


March 2019

## Cadet Voice: A Curious Trinity: War, Media, and Public Opinion

Laura Olson

*United States Air Force*, [laura.olson@edu.edu](mailto:laura.olson@edu.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/spaceanddefense>

 Part of the [Asian Studies Commons](#), [Aviation and Space Education Commons](#), [Defense and Security Studies Commons](#), [Eastern European Studies Commons](#), [International Relations Commons](#), [Leadership Studies Commons](#), [Near and Middle Eastern Studies Commons](#), [Nuclear Engineering Commons](#), [Science and Technology Studies Commons](#), and the [Space Vehicles Commons](#)

Please take our feedback survey at: [https://unomaha.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_8cchtFmpDyGfBLE](https://unomaha.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8cchtFmpDyGfBLE)

### Recommended Citation

Olson, Laura (2019) "Cadet Voice: A Curious Trinity: War, Media, and Public Opinion," *Space and Defense*: Vol. 11: No. 0, Article 8.

DOI: 10.32873/uno.dc.sd.11.01.1096

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/spaceanddefense/vol11/iss0/8>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@UNO. It has been accepted for inclusion in Space and Defense by an authorized editor of DigitalCommons@UNO. For more information, please contact [unodigitalcommons@unomaha.edu](mailto:unodigitalcommons@unomaha.edu).

## Cadet Voice

### A Curious Trinity: War, Media, and Public Opinion

Laura Olson

*The following USAFA cadet Capstone project from spring 2017 won the Best Undergraduate Class Paper Award from the national Political Science honor society, Pi Sigma Alpha. The article appears, below, as submitted, with allowances for Space & Defense formatting.*

August, 2012- President Obama drew a “Red Line” on chemical weapons use in Syria.<sup>1</sup> Just over a year later, a UN report confirmed Syrian chemical use. Two words, spoken by the most powerful man in the world, generated massive media coverage. Around the world, news outlets and people everywhere looked for Washington’s reaction. Words are powerful because of the narrative they create; framing how people see the world. When a powerful enough frame is used, it sways people’s views of the world, changing policy by extension. The words the President spoke were powerful because they created a frame for the issue of Syria. People the world over recognized the frame, thereby giving it power.

The media frame the way many see the world; this paper examines the extent of this frame. This paper examines the question, “What drives public support for military intervention in humanitarian crises?” This paper uses the similar systems model to evaluate the difference in public support for intervention using Kosovo and Syria as case studies. Media coverage and public support for intervention is contextualized by significant strategic events. This paper uses the common variables between Kosovo and Syria to isolate the variables which are different and might be responsible the difference in results.

In the proper context, strategic changes to US policy can be self-reinforcing in terms of popular support. These actions must echo in the public memory, invoking association with previous positive policies. This echo in turn drives an increase in media exposure, on the issue in question, further increasing public support regardless of the nature of the exposure.

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

Because of the large role public opinion plays in the policy making process, it has been the source of extensive political science research. This paper evaluates two variant elements regarding past literature on public opinion. The first element is whether public opinion is reasonable and rational, or easily manipulated and unstable. The second is, to what extent do the way media frame their coverage give shape to public opinion.

There are two perspectives on public opinion which merit consideration. On one side lies the Almond-Lippmann Consensus, which holds that public opinion is volatile and unreliable.<sup>2</sup> Alternatively, a number of scholars believe that the public responds to information and events in a logical and

---

<sup>1</sup> Laura Olson, USAFA '17, is Second Lieutenant in the U.S. Air Force.

<sup>2</sup> Ole R. Holsti, "Public Opinion and Foreign Policy: Challenges to the Almond-Lippmann Consensus,

Mershon Series: Research Programs and Debates," *International Studies Quarterly* 36, no. 4 (December 1992): 441, accessed April 15, 2017, JSTOR.

rational way.<sup>3</sup> The Almond-Lippmann Consensus arose in the decades after WWII, based on the concurring opinions of Walter Lippmann and Gabriel Almond. Walter Lippmann's argument is rooted in his 1922 work, where he advanced the thesis that the public is strictly focused on its immediate needs and has neither the time, nor interest to understand international politics.<sup>4</sup> In the years after WWII, he expanded his argument, stating that public opinion was not just uninformed, but was so off track it was dangerous:

“The unhappy truth is that the prevailing public opinion has been destructively wrong at the critical junctures. The people have impressed a critical veto upon the judgments of informed and responsible officials... Mass opinion has acquired mounting power in this country. It has shown itself to be a dangerous master of decision when the stakes are life and death.”<sup>5</sup>

Gabriel Almond came to similar conclusions, warning against the volatility of public moods and “cyclical fluctuations which stand in the way of policy stability.”<sup>6</sup> His 1956 article was written in Lippmann's style and created the basis for “mood theory,” which stated that public opinion was volatile and easily impacted. According to his theory, if public opinion is easily influenced, it should play no role in politics.<sup>7</sup> Together, Almond and Lippmann form the Almond-Lippmann

Consensus and the basis for one school of thought on public opinion. This consensus held sway throughout the 50s and 60s and counted many influential supporters in its ranks. Hans J. Morgenthau and George F. Kennan,<sup>8</sup> the source of the American policy of containment both supported this school of thought.<sup>9</sup>

A number of scholars challenged the Almond-Lippmann Consensus, citing the advances in public opinion research since the end of the Vietnam War, as well as numerous studies which prove stability in public opinion.<sup>10</sup> Shapiro and Page found that public opinion towards foreign policy changed in response to “international and domestic events that have been reported and interpreted by the mass media and by policymakers and other elites.”<sup>11</sup> This school of thought has gained more traction in recent years, causing the focus to shift to the role that the media play in public opinion and the implications of their role.

The role of the media in public opinion is known as framing, and is considered one determiner of public opinion. A frame aims to reorient a person's thinking towards an issue,<sup>12</sup> Nelson and Kinder define a frame as, “[A frame determines] how [an issue] should be thought about, and may go so far as to recommend what (if anything) should be done.”<sup>13</sup> Chong and Druckman define it as the following: “Framing refers to the process

<sup>3</sup> Robert Y. Shapiro and Benjamin I. Page, “Foreign Policy and the Rational Public,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 32, no. 2 (June 1988): 211, accessed April 15, 2017.

<sup>4</sup> Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion*, (London: Allen and Unwin), 1922.

<sup>5</sup> Walter Lippmann, *Essays in the Public Philosophy*, (Boston: Little, Brown, 1951), 20.

<sup>6</sup> Gabriel Almond, *The American People and Foreign Policy*, (New York: Praeger, 1950), 85.

<sup>7</sup> Gabriel A. Almond, “Public Opinion and National Security Policy,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 20, no. 2 (1956): 239, accessed April 15, 2017.

<sup>8</sup> George Kennan, *American Diplomacy*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951). 1900-1 950.

<sup>9</sup> Holsti, 443.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Shapiro and Page, 211.

<sup>12</sup> Dennis Chong and Yael Wolinsky-Nahmias, “Managing Voter Ambivalence in Growth and Conservation Campaigns,” *Ambivalence, Politics and Public Policy*, (2005), 104 accessed April 15, 2017.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas E. Nelson and Donald R. Kinder, “Issue Frames and Group-Centrism in American Public Opinion,” *The Journal of Politics* 58, no. 4 (1996): 1055-1078.

by which people develop a particular conceptualization of an issue or reorient their thinking about an issue.”<sup>14</sup>

The “CNN effect” is a specific type of media framing intended to mobilize support for humanitarian intervention.<sup>15</sup> Supporters of the “CNN effect” perspective believe that media framing of humanitarian crises is directly responsible for public support for humanitarian intervention.<sup>16</sup> Scholars, however, disagree on its public opinion impact. US intervention in Somalia, which is frequently cited as a case study for this claim, remains under contention. The CNN effect’s ability to mobilize public support is well documented and can mobilize public support.<sup>17</sup> Other agencies, specifically human rights organizations, play a major role in drawing attention to and pressuring Western governments to intervene through ‘human rights shaming’. They draw attention to the worst human rights violations and mobilize interventional efforts.<sup>18</sup> Alternatively, there is evidence that people choose the frames which are consistent with what they believe,<sup>19</sup> instead of being dictated to by outside sources.<sup>20</sup> The emotional connection to the frame, then, is more important than the content of the frame. The news media

subsequently plays no real role in fostering public support for military intervention.

Another possible reason for public support for military intervention has no specific name, but will be called the public’s collective memory for the sake of this paper. “Vietnam Syndrome” is a well-documented effect in which Americans view conflict in the light of past conflict.<sup>21</sup> While most commonly associated with wars, collective memory also encompasses military intervention. It is impacted by the political climate of the time, which is in turn impacted by previous interventions or their absences. For example, US intervention in Somalia was a reason why the US refrained from intervention in Rwanda.<sup>22</sup> Humanity’s failure in Rwanda, prompted intervention in Kosovo.<sup>23</sup> The resultant struggle to direct and redirect action can be seen in public opinion and its influences,<sup>24</sup> although advocacy groups frequently pressure the government directly, instead of working through the public sentiment.<sup>25</sup>

Of the schools of thought considered here, the argument that affirms public opinion is stable and based on logical conclusions, appears to make the stronger argument. More difficult is

<sup>14</sup> Dennis Chong and James N. Druckman, "Framing Theory," *Annual Review of Political Science* 10, no. 1 (2007): 104, accessed April 16, 2017.

<sup>15</sup> Alynna J Lyon. “Global Good Samaritans: When Do We Heed ‘the Responsibility to Protect?’” *Irish Studies in International Affairs* 20, (2009): 45, accessed November 12, 2015.

<sup>16</sup> Amanda Murdie and Dursun Peksen, "The Impact of Human Rights INGO Shaming on Humanitarian Interventions," *The Journal of Politics* 76, no. 1 (2013): 216, accessed November 12, 2015.

<sup>17</sup> Peter Viggo Jakobsen, “National Interest, Humanitarianism or CNN: What Triggers UN Peace Enforcement After the Cold War?”. *Journal of Peace Research* 33, no 2 (1996): accessed 11 November 2015.

<sup>18</sup> Amanda Murdie and Dursun Peksen, 216.

<sup>19</sup> P. M Sniderman S. M. Theriault. The Structure of Political Argument and the Logic of Issue Framing. In

W. E. Saris & P. M. Sniderman (Eds.) *Studies in Public Opinion Princeton*, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004. 133–165.

<sup>20</sup> Nelson and Kinder.

<sup>21</sup> Kurt Jacobsen, "Afghanistan and the Vietnam Syndrome," *Economic and Political Weekly* 36, no. 44 (2001): 4182-183.

<sup>22</sup> Jon Western and Joshua S. Goldstein, “Humanitarian Intervention Comes of Age: Lessons from Somalia to Libya,” *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 4 (2011): 48–59, accessed November 12, 2015

<sup>23</sup> Lyon, 44.

<sup>24</sup> Eric A Heinze, “The Rhetoric of Genocide in U.S. Foreign Policy: Rwanda and Darfur Compared,” *Political Science Quarterly* 122 no. 3, (2007): 373.

<sup>25</sup> Scott Straus, “Darfur and the Genocide Debate”. *Foreign Affairs* 84, no. 1 (2005): 125, accessed November 12, 2015.

to judge whether collective memory or media framing is a larger determiner of public opinion towards intervention.

According to past research, this paper expects some combination of the variables just described. The first possibility is that the public opinion data are reasonable and rational or easily manipulated and unstable, reinforcing the Almond-Lippmann Consensus. Alternatively, should the results prove public opinion reliable, the cause for the different public opinion results between the case studies could be caused by media framing, collective public memory, or some combination of the two. Framing literature contains both supporting and contradicting theories, making this paper a valuable contribution to the field. Most literature is concerned with the impact of public opinion on the decision to intervene, rather than what influences public opinion. The lack of literature on this topic is likely because public opinion research frequently falls into the area of sociology. Examining the political science side of the question offers a fresh perspective to issues already researched extensively.

## METHODOLOGY

Elite framing of issues has been tied to US public opinion by scholars for decades.<sup>26</sup> It is widely accepted that media portrayal, slanted one way or another, changes how people view issues. The literature examined presents opposing interpretations for whether ignorance and capriciousness render public opinion useless as a metric. This paper utilizes the most similar systems model using Kosovo and Syria as case studies because of their multifactoral parallels: religiously motivated conflict, autocratic styles of government, United States reaction, NATO

reaction. This study predicts that either media framing or collective memory is responsible for the changes seen in public opinion. Popular support for air strikes and ground forces, the dependent variable, is evaluated against the volume and type of media coverage for each crisis, the independent variable.

Kosovo and Syria were selected as case studies in this paper because of their similarities, and because both represent cases where the United States took action, making them positive case studies. Humanitarian crises in which the United States intervened were necessary to ensure data availability and issue salience for the American people.

The similar systems approach chooses case studies which have different results despite a great number of similarities. This study will explain the difference in the results by finding the variables which are inconsistent between the two cases.

Public opinion is evaluated by analyzing polling data for each crisis. These polls were obtained through iPOLL Databank from the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research and the Pew Research archives. Because the public support for intervention differed significantly depending on the type of intervention, the two most common forms of intervention, airstrikes and ground forces, were selected to illustrate trends in public support rather than a specific intervention. Similarly worded questions were grouped together, creating some variability in responses. John Zaller's suppositional work on public opinion argues that even minor changes in wording can create large changes in the poll responder.<sup>27</sup> This study attempts to take the data variation into account, but it is

<sup>26</sup> James N. Druckman, "Evaluating Framing Effects," *Journal of Economic Psychology* 22, no. 1 (2001): accessed April 19, 2017.

<sup>27</sup> John R. Zaller, *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

possible that media framing has no impact on public opinion. There were still large gaps in poll data where no polls were found. Where gaps existed because no polls had been conducted, the data were extrapolated to the next data point. Data are presented on a monthly basis, over a period of two years for Kosovo and four years for Syria. When more than one study was available, the results were averaged to present all of the information. Using such long periods of data collection and inference also introduces error when public opinion changes throughout the month due to significant events.

The independent variable, media framing, was operationalized by counting the frequency with which certain key words appeared in the media each month. The *New York Times* was used as the media source because it sets the agenda for other news agencies.<sup>28</sup> This study tracked key words which connote the need to intervene, versus words that would suggest the opposite. The goal was to determine how the *New York Times* framed the Syrian and Kosovo narrative, and to analogize popular response in determination of a framing effect. The words, “civil war,” “civil unrest,” “internal conflict,” and “faction”, were aggregated to portray a frame discouraging intervention. Traditionally, the United States has resisted becoming embroiled in the internal disputes of sovereign nations, a concept deeply engrained since the days of isolationism in the 1930s.<sup>29</sup>

The positive words which were intended to indicate a framing that encourages intervention, were “massacre,” “suffering,” “genocide,” “ethnic cleansing,” “famine,” and “genocide,” and “US obligation”. The appearance of any of these words was

believed to connote a humanitarian obligation to intervene.

The data are presented chronologically in a graph (Fig. 1), contextualized by key events in each crisis. These key events were selected based on their perceived impact on public opinion, occurring right before large spikes or plunges in data.

## FINDINGS

Despite the many similarities in the Kosovo and Syria crises, support for intervention varied greatly, indicated in Figure 1. The goal of this study is to isolate the variable responsible for the difference in results seen between the two cases.

A causal and interdependent relationship appears between media coverage, government action, and public opinion, common across Kosovo and Syrian cases. Among the factors relating Kosovo and Syria is the complex relationship between government policies, the media, and public opinion. The media drives public opinion, but is influenced indirectly by government policies. Public opinion, although impacted by the frequency of exposure to certain frames, is also influenced heavily by memory and context of previous governmental policies. This trinity while perhaps intuitive in hindsight, often combines to have unforeseeable results. This relationship establishes not just common variables between cases, but a common interaction between media coverage, public opinion, and government policy change.

These three variables share a complex relationship, with each component fueling the others. Public opinion feeds on media

<sup>28</sup> Guy Golan, "Inter-Media Agenda Setting and Global News Coverage," *Journalism Studies* 7, no. 2 (February 17, 2007): 323, accessed April 17, 2017.

<sup>29</sup> John Milton. Cooper, *The Vanity of Power; American Isolationism and the First World War, 1914-1917* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Pub. Corp., 1969), 271.

coverage, which follows the stories. The most interesting media fodder is provided by internet conjectures, coverage of American strategic changes, and military action. The government ultimately answers to the people for any action it takes, and hopes for approval in serious strategic shifts. For example, public opinion would not support direct action in Syria after Assad's use of chemical weapons. Then, in response to the "Red Line" breach, President Obama bequeathed the decision to a hostile congress, who effectively killed any possibility for intervention. In Kosovo, airstrikes generated more media coverage, focusing the public's attention on the area, causing them to support it- until it cost them something. After public opinion turned against airstrikes, the government advocated for ground troops which enjoyed a higher approval rating. The three variables act; sometimes concurring, and sometimes opposingly.

The similarities between cases go beyond their surface commonalities. Both countries have autocratic governments struggling with religiously motivated internal division. The former Yugoslav Republic, which once counted Kosovo as a part of its territory was majority ethnic Albanian, and resentment towards its Serbian rulers still rans deep. Syria's internal conflict revolves around pro-Assad forces, ISIS, and a rebel group, all of them hostile to the others. The source of the conflict in Yugoslavia was ethnic and religious between Muslim Albanians and Orthodox Serbs. In Syria the source was religious divisions among Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims. The Polity IV Project qualified Yugoslavia as an autocracy throughout the Kosovo crisis. Although data cuts off in 2013, the Polity Project has defined Syria as autocratic since 1970.<sup>30</sup>

Not only are Kosovo and Syria very similar in their internal politics, but the United States' reaction was similar as well. In both cases the United States joined coalition air strikes and considered using ground troops, but no ground troops were actually deployed.

This paper examines if media framing or collective memory could be the variable which explains the differences in public opinion.

### **MEDIA FRAMING**

Media framing is expected to explain the different public opinion reactions to the similar cases of Syria and Kosovo. This section is dedicated to analyzing media framing and collective memory to explain the changes to public support for military intervention in Syria and then Kosovo. The correlation between media coverage and public support is more nuanced than expected. When research began, a direct correlation between public opinion and the frequency of key words in the media was anticipated. Beyond this initial expectation, support for intervention and an increase in words like "genocide" and "suffering" appeared in the media indicating a framing effect was also expected. There should have been an inverse correlation with the appearance of words like "civil unrest" and "civil war", both of which imply that the conflict was between internal parties. This approach to the study was based in the perception that Americans see it as their responsibility to relieve suffering and prevent genocide, while they resist any effort to intervene in the affairs of sovereign nations.

In the Syria case study the key events which precede a major change in both public opinion and media coverage are the "Red Line,"

<sup>30</sup> Monty Marshall, "Polity IV Project: Political Regime Characteristics and Transitions, 1800-2013," Polity IV Project,

June 5, 2014, accessed April 24, 2017.

drawn in July, 2012; UN confirmed chemical weapons use in September, 2013. ISIS declared a caliphate in June of 2014 and rapidly expanded through Iraq and Syria in the following months. Its expansion prompted the first coalition airstrikes two months later. Russian airstrikes commenced a year later. See Figure 2.

This section compares each individual data line to public support for intervention. Upon examination of the graph, shown in Figure 3, three major spikes push the frequency scale over 200, Syrian President Assad's chemical weapons use, and the declaration of an Islamic Caliphate. Then there are minor media spikes of near one hundred. It happens that major shifts in US policy or in the strategic landscape correlate directly to the spikes in media coverage, which in turn relate directly to changes in public opinion. There is a trend of minor spikes in news coverage, followed by a reactionary major spike. A tertiary spike occurs in April of 2013, when President Obama declares a "Red Line" on chemical weapons in Syria. A major spike occurs in September of the same year after Assad uses chemical weapons, and the world looks to United States for a response to the "Red Line" violation. Minor spikes occur when ISIS seizes Raqqa, its first major city, in January of 2014; and when it takes Mosul and Takrit, in June of the same year. The secondary reactionary spike does not occur until the United States launches its first airstrikes, in September of 2014. The same pattern is seen in April of 2015 when ISIS' loss of Takrit is overshadowed by the reaction to Russian airstrikes in September of 2015. In each case, a major strategic change caused by the United States; and later, Russia, is the greatest generator of media coverage.

Ultimately, there appears to be no clear correlation that indicates a framing narrative pushed by the media and adopted by the

public. Indeed, there appears to be a positive correlation between mentions of civil war and the public's willingness to intervene, demonstrated back in Figure 2. Indeed, the two results appear to be flipped, with a greater positive correlation shown by the negative framing, and a greater negative correlation seen in the positive framing. Consequently, there appears to be no direct impact of media framing on public opinion. From the figure discussed above, it is clear that there is no direct correlation between the type of coverage and the response in public opinion.

The most compelling narrative occurs when considering the aggregate media attention in Syria explained by significant strategic events, demonstrated in Figure 3. Since the value based framing appears to be ineffective in predicting public opinion, consideration of frequency based framing is warranted. Examining aggregate media coverage better reflects public support for intervention, with the obvious exception of the chemical weapons use in 2013.

A challenge with the data presented is the lack of consistent polling data. There were large gaps in the data during which no polling was conducted. Where data existed, as many as five polls in one month asked nearly identical questions, indicating sporadic periods of intense interest followed by nothing. Although Syria was chosen as case study because of the availability of polling data and issue salience (indicated in Figure 3), it is still far from complete. Its absence means that this study, lacking precision, could have been made more complete had more evenly spaced polls been conducted.



## KOSOVO

The representation of data shows the same patterning trends of key political or military events followed by a spike in media coverage. The spike in coverage then leads a subsequent change in public opinion. This representation in the Syria case study appears to apply to Kosovo as well, Figure 4. Though January 1998, is the graphical starting point, however, hostilities between Yugoslav and Albanian Kosovars began long before 1998, when the first Kosovars were killed. The historical chronicling of events began when the Kosovars, who ruled with autonomy, came into conflict with Slobodan Milosevic, the president of Serbia. Milošević, the president of Serbia and Yugoslavia, began restricting their freedoms, and enflamed ethnic tension, already heightened by the breakup of Bosnia-Herzegovina in the mid-1990s. As Kosovo strained for its independence, Yugoslavia was determined to keep its, which heralded a bloody two years that would pull in many of the world's major powers.

January 1998- Ninety Kosovars die, victim of Serbian attacks. In reaction, the UN passes Resolution 1160, imposing an arms embargo on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia until the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Kosovar-Albanians open a dialog and the Serbs remove their troops from Kosovo. This generates initial public interest in the region; however, tensions continue to escalate despite the efforts of Europe.

While Syria's events are driven by dramatic events, Kosovo is the story of country slowly boiling over. The Kosovo situation slowly deteriorates as refugee numbers mount to 300,000 Kosovars, and NATO fighters conduct aerial demonstrations. Finally, NATO authorizes airstrikes in October, which causes a small spike in soon to be dissipated

public attention. Collapsing peace talks, the mal-targeted NATO air campaign—which bombs a civilian train killing twenty, and a refugee convoy killing an additional seventy civilians—generates even more attention. However, these news-worthy events are not associated with a drop in public opinion—rather support for air strikes continues to grow independent of media framing, as seen in March 1999, Figure 5.

Next, support for ground troops, though initially higher than that toward air strikes, drops as the level of the air campaign expands. The correlating historical record shows that in April alone, 400 additional airplanes were requested to support the bombing campaign. Conversely, public support for airstrikes falls off dramatically after an Apache crash sees two American casualties. An additional survey asked people if they would be willing to sustain casualties in the Kosovo situation. Before the crash, 78% said they would; after the crash, that number fell by almost half. Americans were willing to support Kosovo with treasure, but guarded blood jealously. Not detailed in the graph, but important to the validity of public opinion as a metric was overall awareness of the Kosovo crisis. Far from being ignorant of the issues, before airstrikes were conducted, a third of Americans were following the issue. After America engages in the air campaign, the involved number rises to almost 90 percent.

Besides the concurring spikes in December, 1998 caused by the Yugoslav and Serbian forces breaking the cease-fire, the media anti-intervention and the media pro-intervention frame appear to occur independently, as opposed to Syria where they were directly correlated. Different results between case studies would normally mean that the variable explains the difference in results. However, in this case, the difference does not appear to

correlate to changes in public opinion. Rather it relates to overall media coverage, as shown in Figure 4.

## DISCUSSION

This study finds that the public's opinions logically follow events and that the more the United States is invested in an area, the more people become interested in the region. These findings that public opinion is stable and well-reasoned do directly contradict the "Almond-Lippmann Consensus". Within the realms of this study public opinion as a metric has been validated, therefore remains the question: What drives public support for military intervention?

Some think that media frames determine the public's opinion, rather, we see that the media's role is to shine a light on issues frequently determined by the government. The "CNN effect," then, does not change public opinion instead, it is how the people see humanitarian crises in the context of previous conflicts that changes public opinion. Also conclusively greater total coverage had a greater influence on public opinion. The media can direct the focus of the public, but has little power to influence its opinions. Whether this is because people choose frames for emotional reasons, as the literature suggests, is outside the declared realm of this study. However, it could be the focus of future research.

Treated as isolated incidences, the public reactions to Kosovo and Syria appear to be random, but taken in the context of previous US interventions, the public's reaction is completely logical. President Obama's "Red Line" and Assad's subsequent use of chemical weapons is eerily similar to Saddam's use of chemical weapons against the Kurds, which brought about the First Gulf War. In even more recent memory is the 2003

invasion of Iraq, which was precipitated by outrage against weapons of mass destruction. The lack of an American response to the violation of our "Red Line," is consistent with the literature's support that the success of past interventions impacts the likelihood of future interventions. The public loosely categorizes American interventions abroad. As an example, Iraq was reminiscent of the First Gulf War, which was hugely successful. However, Syria is reminiscent of Iraq, which resulted in a decade long war without a successful outcome. In the people's eyes, ISIS is an extension of American policy failures in Iraq. Instead of seeing evil and trying to fix it, the public sees Syria as another Iraq waiting to happen.

Similarly, Russia's use of airstrikes in Syria brings back the eerie specter of the Cold War, a narrative made more compelling by Russian aggression in other areas. When Russia launched airstrikes in September of 2015, support for airstrikes specifically began to drop, falling off significantly, as media coverage of the skirmish decreased towards the middle of 2016.

With all other variables nearly identical, the difference between Syria and Kosovo was casualties. Kosovo was strongly reminiscent of Somalia, as the internal conflict and disproportionate level of media coverage can attest. The internal conflict with international mediators and UN intervention from the beginning, reminded Americans of what can happen when they send their sons and daughters overseas. It was for this reason that support for a NATO air campaign was so strong. When the phrasing of the polling questions changed to ask about unilateral action, support dropped by as many as twenty percentage points. As soon as Americans died, so did the support for that military action.

That support for airstrikes fell in Kosovo indicates that the connection to Somalia had been made. Americans were utterly casualty adverse. Simultaneously, the connection to Somalia was not completely formed, indicated by the remaining support for peacekeeping ground forces. Instead it appears that casualties invoked the collective memory of Somalia, and immediately changed public opinion and ultimately American policy.

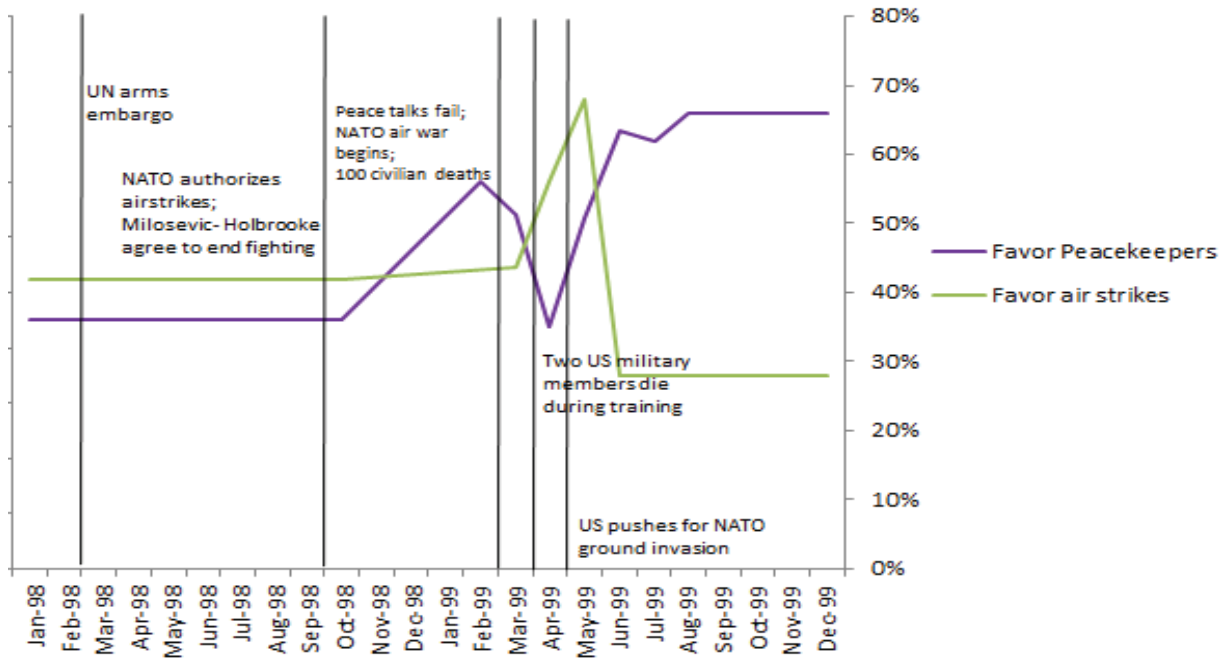
The responses to published opinion and public record of historical events should not be viewed as the only factors when international conflicts are happening in real time. Data points and data spikes cannot account for the knowledge known by actors at each point in the cycle of a crisis. Deeper correlations and causations may yet be brought to bear on recent history when revelations, and clearances time out.

### CONCLUSION

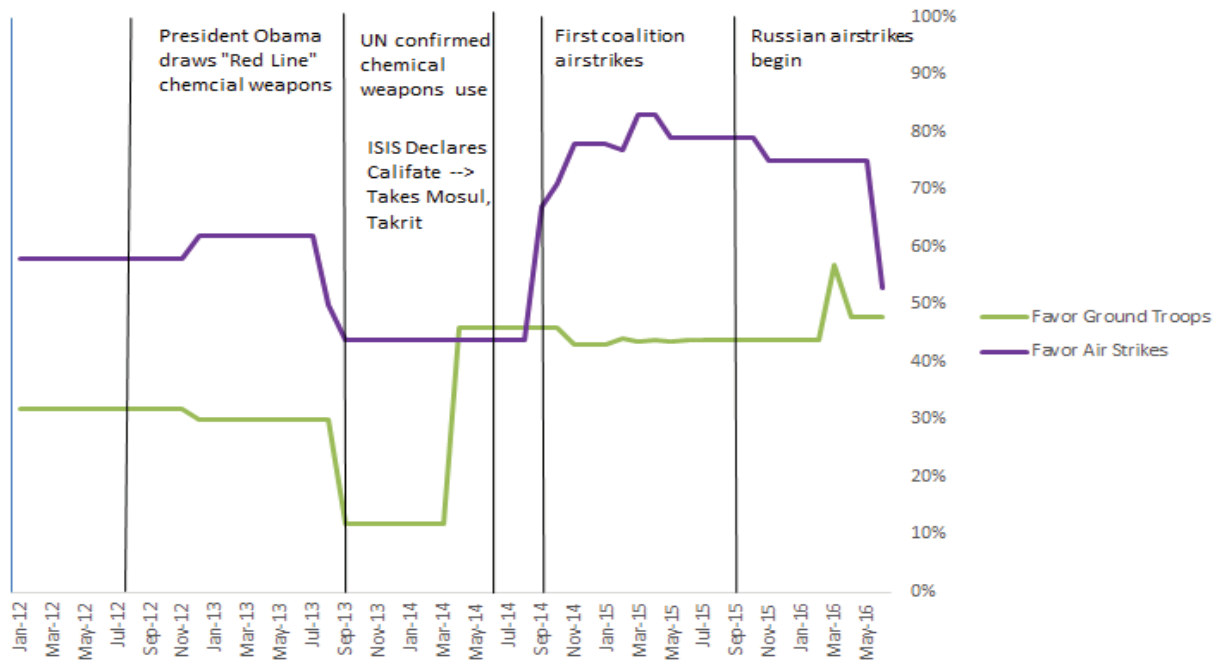
The government has the tremendous ability to shape public opinion and media through its policy. The government sets the agenda, and the media follows. The complex relationship between public opinion, government action, and the media provides the backbone of the similarities between cases, but the ultimate determiner of public opinion is the people themselves. The ideas and distillations of opinion leak out into not only polls and newspapers, but also into blogs and other social media. In fact, the media in all of its varying forms, acts as a conduit and catalyzer of public opinion, giving it a type of power. That power is far less than were it able to directly influence public opinion through specific frames. When all other variables are accounted for, it is the deaths of American servicemen in Kosovo that changed public opinion, summoning other frames of a similar helicopter crash just a few years prior.

Surely it is no secret to our government that American deaths bring both support and opposition to bear in international policies; it continues to be the government's job to justly protect and judiciously support. By extension, policies should never be made to sacrifice lives to change support for intervention. Though the media may focus attention like shining a flashlight on a vignette for a moment, it loses no lives, and sends no sons or daughters into harm's way.

Masked by sterile language and analysis, yet present throughout in the examples of Syria and Kosovo is another hideous truth: the morality of the public exists only until it is asked to sacrifice. For it is far easier to weep for the deaths of millions and call for intervention, knowing it will not happen, than it is to sacrifice your sons and daughters by the hundreds and thousands for an abstract ideal. Perhaps, this then is the difference between those who commit genocide and those who stand and do nothing. One side will kill for their ideal, but the other, though it weeps, will not be slain to promote their own.



### Kosovo Support for Intervention



### Syria Support for Intervention

Figure 1. Comparative public support for Kosovo and Syrian intervention.

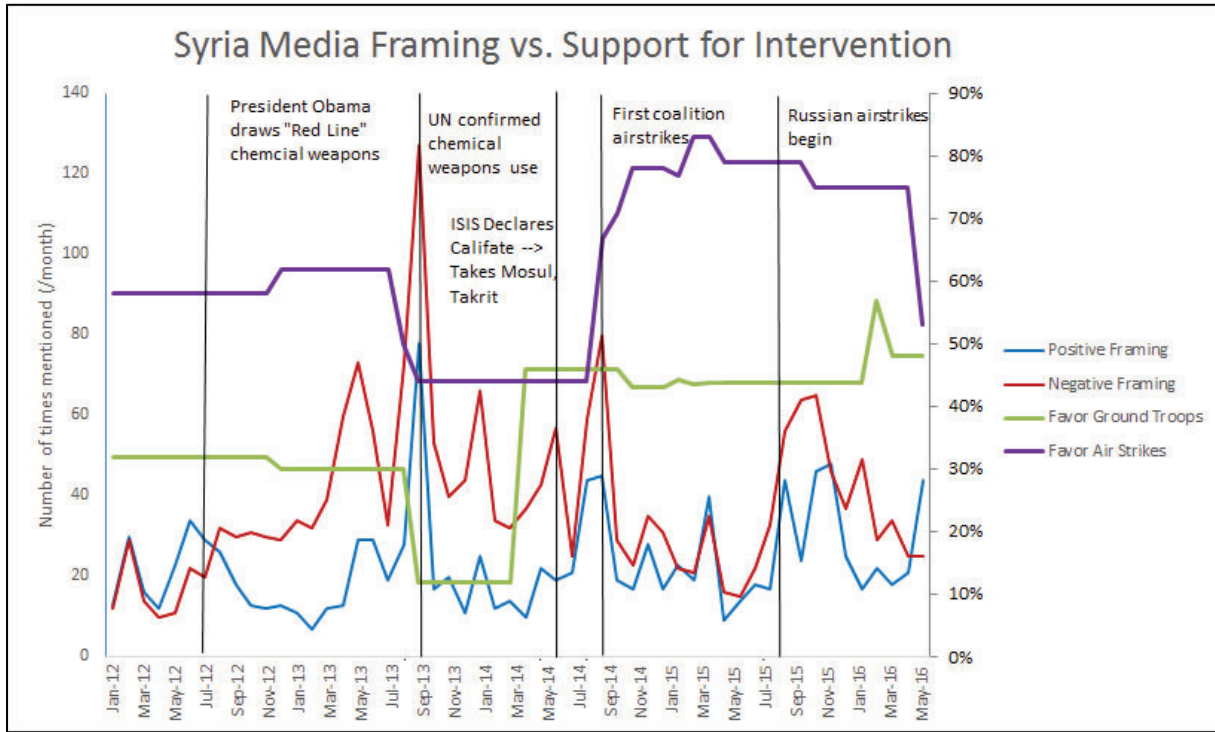


Figure 2. Positive and negative media framing for Syria versus support for military intervention.

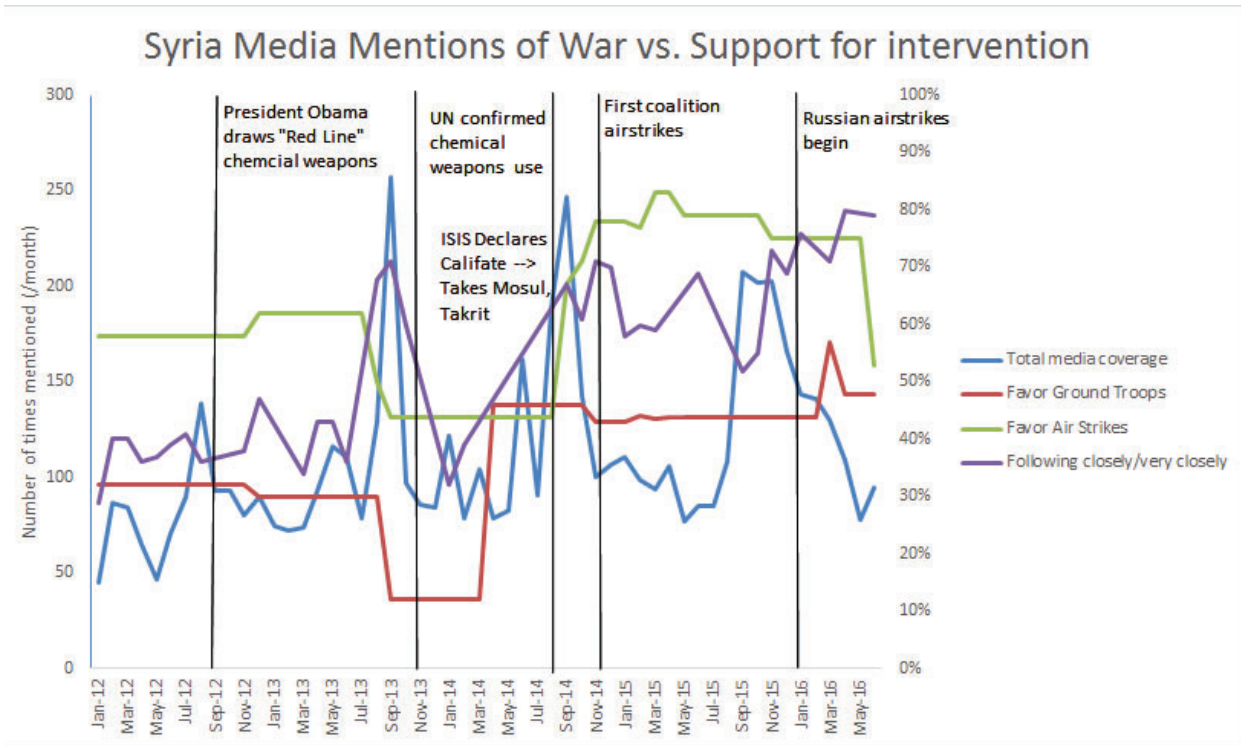


Figure 3. Aggregate media coverage, public support for intervention, with issue salience.

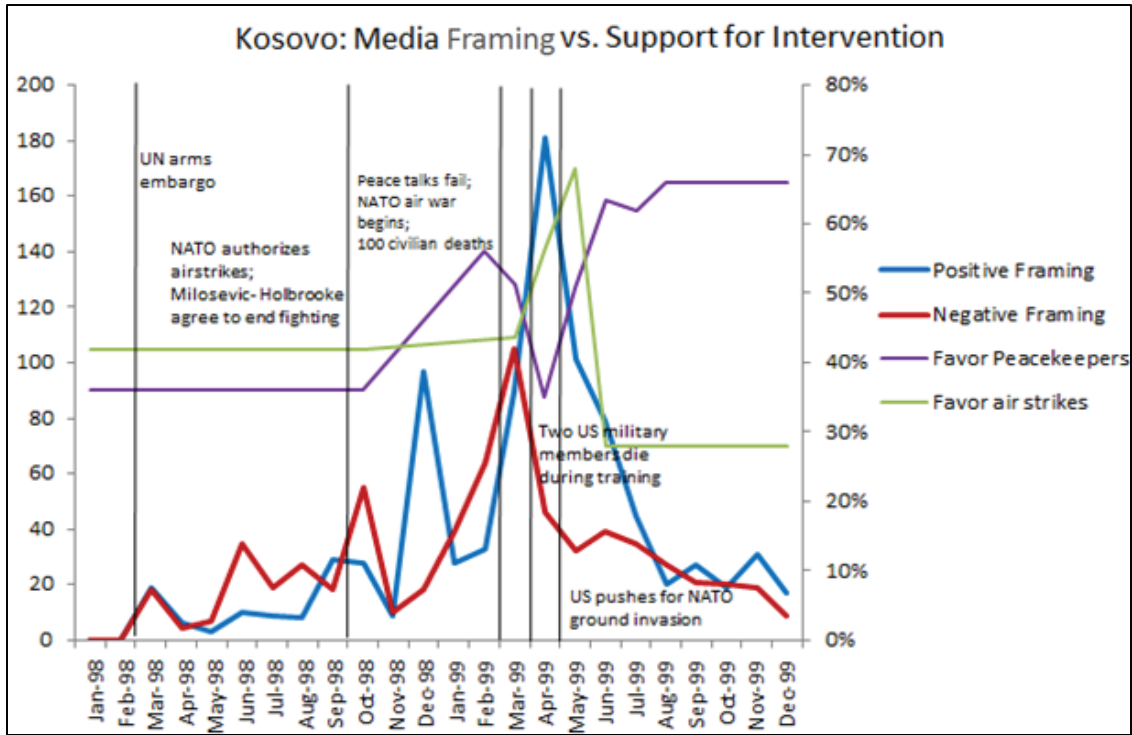


Figure 4. Overview of Kosovo media coverage and public support for military intervention.

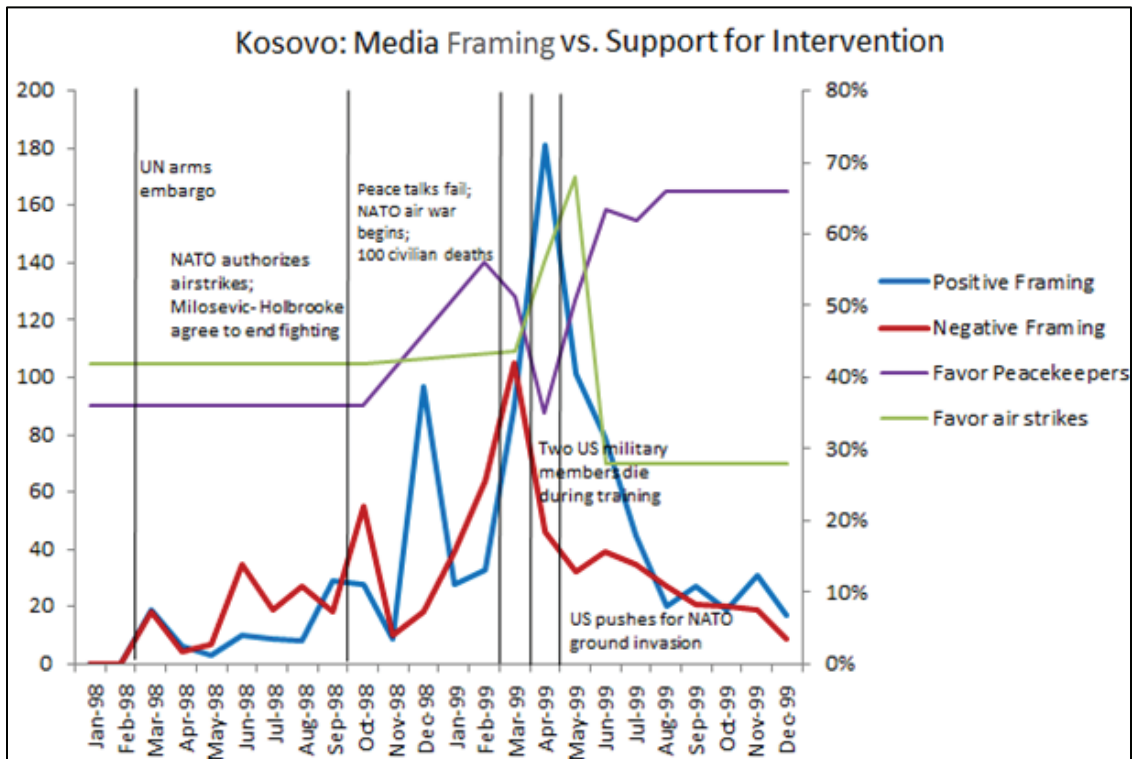


Figure 5. Positive and negative media framing for Syria versus support for military intervention.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Almond, Gabriel A. "Public Opinion and National Security Policy." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 20.2 (1956): 371-78.
- Bennett, Lance. "A View from the Academy." In *Taken by Storm: The Media, Public Opinion, and U.S. Foreign Policy in the Gulf War*, p. 10. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994.
- Chong, Dennis and Yael Wolinsky-Nahmias. "Green Fees: The Price of Open Space." In *Ambivalence, Politics, and Public Policy*, eds. MD Martinez, SC Craig, pp. 103–25. New York: Palgrave, 2005.
- Chong, Dennis, and James N. Druckman. "Framing Theory." *Annual Review of Political Science* 10.1 (2007): 103-26.
- Chong, Dennis, and Yael Wolinsky-Nahmias. "Managing Voter Ambivalence in Growth and Conservation Campaigns." *Ambivalence, Politics and Public Policy* (2005): 103-25.
- Cooper, John Milton. *The Vanity of Power; American Isolationism and the First World War, 1914-1917*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Pub. Corp., 1969.
- Druckman, J. N. "Evaluating Framing Effects." *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 22.1 (2001a): 91–101.
- Garson, Robert. "Culture, Identity and International Relations." *Ordering the International: History, Change and Transformation*. London: Pluto Press, 2004, pp. 189-97.
- Golan, Guy. "Inter-Media Agenda Setting and Global News Coverage." *Journalism Studies* 7.2 (2007): 323-33.
- Holsti, Ole R. "Public Opinion and Foreign Policy: Challenges to the Almond-Lippmann Consensus." Mershon Series: Research Programs and Debates. *International Studies Quarterly* 36.4 (1992): 439.
- John, Tara. "This Timeline Shows the Rise of ISIS." Time. October 15, 2015. Accessed December 15, 2016. <http://time.com/4030714/isis-timeline-islamic-state/>.
- Lippmann, Walter. *Essays in the Public Philosophy*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1951.
- Lippmann, Walter. *Public Opinion*. London: Allen & Unwin, 1922.
- Marshall, Monty. "Polity IV Project: Political Regime Characteristics and Transitions, 1800-2013." Polity IV Project. June 5, 2014.
- Nelson, T.E. and D.R. Kinder. "Issue Frames and Group-Centrism in American Public Opinion." *J. Polit.* 58 (1996): 1055–78.
- Nelson, Thomas E., and Donald R. Kinder. "Issue Frames and Group-Centrism in American Public Opinion." *The Journal of Politics* 58.4 (1996): 1055-1078.
- News, BBC. "Syria profile - Timeline." BBC News. December 05, 2016. Accessed December 15, 2016. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-14703995>.
- "Polls - Roper Center." Roper Center for Public Opinion Research. Accessed December 15, 2016. <http://ropercenter.cornell.edu/polls/>.
- Shapiro, R. Y., and B. I. Page. "Foreign Policy and the Rational Public." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 32.2 (1988): 211-47.

Sniderman, P.M. and S.M. Theriault. "The Structure of Political Argument and the Logic of Issue Framing." In W.E. Saris & P.M. Sniderman, eds. *Studies in Public Opinion*, pp. 133–165. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004.

Western, Jon, and Joshua S. Goldstein. "Humanitarian Intervention Comes of Age: Lessons from Somalia to Libya." *Foreign Affairs* 90.6 (2011): 48-59.

Zaller, John R. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

#### WORKS REFERENCED

Brewer, P.R., J. Graf, and L. Willnat. "Priming or Framing: Media Influence on Attitudes toward Foreign Countries." *Int. J. Commun. Stud.* 65 (2003): 493–508.

Druckman, J.N. "On the Limits of Framing Effects: Who Can Frame?" *The Journal of Politics*, 63 (2001b): 1041–1066.

Druckman, J.N. "The Implications of Framing Effects for Citizen Competence." *Polit. Behav.* 23 (2001c): 225–56.

Gamson, W.A. and A. Modigliani. "The Changing Culture of Affirmative Action." In R. D. Braungart, ed. *Research in Political Sociology*, Vol. 3, pp. 137–177. Greenwich, CT: JAI, 1987.

Keren, Gideon, James Druckman, and Payson Wild. *Perspectives on Framing*. New York: Psychology Press, 2011.

Kinder, D.R. and L.M. Sanders. *Divided By Color: Racial Politics and Democratic Ideals*. Chicago: Univ. Chicago Press, 1996.

Scheufele, D.A. "Framing as a Theory of Media Effects." *J. Commun.* 49 (1999): 103–22.