situation in Iraq and his approval as a president

Figure 3-18

Figure 3-19
Figure 3-20

Figure 3-17 illustrates the relationship between the two variables during George Bush’s era (1990-1992). We can observe that rates were identical in some cases, very close or similar at other times. In a poll conducted by Los Angeles Times on November 14th 1990, the approval rate about the Iraq issue was at 54%, and it was also the same rate for Presidential approval\(^{(324)}\). In a poll conducted by Gordon Black / USA Today on December 1\(^{st}\) and 2\(^{nd}\) 1990, the approval rate concerning policy towards Iraq was 58% and the same for the level of presidential

approval. In a poll conducted by Los Angeles Times on August 29th 1990, the approval rate concerning Iraq was 73%, and the presidential approval was at 76%.

In a poll conducted by Los Angeles Times from 8th – 12th December 1990, the approval rate concerning Iraq was 62% while the presidential approval was 67%. The gap between the two evaluations was rarely a significant one. The largest seen is in a poll conducted by Gordon Black / USA Today on April 3rd 1991, the approval rate of policy regarding Iraq was 69% while approval for the President in general was 83%.

Figure 3-18 illustrates the relationship between the two variables during Bill Clinton’s era (1993-2000), and we see the same results. The values of both the two pairs of evaluations were very similar with slightly increasing levels in the approval of policy towards Iraq over the presidential approval. In a poll conducted by the Los Angeles Times from 17th - 19th October 1994, the approval rate concerning Iraq was 59%, while it was 48% for the presidential approval.


In a poll conducted by CBS News on 23rd and 24th November 1997, the approval rate regarding Iraq was 64%, while it was 58% for the presidential approval\(^{(330)}\).

Figure 3-19 shows that the relationship between the two variables during George W. Bush was almost identical, the two variables fluctuate simultaneously. In a poll conducted by Pew Research Center for the People and the Press from 20th – 24th March 2003, the approval rate concerning Iraq was 71% while it was 67% for the presidential approval\(^{(331)}\). In a poll conducted by Los Angeles Times on 2nd and 3rd April 2003, the approval rate concerning Iraq was 74% while it was 71% for the presidential approval\(^{(332)}\). In a poll conducted by NBC News / Wall Street Journal from 4th – 8th December 2008, the approval rate concerning Iraq was 33% while there was a 32% approval rate of President George W. Bush\(^{(333)}\).

Finally, Figure 3-20 confirms the same relationship during Obama’s previous presidential terms. In a poll conducted by CBS News / New York Times from 1st – 5th April 2009, the approval rate concerning Iraq was 59% while the presidential


approval rate was at 61%\(^{(334)}\). In a poll conducted by Gallup / USA Today from 11\(^{th}\) - 13\(^{th}\) September 2009, the approval rate regarding Iraq was 56% while it was 58\% for the presidential approval\(^{(335)}\). In a poll conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates / Newsweek on 23\(^{rd}\) and 24\(^{th}\) June 2010, the approval rate of policy in Iraq was 41\% while it was 47\% for the presidential approval\(^{(336)}\). In a poll conducted by Associated Press / GFK from 8\(^{th}\) – 12\(^{th}\) December 2011, the approval rate concerning Iraq was 55\% while it was 49\% for the presidential approval\(^{(337)}\).

Based on the evidence discussed above, we can approve this hypothesis that there is a positive correlation between the approvals of the (President) in his dealing with the issue (Issue Evaluation) and his general Presidential approvals (General Evaluation).


**H3: The relationship between public opinion and foreign policy decisions varies according to the partisan belonging of the American administrations (Republicans - Democrats).**

This hypothesis is based on two scientific observations:

1- Numerous studies indicate that there are significant differences between liberals versus conservatives, idealists versus realists, and Republicans versus Democrats in their perceptions of public opinion and response to its outcomes. Generally speaking, Liberals/Idealists/Democrats have a more positive perception of the role of public opinion than Conservatives/Realists/Republicans do.\(^{(338)}\)

2- Within each group of the above, there are differences among the presidents in their perceptions of and response to public opinion.\(^{(339)}\)

The graph below shows the differences between the Republicans and Democrats in how public opinion reacted to their policies, or on how the two categories tried to prepare the public to accept their policies and actions before they were implemented.

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\(^{(339)}\) Ibid
The relationship between public opinion and foreign policy decisions varies according to the partisan belonging of the American administrations (Republicans - Democrats)

![Bar Chart]

Figure 3-21

This figure shows that there are no significant differences between public opinion attitudes towards Democrats or Republican’s policies in Iraq. The public appear to have supported all policies regardless of the political party of each president, and as a consequence, we disapprove this hypothesis.

**H4: The relationship between public opinion and foreign policy decisions varies according to the stage of policy making process; before the war, during the war and after the war**

According to numerous studies, the influence of public opinion varies according to the stage of the foreign policy process. For Example, Thomas Graham (1994) analyses the impact of public opinion on seven American administrations. He focused on how American presidents respond at different
stages of dealing with a foreign policy issue. Graham indentified four stages; the first is getting the issue ‘on the agenda’. The second is negotiating the issue, the third is ratification and the fourth is implementation. According to his study American presidents respond differently to public opinion depending on the stage in the policy process. His findings show that in the first stage public opinion has an impact but in the final stages public opinion has little impact on American presidents. 

The following figure 3-22 explains the public opinion attitudes towards the American foreign policies related to Iraq spanning the four administrations. Each policy is introduced in its relation with public opinion attitudes in three stages; before, during and after.

The relationship between public opinion and foreign policy decisions varies according to the process of policy making (before – during - after)

As shown in the previous figure, public opinion supported all the American foreign policies towards Iraq either to wage wars, military attacks, strikes, or even total withdrawal from Iraq. Public support gradually increases and reaches its peak during implementation of the policy, and then tends to decrease slightly over time.

The significant increase in the approval rates during the crises or during wars reflects what numerous studies have called “Rallying around the Flag Effect” which indicates that when people are concerned about their national security, they tend to forget all their partisan, ideological and even religious differences. The public rallies around the administration and supports its policies. As a
consequence, the presidential approval rates increase significantly during these periods.

As the figure above shows, during George Bush’s era, in a poll conducted by Gordon Black / USA Today, from 1\textsuperscript{st} – 2\textsuperscript{nd} December 1990 (before the war), only 58\% approved waging war against Iraq\textsuperscript{(341)}. In another poll conducted by Los Angeles Times from 17\textsuperscript{th} – 18\textsuperscript{th} January 1990, two days after the beginning of the war, the approval rate of this decision was 88 \%(342). After the war, this percentage decreased. In a poll conducted over a year later by the Los Angeles Times on April 3\textsuperscript{rd} 1991, the approval rate was 69 \%(343).

The same thing happened during Clinton’s terms in office. In a poll conducted by the Los Angeles Times from 17\textsuperscript{th} – 19\textsuperscript{th} October 1994, before the decision to attack Iraq was made, 59\% approved taking military action against Iraq\textsuperscript{(344)}. In a poll conducted by Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, from 19\textsuperscript{th} – 21\textsuperscript{st} December 1998 (during the attacks), the approval rate was 75 \%(345). In a poll

\begin{enumerate}
\end{enumerate}
conducted by Washington Post from 12\textsuperscript{th} – 14\textsuperscript{th} February 1999, after the attacks were made, the approval rate was 63 \%\textsuperscript{(346)}.

During George W. Bush’s Presidency, a similar thing happened. In a poll conducted before Bush declared war, by Pew Research Center for the People and the Press on October 2\textsuperscript{nd} 2002, the approval rate was 56 \%\textsuperscript{(347)}. In another poll conducted by Los Angeles Times during the implementation of military action against Iraq, on 2\textsuperscript{nd} and 3\textsuperscript{rd} April 2003, the approval rate was 74\%\textsuperscript{(348)}. In a poll conducted after the initial policy implementation, by Washington Post from 7\textsuperscript{th} – 11\textsuperscript{th} August 2003, the approval rate was 56\%\textsuperscript{(349)}.

The same thing happened regarding the American withdrawal from Iraq In 2011, during Obama’s era. In a poll conducted by ABC News / New York Times, on 25\textsuperscript{th} – 26\textsuperscript{th} August 2010 (before withdrawal of troops), the approval rate was 51\%\textsuperscript{(350)}. In a poll conducted by CBS News / New York Times, from 19\textsuperscript{th} – 24\textsuperscript{th}


October 2011, (during withdrawal of troops), the approval rate was 60%\(^{(351)}\). In a poll conducted by Associated Press / GFK, from 8\(^{th}\) – 12\(^{th}\) December 2011 (after the withdrawal of troops), the approval rate was 55%\(^{(352)}\).

Based on the previous data, we approve the hypothesis that the relationship between public opinion and foreign policy decisions varies according to the stage of the policy making process; before the war, during the war and after the war.

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CHAPTER IV

Conclusions and Discussions

This study has examined the evidence of congruence between public opinion and American foreign policy towards Iraq between 1990 and 2011 and has investigated the factors and variables that affect this relationship. This study demonstrates that there is correspondence between public opinion attitudes and American foreign policy regarding Iraq during the four American administrations that have been in power since 1990. During George Bush’s era (1990-1992) public opinion strongly supported his decision to go to war with Iraq in January 1991. Findings show that more than 90% of Americans supported this war and approved with Bush’s dealings with Iraq during this war. During Bill Clinton’s two terms in Office (1993-2000) the U.S. attacked Iraq several times and imposed a very severe economic and trade embargo on Iraq. American public opinion supported Clinton’s actions and approved of his dealings with Iraq. President George W. Bush’s (2001-2008) launched a full scale war on Iraq (March 2003) that resulted in capturing Saddam Hussein and his execution. Results show that public opinion supported Bush’s policies in Iraq. And even when public opinion was against keeping the American troops in Iraq after the war it did not affect Bush’s presidential approval and he won his second term in presidency (2005-2008). Finally, when Barack Obama (2009-2011) decided to withdraw most American troops from Iraq in December 2011 there was a high level of approval of this
decision among Americans. Furthermore, this study shows that there are no significant differences between public opinion attitudes towards Democrats or Republican’s policies in Iraq. Public opinion supported all American policies in Iraq regardless of the political party of the president. In addition, this study indicates that the relationship between public opinion and foreign policy decisions varies according to the stage in the process of policy making (before- during – after).

However the correlation does not indicate any sort of causal relations between the two phenomena and as a consequences we cannot say which of the variables are independent and which are dependant. But the findings confirm the proposition that American public opinion followed the American administrations’ policy decision towards Iraq; such as the war of January 1991 and the war of March 2003, or the numerous air strikes on Iraq several times and the imposition of economic and trade sanctions on Iraq similar to what happened from 1993-2000, or the withdraw most the American troops from Iraq in December 2011. In all these cases, there was significant congruence between the American foreign policy decisions towards Iraq and public opinion attitudes regarding these policies.

The analysis reveals that public opinion did not constrain American foreign policy; both legal and illegal policies and procedures have been taken in Iraq by the four American Administrations since 1990. And some of these policies were immoral such as the abuse and torture of detainees and prisoners at Abo
Public opinion was manipulated regarding Iraq. The White House, according to Shapiro & Jacobs 2000, recognizes the political necessity of public support but does not accept public opinion as a given. Rather, it attempts to shape public opinion in a manner that would support the positions already favored by the administration.

There are many methods that American presidents use to manipulate public opinion over Iraq, famously a method is to misinform the public or provide them with false data about the situation in Iraq. The American media has been used efficiently to propagate a variety of propositions about Iraq. For example: Iraq is a threat to the U.S, there are possible ties between Iraq, Al-Qaeda and September 11th attacks, Iraq has weapons of mass destructions, Iraq commits Human rights violations, Iraq poses a threat to Israel, that preemptive war is legal. And finally, that the imposition of democracy onto Iraq is a model that can be applied in other regions.

Similar techniques were used to propagate an image and feed it to audiences, regardless of reality. In the wars against Iraq there was “media imagery success

fully orchestrated to convey a sense or triumph and thus to realize results that reality and reason could never have achieved” (356)

Controlling all the sources of information about Iraq during the wars was another method to manipulate the public opinion. During these wars, the Secretary of Defense controlled all the information and news about the operations there. (357)

Another factor that facilitated American Administrations easy manipulation of public opinion over issues related to Iraq was the initial negative attitudes towards Iraq among Americans even before August 1990. This negative image made Iraq an ideal scapegoat for the United States, especially after the September 11th attacks. It also made it easy to secure Americans’ approval of the policies and decisions taken by the subsequent Administrations.

The results of numerous polls carried out in the 1980’s show that Iraq had a very negative image among Americans. A poll, conducted by Louis Harris & Associates from July 11th-23th 1980 (N= 1506), asked respondents “tell me if you feel that (Iraq) is a close ally of the U.S., is friendly, but not a close ally, is not friendly but not an enemy , or is unfriendly and an enemy of the U.S.?”. (358) The results showed that 15% considered it a close ally or friendly while 66%

considered it unfriendly or an enemy (DK 29%)\textsuperscript{(359)}. A poll, conducted by the same source (Harris & Associates) from January 8th-12th 1982 (N= 1256), showed that 24% considered it a close ally or friendly and 63% considered it unfriendly or an enemy (DK 13%)\textsuperscript{(360)}. While a poll conducted by Louis Harris & Associates from February 20th-24th 1987 (N= 1250), showed that 12% considered it a close ally or friendly and 68% considered it unfriendly or an enemy (DK 20%)\textsuperscript{(361)}. The results of a poll conducted by American Jewish Congress on April 18th-24th 1988 (N= 1017) show that 31% considered it a close ally or friendly and 57% considered it unfriendly or an enemy (DK 13%)\textsuperscript{(362)}. A poll conducted by Louis Harris & Associates from January 24th-26th 1991 (N= 1254) showed that 9% considered it a close ally or friendly and 85% considered it unfriendly or an enemy (DK 6%)\textsuperscript{(363)}. And a poll conducted by Gallup from May 18\textsuperscript{th} -21th 2000 (N= 1011), showed that 10% considered it a close ally or friendly and 86%


considered it unfriendly or an enemy (DK 4%)\(^{(364)}\). And a poll conducted by Gallup / CNN/ USA Today on March 14th-15th 2003 (N= 1007) showed that 2% considered it a close ally or friendly while 96% considered it unfriendly or an enemy (DK 2%)\(^{(365)}\). (Figure 4-1)

Another series of polls, conducted annually by Gallup from February 1991 to February 2012, respondents were asked “I’d like your overall opinion of some foreign countries. Is your overall opinion of (Iraq) very favorable, mostly favorable, or very unfavorable, or very unfavorable?”\(^{(366)}\) and the results showed that the overall opinion across the last two decades was extremely unfavorable, as shown in figure 4-2


“Tell me if you feel that country is a close ally of the U.S., is friendly, but not a close ally, is not friendly but not an enemy, or is unfriendly and an enemy of the U.S.? ... Iraq”

Figure 4-1

“I’d like your overall opinion of some foreign countries. Is your overall opinion of ... Iraq... very favorable, mostly favorable, mostly unfavorable, or very unfavorable?” (Gallup Polls).

Figure 4-2
This study confirms that the differences between democrats and republicans diminish when critical policy issues are at stake. Americans tend to “rally around the flag”. In this case, the partisan loyalty for both presidents and the public do not matter. In a report issued by Brookings (summer 2003) the main conclusion was

“The Iraq war validated a basic rule of American politics: the American public closes ranks in times of national crisis. In the prolonged march to war, the public was divided and ambivalent about the wisdom of invading Iraq rather than relying on continued United Nations weapons inspections. Most of those doubts evaporated once the bombs began falling. And the surge of patriotism not only boosted public support for President Bush, but extended beyond the White House to raise optimism about the country's institutions and American society as a whole” (367).

This study also demonstrates that during crises and critical foreign policy issues the relationship between the approval of issue-performance and the approval of presidential performance becomes highly matching. Many call this effect “Cognitive Priming”. According to this theory people tend to use their evaluation of specific issue to judge the overall performance of governments, presidents and candidates for public office. In general, people tend to think satisfyingly rather than optimally when they are invited to make decisions or evaluations as a result

of their cognitive parsimony\(^{(368)}\). Findings show that when the president did well in Iraq his presidential approval went up and his popularity rose. And the opposite is also true; when he handled the Iraq issues badly his presidential approval fell and his popularity as a president went down. Although there were many important current issues in America such as the economic crisis and heath care problems among others, the situation in Iraq was a significant determinant of the popularity of the four presidents, Bush, Clinton, George W. Bush and Obama. Their handling the Iraqi issue influenced their overall approval and popularity to large extent.

This study contributes to our understanding of the role of public opinion has in shaping foreign policy in the United States and fits into the burgeoning research on how domestic factors affect international behavior. However there are many limitations and we have to be careful in the reading of this study. The study is exploratory and therefore the findings are extremely tentative. Most findings are results of correlation rather than causal relationships and in such cases we cannot make precise inferences about the direction of these relations and about its validity. Despite the limitations the study’s findings should be read as encouraging additional conceptual and empirical work on the relationship between public opinion and American foreign policy.

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