

**DOMESTIC AUDIENCES, POLICY FEEDBACK, AND SEQUENTIAL
DECISIONS DURING MILITARY INTERVENTIONS**

A Dissertation

by

DOUGLAS WALTER KUBERSKI

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

December 2009

Major Subject: Political Science

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Approved by:

Chair of Committee,	Nehemia Geva
Committee Members,	Michael Koch
	Guy Whitten
	Charles Hermann
Head of Department,	James Rogers

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ABSTRACT

Domestic Audiences, Policy Feedback, and Sequential Decisions During Military Interventions. (December 2009)

Douglas Walter Kuberski, B.A., University of Nebraska, M.A., University of Akron

Chair of Advisory Committee: Dr. Nehemia Geva

The literature on escalation situations and audience costs suggests that democratic executives tend to increase commitment to a foreign policy in response to negative feedback. However, real-world cases from international politics suggest otherwise. Specifically, executives do not appear to respond uniformly to failing situations. While scholars have begun to unravel the audience cost mechanism, up until now, we know little about reasons for the variation in how executives use policy feedback to update commitment to a foreign policy.

In this dissertation, I adopt an integrative approach and present a model of sequential decision-making that explains the conditions under which leaders escalate and de-escalate commitment in response to feedback. I attempt to break down the audience cost mechanism to explain why democratic executives do not respond uniformly to negative feedback. While the literature on the escalation of commitment suggests decision-makers tend to increase investment in the face of negative feedback, my theory suggests that under certain conditions, executives may find it politically advantageous to

back down from a failing policy. My theory emphasizes the relationship between citizens, executives, and foreign policy effectiveness.

Next, I suggest that the foreign policy tool of military intervention provides a suitable test case for a theory of sequential decision-making. I first test hypotheses derived from the theory regarding the preference formation process of democratic citizens during the course of such an episode. Understanding the response of citizens to feedback is an important first step to understanding the updating decisions of democratic executives. While previous work has relied on aggregate survey data, experimentation provides me with the ability to analyze how an individual citizen's preference over commitment is impacted by policy feedback. The results of the experimental analyses suggest that citizens act as investors: they favor increasing commitment to military interventions when viewing negative feedback, up to a point.

I then test the main hypotheses derived from the theory regarding executive decision-making on a dataset of major power military interventions from 1960-2000. Overall, the results support the hypotheses: public approval conditions the manner in which executives use feedback to update intervention commitments. In the conclusion, I summarize the study by highlighting key results, present the broad implications for the study of democratic foreign policy making, and discuss avenues for future research.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is about executive decision-making during the course of a foreign policy episode. In it, I present and test an explanation of foreign policy updating, which emphasizes the manner in which citizens condition how executives process policy feedback. Specifically, I focus on the sequential decisions executives make regarding commitment levels during the course of a military intervention.

Military interventions can be viewed as investments: executives invest resources abroad to achieve a particular objective. As the literature on sequential investment decisions from social psychological and organization behavior suggests, when making sequential decisions regarding commitment levels, decision-makers attend to feedback on a previous decision to allocate resources that were intended to achieve an objective (Brockner 1992; Staw 2002; 1976; Staw and Ross 1989). Interestingly, scholarship in this area has highlighted an interesting phenomenon: individuals tend to become locked in to an existing course of action and respond to negative feedback by increasing resources invested to a previous project even though it is unclear whether increasing commitment will lead to the attainment of objectives (Brockner 1992; Dietz-Uhler 1996; Ross and Staw 1991; Staw 2002; Staw and Ross 1989). While self-justification biases

This dissertation follows the style of *American Political Science Review*.

have been highlighted as a major cause of escalation (Brockner 1992; Brockner and Rubin 1985; Rubin and Brockner 1975; Staw 2002; 1976), scholars have pointed to the need for decision-makers to avoid exposing their mistakes to others, or to “save face,” as a major cause for escalating commitment in the face of a failing decisions (Brockner, Rubin, and Lang 1981; Fox and Staw 1979; Staw and Ross 1989).

Similarly, the literature on international crises has emphasized the role of audience costs in sequential decision-making. As Fearon (1994) suggests, democratic executives tend to make commitment decisions, especially regarding the potential use of force, in front of domestic audiences. Once commitment to a given course of action has been announced, democratic leaders find it difficult to back down, as citizens tend to punish them at the polls (Bueno de Mesquita and Siverson 1995). As a result, executives tend to “save face” with the electorate and avoid punishment at the polls by escalating commitment to a course of action when their threats are met (Baum 2004a; Tomz 2007). Therefore, scholars have suggested that democracies find it easier to send credible signals of resolve than autocracies, and that by generating audience costs, are more likely to prevail in a crisis (Eyerman and Hart 1997; Fearon 1994; Partell and Palmer 1999; Schultz 1999; 1998).¹

However, as recent formal work on audience costs suggests, not all audience costs are created equally. As Prinz (2003) and Schultz (1998), argue, the strength of the audience cost mechanism in explaining escalation behavior depends on the stability of participation in democracies. Additionally, Slantchev (2003) suggests variation in the

¹ For work on autocratic audience costs, see Weeks (2008).

institutional protections guaranteeing free media can alter the ability of democratic executives to generate audience costs and thus effectively signal resolve. And interestingly, Smith (1996) suggests that domestic conditions affect the vulnerability of democratic executives to audience costs. While Schultz (2001) points out difficulties in directly testing the audience cost mechanism, what can be empirically tested is whether executives act as if all potential audience costs are not created equally.

Real-world intervention behavior by democratic executives suggests that executives do not treat all potential audience costs uniformly. For example, while President Bush escalated commitment to Iraq in response to negative feedback in 2003 and 2004, President Reagan decreased commitment to Lebanon in response to such feedback in 1983 and 1984. What explains such behavior? Why, under certain conditions do executives escalate commitment in response to negative feedback, while in others they decrease commitment?

In this dissertation, I present a model of sequential decision-making that explains the conditions under which leaders escalate and de-escalate commitment in response to feedback. In building from recent formal work in the literature on audience costs, I attempt to break down the audience cost mechanism to explain why democratic executives do not respond uniformly to negative feedback. While the literature on the escalation of commitment suggests decision-makers tend to increase investment in the face of negative feedback, my theory suggests that under certain conditions, executives may find it politically advantageous to back down from a failing policy.

“Wars of Choice”

The foreign policy tool of military intervention offers a suitable test case for examining updating decisions of executives. Its use has increased in popularity among executives of powerful democratic states since the end of the Cold War. The break up of the Soviet Union has unleashed a number of newly independent states, many of which have subsequently witnessed volatile domestic situations as a result of power vacuums and ethnic tensions. Additionally, the end of the bipolar conflict has lifted constraints on executives who were previously limited in their use of the intervention tool with the potentiality of a standoff with the Soviet Union (Duffield and Prendergast 1994). In responding to regional and civil crises, policymakers have used a variety of intervention strategies ranging from the use of purely military, monetary, or mixed instruments in the hopes of ameliorating various threats to international security (Crocker, Hampson, and Aall 1996). Interestingly, long viewed to be a controversial encroachment upon another state’s sovereignty, intervening in another state militarily to garner influence over political outcomes has become an accepted foreign policy tool. Executives of powerful democratic states have increasingly favored it as a tool of foreign policy to accomplish numerous political objectives ranging from regime change and democratization, to managing internal conflicts, and furthering humanitarian objectives and stability abroad (Hermann and Kegley 1996; Kegley and Hermann 1996; Talentino 2005; Tillema 1994).

Political commentators have referred to military interventions as “wars of choice,” and have suggested that the tool’s flexibility, which provides leaders with control over entering and exiting a situation, has also contributed to its popularity in the

post-Cold War world (Betts 1994; Smith 1994). Whether entering complex internal situations with humanitarian concerns such as Somalia or Yugoslavia, or ones that have been tagged as necessary for regime change such as Haiti, executives of powerful democratic states such as the United States have significant leeway in terms of when to enter, decisions made during the course of an intervention, and when to exit.

Accordingly, academic research has increasingly tackled issues regarding interventions involving the use of force. Specifically, in building from the literature on the use of force in general, scholarship on interventions has largely focused on initial decision to intervene and the duration of such interventions. The literature has also highlighted the complex role of domestic politics and public opinion in particular in sparking initial decisions to intervene militarily and subsequent decisions to leave interventions involving a variety of political objectives, from humanitarian concerns, to ending civil strife, to regime change or stability.

The concern over the influences on intervention policies, in following the broad literature on the use of force, has illuminated a number of interesting relationships between systemic factors, domestic politics, and public opinion on decisions of democratic states to intervene and withdraw. However, as I highlight below, the literature on interventions has not produced a comprehensive theory for explaining how leaders update commitment levels during the course of an intervention. As work on the escalation of commitment and the audience cost mechanism suggests, policy feedback and domestic audiences play a role. In this dissertation, I build from these literatures and

present a theory on how feedback and audiences interact to influence the updating decisions of democratic executives.

Thus, in this dissertation, I ask the following questions: what is the role of policy feedback in the sequential decision-making process of executives? How do domestic political factors interact with international factors to influence the sequential foreign policy decisions of democratic executives? To address these concerns, I construct a general model of sequential foreign policy making and examine the sequential decision-making process executives undertake during the course of a military intervention. I emphasize the relationship between citizens, executives, and military intervention effectiveness. In addressing these concerns, I highlight the importance of decision-frames in enhancing our understanding of the relationship between domestic and international factors.

In this chapter, I first discuss the previous literature on the use of force and emphasize the domestic political approach to conflict behavior. Then, I provide an overview of the literature on military interventions and suggest that work on commitment and audience costs can be used to shed light on the processes by which executives prosecute such conflicts. I conclude by providing a roadmap of the dissertation and how I will address the research questions by combining experimental and large-N data analyses in a multi-method approach. By examining the interactive relationship between domestic and international factors on executive foreign policy making, I aim to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on the connection between domestic politics and international relations.

Domestic Politics and the Use of Force

As scholars have uncovered the empirical regularity that democracies rarely fight one another (see Babst 1972; Levy 1988; Maoz and Russett 1993; Ray 1998), they have shifted their focus from systemic factors associated with power politics to domestic political factors in explaining decisions over the use of force. Increasingly, scholarship has opened the black box of democracy to focus on the influence of domestic political factors, both in terms of incentives and constraints, on decisions over the use of force (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003; Clark and Nordstrom 2005; Palmer, London and Regan 2004; Reiter and Tillman 2002). Empirical evidence suggests that variation in the institutional structure across democracies in addition to variation in an incumbent's electoral prospects help explain executive decisions over when to use force and when to halt hostilities abroad.

Within the literature, the role of the public in executive decision-making over the use of force has produced mixed findings concerning decisions to send and to withdraw forces from military conflicts. On the one hand, scholars have found that lower public approval rates of executives in the U.S. and the U.K. increase their propensity to use force internationally (DeRouen 1995; Foster and Palmer 2006; Morgan and Anderson 1999). On the other hand, other research suggests U.S. presidents are more likely to use force when public approval is high, as it gives them more maneuverability (James and Oneal 1991; Ostrom and Job 1986). Additionally, research on decisions to withdraw forces from abroad has produced mixed results, with some scholars finding a positive relationship between domestic support of democratic executives and duration of military

conflict (Bennett and Stam 1996; 1998), and others finding a negative relationship (Meernik and Brown 2007).

Domestic Politics and Intervention Decisions

As the specific use of force known as military intervention has increased in popularity in the post-Cold War era, academic interest in the subject has also increased. While the literature on interventions has examined purely military, non-military, and mixed interventions, the bulk of the literature has focused on explaining decisions over the use of force. Scholars of military interventions have generally accepted Blechman and Kaplan's (1978) definition that such instances consist of actions "taken by one or more components of the uniformed armed military services as part of a deliberative attempt by the national authorities to influence or be prepared to influence, specific behavior of individuals in another nation...(12)" While varying degrees of military interventions for a variety of political objectives have been examined, the literature has similarly continued to focus on explaining initial deployment decisions and decisions to withdraw forces, while largely overlooking the decisions made during the course of an intervention regarding variation in levels of commitment.²

Under the realist paradigm, initial efforts to study military intervention decisions emphasized systemic factors. Specifically, early scholarship on interventions suggested

² Scholarship has also examined outcomes of military interventions into a variety of external environments for a variety of political objectives (i.e. promoting democracy, ending civil wars, humanitarian assistance and stability, etc.). Specifically, given the rise of political commentary questioning the utility of military interventions abroad, scholars have sought to explain variation in effectiveness of achieving objectives (see Carment and Rowlands 1998; DeRouen and Sobek 2004; Hermann and Kegley 2001; Meernik 1996; Pickering and Kisangan 2006; Regan 1996).

leaders only employ force abroad when clear national interests are involved (Bull 1984; Morgenthau 1967). In the context of the Cold War, scholars emphasized the geostrategic factors, such as alliance politics, geography, and potential ramification on the distribution of power, in explaining decisions by the major powers to intervene militarily in the Third World (Feste 1992).

However, as scholarship on the use of force, in general, has continually adopted domestic political approaches to explain decision-making, the literature on military interventions has similarly progressed. Scholarship in this regard has emphasized the influence of domestic politics on initial decisions to intervene militarily into a variety of situations abroad. For example, Carment and James (1996) adopt Putnam's (1988) two-level game framework for understanding the interaction between domestic and international factors and its influence on military interventions abroad. Their case study work demonstrates that the relative autonomy of the leader in combination with the distribution of political gains and losses at the domestic level connected to ethnic constituencies explains intervention into ethnic conflicts, such as India's intervention into Sri Lanka. Specifically, Carment and James (1996) emphasize the role of ethnic affinities between the potential intervener and the target and find the greater the cross-boundary connection, the more likely intervention is to occur.

Others have focused on explaining intervention decisions in terms of their domestic political consequences. Taliaferro (2004) and Yoon (1997) suggest leaders are more likely to intervene to avoid perceived losses to their relative domestic and international power. Scholarship has demonstrated this relationship in interventions with

humanitarian goals, such as President Bush's concern over his legacy with regards to Somalia, and in those involving internal wars in the context of the Cold War security environment (Butler 2003; Western 2002). While Regan (1998) concedes that domestic concerns over humanitarian issues play a role in decisions to intervene, his analysis suggests that decision-makers tend to stay away from highly intense intrastate conflicts, where the probability of a successful intervention is lower than less intense conflicts. Interestingly, research suggests when interventions are undertaken to avoid losses (either domestic or international), leaders tend to stay involved for longer periods of time (see Taliaferro 2004).

Others have compared democratic and non-democratic regimes in terms of their intervention decisions. Kegley and Hermann (1996) demonstrate the proclivity of democracies to use interventionary methods to resolve conflicts, and specifically, to aim their efforts at non-democracies. Moreover, Meernik (1996) suggests that the length of such interventions by democracies has increased in the post-Cold War era due to fact that the restraints of the bipolar competition have been lifted. However, Bueno de Mesquita and Downs (1996) point to cases such as the French intervention in Chad to support the Habre government to suggest examining such cases may be difficult, as the stated goal of democratization tends to be incompatible with the interests of an intervener's constituency.

As the above review highlights, the literature on the uses of force in general and on military interventions in particular has produced a number of interesting insights concerning the connection between domestic politics and the use of force in a wide

variety of contexts. Specifically, leaders of democratic states appear to take the perceived domestic political consequences of their actions into account when deciding to intervene and to withdraw forces from abroad. The role of public opinion in this process, however, continues to remain a debated subject.

Additionally, during the course of an intervention, leaders are able to make a series of decisions regarding commitment levels in order to alter outcomes: military interventions are not costly lotteries where leaders decide to send force abroad and then hope for the best in terms of achieving objectives. In this dissertation, therefore, I examine decisions involving levels of commitment during the course of military interventions by democracies in light of domestic political explanations on the use of force. By looking at the various decisions democratic executives make concerning commitment to military interventions, I aim to explain variation in decisions across an episode of this increasingly popular tool of foreign policy, and, to further our understanding of the relationship between public opinion and the use of force abroad by executives.

In this dissertation, therefore, I develop a theory of sequential foreign-policy making. Given the renewed interest in military interventions, I test specific research hypotheses derived from the theory with regards to military intervention decisions. In doing so, I aim to add to our understanding of the relationship between democratic citizens and executives concerning decisions over the use of force abroad. As the literature on commitments suggests, policy feedback plays a significant role in the decision-making process of democratic executives. However, the literature on the use of

force suggests executives make updating decisions over commitment in front of their domestic audiences. Thus, how citizens impact the manner in which executives use such information to update foreign policies is the primary concern of this dissertation.

Outlining the Study

In this section, I outline my efforts at analyzing military intervention decisions by democratic executives and how I intend to address the aforementioned puzzles.

Chapter II: I analyze the implications of relaxing the costly lottery assumption for various tools of foreign policy and adopt Billings and Hermann's (1998) conceptualization of sequential decision-making. In order to build from this conceptualization of the foreign policy decision-making process to construct a theory capable of explaining sequential decisions of democratic executives, I review the literature on the domestic politics approach to foreign policy making, discuss recent attempts at constructing a dynamic approach to foreign policy making, and provide an overview of decision-making approaches to foreign policy.

As the review of literature suggests, the domestic politics approach provides a valuable insight: executives are influenced by their domestic circumstances when updating a policy and take the domestic consequences for maintaining political power into account when deciding on foreign policy. Specifically, the preferences of citizens come to play a role in the foreign policy-making process. In combining several lines of research, however, I suggest that executives are freer to ignore citizen preferences when their hold on power is relatively strong.

But, the literature on dynamic approaches to foreign policy highlights the importance of policy feedback, or information regarding the effectiveness of previously implemented policies, in the decision-calculi of executives. As I outline, scholars tend to assume domestic politics away and focus purely on the influences of that information on policy updating. In order to build a theory capable of explaining sequential decisions, and particularly, how executives process information from the domestic and international realms, I advocate an integrative approach that combines the insights of the domestic politics, dynamic, and decision-making approaches to foreign policy making.

Chapter III: I build from the previous literature and present a theory of sequential foreign policy making, which I label Sequential Decision Theory (SDT). I begin by outlining three foundational assumptions of the theory: foreign policies are not costly lotteries, executives are primarily concerned with maintaining political power, and both citizens and executives are impacted by frames. Then, with regards to the first stage of the theory, I outline specific assumptions regarding citizens: 1) They act as investors concerned over the return of public goods, 2) are affected by a decision-frame driven by the direction of policy feedback, and 3) assess policy feedback by focusing on the movement in dominant indicators provided by the mass media. Based upon these assumptions concerning citizen preferences, I present three general propositions regarding their preference formation process.

As for the second stage of the theory, I assume the following with regards to executives: 1) are investors in their foreign policies, 2) evaluate the performance of their foreign policies based on policy feedback that consists of movement in dominant

indicators, 3) view policy feedback in a particular domestic context, and 4) are affected by a decision-frame driven by their level of public support. Thus, SDT suggests as a result of the desire to maintain political power, executives are influenced by a conditional framing effect. In other words, public support conditions the manner in which executives process policy feedback in deciding on policy updates. Based upon these assumptions concerning executive decision-making, I present four general propositions regarding the sequential decision-making process of executives. I conclude the chapter by reviewing the conditions under which public opinion comes to influence executive decision-making during the course of foreign policy updating.

Overall, the theory emphasizes not all audience costs are created equally, and depending on the effectiveness of a policy and the domestic context, executives are more or less willing to incur them.

Chapters IV & V: SDT suggests executives are vulnerable to suffering audience costs after initiating an intervention and they tend to anticipate public reactions so as to gauge the likely amount of audience costs they will suffer for deciding on a policy update. But, are there systematic influences on these preferences over such a policy over time? Rather than rely on public opinion data, in this chapter, I conduct original experiments to generate wider variation in the independent variables of interest and to examine a citizen's preference formation process across different informational contexts. Specifically, given SDT is a general model of sequential foreign policy making I test the implications of the model in the context of both military interventions and foreign aid operations to increase the study's generalizability. Students at Texas

A&M University took part in the experiments, which presented them with information about a hypothetical international crisis modeled after the situation in Somalia in the early 1990's.

In Chapter IV, I manipulate the direction of policy feedback regarding intervention policy, the strategic importance of the host state, and the type of intervention that was initially undertaken by the executive in a context where citizens can compare current feedback to the previous time period only. The results of the first experiment suggest a significant main effect of the direction of feedback on level of ongoing support for the intervention. Interestingly, they also suggest that the type of intervention mediates the impact that feedback has on citizen preferences: citizens' domain sensitivity appears to be heightened when viewing information on purely military operations.

In Chapter V, I relax the informational assumptions of the model and enable a history of feedback to be present where citizens can compare feedback across an entire year (or twelve one month intervals). Not only do I manipulate the direction of feedback in both military and monetary operations, but, also the feedback trends and whether rapid or gradual movements in a particular direction characterize the history. The results of the experimental analysis suggest that the manner in which information is presented to citizens matters, as they tend to decrease support when viewing a rapid acceleration in movement.

Chapter VI: While the results of the experimental analyses suggest citizens respond to feedback similarly across military and monetary interventions, they also

highlight the heightened domain sensitivity of citizens when viewing information on military interventions. Thus, in this chapter I analyze executive decisions over the use of force. In building from previous literature on public opinion and the use of force, I derive specific hypotheses from Sequential Decision Theory that emphasize the interaction between executives and their citizens during the course of a military intervention. I then test these hypotheses using a dataset of thirty-four military interventions by France, the United Kingdom, and the United States from 1960-2000.

Results of the empirical analysis suggest, in line with the theory, that public approval conditions the effect policy feedback has on involvement. When working with low approval rates, executives tend to increase their hostility level towards a target when faced with an increasingly hostile target. However, when working with high approval rates, executives tend to decrease their hostility level towards a target when faced with an increasingly hostile target. Overall, the results support the logic of Sequential Decision Theory and its emphasis on the audience cost mechanism: executives take more risks at lower levels of approval, as the suffering of audience costs would likely lead to the removal of their political power. However they appear to take fewer risks at higher levels of approval, as the suffering of audience costs is less likely to jeopardize their hold on political power.

Chapter VII: In this chapter, I summarize the dissertation, highlighting the main predictions of SDT and the results of the empirical analysis. Special emphasis is given to the relationship between citizens and executives in the crafting of foreign policy. Additionally, I offer a detailed discussion of the theory in light of two cases of U.S.

military interventions abroad. While evidence, both quantitative and qualitative, generally supports the theory, I discuss the limitations of the study and potential avenues for future research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

How do democratic executives update commitment levels to foreign policy? One conceptualization of the sequential-decision process has been largely overlooked, and as I argue, it provides a foundation upon which scholars seeking to construct a theory of sequential decision-making can build. Billings and Hermann (1998) conceptualize sequential decision-making via a process that includes determination of goals, policy implementation, receiving and evaluating information as to how well that policy is achieving goals, and a follow-on choice. Their emphasis is on leaders' decisions to update policy based on a policy's effectiveness over time. And much like scholars unraveling the costly-lottery assumption, they suggest that foreign policy decision-making consists not only of leaders implementing policy, but also reevaluating policy and updating based on information concerning effectiveness and ability to achieve objectives. If scholars are to move away from their emphasis on initial decisions to also explaining sequential ones, adopting such a conceptualization of foreign policy making is a necessary starting point. From this, the key explanatory variables and causal mechanisms driving the foreign policy updating process can be identified, measured, and tested.

In order to build from this conceptualization to construct a theory capable of explaining sequential decisions of democratic executives, I draw from the literature on foreign policy making. In this chapter, I highlight essential insights provided by the

domestic politics and dynamic approaches³ to foreign policy making to be used in the construction of Sequential Decision Theory (SDT) in the following chapter. While I focus on executive decisions over the use of force, as foreign policy tools involving the military tend to produce highly salient foreign policy episodes, I build a framework that enables a plausible analysis of active foreign policies, whether military, monetary, or diplomatic in nature.

I begin by outlining the domestic politics approach to foreign policy making, highlighting the implications of the office-seeking assumption on sequential foreign policy making. As I note, crucial to this assumption is the role of citizens in the foreign policy making process in democratic states. Then, I review recent attempts at constructing a dynamic approach to foreign policy making and devote considerable attention to the role of policy feedback. After exploring both the insights and shortcomings of these approaches in contributing to a comprehensive theory of sequential decision-making, I then provide an overview of decision-making approaches to foreign policy and ways in which they might fill in the gaps created by the former approaches. I conclude by reviewing the contributions of the previous literature regarding sequential foreign policy making, and highlight the theoretical building blocks of Sequential Decision Theory (SDT).

³ Dynamic approaches attempt to explain foreign policy change, and as such, seek to explain the evolution of a foreign policy (whether a specific foreign policy or a general foreign policy paradigm), over time.

The Domestic Politics Approach to Foreign Policy Making

While research shows regime type impacts foreign policy making (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 1999; Levy 1988; Maoz and Russett 1993), scholars have recently shifted their focus towards differences within regimes. Differences within democracies and authoritarian regimes have been posited to create specific incentives for or constraints on leaders to take certain actions on the international scene (Bueno de Mesquita and Siverson 1995; Peceny et al. 2002; Reiter and Stam 1998; Reiter and Tillman 2002). As I outline below, the scholarly emphasis on the interaction between democratic leaders and their citizens in the crafting of foreign policy has produced a number of interesting insights.

One common framework deals with diversionary behavior. Literature on this phenomenon suggests that leaders may look to pick a fight with an external foe in order to divert attention away from domestic troubles and bolster their hold on power (DeRouen 1995; Levy 1988). In terms of democratic executives, scholars have argued this is due to the “rally effect,” or the tendency of democratic publics to increase their support of executives after force is used abroad (Brody 1991; Jordan and Page 1992; Mueller 1973). Others, however, suggest that executives use force to demonstrate competence to voters, and hence, the nature and outcomes of foreign excursions matter for power maintenance (Richards et al. 1993; Tarar 2006).

Additionally, scholars have adopted an audience cost framework for explaining foreign policy behavior, especially in terms of international crises. Literature on audience costs broadly suggests that once leaders make a crisis a public event by either

deploying troops or making threats, they will suffer audience costs or be punished by their domestic audiences for backing down from a stated course of action (Fearon 1994; Schultz 2001; Tomz 2007). As Baum (2004a) suggests, public scrutiny raises the potential political price of a bad foreign policy outcome. In other words, leaders who escalate a crisis and then back down jeopardize their hold on office. Because of the potential domestic backlash for being called on a bluff, research suggests democratic leaders have been shown to have bargaining leverage and are able to communicate intentions effectively (Eyerman and Hart 1997; Partell and Palmer 1999).

However, Schultz (1998) and Prinz (2003) argue the strength of the audience cost mechanism in explaining dispute reciprocation depends on the stability of political participation. Additionally, Slantchev (2003) suggests the ability of democratic leaders to generate audience costs depends on the institutional protections guaranteeing freedom of the media from political manipulation. Under those conditions where leaders are able to generate audience costs, they have been shown to “gamble for resurrection” by forestalling defeat and escalating conflict involvement in the hopes of maintaining domestic support (Downs and Rocke 1994). Hence, under certain conditions, actions taken by democratic leaders are seen as costly signals, as admitting a prior action was made in error is seen as a less advantageous action than standing firm on a dangerous policy.

While the literature on domestic political explanations for foreign policy behavior is vast, scholars have adopted a common assumption: a leader’s main objective is to maintain political power. Recognizing such a powerful assumption, Bueno de

Mesquita et al. (2003) present the selectorate theory of leaders' decisions. The selectorate theory holds that a leader's primary objective is to maintain political power—in order to accomplish any goal, a leader needs to hold such power. All leaders answer to a winning coalition (w) that keeps them in power. Therefore, another main assumption is that leaders aim to keep the loyalty of a sufficient number of members of their winning coalition in order to stay in office, and enact policies to satisfy this requirement. These main assumptions of office holding and loyalty maintenance are important because they influence the objective and selection of policies by the leader. As Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2003) emphasize, “all actions taken by political leaders are intended by them to be compatible with their desire to retain power (9).”

Of course, leaders face different policy incentives in different political settings. The selectorate theory emphasizes the role of political institutional arrangements in creating incentives for leaders to enact different policies in order to maintain office. The most important aspects of the institutional arrangement of a polity in shaping the incentives leaders face are the selection institutions or manner in which leaders of a state are selected. Specifically, this includes the size of the selectorate (s) and the winning coalition (w). The selectorate is the set of residents that has a formal role in expressing a preference for the selection of leadership that rules them, such as eligible voters in present-day United States, or the aristocracy in 17th century France. As Bueno de Mesquita et. al (2003) note, the winning coalition is a subset of the selectorate of sufficient size where it gives the leader political power over the remainder of the selectorate and the disenfranchised members of society.

As democracies consist of large winning coalition/large selectorate situations, crucial to explaining how leaders make policy across democracies is the loyalty norm. According to Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2003), each member of the selectorate has some probability of being in a successor winning coalition, with that probability equal to the size of the winning coalition divided by the size of the selectorate. So members of the current winning coalition may defect and switch allegiance to a challenger, but, with a risk of being excluded from the new winning coalition. In other words, defectors are not guaranteed a place in a challenger's winning coalition since the size of the winning coalition is less than the size of the selectorate. The lower the probability of being guaranteed a place in a challenger's winning coalition, the higher the loyalty to the incumbent will be in the political system. With the risk of exclusion from a challenger's winning coalition being low in democracies, incumbents find it difficult to maintain the loyalty of their winning coalition. Thus, they tend to enact public goods, which can be readily enjoyed by all citizens, not exclusively by a single group.

Given the importance of citizen preferences to executive power maintenance, below I review the literature on public opinion and foreign policy. Specifically, I extract insights from the literature regarding the influences on public preference formation over foreign policy and the conditions under which those preferences come to play a role in the policy making process.

Citizens' Evaluation of Foreign Policy

As suggested by the domestic political approach to foreign policy making, the preferences of citizens play a significant role in foreign policy making. And the literature on public opinion and foreign policy suggests that citizens' assessment of an executive's handling of foreign affairs impacts approval ratings and vote choice (Hurwitz and Peffley 1987; Nickelsburg and Norpoth 2000; Peffley et al. 1995; Wilcox and Allsop 1991). But, if executives are to anticipate citizen preferences, what influences the preference formation process of citizens? And, under what conditions does public opinion come to influence executive foreign policy making?

Research regarding citizens' preferences during the course of a foreign policy has almost exclusively focused on the role of casualties. Mueller's (1973) analysis suggests that support for the Korean and Vietnam wars dropped as the log of casualties increased. However, recent works suggests citizens' response to the progress of conflict in general and casualties in particular is context dependent (Klarevas 2002). For instance, Jentleson (1992) and Jentleson and Britton (1998) suggest the impact of casualties on public opinion is dependent upon the principle policy objective (PPO) of the military operation and whether objectives consist of primarily humanitarian, internal political change, or restraining elements. Interestingly, especially in terms of a sequential framework, Feaver and Gelpi (2004) and Gelpi et al. (2005) suggest citizens' expectations of success as well as the importance of the mission to national interests are important factors shaping the manner in which casualties impact their support of a

military operation. The toleration of additional casualties tends to increase as expectations of success and importance of the conflict to national interests increase.

However, other research has highlighted the potential endogeneity in citizens' evaluations of foreign policy. Zaller (1994; 1992) suggests exposure to media and elite opinion induces support for elite positions where elite consensus exists, while it leads to polarization in cases where elites disagree. For instance, Berinsky and Kinder (2008) present evidence suggesting when identical information is organized or framed differently to promote a given story, this leads to variation in political judgments. Therefore, information stemming from the international realm may be framed a certain way by elites, and that framing can influence citizens' foreign policy preferences.

How can these views on citizens' evaluations of foreign policy be interpreted, especially in the context of an ongoing foreign policy? An important debate in the literature is whether citizens act as consumers or investors. Nincic and Nincic (1995), on the one hand, argue that citizens act as consumers and prefer instant gains from foreign policy. Sullivan (2008), on the other hand, suggests citizens act as investors and focus on the costs of policy withdrawal. Given the experimental results of Tomz (2007) discussed above, once a policy has been enacted, citizens appear to act investors. While they do not directly invest in the policy, they nevertheless pay for the policy via taxes or soldiers and desire a positive policy outcome and public goods. And given the evidence suggesting that democratic citizens tend to express a great deal of confidence in their militaries' (King and Karabell 2003) in completing their missions, citizens appear to be reluctant, under certain conditions, to let costs such as casualties sink.

As investors in their executive's policy, citizens are also expected to track the effectiveness of a given policy. Thus, the literature suggests via the media, citizens track the progress of a foreign policy and form their preferences based on the anticipated outcome of a foreign policy (Powlick and Katz 1998; Sullivan 2008). Interestingly, the logic of audience costs support the claims made in the literature on public opinion (Fearon 1994; Schultz 2001). And, as mentioned previously, Feaver and Gelpi (2004) and Gelpi et al. (2005) suggest the manner in which citizens tend to use feedback such as casualties when forming preferences depends on the perceived likelihood of future success. As long as a policy is perceived to have a likelihood of future success, citizens will tolerate short-term losses in the hopes of achieving long-term gains.

Do anticipated public preferences always influence the sequential decision-making process of executives? Overall, scholars have uncovered various instances where executives anticipate public sentiment in deciding on foreign policy (Baum 2004b; Foyle 2004; McKeown 2000; Sobel 2001). However, the majority of the work in this area is based on anecdotal evidence, and attempts at comprehensive empirical testing are sparse. The literature on domestic politics and foreign policy making suggests the public appears to be influential when an executive's hold on office is at its *weakest* (McDermott 1992; Smith 1996). Under these conditions, an executive's hold in office is too fragile to chance not following public preferences and delivering on public goods tied to reputation. And, given the logic of audience costs, those preferences appear to be staying the course and avoid backing down. When an executive's hold on office is rather strong, however, research suggests that executives are freer to ignore

citizen preferences. Thus, a theory of sequential foreign policy-making must recognize that citizen preferences matter under certain conditions, and those conditions are tied to an executive's level of hold on power.

How do these insights provided by the domestic political approach to foreign policy shed light on the sequential decision-making process of democratic executives? As outlined above, the executive should be aware of the types of policies relevant to the winning coalition (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 1999; 2004; Peceny and Butler 2004). And in terms of democracies, executives find it beneficial to produce public goods. While competence may be influential in decisions to initiate a policy, the audience costs framework seems appropriate for sequential decisions: executives tend to initiate policy (such as initiating conflict) in order to demonstrate that they are competent, but once a policy has been initiated and objectives declared, executives make themselves vulnerable to suffering costs for backing down or bluffing.

However, much like selectorates vary in their size, they also vary in their support of the executive based on a number of domestic and international factors. Some executives may be better able to absorb audience costs and maintain power despite backing down from a specific policy, while others may find it too costly to admit a defeat (McDermott 1992; Smith 1996). For example, President Carter was facing an increasingly discontented public during the course of the crisis involving U.S. hostages in Iran from late 1979 to early 1980. As McDermott (1992) argues, Carter's decision to engage in risky behavior with the use of military force in April of 1980 can be explained in large part by his dwindling domestic popularity, especially with an election looming.

In sum, the literature suggests that not all audience costs have the same consequences: executives may be more able to absorb audience costs when they are more popular domestically, and where suffering such costs will not place their hold on political power in jeopardy. When executives face dwindling domestic support, however, admitting failure and/or backing down from a policy is likely to place their hold political power in question, as citizens are likely to meaningfully punish them at the polls.

Dynamic Approaches to Foreign Policy Making

While the domestic politics based approach provides useful building blocks for a theory of sequential foreign policy making, questions regarding the nature of the policies to be updated remain. Specifically, how do executives assess the effectiveness of their implemented policies? What types of information do they use in updating policies? Backing down from a policy stance may send different signals to citizens depending on the previous effectiveness of that policy, and subsequently, have differing effects on a leader's grasp of political power. Below, I outline recent attempts at explaining foreign policy change and recent work on strategic assessment.

Several attempts have been made at creating a dynamic approach for analyzing foreign policy decisions.⁴ Carlsnaes (1993), Gustavsson (1998) Reiter (1994), and Welch (2005) emphasize the role of policy feedback in explaining sequential foreign

⁴ For a discussion, see Kuperman (2006), Levy (1994), and Ozkececi-Taner (2006). As Hermann (1990) outlines in his discussion of foreign policy change, foreign policy is subject to at least four levels of change: adjustment changes, program changes, problem/goal changes, and international orientation changes. In taking an initial step towards analyzing foreign policy change, I examine adjustment changes, which are changes in the level of effort under a specific foreign policy program.

policy making in several policy areas, such as orientation towards international institutions, alliance strategy, and conflict behavior.⁵ Generally, research suggests that a significant foreign policy failure or crisis sparks policy change, an opposing argument to the escalation of commitment literature. Moreover, research suggests that policy success will entice leaders to maintain the status quo in terms of policy type. For instance, Reiter (1994) argues states tend to base their current alliance choices on the effectiveness of previous alliances: states that previously decided to ally and enjoyed the spoils of victory from war tended to subsequently ally, while those that previously allied and lost tended to subsequently favor neutrality. While providing interesting insights, these works tend to focus solely on one issue area, and thus, do not provide a framework suitable to generalize across states and issues.

Strategic Assessment and the Dominant Indicator Approach

Gartner's (1997) dominant indicator approach provides researchers with important insights on how to operationalize the elusive term of "feedback" regarding policy effectiveness, and specifically, what information leaders use to update policy. Gartner assumes that due to the amount of information emanating from the international realm, leaders reduce the available information to specific indicators—dominant indicators or quantitative measures of performance. Specifically, Gartner argues that

⁵ See Brams (1994) for a model involving alternating decisions between two players. Also, see Filson and Werner (2002), Powell (2004), Powell (2002), Ramsey (2005), Reiter (2003), Slantchev (2004a; 2004b), and Wagner (2000) for recent work on the bargaining approach to war, which enables states involved in hostilities to use feedback from the battlefield to make sequential decisions regarding acceptable offers.

leaders of organizations evaluate performance along the dominant indicators in order to alter behavior and maximize the likelihood they will accomplish their mission.

Dominant indicators measure an organization's central measure of performance, such as use of U-boat losses to gauge British naval strategy in World War I, or use of casualties to gauge U.S. ground strategy in Vietnam (Gartner 1997). Interestingly, Gartner (1997; 1993) also extends the dominant indicator approach to non-war, civilian decision-making situations with his analysis of Carter's decisions during the hostage crisis with Iran. Specifically, he highlights how the switch in strategy from diplomacy to force was driven by a sudden and dramatic dive in the dominant indicator used by presidential advisors between late-March and early-April, 1980: public support for Carter.

Gartner's (1997) main argument is that rapid movement in a dominant indicator should have a profound effect on decision-makers, providing them with clear signals of a strategy's performance and leading them to make decisions more decisively than they would with gradual movement in an indicator. Rapid movement consists of a sudden increase in the acceleration of movement of a dominant indicator, or, of a strategy performing effectively at record rates. Case study research suggests that record changes in acceleration of dominant indicators, such as changes in quarterly U-boat losses or casualties, rather than by record absolute values or cumulative totals, lead decision makers to react decisively in favor or against a particular strategy (Gartner 1993; Gartner 1997; Gartner and Myers 1995). If casualties have been accruing at ten to twenty per month, and suddenly, one hundred are suffered in a given month, this would alert leaders

about the effectiveness of the policy and its likely trajectory. Interestingly, the dominant indicator approach suggests rapidly failing policy prompts decision-makers to switch policy.

Escalation of Commitment

However, scholarship on sequential decisions regarding commitment in investment decision contexts suggests the opposite: decision-makers tend to increase commitment to a previously made investment in response to negative feedback (Brockner 1992; Dietz-Uhler 1996; Ross and Staw 1991; Staw 2002; Staw and Ross 1989). Such a process where decision-makers become overly committed to failing endeavors despite uncertainty regarding the likelihood of attaining the objective has been labeled “the escalation of commitment” (Staw 1976, 1981), “entrapment” (Brockner and Rubin 1985), “the sunk cost effect” (Arkes and Blumer 1985; Northcraft and Wolf 1984), and the “too-much-invested-to-quit syndrome” (Tegar 1980).

Scholars of decisions over commitment to previous decisions have emphasized project, psychological, social, and organizational determinants of escalation behavior (Dietz-Uhler 1996; Kiel, Depledge, and Rai 2007; Leatherwood and Conlon 1987; Staw and Ross 1989). Project determinants of escalation behavior, or the manner in which a project is structured, include the reasons for setbacks, estimated costs required for future success, and the likelihood of future success (Brockner, Rubin, and Lang 1981; Leatherwood and Conlon 1987; Staw and Fox 1977). Psychological determinants of escalation behavior include information processing errors and misinterpreting

information, and self-justification biases (Bazerman, Giuliano, and Appelman 1984; Conlon and Parks 1987; Staw 1976). Additionally, scholars have pointed to social determinants of escalation behavior, such as the desire to not expose errors to others, especially when one's job is on the line or actions are viewed by large audiences (Brockner, Rubin, and Lang 1981; Fox and Staw 1979). And, scholars have also highlighted organizational determinants, such as institutional inertia (Staw and Ross 1989). Overall, a great deal of experimental evidence supports these arguments, with recent efforts exploring the effects of additional variables on escalation decisions such as the impact of social identity (Dietz-Uhler 1996), additional cognitive biases (Keil, Depledge, and Rai 2007), and the framing of investment decisions (He and Mittal 2007; Weber and Zuchel 2005).

Thus, dynamic approaches to foreign policy making, the strategic assessment framework for policy analysis, and work on escalating commitment provide contradictory arguments for how executives update policy based on feedback. The dynamic approaches to foreign policy making and the strategic assessment framework suggest that executives are prone to decrease commitment to a policy or switch policies in the face of negative feedback. However, the literature on the escalation of commitments suggests that executives are prone to escalate commitment to a policy in the face of negative feedback.

Additionally, while Gartner's framework demonstrates the importance of dramatic indicator change on battlefield strategies, challenges remain with conceptually and empirically defining such change. Issues remain in terms of variation in length of

policies and the type of information leaders receive and perceive during the course of evaluating a policy.⁶ Gartner's (1997) emphasis on indicators of policy effectiveness, however, is compatible with the literature on decision-making over commitment to investment decisions, and the recent push in the formal literature on the relationship between battlefield information and bargaining, and must be accounted for by a theory of sequential decision-making. Therefore, despite disagreement as to the impact of feedback on commitment decisions, any theory of foreign policy updating must account for the impact of previous policy effectiveness on policy updating.

As previously suggested, approaches to foreign policy updating tend to ignore the systematic influence that domestic politics has on policy updating and instead assume that assessment takes place in a political vacuum. However, the literature on escalation of commitments suggests updating decisions are made in front of others (Brockner, Rubin, and Lang 1981; Fox and Staw 1979; Staw and Ross 1989). And formal work on audience costs suggests executives make updating decisions in front of domestic audiences, those very audiences that decide their political future (Fearon 1994; Schultz 2001). And, as the literature on foreign policy making suggests, not all domestic audiences are created equally (McDermott 1992; Smith 1996). Thus, a theory of sequential decision-making must specify *how* executives' updating decisions are impacted by both variation in policy feedback and variation in domestic audiences. For informational assumptions, I turn to the literature on foreign policy decision-making.

⁶ Additionally, Gartner (1997) largely focuses on change in terms of type of strategy, rather than in terms of degree of commitment to a particular strategy. For example, in his analysis of British antisubmarine decision making during World War I, Gartner's main goal is to explain the timing of the shift from sea patrol to convoy strategy to protect British and Allied merchant ships.

Decision-Making Approaches to Foreign Policy Making

While previous literature suggests executives take information stemming from the domestic and international realms into consideration when making sequential decisions, the question of how executives process this information remains. In searching for the necessary assumptions concerning how executives process information, I turn to the literature on foreign policy decision-making.

A great number of IR scholars argue the best way to understand foreign policy decision-making is to assume that individuals are rational—they do what they believe is in their best interest at the time they must choose (Morrow 1997). Commonly, researchers interested in foreign policy decision-making specify the meaning of this statement by assuming that leaders are expected utility maximizers—they compare options and order them according to their preferences for each, order them transitively, and always choose the outcome they consider most desirable (Bueno de Mesquita 1981). Specifically, leaders weigh the utility of each possible outcome of a given course of action by the probability of it occurring, sum over all possible outcomes for each strategy, and select the strategy with the highest expected utility (Levy, 1997). Quite simply, leaders do what they believe is best, given the information they have. Based upon these assumptions, IR scholars have employed a rational choice framework in the study of numerous foreign policy choices made by leaders.

While the rational choice framework and the domestic political explanation are compatible (leaders want to maintain power, choose the outcome which best ensures power maintenance), questions remain regarding how previous information impacts the

decision calculi of leaders. As executives have been assumed to be investors in their foreign policies, once a policy is enacted, how that policy performs in terms of achieving objectives is likely to impact subsequent decisions. And to this end, prospect theory and its emphasis on frames offers a useful conceptualization to consider.

Prospect theory, while an alternative theory of choice, is not wholly incompatible with rational choice theory (Levy 1997). Its potential usefulness for understanding how executives make sequential decisions can be found in its emphasis on an editing stage, where individuals identify a reference point, options, possible outcomes, and probabilities associated with outcomes, and how it impacts the evaluation stage when a decision is made. Initially outlined by Kahneman and Tversky (1979) as an alternative theory of risky choice, prospect theory holds that individuals tend to evaluate choices with respect to a reference point, overweigh losses relative to comparable gains, and engage in risk-averse behavior in choices among gains but risk-acceptant behavior in choices among losses. In order to understand decision-making, we must take into account the frame executives use when incorporating information into their decision-calculi, e.g., whether they are in the domain of gains or the domain of losses.

As Kahneman and Tversky (1979) suggest in their discussion of reference points, individual value functions are concave in the domain of gains and convex in the domain of losses. Thus, different representations of the same choice problem frequently do not yield the same preference. Whether a problem is framed involving preventing deaths or saving lives has importance consequences for the evaluation stage, as preferences can

depend on the situation and how a situation is framed (Ferejohn and Satz 1995; Tversky and Kahneman 1981).

As Levy (1997) outlines, prospect theory generates several interesting hypotheses concerning international behavior: leaders take more risks to maintain their support than they do to enhance it; after suffering losses, leaders tend not to accommodate to those losses and instead take risks to recover them, while after making gains they tend to accommodate; and due to slow accommodation of losses, sunk costs frequently influence decision makers' calculations and behavior. The logic of sunk costs suggests that leaders do not renormalize their reference points after suffering losses, and instead, treat the new status quo as a loss that is certain unless additional action is taken (Levy 2003).⁷ As Staw and Ross (1989) suggest, "escalating decisions are framed as losing situations in which new investments hold the promise of turning one's fortunes around (217)." Along these lines, Farnham (1994), McDermott (1992), and McInerney (1994) have adopted prospect theory to explain leaders' decisions during various international crises, such as President Carter's actions during the Iranian hostage crisis and President Roosevelt's decisions during the Munich crisis.

But, as Levy (1997) points out, theorizing on the selection of the reference point around which leaders frame and evaluate choices remains underdeveloped—whether around the status quo or aspiration level. The reference point has been conceptualized as a benchmark from which to gauge the current state of the world and make decisions moving forward. This is important, as how a decision is framed impacts preferences,

⁷ Levy (2003) points to the gambler on a losing streak who ups the ante to recover losses as the classic demonstration of the sunk-cost phenomenon.

and subsequently, decision-making. Do executives use the status quo as the reference point from which to evaluate incoming information? Or, do they compare such information to their aspiration levels? As the literature on domestic politics suggests, with executives' preoccupation of political power maintenance, the level of public support may serve as the reference point around which new information is processed.

To sum, when viewed in isolation, the domestic politics, dominant indicator, and prospect theory approaches to foreign policy making offer vague predictions regarding sequential decision-making of democratic executives (See Table 1). The selectorate theory and related approaches suggest executives tend to politically not afford to back down from a policy. Similarly, prospect theory suggests executives will tend to increase commitment when policy is proving to be ineffective. The dominant indicator approach, however, suggests when a strategy is proving to be effective, executives maintain its use, but when it proves to be ineffective, executives switch strategies.

To fill in the gaps in the construction of a theory of sequential decisions, I advocate an integrative approach: the dominant indicator approach can strengthen prospect theory, while prospect theory can strengthen the domestic politics approach. By integrating these approaches, I suggest a theory will be better able to specify the conditions under which executives tend to back down from or increase their commitment to a policy.

Table 1- Comparing Theories of Decision-Making

Theory	Assumption	Implication	Sequential Prediction
<u>Selectorate & Related Theories</u>	Primary goal of executives is to maintain power	Executives must be attentive to public preferences and will suffer audience costs for backing down	Executives are unlikely to choose policies that fail; likely to avoid backing down
<u>Prospect Theory</u>	Executives are impacted by the manner in which a policy is framed	Executives take risks when the policy is framed in the domain of losses	Executives tend to increase policy commitment in response to increasing costs
<u>Dominant Indicator Approach</u>	Executives use the rate of change in dominant indicators when assessing the performance of a policy	Executives make policy decisions that most help them achieve objectives	Executives tend to change strategy in response to a sudden and rapid movement in dominant indicators in the negative direction
<u>Escalation Situations Approach</u>	Executives attend to feedback on their initial decisions to invest resources	When facing negative feedback, executives face the difficult choice between increasing effort or seeking a new alternative	Executives tend to become locked in to the existing course of action and escalate commitment in response to negative feedback

Conclusion

In this chapter, I garnered insights from the literature to take into account the influence of domestic politics and policy feedback on the sequential decision-making process of democratic executives. The domestic politics approach provides valuable insights regarding the information executives' use in making sequential decisions. Specifically, it suggests executives are influenced by their domestic circumstances when updating a policy. Given the importance of citizen preferences to an executive's goal of power maintenance, I also explored the literature on public opinion and foreign policy. While significant debate exists, citizens appear to act as investors and thus like their executives, act as if influenced by sunk costs: if they believe victory is still possible, citizens tend to prefer to continue with a policy. In combining these insights, however, I suggested that executives are freer to ignore citizen preferences when their hold on power is relatively stronger.

The literature on dynamic approaches to foreign policy provides additional insight, suggesting that executives do not treat the outcomes of policies as lotteries, but continually evaluate the effectiveness of policies via emphasis on dominant indicators. While the literature produces conflicting predictions regarding executive responses to negative feedback, as I suggested, this literature largely assumes information is processed in a vacuum, or, in front of a generic audience. Thus, it has not accounted for the influence of variation in domestic political contexts on the manner in which leaders use feedback in updating policy.

Most importantly, I argued that the literature has largely ignored how leaders process information from the domestic and international realms. As a result, I examined the literature on foreign policy decision-making to garner insights into manner in which executives process information and pointed to prospect theory as a way to bridge the literatures.

In the next chapter, I construct a theory of sequential decision-making by combining these insights into an integrative approach capable of making specific predictions regarding the sequential behavior of executives. In this respect, I aim to move past the case study work and to the construction of a theory of sequential decision-making that lends itself to large-scale empirical testing.

CHAPTER III

SEQUENTIAL DECISION THEORY

In the previous chapter, I reviewed the literature on domestic political approaches to foreign policy, the connection between public opinion and foreign policy, and dynamic approaches to foreign policy. I argued that while previous theories of foreign policy making have provided valuable insights with regards to the factors affecting the choice of a foreign policy, they have largely failed to address sequential decision-making. When sequential decision-making, or, the various updating decisions leaders make during the course of a foreign policy episode, has been addressed, empirical testing has largely been conducted via case studies. In order to gain leverage over understanding the systematic influences on the sequential foreign policy-making process of executives, I proposed an integrative approach might be appropriate. Specifically, I suggested the insights derived from decision-making approaches would prove valuable in constructing an explanation of how leaders process information from both the domestic and international realms.

In this chapter, I build from the previous literature and present a theory of sequential foreign policy making (labeled Sequential Decision Theory or SDT). SDT is a two-level theory and emphasizes any explanation of policy updating by democratic executives must also explain citizen preferences. In presenting SDT, I first discuss three foundational assumptions regarding the sequential decision-process. Secondly, I outline the assumptions of the theory with regards to citizens and then present propositions

regarding their sequential preference formation process. Then, I outline the assumptions with regards to executives and then present propositions regarding their sequential decision-making process. While the assumptions I make at both levels are grounded in the literature, I acknowledge, given the debates in the literature, there are plausible alternative assumptions. While these assumptions simplify a complex process, they are necessary in order to gain leverage over the sequential decision-process.

After discussing the assumptions, I conclude this chapter by summarizing the theory and discussing several implications of the theory regarding the connection between executives and citizens. Overall, the theory suggests that the manner in which the performance of a policy impacts the sequential decisions of executives is highly contingent upon their domestic support. Thus, SDT, in integrating previous decision-theories, contributes to the growing body of literature examining the manner in which the democratic process impacts foreign policy making.

The Foundational Assumptions of Sequential Decision Theory

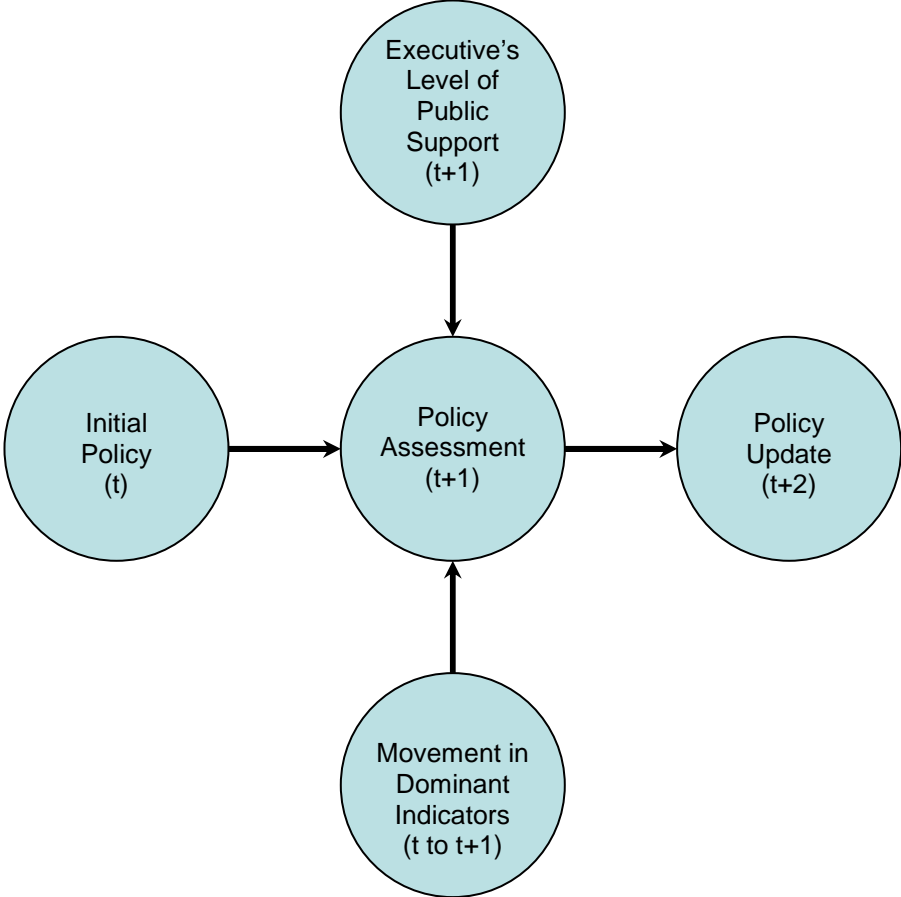
I construct the theory on the basis of three foundational assumptions. For the first foundational assumption, I assume foreign policy making does not consist of a one shot decision, but rather a sequence of decisions involving a particular international issue. Rarely are issues resolved over a short period of time, and commonly, democratic executives must deal with the same issue over a long period of time (Billings and Hermann 1998). Thus, foreign policy making is not a decision-making lottery where executives make a choice to deal with an issue and then hope for the best; it consists of

executives making initial choices and constantly monitoring the effectiveness of those choices in dealing with issues. During any subsequent time period, they may alter the initial policy. For an outline of the assumed decisional sequence, see Figures 1 and 2. The sequence continues until an executive decides to terminate the use of a particular foreign policy tool (subsequent time periods denoted by (i)).

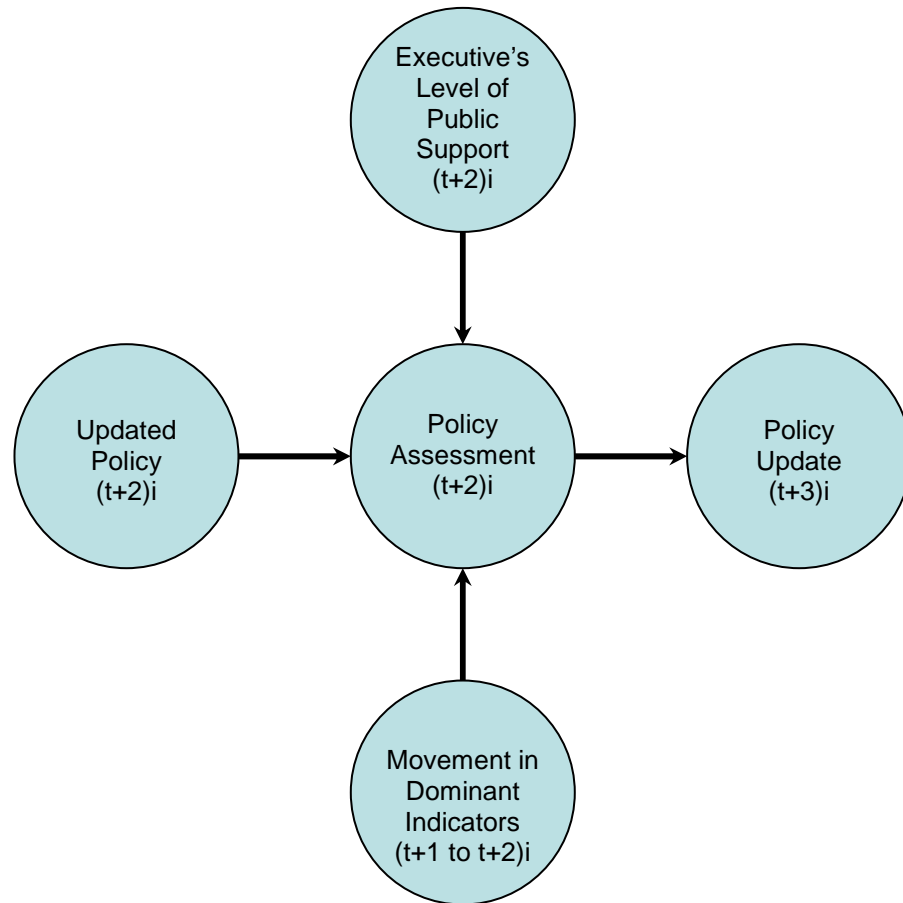
Additionally, I assume an executive's main goal is maintaining political power. Executives are preoccupied with winning elections and maintaining an adequate level of public support in order to achieve their policy goals. In order to win elections, maintain adequate levels of public support, and remain in power, executives must satisfy a sufficient number of the selectorate (a winning coalition of eligible voters), who are assessing the executives' decisions during foreign policy episodes (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003). Since democracies have low loyalty norms due to their large winning coalitions and large selectorates, executives tend to enact policies that provide public goods and do so with a finite amount of resources at their disposal. Thus, executives, in making sequential decisions, act as if cognizant of the selectorate's watchful eye, and tend to anticipate public reactions to updating decisions.

Thirdly, I assume that the manner in which a decision is framed impacts both the preference formation process of the citizenry and the decision-making process of executives (Kahneman and Tversky 1979). Whether or not a situation is framed in the domain of gains or domain of losses affects the risk propensity citizens and executives, and subsequently, their policy preferences or decisions. They both tend to prefer to

**Figure 1- The Decision-Making Process as Outlined by Sequential Decision Theory:
Update 1**



**Figure 2- The Decision-Making Process as Outlined by Sequential Decision Theory:
Subsequent Updates**



engage in more risky behavior, or increasing policy commitment, to recover losses and less risky behavior, or maintaining or even decreasing policy commitment, in accommodating to gains.

In terms of frames, I refer to the manner in which the evaluation of a policy is framed by the presentation of information. As Geva, Astorino-Courtois, and Mintz

(1996) suggest, both evaluative and thematic framing take place. Evaluative framing involves how a previous situation is presented. Thematic framing involves content-based communications to sensitize decision-makers to certain aspects of a decisional environment. Thus, I define frames in terms of evaluative framing that are created by the presentation of a previous situation. With regards to executives, the frame is established by information that pertains to public support. With regards to citizens, the frame is established by the information that pertains to what the feedback suggests. As I outline below, my main concern is if a decision over commitment takes place in the domain of gains or in the domain of losses. If the updating decision takes place in the domain of losses, I suggest the decision is framed as one to recover losses. If the updating decision takes place in the domain of gains, I suggest the decision is framed as one to achieve gains.

I distinguish between two types of risk. For executives, risk is defined in terms of losing office. I treat escalation as risky for executives because while I suggest committing more resources delays the incurrence of audience costs, it does not guarantee a policy will succeed. Thus, if the policy fails, the fact that an executive committed additional resources to the endeavor will be evaluated by citizens and if the endeavor fails it will increase the risk of losing office. An executive takes the risk, as I argue below, in order to “gamble for resurrection” (Downs and Rocke 1994), where escalating commitment will either make the executive extremely worse or better off domestically depending on the outcome of escalation. As I argue below, executives take this gamble because they are vulnerable to audience costs. Interestingly, by escalating, they avoid

immediately suffering audience costs, but make themselves *more* vulnerable in the event of a future failure. Therefore, it is risk, domestically, to escalate commitment. For citizens, risk is defined in terms of the direction of policy feedback. Preferring to escalate commitment is risky for citizens because they are investors in the outcome of the foreign policy in terms of public goods. Escalation does not guarantee that they will extract the promised amount of public goods from the endeavor, and they run the risk of losing additional resources.

Below, I build from these three foundational assumptions in the construction of Sequential Decision Theory.

Citizens' Evaluation of Foreign Policy

With regards to the public and foreign policy, I assume citizens act as investors: they do not expect a simultaneous return on investment and will continue with an investment if they expect the return on investment (achievement of foreign policy goals) will be realized in the future and will be less than the incurred costs (Sullivan 2008). Thus, they are willing to accept a risk in the form of uncertainty in return for a potentially greater benefit in the future. In forming their sequential preference, I assume citizens are primarily concerned how sequential decisions impact the provision of public goods, such as access to resources or national security (Bueno de Mesquita and Downs

2006).⁸ Staying the course to achieve policy goals is preferred to backing down, all else equal.

In evaluating foreign policy, I assume citizens are affected by frames: they are risk-acceptant in the domain of losses and risk-averse in the domain of gains (Kahneman and Tversky 1979). As investors who pay for foreign policy in terms of money and often times, casualties, citizens are heavily influenced by sunk costs (Arkes and Blumer 1985; Sullivan 2008). Thus, the manner in which a sequential policy problem is framed impacts the preference formation process of citizens. When in the domain of losses, citizens tend to prefer executives take more risks internationally in terms of more action. When in the domain of gains, citizens tend to accommodate to gains: since citizens pay costs for maintaining foreign policy, they prefer to reap rewards as quickly as possible.

Moreover, I assume citizens reassess policy based upon information concerning the effectiveness of that policy. This information is on dominant indicators of policy effectiveness (Gartner 1997). I assume the frame citizens use for the sequential policy choice is generated by the direction of movement in dominant indicators from one time period to the next.⁹ Dominant indicators are quantitative measures of the performance of a particular foreign policy (Gartner 1997). Such a focus on dominant indicators enables citizens to simplify the complexities stemming from the international arena in forming their preferences.

⁸ While the theory treats all public goods equally, variation in the importance of public goods to citizens may impact their sequential preferences and how they reward/punish an executive for certain actions.

⁹ This is an assumption I make regarding the manner in which information is presented to citizens. I subsequently refer to this manner as “comparative.”

I assume information regarding dominant indicator movement is provided to citizens by the mass media, and, that this information is widely available during salient foreign policy episodes (see Aldrich et al. 2006). Moreover, I also assume that this information captures actual movement in dominant indicators and is free from elite manipulation.¹⁰ Thus, citizens are able to track the progress of a leader's policy via the mass media and a focus on the direction of movement in dominant indicators of policy effectiveness.

From these assumptions with regards to citizens' sequential foreign policy preferences, I present the following general propositions:

Proposition 1: After executives enact a foreign policy, citizens hold them accountable for delivering on promises of public goods.

Proposition 2: After executives enact a foreign policy, citizens hold them accountable for effectively using their resources such as tax dollars and soldiers.

Proposition 3: In deciding on their preferred level of policy continuation, citizens are impacted by the direction of movement in dominant indicators as provided by the media; they prefer higher levels of commitment when viewing negative movement in dominant indicators when compared with positive movement.

¹⁰ As Berinsky (1992) suggests, elite discourse can play a significant role in framing foreign policy choices. While I acknowledge this possibility with regards to sequential choices, for simplification purposes, I assume citizens are able to view the quantitative movement in dominant indicators free from elite manipulation.

Executive Decision-Making in Democratic States

Similarly to citizens, I assume executives act as investors with regards to their foreign policies: they do not expect a simultaneous return on investment and will continue with an investment if they expect the return on investment (achievement of foreign policy goals) will be realized in the future and will be less than the incurred costs (Nincic and Nincic 1995). Thus, they are willing to accept a risk in the form of uncertainty in return for a potentially greater benefit in the future. As investors, executives continually reassess the utility of their investments, or in the case of foreign policy, the effectiveness of their policies in terms of likely policy outcomes and whether they are worth further commitment. If the expected gain exceeds the expected costs of continuing with the policy, executives will increase their commitment to the original policy.

SDT assumes that executives attend to specific types of information from the international realm: as investors, they reassess their policies based upon information on policy effectiveness. Specifically, as with citizens, executives use dominant indicators, which are quantitative measures of the performance of a particular strategy, to guide that assessment (Gartner 1997). Such an emphasis on dominant indicators enables leaders to simplify the complexities stemming from the international arena and make timely decisions.¹¹

¹¹ I acknowledge the possibility that executives may switch indicators of success as well as objectives during the course of a foreign policy episode. However, for the purposes of simplification, I assume objectives remain constant and executives monitor the same indicators during the course of a foreign policy episode.

In processing information stemming from the international arena, executives are concerned with the direction in dominant indicator movement.¹² When such reassessment suggests the policy is succeeding, this signals to the executive that the policy is more likely to achieve objectives in the future. When reassessment suggests the policy is failing, this signals to the executive that the policy is less likely to achieve objectives in the future.

However, executives do not process information regarding policy effectiveness in a vacuum. Given the primary objective of maintain political power, executives view feedback in a particular domestic context. After initiating a policy and declaring that policy is fit to achieve foreign policy objectives, the model assumes executives become vulnerable to suffering audience costs if they back down from the policy. If executives' decisions during the course of a foreign policy episode are perceived to be backing down, they make themselves vulnerable to a backlash from the electorate (Fearon 1994; Schultz 2001). Such an assumption suggests that executives cannot afford to simply reassess the policy in a vacuum but rather must take into consideration the domestic political consequences of their sequential decisions. They may decide increasing commitment to a policy will not accomplish goals in the future, but do so nonetheless because backing down will weaken their hold on political power. In other words,

¹² This is an assumption I make regarding the manner in which information is presented to executives. I subsequently refer to this manner as "comparative," where executives are influenced by the direction of movement from t to $t+1$ in making decisions at $t+2$.

executives act as if audience costs will be incurred if they back down from an initiated foreign policy.¹³

Thus, SDT assumes executives also act as if influenced by a domestic frame. This frame is shaped by the level of public support given to an executive that is directly related to their chances of maintaining political power. Such support is a function of an executive's handling of both domestic and foreign affairs. Lower levels of support put the executive in the domain of losses domestically and spark more risky behavior internationally in order to maintain power. Higher levels of support put the executive in the domain of gains domestically and spark more conservative behavior internationally. The mechanism at work here is based on the previously mentioned phenomenon of audience costs: the previous level of public support signals to executives how costly backing down from a policy will be to their political future. If audience costs are incurred at lower levels of support, the suffering of audience costs is more likely to jeopardize an executive's hold on political power.

While previous theories of foreign policy tend to include variables from the domestic and international realm in models without a specified a causal mechanism driving their interaction, SDT outlines how executives process information from both realms in order to arrive at decisions. Specifically, it suggests executives are influenced by a conditional framing effect of public support. I label this phenomenon the *conditional framing effect*. Given the primary goal of executives is maintaining political

¹³ The assumption regarding audience costs is appropriate for a sequential framework, as once a policy declaration has been made a democratic executive is exposed to audience costs, which are incurred in the event of the executive backing down short of achieving the policy's objectives. Arguments dealing with executive competence in foreign policy making primarily deal with leaders initiating a policy (such as conflict) in order to demonstrate competency to the public (Richards et al. 1993; Tarar 2006).

power, the model suggests the concern over the potential political consequences of suffering audience costs drives the policy updating process. Thus, the domestic frame conditions the manner in which executives process information on policy feedback (see Table 2, which includes predictions regarding updated commitment levels).

When executives' hold on power is rather weak, they have less leverage over foreign policy (conditions 3 and 4, Table 2). By leverage I refer to the ability of executives to absorb the domestic backlash from not delivering on a public good. As a result, when viewing positive feedback on a foreign policy (condition 3), executives tend to update commitment to that policy by maintaining the previous level of commitment. Because of the need to deliver on promised public good, and, the signal of eventually delivering those promised given by the positive feedback, executives maintain commitment. However, when viewing negative feedback through this lens (condition 4), executives tend to update commitment to that policy by *increasing* the previous level of commitment. Because incurring audience costs for backing down from a previous policy would jeopardize their hold on power, executives increase commitment in order to signal to the public that they are not backing down from the policy and are attempting to deliver promised public goods.

If their hold on power is rather strong, their chances of maintaining political power tend to not hinge upon the outcome of a particular foreign policy, and as a result, they have maximum discretion over sequential foreign policy decisions (see conditions 1 and 2, Table 2). As a result, when viewing positive feedback on foreign policy

Table 2- The Conditional Framing Effect of Public Support on the Executive Use of Policy Feedback

	Feedback Positive	Feedback Negative
Public Support Positive	1). Executives have most leverage over foreign policy (Maintain commitment)	2). Executives have most leverage over foreign policy (Decrease commitment)
Public Support Negative	3). Executives less able to absorb audience costs (Maintain commitment)	4). Executives less able to absorb audience costs (Increase commitment)

(condition 1), executives tend to update commitment to that policy by maintaining the previous level of commitment to that policy. Under this condition, neither backing down short of delivering on promised public goods nor increasing commitment is preferable, given that the feedback is signaling success. However, when viewing negative feedback through this domestic lens (condition 2), executives tend to *decrease* commitment to that policy. Because their grasp of power is relatively strong, executives can divert resources elsewhere in the hopes of delivering on public goods because they can more readily absorb the incurrence of domestic audience costs. Thus, the model predicts that while

executives tend to react similarly to positive feedback across levels of domestic support, those with positive levels of support act oppositely to those with negative levels in response to negative feedback.

From these assumptions with regards to the sequential foreign policy decisions of democratic executives, I present the following general propositions:

Proposition 4: Lower levels of domestic support will increase the importance executives place on avoiding audience costs.

Proposition 5: Across levels of public support, leaders act similarly in response to positive feedback: they tend to maintain previous levels of commitment.

Proposition 6: When executives' levels of domestic support are sufficiently high to render their political future "audience cost proof", executives increasingly attend to the information on policy effectiveness in an unbiased manner.

Consequently, negative movement in dominant indicators decreases commitment in the policy and positive movement leads to maintenance in commitment.

Proposition 7: When executives' levels of domestic support are low, they tend to increase levels of commitment in response to negative feedback and maintain levels of commitment in response to positive feedback.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented an integrative approach to understanding sequential foreign policy decision-making. I built from the insights of the selectorate theory, prospect theory, and the dominant indicator approach in constructing a theory capable of

identifying the systematic influences on an executive's sequential decisions, on citizen preferences during sequential episodes, and on the relationship between citizens and executives in the crafting of foreign policy. Interestingly, the integrative approach produces new insights on the sequential decision making process of democratic executives (see Table 3).

Generally, the theory suggests executives are primarily concerned with maintaining power and as a result, must attend not only to policy feedback, but first and foremost to public opinion. Thus, information on foreign policy performance is conditioned by an executive's level of public support: executives interpret feedback through a lens of support.

The theory holds that once a policy has been enacted, citizens, who hold the key to the executive's political future, are concerned with public goods. Thus, the mechanism at work connecting executives to their respective publics is the audience cost mechanism, which posits once executives have enacted a policy, their citizens will punish them if they back down from a policy and fail to deliver on promised public goods. Overall, however, the theory emphasizes that not all audience costs are created equally, and depending on the effectiveness of a policy and the domestic context, executives are more or less willing to incur them.

As I discussed previously, the literature has suggested public opinion impacts foreign policy, but has remained silent about the conditions under which public opinion comes to influence the decision-calculi of executives. SDT outlines the conditions under which this relationship exists, and more specifically, the nature of this relationship. If

Table 3- Comparing Sequential Decision Theory with Theories of Decision-Making

Theory	Assumption	Implication	Sequential Prediction
<u>Selectorate & Related Theories</u>	Primary goal of executives is to maintain power	Executives must be attentive to public preferences and will suffer audience costs for backing down	Executives are unlikely to choose policies that fail; likely to avoid backing down
<u>Prospect Theory</u>	Executives are impacted by the manner in which a policy is framed	Executives take risks when the policy is framed in the domain of losses	Executives tend to increase policy commitment in response to increasing costs
<u>Dominant Indicator Approach</u>	Executives use the rate of change in dominant indicators when assessing the performance of a policy	Executives makes policy decisions that most help her achieve objectives	Executives tend to change strategy in response to a sudden and rapid movement in dominant indicators in the negative direction
<u>Escalation Situations Approach</u>	Executives attend to feedback on their initial decisions to invest resources	When facing negative feedback, executives face the difficult choice between increasing effort or seeking a new alternative	Executives tend to become locked in to the existing course of action and escalate commitment in response to negative feedback
<u>Sequential Decision Theory</u>	Executives are impacted by a double frame consisting of their domestic level of approval and the direction of policy feedback	The manner in which executives process policy feedback depends on their domestic context	In response to a failing policy, executives increase commitment when faced with low levels of domestic support, and decrease commitment when faced with high levels

executives are to determine the domestic political consequences of their actions (i.e. the extent of audience costs to pay), SDT suggests not only will they focus on their grasp on political power, but they also will tend to anticipate citizens' preferences when making sequential foreign policy decisions. Interestingly, SDT suggests executives are most attentive to public opinion when their support is sufficiently low enough to make them fear audience costs. Moreover, it suggests public support and thus the ability of executives to absorb audience costs is lowered when they view negative feedback on policy. However, while it may appear that continuing with a failing policy is incompatible with the goal of executives to maintain power, as previous literature suggests citizens lower approval in the face of failing foreign policies, as long as executives do not *concede* policy failure, they will not fully absorb audience costs and will subsequently increase their chances of maintaining power.

When public support is sufficiently high, the theory suggests executives are better able to absorb audience costs and as a result, focus more on information rather than on their domestic circumstances in deciding on their sequential policies. Under this condition, in line with main predictions of the dominant indicator approach (Gartner 1997), the theory suggests executives back down when policy is failing and stay the course when it is succeeding. Thus, an implication of SDT is that citizens' sway over foreign policy is low when its support of executives is high, and in order to gain leverage over foreign policy, it must signal to executives that suffering audience costs would jeopardize their hold on office by lowering support.

While I presented general propositions regarding citizen preferences and executive decision-making in this chapter, in the chapters that follow I derive specific hypotheses with regards to military intervention decisions. In Chapters IV and V, I explicate and test hypotheses regarding the preferences of citizens. In Chapter VI, I explicate and test hypotheses regarding the updating decisions of executives.

CHAPTER IV

THE INFLUENCE OF POLICY FEEDBACK ON CITIZENS' SUPPORT FOR ONGOING INTERVENTIONS

One of the main propositions of SDT outlined in Chapter III is that in order for executives to maintain power they must, under certain conditions, attend to the preferences of the citizenry with regards to foreign policy. Specifically, SDT suggests when the executive hold on political power is in jeopardy executives tend to anticipate citizens' preferences over an ongoing policy in an effort to avoid suffering audience costs. But, are there in fact systematic influences on these preferences over a policy over time? Specifically, does the citizenry respond to policy feedback in the manner outlined by SDT so that the executive can anticipate what the preferred level of policy continuation will be? To test this important proposition regarding the first level of the theory, I conduct an original experiment with regards to citizens' reactions to feedback on an intervention policy.

Previous studies on foreign policy making have tended to assume that citizens act either as investors (Sullivan 2008) or consumers (Nincic and Nincic 1995). Of those studies that have examined citizen's reactions to feedback in the form of casualties, they have largely examined aggregate public opinion data (Gartner and Segura 1998; Sullivan 2008). Thus, I choose experimentation for three reasons: 1) to examine how individual citizens process feedback stemming from an intervention and form their policy preferences, 2) to generate wider variation in the independent variables, and 3) to

examine a citizen's preference formation process across various informational contexts at the individual level. Specifically, with regards to the first experiment presented in this chapter, I focus on manipulating several independent variables in a context where information is presented in a comparative fashion¹⁴. The use of the comparative context enables me to focus on the impact of the direction of feedback on the sequential preference formation of citizens.

In this chapter, I outline the experiment, by presenting the experimental logic, procedures, and materials given to participants, and presenting results of the statistical analyses. I then discuss the implications of the results specifically in terms of military intervention policies and generally in terms of any foreign policy over time, and conclude with a discussion of the limitations of the experiment. While this dissertation is concerned with sequential decisions over the use of force, I examine citizen's preference formation process regarding both military and monetary tools. Once foreign policy declarations are made in public, executives are susceptible to suffering domestic audience costs. Experimentation offers a suitable method for testing hypotheses in different foreign policy contexts.

The results generally support the argument that citizens are sensitive to information regarding policy effectiveness. Specifically, they appear to respond to policy feedback in ways predicted by the SDT: negative feedback entices them to prefer investing more in the operation. This suggests executives have a basis on which to

¹⁴ Comparative fashion enables citizens to detect the direction of feedback (change from one time period to another) but not differences in change compared to other time periods. In Chapter V, I manipulate the independent variables in a context where information is presented as part of a history and thus enable examination of the effects of trends on information processing.

anticipate ways in which feedback influences public sentiment. Interestingly, the results support the counterintuitive predictions I derive from the theoretical model, which may help explain controversies in the literature on public opinion formation and the use of force. And while the logic of the model is supported in both military and monetary interventions, citizens appear to be more domain-sensitive regarding military interventions. Thus, by analyzing the process individual citizens use in forming preferences, I contribute to our understanding of the citizenry in models of foreign policy making.

Experimental Logic

As Billings and Hermann (1998) argue, foreign policy decision-making consists of leaders reevaluating policy and updating based on information concerning performance. Thus, foreign policy is not a one-shot decision, but consists of executives making a continuous series of decisions. In Chapter III, I outlined Sequential Decision Theory (SDT) in an effort to explain how executives update foreign policy. The building blocks of SDT come from the following: the selectorate theory, a framework which highlights how an executive's political circumstances influence foreign policy decision making; prospect theory, a framework for understanding decision-making under risk; and the dominant indicator approach, a framework for policy assessment. SDT, the amalgamation of these frameworks for understanding decision making, offers a unique two-level explanation for how citizens and executives interact during the course of a foreign policy episode.

The selectorate theory assumes that an executive's primary objective is to maintain office (Buono de Mesquita et al. 2003). Moreover, it assumes that since all executives answer to a winning coalition, they must enact policies that satisfy a sufficient number of members of the coalition in order to maintain office. Given that democracies have low loyalty norms due to their large winning coalitions and large selectorates, executives tend to enact policies that provide public goods. How does this help to explain sequential foreign policy decision-making? The selectorate theory, while offering strong predictions for the enactment of foreign policies, is rather vague in terms of sequential decisions.

In building from the office holding assumption of selectorate theory to explain sequential foreign policy decisions, I further explore the link between citizens and executives. As I outlined in Chapter III, executives, in making sequential decisions, consider public preferences, given that the public holds the power to remove them from office should they not enact their preferences. As an umbrella assumption, in SDT, I assume that citizens and executives use frames when forming their preferences (Kahneman and Tversky 1979). They tend to engage in risk-averse behavior in choices among gains but risk acceptant behavior in choices among losses (Levy 1997). As outlined by prospect theory, this reference dependence suggests that the disutility of losing a good is greater than the utility of acquiring it. Executives anticipate citizens' preferences in a sequential foreign policy area, and thus are influenced by the conditional frame of public support. But what creates the frame the citizenry uses?

SDT suggests citizens use dominant indicators as to how well a policy is reaching objectives in forming their sequential preferences (Gartner 1997). Specifically, the movement in indicators creates their frame; movement in negative direction creates a loss frame and movement in positive direction creates a gain frame that impacts the manner in which citizens process information on the foreign policy. Normally, when indicators suggest a policy is failing we should expect a decrease in preferences for that policy or a switch to another in order to reach objectives; when a policy is succeeding, we should expect an increase in preferences for that policy or at the very least, a preferences for maintaining previous levels of investment in that policy (Gartner 1997). However, the logic of SDT challenges the argument of Gartner's approach and builds from the literature on escalation situations (Brockner 1992; Staw 2002; 1976; Staw and Ross 1989). Given the assumption that the citizenry consist of investors who are impacted by the feedback frame, they prefer to increase investment in the face of a failing policy and maintain investment in the face of a succeeding policy. Below, I outline the influences on citizen preferences that create this situation where the citizenry appears to hold counterintuitive sequential preferences.

Public Reactions to Foreign Policy and Foreign Policy Making

Judgments as to how well an incumbent is handling foreign affairs appear to significantly predict approval ratings and vote share (Aldrich et al 1989; Anand and Krosnick 2003; Hurwitz and Peffley 1987; Nincic and Hinkley 1991). However, research is divided on whether citizens are able to react critically and independently of

elite framing of information, or, whether they simply accept the stories they encounter at face value. On the one hand, research suggests the public predictably responds to international events by focusing on the objectives of a particular policy (Jentleson 1992; Jentleson and Britton 1998; Nincic 1992). However, Zaller (1994; 1992) suggests exposure to media and elite opinion induces support for elite positions where elite consensus exists, while it leads to polarization in cases where elites disagree. For instance, Berinsky and Kinder (2008) present evidence that suggests when identical information is organized or framed differently to promote a given story, this leads to variation in political judgments.

Despite the debates regarding the elite framing of foreign policy, previous research highlights elite perception of public opinion influences foreign policy behavior (Aldrich et al 2006; McKeown 2000). Specifically, leaders tend to *anticipate* how citizens will react to certain policies and act accordingly (Baum 2004b; Foyle 2004). This logic, as I have outlined, forms the foundation of SDT. My theory, however, goes a step further and offers an explanation as to *how* the citizenry reacts to policy feedback, since executives must come to understand the systematic influences on public opinion formation in order to anticipate how citizens will react to policy feedback and eventually decide whether to reward or punish them at the polls. Below, I look towards the literature on interventions to translate the logic of SDT into testable experimental hypotheses.

Influences on Public Preferences over Foreign Policy: The Case of Military Intervention

A military intervention operation offers a suitable test case for SDT.

Interventions rarely end after the initial decision of involvement, and great variation exists in terms of the duration of such endeavors where force is used short of war (Meernik and Brown 2007). Moreover, the bulk of the literature on interventions has focused on the initial decision to deploy troops or resources to a particular area (De Rouen 1995; Morgan and Bickers 1992; Ostrom and Job 1986; Sobel 2001); although recently scholars have begun to unravel the influences on conflict prosecution once the intervention begins (see Meernik and Brown 2007). And, this literature has produced mixed results on the role of the public in intervention policy. Some authors find increases in public approval tend to increase the proclivity of executives to use force; others find the exact opposite and suggest lack of public support leads executives to prefer using force abroad, while some evidence suggests that increases in approval tend to decrease involvement (DeRouen 1995; James and Oneal 1991).

I suggest that these contradictory findings can be explained by the lack of attention to foreign policy feedback, and specifically, how the citizenry, who is assumed to be an important factor in the policy making process, responds to information stemming from an intervention. Since public support of an intervention is assumed in the literature to be an important factor in explaining both initial and subsequent decisions on involvement made by executives, taking a step back to examine what factors influence public support of sequential intervention decisions is a fruitful endeavor. Policy feedback has been shown to play a vital role in the decision-making process of

military leaders (Gartner 1997). By translating this line of argumentation to the public realm, I argue scholarship on public opinion formation will benefit. Specifically, examining how the citizenry comes to process information emanating from the intervention is crucial to understanding how they come to form their preferences that play a vital role in sequential foreign policy making. So, how do citizens form their preferences regarding sequential foreign policy during interventions? How does policy feedback affect their preferences over the continued level of involvement? In my attempt to address these questions, I build from the theoretical logic of SDT and look to the literature on interventions for insights on how to translate theoretical logic into testable hypotheses.

In deciding on what they prefer in moving forward with an intervention, citizens process information and ask: “is this policy worth continuing?” In processing information, they do not act as consumers, as argued by Nincic and Nincic (1995). Rather, they act as investors (Sullivan 2008), as such, are influenced by sunk costs (Arkes and Blumer 1985). Specifically, I assume the citizenry consists of investors who pay for a leader’s foreign policy in the form of taxes and potential casualties (Hibbs, Rivers, Vasilatos 1982), and are concerned with the return on public goods (Bueno de Mesquita et. al 2003). In other words, *after* an initial policy decision by the leader has been made, the citizenry forms their preferences based on the next decision’s perceived effects to deliver public goods.

Along these lines, while democratic citizens tend to become weary of military endeavors (Bennett and Stam 1998), they also tend to express a great deal of confidence

in their militaries (King and Karabell 2002). Once their military has been put into action, the citizenry expects them to achieve the objectives and deliver public goods. Due to their confidence in their militaries and their desire to enjoy public goods promised by executives, I assume contrary to Bennett and Stam (1998) that citizens are influenced by sunk costs.

As an investor, the citizenry relies on reducing information emanating from the intervention to a manageable size; they tend to use cognitive shortcuts in the completion of such tasks (Vertzberger 1990). Specifically, during the evaluation process, they use dominant indicators as to how the intervention is proceeding as shortcuts, both in terms of the extent to which objectives are being achieved and the anticipated degree of difficulty, or resistance, moving forward (Gartner 1997; Nincic and Nincic 1995). I assume citizens use frames when processing information emanating from the intervention and in the formation of their policy preferences, use frames that are formed based on the direction of movement in dominant indicators.¹⁵ Thus, the citizenry tends to form risk-averse preferences in choices among gains but risk acceptant preferences in choices among losses (Kahneman and Tversky 1979; Levy 1997). As a result, I assume, in line with the escalation of commitment literature, citizens will tend to prefer increasing commitment when facing adverse or negative feedback.

Given the arguments on public good-seeking investors, once the state is involved in an intervention, I expect negative information in the face of uncertainty to embolden a

¹⁵ While I acknowledge the debate in the literature concerning elite framing effects, I make the simplifying assumption that citizens are concerned with the direction of policy feedback and, given the wide range of available information sources, are able to extract this information from the media.

member of the public further; the audience costs mechanism, which suggests citizens punish leaders for backing down from foreign policy, generates this behavior. Citizens are risk acceptant when feedback suggests failure and the desirability of continuing the intervention remains highly uncertain. Positive information in the face of continued uncertainty, on the other hand, tends to suggest caution and reaping rewards while the opportunity lends itself. Given their general weariness towards armed conflict, citizens are risk averse when the feedback suggests success and the desirability of continuing the intervention remains highly uncertain (which is the case when information is presented in a comparative fashion). From this logic, I present the following research hypothesis on the effect of feedback:

Hypothesis 1: Compared to conditions where feedback is positive, negative feedback will *increase* the level of support a citizen gives to continuing with the intervention.

Another underlying factor that appears to influence the decision calculus of the citizenry in ongoing interventions is the strategic importance of the mission. Specifically, previous research highlights the perceived strategic importance of the mission impacts foreign policy, both in terms of citizens' approval of those actions and the foreign policy enacted (Huth 1998; Mintz and Geva 1993; Morrow, Siverson, Tabares 1997; Nincic and Russett 1979). When citizens deem the mission as strategically important, they favor maintaining involvement with that policy, whether in terms of an intervention, interstate conflict, or trade. This suggests that despite the fact resources are being diverted from domestic concerns to international ones, citizens are more apt to approve in cases where it is clearly in the national interest to do so.

Also, because citizens operate in an uncertain environment due to availability of limited feedback, the strategic importance of a mission provides them with additional information that affects the utility of involvement. From this logic, I present the following research hypothesis on the additive effect of the control variable labeled “strategic importance”:

Hypothesis 2: Compared to conditions where the strategic importance of the host state is low, high strategic importance will increase the level of support a citizen gives to continuing with the intervention.

Moreover, the type of intervention may influence public preference formation.

Fever and Gelpi (2004) suggest citizens’ sensitivity to casualties depends on the strategic importance of the mission and its likelihood of success. While Sullivan (2008) suggests that citizens tend to treat casualties as sunk costs, Bennett and Stam (1996), Bueno de Mesquita and Siverson (1995), and Mueller (1973) argue that they are highly sensitive to military casualties, especially as they mount over the course of a conflict. Given the debate concerning citizens’ sensitivity to casualties, others argue that citizens, especially in advanced industrial democracies, tend to support using foreign aid as a tool of foreign policy at consistently high levels (Otter 2003). Therefore, citizens may be more reluctant to increase support for continuing with an intervention when it involves sending soldiers versus money. While this study is primarily concerned with testing the logic of SDT on interventions that consist of military operations, the type of intervention may influence information processing. Thus, I present the following research hypothesis on the additive effect of the control variable labeled “intervention type”:

Hypothesis 3- Compared to conditions where the type of intervention consists of military force, use of foreign aid will increase the level of support a citizen gives to continuing with the intervention.

Citizens' views on intervention policy have been shown to vary, both within and across interventions (Gelpi, Feaver, and Reifler 2005; Jentleson and Britton 1998).

Thus, policy feedback may not always hold the same weight in citizens' decision calculi.

Given that resources have already been invested into a particular mission, I suspect that

when the stakes are higher (strategic importance of host state is high) citizens will be

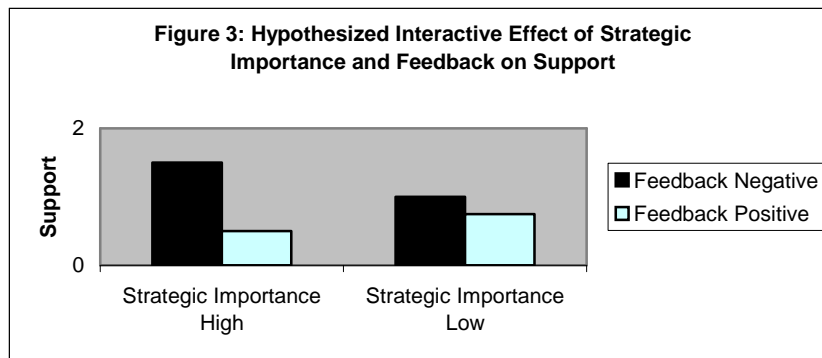
more domain-sensitive. They will be more risk acceptant when viewing negative

information and more risk averse when viewing positive information. Thus, I present

the following research hypothesis on the interactive effect of strategic importance and

feedback (see Figure 3):

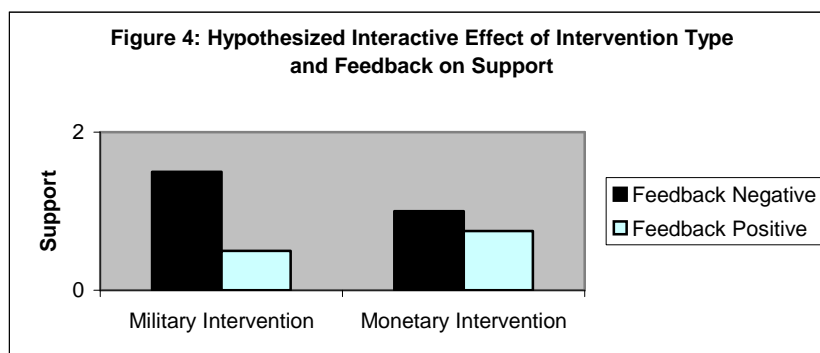
Hypothesis 4- The effect of feedback on a citizen's support is conditioned by the strategic importance of the host state. Compared to conditions where strategic importance of host state is low, citizens will exhibit a greater difference across feedback conditions when strategic importance is high.



In addition, I suspect that the type of resources invested into a particular mission alters the manner in which feedback is processed. I expect citizens to be more domain-sensitive when processing information on ongoing military interventions. In those cases,

the stakes are higher and they more likely they are to both take risks in order to recover losses and quickly accommodate to gains in order to avoid future losses. From this logic, I present the following research hypothesis on the interactive effect of intervention type and feedback (see Figure 4):

Hypothesis 5- The effect of feedback on a citizen's support is conditioned by the type of intervention. Compared to conditions where intervention type is monetary, citizens will exhibit a greater difference across feedback conditions when intervention type is military.



In the next section, I describe an experiment I designed to test the above hypotheses regarding citizens' processing of initial policy feedback on interventions.

The Experiment

To test the hypotheses regarding public preference formation during interventions, I constructed a hypothetical international crisis modeled after the situation in Somalia in the early 1990's.¹⁶ The scenario I presented to participants outlined both

¹⁶ The scenario presented to participants suggested the intervention included both humanitarian elements and those specifically related to U.S. national security. Such instances, where multiple objectives are pursued, are quite common (Jervis 1999).

the concerns emanating from the situation and the initial response of the United States. They are then presented with information about how well the intervention affected the situation facing the foreign country (comparing the situation before the intervention to the situation after the intervention the following year). The participants were asked to reveal their preferred policy moving forward in the operation.

Participants: One hundred and forty undergraduate students at Texas A&M University took part in this experiment. The participants were randomly assigned to one of eight experimental groups.

Design: The structure of the experiment is a 2x2x2 between groups design (see Figure 5). The factors are: (a) nature of policy feedback (negative versus positive), which is the main explanatory variable extracted from the theory; and two control variables (b) strategic importance of the foreign country to the United States (strategic value versus no strategic value); (c) investment type (whether the U.S. provided military assistance or monetary assistance).

The dependent variable is the preferred second stage policy of the participant (decrease, maintain, or increase involvement), which I label support.

Research Materials and Treatment: The instructions for the participants specified in advance the choice they will have to make. Specifically, they were informed they had to read a specific scenario concerning a particular crisis abroad, the U.S. intervention effort, and its effectiveness after one time period. Then, they were to indicate what policy they would recommend the president should adopt moving forward (decrease, maintain, increase current policy).

Figure 5- Experimental Conditions and Hypotheses: Experiment 1

	Positive Feedback Military Intervention	Positive Feedback Monetary Intervention	Negative Feedback Military Intervention	Negative Feedback Monetary Intervention
Strategic Importance High	A	B	C	D
Strategic Importance Low	E	F	G	H

Hypothesis 1: $(C+D+G+H)/4 > (A+B+E+F)/4$

Hypothesis 2: $(A+B+C+D)/4 > (E+F+G+H)/4$

Hypothesis 3: $(A+C+E+G)/4 > (B+D+F+H)/4$

Hypothesis 4: $((C+D)/2)-(A+B/2) > ((G+H)/2)-(E+F/2)$

Hypothesis 5: $((C+G)/2)-(A+E/2) > ((D+H)/2)-(B+F/2)$

You will be exposed to a fictitious international crisis. The crisis is a consequence of a prolonged drought that hit a foreign country. You will be informed of what was our President's initial response to that crisis. Then, you will read additional information concerning how well the initial response has worked out. Once you have finished reviewing the information you will be asked to give your opinion on what the President should do in response to the developing situation.

Please make this decision carefully. You may review previous information in your booklet at any time during your experiment up to the point where you mark your choice. While this specific scenario is hypothetical, similar situations are quite common with respect to U.S. foreign policy. Your thoughtful response will help researchers better understand the complex deliberations concerning intervention operations and the foundations of public support associated with them.

After you mark your choice and turn the page, you will find the post-study questionnaire. Please answer all questions without referring back to any other information in the booklet. Once the questionnaire is complete, please sit quietly until the investigator collects your booklet.

Strategic Importance Treatment: All participants were exposed to one of the treatments concerning the strategic importance of the foreign country experiencing the crisis to the United States. Half of the participants viewed information suggesting that the country in question was strategically valuable to the United States (coded as 1):

The small island country of Hitobia has traditionally been labeled as a strategically important area to the United States. Its vast amount of natural resources as well as its relative location to hostile nations has made it an area of concern for the United States for decades. Our Secretary of State says that "ensuring Hitobian stability is of vital importance to U.S. strategic interests," and that destabilization of Hitobia "would directly threaten the security of the United States."

The other half viewed information about a non-strategically valuable state (coded as 0):

The small country of Hitobia has traditionally been a popular tourist attraction. Its friendly atmosphere to Western tourists, along with its climate, continues make it a top vacation spot.

Type of Intervention Treatment: All participants were exposed to one of two treatments concerning the type of intervention policy. Half viewed information on the use of the military to assist with the crisis (sending 2,500 troops, which I coded as 1), while the other half viewed information on the use of aid (\$100 million, which I coded as 0). For example:

(a)Initially in 2012, the President decided to send 2,500 U.S. peacekeeping troops to Hitobia in the hopes of alleviating the humanitarian crisis and stabilizing the domestic situation there.

(b)Initially in 2012, the President decided to send a \$100 million foreign aid package to Hitobia in the hopes of dealing with the emergency situation.

Feedback Treatment: Two versions of feedback were administered. Half of the participants viewed negative information about the effectiveness of the initial assistance effort (coded as 1), while the other half viewed positive information (coded as 0). Each of the four negative conditions presented information suggesting that the U.S. efforts were not working to alleviate ills stemming from the drought that befell that foreign country. Participants read the following based on type of investment:

(a)2013: A year since the arrival of the U.S. aid package in 2012. The domestic situation in Hitobia has worsened. 1 million additional Hitobians have lost their homes and 800,000 more are suffering from inadequate nutrition. The internal stability of the country has also regressed, with reports suggesting the factions do not want to discuss a resolution to end the fighting.

(b)2013: A year since the arrival of U.S. troops in 2012. The domestic situation in Hitobia has worsened. 1 million additional Hitobians have lost their homes and 800,000 more are suffering from inadequate nutrition. The internal stability of the country has also regressed, with reports suggesting the factions do not want to discuss a resolution to end

the fighting. U.S. troops have also encountered significant resistance from local Hitobians in their peacekeeping efforts, with 50 U.S. casualties suffered since the beginning of the operation.

All other participants were in the positive conditions and read the following:

(a)2013: A year since the arrival of U.S. aid package in 2012. Hitobia has witnessed vast improvements in its domestic situation. 1 million victims regained their homes and roughly 800,000 victims have received food and ample nutrition. The internal stability of the country has also improved, with reports suggesting the factions are discussing a resolution to end the fighting.

(b)2013: A year since the arrival of U.S. troops in 2012. Hitobia has witnessed vast improvements in its domestic situation. 1 million victims regained their homes and roughly 800,000 victims have received food and ample nutrition. The internal stability of the country has also improved, with reports suggesting the factions are discussing a resolution to end the fighting.

U.S. troops have also encountered minimal resistance from local Hitobians in their peacekeeping efforts, with 5 U.S. casualties suffered since the beginning of the operation.

The Measure of the Dependent Variable: Participants were asked to circle one of the following policies they most preferred in response to the developing situation: (a) decrease involvement; (b) maintain current level of involvement; (c) increase involvement. These were then coded as 0, 1, or 2, respectively, for subsequent analyses.

Manipulation Checks: In order to verify the effectiveness of the manipulations and internal validity, respondents were asked a series of questions. They were prompted to circle the appropriate response with regards to the developing situation and whether it was: (a) improving; (b) worsening; (c) don't know. Similarly, they were directed to rate, on a scale from 1(low) to 10 (high), the strategic importance of the host state and the costliness of the intervention. The results of the manipulation checks indicate the

internal validity of the factors I manipulated (see Table 4). While the results are not as strong for the investment type check as for the feedback and strategic importance check, the results of a slightly modified manipulation check of the investment factor in Chapter V suggest the internal validity for the treatment is high

Results

Given that the goal of my analysis is to examine the effects of the treatments on the average preferred level of involvement, I conduct a 2x2x2 between groups ANOVA (see Table 5). As Davison and Sharma (1994) and Velleman and Wilkinson (1993) suggest, while ANOVA can be useful to perform on ordinal data, interpreting results can only be done in a “more or less” context. In other words, I can interpret the effects only in a comparative manner.

The results support Hypothesis 1, as the main effect of Feedback on level of support is statistically significant [$F(1,140)=9.11, p<.001$]. The mean response in the negative conditions is 1.15, while the mean response in the positive conditions is .78. This suggests those citizens in the negative feedback conditions prefer higher levels of continued involvement than those in the positive conditions. In other words, citizens tend to be domain sensitive in deciding on sequentially preferred policies: when receiving information that depicts failure, they tend to favor higher levels of continued policy involvement, all else equal.

Table 4- Manipulation Checks for Experiment 1

Table 4a- Effect of the Feedback Treatment on Participant's Assessment of the Situation

	# of Participants	Mean Response***
Negative Feedback Treatment	63	.968
Positive Feedback Treatment	71	.000

Dependent Variable: 1=situation worsening, 0=situation improving

***Denotes difference of means significant at $p < .001$

Table 4b- Effect of the Strategic Importance Treatment on Participant's Assessment of the Importance of the Host State to U.S. Interests

	# of Participants	Mean Response***
High Importance Treatment	70	6.70
Low Importance Treatment	70	5.04

Dependent Variable: response on scale from 1-10 (with 10=highest level of importance)

***Denotes difference of means significant at $p < .001$

Table 4c- Effect of the Intervention Type Treatment on Participant's Assessment of the Cost of the Intervention to the U.S.

	# of Participants	Mean Response*
Military Treatment	72	5.59
Monetary Treatment	68	4.74

Dependent Variable: response on scale from 1-10 (with 10=highest level of importance)

*Denotes different of means significant at $p < .05$

**Table 5- Results of ANOVA on Average Level of Support across Conditions:
Experiment 1**

Treatment	Comparison of Means
Feedback	Negative Conditions: 1.15 Positive Conditions: .78 (9.11)***
Strategic Importance	High Importance Conditions: 1.16 Low Importance Conditions: .75 (10.64)***
Intervention Type	Military Conditions: 1.04 Monetary Conditions: .89 (1.50)
Feedback*Strategic Importance	Negative/High Importance Conditions: 1.46 Negative/Low Importance Conditions: .89 Positive/High Importance Conditions: .85 Positive/Low Importance Conditions: .67 (2.01)
Feedback*Intervention Type	Negative/Military Conditions: 1.36 Negative/Monetary Conditions: .90 Positive/Military Conditions: .72 Positive/Monetary Conditions: .84 (4.43)*

f-statistic in parentheses. *** p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05

In addition, the results also offer support to Hypothesis 2, as the main effect of Strategic Importance is statistically significant and in the predicted direction

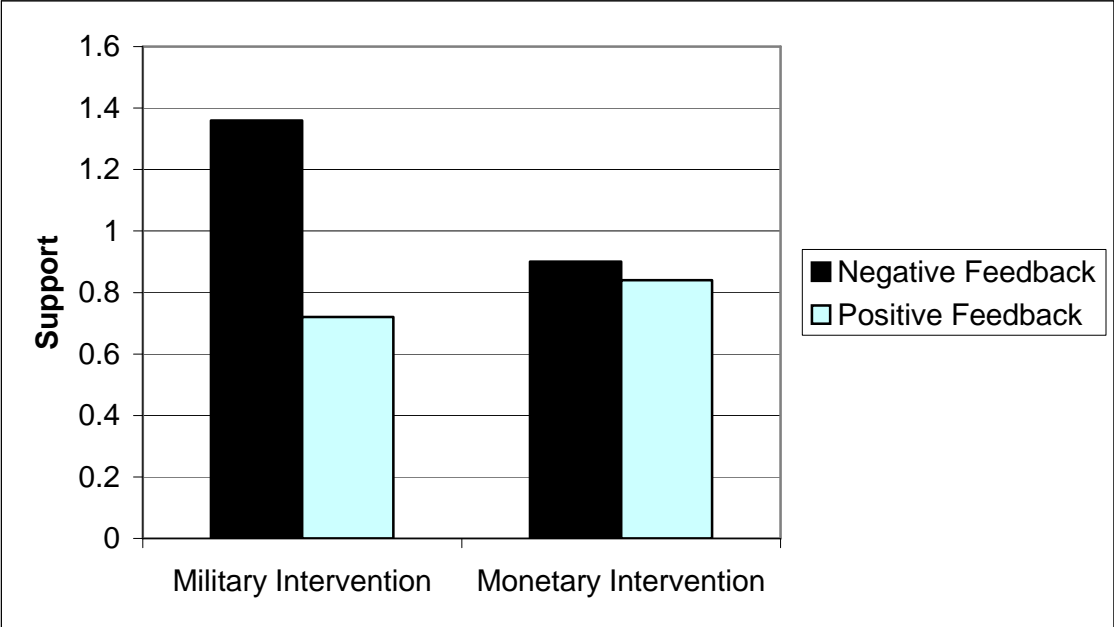
[$F(1,140)=10.64, p<.001$]. The mean response in the strategic importance high conditions is 1.16, while it is .75 in the strategic importance low conditions. This suggests that the strategic importance of the host state has a statistically significant effect on preferences.

Interestingly, the results do not support Hypothesis 3, as Intervention Type is not a statistically significant predictor of support. It appears that when citizens decide on the continuation of an intervention, the cuing effect from importance overrides the type of intervention (military versus monetary) the leader has made.

As Table 3 depicts, hypothesis 4 is not supported by the analysis— Feedback*Strategic Importance does not achieve statistical significance. Strategic importance of the host state does not appear to influence the relationships between feedback and support, although the effect is in the expected direction. While it appears that citizens tend to be more domain-sensitive when processing information on strategically important hosts, results suggest further exploration is needed.

However, the results do lend support to hypothesis 5, as there is a significant interactive effect between feedback and intervention [$F(1,140)=4.43, p<.05$]. As the results suggest on Feedback*Intervention Type and the interaction graph in Figure 6 displays, the investment (in this case, type of assistance) mediates the impact that feedback has on policy preferences moving forward. While positive feedback tends to sway participants into preferring lower levels of continued involvement and negative leads them to prefer higher levels, the type of intervention attenuates this impact. The

Figure 6- The Relationship between Feedback and Support across Intervention Type Conditions



difference of means between citizens in the negative feedback and the positive feedback conditions that are also in the military conditions is .64. However, the difference between them in the monetary conditions is only .06. Thus, the results suggest military interventions heighten the domain-sensitivity of the citizenry, with citizens preferring more risks with negative feedback and more caution with positive feedback compared to monetary interventions.

Discussion

While citizens respond to the direction of movement in dominant indicators as proposed by Gartner (1997), they do so in a counterintuitive fashion: they prefer increased involvement when viewing negative feedback. The results of the experimental analysis suggest that the citizenry is domain sensitive in deciding on which policies to prefer in a sequential process. The domain, whether gains or losses, is determined by the direction of the policy feedback: policy success puts a citizen in the domain of gains while policy failure puts him/her in the domain of losses. And as assumed by SDT, citizens prefer higher levels of continued involvement when viewing negative feedback; they are willing to support risk taking in order to recover previous losses and give the policy a chance to succeed. They prefer lower levels of continued involvement when viewing positive feedback; they are risk averse and tend to accommodate in the face of policy gains. This lends credence to sunk costs arguments and the psychological mechanism outlined by SDT, specifically, that as public goods-seeking investors, citizens tend to use frames when processing information on an ongoing information and forming their sequential preferences.

The results point to additional effects concerning strategic importance and intervention type, variables that the literature on intervention decisions outlined as important contextual variables affecting citizens' preferences. While the type of assistance does not appear to have a significant impact on preferred level of continued involvement, it does modify the relationship between feedback and policy preference; citizens are more domain-sensitive in military conditions. Thus, while feedback appears

to work similarly across military and monetary interventions, its framing effect appears to be heightened when force is used.

These results, however, only speak to those situations where information is presented in a comparative manner, where only direction of feedback can be perceived. Thus, uncertainty concerning the likely outcome is high. Specifically, the experiment provided participants information after the initial decision to get involved was made and thus, the information was nested in an immediate history policy feedback. Citizens were able to compare the situation prior to the intervention with the situation a year after the intervention began. Because of the high level of uncertainty in such instances, information on success does not suggest the mission has been completed; and information on failure does not suggest the mission cannot be completed. Here, the feedback is noisy and does not contain enough information for the public to confidently determine whether or not the policy will deliver the public goods an executive has promised.

Conclusion

One of the main arguments of my theory holds that there are systematic influences on the preference formation process of citizens during sequential foreign policy episodes. These influences, as derived from the theory, stem from the movement in dominant indicators of policy feedbacks. As results indicate, citizens prefer higher levels of continued involvement when viewing negative feedback. Additionally, the results suggest controlling for contextual factors is important in analyses of citizen

preferences regarding military interventions. Citizens prefer to continue with interventions involving strategically important states. More importantly, they appear to be domain sensitive when deciding on their preferred foreign policy in a sequential framework, and, the type of aid effort attenuates the domain sensitivity.

Thus, citizens appear to act as investors and to be influenced by previous costs of a mission (Arkes and Blumer 1985; Sullivan 2008). While the citizens may not broadly approve of military action and with the job an executive is doing in handling a mission, they may nonetheless prefer to increase involvement. This study, by asking citizens about their sequential preferences rather than their opinions of the executive's handling of the mission, suggests previous measures of the dependent variable may have contributed to conflicting results. A citizen can disapprove of the executive and prefer to increase involvement, and by doing so reserve the right to modify his approval of the executive in the future, especially if the intervention has not been terminated. In Chapter VI, I address whether executives anticipate such behavior.

Overall, the experiment tested the reactions of the citizenry to one piece of feedback (comparative) from the intervention and its results suggest that until the picture becomes clearer, negative feedback leads the citizenry to favor more action while positive feedback leads them to favor less action. But, how do additional pieces of feedback work, specifically, when one piece of information is part of an informational context? In the following chapter, I address this question by conducting an additional experiment on feedback trends. Understanding how the preference formation process changes when certainty increases is a task to which I now turn.

CHAPTER V

UNRAVELING THE INFLUENCE OF POLICY FEEDBACK ON CITIZENS' SUPPORT FOR ONGOING INTERVENTIONS: EXAMINING REACTIONS TO FEEDBACK TRENDS

The results from the experimental analysis in Chapter IV suggest the citizenry is sensitive to feedback and they react to such information in the counterintuitive manner predicted by the theoretical model: negative feedback leads them to favor continuation while positive feedback leads them to favor withdrawing from the conflict. In addition, the domain sensitivity (gain versus loss) is larger in the context of a military intervention. And, as others found, support is more likely when dealing with strategically important targets, though importance does not appear to heighten domain sensitivity.

However, the manner in which information concerning an intervention is presented to citizens may matter. This potential importance is connected with the fact that information stemming from an intervention has a degree of noise regarding the likely outcome of the mission. In other words, movement in a particular direction may influence the public differently depending on the nature of that movement. While the results of the experimental analysis in Chapter IV suggests the direction of feedback guides the process, Gartner's (1997) approach suggests that the rate of change in that direction, or trends, may also impact the process by generating more certainty about the likely outcome of a policy. Feedback may be viewed in a different informational

context, where the accumulation of feedback, not only the direction, may come to influence how subsequent feedback is interpreted.

This consideration raises two important questions: do citizens identify trends and if so, do trends make a difference in the formation of their sequential foreign policy preferences? To examine these questions, I conduct an additional experiment that relaxes the information assumption I made in Chapter IV and presents citizens with a history of feedback that enables them to view variation in the acceleration of movement in dominant indicators.

In this chapter I outline the experiment; firstly, by presenting the experimental logic, procedures, and materials given to participants, and secondly, by presenting results of statistical analysis with regards to the implication of performance trends and specific research hypotheses generated from that implication. I then discuss the results specifically in terms of the sequential nature of an intervention policy and generally in terms of any sequential foreign policy, and conclude. The results indicate citizens are impacted by the manner in which information is presented to them, and specifically, when information is presented as a history, they use the trends in policy feedback while forming their sequential policy preferences, suggesting an acceleration in trends impacts their information processing. While trends do not appear to alter the relationship between feedback direction and preferences, they have an interesting main effect: rapid trends in either direction decrease preferences for continued involvement.

Experimental Logic

As I have argued, foreign policy making rarely consists of a one-shot decision. Rather, it consists of leaders reevaluating and updating policy; it is sequential (Billings and Hermann 1998). While the literature offers a number of insights into the initial decisions involved in foreign policy making, it has, until recently, largely avoided addressing this sequential nature directly. Building from the main assumption of the selectorate theory (Buono de Mesquita et al. 2003), namely, that a leader's main objective is to maintain office, I presented Sequential Decision Theory (SDT) in an effort to explain how leaders update foreign policy. Then, I explored an implication of Sequential Decision Theory that emphasizes the preference formation process of the citizenry via experimentation in Chapter IV. This implication emphasized the citizenry's processing of information on foreign policy, specifically their processing of information from one time period in comparison to the previous time period.

In order to transform the selectorate theory into a framework capable of explaining sequential decisions and the citizenry's role in them, I introduced the main assumptions of both prospect theory (Kahneman and Tversky 1979) and the dominant indicator approach (Gartner 1997). Since a leader depends on the selectorate's support and its perceptions of her competence in furthering the national reputation in order to maintain power, I assumed that she acts as though she is concerned with how citizens reacts to the performance of a foreign policy. Thus, an examination of how the citizenry processes feedback is most crucial in understanding how a leader makes her sequential decisions. To this process, I suggested the citizenry uses frames that are shaped by the

movement in dominant indicators. In other words, understanding the nature of the feedback concerning foreign policy performance is crucial.

However, in Chapter IV, I focused on the main implication of my theory dealing with the impact of the *direction* of feedback on citizens' information processing (whether positive or negative). This focus was warranted given that the main mechanism of SDT is the framing effect. But, Gartner (1997) suggests that trends in feedback may matter as well, as they may impact the decision maker's assessment of the certainty moving forward. This is because information on foreign policy outcomes holds a degree of noise regarding the likely outcome of an intervention and specifically, whether a recovery is likely in the face of a failing policy. This determination, I argue, impacts the degree of audience costs that are suffered in the event an executive backs down from a policy. If movement in the negative direction suggests that not only is a policy failing, but that a recovery is unlikely, then citizens will prefer less involvement. Building from this logic, I address the following question: how do trends in dominant indicators affect information processing and ultimately the formation of sequential foreign policy preferences of the citizenry? To address this question, I explore another implication of the combined insights of prospect theory and the dominant indicator approach: the certainty effect.

Public Reactions to Foreign Policy and Foreign Policy Making

As I outlined in the previous chapter, the literature on public opinion formation suggests that while the public responds predictably to international events (Jentleson

1992; Jentleson and Britton 1998; Nincic 1992), under certain conditions, elite discourse can drive public opinion (Berinsky and Kinder 2006; Geva, Astorino-Courtois, and Mintz 1996; Zaller 1994; 1992). Despite this debate, I have argued that leaders must come to understand how information will influence those reactions and that the direction of policy feedback plays a vital role in the process. The logic of SDT poses two additional questions: do citizens identify trends in policy feedback and if so, do trends make a difference in the formation of their sequential foreign policy preferences?

As outlined previously, the information citizens view concerning foreign affairs can be vast and come from sources such as presidential rhetoric and media coverage (Aldrich et. al 2006; Baum 2002). Citizens, like any decision maker, use cognitive shortcuts to make sense of the world around them (Vertzberger 1999). In a sequential process, SDT suggests citizens use a specific type of cognitive shortcut: movement in dominant indicators. This movement creates the frame with which citizens use to process information and form their opinions.

Additionally, however, the direction may be nested within a wartime trend of information (Gartner 2008). One hundred casualties in a given month may send different information signals depending on the rate of change compared to the history of previous feedback. If one hundred casualties indicates a spike of ninety casualties from the previous month, and previous increases included no more than twenty from month to month, then such an acceleration may make a difference regarding citizens' assessment of the likely outcome of an intervention and whether or not increasing involvement is a preferred. How then do citizens process information in subsequent stages of a sequential

process, where a *history* of feedback is present? I look towards the literature on interventions to aid in the translation of the logic of prospect theory and the dominant indicator approach into testable experimental hypotheses regarding the role of trends.

Influences on Public Preferences over Foreign Policy: The Case of Intervention Stages

An intervention operation offers a suitable test case for exploring the implications that arise when relaxing the informational assumption of SDT. Interventions rarely end after the initial decision of involvement, and great variation exists in terms of the duration of such endeavors where force is used short of war (Meernik and Brown 2007). Thus, quite frequently, interveners spend months implementing a particular intervention policy and during this time the citizenry processes multiple reports of feedback as to how the intervention is proceeding. Within these reports, news media may present current information as part of a history of information from the intervention.

While bulk of the literature on interventions has focused on the initial decision to deploy troops or resources to a particular area, recently, scholars have begun to unravel the influences on conflict prosecution once the intervention has begun (see Meernik and Brown 2007). The role of feedback, however, has been largely overlooked. Additionally, research has produced mixed results on the role of the public in decisions over the use of force (DeRouen 1995; James and Oneal 1991). By relaxing the assumption on the manner in which information is presented to citizens, I attempt to shed more light on the ways in which feedback influences public opinion formation

during an intervention, which is an important undertaking if we are to understand the complex relationship between public opinion and executive decision-making during interventions.

As highlighted by SDT, in deciding on what they prefer in moving forward with an intervention, citizens process information and ask: “is this policy worth continuing?” As investors, they come to feel psychological attachment to human and material investments in the conflict and prefer to redeem these previous investments rather than let them sink (Sullivan 2009). In other words, *after* an initial policy decision by the leader has been made, citizens form their preferences based on the next decision’s perceived effects on the attainment of public goods.

SDT assumes that citizens rely on cognitive shortcuts to reduce information concerning a policy to a manageable size (Vertzberger 1999; 1990). In a sequential episode, they specifically use dominant indicators of how the intervention is proceeding as shortcuts (Gartner 1997; Nincic and Nincic 1995). And, the direction in dominant indicator movement creates frames for them to use when processing information (Kahneman and Tversky 1979; Levy 1997). Negative feedback puts them in a loss frame and positive feedback puts them in a gain frame prior to deciding their sequential preferences. The loss frame leads them to favor recovering losses while the gain frame leads them favor accommodating to gains. From this logic and in line with the previous experiment, I present the following research hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Compared to conditions where feedback is positive, negative feedback will *increase* the level of support the citizen gives to continuing with the intervention.

Unlike the first experiment, however, I relax the assumption that citizens view only one piece of summary information in isolation prior to forming his or her preference and instead introduce a *history* of feedback. And once additional information is introduced, how the public interprets new information depends on what exactly occurred previously (Boettcher 1995). Specifically, the pattern and history of movement in dominant indicators and its relation with new information become factors that influence how the citizenry processes new information in forming sequential preferences (Gartner 2008; Gartner and Segura 2000; 1998).

Thus, in addition to the framing effects of direction, the rate of change in dominant indicators may influence the preference formation process of the public. The change in the pace of movement consists of a sudden and rapid change in indicators, which Gartner (1997) suggests, profoundly influences decision makers' policy evaluations. Suffering one thousand casualties in a given year will send different signals depending on the manner in which those casualties have accumulated over the course of the twelve months. Specifically, the speed and the pattern of change send stronger signals regarding performance and the likely outcome of the policy (Gartner 2008). Also known as trends, these patterns represent the rate of change of recent dominant indicators and can occur gradually or rapidly (Gartner 1997).

How does this change in certainty alter the manner in which *citizens*, who are attempting to sift through noisy information, form their sequential preferences? As prospect theory suggests, decision-makers tend to violate the substitutability axiom due to the certainty effect (Kahneman and Tversky 1979). According to the certainty effect,

when given the choice between two highly probable occurrences involving a certain outcome, people choose the prospect where the outcome is certain despite having a higher utility for the other option; and, when given a choice between two options with very small probabilities of occurrence, most people choose the prospect that offers the largest gain. Given that I assume citizens are investors, they will tend to prefer decreasing the involvement in an intervention when certainty has been reduced across levels of policy success: in this situation, I expect citizens to prefer less involvement as the probability for recovery has been reduced. Under these conditions, they can bear the costs of withdrawing in public goods lost, as it is not seen as backing down but more so as a necessary withdrawal.

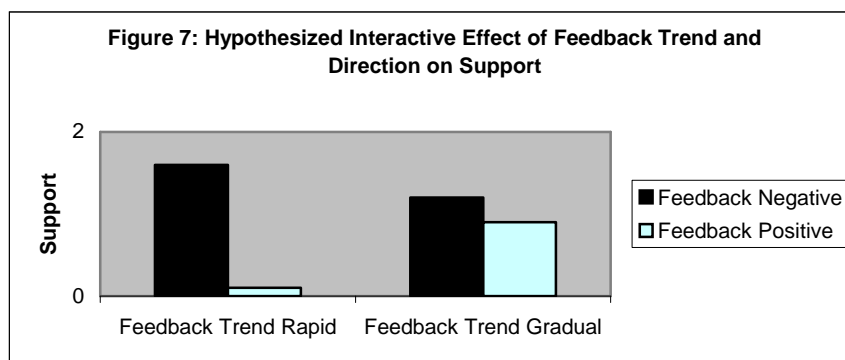
In other words, the accumulation of feedback increases *certainty* of citizens in terms of what exactly is occurring in an intervention and what its likely outcome will be. When information produces higher levels of uncertainty and thus probabilities of victory and defeat are both relatively small (feedback is gradual), I expect citizens to choose the decision that offers the largest potential gain (higher levels of involvement with the intervention and pursuing the total gain). From this logic, I present the following research hypothesis on the additive effect of trends:

Hypothesis 2: Compared to conditions where the feedback trend is gradual, rapid feedback will *decrease* the level of support the citizen gives to continuing with the intervention.

However, prospect theory suggests that the feedback trend should alter the domain sensitivity of citizens and condition the impact direction has on sequential preferences. Specifically, I expect citizens who view a rapid spike in feedback to be

much more domain sensitive, and to prefer more accommodation to gains when viewing a succeeding policy and more risky behavior when viewing a failing policy. In other words, in a situation where victory *is still possible* but not very probable, I expect citizens to choose the prospect that has the largest gain much more so than where victory is more probable but still uncertain. The logic of the framing and certainty effects produces the following interactive hypothesis (see Figure 7):

Hypothesis 3- The effect of feedback on a citizen's support is conditioned by the feedback trend. Compared to conditions where feedback accumulates gradually, citizens will exhibit a greater difference across feedback conditions when the feedback trend is rapid.



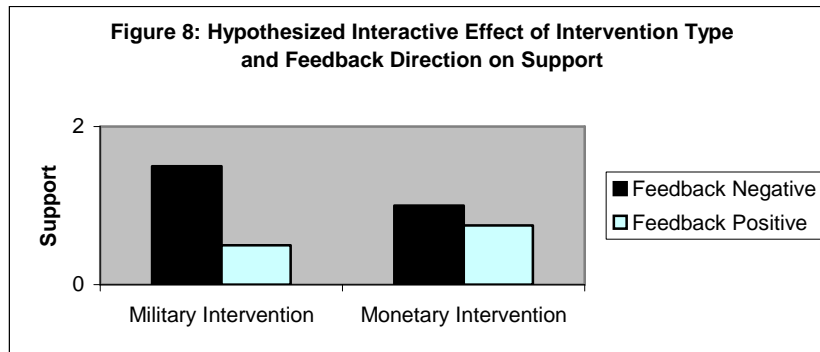
Moreover, the type of intervention may influence public opinion formation; variation in the tool of intervention may alter the manner in which citizens incorporate new information into their collective decision calculus. Specifically, scholars have argued the public is highly sensitive to military casualties, especially as they mount over the course of a conflict (Bennett and Stam 1996; Bueno de Mesquita and Siverson 1995; Fever and Gelpi 2004; Mueller 1973). In addition, scholars have also suggested democratic publics, especially in advanced industrial democracies, tend to support using

foreign aid as a tool of foreign policy at consistently high levels (Otter 2003). While the results of the previous experiment suggest the type of intervention did not significantly affect information processing at an early stage, it may gain significance as a conflict progresses. From this logic, and in line with the previous experiment, I present the following research hypothesis on the additive effect of the control variable labeled “investment type”:

Hypothesis 4- Compared to conditions where the type of intervention consists of military force, use of foreign aid will increase the level of support the citizen gives to continuing with the intervention across feedback trends and direction.

But, citizens’ views on intervention policy have been shown to vary, both within and across interventions (Jentleson and Britton 1998). Thus, policy feedback may not always hold the same weight in citizens’ decision calculi. As resources have already been invested into a particular mission, I suspect the type of those resources invested into a particular mission alters the manner in which feedback is processed during subsequent stages of an intervention. Since citizens generally support the provisioning of foreign aid, I expect the type of resources invested to alter their domain sensitivity. When controlling for the trend in feedback, previous military investments will further embolden those in negative condition to stay the course, and they will propel those in the positive conditions to accommodate to gains at a comparatively faster rate. From this logic, and in line with the previous experiment, I present the following interactive hypothesis (see Figure 8):

Hypothesis 5- The effect of feedback on a citizen’s support is conditioned by the type of intervention. Compared to conditions where intervention type is monetary, citizens will exhibit a greater difference across feedback conditions when intervention type is military across feedback trends.



In the next section, I describe an experiment I designed to test the hypotheses regarding the citizenry's processing of policy feedback during an intervention where information is presented as part of a history.

The Experiment

To test the hypotheses regarding citizens' preference formation during an intervention where a history of feedback is presented, I constructed a hypothetical international crisis modeled after the situation in Somalia in the early 1990s.¹⁷ The scenario I presented to participants outlined both the concerns emanating from the situation and the initial response of the United States. They are then presented with information about how well the assistance mission has affected the situation facing the foreign country, only in this experiment, multiple bits of information are presented. Specifically, participants viewed twelve pieces of information about the feedback of the

¹⁷ The scenario was nearly identical to the one presented to participants in the first experiment, although this one placed the hurricane as the catalyst for the turmoil as opposed to a drought. Similarly, the scenario presented to participants contained both humanitarian and security elements. Such instances, where multiple objectives are pursued during an intervention, are quite common (Jervis 1999).

mission and were asked to reveal their preferred policy moving forward in the assistance operation.

Participants: One hundred thirty one undergraduate students at Texas A&M University took part in this experiment. The participants were randomly assigned to one of eight experimental groups.

Design: The structure of the experiment is a 2x2x2 between groups design (see Figure 9). The factors are two main explanatory variables: (a) direction of the policy feedback (negative versus positive); (b) the feedback trend (rapid versus gradual); and a control variable (c) investment type (whether the U.S. provided military assistance or monetary assistance). Unlike the previous experiment, this one holds constant the strategic importance of the target state (all conditions deal with highly important ones). The dependent variable is preferred sequential policy (after one year) of the participant (decrease, maintain, or increase involvement).

Research Materials and Treatment: The instructions for the participants specified in advance the choice they will have to make. Specifically, they were informed they had to read a specific scenario concerning a particular crisis abroad, the U.S. intervention effort, and its effectiveness after each month over the course of one year, retrospectively. Then, they were to indicate what policy they would recommend the president should adopt moving forward. For example:

Figure 9- Experimental Conditions and Hypotheses: Experiment 2

	Positive Feedback Rapid Trend	Positive Feedback Gradual Trend	Negative Feedback Rapid Trend	Negative Feedback Gradual Trend
Military Investment	A	B	C	D
Monetary Investment	E	F	G	H

Hypothesis 1: $(C+D+G+H)/4 > (A+B+E+F)/4$

Hypothesis 2: $(A+C+E+G)/4 < (B+D+F+H)/4$

Hypothesis 3: $(A+B+C+D)/4 > (E+F+G+H)/4$

Hypothesis 4: $((C+G/2)-(A+E/2)) > ((D+H/2)-(B+F/2))$

Hypothesis 5: $((C+D/2)-(A+B/2)) > ((G+H/2)-(E+F/2))$

You will be exposed to a fictitious international crisis that may happen in the future. The crisis is a consequence of a massive hurricane that hit a foreign country. You will be informed of what was our President's initial response to that crisis. Then, you will read additional information concerning how well the initial response has worked out. Once you have finished reviewing the information you will be asked to give your opinion on what the President should do in response to the developing situation.

Please make this decision carefully. You may review previous information in your booklet at any time during your experiment up to the point where you mark your choice. While this specific scenario is hypothetical, similar situations are quite common with respect to U.S. foreign policy. Your thoughtful response will help researchers better understand the complex deliberations concerning intervention operations and the foundations of public support associated with them.

After you mark your choice and turn the page, you will find the post-study questionnaire. Please answer all questions without referring back to any other information in the booklet. Once the questionnaire is complete, please sit quietly until the investigator collects your booklet.

Feedback Direction Treatment: Two versions of the feedback direction treatment were administered. Half of the participants viewed generally negative information about the effectiveness of the assistance effort (coded as 1), while the other half viewed generally positive information (coded as 0). Each of the negative conditions presented information suggesting the U.S. efforts were generally not working to alleviate ills stemming from the crisis that befell that foreign country. Note in line with Gartner's (1997) logic, the absolute value in dominant indicators is the same across conditions.

The only factor that varies (see below) is the manner in which the situation arrives at such a figure or trend. Those in the negative conditions viewed the following text:

The following graph explains how the situation in Hitobia has changed since U.S. involvement.

The graph describes how the situation has been changing EVERY MONTH during the U.S. intervention. It indicates the change in the number of Hitobians whose conditions worsened.

Total # of additional Hitobians homeless in 2012: 580,000

The other half in the negative conditions read the following text, which included information concerning the presence of the U.S. military:

The following graphs explain how the situation in Hitobia has changed since U.S. involvement.

The graphs describe how the situation has been changing EVERY MONTH during the U.S. intervention. The first graph indicates the change in the number of Hitobians whose conditions worsened.

Total # of additional Hitobians homeless in 2012: 580,000

The second graph shows the number of U.S. troop fatalities during the operation. These fatalities are a consequence of insurgents of different clans who wanted to gain control of scarce resources.

Total # of U.S. troops killed in Hitobia during 2012 relief mission: 215

The only factor that varies (see below) is the manner in which the participant arrives at such a figure or trend. Participants read the following text:

(a) The following graph explains how the situation in Hitobia has changed since U.S. involvement.

The graph describes how the situation has been changing EVERY MONTH during the U.S. intervention. It indicates the change in the number of Hitobians whose conditions improved.

Total # of Hitobian victims regaining homes in 2012: 580,000

(b)The following graphs explain how the situation in Hitobia has changed since U.S. involvement.

The graphs describe how the situation has been changing EVERY MONTH during the U.S. intervention. The first graph indicates the change in the number of Hitobians whose conditions improved.

Total # of Hitobian victims regaining homes in 2012: 580,000

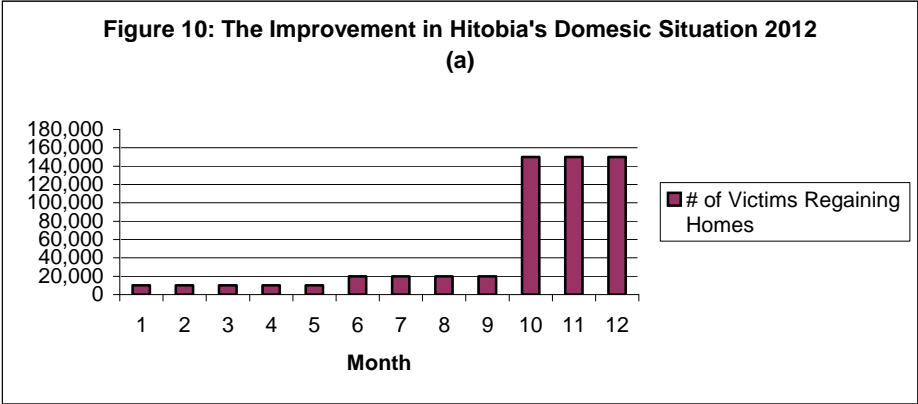
The second graph shows the number of U.S. troop fatalities during the operation. These fatalities are a consequence of insurgents of different clans who wanted to gain control of scarce resources.

Total # of U.S. troops killed in Hitobia during 2012 relief mission: 215

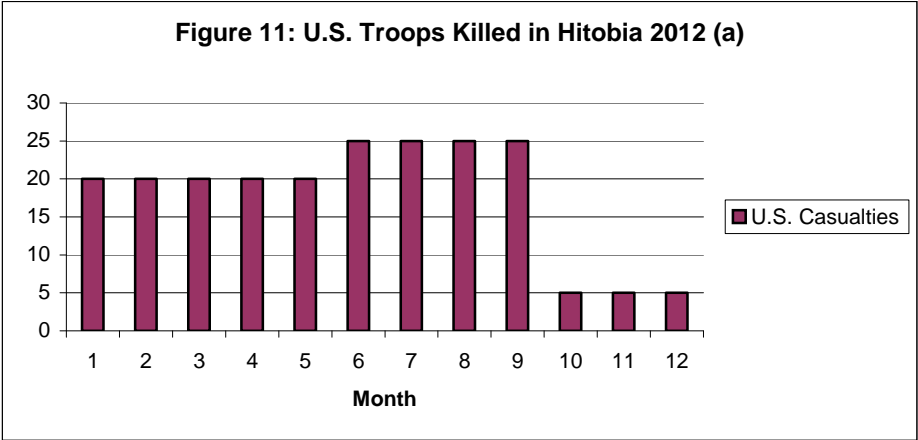
Feedback Trend Treatment: In addition to the direction, I manipulated the trend in feedback and administered two different versions of the feedback trend. Half of the participants viewed feedback suggesting a rapid rate of change in movement in a particular direction (coded as 1) and half viewed feedback suggesting a gradual rate of change in movement in a particular direction (coded as 0). The manipulation was presented using both verbal and graphical representations. The test for the effects of trends in feedback, I control for context: gradual conditions have relatively flat slopes at the end of the sequence, whereas rapid conditions have relatively steep ones. In line with Gartner (1997), the cumulative totals are the same; only *how* one arrives at those cumulative totals is different. For example, the rapid treatment, given to half of the participants, appeared as the following (see Figures 10 & 11)¹⁸:

¹⁸ This trend closely approximates the “curvilinear increasing” condition in Gartner (2008).

The graph illustrates that during the first 9 months of the operation, the impact of U.S. assistance was minimal. However, towards the end of 2012, there was a rapid improvement in Hitobia’s conditions.



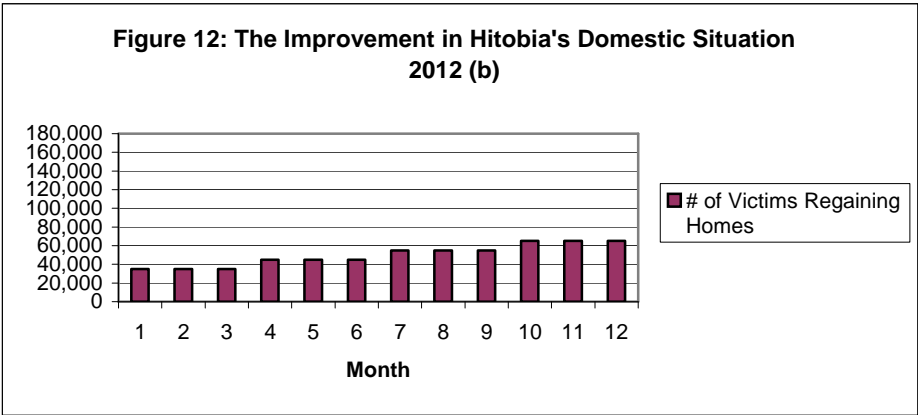
The graph illustrates that during the first months of the operation, the U.S. consistently suffered 20 to 25 casualties per month. However, as time passed, the casualty rate rapidly decreased.



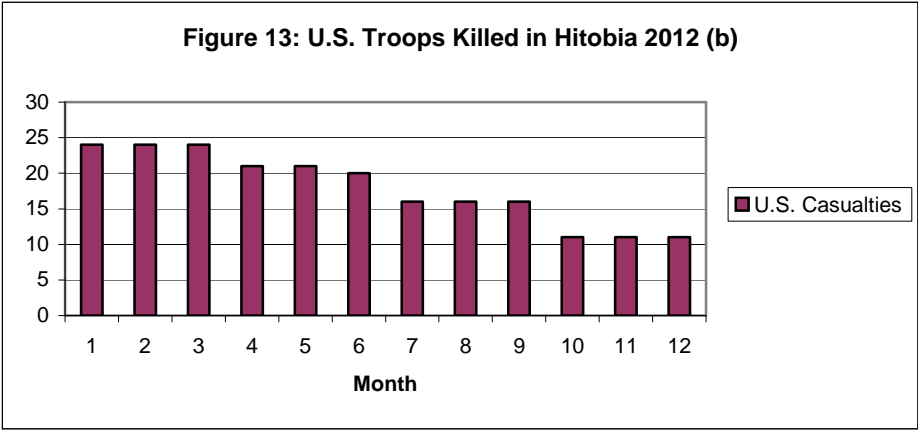
The gradual treatment given to the other half of the participants appeared as the following (see Figures 12 & 13)¹⁹:

The graph illustrates that during the first months of the operation, the impact of U.S. assistance was minimal. However, as time passed, there was a gradual improvement in Hitobia’s conditions.

¹⁹ This trend closely approximates the “uniform” condition in Gartner (2008).



The graph illustrates that during the first months of the operation, the U.S. consistently suffered nearly 25 casualties per month. However, as time passed, the casualty rate gradually decreased.



Type of Investment Treatment: All participants were exposed to one of two treatments concerning the type of intervention policy. Half viewed information on the use of the military to assist with the crisis (sending 2,500 troops, which I coded as 1), while the other half view information on the provisioning of money (\$100 million, which I coded as 0). For example:

(a)Initially in 2012, the President decided to send 2,500 U.S. peacekeeping troops to Hitobia in the hopes of alleviating the humanitarian crisis and stabilizing the domestic situation there.

(b)Initially in 2012, the President decided to send a \$100 million foreign aid package to Hitobia in the hopes of dealing with the emergency situation.

The Measure of the Dependent Variable: Participants were asked to circle one of the following policies they most preferred in response to the developing situation: (a) decrease involvement; (b) maintain current level of involvement; (c) increase involvement. These were then coded as 0, 1, or 2, respectively, for subsequent analyses and labeled as support.

Manipulation Checks: In order to verify that participants were affected by the experimental treatments, they were asked a series of questions. They were prompted to circle the appropriate response with regards to the developing situation and whether it: (a) improved; (b) worsened; (c) don't know. Similarly, they were directed to circle the appropriate response with regards to *how* the situation improved or worsened during the course of the year: (a) gradually; (b) rapidly; (c) don't know. Participants were also asked what type of aid the United States provided to Hitobia (military or monetary). The results of the manipulation checks indicate the internal validity of the factors I manipulated (see Table 6).

Results

Given that the goal of my analysis is to examine the effects of the treatments on the average preferred level of involvement, I conduct a 2x2x2 between groups ANOVA

Table 6- Manipulation Checks for Experiment 2

Table 6a- Effect of the Feedback Treatment on Participant's Assessment of the Situation

	# of Participants	Mean Response***
Negative Feedback Treatment	61	.90
Positive Feedback Treatment	65	.03

Dependent Variable: 1=situation worsening, 0=situation improving

*** Denotes difference of means significant at $p < .001$

Table 6b- Effect of the Feedback Trend Treatment on Participant's Assessment of The Manner in Which The Situation Progressed

	# of Participants	Mean Response***
Rapid Feedback Treatment	64	.55
Gradual Feedback Treatment	66	.02

Dependent Variable: 1=Rapidly, 0=Gradually

*** Denotes difference of means significant at $p < .001$

Table 6c- Effect of the Investment Type Treatment on Participant's Assessment of Type of Intervention Employed by the U.S.

	# of Participants	Mean Response***
Military Treatment	70	.94
Monetary Treatment	61	.02

Dependent Variable: 1=Military, 0=Monetary

*** Denotes difference of means significant at $p < .001$

(see Table 7). As Davison and Sharma (1994) and Velleman and Wilkinson (1993) suggest, while ANOVA can be useful to perform on ordinal data, interpreting results can only be done in a “more or less” context. In other words, as with the ANOVA results presented in Chapter IV, I can interpret the effects only in a comparative manner.

While the effect of Feedback Direction is in the predicted direction and approaches statistical significance, it is statistically indistinguishable from zero. While those in the negative conditions prefer higher levels of continued involvement than those in the positive conditions (1.39 versus 1.19), the results do not confirm the relationship depicted by hypothesis 1. This suggests the manner in which information is presented to citizens may impact their preference formation process and minimize the impact of frames as outlined by Sequential Decision Theory.

The results support Hypothesis 2, as the main effect of it Feedback Trend is statistically significant and in the predicted direction [$F(1,131)=5.22, p<.05$]. The mean response in the feedback rapid conditions is 1.12, while it is 1.39 in the gradual feedback conditions. This suggests that variation in the acceleration rate of feedback has a statistically significant effect on preference: when controlling for direction and type of intervention, rapid feedback tends to lead citizens into preferring lower levels of involvement in comparison to gradual feedback, as predicted by the combined logic of the certainty effect and the dominant indicator approach.

The results do not lend support to interactive relationship posited by Hypothesis 3 (Feedback Direction*Feedback Trend). The trend does not alter the domain sensitivity of citizens; they appear to use a similar degree of domain sensitivity whether they are in

**Table 7- Results of ANOVA on Average Level of Support across Conditions:
Experiment 2**

Treatment	Comparison of Means
Feedback Direction	Negative Conditions: 1.39 Positive Conditions: 1.19 (1.465)
Feedback Trend	Rapid Conditions: 1.12 Gradual Conditions: 1.39 (5.22)*
Intervention Type	Military Conditions: 1.19 Monetary Conditions: 1.34 (2.10)
Feedback Direction*Feedback Trend	Negative/Rapid Conditions: 1.18 Negative/Gradual Conditions: 1.47 Positive/Rapid Conditions: 1.06 Positive/Gradual Conditions: 1.32 (.01)
Feedback*Intervention Type	Negative/Military Conditions: 1.23 Negative/Monetary Conditions: 1.49 Positive/Military Conditions: 1.14 Positive/Monetary Conditions: 1.25 (.17)

f-statistic in parentheses. *p<.05

the gradual or rapid conditions. Additionally, Hypothesis 4 is not supported by the results, corroborating the null finding concerning the type of intervention in Chapter IV.

However, in contrast to the previous experimental analysis, the results do not lend support to Hypothesis 5, which posited that type of investment impacts the relationship between feedback direction and support (Feedback Direction*Intervention Type). It appears when considering the trend of information in a sequential foreign policy episode citizens' domain sensitivity is not dependent upon the type of intervention. Once again, the preference formation of citizens during sequential foreign policy episodes appears to be dependent upon the manner in which information is presented to them.

Discussion

The results of the first experiment support the main tenet of SDT, namely, that the direction of policy generates a frame that impacts the preference formation process of citizens. However, SDT assumes that citizens are presented with information in a comparative context, where they focus on the direction of movement in dominant indicators of performance from one month to the next and where certainty regarding the likely outcome is still relatively low. In this chapter, I relaxed this assumption to test the main tenet of the dominant indicator approach regarding feedback trends. The result suggests when citizens retrospectively view multiple pieces of feedback, the certainty effect emerges: a rapid acceleration in indicator movement lowers preferences for continued involvement.

Interestingly, the interaction between the framing and certainty effect suggested by prospect is not supported by the analysis. While rapid feedback does decrease

preferences for involvement, those viewing rapidly negative feedback do not exhibit a heightened propensity for gambling to recover losses. Thus, citizens act as if they commit a version of the *fundamental attribution error*: they attribute failures to environmental factors and success to their own individual efforts (Quattrone 1982). When feedback moves rapidly in either direction, this increases the certainty of the cost-bearing public; and when such information is positive, they appear to gain certainty the United States' has done what it *needs* to do and when such information is negative, appear to they gain certainty that the United States' has done all it *can* do, not that it must gamble for the higher prospect.

Conclusion

One of the main tenets of my theory holds there are systematic influences on public preference formation during the various stages of a sequential foreign policy episode. Previously, I explored the basic implications involving the direction of policy feedback, the importance of the target state, and the type of intervention with regards to an intervention policy immediately following a comparison between two time periods. I explored these implications in the context where information was presented in a comparative manner, enabling citizens to be influenced by the direction of feedback.

In this chapter, I relaxed an assumption of SDT regarding the manner in which information is presented to citizens to enable analysis of the impact of indicator trends on sequential preferences. Operationally, I defined this trend using verbal and graphical cues occasionally employed by the news media as the slope of recent monthly movement

in both troop fatalities and improvement in local conditions. As results suggest, the assumptions researchers make regarding the manner in which information is presented to citizens matters. When a history of information is presented, all else equal, rapid changes in the movement of monthly indicators of performance increase support for withdrawing in comparison to where movement occurs gradually. Interestingly, the effect of the actual direction of the feedback is quelled in this particular informational context.

The null result with regards to direction in the second experiment has implications for prospect theory. Specifically, it appears that citizens are more risk acceptant when operating in the domain of losses *up to a point*. As I previously suggested, negative feedback decreases the probability attached to a successful outcome of an intervention. Thus, there appears to be a probability threshold, where once the probability decreases to a low enough point, negative feedback no longer makes citizens risk acceptant. Rapid feedback appears to increase the likelihood that citizens reach that probability threshold.

While the second experiment tested an implication of the dominant indicator approach (Gartner 1997) that arises when relaxing the informational assumption, several differences are worth noted between it and Gartner's (2008) experiments. Gartner's experiments were free flow, as individuals were able to stop whenever they choose; my experiment was forced flow, as individuals viewed each piece of information in an intervention sequence to ensure they received the treatment trend. Also, his sole focus was on casualties, while the feedback treatment I created includes information on

casualties as well as progress on the ground that are both directionally consistent. Additionally, the dependent variable for my analysis is the sequential preference of citizens, not whether or not they currently approve of the leader or the conflict. As I argued previously, citizens may disapprove of a leader's job or of the conflict in general, but, still prefer to heighten involvement if they believe success is still possible and still reserve the right to increase approval of the executive at a later date. Therefore, more research is needed to distinguish between the impacts of various indicators of success and of various questions regarding the conduct of an intervention.

The results of the two experiments suggests framing effects, are most important to citizens when information is presented in a comparative manner (Chapter IV), while certainty effects are most important to them when information is presented as part of a history (Chapter V). Seemingly, citizens are likely to prefer continuation during subsequent stages of an intervention despite negative feedback as long as uncertainty regarding the likely policy outcome is high; if certainty is high, however, they comparatively prefer less involvement. This is in line with work in social psychology and organizational behavior, which suggests important determinants of persistence to a course of action is whether future investment is likely to be efficacious and the severity of the feedback itself (Brockner and Rubin 1975; Staw and Ross 1989).

This highlights the importance of the assumption researchers make regarding how information is presented to citizens. While I assume the citizens and executives are impacted by frames generated by the direction of policy feedback, and thus, view

information as part of a comparison, examining preference formation under a different assumption has provided additional insights.

Scholars may question the external validity of my results. While political scientists in general (Kinder and Pulfrey 1993) and international relations scholars in particular (see McDermott, 2002a, b) acknowledge the internal validity of experimentation as means of testing hypotheses, debate continues regarding the method's external validity. As questions have been raised concerning the validity of using students as participants in experimental research, I have three responses to such criticisms. Firstly, experiments are designed mainly to test hypotheses that were deduced from a given theory. In this respect, I echo the sentiment expressed by Mook (1983), who suggests the results of a given experiment simply support the logic of the theory, given that the experiment is an appropriate representation of the theory. Secondly, Gartner (2008) employed undergraduate and national samples in his experimental research on the preference formation of citizens during interventions and the results appear to be robust across samples. And my main goal as previously stated was to test several implications of my theory regarding citizens. Thus, while these generally supportive results are tentative, I encourage future research to test the robustness of the relationships uncovered by expanding the sample.

In the following chapter, I address SDT's implications regarding executive decision-making and analyze historical data in order to test hypotheses on executives' sequential intervention decisions.

CHAPTER VI
EXECUTIVE APPROVAL, POLICY FEEDBACK, AND DECISION-MAKING
DURING MILITARY INTERVENTIONS

The results of the experimental analysis described in Chapter IV suggest citizens are affected by frames in forming their sequential foreign policy preferences. Specifically, the results support a main tenet of SDT: negative feedback places citizens in the domain of losses and entices them to prefer more action, while positive feedback places them in the domain of gains and entices them to prefer less action. Despite the assumption standing up to empirical scrutiny, puzzles regarding executives' sequential decisions during an intervention remain. How does public opinion impact executives' use of feedback in making sequential decisions? Under what conditions will public opinion matter for executive decision making during an intervention? While a consensus exists in the literature suggesting public opinion does influence executive foreign policy making generally, a more detailed theoretical and empirical examination of this link is necessary, especially with regards to military interventions.

Given the results of the experimental analyses, which suggest citizens have a heightened sensitivity to information on military interventions, I focus on executive decisions over the use of force. Specifically, I build from the recent literature on military interventions, which emphasizes decision making once force has already been deployed (see Meernik and Brown 2007). While the bulk of the literature on military interventions and on the use of force focus almost exclusively on the initial decision to

use force (De Rouen 1995; Morgan and Bickers 1992; Ostrom and Job 1986; Sobel 2001), it provides useful insights for understanding how executives make sequential decisions.

In this chapter, I draw upon previous work on public opinion and the use of military force, summarize my theory of sequential decision making and present it in the context of executive decision-making during military interventions, and derive specific hypotheses from the theory that emphasize the interaction between citizens and their executives in the crafting of sequential foreign policy decisions.

I then test the hypotheses using a dataset of thirty-four military interventions by France, the United Kingdom, and the United States from 1960-2000. The evidence suggests, in line with Sequential Decision Theory, sequential decision-making during military interventions is a complex process: public approval conditions the effect that feedback has on involvement. Executives appear to be affected by the conditional framing effect of public approval. Generally, when support for executives is low, they tend to take more risks in an effort to avoid suffering domestic political audience costs. When they are more secure in office, or when their support is at higher levels, they tend to listen to what the feedback is suggesting about the effectiveness of the policy and take fewer risks.

Public Opinion and Decisions on the Use of Military Force

Overall, scholars assume that a leader's main goal is maintaining power. Therefore, under certain conditions, democratic executives must be attentive to public

preferences (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003). A unifying theme of research on the connection between public opinion and foreign policy is that public opinion must be activated in order to potentially influence foreign policy, and that activation entails significant media attention (Powlick and Katz 1998)²⁰. Given uses of military power tend to receive more media coverage, scholars have uncovered various instances where public opinion has influenced the executive use of force, although they have made interesting arguments without attempts at large scale testing with regards to military interventions (Baum 2004b; Foyle 2004; McKeown 2000). However, scholarship that has examined the relationship between public opinion and the use of force on a large scale has produced several debates concerning the relationship between public opinion and executive use of force.

For example, research on the “rally effect” examining whether executives enjoy a boost in support when they employ military force abroad has produced mixed results. While Lian and Oneal (1993) argue on average that approval does not change following the use of force, other research finds significantly positive effects. Several scholars suggest approval increases when executives employ force internationally (Brody 1991; Jordan and Page 1992; Mueller 1973). Oneal, Lian, and Joyner (1996), additionally, suggest executives enjoy increased approval when they respond with force following foreign aggression, while Lai and Reiter (2005) present evidence suggesting rallies occur when there is an intense and direct threat to the national interest.

²⁰ However, see Baum (2003)

As research has produced mixed results regarding the manner in which citizens respond to uses of force, not surprisingly, research on diversionary behavior of executives, which relies on the existence of the rally effect, has also produced mixed results regarding the manner in which executives respond to changes in their domestic circumstances. Some scholars have found that lower public approval rates of the executive increase their propensity to use force internationally (DeRouen 1995; Foster and Palmer 2006). As McDermott (1992) and Smith (1996) theorize, when domestically vulnerable, executives take risks in the hopes of bolstering reelection chances. Interestingly, however, additional research suggests executives are more likely to use force when public approval is high, as it gives them more maneuverability (James and ONeal 1991; Ostrom and Job 1986).

How can these insights be useful in understanding the conditions under which public opinion influences foreign policy decisions of executives *after* military force has been deployed? A potentially fruitful line of research to extract insights from is the literature on foreign policy feedback. As the discussion below suggests, not only must executives who wish to maintain power attend to public opinion, but also to the effectiveness of their chosen policies.

Feedback during Conflict Episodes

As Billings and Hermann (1998) note, after a foreign policy decision such as an intervention is made and implemented, leaders receive information on the consequences of their initial policy choice and evaluate that information before reconsidering the

problem and making a follow on choice. In other words, while the implementation of an intervention policy is an important stage, executives make a series of decisions during the course of an intervention and use information stemming from the intervention to help make those decisions.

What characterizes the information executives receive and how does that information affect their sequential decisions? Slantchev (2003) constructs a formal model of simultaneous bargaining and fighting, which suggest learning occurs when information is revealed by manipulable negotiation behavior and nonmanipulable battlefield outcomes. This suggests that during the course of military conflicts, especially interventions consisting of the unilateral decisions to use force and withdrawal, executives learn about the effectiveness of their policies via feedback from the battlefield. The focus on the effects of information acquired *during* fighting on sequential decisions regarding the use of force has sparked a number of studies, all of which find that such information, such as the rate of loss of the initiator, alters the decision calculi of leaders (Powell 2004; Ramsey 2005; Slantchev 2004).

While this literature has largely been preoccupied with the relationship between battlefield information and decisions to terminate hostilities between two states, this logic can be extended to the realm of military interventions, where an intervening state unilaterally decides to continue to use force or cease hostilities. As Gartner (1997) suggests in his analysis of the strategic assessment of organizations during wars, decision-makers continually evaluate performance and alter behavior based on that performance to maximize the likelihood a mission will be accomplished. Gartner's

analysis highlights that the performance of a particular strategy and its likely outcome are revealed through changes in the rate of movement in “dominant indicators,” which are measures of complex information. They can, for instance, include a focus on one indicator, such as body counts during a war, or an overall assessment of several dominant indicators at once that signal success/failure of a policy (Gartner 1993; Gartner 1997; Gartner and Myers 1995). Garter (1997) argues that rapid and sudden changes in the rate of movement in dominant indicators spark policy changes, as they provide a clearer signal to decision-makers regarding the effectiveness of their policies.

Military interventions are commitments by executives. Interestingly, literature on sequential decisions regarding commitment levels to investments suggests the exact opposite of the strategic assessment literature: individuals tend to become locked in to an existing course of action and respond to negative feedback by increasing resources invested to a previous project even though it is unclear whether increasing commitment will lead to the attainment of objectives (Brockner 1992; Dietz-Uhler 1996; Ross and Staw 1991; Staw 2002; Staw and Ross 1989). Thus, the literature on sequential decision-making has produced contradictory arguments regarding the manner in which executives update commitment levels in response to policy feedback.

Below, I account for these discrepancies by suggesting that executives respond to feedback differently depending on their domestic situations. Overall, the literature on public opinion and the use of military force and leaders’ decisions during the course of a conflict suggest that power-seeking executives are influenced by public opinion in deciding on the use of force, but, when making sequential decisions, also take into

account the information stemming from the battlefield. However, the conditions under which public opinion influences the processing of battlefield information remain unclear. In the next section, I draw on these arguments in presenting my theory on sequential decisions specifically with regards to military interventions and highlight the conditions under which executives increase and decrease commitment in response to negative feedback.

Sequential Decision Theory

I build from several assumptions in the literature discussed above in applying Sequential Decision Theory to military interventions. To begin, the main goal of executives is to maintain political power, and thus, they make foreign policy with an eye on what citizens generally prefer (Buono de Mesquita et al. 2003). When processing information concerning an intervention, executives are impacted by how the situation is framed (McDermott 1992). As the primary goal of executives is maintaining power, I assume their levels of public approval act as a frame when they are deciding on sequential policies. Executives are willing to take risks in order to obtain the higher raw utility when in the domain of losses; when in the domain of gains, they tend to take fewer risks (Kahneman and Tversky 1979). Thus, I expect executives to be more willing to employ higher levels of involvement during an intervention when faced with low levels of domestic approval.

Additionally, I assume executives are investors and thus attend to information stemming from the intervention regarding the effectiveness of an intervention policy

(Nincic and Nincic 1995). Specifically, when making sequential decisions regarding a policy, I assume executives use information concerning the consequences of the policy choice (Billings and Hermann 1998). The information executives view consists of movement within dominant indicators of intervention effectiveness (Gartner 1997). I assume the *direction* of movement is most important to executives in indicating the likelihood of policy success.²¹ While conventional wisdom suggests information signaling policy failure (e.g. more casualties, additional territory lost) will entice leaders to retract the original policy and switch to another in order to achieve goals, SDT suggests executives are likely to suffer audience costs after withdrawing in the face of a failing policy. Thus, I expect negative feedback to entice executives to increase their investment in the original intervention policy in their attempts to avoid suffering audience costs.

However, not all potential intervention failures are created equally. Some executives may be better able to absorb the costs of a failed mission. As Smith (1996) suggests, when governments are assured of reelection, they make unbiased decisions considering only international factors, but when voters' evaluation of foreign policy outcomes could potentially affect election results then governments are willing to take more risks. In other words, public approval frames an executive's decision context and conditions how they process battlefield information (McDermott 1992). This insight in light of the logic that intervention losses hurt democratic leaders suggests then when

²¹ While Gartner's (1997) framework emphasizes the rate of change in indicator movement, my theory emphasizes the direction in indicator movement has on executive sequential-decision making. By focusing on direction, I attempt to make my theory applicable to a wider range of intervention cases, as requirements on the duration of an intervention are relaxed.

things are going badly with a conflict *and* domestic conditions are poor, leaders will take risks and “gamble for resurrection”(Downs and Rocke 1994).

But why are executives’ political fates so closely tied to intervention outcomes? Could executives simply cut losses in the face of a failing mission and low domestic support and still maintain power? The main mechanism at play is audience costs: backing down in the face of trouble would almost seal the fate of politically vulnerable executives, as they would suffer audience costs for failing to deliver public goods (Bueno de Mesquita et. al 2003; Fearon 1994; Schultz 2001). Under conditions of a failing policy, executives cannot merely withdraw; they must at least maintain high levels of involvement even if policy success is unlikely (such as President Nixon with regards to the U.S. intervention in Vietnam). The intervention may be going poorly and decreasing an executive’s level of public approval, but by maintaining high levels of involvement, the executive signals to the citizenry that defeat has not been conceded. Ultimately, the executive hopes that maintaining a high level of involvement will help them avoid suffering audience costs and ultimately, maintain political power, not necessarily achieve intervention objectives.

Thus, my theory suggests executives are influenced by a conditional domestic frame in making updating decisions during the course of an intervention. Politically vulnerable executives have incentives to escalate in the face of a failed policy and signal they are going for the higher raw utility (achieving intervention goals in their entirety) instead of scaling back the effort and signaling they are settling for the lower raw utility

(achieving partial intervention goals).²² When relatively politically secure, however, executives are freer to make unbiased decisions and focus on what the information stemming from the battlefield is signaling. My theory suggests when executives are more secure and enjoy high levels of domestic support, they are able to deescalate in the face of an ineffective intervention policy. Since their domestic support is relatively high, their perceived level of competency in other areas for delivering public goods compensates for backing down, and “gambling for resurrection” will not be rendered necessary. Thus, I present the following research hypotheses:

Hypothesis: Approval mediates the effect feedback has on subsequent actions: as feedback becomes more negative at lower levels of approval, actions increase but as feedback becomes more negative at higher levels of approval, actions decrease.

Research Design

To test the research hypotheses, I analyze a set of cases on all major military interventions initiated by France, the United Kingdom, and the United States between 1960 and 2000. The cases are extracted from the Military Intervention by Powerful States (MIPS) dataset (Sullivan and Koch 2009). A military intervention is defined as “a use of armed force involving the official deployment of at least 500 regular military personnel (ground, air, or naval) to attain immediate-term political objectives through action against a foreign adversary (Sullivan and Koch 2009).” The MIPS data consists of interventions against both state and non-state adversaries by France, the United

²² Although executives may switch strategies for using force, I assume a generic strategy of “military intervention” once an intervention has been initiated. As long as soldiers remain, I am interested in the varying levels of commitment to the generic strategy of “military intervention.”

Kingdom, the United States, Russia/USSR, and China. From the complete list of MIPS cases, I analyze interventions undertaken by the three major powers that are democracies. The unit of analysis is the military-intervention month.²³

Because I am interested in sequential decisions during a military intervention, the dependent variable of interest, Major Power Involvement, captures the level of involvement of a major power during an intervention month. The values of this variable consist of the average level of hostility of actions taken by a major power that are directed against the target in a given month. Higher values indicate a major power acts more aggressively towards the target. Data are derived from the World Event Interaction Survey (WEIS), Kansas Event Data System (KEDS), and Conflict and Peace Databank (COPDAB) datasets, which record the flow of action and response between actors using major newspapers from around the world.²⁴

My two primary independent variables of interest capture the policy feedback from the intervention and public approval of the executive. The WEIS, KEDS, and COPDAB datasets also contain information regarding actions taken by a target towards the intervening state. Using these datasets in the same manner described above, I create

²³ Sequential Decision Theory assumes that feedback does not come to play a role in leaders' decisions until the third month, when they can actually assess movement in dominant indicators (change from the first month to the second month). Thus, the models in this paper are estimated on thirty-four cases because I drop those which do not reach the third month, since there is no possibility for an assessment of how things have changed from time period one to time period two to impact leaders' decisions in time period three. There are 16 US, 11 UK, and 7 French interventions that last at least three months. See Appendix, Table 1, for case listing.

²⁴ While KEDS and WEIS data use the same scale, with events being scored from 11 at the low end of conflictual behavior and 223 at the high end, the COPDAB data scores events from 1-14. In order to place the data on a meaningful scale, I recoded the data so that the range is from -50 at the low end of conflictual behavior (cooperative) and 50 at the high end of monthly average actions (force). For example, an average of 12 or higher on the COPDAB scale and 221 or higher on the WEIS/KEDS scale are recoded as 50. The scale continually decreases until an average of 1 on the COPDAB and 13 or lower on the WEIS/KEDS are recoded as -50.

a variable labeled Target Action Trajectory by subtracting the second lag (two months prior) of a target's average level of hostility from the first lag of a target's average level of hostility (one month prior), and re-scale it by adding 90 to the difference for interpretation purposes.²⁵ Higher values indicate increasing hostility on the part of the target, or, more negative feedback.

In order to capture citizens' influence on executives' assessments of feedback, I use executive approval ratings from Gallup data for U.S. presidents taken from the Roper Center, TNS Sofres and Anderson (1995) for French presidents, and British Political Facts (Butler and Butler 2000) and Gallup data from the Roper Center for British prime ministers. I lag these ratings one month and label the variable Executive Approval Lag. The lag of this variable is used in order to capture the effects of executive approval on the sequential decisions regarding involvement in the following month, as SDT suggests an executive's domestic frame is in place prior to receiving information on an intervention's progression. Also, because I am interested in how the approval rating of executives conditions the effect of feedback on involvement, I interact Target Action Trajectory with Executive Approval Lag (labeled Target Action Trajectory*Executive Approval Lag).

I include a number of controls in the model. To account for previous events in the intervention that may impact sequential decisions, I include Major Power Involvement Lag, which indicates the major powers' previous level of hostility towards

²⁵ This re-scaling is done to increase ease of interpretation of the multiplicative interaction term in the model. Importantly, especially for the purposes of the interaction between publics and executives, the events data are coded based on coverage in major newspapers, outlets perceived widely by democratic publics.

the target. Higher levels of previous hostility should lead to higher levels of current hostility. Also, I include Count, which is a measure of the number of months a state has been involved in the military intervention at time t . Along the lines of sunk costs arguments, the longer a state remains entrenched in an intervention and the more resources it has invested in the mission, the higher the current level of involvement (Fearon 1994).

Additionally, sequential decisions during military interventions may vary with the major power's war aims, as the issues at stake have been shown to affect public preferences (Bennett and Stam 1996; Jentleson 1992; Jentleson and Britton 1998). The MIPS dataset codes the aims of the major powers and whether they consist primarily of Foreign Policy Restraint (Foreign Policy Restraint Objective), Humanitarian Intervention (Humanitarian Objective), or, the comparison category, Internal Policy Change (Internal Policy Change Objective). I expect executives to maintain higher levels of subsequent involvement when initial investment is at its highest, or, when the PPO consists of internal policy change, as this objective requires more resources and effort to achieve. While research suggests support for entering such interventions tends to be relatively lower (Jentleson and Britton 1998), once a decision has been made, I expect the costs of early exit to influence executive decisions to maintain involvement in such missions.²⁶

²⁶ I acknowledge executives select themselves into interventions and the selection process may impact subsequent decisions. By including the policy objective sought, I aim to control for the effects of the initial decision process on updating decisions.

I also include several controls that further account for the domestic political climate of the major powers. Right Executive is a dichotomous variable measuring the partisan orientation of executives at time t . I code this variable as 1 when the President of the U.S. is Republican, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom is from the Conservative Party, and the President of France is a member of the Gaullist Party or one of its successors. Previous research suggests parties of the left are less hawkish than more right oriented parties (Koch 2009; Palmer, London, and Regan 2004).

Additionally, I include a control for whether the partisanship of the government making a sequential decision at time t is different from the one that made the initial intervention decision and label it Government Change. As executives may find it easier to scale back a conflict if they are of a different party than the initiating party, as audience costs will not apply to them, a switch from same government to different government should decrease subsequent levels of involvement. And, since elections have been shown to influence the conflict propensity of leaders, I also account for the time in months a leader has until the next mandated election by including a variable labeled Electoral Clock. With all else equal, I expect leaders to authorize higher levels of involvement in their ongoing interventions as elections near to avoid suffering domestic political audience costs immediately prior to these events (Fearon 1994; Schultz 2001; Smith 1998).

I also include two dummy variables that indicate whether the United Kingdom or France is the intervening state (United States is the comparison category). These variables help control for the possibility that the three democracies have different

baseline risk propensities during the subsequent time periods of an intervention episode. To account for the non-independence of units, I estimate the model clustering on the intervention case. For descriptive statistics, see Table 8.

Results

I estimate a random-effects generalized least squares (GLS) regression while clustering on the intervention case to examine how feedback and approval affect executives' sequential decisions during military interventions. Given the continuous nature of the dependent variable and the fact that the data include variables taken from across space and time, GLS is an appropriate estimation technique. Table 9 presents results from random-effects generalized least squares (GLS) regression analysis. Results of Fisher's Test for stationarity among unbalanced panels indicate the series are stationary. Additionally, results of a Hausman test indicate a random effects model is appropriate.

The coefficient on Executive Approval Lag suggests executives involve themselves more in an intervention at higher levels of previous approval. However, because of the presence of the interaction term, the positive sign on the coefficient suggests that when Target Action Trajectory is zero or at the highest level of positive feedback, an increase in lagged approval leads to an increase in involvement. The coefficient on Target Action Trajectory is positive and significant, suggesting that an increase in target hostility has a significant enhancing effect on major power

Table 8- Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Observations	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Major Power Involvement	690	6.902	23.075	-50	50
Target Action Trajectory	690	90.130	18.091	0	180
Executive Approval Lag	690	53.501	9.874	31	83
Major Power Involvement Lag	690	6.9856	22.938	-50	50
Count	690	31.488	30.315	3	132
Foreign Policy Restraint Objective	690	.200	.400	0	1
Humanitarian Objective	690	.226	.418	0	1
Internal Policy Change Objective	690	.514	.500	0	1
Right Executive Government Change	690	.443	.497	0	1
Electoral Clock	690	.330	.470	0	1
United Kingdom	690	29.740	18.581	1	84
United Kingdom	690	.249	.432	0	1
France	690	.178	.383	0	1
United States	690	.572	.495	0	1
Multiple Intervention	690	.510	.500	0	1
Ground Troops	690	.589	.492	0	1
Coalition	690	.511	.500	0	1
Target Hostility Level	690	5.623	18.325	-40	50
Target Hostility Level Lag	690	6.130	18.245	-40	50

Table 9- GLS Model 1: Sequential Decisions over Involvement during Major Power Interventions 1960-2000

Independent Variable	Model 1
Target Action Trajectory	.496** (2.71)
Executive Approval Lag	.740* (2.39)
Target Action Trajectory*Executive Approval Lag	-.009** (2.71)
Major Power Involvement Lag	.344*** (9.31)
Count	.247*** (7.16)
Foreign Policy Restraint Objective	-9.446*** (4.81)
Humanitarian Objective	-11.928*** (4.88)
Right Executive	-.129 (.08)
Government Change	-1.984 (.82)
Electoral Clock	.068 (1.66)
United Kingdom	-.396 (.21)
France	-9.820*** (4.34)
Constant	-38.199* (2.21)
N/Overall R-sq	690/.466
Wald chi2(12)	590.89***

z statistics in parentheses. * p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05**

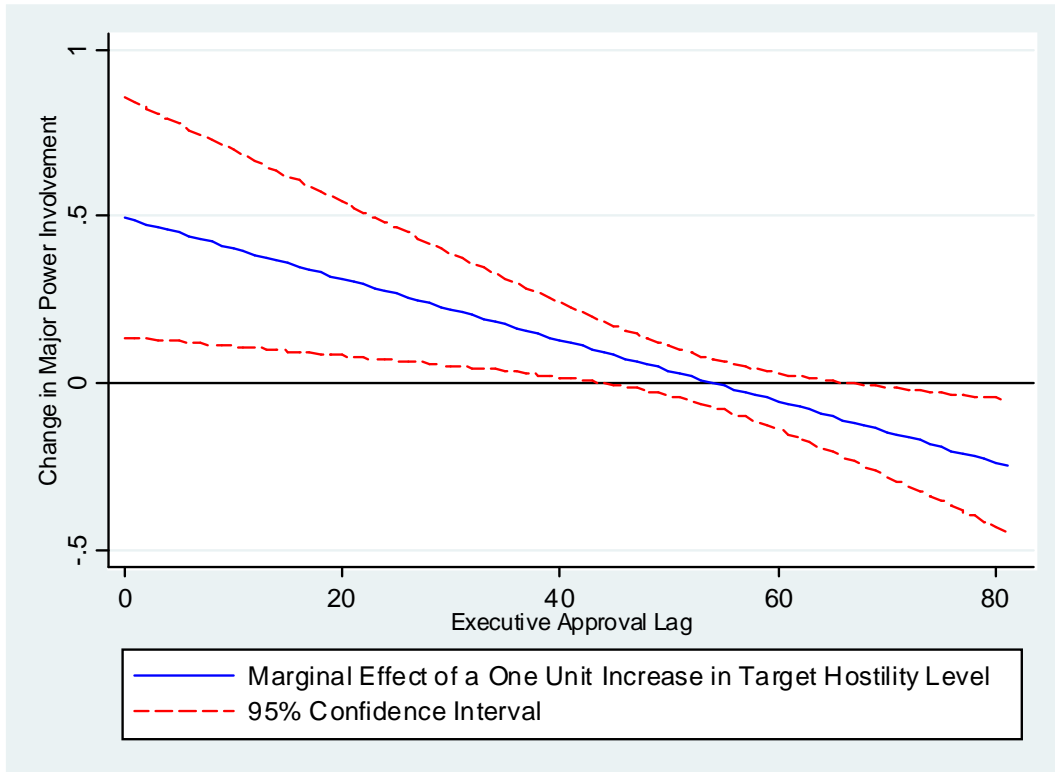
involvement. However, this has very little meaning substantively, as the result only applies to when Executive Approval Lag has a value of zero.

The coefficient on Executive Approval Lag suggests executives involve themselves more in an intervention at higher levels of previous approval. However, because of the presence of the interaction term, the positive sign on the coefficient suggests that when Target Action Trajectory is zero or at the highest level of positive feedback, an increase in lagged approval leads to an increase in involvement. The coefficient on Target Action Trajectory is positive and significant, suggesting that an increase in target hostility has a significant enhancing effect on major power involvement. However, this has very little meaning substantively, as the result only applies to when Executive Approval Lag has a value of zero.

However, since the coefficient on the interaction term Target Action Trajectory*Executive Approval Lag is negative, this suggests the enhancing effect of negative feedback on major power involvement declines as lagged executive approval increases. Thus, as hypothesized, the results suggest the effect of feedback on major power involvement is conditioned by previous levels of executive approval. To tease out the impact of feedback on involvement when lagged executive approval is greater than zero, I graphically illustrate how the marginal effect of feedback changes across the range of executives' lagged approval ratings in Figure 14.

As Figure 14 illustrates, the marginal effect of negative feedback on major power involvement is positive and significant until lagged executive approval reaches 45%,

Figure 14- Interactive Effect of Target Action Trajectory and Executive Approval on the Level of Major Power Involvement during Military Interventions 1960-2000

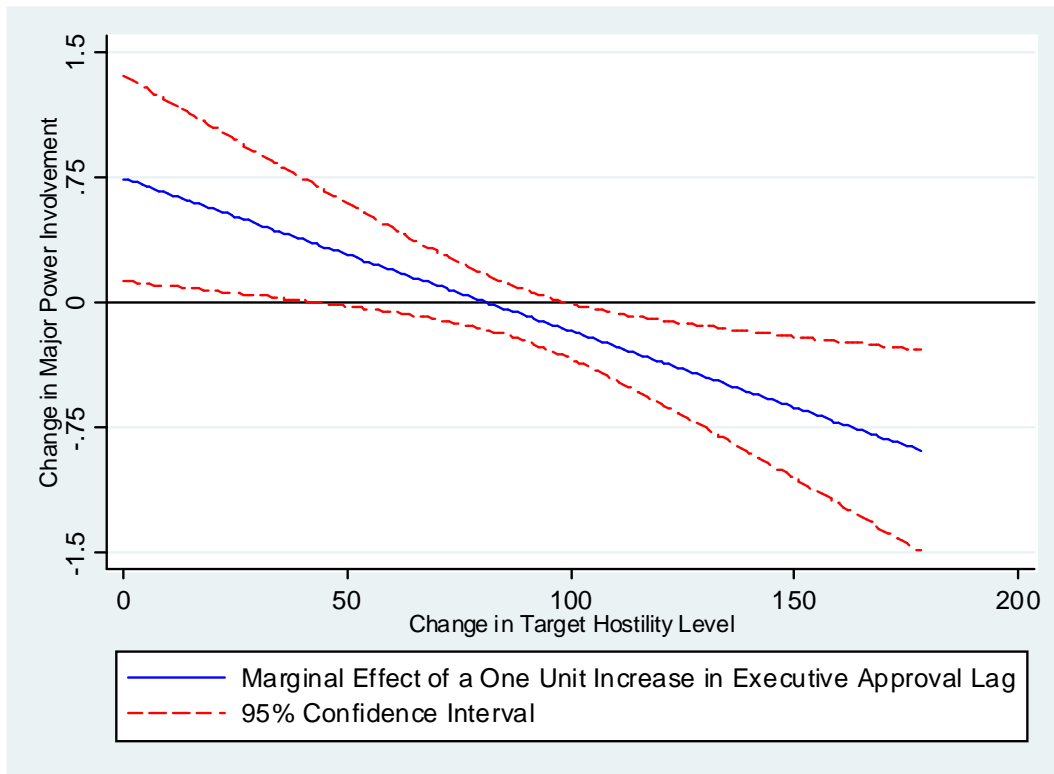


where it becomes statistically indistinguishable from zero. While it remains positive, the enhancing effect of negative feedback on major power involvement steadily decreases as lagged executive approval increases. Initially, the marginal effect is .50 units of increased major power involvement at the extreme lower levels of lagged approval, but this effect is .10 units as lagged approval reaches 44%. In approximately 23% of the observations, executives have a lagged approval below 45%.

Interestingly, the marginal effect of negative feedback once again becomes statistically significant but *negative* once lagged approval reaches 67%. As the graph suggests, the dampening effect of negative feedback at these higher levels of lagged approval steadily increases as lagged approval increases. Initially this marginal effect is .12 units of decreased major power involvement, but this effect is .24 units as lagged approval reaches 81%. In approximately 11% of the observations executives have a lagged approval at 67% or above. Thus, approval appears to condition how executives process feedback when making sequential decisions during an intervention. Executives appear to take more action at lower levels of approval, and appear to take less action at higher levels of approval when facing an increasingly hostile target.

I also plot the interaction differently to examine the marginal effect of executive approval lag on major power involvement across levels of feedback. Graphing the interaction in this manner also supports the theoretical logic. As Figure 15 illustrates, the marginal effect of lagged executive approval on major power involvement is positive and significant until negative feedback (increase in target hostility) reaches 43, where it becomes statistically indistinguishable from zero. While it remains positive, the enhancing effect of lagged executive approval on major power involvement steadily decreases as feedback becomes more negative. Initially, the marginal effect is .74 units of increased major power involvement at the extreme lower levels of negative feedback, but this effect is .35 units as targets increase their hostility level by 42. In approximately 2% of the observations, targets increase their hostility level by 42 or less.

Figure 15- Interactive Effect of Executive Approval and Target Action Trajectory on the Level of Major Power Involvement during Military Interventions 1960-2000



Interestingly, the marginal effect of lagged executive approval once again becomes statistically significant but *negative* once negative feedback reaches 99. As the graph suggests, the dampening effect of lagged executive approval at these higher levels of negative feedback steadily increases as feedback becomes more negative. Initially this marginal effect is .16 units of decreased major power involvement, but this effect is .89 units as targets increase their hostility level by 180 units. In approximately 22% of

the observations targets increase their hostility level by 99 or more. Thus, feedback appears to condition the effect of approval on involvement. Executives appear to take more action when facing rather docile targets, and appear to take less action when facing increasingly hostile targets as approval increases.

As for the control variables, Major Power Involvement Lag is statistically significant and positive as expected, suggesting that higher levels of previous major power involvement subsequently lead to higher levels of continued major power involvement. Additionally, the coefficient on Count is statistically significant and positive as expected by the logic of sunk costs, suggesting that longer periods of involvement by major powers lead to higher levels of subsequent involvement. As for the variables controlling for the aims of the major powers, Foreign Policy Restraint Objective and Humanitarian Objective are both negative and statistically significant (as well as substantively significant from a relative standpoint). In comparison with missions involving the objective of internal political change, subsequent levels of involvement in missions involving goals of foreign policy restraint and humanitarian objectives are roughly 9 and 11 points lower on the hostility scale respectively.

Interestingly, France is statistically significant and negative suggesting that French executives have a proclivity towards lower levels of involvement during the course of an intervention compared with American executives. The effect is substantively significant as well and suggests French executives have lower levels of subsequent involvement by nearly 10 points on average in comparison with American and British executives. As for the other domestic factors, Electoral Clock, Right

Executive and Government Change are statistically indistinguishable from zero, suggesting citizens' approval level of the executive is the main domestic factor that conditions an executive's decision process.

Robustness Checks

Major powers may conduct multiple interventions in a given month, intervene as part of a coalition, and, may also hold varying levels of resolve towards the attainment of a particular goal. These considerations highlight potential biases to the empirical results obtained in Model 1. To guard against potential bias introduced by those instances where a major power is involved in multiple interventions in a given month, I create a dummy variable to indicate whether the major power is involved in two or more interventions in a given month.²⁷ I label this Multiple Interventions, and run the model with the variable to account for the potential influence of having multiple investments at a given time period on an executive's updating decisions. Additionally, take the variable Coalition from the MIPS dataset to control for those cases where an executive sends forces as part of a multinational force, which may alter the decision calculus regarding sequential decisions as evidence suggests citizens are more supportive of multilateral interventions (see Gaubatz 1995). Also, I take the variable Ground Troops from the MIPS dataset to control for those cases where an executive sends troops for ground combat, which may indicate a higher level of resolve.

²⁷ The majority of multiple intervention months consist of only two interventions by a major power. Exceptions include four ongoing interventions by the U.K. from December of 1963 to March of 1964, and three ongoing interventions by the U.S. at several points during the 1990s.

As Table 10, Model 2 depicts, the results of Model 1 appear to be robust. The coefficients on the variables of interest remain statistically significant and in the predicted direction, while the interactive relationship between approval and feedback mirrors that of Model 1. This suggests that executives are able to isolate the anticipated domestic consequences of their actions across intervention episodes even if involved in multiple interventions simultaneously, multilateral interventions, or interventions involving ground troops. Interestingly, however, while the coefficients on Multiple Interventions and Groups Troops are statistically insignificant, the coefficient on Coalition is positive and statistically as well as substantively significant. This suggests that executives maintain higher levels of commitment to military interventions that are multilateral in nature. The result supports previous arguments that suggest democratic publics tend to offer more support to sending troops abroad when they are apart of a multinational force.

Additionally, there is an extreme outlier in the sample with respect to number of troops committed: the U.S. intervention in Vietnam. As an additional robustness check, therefore, I drop those observations covering the U.S. intervention in Vietnam. This is done to check whether this particular intervention, which consists of over 500,000 troops (nearly thirty times the median troop level), is biasing the results. As Model 3 in Table 11 indicates, the results of Model 1 appear to be rather robust regardless of the sample, as the coefficients on the variables of interest remain statistically significant and in the predicted direction.

Table 10-GLS Model 2: Accounting for the Effects of Multiple Ongoing Interventions, Multilateral Interventions, and Ground Troops

Independent Variable	Model 2
Target Action Trajectory	.508** (2.80)
Executive Approval Lag	.803** (2.56)
Target Action Trajectory*Executive Approval Lag	-.009** (2.78)
Major Power Involvement Lag	.316*** (8.47)
Count	.223*** (6.39)
Foreign Policy Restraint Objective	-9.397*** (3.95)
Humanitarian Objective	-12.118*** (4.73)
Right Executive	1.403 (.87)
Government Change	-1.554 (.62)
Electoral Clock	.065 (1.56)
United Kingdom	2.745 (.99)
France	-7.591*** (2.80)
Multiple Interventions	-.242 (.15)
Coalition	6.473*** (2.90)
Ground Troops	2.417 (1.24)
Constant	-47.282** (2.74)
N/Overall R-sq	690/.477
Wald chi2(12)	615.68***

z statistics in parentheses. * p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05**

Table 11- GLS Model 3: Excluding the U.S. Intervention in Vietnam

Independent Variable	Model 3
Target Action Trajectory	.521* (2.12)
Executive Approval Lag	.780 (1.82)
Target Action Trajectory*Executive Approval Lag	-.009* (1.96)
Major Power Involvement Lag	.184*** (4.29)
Count	.052 (1.09)
Foreign Policy Restraint Objective	-5.68** (2.76)
Humanitarian Objective	-4.59** (1.67)
Right Executive	.100 (.05)
Government Change	-.691 (.25)
Electoral Clock	.037 (.85)
United Kingdom	1.21 (.63)
France	-6.89** (2.97)
Constant	-43.276* (1.94)
N/Overall R-sq	562/.090
Wald chi2(12)	52.93***

z statistics in parentheses. * p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05**

Strategic Implications

Targets may anticipate the reaction of major powers. If targets act strategically, they will increase their hostility when lagged executive approval increases, as the results of the previous analyses suggest this is when major powers are most likely to deescalate. To account for the strategic implications of the decision process, I perform an auxiliary analysis using the target's actions as a function of lagged executive approval and a series of control variables that may plausibly influence target behavior. See Table 12, Model 4 for results of the auxiliary analysis.

The results of Model 4 suggest that targets do not respond systematically to increases in lagged executive approval, as the coefficient on Executive Approval Lag is statistically insignificant. Major Power Involvement Lag and Target Hostility Level Lag are both statistically significant and positive, suggesting that targets increase their hostility in response to higher levels of previous hostility by both parties. Interestingly, targets appear to increase their hostility towards the intervener when facing a Coalition and an intervener with Multiple Interventions. This suggests that targets act as though putting pressure on multilateral forces and interveners who are involved in other interventions will further their objectives. Additionally, targets appear to put less pressure on interveners when they pursue a Foreign Policy Restraint Objective or a Humanitarian Objective, as the coefficients suggest when internal change is sought targets tend to increase hostility. The only other variable to reach statistical significance is United Kingdom, which is positive and significant, suggesting that targets tend to increase involvement more when facing a British compared to an American intervention.

Table 12- GLS Model 4: Auxiliary Analysis on Strategic Behavior of Target

Independent Variable	Model 4
Major Power Involvement Lag	.118*** (3.61)
Executive Approval Lag	-.053 (.80)
Target Hostility Level Lag	.313*** (8.27)
Ground Troops	1.132 (.59)
Multiple Intervention	3.953* (2.54)
Coalition	5.879** (2.71)
Foreign Policy Restraint Objective	-5.056* (2.11)
Humanitarian Objective	-4.125* (1.96)
France	2.506 (.96)
United Kingdom	6.370* (2.35)
Constant	-.837 (.18)
N/Overall R-sq	690/.334
Wald chi2(12)	201.15***

z statistics in parentheses. * p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05**

Thus, while evidence suggests targets act strategically, the role of domestic audiences of the intervener in the strategic process remains unclear.

Discussion

These results appear robust and support the theoretical logic of a conditional framing effect influencing executives' decisions during the course of an intervention, as their domestic situations appear to condition their processing of battlefield information. When their approval is low (44% or below) executives act as if they are in the domain of losses domestically: they take more risks and increase involvement more at these lower levels of approval when targets take more hostile actions. This behavior is in line with arguments on the escalation of commitment. As SDT suggests, executives attempt to secure power as they anticipate losing office if admitting a defeat to their domestic audience under these circumstances.

However, when approval is higher (67% or above), executives appear to focus more on the feedback from the intervention: under these conditions, they are in the domain of gains domestically and tend to *decrease* involvement when faced with increasingly hostile actions by targets at these higher levels of approval. They take less risky actions here because their approval ratings are higher, as is their likelihood of maintaining power, and thus, they are able to absorb suffering audience costs. While admitting failure may still make them susceptible to suffering audience costs, such admittance is not as damaging at these levels of approval. In these instances, the positive domestic frame conditions the effect of feedback: negative feedback entices them to invest less. Thus, at higher levels of approval, executives act in line with the main assumption of the dominant indicator approach (Gartner 1997).

These results presented in this chapter, in conjunction with those from the experimental analyses and previous literature, highlight an interesting story about the relationship between citizens and executives during an intervention. And under the conditions where information is presented comparatively, citizens remain relatively uncertain about the likely outcome of an intervention. Because of this, executives are likely to take more risks in the next period in order to avoid admitting defeat and running the risk of suffering audience costs. This is because citizens, while questioning the competence of their executive to deliver public goods in such cases, prefer to increase involvement rather than back down and let costs sink. Executives act as though they anticipate this preference and when politically vulnerable increase involvement in order to avoid suffering audience costs. Thus, the interests of politically vulnerable leaders and their citizens appear to coalesce.

Also, while the type of strategy executives employ does not appear to alter the conditional framing effect of approval on feedback, the results suggest the use of a ground strategy leads to higher levels of subsequent involvement. In order to better capture initial levels of resolve, future iterations should control for the specific force levels that were initially employed.

The analysis also suggests a more detailed account of the institutional variation within democratic states and its potential impact on the sequential decision process of executives is warranted. Specifically, the results suggest French executives have a different level of sequential commitment to intervention missions, pointing to the subtleties of its semi-presidential system as additional variables to consider.

Conclusion

While the previous two chapters addressed how citizens come to form their sequential preferences during an intervention, in this chapter, I have attempted to address the broad puzzle concerning how executives make decisions during the course of a military intervention, and specifically, how the citizenry influences their processing of information. In drawing from the literature on public opinion and military force and importance of battlefield information, I have specified the logic of Sequential Decision Theory with regards to military intervention decisions and have tested the theory on cases derived from the Military Interventions by Powerful States (MIPS) dataset.

As the results indicate, executives are influenced by a conditional frame when incorporating battlefield information into their decision calculi. When executive approval is at lower levels, executives operate in the domain of losses domestically and thus are likely to take more risks in an intervention after viewing increasingly hostile actions from targets. When executive approval is at higher levels, however, executives operate in the domain of gains domestically, and are likely to take fewer risks when viewing such information. In other words, the results suggest that executives do anticipate the preferences of citizens when making sequential decisions, and specifically, appear to follow those preferences when executive approval is sufficiently low. When it is, executives increase involvement when faced with negative feedback, a preference that citizens are likely to hold according to the logic of SDT and the results of the experiments.

While the previous literature on public opinion and conflict suggests citizens tend to lower their approval of the executive when viewing negative feedback, the results here suggests two caveats: such a “punishment” demonstrated to occur in the literature appears to be conditional on the outcome of the intervention, and, lower public approval of an executive or of an executive’s handling of a conflict does not necessarily entail a preference for lowering involvement.

Ultimately, executive decision-making during the course of an intervention is a complex process. Shifts in public opinion matter a great deal, as leaders anticipate the extent to which audience costs will jeopardize their hold on power based on their approval levels. In other words, the results demonstrate how audience costs manifest themselves in the interplay between assessment and decisions. While these results are tentative and subject to further empirical scrutiny, they have revealed the conditional nature with which public opinion comes to impact executive decision-making. And this research offers insights from which the burgeoning literature on battlefield information and decision-making during conflicts can build by pointing to a conditional framing process. Overall, this analysis contributes to the research that is taking place at the nexus of international relations and domestic politics regarding the connection between democratic publics and the foreign policy of their leaders by extending inquiry beyond initial policy decisions to sequential ones.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has examined how public opinion and foreign policy feedback interact to influence executive decisions over commitment levels during the course of a military intervention. It began by pointing out a puzzle: despite arguments in the literature on escalation of commitments and audience costs suggesting that leaders tend to increase commitment to a failing course of action, real-world cases suggest otherwise. Specifically, leaders do not appear to respond uniformly to negative or adverse feedback, and sometimes deescalate commitment as well. In order to explain the puzzle, I suggested a more detailed explanation of the audience cost mechanism was warranted. With the recent rise in popularity of the military intervention tool with the end of the Cold War, I suggested these foreign policy episodes offer suitable test cases for a framework of sequential decision-making.

In Chapter II, I adopted Billings and Hermann's (1998) conceptualization of the sequential decision process. Then, I drew from the literature on foreign policy making, emphasizing previous efforts to explain executive decisions over the use of force. While the selectorate theory (Buono de Mesquita et. al 2003), prospect theory (Kahneman and Tversky 1979; McDermott 1992), and the dominant indicator approach (Gartner 1997) provide insights into how executives update commitment levels to a policy, I suggested that an integrative approach may help in the construction of a theory of sequential decision-making that would lend itself to comprehensive empirical testing. Specifically,

while domestic politics and dominant indicator approaches suggest executives take both domestic factors and policy feedback into account when making updating decisions, prospect theory provides the necessary decision-making approach to explain how domestic politics and feedback interact to shape decisions.

In building from the previous literature, I presented Sequential Decision Theory (SDT), a two-level theory about how citizens and feedback interact to shape the updating decisions of executives. SDT is built from three foundational assumptions: foreign policy making involves a sequence of decisions, an executive's primary goal is to maintain political power, and both citizens and executives are influenced by frames. As executives rely on citizen support for political power, SDT suggests executives tend to anticipate public preferences in making updating decisions. Thus, the first stage of the theory explores how citizens form their sequential policy preferences based upon the movement in dominant indicators of policy performance. Based upon the assumptions that citizens are investors who use frames based on the direction of movement in dominant indicators provided by the media, SDT suggests citizens tend to prefer higher levels of commitment when viewing negative feedback.

The second stage of the theory explores how executives decide on updating policy. Driven by the audience cost mechanism and based upon the assumptions that executives are investors who use frames based on the level of public support, SDT suggests the manner in which executives use information to update policy commitment is conditioned by public approval. Most notably, in an effort to maintain political power and avoid suffering audience costs, the theory predicts executives tend to increase

commitment when viewing negative feedback through a lens of low support, but decrease it when viewing such information through a lens of high support. Interestingly, the theory suggests that executives tend to follow public preferences when their hold on political power is at its weakest. The results are consistent with recent work in IR that suggests concerns with maintaining power may bias the decision-making process of democratic executives (Bueno de Mesquita and Downs 2006; Downs and Rocke 1994; Smith 1998).

Chapters IV and V examined the preference formation process of citizens via two original experiments. Chapter VI included an analysis of a dataset on major power military intervention decisions. Below, I summarize the results of the analyses in Chapters IV-VI and discuss the U.S. interventions into Iraq and Lebanon through the lens of the theory.

Citizens, Executives, and Policy Updating

The results of the analyses in Chapters IV-VI generally support the hypotheses derived from the theory regarding the behavior of citizens and executives, with important caveats. In Chapter IV, I tested hypotheses derived from the first level of the theory regarding the preference formation process of citizens. This was done via an original experiment that consists of variations in the direction of policy feedback, capturing progress in stabilizing a conflict abroad and casualties, during the course of an intervention. Interestingly, when the direction of feedback is emphasized across types of interventions and levels of strategic importance, citizens appear to prefer more

commitment when viewing negative feedback. Additionally, they appear to be more sensitive to the feedback when viewing information about military versus monetary interventions. In other words, they appear to act as investors, and more so when force is being used.

In Chapter V, I relaxed the informational assumptions of the theory and allowed for information to be nested in a history where feedback trends are present. Instead of enabling citizens to compare current information to only the previous time period, they are presented with information capturing feedback during the course of an entire year. The results of the experimental analysis suggest citizens are able to detect trends, and when trends are detected, they trump direction in shaping sequential preferences. Specifically, citizens appear to prefer decreasing commitment when feedback moves rapidly across types of interventions. This suggests citizens may not punish leaders for backing down when the probability of success appears to be low, which, according to the theory, is the case when negative feedback occurs rapidly.

To test the second level of Sequential Decision Theory, I analyzed data on military interventions by the France, the United Kingdom, and the United from 1960-2000. Specifically, I tested the conditional effect of public approval on how executives use information on target hostility levels to update their intervention actions. Results of a random-effect generalized least squares (GLS) regression suggest executives use feedback differently depending on their domestic support. Under the conditions of low public approval, executives tend to increase actions in response to increasing hostility levels of the target. However, under the conditions of high approval, executives tend to

decrease actions in response to increasing hostility levels of the target. Thus, it appears executives anticipate the consequences of their updating decisions with regards to their hold on political power. They appear to act as if the consequences of suffering audience vary depending on their level of approval.

Overall, the results of the analyses in Chapters IV and V suggest the direction of feedback matters most to the public until a rapid spike occurs. This is consistent with Feaver and Gelpi (2004), who argue that the crucial factor explaining citizen support for ongoing missions is not mounting casualties but the likelihood of success. In these experiments, casualties are part of the feedback indicating the likelihood of success. Thus, democratic citizens appear to be focused on the likelihood of success in forming their sequential preferences over commitment to an intervention (Gelpi, Feaver, and Reifler 2005). I argue they extract that likelihood from the movement in dominant indicators, of which casualties are included. Negative movement from month to month does not appear to lower citizens' perceptions of the probability of success enough to lower their preferences over commitment. However, a spike in monthly movement appears to lower their perceptions of the probability of success enough to lower their preferences over commitment. This conforms to previous arguments in the literature on escalation of commitment regarding how likely it is additional investment proves to be efficacious (Leatherwood and Conlon 1985; Staw and Fox 1977).

In Chapter VI, the results suggest executives follow public preferences when their hold on political power is relatively weak. As the public tends to prefer not backing down when feedback is negative, under these conditions leaders tend to increase

involvement. When executives have a firmer grasp on political power, they appear to have maximum discretion in making updating decisions. These results add to our understanding of escalation situations by pointing out that “face-saving” behavior tends to take place when a decision-makers grasp on power is in jeopardy (Brockner, Rubin, and Lang 1981; Fox and Staw 1979). When executives’ hold on power is rather strong, the need to “save face” appears to decrease.

In light of the results of the analyses, I discuss the U.S. interventions in Iraq and Lebanon.

Executive Decision-Making during Operation Iraqi Freedom: 2003-2004

Alleging Iraqi non-compliance with U.N. weapons inspectors, and specifically, Security Council resolution 1441, President Bush initiated the U.S.-led intervention in Iraq on March 20, 2003. The primary goal of the intervention, according to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, was to defend the American people through a number of avenues, including the overthrow of the Hussein regime, securing WMD, defeating terrorist elements, and ensuring the necessary conditions for the development of a stable representative government (Garamone 2003). Despite the intervention’s early success with the toppling of the Hussein regime in April of 2003, defeating terrorist elements and creating the conditions for a stable democracy have proven difficult (Donnelly 2004). How can Sequential Decision Theory explain President Bush’s decision-making during the course of the intervention, specifically, his decisions to increase commitment in response to escalations in violence?

During the course of the intervention from April of 2003 to the President Bush's re-election bid in the fall of 2004, the target event trajectory, and subsequently, the major power response to that trajectory, fit nicely into the theoretical framework. Evidence suggests the president's approval rating conditioned the manner in which he used feedback from Iraq in updating commitment levels. After the fall of the Hussein Regime, public approval of President Bush was high, reaching 71% (Roper Center). As a result, the president maintained his previous level of commitment to the intervention by maintaining troop presence and overseeing the creation of a Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq and installing Lt. Paul Bremer in May of 2003 (O'Hanlon and Campbell 2007).

However, the "Iraq Spring Fighting of 2004," and the rise of the insurgency against U.S. forces led to increased levels of commitment by U.S., such as the two battles to take Fallujah in April and November of 2004 (Faulk 2006). Interestingly, at the time of the spring fighting, executive approval indicated by Gallup polls had dropped below 50% for the first time since President Bush took office (Roper Center). With 2004 election looming, this signaled to the president that he could not afford to suffer audience costs for backing down. And in line with the theory, President Bush increased involvement despite failures in Iraq to effectively deal with the insurgency and establish the conditions for democracy. His approval appears to have conditioned his response to the feedback, and because of his refusal to back down he did not immediately suffer audience costs. Specifically, as McAlister (2006) notes, the perception of President Bush as a "strong leader" played a vital role in his victory in the 2004 election. Overall,

his behavior and the behavior of citizens fit the story outlined by the theory: he increased commitment in an effort to avoid suffering audience costs, which would have seriously jeopardized his hold on political power, and citizens rewarded his firm stance.

Executive Decision-Making during the U.S. Intervention in Lebanon: 1982-1984

After a multinational force comprised of U.S. forces oversaw the PLO evacuation from Beirut in August of 1982, hostilities in Lebanon once again erupted in September. In response, President Reagan sent 1600 marines into Lebanon on September 29, 1982 with orders to establish a protective perimeter around the Beirut airport. The goal of the intervention was to maintain the Gemayal regime and stabilize the Maronite government in Lebanon (Weisburd 1997). However, seventeen months later, on February 26, 1984, President Reagan withdrew forces and declared that it was impossible to enforce peace in Lebanon (Clodfelter 2002). How can Sequential Decision Theory, and its emphasis on the interaction between domestic support of the executive and policy feedback, explain President Reagan's decision-making during the course of the conflict, especially the decision to decrease commitment and withdraw without obtaining stated objectives?

During the course of the intervention in 1983, the target event trajectory, and subsequently, the major power response to that trajectory, also fit nicely into the theoretical framework. In April of 1983, a terrorist attack hit the U.S. embassy, while in August, a similar attack led to two marine casualties at the Beirut airport. Domestically, Reagan's approval rating hovered in the low 40% range, reaching a low of 37% in early 1983 (Roper Center). As Sequential Decision Theory suggests, backing down from the

troubles and suffering audience costs at such low levels of approval would have seriously injured Reagan's hold on political power. Thus, in response to the escalating violence against U.S. personnel, Reagan authorized a combination of aerial and naval support in an attempt to stabilize the situation (Clodfelter 2002; Friedman 1984).

However, in October of 1983, Shiite militia attacked the U.S. marine barracks near the Beirut airport, killing 266 U.S. military personnel (Clodfelter 2002). Why, then, did Reagan decrease commitment to the point of total withdrawal four months later? I point to two factors: the increase in Reagan's public approval during the course of 1983, and, the sudden and dramatic movement in dominant indicators as a result of the attacks on the marine barracks. Reagan's public approval rose 15% from February of 1983 to January of 1984 (Roper Center), thus changing the manner in which battlefield information was processed. Because of this increase in support, the possibility of withstanding the incurrence of audience costs increased. Additionally, the nature of the battlefield information changed. While the negative feedback during the course of 1983 was rather modest, evidence suggests that the negative feedback received as a result of the October bombings sent a strong signal not only to President Reagan, but to the electorate as well, that the intervention would likely fail to achieve objectives and that seeking public goods elsewhere may be preferable. Interestingly, this is consistent with the results of the experimental analysis in Chapter V, which suggest the public tends to prefer decreasing involvement when viewing rapidly negative feedback. The election results of 1984, with Reagan's re-election victory, appear to follow this logic.

To sum, President Bush faced declining approval ratings prior to his re-election bid. SDT suggests this conditioned the manner in which he used battlefield information to update commitment to the intervention. Evidence appears to support this claim: in response to the increases in insurgent attacks and failures to establish the conditions conducive to democracy, President Bush increased commitment. While President Reagan initially increased involvement in response to low approval ratings and modestly negative feedback, he decreased commitment to the point of withdrawal in response to increasing approval ratings and rapidly negative feedback. SDT suggests the higher approval ratings enabled Reagan to back down with a lower probability of losing his re-election bid. And, consistent with the results of the experimental analysis in Chapter V, the rapidly negative feedback appears to have lead the public to prefer the president to decrease commitment and seek public goods elsewhere.

A Look Ahead

To conclude, I briefly discuss three avenues for future research: examining the potential for elite manipulation of feedback, exploring how approval and feedback interact with decisions on when to quit a foreign policy, and extending the analysis to include citizens and executives from other democratic states.

The empirical results in this study present several implications for future work. Additionally, in an attempt to systematically test a theory of sequential decision-making, I have made several simplifying assumptions in order to reduce the number of moving parts in the analysis to two: public support of the executive and the direction of policy

feedback. While the experiments, data analysis, and brief discussion of the U.S. interventions in Iraq and Lebanon highlight the usefulness of the Sequential Decision Theory in explaining the updating decisions of executives, future work should unravel the various assumptions I have made. One of these assumptions concerns the public's source of information regarding feedback. While I assume citizens are able to access and attend to the direction of feedback in forming their sequential preferences, scholarship suggests the possibility of elite manipulation of information on foreign policy (Zaller 1994). Citizens have been shown to react to the same information differently depending on how that information is packaged to tell a particular story (Berinsky and Kinder 2006; Geva, Astorino-Courtois, and Mintz 1996). Thus, relaxing this assumption to account for the influence of elite framing of feedback by analyzing partisan debates in the media and testing the influence of media framing experimentally is warranted.

Additionally, exploring how approval and feedback interact with decisions on when to quit an intervention appears to be a natural extension of this analysis. As the results of the experimental analyses indicate, the public appears to demand more in the face of failure *up to a certain point*. While Chapter V suggests sudden dramatic increases in negative feedback spark citizens to say enough is enough (Gartner 1997), perhaps the accumulation of a certain amount of gradual failures do so as well (Mueller 1973). Future work should analyze the amount of negative feedback necessary (whether immediate or its accumulation) to incite citizens to believe policy failure is likely, and thus, quitting is desirable and not seen as backing down but as good policy.

As the results of the experimental analysis in Chapter V suggest, citizens are capable of detecting trends. If, as the theory argues, executives tend to follow public preferences when their grasp on power is relatively weak, unraveling the potential influence of feedback trends on executive decision-making is warranted. Also, in analyzing decisions to quit an intervention, breaking down the selectorate into an executive's winning coalition may help researchers gain more leverage over such decisions. While I have treated the winning coalition of executives generically as one simply demanding that executives deliver on their promises of public goods, research suggests parties of the left are less hawkish than more right oriented parties (Koch 2009; Palmer, London, and Regan 2004). This could have important implications for how executives anticipate public reactions to their policy updates during an intervention, and thus, influence their sequential decisions.

Conducting the two experiments in Britain and France would strengthen confidence in the experimental results. As the results in Chapter VI suggest French executives are more reluctant to increase involvement during the course of an intervention, examining whether this is the result of citizen preferences would further our understanding of the sequential decision process from a comparative perspective. And finally, extending the model to explain the updating decisions of democratic executives from a wider variety of institutional settings would strengthen the generalizability of the empirical results.

While the empirical analyses suggest Sequential Decision Theory can help scholars gain leverage over sequential foreign policy decisions, this is simply a first cut.

Not only do I hope future work will explore the implications of relaxing the assumptions I have made. Also, I hope future work will test the theory's explanatory power further by employing the framework to explain updating decisions over the use of other foreign policy tools.

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APPENDIX A

MILITARY INTERVENTION CASES FROM MIPS DATASET

Major Power	Start Date	End Date	Location	Target
U.S.	Jun. 3, 1961	Jan. 30, 1962	Dominican Rep	New Trujillista Regime
U.K.	Jul. 1, 1961	Oct. 19, 1961	Kuwait	Iraqi Army
U.S.	Feb. 1, 1962	Jan. 27, 1973	Vietnam	NVA and VietCong
U.S.	May 16, 1962	Jul. 23, 1962	Thailand	Pathet Lao, N. Viet, PRC
U.K.	Dec. 10, 1962	May 31, 1963	Brunei	TNKU rebels, Indonesia
U.K.	Apr. 19, 1963	May 19, 1965	Malaysia	Indonesia Army, guerillas
U.K.	Jun. 13, 1963	Nov. 30, 1966	Swaziland	Rioters from labor movement
U.K.	Aug. 3, 1963	Apr. 18, 1965	Yemen AR	Tribes in the Radfan
U.K.	Dec. 17, 1963	Mar. 27, 1964	Cyprus	Turkish and Greek communities
U.K.	Jan. 25, 1964	Jul. 31, 1964	E. African Sts.	Mutinying military troops
FR	Feb. 19, 1964	Dec. 31, 1965	Gabon	Coup leaders/provisional govt.
U.K.	Nov. 25, 1964	Nov. 30, 1967	South Arabia	NLF, FLOSY
U.S.	Apr. 28, 1965	Sep. 20, 1966	Dominican Rep	Leftist opposition
U.K.	Dec. 3, 1965	Apr. 30, 1966	Zambia	S. Rhodesia (Zimbabwe)
FR	Aug. 28, 1968	Aug. 30, 1971	Chad	FROLINAT insurgents
U.K.	Jan. 1, 1970	Dec. 31, 1973	Br. Honduras	Guatemalan Army
U.S.	Apr. 30, 1970	Aug. 14, 1973	Cambodia	Khmer Rouge
FR	Dec. 12, 1977	May 30, 1978	Mauritania	POLISARIO/SPLA rebels
FR	Apr. 28, 1978	May 16, 1980	Chad	FROLINAT
U.K.	Apr. 25, 1982	Jun. 14, 1982	Argentina	Argentina
U.S.	Sep. 29, 1982	Feb. 26, 1984	Lebanon	Govt. opposition forces; Syria
FR	Aug. 9, 1983	Nov. 9, 1984	Chad	Libya and GUNT/FAP rebels
U.S.	Oct. 25, 1983	Dec. 12, 1983	Grenada	New Jewel/PRG regime
U.S.	Feb. 16, 1986	Sep. 11, 1987	Chad	Libya and GUNT/FAP rebels
U.S.	May 11, 1989	Jan. 31, 1990	Panama	Panamanian govt. (Noriega)
U.S.	Aug. 14, 1990	Feb. 28, 1991	Kuwait	Iraqi Government
U.S.	Aug. 27, 1992	Mar. 19 2003	Iraq	Iraqi Government
U.S.	Dec. 3, 1992	Dec. 31, 1993	Somalia	Somali National Alliance
U.S.	Sep. 19, 1994	Mar. 31, 1995	Haiti	Haitian military regime (Cedras)
U.S.	Oct. 14, 1994	Dec. 21, 1994	Kuwait	Iraqi regime (Hussein)
FR	May 23, 1996	Jun. 2, 1997	CAR	Army mutineers/rioting soldiers
U.S.	Sep. 3, 1996	Mar. 19, 2003	Kuwait	Iraq regime (Hussein)
U.S.	Feb. 1, 1998	Dec. 20, 1998	Iraq	Iraq
U.S.	Mar. 24, 1999	Jun. 10, 1999	Yugoslavia	Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

VITA

Name: Douglas Walter Kuberski

Address: 2010 Allen Building
TAMU 4348
College Station, TX 77843-4348

Email Address: dkuberski@polisci.tamu.edu

Education: B.A., History and Political Science, University of Nebraska, 2003
M.A., Political Science, University of Akron, 2005
Ph.D., Political Science, Texas A&M University, 2009