Foreign Policy Gaps between Citizens and Leaders

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Persistent gaps between the policy preferences of leaders and those of citizens are problematic from the point of view of democratic theory. Examination of the foreign policy preferences of samples of citizens and leaders from seven Chicago Council on Foreign Relations (CCFR) surveys between 1974 and 1998 reveals many differences of 30, 40, and even 50 percentage points. Often a majority of the public has disagreed with a majority of leaders. Some of the same gaps have persisted over the full 24-year period of these surveys.

The pattern of gaps is considerably more complicated than a simple difference in degree of commitment to internationalism. Citizens have generally put a higher priority than leaders on expanding domestic programs like Social Security, crime fighting, and health care, and have been more eager to cut foreign economic aid. But there have not been substantial gaps with respect to defense spending or military aid. More members of the public than leaders emphasize foreign policy goals related to protecting Americans’ jobs and ensuring Americans’ health and physical security (e.g., from terrorism, drugs, and epidemic diseases). Citizens have been more reluctant than leaders to use U.S. troops in most circumstances, but the opposite is true of situations involving Latin America. Citizens have been more willing to bomb than to commit troops, though not indiscriminately so, and many more citizens than leaders oppose selling weapons abroad. Fewer members of the public than leaders have favored most kinds of cooperative relationships with adversary countries. But more members of the public than leaders generally support the United Nations, and more favor multilateralism in general. About the same number of citizens as leaders have supported NATO.

Some of these gaps may reflect lower levels of attention to foreign affairs and lower levels of information among the public than among leaders, but many of the gaps may instead reflect different values and interests. In cases where the public is ill-informed, persistent gaps suggest a failure of leaders to educate and persuade. Where public opinion is well-informed and deliberative, democratic theory would seem to call for responsiveness by policymakers.

In a representative democracy gaps in policy preferences between citizens and leaders are potentially troublesome. This is particularly true if the leaders influence policymaking and if policy itself diverges from what ordinary citizens say they want. In the next section we explicate the problems that elite–mass opinion

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gaps may pose in terms of alternative versions of democratic theory. In subsequent sections we present evidence on the extent to which such gaps concerning foreign policy have existed during the past two or three decades in the United States.

Democratic Theory and Citizen–Leader Gaps

The troublesome nature of gaps between leaders and citizens is most evident from the point of view of populist theories of democracy, in which government is expected to respond directly and immediately to the wishes of the citizenry.\(^1\) To a populist democrat, the existence of gaps between leaders and citizens constitutes \textit{prima facie} evidence that government has not been responding to the public and that democracy is not working well. But even if—like most political theorists—we do not accept the idea that democracy calls for immediate responsiveness to every expression of public opinion (see Dahl, 1956), citizen-leader gaps may still signal trouble.

Suppose, for example, we embrace a type of democratic theory that holds that government should respond to the \textit{informed and deliberative} opinions of the public; that policy should reflect the preferences that ordinary citizens do express (or \textit{will} express or \textit{would} express) once they receive the best available information and have time to think and talk about it. This view has powerful appeal and a long and distinguished history. It was advocated, for example, by James Madison, in the \textit{Federalist Papers} (Hamilton, Madison, and Jay, 1961: esp. \#10, \#37, \#49, \#51, \#63), Robert Dahl (1989) and other contemporary theorists have argued for one version or another of deliberative democracy.\(^2\) Deliberative democracy is considered by some to constitute the very foundation of American political ideals and practice: institutional barriers are erected to prevent immediate responsiveness to the wishes of ordinary citizens, but what Madison called the “refined and enlarged” views of the public are supposed to be the chief engines of policymaking (see Bessette, 1994).

For deliberative democratic theory, preference gaps between leaders and citizens might constitute a problem for at least two different reasons, depending upon our views of the nature and dynamics of public opinion. First, if we accept the idea that contemporaneous expressions of public opinion (ascertained by polls and surveys, for example) often or usually do in fact reflect informed and deliberative opinion, then it follows that gaps between such expressions by citizens and leaders indicate a failure of responsiveness to deliberative opinion. Such a view of public opinion, while not universally held, does have some support from scholarly research and fits with the idea that collective deliberation may often work well through division of labor and media-transmitted cues and information (Page and Shapiro, 1992; Page, 1996: chap. 5).

If, on the other hand—in some or all cases—citizens are uninformed or mistaken and need further evidence and argumentation to form authentic preferences, then it would seem to be the obligation of experts and leaders to enlighten them, to educate and persuade the citizenry (Dewey, 1980). In such cases, long-term persistence of large gaps between citizens and leaders would signify a failure of leaders to convey the relevant information and reasoning.

These general considerations of democratic theory have sometimes been thought by Realists and other international relations theorists not to apply to foreign pol-

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\(^1\) A populist theory of democracy is explicit or implicit, for example, in many economic theories of social choice and spatial models of electoral competition (Arrow, 1951), Downs, 1957: esp. chap. 4, Davis and Hirsch, 1966; Davis, Hirsch, and Ordeshook, 1970)

\(^2\) A recent variant is offered by James Fishkin (1995), who suggests that sufficient deliberation may not occur naturally in society but that the contours of a hypothetical enlightened public opinion can be discovered in the results of especially arranged deliberation among random samples of citizens.
icy, where the stakes are especially high and ordinary citizens may be particularly ignorant. In such circumstances, the argument goes, decisionmakers must sometimes act as Burkean trustees rather than democratically instructed delegates, and must simply defy the public's wishes—saving citizens from themselves—in order to defend the national interest. We will have more to say shortly about the empirical validity of such a view of public opinion. For now it is sufficient to point out that the assumption that decisionmakers embody superior wisdom (rather than, say, interests that conflict with those of ordinary citizens) may not be entirely unproblematic; that in a post–Cold War, sole-superpower world the stakes involved in errors made by the American public may be much reduced; and that, in any case, there is increasing evidence that domestic forces—including public opinion—do matter a great deal in the making of foreign policy, whether we like it or not.3

For both normative and empirical reasons, then, it has become particularly important to examine citizens' preferences about foreign policy and the relationships between citizens' preferences and those of leaders, looking directly at the nature and extent of gaps between the two. Previous work of this sort has been limited.4 We propose to extend it, using an especially helpful set of data.

Data and Methods

Every four years since 1974 the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, under the direction of John F. Rielly, has carried out a study of American public opinion and U.S. foreign policy in which many of the same survey questions are asked of a national sample of the U.S. public and a sample of leaders from government, academia, the media, and elsewhere. The CGFR studies are particularly useful for our purposes because they have been repeated regularly over a fairly long period, using many of the same survey questions each time. These data permit one to trace the nature and magnitude of citizen–leader gaps over time based on a series of comparable surveys. The United States is of course not the only country for which the issue of such gaps holds interest, but the availability of good data and the significance of the United States as a force in world politics make this a reasonable case to examine.5

One of the present authors has served as a consultant on each of the CCFR studies from 1974 through 1998 and regularly helped draft chapters or sections concerning citizen–leader gaps. This article draws upon his past work with the CCFR as well as the Council's published findings and the data provided each year by Gallup (and, for 1974, by Harris).

For questions in each of the seven surveys we have computed the size of leader–citizen gaps using a simple method. First the marginal frequencies of responses for both the leadership sample and the public were recalculated, excluding "don't know" or "not sure" responses, so that the percentages refer to a base of those who hold opinions. Since proportions of "don't know" responses frequently differ across questions, over time, and between elite and mass opinion—

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4 Notable exceptions include Odendick and Barlow, 1982, Wittkopf, 1990, and Holstein, 1996 esp. chap 4
5 See Rielly, 1975, 1979, 1983, 1987, 1991, 1995, and 1999 Brief summaries have also appeared under Rielly's authorship in the journal Foreign Policy The surveys were carried out by the Gallup organization (but in 1974 by Harris) in the autumn of each year previous to the March publication of the report. The surveys were designed and analyzed and the reports drafted, under Rielly's supervision, by teams of outside consultants, research assistants, and Council employees, including Bernard Cohen, Benjamin Page, Robert Hunter, William Schiwy, Bernard Rodnys, Catherine Hug, Arthur Czy, and Richard Sobei (consultants), Robert Pearson, Glenn Dempsky, Bruce Peterson, Donald (Pete) Jordan, Trevor Thompson, and Jason Barabas (research assistants), and Nora Dell, Arthur Czy, Catherine Hug, Stephen del Rosso, and April Donnellan (Council employees). Funding was provided by the Ford Foundation, the Lilly Endowment, the John D and Catherine T MacArthur Foundation, and others

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with ordinary citizens generally more prone to express uncertainty—it is essential to exclude “don’t knows” in order to produce a clearly defined and comparable measure of each opinion gap. (Otherwise the citizen—leader gap in percentage of “pro” responses generally differs in magnitude and/or direction from the gap in percentage “con” in any one survey, and the two may change by different amounts from one survey to another.)

One way to think about the exclusion of “don’t know” responses would be to argue that we can still generalize about the entire population, on grounds that those who did not express an opinion would have done so—and would have divided in about the same proportions as the opinion-expressing respondents did—under certain hypothetical circumstances. (If, for example, their information levels were higher.) But this argument is undercut by the fact that “don’t know” respondents often differ from others in additional characteristics besides information levels. They probably would not divide in the same proportions (see Brehm, 1993; Althaus, 1998). A stronger rationale for our procedure, in addition to the practical fact that we must exclude “don’t knows” in order to arrive at unique and comparable measures of gaps, is that those who express opinions about an issue are the relevant population with respect to that issue. They are certainly more relevant politically, and—at least under certain conceptions of representation—they may be more relevant ethically. In any case, however, the consequences of excluding “don’t knows” from our data are rather small, because their numbers are generally low: usually well under 10 percent of the citizenry and rarely over 20 percent.

In order to calculate clearly defined measures of the citizen—leader gap on each issue we also dichotomized all responses, ordinarily reporting proportions that picked a polar alternative such as “favor” or “spend more.” Then the percentage of leaders favoring a given position was simply subtracted from the percentage of the public favoring that same position. The resulting number gives the size of each gap in terms of percentage points, and a positive or negative sign tells the direction of difference.

It is important to recognize that substantial preference gaps may be significant for democratic theory even when majorities of citizens and leaders do not seem to favor “opposite” positions on two-alternative survey questions. Real-world policy choices are seldom truly dichotomous. Alternative policies can generally be arrayed along continua that represent gradations of magnitude: the number of dollars to be spent on defense or foreign aid, for example, or the extent of intervention in a particular crisis abroad, or the severity of barriers to be imposed on trade. In

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6 A concrete example from the 1998 data on the question of using economic sanctions against North Korea, 65% of leaders favored using sanctions, 35% opposed, and only 2% said “don’t know.” Among the public 57% favored sanctions, 26% opposed, and 17% said “don’t know.” Thus one could say, rather confidently, that more leaders than citizens favored sanctions by 7 percentage points! When “don’t knows” are excluded it becomes clear that among those with opinions, 68% of the public and 65% of the leaders favored sanctions, while 32% of the public and 34% of leaders opposed them. This amounts to only a tiny 2-percentage-point gap between the two groups, and we arrive at the identical 2-percentage-point figure whether we focus on “favor” or “oppose” responses (For purposes of illustration we picked an example with an unusually high proportion of “don’t know” responses among citizens.)

7 Once responses to multi-alternative items are grouped into a dichotomy, the gap concerning one set of alternatives is simply the mirror image of the gap concerning the other, with the same magnitude but opposite sign. Response alternatives were generally dichotomized in such a way as to maximize measured gaps, so that no important differences between leaders and citizens would be missed. Gaps calculated from other dichotomizations are equally real but less interesting.

8 For years prior to 1998 some of our calculations were based upon marginal frequencies rounded to the nearest whole number, as presented in Gallup codebooks or questionnaires or in published Council reports. This and the subtraction of rounded percentages from each other can produce rounding errors in the computation of percentages and gaps, but such errors are ordinarily limited to a single percentage point.
such cases, differences between the percentages of citizens and leaders that "favor" or "oppose" a particular policy alternative according to a dichotomous (or dichotomized) survey question can be taken as a rough measure of the distance between the average citizen and the average leader on the underlying policy continuum. If, for example, 90 percent of leaders but only 60 percent of citizens say they "favor" foreign aid to country X, it is reasonable to infer that the average leader favors more aid to X than the average citizen does. The 30-percentage-point gap is important even though majorities in both groups favor some non-zero level of aid.\footnote{The precise relationship that percentage differences in frequencies of survey responses bear to distances between mean or median positions on an underlying continuum is a complicated one that depends upon such factors as precisely where on the continuum a survey opinion is seen to stand, how respondents decide whether they are close enough to that point to say they "favor" it, and just how individuals' most-preferred points are distributed along the continuum. Our point is that within a wide range of possible measurement assumptions, significant differences between groups in response percentages are likely to reflect meaningful differences in their average locations on policy continua.}

Any systematic study of leaders necessarily involves difficulties in conceptualizing the relevant population and sampling from it. The CCFR leadership sample is not free from ambiguities and problems in this respect; in fact it seems to embody a certain ambivalence (reflected in language that shifts from one Council report to another) over whether the aim is to study "foreign policy leaders," "opinion leaders," or just plain "leaders."

Important aspects of the CCFR sampling frame have clearly been designed to identify individuals with foreign policy power, specialization, and expertise: administration officials in the State, Defense, and other departments and agencies dealing with foreign policy; members of congressional foreign affairs committees and subcommittees; newsmakers and journalists who deal with international news; the presidents of foreign policy organizations; academics who teach in the area of foreign affairs; the vice presidents for international affairs of major corporations; and top officials in foreign-policy-oriented special interest groups.

But some very important foreign policy decisionmakers, including military officers serving on the Joint Chiefs of Staff, are excluded from the sampling frame. And other aspects of the sample design appear to include prominent people without regard to international orientation or expertise, such as religious leaders and presidents of the largest labor unions. Some of the CCFR leadership categories involve mixtures of these two types of targets. U.S. Representatives and Senators are now sampled from a comprehensive list rather than from the membership of foreign affairs committees, but when legislators cannot be reached their legislative assistants responsible for foreign affairs are interviewed. The early samples of business leaders included some corporate CEOs as well as international vice presidents. And the "educators" include university presidents—who may have no particular interest in international relations—as well as the faculty members who teach foreign affairs. (Both sets of educators are chosen from a list of some sixty major universities that was apparently compiled in the distant past by the Harris organization.)\footnote{It is difficult to learn the precise nature of the leadership sampling scheme, both because the descriptions given by the survey organizations each year are brief and ambiguous (see, e.g., the "Technical Appendix" to the Opinion Leaders Tophine Report, Vol. 2, submitted to the CCFR by the Gallup organization in December 1998), and because institutional memories of this 24-year period are understandably incomplete. We are very grateful to Lydia Sand of the Gallup organization who answered many questions in personal communications during January and February 1999.}

It is not easy to specify exactly what is the universe of leaders from which the CCFR has been drawing samples. Still, the design has several redeeming features. First, all the individuals sampled do, in some intuitive sense, seem in fact to be leaders, or at least to represent the views of people with leadership roles.
and authority.\textsuperscript{11} Second, the leadership samples are sufficiently diverse to touch upon many or most of the roles in society that one might associate with foreign policy leadership. If one wishes to quarrel with the particular—and inherently arbitrary—weights implicitly given to different types of leaders by the choice of how many in each group were interviewed, one can either re-weight the sample as desired (this is easily done by computer) or simply look at how the views of different groups of leaders differ from each other. Third, and perhaps most important, the leadership samples appear to have been selected by quite similar (though not exactly identical) methods in each of the seven CCFR surveys.\textsuperscript{12} Whatever universe of leaders is being sampled from, at least it is roughly the same universe each time. It is possible to make legitimate comparisons over time.

Without question, in any case, these are the best (indeed the \textit{only}) available data for comparing, over a long series of surveys, the policy preferences of U.S. citizens and foreign policy leaders. They may also permit some inferences about relationships between citizens’ preferences and actual U.S. foreign policy. Direct comparisons between citizens’ preferences and actual policy would be difficult because of vexing problems of measurement and method.\textsuperscript{13} If the reader believes (as we ourselves are inclined to suspect) that the leaders—especially the administration officials—surveyed by the CCFR tend to influence policy and that their expressed preferences tend to correspond fairly closely to actual U.S. policy, then our data on preference gaps can substitute for such a comparison and have clear relevance to democratic theory. Even if that interpretation is rejected, however, our findings about gaps between citizens’ and leaders’ preferences may be of interest in themselves.

\section*{Internationalism}

The most conspicuous gap between citizens and leaders is a familiar and long-standing one: more leaders than citizens tend to be “internationalists,” at least in the simple sense that they say they favor the United States taking an “active part” in world affairs. When respondents are asked whether the U.S. should take an “active part” or should “stay out” of world affairs, leaders in the CCFR sample almost unanimously choose “active part,” whereas only about two thirds of the general public does so, producing a gap between the two on the order of 25 or 30 percentage points. Figure 1 shows, over the 24 years of CCFR surveys, the

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{11} The interviews of leaders have all been carried out by telephone or in person, which improves chances of cooperation by busy people and avoids the problem of subordinates often filling out written questionnaires. In the cases when CCFR interviewers settled for subordinates (e.g., congresspersons’ legislative assistants for foreign affairs) this was known to the survey organization and there was good reason to expect that the subordinates gave responses quite close to those their superiors would have given.}

\textsuperscript{12} The ambiguities in written descriptions of the surveys and the incompleteness of institutional memories make it impossible to rule out certain possible changes in design, but most differences in descriptions (such as the failure for some surveys to specify that media leaders were limited to those specializing in international stories) appear to reflect the presence or absence of descriptive detail rather than substantive variations. The only changes of which we are fairly certain are (1) the change after 1990 of sampling from a “comprehensive in-house list” of congresspersons rather than foreign affairs committee members, (2) an early shift from including some corporate CEOs to an exclusive focus on international vice presidents, and (3) a gradual shift, after 1986, toward including more (and relatively smaller) corporations in the sampling frame. We do not believe it likely that any of these changes had a substantial impact on the nature of the overall leadership sample.

\textsuperscript{13} It is difficult to assess directly the distance between citizens’ preferences and actual policy on a particular issue because they are not measured on the same scale. The standard methods used to study connections between opinion and policy, which generally rely on co-variations across political jurisdictions (e.g., congressional districts or states) or over extensive time series, are not of limited use for studying the foreign policy of a single nation (the United States) when we have only national opinion data and relatively few observations over time.
percentages of citizens and leaders favoring an “active part,” and the percentage point gaps between them.14

Note the great stability over this period in the responses of citizens and leaders and in the size of the gap between them. The only significant exception came in 1982, when members of the public were apparently alarmed by assertive Reagan administration military and foreign policies (see Rielly, 1983) and gave more “stay out” responses than usual. Various other organizations’ surveys asking

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Note: Entries are percentages saying the U.S. should take an “active part” in world affairs rather than “stay out” of world affairs, with “don’t know” excluded. Gaps, in percentage points, are the percent of citizens minus the percent of leaders.

Fig 1 The internationalism gap

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14 The gaps displayed here are slightly smaller than those indicated in some sections of Council reports (e.g., Rielly, 1985) that do not exclude “don’t knows” and therefore show a somewhat lower proportion of “active part” responses among the citizenry—in 1994, 65% instead of 69%. That procedure can be defended on the plausible grounds that a “don’t know” response is not internationalist. In a systematic study of gaps across issues and over time, however, it is necessary to exclude “don’t knows” for the reasons noted above.
the same question have found very similar levels of public responses ever since the early days of World War II, with only relatively minor shifts such as a moderate decline in "active part" responses after the Vietnam War (see Page and Shapiro, 1992:47-48, 174-77; Holsti, 1996:41-42).

But exactly what are we to make of this "internationalism gap" between citizens and leaders? Precisely what sorts of foreign policies are subject to this kind of citizen-leader difference? And why does the gap exist?

A traditional answer—one might say the Cold War answer—has been that leaders are more aware of world realities, more alert to threats to the national interest, and more willing to making sacrifices to protect the nation. Ordinary citizens are inattentive, uninterested, reluctant to engage international realities, and—once aroused to action by unavoidable crises—prone to extremist and inflexible responses. Thus in the early Cold War period Walter Lippmann issued a scathing condemnation of public ignorance: "in matters of war and peace the popular answer is likely to be No.... [T]he prevailing public opinion has been destructively wrong at the critical junctures. The people have imposed a veto on the judgments of informed and responsible officials" (Lippmann, 1955:23-24). In a more temperate and scholarly fashion Gabriel Almond had previously pronounced the "mood theory," according to which the public's isolationist impulses are overcome only by "superficial and fluctuating" responses to crises, after which there is a "swift withdrawal" like the snapping-back of a strained elastic (Almond, 1960:53, 76). James Rosenau emphasized the uninformed, inattentive, and emotional nature of mass opinion; he found solace in the existence of an "attentive public," probably not larger than 10 percent of the population (Rosenau, 1961:35, 39-40).

More recently—especially since the experience of the Vietnam War cast doubt upon the proposition that leaders are invariably wise about foreign affairs—scholars have chipped away at this interpretation of gaps between leaders and citizens. Public opinion in general has enjoyed something of a rehabilitation. It is still well established that most ordinary citizens have only limited interest in, attention to, or information about politics, especially foreign affairs (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996). But Caspary (1970) and others have refuted the mood theory.15 Collective public opinion has been found to have much greater stability than was once thought (Page and Shapiro, 1992: chap. 2; see Holsti, 1992). Collective public opinion also appears to rest—with the help of cues and cognitive shortcuts that enable even the inattentive to make use of available information—upon a stronger informational base than was once believed (see Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock, 1991). Foreign policy opinions have been found by Eugene Wittkopf (1986) and others, using CCFR data, to be structured in a highly coherent fashion and along lines quite similar to the structuring of leaders' opinions.

The analysis of opinion structure has also helped illuminate the fact that internationalism has multiple meanings, suggesting that citizen-leader gaps may be more complicated than once thought. According to Wittkopf (1986, 1987, 1990, 1994) citizens' opinions, like those of leaders, tend to be organized along two dimensions of "cooperative" and "militant" internationalism. From this point of view the internationalism gap may take a more differentiated form: for example, citizens may tend to be less "accommodationist" or "internationalist" (more "hardline" or "isolationist") than leaders (Wittkopf, 1987:147). To put it another way, citizens may shrink from the cooperative sort of internationalism but not necessarily from the militant sort. Ole Holsti and James Rosenau (1979, 1986,

15 Almond himself, in an introduction to the 1960 reprint of his 1950 book, declared that there had subsequently been a "maturation" of mass opinion and an increase in the size of the attentive public (Almond, 1960:xxi)
1988, 1990, 1996), in an important series of articles using Foreign Policy Leadership Project (FPLP) data, have generally supported the two-dimensional picture from the leadership side. William Chittick and others argue that even more complexity is required for a full understanding of opinion structure: a third dimension and a reconceptualization focusing on the goals of identity, security, and prosperity (Chittick, Billingsley, and Travis, 1995; see also Hinckley, 1992, on the dimension of multilateralism).

We propose to build upon, and extend, the idea that foreign policy gaps between citizens and leaders are more differentiated than was once thought—that is, that they do not merely reflect disagreement over a unidimensional "internationalism." Nor, however, are the gaps easily characterized in terms of just two or even three dimensions. As we will see, the sizes of citizen–leader gaps vary in complex and subtle ways across a number of specific kinds of foreign policies.16

We will also build on the emerging consensus that early scornful views of citizens’ foreign policy preferences are no longer correct, if they ever were. In some cases, at least, foreign policy gaps may reflect well thought out and legitimate public preferences that simply differ from those of leaders, so that leaders might do well to pay more attention to them. In other cases citizens may be deficient in their understanding and leaders justified in efforts to enlighten (or even temporarily ignore) them.

Priority on Domestic Rather Than Foreign Policy Programs

One important set of citizen–leader opinion gaps concerns the relative priority of foreign and domestic policies. Citizens much more than foreign policy leaders tend to put a high priority on domestic spending programs and lower priority on devoting resources to foreign affairs. This tendency has been evident throughout the 24-year period of CCFR surveys. It appears to have grown stronger after the end of the Cold War, as substantial proportions of ordinary Americans have insisted that various domestic programs should be expanded while some—but not all—foreign and military programs should be cut back.

Domestic Programs

The 1998 gaps on selected foreign and domestic spending items are displayed in Table 1, which gives the percentages of the public and leaders in favor of "expand[ing]" or "cut[ting] back" various programs and the percentage point gaps between citizens and leaders.17

The largest such gap—of 38 percentage points—concerns Social Security, with fully 69 percent of the public but only 31 percent of leaders wanting to expand

16 While dimensional analyses of foreign policy attitudes are interesting in themselves and constitute a useful background to our work, it is important to see that we are studying something quite different. We are interested in the concrete foreign policy preferences of ordinary Americans on a wide array of specific issues. Motivated by democratic theory, we want to know whether foreign policy leaders favor policies that are close to or distant from those that most American citizens want. In statistical terms, this leads us to focus on the central tendencies of preferences among citizens and among leaders, asking how those central tendencies differ from each other. Dimensional analyses are concerned with covariation among attitudes on different issues and with the structure of attitudes (sometimes comparing structure between elites and masses). Central tendencies generally drop out of dimensional analyses.

17 The focus on a single response to a three-alternative question (the middle alternative is "keep the same") is not ideal because, if leaders and citizens "keep the same" responses differ in frequency, gaps on the "expand" response could differ from those on "cut back." Ideally one might prefer to calculate "net balance" figures (% expand minus % cut back) for both groups, as the Chicago Council often does in its reports (e.g., Reilly, 1995 12). One could then compute gaps as the public’s net balance minus the leaders’ (or, arguably, half that amount). But the net balance method is cumbersome and not easy to communicate. In this case no important results change when alternative methods of calculating gaps are used.
Table 1. Domestic and Foreign Priorities, 1998

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<th>Public</th>
<th>Leaders</th>
<th>GAP</th>
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<tr>
<td>Social Security (% “expand”)</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>38</td>
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<tr>
<td>Programs to combat crime and</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>violence (% “expand”)</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>27</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health care (% “expand”)</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aid to education (% “expand”)</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic aid to other nations</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>32</td>
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<tr>
<td>(% “cut back”)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Defense spending (% “cut back”)</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>-4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Military aid to other nations</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>(% “cut back”)</td>
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Source: CCFR surveys. “Don’t knows” are excluded. Gaps are measured in percentage points.

the program. Even larger Social Security gaps occurred in 1990 (a 47-percentage-point gap) and 1994 (43 points). Clearly citizens tend to put a much higher priority than leaders do on this key domestic program. Similarly, a much higher proportion of citizens than leaders in 1998 favored expanding programs to combat violence and crime, creating a 27-point gap; a smaller but significant gap existed on this issue in 1994 as well. Considerably larger majorities of the public than of leaders want to expand health care programs, producing a gap of 18 percentage points in 1998 and 28 points in 1994. Substantial (but smaller) gaps existed on aid to education in 1998 and 1994, though not in 1990.18

Unfortunately the CCFR did not ask leaders about spending priorities in the 1978 through 1986 surveys. But the 1974 survey (which inquired about a somewhat different set of programs) suggests that the pattern of citizens putting higher priority than leaders on domestic programs may extend beyond the major, highly popular issues mentioned above. In 1974 a much larger minority of citizens (36%) than leaders (6%) favored expanding farm subsidies, for a 30-point gap. And a somewhat larger minority of citizens (23%) than leaders (7%) wanted to expand highway programs, a 16-point gap. Although these differences involve only minority views in both groups, they suggest that the level of spending favored by the average citizen may have exceeded that favored by the average leader.

Economic Aid

The picture is quite different when it comes to economic aid to other nations: substantially more citizens than leaders say they favor cutting aid. In 1998, 50 percent of citizens but only 18 percent of leaders said they wanted to cut back economic aid programs, a 32-point gap. Gaps of similar or greater size have existed each year the CCFR gathered relevant data: in 1994 (30 points), 1990 (43

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18 There were no substantial gaps on education or health in 1974, the only other year in which the relevant data were collected.
points), and 1974 (40 points). The same pattern has also appeared in terms of general support for or opposition to "giving economic aid to other nations." In 1998, 49 percent of the public but only 10 percent of the leaders said they opposed aid, producing a gap of 39 percentage points. This gap was 38 points in 1994 and 41 in 1990. And a similar pattern appears as well in questions about aid to specific groups or countries, including Russia (a 25-point gap in 1998), Eastern Europe (48 points in 1990), the Palestinians (40 points in 1994), and (in 1982) nations in black Africa or Central America. In 1998 the largest gap of all—of 51 percentage points—concerned whether we should contribute more money to the IMF to meet world financial crises: 67 percent of the citizens but only 16 percent of the leaders opposed doing so.

These are very large and troubling discrepancies between the expressed preferences of citizens and leaders. We will have more to say about why they exist and what significance they have, but first it is important to recognize that they do not simply result from a myopic or selfish unwillingness of the American citizenry to help people in other countries. Under certain circumstances the public is just as willing as leaders to do so. Citizens are equally as inclined as leaders, for example, to rate the foreign policy goal of combating world hunger as "very important." In only one of the seven surveys (1974) were they significantly less likely to do so, and in another survey (1994) significantly more citizens than leaders considered combating world hunger a very important goal. On the somewhat more abstract goal of helping to improve the standard of living of less developed nations, leaders were at one time more supportive than citizens—there were substantial gaps of 22, 27, and 19 points in the 1974, 1978, and 1982 surveys— but these fell below 10 points in all subsequent years. Very large majorities of the public have expressed support for disaster relief abroad. In 1974, for example, 93 percent favored giving emergency food and medical supplies in cases of natural disasters such as floods or earthquakes.

Military Spending and Military Aid

Moreover, there have generally been no significant gaps at all between citizens and leaders on the most central issue involving resources devoted to foreign affairs: the defense budget. No appreciable gap on cutting defense programs existed in 1998 or 1994. In several earlier years including 1978 and 1982 citizens were more likely than leaders to favor an increase in defense spending. In 1990 there was an even bigger gap of this sort: fewer members of the public than leaders, by 44 percentage points, wanted to cut back on defense programs. (As we will see, 1990 was an unusual year in which citizens were slower than leaders to recognize the end of the Cold War.) There is simply no evidence in the CCFR surveys of lesser willingness by citizens than leaders to make financial sacrifices in order to defend the nation.

Other data suggest why this has been so. About as many members of the public as leaders have generally seen the military power of the Soviet Union or Russia as a "critical threat" to the vital interests of the United States; indeed more members of the public than leaders did so in 1990 and 1994. In all five surveys in which the question was asked (1974 through 1990), significantly more members of the public than leaders saw containing communism as a very important goal of U.S. foreign policy.19 (These gaps of about 20 percentage points jumped up to 48 points in 1990.) In all four surveys with relevant data, just about as many

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19 Surveys from 1974 through 1986 also asked about the possibility of communism coming to power through elections in various countries or regions. In some of these cases slightly more leaders than citizens saw a "great threat" to the United States, but in a number of cases—especially those dealing with Latin America (Chile, El Salvador, Latin America as a whole)—substantially more citizens than leaders did so.
citizens as leaders saw matching Soviet or Russian military power as a very important goal. Again, considerably more citizens than leaders (by 38 percentage points) did so in 1990.

The absence of gaps on defense spending also largely applies to military aid. In most of the relevant surveys (1998, 1994, 1990, 1974) there was no more than an insignificant 6-point difference between the proportion of citizens and the proportion of leaders wanting to cut back military aid programs. Majorities of the public generally favored cutting back such programs, but so did virtually equal-sized majorities of leaders. A similar paucity of gaps applies to intelligence-gathering operations as well. In 1998, only 9 percentage points more of the citizenry than of leaders wanted to cut back intelligence gathering programs (more members of both groups actually wanted to increase than to cut back such programs), and the gap was even smaller in 1994.

American citizens, then, do not appear to be generally less inclined than leaders to devote money to foreign affairs, with the exception of certain kinds of economic aid. Instead, they simply are much more eager than foreign policy leaders to expand a number of domestic spending programs. This tendency is so substantial and has persisted for so many years that it may constitute the kind of deliberative public opinion that political leaders would do well to take into account.

The foreign aid anomaly deserves a bit more discussion. It is absolutely clear that over many years substantially more citizens than leaders have said they want to cut back or eliminate economic aid programs. The precise reasons for this gap are controversial, however, and we cannot resolve the controversy here. Steven Kull and I. M. Destler have made a strong case that public expressions of opposition to aid programs depends significantly upon gross overestimates of the current amount of such aid, which in turn may result from persistent attacks on foreign aid by politicians and commentators in the mass media. When citizens are informed of the very small share of the budget currently taken by foreign aid, support rises markedly (Kull and Destler, 1999: chap. 5; see also Kull, Destler, and Ramsay, 1997: chap. 5). On the other hand, additional survey evidence suggests there may be more to it: many members of the public are highly skeptical that aid reaches people who need it. Many think aid has tended to end up in the hands of corrupt officials or repressive dictators. Few believe aid helps the U.S. economy or the American national interest, and these attitudes have been closely related to opposition to aid (Ricelly, 1975:26–27, 1979:22, 1983:24–26). Such perceptions may not be altogether inaccurate. To the extent they underlie public opposition to aid, the economic aid gap may result from legitimate differences in values and in cost-benefit calculations between citizens and leaders, not from public ignorance or selfishness.

Foreign Policy Goals and Threats That Hit Home

Just as the American public more than leaders tends to emphasize domestic spending priorities, to a much greater extent it tends to favor foreign policy objectives of protecting immediate national self-interests, especially economic prosperity and physical safety.

Jobs

The sharpest gaps of this sort occur with reference to promoting and protecting Americans' jobs—a matter about which the economic class interests of leaders

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201982 and 1986 are exceptions, with 31 and 42 percentage points more citizens than leaders wanting to cut back military aid, presumably because of opposition to Reagan administration assertiveness abroad.
(many of them comfortably ensconced in well-paid professional positions) may tend to differ from those of ordinary citizens. Many more citizens than leaders, for example, judge that the foreign policy goal of "protecting the jobs of American workers" is very important. In 1998, 83 percent of the citizenry called this goal very important, putting it in second place among seventeen goals, only slightly below preventing the spread of nuclear weapons. But only 45 percent of leaders cited job protection as a very important foreign policy goal, producing a gap of 38 percentage points. In every one of the seven CCFR surveys a similar gap of 33 points or more has existed. This and related gaps in the 1998 CCFR data are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 makes evident that more citizens than leaders want to place foreign policy emphasis on a wide range of issues related to U.S. wages, employment levels, and prosperity. In 1998 more citizens than leaders, by 19 percentage points, rated the goal of reducing trade deficits as very important. In earlier years (1978 and 1982) there were similar gaps of 17 and 36 points concerning the importance of "protecting the value of the dollar." It is presumably for the same reason that more citizens than leaders regularly—in all five surveys between 1974 and 1994 that gathered the data—declared that the goal of protecting American business abroad was very important. These gaps generally amounted to more than 20 percentage points.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Protecting the jobs of American workers (%) “very important” f.p. goal</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>83%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leaders</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>GAP</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reducing our trade deficit with foreign countries (%) “very important” f.p. goal</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leaders</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>GAP</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic competition from low-wage countries (%) “crucial threat” to vital U.S. interests</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leaders</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>GAP</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic competition from Japan (%) “crucial threat” to vital U.S. interests</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>47%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leaders</td>
<td>14%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>GAP</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tariffs to protect certain manufacturing jobs from less expensive imports (%) “necessary”</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leaders</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>GAP</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large numbers of immigrants and refugees coming into the U.S. (%) “critical threat”</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leaders</td>
<td>18%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>GAP</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Controlling and reducing illegal immigration (%) “very important” f.p. goal</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leaders</td>
<td>21%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>GAP</td>
<td>36</td>
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<tr>
<td>International terrorism (%) “crucial threat”</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>86%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leaders</td>
<td>61%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>GAP</td>
<td>24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assassination of individual terrorist leaders (%) favor</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>61%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leaders</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>GAP</td>
<td>26</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stopping the flow of illegal drugs into the U.S. (%) “very important” f.p. goal</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>84%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Leaders</td>
<td>57%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>GAP</td>
<td>27</td>
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<tr>
<td>AIDS, the Ebola virus, and other potential epidemics (%) “crucial threat”</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leaders</td>
<td>54%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>GAP</td>
<td>40</td>
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Similarly, the public in 1998 was substantially more likely than leaders to see economic competition from low-wage countries as a "critical threat": by 42 percent to 16 percent, for a 26-point gap. Citizens more than leaders (47% to 14%, a 32-point gap) also saw economic competition from Japan as a critical threat. Arguably the latter perception by a large minority of the public has been overtaken by events and is no longer correct. But citizens' greater sensitivity to threats from abroad to jobs and wages is real and reflects, in substantial part, fears of unemployment due to low-cost imports. Such sensitivity shows up again and again in CCFR surveys over the years.

Such concerns also underlie the well-known susceptibility of citizens more than leaders to the argument that tariffs are necessary to "protect certain manufacturing jobs in certain industries from the competition of less expensive imports." In 1998, 60 percent of the public but only 36 percent of leaders endorsed that position, for a 24-point gap. Interestingly, the tariff gap had been even larger in 1994 (39 points), before leaders moved significantly in the public's direction. Before 1994, when citizens expressed still more protectionist attitudes, the gap was the same or larger: 35 points in 1990 and 45 points in 1986.

Concerns about jobs and wages undoubtedly also play a part in attitudes concerning immigration, which tends to put more downward pressure on the compensation of low-wage citizens than high-salary leaders. In 1998, 57 percent of the public but only 18 percent of leaders saw "large numbers of immigrants and refugees" as a critical threat to the vital interests of the United States, producing a 39-point gap. Similarly, 47 percent of citizens but only 21 percent of leaders called the foreign policy goal of "controlling and reducing illegal immigration" very important, for a 36-point gap. We cannot tell how much of this reflected social or cultural rather than economic concerns, but clearly the economic aspect is significant.

We would argue that these job-related attitudes of the citizenry, rooted in the realities of economic life, deserve serious consideration by decisionmakers. To the extent that citizen-leader gaps are replicated in gaps between public policy and what citizens want, democratic theory would suggest the desirability of greater responsiveness.

Physical Security

Another set of issues on which citizens tend to differ from leaders involves foreign policies directly related to the physical health, safety, and well-being of Americans.

Citizens are extraordinarily sensitive to the dangers of nuclear weapons, putting the goal of preventing the spread of such weapons at the very top of their priority list in 1998, and—during the Cold War—expressing great fear of nuclear war, receptivity to a nuclear arms control agreements, and the like. But these are matters upon which citizens and leaders have largely agreed.21

The main gaps involve threats that some leaders see as remote or minor but citizens take very seriously. Most notable here is international terrorism. In 1998, 86 percent of citizens but only 61 percent of leaders considered terrorism to be a "critical threat," for a 24-point gap. By only a small margin (just 7 percentage points) more citizens than leaders called the goal of combating terrorism "very important." But in the context of terrorism citizens overcame their general reluctance to use force (to be discussed below); large majorities of citizens, just like leaders, favored air strikes on terrorist training camps and facilities and even

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21 One exception is a 35-point gap in the Cold War lag year 1999, with citizens less concerned than leaders about the spread of nuclear weapons. Another came in 1982, when a larger majority of leaders than citizens favored a mutual nuclear freeze.
(by a smaller margin) attacks by ground troops against terrorist camps and facilities. And the public (61%) much more than leaders (35%) went so far as to favor the assassination of individual terrorist leaders, for a gap of 26 points.\(^{22}\) The World Trade Center bombing, among other recent events, suggests that public concern about terrorism may not be entirely off the mark.

Another threat to Americans' health and well-being that citizens tend to take more seriously than leaders is that of illegal drugs. In both surveys with relevant data, more citizens than leaders (by 27 points in 1998 and 29 points in 1994) called "stopping the flow of illegal drugs into the United States" a very important foreign policy goal. Here, too, citizens have been more willing than leaders to take measures, even extreme measures.

Finally, in 1998 citizens much more than leaders considered "AIDS, the Ebola virus, and other potential epidemics" to pose a critical threat to the vital interest of the United States in the next ten years. Seventy-four percent of the public but only 34 percent of leaders did so, for a hefty 40-point gap. We may scoff at this concern, but—especially given the possibilities of biological warfare—who can be sure that the public is wrong? In any case, the U.S. public seems to have embraced an enlarged view of "national security" that is not fully shared by foreign policy leaders.

**Aversion to Bloodshed**

Just as most members of the American public are quite concerned about the physical security of Americans within the United States, they also want to avoid death or injury to Americans abroad, whether travelers, diplomats, or soldiers. But this aversion to bloodshed is not limited to an ethnocentric identification with fellow Americans. It appears to include a desire to avoid harm to foreigners as well.

**Reluctance to Use Troops**

At least since the war in Vietnam the public has consistently been more reluctant than leaders to use U.S. troops in most situations. The CCFR questions about whether U.S. troops should be used under various hypothetical circumstances have produced some of the largest citizen-leader gaps in all seven surveys.\(^ {23}\)

In 1998, for example, 75 percent of leaders but only 34 percent of the public favored using U.S. troops if North Korea invaded South Korea, for a marked 41-point gap that left leaders and citizens on opposite sides of the question. If Iraq invaded Saudi Arabia, 80 percent of leaders but only 52 percent of the public said they would use U.S. troops, a 28-point gap. Similar gaps appear in the event that Arab forces invaded Israel (27 points), Russia invaded Poland (26 points), or China invaded Taiwan (20 points). In each of the three latter cases a majority of leaders favored troop use but a majority of citizens opposed it (see Table 3).

As Table 3 makes clear, these gaps were not limited to the post–Cold War period. Each of them appeared in all or nearly all the surveys that asked the

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\(^{22}\) It is possible that the 1998 comparisons between citizens and leaders on terrorism were affected by the fact that the public survey was fielded only a few weeks after the terrorist bombings of U.S. embassies in Africa, whereas the leadership survey was conducted substantially later in the fall. But leaders seem unlikely to have forgotten these events or to have become less concerned about terrorism, particularly since disputes with Iraq and U.S. airstrikes against that country occurred after the public's but during the leaders' interview period.

\(^{23}\) Pre-1998 CCFR data on many differences between the opinions of citizens and leaders concerning troop use are correctly described in Holst, 1996:91–95. The same book includes compact discussions of pre-1998 citizen-leader differences concerning general internationalism, trade, economic, and military aid, and foreign policy goals (Holst, 1996:84–91, 95–98), though the size of gaps is not systematically presented. Oldendick and Barthes (1982) give several tables comparing citizens' and leaders' opinions in the 1974 and 1978 CCFR data.

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<td><strong>If Soviets/Russians invaded</strong></td>
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<td>Western Europe</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pub.</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>61%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ldrs.</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>92%</td>
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<tr>
<td>GAP</td>
<td>-36</td>
<td>-31</td>
<td>-27</td>
<td>-19</td>
<td>-25</td>
<td>-31</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>If the Soviets invaded Japan</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Pub.</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>45%</td>
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<td>Ldrs.</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>76%</td>
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<tr>
<td>GAP</td>
<td>-35</td>
<td>-27</td>
<td>-27</td>
<td>-31</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>If North Korea invaded South Korea</strong></td>
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<td>Pub.</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ldrs.</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>75%</td>
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<tr>
<td>GAP</td>
<td>-4</td>
<td>-22</td>
<td>-28</td>
<td>-39</td>
<td>-11</td>
<td>-39</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>If Iran/Iraq invaded Saudi Arabia</strong></td>
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<td>(Iran) 25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ldrs.</td>
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<td>54%</td>
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<td>GAP</td>
<td></td>
<td>-29</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>If Arab forces invaded Israel</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Pub.</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ldrs.</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>71%</td>
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<tr>
<td>GAP</td>
<td>-13</td>
<td>-6</td>
<td>-17</td>
<td>-22</td>
<td>-21</td>
<td>-24</td>
<td>-27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Latin America</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Pub.</td>
<td>(Cuba into 42%)</td>
<td>(Panama 65%)</td>
<td>(Left 24%)</td>
<td>(Nicar.) 29%</td>
<td>(Mexico 54%)</td>
<td>(Cuba 50%)</td>
<td>43%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ldrs.</td>
<td>Dom. Rep. 48%</td>
<td>Canal 51%</td>
<td>wins 10%</td>
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<td>revln) 20%</td>
<td>revln) 19%</td>
<td>18%</td>
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<tr>
<td>GAP</td>
<td>-6</td>
<td>closed +14</td>
<td>El.Salv) +14</td>
<td>Hondrs) +10</td>
<td>+34</td>
<td>+31</td>
<td>+24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
relevant questions. The hypothetical invasion of South Korea by North Korea, for example, evoked substantially less public than leadership support for troop use in six of the seven CCPR surveys. The only exception is the Vietnam-focused year of 1974, when the public’s meager support for troop use (18% in that year) could not possibly have fallen much below the leaders’ bare 22 percent. Similarly, the 1982 question about Iran invading Saudi Arabia and the 1990, 1994, and 1998 questions about Iraqi invasions all showed gaps of about 30 percentage points. Six of the seven surveys revealed substantial gaps concerning an Arab invasion of Israel. The same was true concerning hypothetical Soviet invasions of West Berlin or Poland. These gaps extended to issues at the very heart of U.S.-Soviet tensions during the Cold War. In all six surveys that asked about it, the public was more reluctant than leaders—by 20 or 30 percentage points or more—to use U.S. troops in the event of a hypothetical Soviet invasion of Western Europe. A Soviet invasion of Japan elicited gaps of about 30 percentage points in all four surveys that inquired about it.

At the same time, it would be incorrect to say that the American public has opposed using U.S. troops under all circumstances, or even that it has always been more reluctant than leaders to use them. Substantially larger majorities of the public than of leaders regularly rated “containing communism” as a very important foreign policy goal, and majorities of the public (though smaller than the majorities of leaders) rated the goal of “defending our allies’ security” as very important. During the Cold War, majorities of the public supported key instances of troop use. In five of the six relevant surveys, for example, substantial public majorities of more than 60 percent favored using U.S. troops to defend Western Europe. (The only exception came in 1974, when a near-majority 49 percent of the public did so; this figure was depressed by post-Vietnam trauma and possibly also by a slight variation in question wording.) In all the relevant Cold War-year surveys, majorities or near-majorities of the public favored using troops to defend Japan. In 1974 (the only year this question was asked) fully 87 percent of the public—nearly as many as the 96 percent of leaders—favored using troops if Canada were invaded.

On core issues of defending U.S. borders and defending U.S. interests across the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, therefore, it cannot be said that the U.S. public has opposed using American troops.

Moreover, there has been considerable public willingness to use troops when the public’s other highest-priority goals are at stake, such as securing adequate supplies of energy, combating terrorism, or stopping the flow of drugs into the United States. This is evident in the 1998 survey in which the only troop-use question that elicited majority approval concerned a hypothetical Iraqi invasion of Saudi Arabia. (Slightly larger majorities favored defending Saudi Arabia in 1990 and 1994.) A different set of 1998 items found that a solid majority of the public (63%—virtually identical to the 60% of leaders) favored the idea of “attacks by U.S. ground troops” on terrorist training camps and other facilities. In 1986, large majorities of the public favored using military and civilian personnel to help foreign countries combat drugs, and considerably more citizens than leaders (though still only a minority) favored the use of military force even without

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24 The only exception was 1978, a year of strong U.S. pressure on Israel to make peace, in which only 32% of leaders and 26% of the public favored troop use in the event of an Arab invasion.

25 In 1974 the Harris question asked about troop use: “If Western Europe were invaded,” without mentioning the Soviets. The 1974 Harris questions also differed from subsequent Gallup items in asking about reactions “if Israel were being attacked by the Arabs” [rather than “if Arab forces invaded Israel”], “if the Russians [rather than ‘Soviets’] took over West Berlin,” and “if China invaded Formosa (Taiwan)” [rather than just “Taiwan”]. None of these variations, however, is likely to have had a large effect on the size of gaps.
the other country's permission. As we will see, the public has also supported the use of U.S. troops in multilateral peacekeeping operations.

Particularly striking is the tendency of more citizens than leaders to favor troop use in many hypothetical circumstances involving nearby Latin America. Neighboring Mexico, like Canada, enjoys a special status in the public mind: in 1990, fully 34 percentage points more of citizens than leaders (54% vs. 20%) favored using U.S. troops "if the government of Mexico were threatened by a revolution or civil war." Unfortunately the CCFR surveys have not regularly repeated identical questions about Latin America, but the potpourri of items from various years at the bottom of Table 3 all display the same tendency. A higher proportion of citizens than leaders favored the use of U.S. troops in the event that Panama closed the canal (1978), if leftist guerrillas were about to defeat the government of El Salvador (1982), if Nicaragua invaded Honduras (1982), (again) if the government of El Salvador were about to be defeated by leftist rebels (1990), or if "people in Cuba attempted to overthrow the Castro dictatorship" (1994, 1998).26

**Bom**

When it comes to bombing—which poses less danger to American soldiers than ground operations do—some observers think of the U.S. public as being quite bloody-minded. Not necessarily so. True, many surveys by various organizations have shown that, under similar circumstances, more Americans generally favor bombing than favor using troops—an understandable preference.27 This has been true, for example, in dealing with Iraqi aggression against Kuwait (Mueller, 1994) or Iraqi efforts to develop chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons, and of coping with Serbian atrocities in Bosnia (Sobel, 1998). The limited data on this point in CCFR surveys show the same thing. In 1998, for example, the 63 percent of the public favoring ground attacks against terrorist camps and facilities was markedly exceeded by the 80 percent of the public favoring air strikes. (Again in this case there was no significant gap between citizens and leaders.)

But this does not mean that the American public favors indiscriminately raining death and destruction upon foreign countries. Most cases in which majorities have supported bombing involve what Americans see as high-priority foreign policy goals or critical threats to vital U.S. interests—combating terrorism, securing energy supplies, stopping aggression, or preventing weapons proliferation. Most of these cases parallel, at a somewhat higher level of support, the circumstances under which many members of the public would be willing to use troops.

**Avoidance of Bloodshed Abroad**

Although the prime focus of the U.S. public's aversion to bloodshed undoubtedly concerns the lives of Americans, there is some evidence that it is not limited only to Americans. The goal of "worldwide arms control," for example—embraced as "very important" by nearly 70 percent of the public in the four

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26 The only exception came in 1986, when more leaders (71%) than citizens (52%) favored using U.S. troops if Nicaragua allowed the Soviets to set up a missile base.

Even in war-weary 1974, 42% of the public—not significantly less than the 48% of leaders—favored using U.S. troops in case of a Cuban invasion of the Dominican Republic. And more of the public (30%) than leaders (10%) in 1978 favored using U.S. troops in the event that "Rhodesia were invaded by Cuban troops supplied by the Soviets." That this represented something more than confusion about the location of Rhodesia is suggested by the 1994 finding that a larger (though still quite small) minority of citizens than leaders favored using troops if civil war broke out in South Africa.

27 Not only do citizens expect bombing rather than troop use to spare the lives of American soldiers, they may also see it as a more precise tactic that can spare foreign civilians.
CCFR surveys of the 1970s and 1980s—implies concern about other countries as well as the United States. So do the top-ranked goal of 1998, preventing the spread of nuclear weapons, and the substantial embrace of "strengthening the United Nations" as a very important goal.

Much the same thing is suggested by the public's lower support of military than economic aid. (For 1998, see Table 1.) In every one of the seven CCFR surveys the balance of public opinion—the percentage "expand" minus the percentage "cut back"—was more negative on military than on economic aid. But perhaps most conclusive is the repeated finding that large majorities of the public have opposed even selling military equipment abroad. In 1994, for example (unfortunately the question was not asked in 1998), only a tiny 16 percent of the public compared with 47 percent of leaders favored "selling military equipment to other nations." The public had been somewhat more amenable to arms sales during the Cold War—presumably for strategic reasons—with support ranging 35 percent or 40 percent. But the size of the gap between citizens and leaders has remained about the same (around 25 to 30 percentage points) in all five surveys with relevant data. The strong post–Cold War public opposition to arms sales, which have been very lucrative for the United States (indeed the U.S. has become the number one supplier of arms to the world), seems most comprehensible as intending to avoid encouraging war, armed repression, or bloodshed abroad.

**Cooperation and Multilateralism**

As we have noted, some dimensional analyses of public opinion about foreign policy have suggested that ordinary Americans may score lower than leaders on "cooperative internationalism" (Wittkopf, 1987:147). There are indeed important gaps between leaders and citizens on issues of international negotiation and cooperation, but the picture is not so simple as one of a cooperative elite vs. a unilateralist (or isolationist) public. There are some significant gaps that go in the opposite direction.

During the Cold War—including various periods of détente—the public was generally less supportive than leaders of various conciliatory moves toward the Soviet Union. In 1986, for example, 86 percent of leaders but only 59 percent of the public favored exchanging scientists with the Soviets, a gap of 27 percentage points. There were similar though somewhat smaller gaps in 1986 on resuming cultural and educational exchanges, restricting trade, and selling advanced U.S. computers (though not on arms agreements or trade restrictions); in 1982, on restricting trade, exchanging scientists, forbidding grain sales, cultural and educational exchanges, negotiating arms control agreements, computer sales, and energy cooperation; in 1978 on most of those same issues; and in 1974 on a long list of items including equal trade, mutual troop reductions, joint space missions, and energy cooperation. This type of gap apparently reached a peak in 1990, when 66 percent of the public but only 25 percent of leaders declared that the Cold War was "not really over," and 58 percent of the public but only 10 percent of leaders called the goal of containing communism "very important."

It is important to note, however, that on many or most of the specific measures involving cooperation with the Soviet Union, a majority of the public—often a large majority—actually favored the cooperative course. In 1986, for example (the last year in which such specific questions were asked), 82 percent

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29 A useful multi-year graph contrasting citizens' and leaders' opinions on arms sales—which, however, omits the 1974 leadership data and does not exclude "don't knows," thus slightly overstating the size of the gaps—can be found in Reilly, 1995:32

29 Alternatively, some Americans may fear the use of U.S.-supplied weapons against the United States
of the public favored arms control agreements and 76 percent favored resuming cultural and educational exchanges. (The public was more reluctant to expand grain sales or lift trade restrictions, and strongly opposed to selling advanced computers or sharing technical information on missile defenses.\textsuperscript{30}) On such issues the gaps suggest that leaders may (on average) want to pursue the cooperative policies \textit{further} than the average citizen does, but not that the two groups disagree about whether or not to pursue them at all.

The public's relative hesitancy about cooperating with adversaries has extended also to issues of establishing diplomatic relations with hostile or formerly hostile countries. In 1974 and 1982, for example—when big majorities of leaders favored reestablishing diplomatic relations with Cuba—only about half of the public did, creating large gaps of around 30 percentage points. In 1994, 89 percent of leaders but only 65 percent of the public favored establishing diplomatic relations with Vietnam, a 24-point gap.

There are a few signs of similar gaps with respect to international agreements. In the five surveys between 1974 and 1990 that asked about it, somewhat fewer members of the public than leaders (generally by about 10 to 15 percentage points) called worldwide arms control a "very important" foreign policy goal.

But this is not the whole story. For one thing, the U.S. public has a long history of strong support for the United Nations—often stronger than leaders' support. In every one of the seven CCFR surveys, for example, substantially more members of the public than leaders called strengthening the UN a very important foreign policy goal.\textsuperscript{31} Usually the gap amounted to 20 or 25 percentage points, though it dipped to 15 points in 1998 when 48 percent of the public but only 33 percent of leaders called strengthening the UN a very important goal. (This dip may reflect a belief that the UN under Secretary-General Anan has already gained strength.) Also in 1998, 56 percent of the public said the U.S. should "go ahead and pay back the dues" it owes rather than waiting for reform of the UN. (Unfortunately this question was not asked of leaders.)

There are also many indications that the public strongly prefers negotiations to confrontation or the use of force. Although majorities in 1998 endorsed airstrikes (80% in favor) and attacks by U.S. ground troops (63%) against terrorist bases and facilities as well as assassination of individual terrorist leaders (61%), still larger majorities favored diplomatic efforts to apprehend suspects and dismantle training camps (90%) and the trial of suspected terrorists in an International Criminal Court (90%). Nearly as many (86%) favored diplomatic efforts to improve U.S. relations with potential adversary countries. In none of these cases, except assassination, was there an appreciable gap between citizens and leaders.

Furthermore, there is considerable evidence that the U.S. public generally supports multilateralism, both through the UN and through regional alliances. In 1998, substantially fewer members of the public (23%) than leaders (48%) said that in international crises the United States should "take action alone" if it does not have the support of its allies—a 25-point gap.\textsuperscript{32} A majority in 1998 said that the U.S. should take part if asked to join "a United Nations international peace-

\textsuperscript{30} Americans seem particularly reluctant to cooperate with adversary countries when there may be strategic implications (as with trading computers or missile information, in the Soviet case). In 1978 the public was 22 percentage points less supportive than leaders of "expanding trade with Communist China," though large majorities of both groups favored it.

\textsuperscript{31} Similarly, in 1974 a few more (8 to 18 percentage points more) citizens than leaders said they wanted the U.S. to be a leader in support of international organizations, that foreign policy should be conducted through international organizations (71% said so), and that the only way to keep peace is through international organizations.

\textsuperscript{32} On the other hand, the public in 1998 was considerably more in favor of imposing economic sanctions on Cuba (by 29 percentage points) and on China (by 25 points), policies opposed by many U.S. allies.
keeping force in a troubled part of the world.”

Throughout the Cold War and subsequently the public has consistently supported NATO, with the center of gravity of opinion favoring keeping U.S. troop commitments at about the same level as existed at the time of each survey. In each survey between 1978 and 1986, for example, there was no appreciable gap at all between the small minorities (under one fifth) of citizens and leaders who wanted to decrease the U.S. commitment to NATO or withdraw entirely. In 1990, when the public was more skeptical than leaders about the end of the Cold War, many more leaders (62%) than members of the public (31%) favored decreasing commitments to NATO.

If one wished to generalize about cooperative internationalism, then, it would be fair to say that gaps between citizens and leaders go in both directions. The American public has displayed less strong support than leaders (though often majority support) for diplomatic and cooperative relationships with the Soviet Union and other adversaries, but more support for the United Nations, roughly equal support for NATO, and more aversion to unilateral action. These gaps, like the others we have discussed, certainly do not amount to a chasm between an isolationist public and internationalist leaders.

Conclusion

Some years ago Robert Oldendick and Barbara Bardes wrote that the foreign policy opinions of U.S. leaders “diverge sharply” from those expressed by the mass public, and that comparison of the 1974 and 1978 CCFR surveys did “not show any closing of the gap” between mass and elite attitudes on the variety of issues (Oldendick and Bardes, 1982:380). Twenty years later the picture is much the same. On many different foreign policy issues there are large gaps between the preferences of citizens and leaders: gaps of 30, 40, and even 50 percentage points. In many cases majorities of citizens and leaders take positions directly opposed to each other. And in a number of cases this has remained true over the entire 24-year period of the Chicago Council surveys.

The pattern of gaps is considerably more complicated than a simple difference in degree of commitment to internationalism. It is not correct to characterize the leaders as “internationalist” and citizens as “isolationist.” Nor, however, are the gaps easily characterized in terms of just two or three dimensions. They vary in size across a number of specific types of policies.

Citizens, for example, have generally put a higher priority than leaders on expanding domestic programs like Social Security, crime fighting, and health care, and have been more eager to cut foreign economic aid. But there have not been substantial gaps with respect to defense spending or military aid. More members of the public than leaders emphasize foreign policy goals related to protecting Americans’ jobs and ensuring Americans’ health and physical security (e.g., from terrorism, drugs, and epidemic diseases). Many more citizens than leaders have been reluctant to use U.S. troops under most circumstances, but not in those involving Latin America—where the opposite is the case. Citizens have been more willing to bomb than to commit troops, though not indiscriminately

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43 Sixty-one percent of the public said that the U.S. should take part in such a peacekeeping operation, 17% said it “depends on circumstances,” and only 22% said the U.S. should not take part. This question was not asked of the leaders.

44 In 1974, 11 percentage points more of leaders than citizens wanted to decrease the commitment to or withdraw from NATO.

45 The graph in Ruoh, 1991:35, which seems to show citizen-leader gaps concerning NATO in earlier years, is misleading because it displays only the proportion saying “keep our commitment what it is now,” ignoring “increase” and “decrease” responses. Responses to such multi-alternative, ordinal items are best summarized in terms of the balance of opinion pushing in one direction or another from the status quo.
so, and (much more than leaders) they oppose selling weapons abroad. Fewer citizens than leaders have favored most kinds of cooperative relationships with adversary countries. But more members of the public than leaders generally support the United Nations, and more favor multilateralism in general. About the same number of citizens as leaders have supported NATO.

According to democratic theory as we understand it, the persistence of large gaps between citizens and leaders is seriously troubling. But some kinds of gaps may be more worrisome than others, and different gaps are troubling for different reasons.

Some gaps may reflect little more than a temporary failure by the public—lacking close attention to or deep expertise about foreign affairs—to perceive or foresee changes in international realities. In 1990, for example, a transitional moment in which the Soviet Union was disintegrating but had not yet fully collapsed, many large opinion gaps apparently resulted from leaders’ quicker assessment that the Cold War was over and that neither the spread of communism nor Soviet military power presented much of a threat to the United States. Four years later there was less sign of such gaps.\textsuperscript{36}

Similarly, in 1998 the public’s continued perception of Japan as an economic threat, and the public’s failure to match leaders’ judgment that the U.S. had a vital interest in Brazil (where economic weakness threatened to spread to much of Latin America) may have reflected leaders’ greater attentiveness and expertise, and may well have been temporary.\textsuperscript{37} In such cases it can be argued that foreign policy decisionmakers should exert leadership and should pursue the policies their expertise dictates. The public can be trusted to catch up and approve those policies retrospectively—particularly if leaders clearly explain and justify those policies and if the policies work out well.

Similar arguments might be made about other policies where many or most members of the public may not fully understand what consequences they would have. The much stronger endorsement in 1998 by the public than by leaders of economic sanctions against China, for example, may have resulted not only from different weighting by citizens and leaders of human rights concerns but also from a failure of citizens to appreciate the major negative consequences to the U.S. economy that could result from curtailing trade with China. The enormous 51-point gap concerning more money for IMF bailouts may possibly have reflected a deficiency in the public’s understanding of the great dangers to the United States from financial collapses abroad. The enduring tendency of citizens much more than leaders to favor some protective tariffs might be seen as symptomatic of failure to comprehend the great benefit of free trade.

We would hesitate, however, to push such arguments too far. Simply to assume that ordinary Americans are foolish or mistaken whenever they disagree with leaders is potentially threatening to the very idea of democracy. Some—perhaps many—gaps may result from citizen–leader differences in values and interests rather than information. And in some cases of information-based disagreement the public may not be wholly incorrect.

\textsuperscript{36} The 1994 citizen–leader gap on economic aid to Russia was smaller than the gap on other aid issues. In 1994, however, the public’s positive thermometer ratings of Russia and Boris Yeltsin were actually somewhat lower than those given to the Soviet Union and Gorbachev in 1990, and the public was significantly more prone than leaders to see Russian military power as a critical threat to the U.S.

\textsuperscript{37} The proportion of the public perceiving Japanese economic competition as a critical threat dropped sharply from 64% to 47% between 1994 and 1998, and the citizen–leader gap fell from 43 to 32 percentage points, indicating this gap was partly temporary. The residual gap, however, probably signaled citizen’ greater sensitivity to possible pressure on U.S. jobs and wages. Likewise the 28-percentage-point difference in 1994 between the public’s (63%) and leaders’ (24%) perception of Haiti as a vital interest very likely reflected enduring citizen–leader differences over refugees and immigration.
The unpleasant aftermath of the IMF's imposition of stringent deflationary conditions upon certain countries, for example, and the mysterious disappearance of loan money in Russia and elsewhere, suggest at least the possibility that the public's skepticism about IMF bailouts may have had some warrant. The gradual acknowledgment by economists that not everyone (particularly not low-wage workers) benefits in all circumstances from globalization and free trade suggests that citizens may not have been altogether mistaken in their concern about cheap imports. There may simply be divergent economic interests on this matter between more- and less-well-off members of society. (If, on the contrary, substantial numbers of citizens have persistently over many years been mistaken about tariffs, this would seem to be a prime example of the failure of leaders to educate and persuade.)

Much the same sort of reasoning would seem to apply in the case of the large, enduring gaps between citizens and leaders concerning foreign economic aid. If Kull and Destler (1999) are correct that public opposition to such aid mainly reflects a failure by citizens to understand the very modest current costs of aid, then the persistence of such gaps for more than two decades indicates that foreign policy leaders—or, more broadly, the systems of political communication and collective deliberation in the United States—have badly failed to provide citizens with the correct information. If, on the other hand, there is substantial merit to public suspicions that aid has often failed to reach people in need and has instead been lost to corruption or used to bolster despotic regimes, then the long-term persistence of gaps between citizens' and leaders' preferences may reflect a failure of policymakers to respond to informed, deliberative public opinion—that is, a failure of democracy.

As we have noted, the relevance of citizen–leader gaps to issues of democratic responsiveness depends upon the assumption that the preferences of these leaders are closely connected to actual U.S. policy. This assumption may not always be correct. In the CCFR data from 1982 and 1986, for example, there are indications that Reagan administration policy may have differed quite substantially from what non-administration leaders in the sample favored (Rielly, 1983:35–38, 1987:34–40). As best we can tell, however, those two years were anomalous. In the other five CCFR surveys, administration officials' responses were considerably closer to the average responses of other leaders, which in turn seem to have been rather closely mirrored by actual U.S. foreign policy.38

Three clusters of large and enduring citizen–leader gaps seem to us to raise particularly strong concerns about possible failures of democratic responsiveness. One is the strong tendency of citizens, much more than leaders, to place a high priority upon domestic spending programs and domestically oriented foreign policy goals. Again and again in CCFR surveys the balance of opinion among the public has favored expansion of many domestic programs but has tilted toward cutting foreign economic aid, while favoring foreign policies that help with Americans' jobs, health, and physical security. Again and again the leaders have favored more foreign aid and less domestic spending than the public, and have less enthusiastically embraced domestically oriented goals. As we have seen, this does not by any means signify that the American public is isolationist, but it does indicate that its spending and policy priorities—surely relevant matters for democratic control—are different from those of the leaders.

38 In all seven CCFR surveys the opinions of some groups of leaders have differed markedly from the opinions of others—e.g., business leaders regularly disagree with labor union leaders—but there has been a fairly high level of consensus among the whole set of leaders on many issues. Except in 1982 and 1986 the average views of leaders seldom seem to us to have diverged much from actual U.S. policy, though of course we cannot be sure of the precise relationship between the two because preferences and policies are not assessed on the same metric.
The public's reluctance to engage U.S. troops abroad, too, represents something other than a crude isolationism. Citizens differentiate rather sharply among possible military interventions that they believe would or would not advance the foreign policy objectives they value most highly. But—especially in the post–Cold War world—they are generally unwilling to shed Americans' blood, absent compelling reasons to do so. Such blood, after all, is more likely to flow from ordinary citizens and their loved ones than from foreign policy leaders. The large and persistent gaps concerning the use of U.S. troops may not represent some sort of misinformation that has misled the public but rather a genuine difference of values and interests between citizens and leaders, one that democratic theory suggests leaders ought to take into account.

Finally, citizens' greater support than leaders for multilateralism in general and for the United Nations in particular, and their greater reluctance to go it alone, may reflect serious differences in goals and/or beliefs about how best to pursue them. If so, for leaders to defy these preferences would again raise questions about democratic responsiveness.

Of course it is not easy to sort out which cases are which. It is hard to tell when public opinion is solid and deliberative, as opposed to being based on misinformation. Yankelovich (1991) and Price and Neijens (1997), among others, have discussed various possible indicators of the quality of public opinion, but we have not made a serious effort to use those or other such criteria here. Our main point is that one should not simply assume that public opinion that one happens to disagree with must result from confusion or misinformation. The burden should be on the objector to demonstrate, with data, what the public's beliefs and perceptions actually are and how they affect opinion (see, for example, Kull and Destler, 1999, with respect to foreign aid and peacekeeping). Further, one proposing to discount public opinion should have to demonstrate, with objective evidence, that the relevant public beliefs and perceptions are in fact incorrect. Absent such evidence, we should be open to the possibility that citizens' opinions may be based on reasonably good information but on values and/or interests that differ from our own.

It is not the present authors' view that *vox populi is vox dei*. In some respects and on some occasions the American public undoubtedly misunderstands how the world works. On the other hand, leaders can be wrong, too. Taken as a whole, the gaps that CCFR surveys have revealed between the foreign policy preferences of citizens and those of leaders do not generally appear to us to result from a contrast between leaders' wisdom and expertise and the public's ignorance, misunderstanding, selfishness, or short-sightedness. In many cases public opinion may be reasonably well informed and deliberative, and the gaps may reflect differences between leaders and citizens with respect to values, goals, and interests. In such cases democratic theory would seem to recommend responsiveness to what the citizens favor.

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