

---

# The Benefit of the Doubt: Testing an Informational Theory of the Rally Effect

Michael Colaresi

---

**Abstract** In this article I investigate the apparent tension between liberal theories that highlight the foreign policy benefits of domestic accountability and the observation that the public tends to reflexively support a leader during an international crisis. Previous theories of the process by which the public rallies around their leader tend to highlight the emotional and automatic nature of citizens' responses to threats. Using a simple signaling model, I show that the political and operational circumstances that increase the probability of post hoc verification and punishment for privately motivated policy enhance the credibility of a leader's choices and transmit information on the benefits of action to the public. I derive several observable hypotheses from the informational model, linking the costliness of the signal, the presences of divided government, election years, active term limits, political insecurity, changes in freedom of information laws, and trust in government to the size of the rally in the United States. A battery of empirical tests offer strong support for the informational model and suggest that a public rally is a rational response to numerous international crisis circumstances. Observing a rally need not imply an emotional or irrational public.

---

One of the central debates in international relations dissects what role the public plays in foreign policy and world politics. Many liberal theories of international politics assume both that the public actively constrains foreign policy in democracies and that these public constraints have positive policy repercussions.<sup>1</sup> Theoretical models building on this public-as-constraint assumption suggest that where leaders face institutional checks and balances from effective legislatures and regular elections, foreign policy action is likely to be more effective at communicating intentions.<sup>2</sup> For example, during the Cuban Missile Crisis, the fact that the public was perceived to be both unwilling to endure Soviet missiles in Cuba and

The author would like to thank Eric Chang, Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, Henk Goemans, Burt Monroe, Joachim Rennstich, Ken Bickers, Steve Chan, Tom Hammond, and Brian Silver for comments and constructive criticism. Three reviewers and the editorial staff at *IO* also deserve considerable thanks for contributing to the coherence of the article. As always, the remaining faults solely reflect the faults of the author.

1. See Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003; Russett 1993; Martin 2000; and Schultz 2001, for a summary of arguments and evidence.
2. See Martin 2000; and Fearon 1994 and 1998.

*International Organization* 61, Winter 2007, pp. 99–143

© 2007 by The IO Foundation.

DOI: 10.1017/S0020818307070038

likely to electorally punish any leader that ignored popular preferences, increased the credibility of U.S. threats and the effectiveness of the Cuban blockade.<sup>3</sup> Likewise, empirical findings illustrate that democracies tend to generate consistent cooperation across leadership transitions,<sup>4</sup> successfully raise money to fight conflicts,<sup>5</sup> and win a disproportionate share of their wars.<sup>6</sup>

However, realist critics argue that the empirical record is not uniformly consistent with the public-as-constraint assumption. These scholars suggest that the systematic spikes in public approval for a leader during international conflicts—known as the rally-'round-the-flag effect<sup>7</sup>—imply that public preferences are at best functionally irrelevant to the efficient formulation of international policies and at worst a wayward guide to foreign policy. The dominant theoretical models of the rally effect, by treating public opinion as reflexive, support these realist claims of an emotional, rather than a rational, public.<sup>8</sup> Since the public automatically rallies to the side of a leader in an international crisis, there is no reason to expect leaders to be held accountable for their policies or for those leaders to pander to citizens' preferences.<sup>9</sup> In this view, U.S. decisions during the Cuban Missile Crisis were not limited by public preferences, since the public was going to reflexively rally in response to the increased Soviet threat. These emotional reactions highlight the public's lack of knowledge and interest in the realities of world politics.<sup>10</sup> As such, citizen preferences are hypothesized to be poor guides to rational and effective policy. Morgenthau summarizes the argument when he writes, "good foreign policy cannot from the outset count upon the support of a public opinion whose preferences are emotional rather than rational."<sup>11</sup> Instead, national executives should lead, rather than follow, these emotional and malleable public preferences. To realist scholars, deferring to the public on questions of international relations and foreign policy would be similar to letting the sheep herd the shepherds.

In this article, I suggest that the conventional interpretations of the rally-effect and the foreign policy processes they imply suffer from both theoretical and empirical anomalies.<sup>12</sup> To extend these conventional arguments, I offer an informational model of the rally effect that highlights the previously ignored national security information asymmetries between leaders and citizens even in open societies. I

3. See Kennedy 1969; and Schlesinger 1978.

4. See Guisinger and Smith 2002; and McGillivray and Smith 2000.

5. See Schultz and Weingast 2003.

6. See Reiter and Stam 2002; and Lake 1992.

7. The literature on the rally-'round-the-flag effect is too voluminous to cite comprehensively. Hetherington and Nelson 2003 includes a succinct summary of the patriotism arguments; while Brody 1991 explores the logic of the opposition criticism perspective.

8. See Mueller 1970. Even the opposition criticism model—Brody 1991—assumes that the public follows elite cues rather than constraining policy from the bottom up.

9. See Waltz 1967, 272; Morgenthau 1967; and Rosato 2003, 599.

10. See Lippmann 1922, 1927.

11. Morgenthau 1967; 558.

12. Despite these problems, the rally effect has continued to be cited by critics of the public-as-constraint assumption. For a recent example, see Rosato 2003.

show that when one merges the reasonable realist assumption that the public delegates foreign policy information to a leader with the liberal argument that citizens can retrospectively punish leaders for choosing actions that are not in the public interest, a public rally is a rational response to numerous international crisis circumstances. Observing a rally need not imply an emotional or irrational public, as erroneously argued by democratic critics.

I conduct several tests of the informational theory on data taken from the United States and compare it to conventional explanations. Specifically, I expect that foreign policy actions and crises that carry a high probability of post hoc verification and meaningful punishment will lead to large rallies in the United States. The observable implications of this approach are that the rally should correlate with the costliness of the foreign policy action, the electoral calendar, active term limits, political security, control of congress, freedom of information laws, and trust in government. The model and supportive empirical findings suggest that the presence of a rally-effect should not be used as evidence that the public is irrelevant to international affairs. Conversely, rally behavior can be representative of a retrospective-accountability equilibrium where leaders act in the public interest and the public supports those actions.

This article proceeds in four parts. First, I critically consider the conventional models of public opinion change. Second, I attempt to build an integrative model of the rally by focusing on the factors that centralize but then retrospectively facilitate the dynamic diffusion of foreign policy information. The structure of this informational argument is illustrated formally within a principal-agent signaling framework. Third, I present the hypotheses and research design. The aim of this section is to formulate adequate tests of the informational theory of the rally. Finally, I present the results of a battery of empirical tests, including both in-sample and forecasting methods. The findings offer strong and consistent support for the informational model and suggest several avenues for future research linking secrecy, accountability, and international relations both within and beyond democratic contexts.

## Previous Explanations for the Rally

### *Patriotism*

With the advent of political polling, scholars of international politics noted that public approval of a U.S. president tended to rise during international crises.<sup>13</sup> However, Mueller proffered the first systematic explanation of the rally in the United States.<sup>14</sup> This research suggested that patriotism and nationalistic emotion explain the empirical fact that support for the U.S. president increases in times of inter-

13. See Polsby 1964; Roper 1969; and Neustadt 1960.

14. Mueller 1970 and 1973 in turn built on work by Waltz 1967.

national crises, even when the crises seem to be handled poorly. Mueller's causal logic specified that international conflict, regardless of blame, causes the public to feel threatened. This threat to core values reminds people of their patriotism and love of country. As such, the public rallies to symbols of that patriotism, such as the flag. The national leader, as the personal embodiment of the state, is one of the most powerful patriotic symbols. Thus, international crises infuse the public with strong patriotic feelings and renewed support for the leader and country.

### *Is Patriotism Blind?*

While the patriotism explanation is consistent with the observation that approval of the president in the United States increases on average during international crises, other findings suggest that patriotism is not the end of the story. First, and most obviously, the size of the rally in the United States has varied considerably over the last fifty years. According to one data source, rallies have varied between significant losses in support (−13 percent) to large gains in approval for the executive (+33 percent).<sup>15</sup> While this dispersion could be random variation around a constant “patriotic mean,” the range is considerable. Further, out of sixty-three rally events between 1950 and 1998 in the United States, twenty-six actually led to a decrease in presidential approval.<sup>16</sup> While small rallies may only reflect minimal threat perceptions, and may thus be consistent with the patriotism model,<sup>17</sup> the patriotism explanation has a more difficult time predicting the negative rallies.<sup>18</sup>

Second, it appears that the public does not reflexively rally to support the president, but at least pauses to consider the avowed goals of the foreign policy. Several authors<sup>19</sup> report that crises involving defensive versus offensive goals, at least as publicly espoused in the press, garner larger rallies for the U.S. president. Jentelson and Britton<sup>20</sup> confirm this finding while also showing that a third type of foreign policy goal, humanitarianism, should be considered. Therefore, empirical evidence shows that different types of foreign policy crises engender rallies of varying intensities. Proponents of the patriotism logic have defended the theory by suggesting that patriotism in the United States involves a resonance with defensive rather than offensive goals.<sup>21</sup>

Finally, there is also a strategic paradox inherent in the patriotism argument. If citizens know they are patriotic, tending toward supporting a president during

15. Rallies as coded in Baum 2002 and updated through 2004 by the author (see below).

16. Six of the twenty-six negative rallies would be considered significant given conventional statistical significance levels ( $p < .05$ ). Four of these are considered defensive crises.

17. I would like to thank an anonymous reviewer for highlighting this point.

18. Of course, these could be small rallies that become overwhelmed by other factors.

19. See Jentelson 1992; and Oneal, Lian, and Joyner 1996.

20. See Jentelson and Britton 1998.

21. See Hetherington and Nelson 2003. This rewriting does not make the amended theory any less true, *ex post*. It remains an empirical question whether the offensive/defensive goals explanation supersedes other explanations.

an international crisis, they should be aware that they are vulnerable to political manipulation. For example, an executive interested in reelection need only initiate a (defensive) international crisis to increase his popular support and reelection probability according to the patriotism logic. Knowing this tendency, the public should be skeptical of blindly supporting a leader. If members of the public are even marginally strategic, merely having the innate drive toward patriotism may not be enough to create rally behavior. Knowing that leaders can use patriotism to their private advantage<sup>22</sup> could counteract the rally inclination. With a strategic, self-conscious public, one would expect less intense rallies in an election year or when the incumbent president was politically weak, because the public would know that the executive would have an incentive to manipulate.<sup>23</sup>

### *Opposition Politics*

In response to many of these anomalies in the patriotism theory, Brody and Shapiro<sup>24</sup> constructed an alternative explanation for the rally effect. They suggest that during periods of international calm, in the absence of a foreign policy crisis, presidential approval reflects the thrust and parry of elite politics. Each party attacks and defends in turn. Presidential approval oscillates with these oppositional forces, as the public rallies not to patriotic symbols but their party's message. However, according to the opposition theory of the rally, the opposition elite ceases its criticism during an international crisis. Therefore, the rally effect occurs because the downward pressure on presidential approval, exerted from opposition attacks and criticism, is removed. Approval rises because only voices supporting the president are relayed to the public.

The opposition theory therefore not only predicts that presidential rallies will occur as an international crisis breaks out, but also predicts two additional, and testable, empirical regularities. First, one should see opposition criticism of the executive decrease<sup>25</sup> during international crises. If this does not happen, several links in the opposition story would be called into question. Second, and most importantly, the size of a rally should correlate with the level of opposition criticism. Large and dramatic rallies should result from sharp declines in elite opposition criticism.

The problem for the opposition-criticism theory is that these two additional hypotheses have received, at best, mixed support. While Brody<sup>26</sup> provides evidence to support the importance of opposition cues in explaining the rally, others

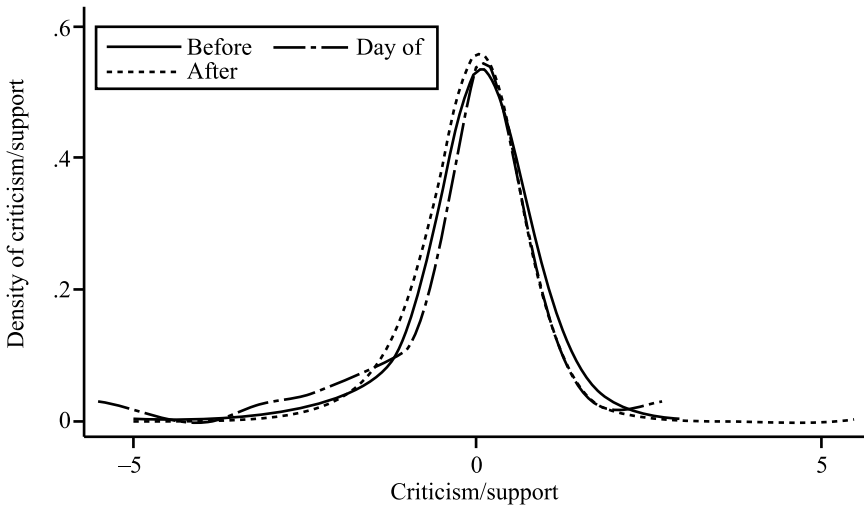
22. I explore the specific private advantages leaders may gain below.

23. I analyze the strategic logic of rally events and test several hypotheses relating to elections, low approval, and scandals below.

24. See Brody 1991 and 1994; and Brody and Shapiro 1989.

25. One should also observe an increase in average support.

26. See Brody 1991 and 1994.



**FIGURE 1.** *The univariate distribution of criticism (-)/support (+) the week before, during, and the week after a rally event*

have been unable to replicate these findings using alternative data sources. Baum and Groeling<sup>27</sup> find that elite opposition criticism, as reported in the mainstream media, does not decrease during international crises. Similarly, Oneal, Lian, and Joyner<sup>28</sup> show that knowing whether the opposition supports or opposes the president in an international crisis increases or decreases presidential support by only a negligible amount.<sup>29</sup>

To further probe the plausibility of the opposition theory, I created a daily measure of opposition criticism coded from Reuters news stories from 1991 to 1998. The scale ranges from -6 to 6 with negative numbers reporting greater criticism and positive numbers reporting support.<sup>30</sup> Figure 1 plots the smoothed distribution of opposition criticism the week before, on the day of, and the week after a rally event.<sup>31</sup> From a Kruskal-Wallis rank test, one cannot reject, at any reason-

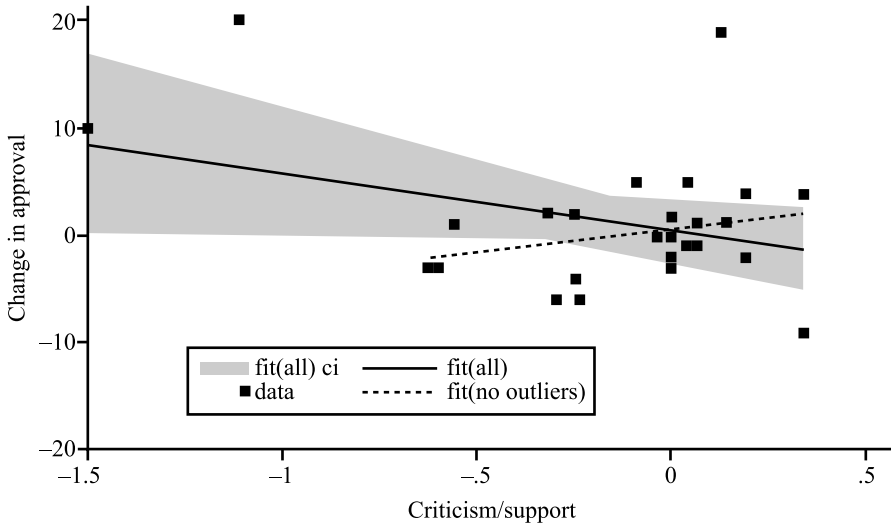
27. See Baum and Groeling 2004.

28. See Oneal, Lian, and Joyner 1996.

29. Less systematically, Hetherington and Nelson 2003 highlights a few anomalous cases.

30. For example, an opposition group denouncing the government would score a -6, while another political party rewarding the government would receive a +6 score. The scale was created using a panel of expert coders, the Virtual Research Associates (VRA) parsed events, and the IDEA event coding scheme. See Bond et al. 2004; and King and Lowe 2003. Only opposition statements and actions targeted at the national executive and the government are coded on the criticism scale. More information on the criticism scale is included in Colaresi 2004.

31. Rally events are coded as in Baum 2002.



**FIGURE 2.** *Bivariate regression results for opposition criticism and the rally (with and without outliers)*

able level of significance,<sup>32</sup> the null hypothesis that these three samples were drawn from the same population. Similarly, one cannot reject the null hypothesis of a nonparametric median test that these three samples were drawn from a population with the same median. This suggests that opposition criticism does not change during or after a rally event, as predicted.

Figure 2 plots the results of two bivariate regressions of immediate opposition criticism (the day after an international crisis) and the subsequent rally (the change in presidential approval pre- and postevent).<sup>33</sup> The first regression line uses all of the data points and suggests a marginally significant bivariate relationship between opposition criticism and the rally (at the .10 level). However, the relationship is in the opposite direction from that predicted by the opposition theory. The greater the support (criticism) from the opposition, the lower (bigger) the size of the rally. The second line ignores several obvious outliers in the data. In this case, the point estimate for the relationship is in the predicted direction, but it is not significantly different from zero. Therefore, as with the patriotism explanation, several anomalies remain to be explained from an opposition-criticism standpoint.

32. For example, at the .10 level of significance.

33. The opposition-criticism measure is as explained above. The substantive results are even less supportive of the opposition theory when different lags are used and when opposition is measured in a change metric. Rally events and intensities are as measured in Baum 2002. See below for a more complete definition of the data. The rally intensity is measured with the change in presidential approval.

*What Rally?*

Some recent research has called into question whether the rally effect even exists. Oneal, Lian, and Joyner<sup>34</sup> find that the average rally effect for a U.S. use of force is practically zero. Although this changes for certain classes of events, such as those that involved conflict with the USSR/Russia, overall the findings are much less dramatic than Mueller or others have reported. What explains this difference? Quite simply, it is measurement. Oneal, Lian, and Joyner argue that Mueller and others have ignored many U.S. crises that did not lead to a rally. Therefore, the rally effect arises from selection bias. These authors use a long list of militarized interstate disputes (MIDs) involving the United States to avoid the problem of selecting only cases that have led to dramatic rallies.<sup>35</sup>

Despite these anomalies, there are several strong reasons to continue to probe the interaction between the public and elite foreign policy decisions. First, the anomalous empirical findings rely on an operationalization of foreign policy events that does not comport with the conception of a rally as suggested by Mueller.<sup>36</sup> Mueller defined a rally as an event that was (1) international, (2) involves the U.S. president directly, and (3) is “specific, dramatic, and sharply focused.”<sup>37</sup> Kernell<sup>38</sup> slightly altered this definition by ignoring presidential inaugurations.<sup>39</sup> Yet, in the potential rally event measure used by Oneal, Lian, and Joyner,<sup>40</sup> an event such as the 15 August 1997 seizure by the United States of a Russian fishing vessel in the Bering Sea would be counted, even though it is less than salient, dramatic, or sharply focused.<sup>41</sup> Why would people change their minds if they did not know about the policy? Secondly, using a more dramatic cutoff for military conflict, James and Rioux<sup>42</sup> uncover a rally-effect with an intensity somewhere between Oneal and colleagues and Mueller.<sup>43</sup> Finally, even if one grants that the average rally in reaction to a foreign policy action is insignificant, this does not imply that the rally does not exist for an identifiable subset of actions and situations.

However, it is apparent that there is more variance in the way the public reacts to U.S. foreign policy actions than suggested by the original conception of the rally-effect. What one needs is a theory that can predict *ex ante* which events are *ex post* likely to lead to rallies and which are not. Conceptualization of variables must be tied to a theoretical model to avoid the charge that the measures were selected based on the dependent variable. Additionally, a research design includ-

34. See Oneal, Lian, and Joyner 1996.

35. For a discussion of MID data, see Jones, Bremer, and Singer 1996.

36. Mueller 1973.

37. *Ibid.*, 209.

38. See Kernell 1978.

39. This seems reasonable given the domestic focus of inaugurations.

40. See Oneal, Lian, and Joyner 1996.

41. Controlling for salience, for example by measuring placement in a major newspaper, alleviates some of these problems.

42. James and Rioux 1998.

43. Compare Oneal, Lian, and Joyner 1996; and Mueller 1973.



ing out-of-sample prediction can help alleviate concerns that the model was created to “fit the data” and support the external validity of the theoretical model.

### *The Building Blocks: Alert Patriotism and Loud Opposition*

The anomalies do not suggest that either the patriotism or opposition-criticism theories are useless. Work by Baum and Groeling<sup>44</sup> has made considerable progress in updating the political opposition argument to account for media effects. These authors suggest that the public’s perceptions of approval or disapproval are contingent on available information. The vast majority of this information comes from the media. Therefore, Baum and Groeling specifically analyze media incentives for broadcasting pro- or antigovernment information to the public. Below, I offer a theory that builds on and generalizes this logic of information accumulation.

The strengths and weaknesses of previous research can serve to triangulate several attributes that a more successful theory of the rally must contain. As the patriotism theory avers in the U.S. case, the public generally cares about the country. The majority of the public would rather see the nation continue to exist and prosper. At the most general level, the preferences of the public—those who constitute the rally or those who stay in opposition—should be part of any explanation. Although patriotism may not be blind, it can still exert an important influence on decisions. Similarly, the strength of the opposition-criticism theory is that it identifies a significant source of information for the public as citizens make up their minds to support or oppose presidential action. Even if the opposition is not immediately silent, it may be part of the rally story. Further, other sources of information may be available to the public, including information emanating from nonexecutive branches of government, independent media investigations, and whistle-blowers. Opposition silence or voice and the transmission of that information may be only the tip of the information iceberg. From this perspective, the rally occurs because citizens are persuaded to support an action based on the information they receive. The institutional, operational, and political contexts in which this information is sent could have a profound effect on whether it is perceived to be credible and persuasive.<sup>45</sup>

## **An Alternative Explanation: Information, Institutions, and Foreign Policy**

### *Temporary Information Asymmetries*

A leader’s foreign policy decisions are calculated within a dynamic institutional context. Even in democratic states such as the United States, these institutions

44. See Baum 2002; and Baum and Groeling 2004.

45. See Lupia and McCubbins 1998.

include mechanisms for the centralization and concentration of foreign policy information in the executive. Classification is carried out through legal confidentiality clauses, penalties for endangering the nation (treason), and executive privilege. It has been generally acknowledged that information centralization and concentration mechanisms are executive powers necessary for implementing and formulating consistent and effective foreign policy. Quite simply, policies that involve surprise, hiding, lying, sneaking, and bluffing require the executive to have private information. If everyone in a country had immediate access to all information on foreign policy, it is highly probable that another country would also discover that private information.<sup>46</sup> Bargaining, even with an international ally over trade policy, is less effective for a state that has no private information. The value of secret information is even greater during military maneuvers and planning.

There are two categories of relevant private information held by the executive. The first is the public cost/benefit forecasts. How strong is the threatening state or how destabilizing is the international situation? What are the net benefits of foreign policy action? For example, in early 2002, the U.S. public was asked to support military intervention in Iraq. The information necessary for the public to make an informed decision on the merits of this operation was classified. The probability of gaining public benefits from action, in this case the expected reduction in threat posed by weapons of mass destruction, severing a potential Iraq–al Qaeda alliance, and eliminating a regional destabilizing force, depended on the current state of the world (did those threats exist) and the likely state of the world at the end of the war (would action reduce the threats or exacerbate them). While point predictions concerning these benefits were made public before the war, the certainty with which those point predictions held (the standard errors of the predictions) and the methods by which the predictions were derived (from what sources of what credibility) were private information.<sup>47</sup> The end result is that the public is less informed on the likely costs and benefit of foreign policy actions than the executive.

Derived at least in part as an unintended consequence of these primary information asymmetries, a second executive information monopoly concerns the private benefits that might accrue to the leader if the public reflexively supported foreign policy action. International confrontations may allow presidents to brandish their leadership skills with photo opportunities employing military personnel and equipment and possibly divert press and public attention from domestic problems. For example, George W. Bush took to calling himself a “war president” after 9/11 and Bill Clinton was accused of diverting attention from his personal scandals when he launched cruise missile attacks on al Qaeda targets in 1998. McMaster claims that President Lyndon B. Johnson twisted the facts surrounding

46. See Gibbs 1995; and Stiglitz 1999.

47. Additionally, the classification of uncertainty estimates is pivotal when the ambiguity is asymmetrical around the publicized point prediction.

the Gulf of Tonkin incident to boost his reelection chances.<sup>48</sup> Additionally, foreign policy action might lead to monetary benefits for a leader's political backers. In the 2003 Iraq War, several opposition activists made the case that George W. Bush initiated the war to benefit his supporters in the oil industry or corporate interests such as Halliburton that might then funnel money back into political contests.<sup>49</sup>

Because the public is unsure of the threat level they face and what options are most likely to efficiently maximize public security, private presidential motivations could be wrapped in public interest rhetoric. For example, ex-CIA Sudan station chief Milt Bearden's first reaction to the 1998 cruise missile attacks on the night of Monica Lewinsky's return to grand jury testimony was "what do they know? What is this about?," referring to the information and motivations that drove the specifics of the retaliation.<sup>50</sup> To make a fully informed decision about the action, the public would need to know how important the cruise missile targets were to al Qaeda,<sup>51</sup> and whether the timing of the attacks was optimized for policy effect or scandal deflection. This judgment depends on classified information. What intelligence, if any, led to the decision that this night was the only or best "window" to carry out the strikes? These information asymmetries may make even a patriotic citizen pause before automatically supporting a president's foreign policy actions.

The United States and other democracies also have constructed, maintained, and at times ignored, countervailing institutions that create an opportunity for the diffusion of retrospective foreign policy information. Most fundamentally, freedom of speech allows for different points of view and new information to be offered, shared, and exchanged with the public. U.S. laws include provisions for legislative and judicial subpoena and oversight on international executive decisions. Currently in the United States, there is a practical, affordable, and judicially reviewed method for the public to query information under the 1974 revisions to the original Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Similarly, once information is in the public view, the transmission of that information in press is usually protected. In the United States, these protections were illustrated in the Pentagon Papers case.<sup>52</sup> All of these protections and procedures take time to implement, but create the opportunity for the eventual diffusion of information on foreign

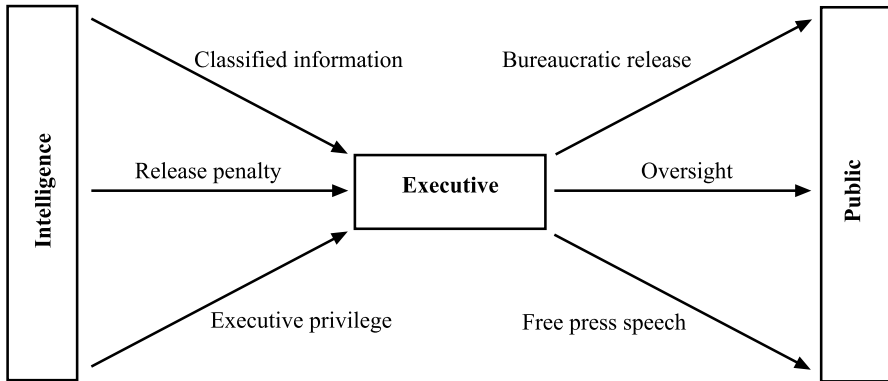
48. Gibbs 1995 for his relevant discussion of "internal threat" motivations.

49. See Kaufmann 2004 for a summary of the public-elite discourse in the prelude to the 2003 Iraq War. Action might also motivate support for other facets of a president's agenda, rather than promoting public security. For example, trumpeting international threats may help to increase defense spending, if believed, on specific presidential priorities. John F. Kennedy and Ronald Reagan highlighted Soviet threats during the Cold War to attempt to push for increased spending on missile and Star Wars programs respectively. Similarly, George W. Bush underlined the threats from China, North Korea, and Iran when attempting to motivate support for his missile defense shield.

50. *Frontline*, 13 September 2001. Full interview can be downloaded from ([www.pbs.org/frontline](http://www.pbs.org/frontline)).

51. The attack in Sudan has drawn criticism on this point.

52. See Prados and Porter 2004.



**FIGURE 3.** *The centralization and potential diffusion of foreign policy information*

affairs into the public realm. The potential dynamic information flows are illustrated in Figure 3.<sup>53</sup>

It is important to note that the mere presence of an opportunity for foreign policy facts to reach the public does not imply that information diffusion is automatic and constant. On the contrary, the willingness of both the press and the legislature to use their publication and oversight powers varies over time in predictable ways. For example, the press is more likely to probe and broadcast information on dramatic foreign policy actions. The legislature is more likely to hold hearings and investigate presidential decisions under divided government, when intraparty cooperation between the executive and legislative branches does not counterbalance the institutional political checks on executive power.<sup>54</sup> While the U.S. Congress held a number of hearings on escalation in Vietnam after the Gulf of Tonkin incident, a renewed legislative focus on the Vietnam War followed the change to divided government in 1969. More generally, between 1954 and 1989 the average number of hearings on defense and international affairs was 25 percent higher under divided government (average of 248 hearings a year on foreign policy issues) as compared to unified government (average of 196 hearings a year on foreign policy issues).<sup>55</sup>

53. This figure is a simplification. Direct information flows from foreign policy facts to the public, unmediated by the executive, are not only theoretically possible but real. The recent U.S. scandal over the Abu Ghraib prison illustrated this process. It should be noted that the same diffusion institutions are still at work.

54. Furthermore, the public's trust that these political institutions police themselves ebbs and flows over time (see below).

55. Information taken from and classified using the Policy Agendas Project. See (<http://www.policyagendas.org>); and Baumgartner and Jones 2005. The difference in means is significant at the .05 level using a t-test.

What emerges from these countervailing forces in the United States are volatile tides of information centralization within the executive and diffusion of information to the public. By design, the public is relatively ignorant of the immediate facts on the ground in a foreign policy crisis, but may be confident that information will eventually come their way, given the right operational and political circumstances.<sup>56</sup> This can be contrasted with crisis contexts where information diffusion is likely to be blocked or slowed, either due to party loyalty,<sup>57</sup> a disinterested press, or an absence of adequate legal protections.<sup>58</sup>

A related set of democratic institutions allows the public to punish a leader for enacting policies that they do not perceive to be in the national interest. Yet again, the opportunity to punish a leader if foreign policy abuse is discovered is not constant within the United States, or in other democracies. The most obvious form of leadership punishment is direct electoral defeat. Elections serve as low-cost mechanisms to punish and deselect an executive from power. This suggests that the information diffusion process must be complete before election day. Since diffusion occurs with a lag, a crisis and foreign policy action that occurs just before an election is unlikely to be scrutinized in time. A leader in a precarious political situation (low approval or facing a scandal) or who is term-limited, also may avoid the conditional electoral punishment.<sup>59</sup> It is likely that the specifics of the institutional, political, and operational contexts, and their related possibilities for *ex post* verification and conditional punishment, will influence both a leader's foreign policy decisions and the public's reactions to those decisions. Specifically, these verification and punishment mechanisms may create disincentives for leaders to call for foreign policy action when that action is in their private interest but not in the public interest.

I explore the logic of this argument below, but a preview will help to frame the discussion. The results of a simple signaling model suggest that institutions and situations that protect and accelerate post hoc information revelation and contingent leadership punishment help to create the atmosphere in which rallying is a rational response to foreign policy action. When the public is weighing its reaction to a presidential foreign policy initiative, it takes into account the likely motives of the leadership. If the current crisis provides the leadership with an institutionally constituted opportunity to politically manipulate foreign policy for private gain, through information control, and no counterbalancing incentive to avoid abuses of

56. While the resulting information will not be encyclopedic, it is likely to provide ample basis to inform retrospective judgments. See Lupia and McCubbins 1998 for a discussion of the many mechanisms by which incomplete information can lead to near-efficient decision making. Note that opposition voices can play a large role in this process.

57. For example, when one party controls the executive and legislative branches.

58. For example, the situation in the United States before the Freedom of Information Act was strengthened in 1974.

59. However, additional punishments include imposing further electoral defeats on the leader's party, and rejecting policies that the leader may care about. Finally, reporters, academics, or other members of the public are free to accost a leader's record and legacy in print.

foreign policy power exists, the public is likely to be skeptical of foreign policy moves. On the other hand, situations that provide an active disincentive to mislead the public increase the probability of a public rally, even in the face of limited contemporaneous information. The post hoc revelation of abuses of power and opportunity to punish any abuses, with both the public and the leadership's common knowledge, supplies just such an incentive. In short, some situations lend themselves to elites credibly signaling foreign policy needs to the public because leaders are vulnerable to punishment if they abuse their temporary informational advantage. This variation leads to several potentially observable patterns in rally behavior in the United States.

### *Signaling a Rally: A Principal-Agent Model*

The informational argument can be illustrated in a simple incomplete information principal-agent model. The structure of the game is as follows,

1. Nature chooses an international crisis situation. This is revealed to the agent (the president) but not the principal (the public). The principal has belief  $p \in (0, 1)$  about whether the specific situation is one where action will accrue private benefits to the agent ( $\beta$ ) or the complementary belief  $(1 - p)$  that action in this case will provide a benefit to all ( $\theta$ ).
2. The agent chooses action  $\alpha$  or  $-\alpha$ .<sup>60</sup>
3. The game ends with the status quo if  $-\alpha$  is chosen. Payoffs are  $(0, 0)$ .
4. If the agent acts ( $\alpha$ ), the principal chooses whether to support (S) the action or oppose (O) it.
  - Support leads to payoffs  $(\beta - (p(\nu|\alpha) \times \phi), -\gamma)$  in a  $\beta$  world and  $(\theta, \theta - \gamma)$  in a  $\theta$  world.  $\gamma$  includes both the cost of the action and institutional maintenance costs.  $p(\nu|\alpha)$  represents the probability that the principal will be able to verify that the action was not in their interest, where  $p(\nu|\alpha) \in (0, 1)$ .  $\phi$  measures the level of punishment that an agent can incur if verification occurs.  $\beta$  measures the private benefits and  $\theta$  indicates the public benefits.
  - Oppose leads to payoffs  $(\tau_a, \tau_p)$ .

For simplicity, I define  $\varepsilon = p(\nu|\alpha) \times \phi$ . The costs  $\gamma$  and  $\phi$  are constrained to be greater than 0, as are the benefits  $\beta$  and  $\theta$ . Further,  $\theta > \gamma$ , constraining the

60. Some may object to a model of the rally that treats the public as responding to a leader's action. However, both the opposition and foreign policy restraint defensive goals hypotheses rely on a similar, though unstated assumption. For example, in the opposition-criticism argument, a crisis arrives, then the leadership and opposition act and comment, and the public rallies or not, conditional on this dynamic. Similarly, in the foreign policy restraint/defensive goals hypothesis, the rally depends on the previous government explanation of its goals and the press coverage of that explanation.

game to model crisis situations where the potential benefit to the national interest/security of the state is strictly greater than the costs incurred in a  $\theta$  world.<sup>61</sup> Finally,  $\tau_i < 0$ , where opposition is costly for the principal and the agent. The game<sup>62</sup> is similar to many principal-agent models with incomplete information, where the principal is at a potential informational disadvantage.<sup>63</sup> I analyze the game using perfect Bayesian equilibria (PBE) as the solution concept. The idea is that players (in this case the principal) update their beliefs about the game according to Bayes's rule.

*Proposition 1: In situations where  $\beta - \varepsilon > 0$ , no pure separating equilibrium exists.*

The proof is included in the Appendix. In situations where retrospective information diffusion and conditional punishment are unlikely, foreign policy action does not convey information to the public. Since  $\theta > 0$ , the agent will prefer  $\alpha$  to  $\neg\alpha$ , if the anticipated probability of support from the principal is sufficiently high. However, the converse is true if opposition is the principal's likely strategy ( $\tau_p < 0$ ). When the outcome  $(\beta, \alpha, S)$  is better than the status quo for the agent ( $\beta - \varepsilon > 0$ ), the incentives for a  $\beta$  crisis are similar to the incentives in the  $\theta$  case. Both crisis situations supply the agent with an incentive to act ( $\alpha$ ) when the anticipated probability of support from the principal is high enough. Similarly, both types have an incentive to avoid being opposed, because  $\tau_a < 0$ . If the principal is skeptical enough to prefer opposition to support, then both crisis types will lead an agent to avoid  $\alpha$ . If the principal is trusting enough (that is,  $p$  is sufficiently low), both types of agents can take advantage of that and offer  $\alpha$ . For the principal, support strictly dominates oppose when  $p < [-\tau_p + (\theta - \gamma)]/\theta$ . Significantly, seeing  $\alpha$  or  $\neg\alpha$  does not supply the principal with information on the crisis situation. The two pure strategy pooling equilibria under these conditions are  $(\neg\alpha, \neg\alpha, O)$  if  $p > [-\tau_p + (\theta - \gamma)]/\theta$ , and  $(\alpha, \alpha, S)$  if  $p < [-\tau_p + (\theta - \gamma)]/\theta$ .<sup>64</sup> A separating equilibrium does not exist because the agent's incentives are similar in both cases.

These pooling equilibria have significant implications for the interaction between foreign policy and public opinion in the United States. When post hoc information

61. If this inequality is reversed, the distinction between the  $\beta$  and  $\theta$  world breaks down, as does the uncertainty. Regardless of the state of the world, the public would like to avoid  $\alpha$  if possible.

62. There are a multitude of simplifications within this model and theory. I follow other work in suggesting that the worth of a model should be measured by the usefulness of its empirical predictions rather than the truthfulness of its assumptions. As noted by Morton 1999, all models, by design, include false assumptions.

63. One slight difference is that I interpret the uncertainty in the model as reflecting private information about the crisis situation rather than private information about the "type of player." This is similar to the Lupia and McCubbins 1998 model that separates uncertainty about the situation and the player.

64. This game includes a continuum of mixed strategy equilibria when:  $p = [-\tau_p + (\theta - \gamma)]/\theta$ . These are described by:  $(\alpha, \alpha, \sigma_p(S) > \bar{m})$ , where  $\bar{m} = -\tau_a / [(-\tau_p + (\theta - \gamma) - \theta)(\beta - \varepsilon - \theta) + \theta + \tau_a]$  and  $\sigma_p(S)$  is the probability with which the principal plays support.



diffusion and contingent leadership punishment are unlikely ( $\varepsilon < \beta$ ), for example, because of proximate elections, unified government, or a disinterested media, either the principal can be taken advantage of, given  $\beta$  and a low enough  $p$ , or an agent can fail to garner principal support, given  $\theta$  and a high enough  $p$ . Here, policy action and support depend to a large extent on prior beliefs, and these beliefs are not updated based on action. Therefore, action does not credibly signal an international threat.

*Proposition 2:* When  $\tau_a < \beta - \varepsilon < 0$ , a separating equilibrium exists where  $\alpha$  is chosen only in a  $\theta$  situation, and the principal supports that action.

In crisis situations where principals are sufficiently confident that they can recognize and punish agents for acting in the private interest ( $\beta - \varepsilon < 0$ ), only a  $\theta$  situation will lead an agent to offer  $\alpha$ . Agents in  $\beta$  situations do not offer  $\alpha$ , because they prefer the status quo ( $0 > \beta - \varepsilon$ ). Conversely,  $\theta$  situations do present an incentive for  $\alpha$ , over  $\neg\alpha$  ( $\theta > 0$ ). The specific situations that allow for post hoc verification and punishment, by raising  $\varepsilon$ , create the conditions for an informative signal to principals that the situation is one of national rather than private interests. Knowing this, principals can update their beliefs ( $p|\alpha$ ) about the crisis situation and judge that support rather than opposition is their best strategy. Under these key conditions, skepticism does not lead to inaction ( $\neg\alpha$ ) but rather to both action and support. When principals see a signal, they can be confident that the situation calls for action in the national interest. Active checks on the president as the foreign policy agent, through an active press following a hot story, or an opposition-controlled legislature, can both reduce private-interest action (those that are solely in the private interest of the agent) and induce principal support (due to the informative signal).

## Hypotheses

By aggregating the signaling model results over a diverse population of citizens, the informational perspective leads to several new and specific observable hypotheses related to the rally effect in the United States. The sunflower plot in Figure 4 illustrates the process with a population of citizens where the signaling model sets the mean expected utility of support ( $EU(S)$ ) and opposition ( $EU(O)$ ) for individuals but other factors lead to deviations. The greater the mean expected utility of support, relative to the mean expected utility of opposition ( $EU(S) > EU(O)$ ), the greater the proportion of the population likely to rally. In Figure 4, three simulated crisis situations are represented by the three distributions. The greater the area<sup>65</sup> above the line representing  $EU(S) = EU(O)$ , the larger the predicted aggre-

65. This is represented in two dimensions by the density of the dots in the sunflower plot. If one were to project these plots in three dimensions, the third axis would represent the density or frequency of dots falling on the grid.



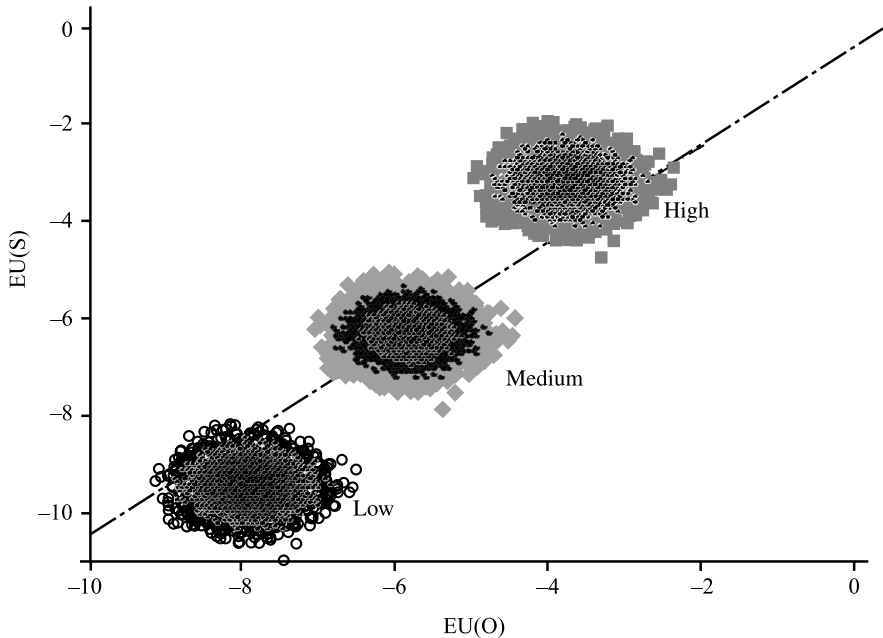


FIGURE 4. Sunflower plot of hypothetical expected utility distributions

gate rally. For example, where the model predicts a low propensity to rally, when one adds random deviations, one would expect a small or negative rally (distribution of points on the lower left). More credible circumstances and actions should lead to a larger aggregate rally (distribution of points on the upper right).

Specifically, this perspective suggests that the size of a rally will be related to the probability of *ex post* verification and punishment for private versus public gain.<sup>66</sup> As discussed above, and expanded upon here, there are several operational and political sources of variation in the credibility of a U.S. president's foreign policy actions. These factors include the likelihood of an action to draw public and legislative attention (costliness of the action), divided government status, prior presidential approval, ongoing scandals, election timing, a term-limited leader, effective freedom of information laws, and trust in government.

On the operational level, the probability of verification and penalty vary with the action chosen by the executive, when holding other institutions and concepts constant. Different types of actions facilitate greater or lesser degrees of scrutiny, economic cost, and direct diffusion of information. For example, one can think about actions leading to information diffusion in at least three ways. First, when troops are on the ground, there are additional eyes and ears that can report what

66. Where Proposition 2 holds, the citizen distribution of support should look like the "high" distribution in Figure 4.

**TABLE 1.** *Potential costliness of foreign policy actions, ex post*

| <i>Action</i>                   | <i>Scope</i> | <i>Oversight</i> | <i>Drama</i> | <i>Overall</i> |
|---------------------------------|--------------|------------------|--------------|----------------|
| <i>Verbal</i>                   | low          | low              | low          | lowest         |
| <i>Small-scale mobilization</i> | low          | medium           | low          | low            |
| <i>Large-scale mobilization</i> | high         | medium           | medium       | medium         |
| <i>Small-scale fighting</i>     | med.         | high             | high         | high           |
| <i>Large-scale fighting</i>     | high         | high             | high         | highest        |

they see. Troops not only talk to the government but also to networks of friends, family, and sometimes news organizations. Second, the mobilization of military strength costs money. The greater the budgetary strain, the more likely a move is to stir up legislative and press attention. In these cases, the power of subpoena and other post hoc checks on executive power are more likely to be used. Finally, dramatic events such as direct military conflict increase the probability of press and public attention. Again, drama increases the chances that information about the crisis will diffuse to the public *ex post*. This leads to the hypothesis that the more “costly” the action for the leader—meaning the more likely that action is to subject the leader to after-the-fact verification and potential punishment if motivated by private gain—the greater the number of people who will be persuaded to support the action.<sup>67</sup>

Specifically, I organize foreign policy actions into five categories (see Table 1). Purely verbal actions have the lowest verification propensity because they do not put any eyes and ears on the ground, fail to generate mobilization costs,<sup>68</sup> and are less dramatic than military fighting. Small-scale mobilizations are slightly more costly, where small numbers of troops are moved within a region. If this movement involves less than a brigade, wing, or carrier group—the usual war-fighting units—it is relatively cheap and benign. Larger-scale mobilizations that involve larger war-fighting units can be thought of as moderately costly and dramatic. Not only are more eyes and ears in the vicinity of the crisis, but moving and mobilizing large-scale military forces attracts legislative and press oversight. Significantly more dramatic, though with equal or smaller economic cost, is small-scale violent action. Where restrained and limited force is used, people are likely to pay attention. However, the actions with the highest *ex post* verification and punishment probability involve large-scale fighting. Wars or large-scale crises involve high drama and cost as well as putting a multitude of independent eyes and ears in

67. Another way to phrase this is that a brigade is worth a thousand words.

68. Talk is cheaper than tanks.

proximity to crisis information. This event categorization leads to the first observable hypothesis (H1).<sup>69</sup>

*H1: The greater the likelihood that an action will draw media and legislative attention, the greater the rally.*

In the United States, as well as other democratic contexts, the probability of a leader losing office can also affect the perceived utility of supporting an executive's foreign policy choices. A president that is suffering from political trouble may benefit from a foreign policy diversion and rally. This political trouble increases the value of  $\beta$  for the incumbent. For example, some political opponents suggested that President Clinton timed his punitive cruise missile strikes against al Qaeda in 1998 to divert attention from the Lewinsky scandal. The suggestion is that a president could benefit from a foreign policy crisis (conditional on a rally) even if that crisis was not in the public interest.

This perverse incentive simultaneously raises the citizens' prior probability of a  $\beta$  world ( $p$ ). Citizens may be aware and skeptical of a weak politician attempting to politically manipulate foreign policy. Therefore, a weak incumbent should be less able to mobilize a rally, given the comparatively higher value of  $\beta$  (the private interest in a crisis) and  $p$  (the prior probability of a crisis being in a leader's private interest). Additionally, presidential scandals could have the same political effect. A president that was on his political heels because of a scandal relating to abuses of power (Watergate), secrecy (Iran-Contra) or lying (Lewinsky scandal) may be in danger of impeachment. Again, this serves to increase the public's skepticism of any future crisis ( $p$ ), while increasing a leader's incentive to initiate action for private gain ( $\beta$ ).

These political insecurity hypotheses are also related to the value of  $\phi$ , the contingent punishment (and thus by definition  $\varepsilon$ ). For example,  $\phi$  may be lower for an insecure and scandalized leader because the probability of losing office has already increased. Therefore, the threat of being evicted from power if an abuse of power is uncovered is not an effective deterrent. These politicians have less to lose politically by acting in their private interest ( $\alpha|\beta$ ).<sup>70</sup> Hypotheses 2 and 3 follow from this logic.

69. By modeling the rally as a function of presidential action, I am assuming that the expected immediate rally does not in turn explain the costliness of action. I probe this assumption using a two-stage least squares model in the Appendix. There is some anecdotal evidence that presidents do not form policy solely on the basis of conditional public opinion forecasts. Clinton argues that he ordered the cruise missile strikes on al Qaeda targets in 1998 despite warnings from his staff that the action would draw heavy criticism; see Clinton 2004. Kennedy expected to be criticized domestically for ordering a blockade of Cuba instead of aggressive air strikes during the Cuban Missile Crisis; see Kennedy 1969. However, leadership justifications and motivations such as these should be taken with a healthy dose of skepticism. It remains an empirical question whether approval drives action or action drives approval.

70. However, this only captures one of many potential vectors of a leader's utility function. For example, if leaders care not just about holding office, but also about their legacies, political party, or policy concerns, numerous punishments remain to be levied.

*H2: Foreign policy actions initiated by an executive with weak approval ratings will lead to a smaller rally than other types of situations.*

*H3: Foreign policy actions initiated when an executive is involved in a scandal will lead to smaller rallies than actions initiated under normal circumstances.*

Five additional observable hypotheses can be derived from situations that raise or lower the probability of *ex post* political verification ( $p(v|\alpha)$ ) and punishment ( $\phi$ ).<sup>71</sup> First, divided government acts to increase the potential political cost of a foreign policy action and thus increases the persuasiveness of a leader's signal. The public can be more confident that a legislature under opposition control will use its subpoena and oversight power to uncover abuses of power. As noted above, while it may not be in the president's party's interest to attack a foreign policy action that was undertaken for private rather than public gain, an opposition party will have no such qualms.<sup>72</sup> Second, foreign policy action that occurs close to an election reduces the chances that information will diffuse to the public prior to the electoral choice. Since a rally during an election could benefit the incumbent and simultaneously decreases the probability of preelection verification, the public is likely to be skeptical. Therefore, rallies in election years are likely to be smaller compared to rallies in nonelection years, all else equal. Third, a term-limited president cannot be punished through conventional electoral means. Again, this makes any foreign policy action less persuasive to the public.

Fourth, laws that institutionalize the release of national security information and open government archives increase the probability of retrospective information revelation ( $p(v|\alpha)$  and  $\varepsilon$ ). In the United States, the implementation of the 1966 Freedom of Information Act and the 1974 Privacy Act served to increase post hoc verification probabilities for the public. Knowing this, leaders are less likely to act in their private interest and the public is more likely to support foreign policy action. Finally, post hoc verification depends, to some extent, on the government itself to function. In the United States, checks and balances must operate to bring dubious actions to light. Legislative committees must oversee rather than overlook the executive's policy actions. The courts must be trusted to punish abuses of power. It is also helpful if the executive branch is willing and perceived to police itself.<sup>73</sup> Skeptics of government operations will find it both more likely that foreign policy actions will take place in a  $\beta$  world (for the executive's private interest) and more likely that the executive will be able to get away with it. Therefore,

71. Which together define  $\varepsilon$ .

72. There are many situations when the president's party will criticize the executive. The difference is relative, not absolute.

73. For example, the naming of special prosecutors and investigation teams can serve the purpose of self-policing. The naming of Lawrence Walsh as a special investigator to the Iran-Contra affair is one example.

**TABLE 2.** *Political situations, signaling model parameters, and rally hypotheses*

| <i>Situation</i>                  | $\Delta$ Parameter settings                             | <i>Directional hypothesis</i> |
|-----------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|
| COSTLY SIGNAL                     | $p \downarrow, \alpha \downarrow, \varepsilon \uparrow$ | +                             |
| WEAK APPROVAL                     | $\beta \uparrow, p \uparrow, \varepsilon \downarrow$    | -                             |
| ONGOING SCANDAL                   | $\beta \uparrow, p \uparrow, \varepsilon \downarrow$    | -                             |
| DIVIDED GOVERNMENT                | $p \downarrow, \varepsilon \uparrow$                    | +                             |
| ELECTION YEAR                     | $\beta \uparrow, p \uparrow, \varepsilon \downarrow$    | -                             |
| TERM LIMITED ( <i>lame duck</i> ) | $\varepsilon \downarrow$                                | -                             |
| INFORMATION LAWS                  | $\varepsilon \uparrow$                                  | +                             |
| TRUST IN GOVERNMENT               | $p \uparrow, \varepsilon \uparrow$                      | +                             |

the higher the trust in government, the more likely a large rally. The eight hypotheses are summarized in Table 2.

*H4: Foreign policy actions initiated under conditions of divided government will lead to a greater increase in support for a leader, as compared to actions under unified government.*

*H5: Foreign policy actions initiated in an election year will lead to a smaller rally than other foreign policy actions.*

*H6: Foreign policy actions initiated by a term-limited incumbent will elicit a smaller rally than actions initiated by other types of incumbents.*

*H7: Increases in the institutionalization of public access to national security archives and retrospective information will lead to larger rallies.*

*H8: The greater the percentage of the public that trusts government institutions, the greater the size of the rally.*

## Methodology

In order to test the new hypotheses suggested by the informational theory, I assemble data on rally events and the relevant independent variables. To measure costly

action, I categorize the rally events listed in Jentelson and Baum<sup>74</sup> by their differing verification probabilities. All of these events were sorted as either verbal, small-scale, or large-scale mobilizations, or small-scale or large-scale fighting (coded numerically 1 through 5).<sup>75</sup> I describe this variable as the *COSTLY ACTION* variable because it varies with the *ex post* verification and punishment that the leader will be subjected to, all else equal.

Additionally, I code divided government whenever the opposition party has a majority in either the U.S. House of Representatives or the Senate. I include three dummy variables to measure the political insecurity of an incumbent. The first takes on nonzero values during a presidential election year. The second measures when the president's approval is below 52 percent and thus the incumbent is politically weak. The third variable is coded as 1 for three large-scale presidential scandals—Watergate, the Iran-Contra affair, and the Lewinsky investigation—and 0 otherwise. Finally, a dummy variable measuring whether term limits are in effect for a president is calculated (1 = lame duck, 0 otherwise).<sup>76</sup>

The last two informational variables measure the change in information laws in the United States and the trust in government. In the United States, significant changes in freedom of information laws occurred in 1966 and 1974. The Freedom of Information Act was passed and signed into law in 1966. The law was strengthened, fees and response times regulated, exemptions narrowed, and a review process initiated in 1974. I code a dummy variable equal to 1 after the year 1974 to measure these significant changes in information laws. While the 1966 law created the infrastructure for post hoc information revelation, the use of the Freedom of Information Act only significantly rose after the 1974 changes.<sup>77</sup> I code trust in government by using the National Election Study (NES) government trust index. This is measured every two years.<sup>78</sup>

I use several research strategies to explore the plausibility of the informational model. In all models presented below, the dependent variables are defined as the change in Gallup polls on presidential approval pre- and postrally events from 1950 to 1998.<sup>79</sup> Using multivariate regression techniques, I control for the infor-

74. See Jentelson 1992; and Baum 2002.

75. The categorization was done through historical research utilizing both the MID and ICB data sets as well as the Fordham 1998 description of events. The Archives of the *New York Times* were also used as a primary source for what action was announced and when it happened. For the analysis utilizing militarized disputes, I also constructed a measure of costliness based on the hostility level of the dispute and the crisis level; see Chapman and Reiter 2004. This measure (see below) does not rely on historical research, reducing the potential for measurement bias. The results were substantively identical.

76. Scandal timing coded as in Baum 2002.

77. Changes in 1966 were not statistically significant when tested empirically.

78. I code the variable equal to the index in the past election for nonelection years. Question wording and data are available from [www.umich.edu/~nes](http://www.umich.edu/~nes).

79. The data are coded in accordance with the research design in Baum 2002 and updated for the post-9/11 period using the Roper Center database (for approval scores).

TABLE 3. Summary statistics for variables used in the analysis

| Variable                   | Observations | Mean  | Standard deviation | Minimum | Maximum |
|----------------------------|--------------|-------|--------------------|---------|---------|
| RALLY                      | 63           | 1.29  | 6.53               | -13     | 20      |
| COSTLY ACTION              | 63           | 2.84  | 1.32               | 1       | 5       |
| DIVIDED GOVERNMENT         | 63           | 0.67  | 0.47               | 0       | 1       |
| TERM LIMITED               | 63           | 0.24  | 0.43               | 0       | 1       |
| LOW APPROVAL               | 63           | 0.35  | 0.48               | 0       | 1       |
| PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION YEAR | 63           | 0.22  | 0.42               | 0       | 1       |
| SCANDAL                    | 63           | 0.14  | 0.35               | 0       | 1       |
| INFORMATION LAWS           | 63           | 0.60  | 0.49               | 0       | 1       |
| TRUST IN GOVERNMENT        | 63           | 37.49 | 9.38               | 26      | 61      |
| FOREIGN POLICY RESTRAINT   | 63           | 0.75  | 0.44               | 0       | 1       |
| SALIENCE                   | 63           | 0.63  | 0.49               | 0       | 1       |
| CRITICISM/SUPPORT          | 25           | -0.29 | 1.48               | -5.5    | 2.72    |
| UNEMPLOYMENT               | 63           | 0.04  | 0.23               | -0.45   | 0.85    |
| INFLATION                  | 63           | 0.03  | 0.03               | -.01    | .12     |

mational variables as well as for several plausible confounding variables<sup>80</sup> including the reported goals of the action, salience of the event, the level of opposition criticism, and economic variables. The goals of a foreign policy action are categorized based on work by Jentelson,<sup>81</sup> where events aimed at foreign policy restraint (FPR) should receive a larger rally than U.S. moves designed to compel another state to act.<sup>82</sup> Salience is measured using a dummy variable marking whether an event was covered by a front page story in the *New York Times*.<sup>83</sup> I also control for the level of opposition criticism/support, as suggested by Brody.<sup>84</sup> The criticism/support measure includes support as positive values and criticism as negative values and is available only from 1991 to 1998. Finally, I include the three-period average of the inflation rate and unemployment rate coded from Baum.<sup>85</sup> Summary statistics for these variables are included in Table 3.

80. These control variables are suggested by the patriotism argument (salience), the revised-patriotism argument (foreign policy restraint goal), opposition criticism (the opposition-criticism hypothesis), and previous investigations of presidential approval (inflation and unemployment, see Baum 2002).

81. See Jentelson 1992.

82. Data are taken from Jentelson 1992 and the update found in Baum 2002.

83. This data was taken from the Archives of the *New York Times*. The relevant dates were found in Jentelson 1992 and Baum 2002.

84. See Brody 1991. Criticism of the president is measured using the scaled IDEA Event Data described above.

85. See Baum 2002.

I carry out a number of robustness checks to probe the possibility that my findings are a product of unmeasured dynamics, selection bias, or endogeneity.<sup>86</sup> In almost no case do these changes in sample and estimation strategy alter the substantive interpretation of the results. For example, while I find in a bivariate sense that costly action is correlated with unexplained rally behavior using a two-stage least squares estimation strategy, once the relevant informational variables are modeled, the bias in the single equation methods becomes insignificant. The tests and changes are discussed in detail in Appendix 2.<sup>87</sup>

After reporting the in-sample findings, I use the pre-1998 model to generate predictions for several potential rallies for the post-9/11 time period. I then explore whether the informational theory variables provide more accurate out-of-sample predictions than either the patriotism or opposition-criticism models. The forecasting predictions are especially useful for probing the external validity of the informational model.

### *Results*

The findings robustly support the informational theory's predictions for the variation in rally size. Table 4 includes results from ordinary least squares (OLS) regression models, with Model 1 representing the informational perspective. In this model—column (1)—each of the informational coefficients are in the predicted direction and statistically significant at or below the .10 level. While the statistical significance of the coefficient is supportive of the theory, the true quantity of interest is the predicted size of the rally. In all cases the informational effects can be interpreted as politically meaningful.<sup>88</sup> I find that a large-scale military action is expected to immediately increase presidential approval by 5.6 percent more than a verbal action, all else equal. This suggests that presidents are able to generate public support when they need it most. While it might be relatively easy for a president to continue to talk about an issue or verbally threaten another state when the country does not intensely support these actions, extreme military action may necessitate more public support to reap policy benefits. Addi-

86. See Appendix 2.

87. I control for the dynamic nature of presidential approval by diagnosing the series using Box-Jenkins methods. The polls are taken at irregular intervals. I use the sequence of the polls to diagnose autocorrelation. An AR(2) model produced white noise residuals. I also control for ceiling effects by including a lagged approval level variable. Presidents with very high levels of approval are less likely to have large rallies because approval is bounded at 100. I report one-tailed hypothesis tests as all expectations are directional. In addition, I also replicated the in-sample findings using MID data taken from Chapman and Reiter 2004 with a different indicator of signals and found substantively identical results.

88. The definition of a politically meaningful effect is in many ways in the eyes of the beholder. Previous research has appeared to use 3 percent as an implicit cutoff, with politically meaningful rallies needing to exceed that threshold. As noted by Baker and Oneal 2001, since ten out of the fifteen presidential elections since 1948 have been decided by 10 percent or less, even small changes may be substantively meaningful.



**TABLE 4.** *Information and the rally: OLS results with patriotism, opposition, and economic controls*

|                                   | <i>Information</i>   | <i>Patriotism</i>    | <i>Criticism</i>    | <i>Economy</i>        |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
|                                   | (1)                  | (2)                  | (3)                 | (4)                   |
| COSTLY ACTION                     | 1.437***<br>(.504)   | 1.438***<br>(.526)   | 1.306*<br>(.834)    | 1.639***<br>(.495)    |
| DIVIDED GOVERNMENT                | 4.866***<br>(1.72)   | 4.881***<br>(1.754)  | 11.414**<br>(5.525) | 4.872***<br>(1.711)   |
| TERM LIMITED                      | -3.873**<br>(1.788)  | -3.941**<br>(1.831)  | -14.61**<br>(7.438) | -3.436**<br>(1.881)   |
| LOW APPROVAL                      | -4.106*<br>(2.527)   | -4.22*<br>(2.731)    | -7.45<br>(6.015)    | -3.765*<br>(2.356)    |
| PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION YEAR        | -3.537*<br>(1.581)   | -3.54**<br>(1.611)   | -11.507**<br>(6.07) | -3.653***<br>(1.516)  |
| SCANDAL                           | -5.359***<br>(1.541) | -5.361***<br>(1.553) |                     | -5.71***<br>(1.835)   |
| INFORMATION LAWS                  | 6.469***<br>(2.446)  | 6.478***<br>(2.675)  |                     | 7.276***<br>(2.553)   |
| TRUST IN GOVERNMENT               | .347**<br>(.166)     | .345**<br>(.179)     | 1.102<br>(1.412)    | .413***<br>(.176)     |
| FOREIGN POLICY RESTRAINT          |                      | -.264<br>(1.345)     |                     |                       |
| SALIENCE                          |                      | .021<br>(1.549)      |                     |                       |
| CRITICISM/SUPPORT                 |                      |                      | -.094<br>(.784)     |                       |
| UNEMPLOYMENT                      |                      |                      |                     | 18.811<br>(24.777)    |
| INFLATION                         |                      |                      |                     | 529.155**<br>(271.69) |
| CHANGE IN APPROVAL ( <i>t</i> -1) | -.104<br>(.183)      | -.104<br>(.185)      | .017<br>(.255)      | -.132<br>(.175)       |
| CHANGE IN APPROVAL ( <i>t</i> -2) | -.435***<br>(.121)   | -.439***<br>(.122)   | -.174<br>(.32)      | -.421***<br>(.126)    |
| APPROVAL ( <i>t</i> -1)           | -.221**<br>(.126)    | -.226**<br>(.134)    | -.462**<br>(.267)   | -.182*<br>(.118)      |
| <i>Constant</i>                   | -5.973<br>(9.711)    | -5.404<br>(12.05)    | -9.12<br>(33.019)   | -13.607*<br>(9.83)    |
| <i>Observations</i>               | 63                   | 63                   | 25                  | 63                    |

Notes: Standard errors are in parentheses. \*\*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\* $p < .05$ ; \* $p < .10$ .

tionally, times of divided government were estimated to increase the immediate rally for the president by 4.8 percent, while freedom of information laws increased the rally in the United States by greater than 6 percent. Although some scholars view democratic checks and balances on an executive as a weakness when formulating foreign policy, the informational model and statistical findings on divided government and freedom of information laws suggest the opposite. Taken together,

divided government and information access can increase the rally by 10 points. By increasing the probability of post hoc verification and punishment, these oversight mechanisms increase the credibility of a leader's policy signals to citizens.

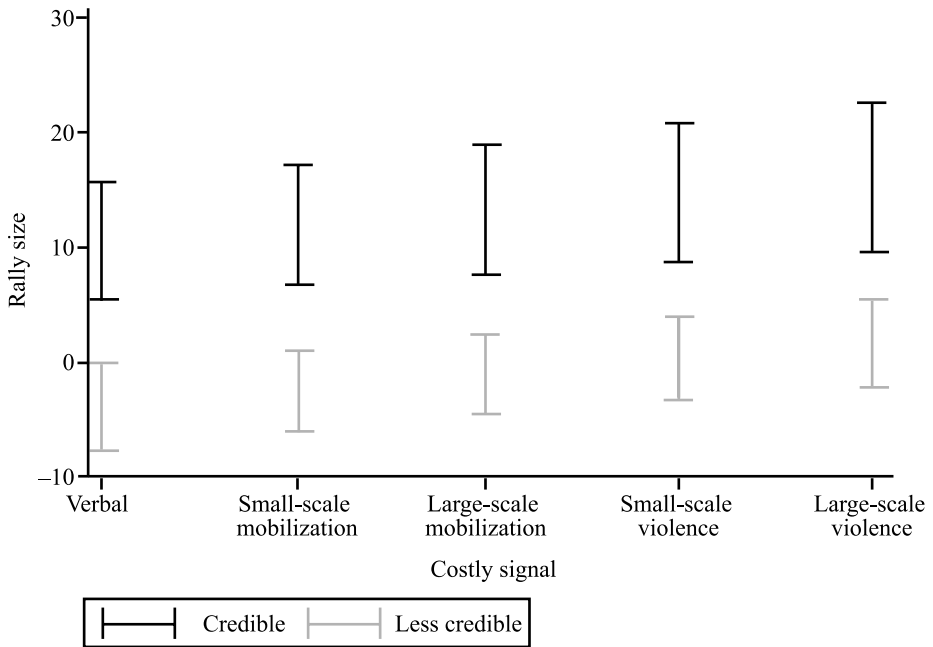
The findings on political insecurity and government trust are also consistent with the informational signaling story. Ongoing scandals, low approval, and an upcoming election are expected to decrease the size of a rally by 5.4 percent, 4.1 percent, and 3.5 percent respectively. Being term-limited results in a predicted drop in the rally by approximately 3.8 percent. From the information perspective, under these circumstances, the public either has a reason to expect that a leader may be privately benefiting from foreign policy action (diversion from weak approval or scandal) or a reduced confidence that information will be available or useful in punishing a leader for private-interest action (upcoming election or active term limits). Conversely, a 10-point rise in trust in government is estimated to increase the rally by almost 3.5 percent. The greater the proportion of the country that views the government as self-policing and the lower the proportion of the public that views the government as corrupt, the larger the predicted rally.

These results are consistent when the potentially confounding effects of foreign policy restraint (FPR), salience, opposition support and criticism, and unemployment and inflation are modeled in columns (2) to (4) of Table 4. Only one of these other variables is significant (inflation) and only the low approval and trust measures lose their statistical significance in the criticism model.<sup>89</sup> Additionally, these control variables do not add substantially to the overall fit of the model.

The substantive importance of the informational theory can be illustrated by simulating the predicted size of the rally for various different scenarios from the statistical model. Several of these predictions are presented in Figure 5. The two sets of bars represent the 95 percent confidence intervals around the predicted rally size for credible versus less credible circumstances as suggested by the informational theory. Credible circumstances involve an incumbent with strong approval (>52 percent) operating under divided government circumstances, without relevant term limits and where trust is high (46 percent), outside of an election year. Less credible circumstances involve a leader with weak approval (<52 percent), operating in an election year with a unified government and low trust in government (37 percent).<sup>90</sup> The statistical model predicts that a cheap signal (purely verbal) under less credible political circumstances actually can lead to a negative rally. However, even cheap signals can generate a small boost in approval for a politically secure leader operating under divided government. The spikes edge upward as the costliness of the signal increases (from verbal to large-scale fighting). For example, a 15-point rally is predicted to result from large-scale fighting under credible circumstances.

89. This most likely occurs because the sample size is significantly reduced. The absolute size of the coefficients actually increases, but less than the size of the uncertainty estimates.

90. For this simulation both the credible and less credible scenarios do not involve scandals and I set the information law variable equal to 1.



**FIGURE 5.** *The effect of costly action and credibility (strong approval, divided government, nonelection year, no lame duck) on rally size*

Similarly, Figure 6 illustrates the actual and predicted rallies for four crises that occurred during presidential scandals. In 1973, during the unfolding of the Watergate scandal, the Nixon administration dealt with two international crises: a nuclear alert in reaction to Soviet threats in the Middle East, and also heightened tension in Laos and Cambodia. Because of the ongoing scandal, the informational model as estimated in column (1) of Table 4 predicts that approval would fall by about 10 points (with a 95 percent confidence interval (CI) of  $-15.2, -5.2$ ), while the actual decline in approval was 8 points. Similarly, the model predicts that Nixon would lose around 2 points (with a 95 percent CI of  $-6.8, 2.2$ ) during the Middle East alert crisis in October of 1973, where the actual negative/antirally was 3 points. In both of these cases, the estimated model predicts that Nixon could not credibly signal to the public that foreign policy action was in the national interest, rather than in his private interest. In fact, British Prime Minister Anthony Heath suggested in private notes that Nixon might use the Middle East alert crisis to divert attention from his domestic troubles.<sup>91</sup> Nixon also had the dual misfortune of formulating policy as trust in government was decreasing (reducing the predicted rally), but before the freedom of information laws in the United States were

91. See *New York Times*, 2 January 2004, A4.

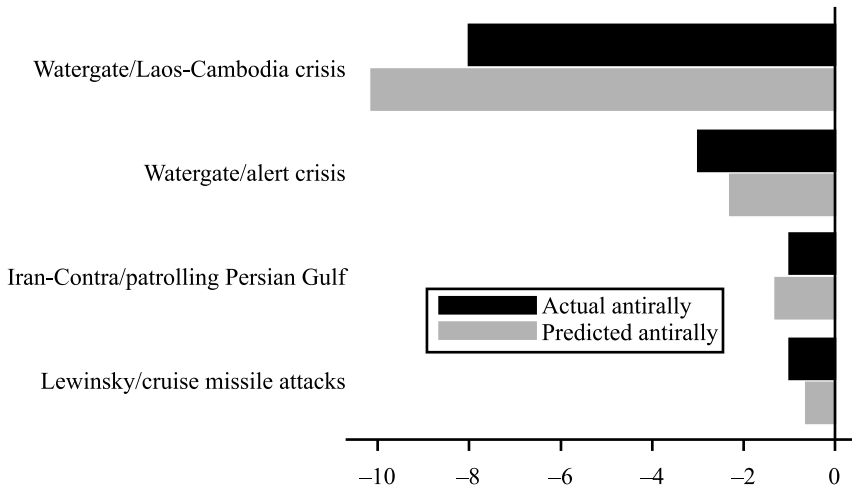


FIGURE 6. Four predicted and actual rallies during presidential scandals

strengthened (which are predicted to increase the rally). Similar antirallies occurred during the Iran-Contra affair when Reagan increased the U.S. role in patrolling the Persian Gulf sea lanes (predicted rally =  $-1.3$ , actual rally =  $-1$  with a 95 percent CI of  $-3.8, 1.2$ ), and during the Lewinsky scandal when Clinton launched cruise missile attacks on al Qaeda targets (predicted rally =  $-1$ , actual rally  $-0.6$  with a 95 percent CI of  $-3, 1.8$ ).

One can contrast these insignificant and negative rallies with more credible situations, as defined by the informational model. For example, the informational model would predict that George H. W. Bush was in a strong position to mobilize support for the first Gulf War. First, he was neither bogged down in a scandal nor had low approval ratings. Second, he was operating under circumstances of divided government, after the 1974 strengthening of the freedom of information laws, and outside of a presidential election campaign. The empirical model predicts that Bush would receive a rally of 12 points (with a 95 percent CI of  $7, 17$ ) in this case, while the actual rally was 19.

### Summary of In-sample Findings

The findings from a battery of estimation strategies presented here and in Appendix 2, including OLS, Prais-Winsten, Heckman, and instrumental variable models,<sup>92</sup> provide broad and consistent support for the informational theory. The

92. All non-OLS findings are reported in Appendix 2.

**TABLE 5.** *Summary of hypotheses and findings on the informational model from OLS, Prais-Winston, Heckman, and instrumental variable estimations*

| <i>Variable</i>                       | <i>Directional hypothesis</i> | <i>Estimated direction</i> | <i>Modal sig.</i> |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|
| H1: COSTLY ACTION                     | +                             | +                          | $p < .01$         |
| H2: WEAK APPROVAL                     | -                             | -                          | $p < .10$         |
| H3: ONGOING SCANDAL                   | -                             | -                          | $p < .01$         |
| H4: DIVIDED GOVERNMENT                | +                             | +                          | $p < .01$         |
| H5: ELECTION YEAR                     | -                             | -                          | $p < .05$         |
| H6: TERM LIMITED ( <i>lame duck</i> ) | -                             | -                          | $p < .05$         |
| H7: INFORMATION LAWS                  | +                             | +                          | $p < .01$         |
| H8: TRUST IN GOVERNMENT               | +                             | +                          | $p < .05$         |

*Notes:* See Appendix 2 for Heckman and instrumental variable results.

informational theory's hypotheses, findings, and modal significance levels<sup>93</sup> are summarized in Table 5. All of the variables are consistently estimated to influence the size of the rally in the direction predicted by the informational model.

### *Forecasting*

What does the informational model, fit to 1950–98 data, have to say about post-9/11 events? The previous results were all based on in-sample hypothesis tests. An alternative testing strategy is to compare the in-sample predictions with out-of-sample data. This forecasting procedure allows one to probe the external validity of the previous findings and the informational theory. For example, to the extent that the previous results were a product of estimation or specification bias, they should forecast poorly out of sample. Toward this end, I collected data on potential rally events in the post-9/11 period in the United States. This yielded fifteen events, some of which occurred in close temporal proximity. The thirteen events with pre- and postapproval measures are listed in Table 6.<sup>94</sup> These events included verbal messages (the orange alerts), large-scale mobilizations in Afghanistan and Iraq, and large-scale fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq. I include the terrorist attacks on 9/11 as a large-scale fighting event.<sup>95</sup> Not only

93. I denote the modal significance as the most frequently reported significance level for the relevant variable.

94. Gallup did not take polls between 11 September 2001 and the large-scale mobilization for the war in Afghanistan (19 September 2001) and between the Iraq orange alert and the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

95. Ignoring the 9/11 rally does not change the substantive conclusions.

TABLE 6. *A list of post-9/11 foreign policy events*

| <i>Sequence</i> | <i>Date</i> | <i>Description</i>            | <i>Action</i>            |
|-----------------|-------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1               | 9/11/2001   | 9/11 attacks and mobilization | Large-scale fighting     |
| 2               | 10/7/2001   | Afghanistan                   | Large-scale fighting     |
| 3               | 2/3/2002    | Olympic alert                 | Verbal                   |
| 4               | 9/10/2002   | 9/11 anniversary alert        | Verbal                   |
| 5               | 9/14/2002   | Bush UN speech                | Verbal                   |
| 6               | 12/21/2002  | Iraq mobilization             | Large-scale mobilization |
| 7               | 2/7/2003    | Duct tape alert               | Verbal                   |
| 8               | 3/19/2003   | Iraq War and alert            | Large-scale fighting     |
| 9               | 5/20/2003   | Boston/New York alert         | Verbal                   |
| 10              | 12/21/2003  | Chatter alert                 | Verbal                   |
| 11              | 3/11/2004   | Madrid bombing                | Verbal                   |
| 12              | 3/26/2004   | Ashcroft warning              | Verbal                   |
| 13              | 8/1/2004    | Economic icon alert           | Verbal                   |

did thousands of people die, but the military was given authorization to fire on civilian planes and the vice president was ushered to protection in an “undisclosed location.”<sup>96</sup> As in the previous tests, the rally is measured using changes in the percentage of respondents approving of the president’s performance in Gallup polls.

This forecasting approach uniquely allows the external validity of the findings to be explored. Forecasting in the post-9/11 world could also be considered a tough test for the theory, since many commentators<sup>97</sup> have suggested that the terrorist attacks have altered the way the public thinks about foreign policy. If that was the case, pre-9/11 models of public opinion on foreign affairs would not provide a good explanation of post-9/11 opinion dynamics.

To represent the informational theory, I generate predictions from the first model in Table 4. I compare these results to two null/no-rally models, where the effects of all informational variables are zero. The first null model predicts that the rally will be zero regardless of previous approval or the costly signal. The second, dynamic null model predicts that the average rally will be zero, but that the previous changes in approval will predict present changes.<sup>98</sup> I represent the patriotism model by including the average rally for post-9/11 events.<sup>99</sup> The predictions

96. Further, directives came from the executive branch, as in a military operation. Also, the media treated the event as a military attack, with headlines reading, “Attack on America,” or some variation.

97. See Mueller 2003 for a skeptical view of the “step function” interpretation.

98. The dynamic null model is computed as in Table 4, but with the informational variables assumed to be zero and the equilibrium (constant) constrained to zero.

99. The forecasting performance only weakens for the patriotism model when the *ex ante* mean rally is used.

**TABLE 7.** *Forecast error comparisons for the informational, patriotism, opposition-criticism, and insignificant-rally models on the post-9/11 events*

| <i>Model</i>                                  | <i>RMSE</i> | <i>MAD</i> | <i>U</i> |
|---|-------------|------------|----------|
| <i>Informational prediction</i>               | 6.103       | 4.409      | 0.596    |
| <i>Patriotism prediction</i>                  | 9.332       | 5.775      | 0.911    |
| <i>Opposition-criticism prediction</i>        | 9.907       | 6.081      | 0.966    |
| <i>Null/no-rally prediction</i>               | 10.247      | 6.077      | 1.000    |
| <i>Null/no-rally with dynamics prediction</i> | 11.236      | 6.633      | 1.097    |

*Notes:* MAD = mean absolute deviation; RMSE = root mean squared error; U = Theil's U.

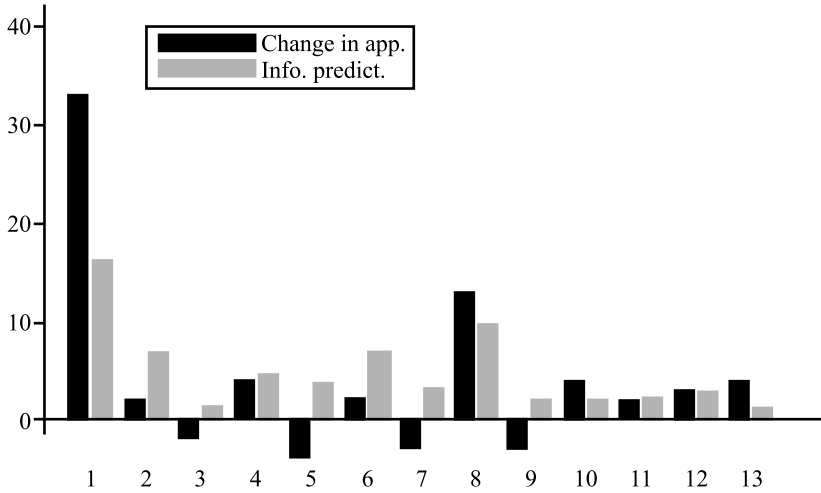
from the opposition-criticism model are forecasted using the bivariate model in Figure 2.<sup>100</sup>

There are several methods to compare the accuracy of forecasts. These include the root mean squared error (RMSE), the mean absolute deviation (MAD), and Theil's U. The RMSE criterion penalizes models that make big mistakes, while MAD weights errors in proportion to their absolute error. Theil's U is similar to RMSE because it standardizes the mean sum of squared errors by the variation in  $y$ .

Regardless of the measure chosen, the informational model provides more accurate predictions than either the mean-rally, opposition-criticism, or null/no-rally models. As illustrated in Table 7, the informational predictions perform the best in the post-9/11 world, producing the lowest RMSE, MAD, and Theil's U. Figure 7 presents the results from the informational model beside the actual measured rallies for each event. Not surprisingly, the costly-signaling predictions substantially underestimate the 9/11 rally. In reality, not only was 9/11 a large-scale event, but it was a mass-observed event. In a unique sense, the event was witnessed, live on television, by millions of viewers. The possibility that the resulting mobilization was noncredible ( $p$  in the signaling model) was minuscule.<sup>101</sup> The costly-signaling model does a better job predicting the small to negative rallies that followed the Olympic and orange alerts. The informational theory would predict that since these alerts were verbal and carried a low probability of *ex post* verification and punishment, they are less persuasive. Of the other theories, the patriotism model, predicting a constant rally, does slightly better than the opposition-criticism/support model

100. Specifically, I use the model with the outliers removed ( $\beta_{Crit} = 4.86$ ). I then coded whether the opposition party agreed with (1.86), opposed (-1.83), or was of mixed opinion about the rally actions (0).

101. Almost 80 million people tuned into news stations on 9/11, approximately 40 percent of the U.S. population; see Althaus 2002.



**FIGURE 7.** *Post-9/11 event-by-event forecasting fit for the informational model (actual and predicted)*

on both the RMSE and MAD criteria.<sup>102</sup> The forecasting performance of the informational model reinforces the in-sample evidence that the credibility of an executive's actions can influence the intensity of the rally effect.

## Conclusion

In this article, I have offered a theory of the rally effect that nests patriotic preferences within a signaling environment. The empirical tests of eight specific hypotheses derived from the informational perspective were highly supportive of the model. Further, the forecasting results for the informational theory suggest that an understanding of the variance in the credibility of foreign policy signals can help researchers predict the size of foreign policy rallies over time. Certain specific and identifiable operational, institutional, and political factors increase the probability of post hoc verification and conditional punishment and create an incentive structure that aids leaders in generating support for their foreign policies. Since there are disincentives for selfish policy, citizens can be more confident that international actions are in the public interest.

The informational theory has implications for a broad range of research in international relations, including the monadic democratic peace and diversionary theory. Instead of viewing democracies as institutionally constant, I have argued that dif-

102. Adding information on foreign policy restraint and salience decreased the accuracy of the patriotism forecasts.



ferent actions and circumstances will carry varying probabilities of verification and conditional punishment and that distinct constellations of institutional, political and operational factors influence the calculations of both leaders and citizens. Therefore, there is the potential to examine how democracies differ from each other and from nondemocracies based on these retrospective criteria. The signaling model suggests that previous research on the monadic democratic peace is incomplete. First, measures of institutions based on the mere presence or absence of elections and opposition parties ignore the temporal properties of national security classification and diffusion. Due to increased secrecy and classification, democratic accountability on foreign affairs is not constant over time and space. Second, the signaling theory does not suggest that states (such as the United States) with active post hoc verification and conditional punishment institutions will never use force, as the conventional research on the monadic democratic peace investigates. On the contrary, force is likely if it is perceived to serve the public interest. What is predicted is that those states able to credibly signal public interest through foreign policy action should become involved in different types of conflicts as compared to other types of states. One specific hypothesis would be that conflicts launched on territory with easily lootable resources should be comparatively rare in national security-accountable regimes.

Additionally, the informational model suggests that the presence of retrospective foreign policy institutions, when active, reduces the prevalence of diversionary conflict involving large-scale violence.<sup>103</sup> This argument runs counter to suggestions made by Gelpi<sup>104</sup> but is consistent with recent findings reported by Mitchell and Prins.<sup>105</sup> Most private benefits that could accrue to a leader would be counteracted by *ex post* institutional checks. Diversionary theory has always assumed that leaders knew more than the populace concerning foreign affairs. How else could deception be perpetrated? However, the diversionary literature has failed to capture the institutionally mediated dynamics of information diffusion. If patriotism is not blind but is retrospectively informed,<sup>106</sup> diversion is a less appealing policy option for those actions that will bring about post hoc verification.

A more fruitful avenue for future work would be to analyze the longitudinal and cross-sectional changes in these information-diffusion mechanisms. Even relatively small changes—for example, allowing former executives the choice to keep information secret in perpetuity—could alter the balance between secrecy and accountability.<sup>107</sup> The results presented above suggest that research into the rele-

103. See Fordham 1998; and Leeds and Davis 1997.

104. See Gelpi 1997.

105. Mitchell and Prins 2004.

106. With verification depending on the costs of the action and political factors.

107. U.S. President George W. Bush has signed several executive orders that may move in this direction. Specifically, EO 13233 amending the Presidential Records Act and EO 13292 amending the classification scheme for government information are germane. Jointly, these changes may decrease the probability of post hoc verification in the United States, giving both the current and former presidents the ability to block information diffusion.

vant foreign policy institutions around the globe may provide insight into the foreign policy–public opinion nexus.

Ultimately, this work and other analyses of the rally are important not just for the spike in approval that they represent, but for the triangular theoretical linkages between publics, executives, and international relations that they imply and test. An information-based rally, rather than a reflexive one, challenges the traditional realist supposition that democratic states are disadvantaged in the competitive arena of international anarchy. Kissinger,<sup>108</sup> among other theorists, has suggested that reliance on the public impedes democratic governments from acting with the necessary secrecy and dispatch. The veracity of democratic foreign policy folly is challenged by the findings that democracies tend to be victorious in war, economically successful when at peace, and efficient at signalling their intentions to international enemies.<sup>109</sup> If in fact the public were involved in every foreign policy decision and immediately privy to each foreign policy fact, effective policy would be unlikely. However, this characterization of democratic foreign policy institutions is misleading. Democracies, as do autocracies, allow elites to keep foreign policy secrets from their publics. Additionally, foreign policy decision-making power can be more centralized within democracies than domestic policymaking power. What is distinct within democracies, as compared to autocracies, is the construction of retrospective information diffusion and conditional leadership punishment institutions. While the efficacy of these institutions varies with the political and operational circumstances of the day, democracies can have at least a modicum of the secrecy and autonomy that realist scholars promote. Yet, by balancing foreign policy efficacy with accountability, different and potentially more socially beneficial patterns of behavior can emerge.

## Appendix 1: Formal Proofs

Here I explore two perfect Bayesian equilibria, given the constraints:

$$\beta > 0$$

$$\varepsilon \geq 0$$

$$\tau_i < 0$$

$$\theta > 0 > \gamma$$

$$\theta - \gamma > 0$$

$$p \in (0,1)$$

108. See Kissinger 1995.

109. See Reiter and Stam 2002; Lake 1992; Schultz 2001; and Fearon 1994.

*Proposition 1.* When  $\beta - \varepsilon > 0$ , at the last stage of the game, P plays S if:

$$EU_p(S) > EU_p(O)$$

$$p - \gamma + (1 - p)(\theta - \gamma) > \tau_p$$

$$p < \frac{-\tau_p + (\theta - \gamma)}{\theta}$$

I define:

$$\hbar = \frac{-\tau_p + (\theta - \gamma)}{\theta}$$

When  $p < \hbar$ ,  $A_\beta$  will play  $\alpha$  if:

$$EU_A(\alpha|S, \beta) > EU_A(\neg\alpha|S, \beta)$$

$$\beta - \varepsilon > 0$$

As long as this is true,  $A_\beta$  plays  $\alpha$ .

Similarly, when  $p < \hbar$ ,  $A_\theta$  will play  $\alpha$  if:

$$EU_A(\alpha|S, \theta) > EU_A(\neg\alpha|S, \theta)$$

$$\theta > 0$$

This is true by definition. Using Bayes's rule, P's posterior beliefs remain unchanged:

$$\frac{p \times 1}{(p \times 1) + (1 - p) \times (1)} = p,$$

$(\alpha, \alpha, S)$  describes a perfect Bayesian equilibrium when  $p < \hbar$ , and  $\beta - \varepsilon > 0$ .  $A_\beta$  chooses  $\alpha$ ,  $A_\theta$  chooses  $\alpha$ , and P chooses support.

When  $p > \hbar$ , P's best strategy is to oppose. Knowing that,  $A_\beta$  will only play  $\alpha$  if:

$$EU_A(\alpha|O, \beta) > EU_A(\neg\alpha|O, \beta)$$

$$\tau_a > 0$$

Since this is never true by definition,  $A_\beta$  plays  $\neg\alpha$ .

Similarly,  $A_\theta$  will only play  $\alpha$  if:

$$EU_A(\alpha|O, \theta) > EU_A(-\alpha|O, \theta)$$

$$\tau_a > 0$$

Again, this cannot be true.

Notice that  $p > \hbar$  can only be true if  $|\tau_p| < |\gamma|$ . If the cost of opposition was greater than the cost of  $\alpha$ , then  $\hbar > 1$ .

Using Bayes's rule, P's posterior beliefs remain unchanged:

$$\frac{p \times 1}{(p \times 1) + ((1 - p) \times (1))} = p,$$

$(-\alpha, -\alpha, O)$  describes a perfect Bayesian equilibrium when  $p > \hbar$ , and  $\beta - \varepsilon > 0$ .  $A_\beta$  chooses  $\alpha$ ,  $A_\theta$  chooses  $\alpha$ , and P chooses support.

Using the above constraints, a separating equilibrium  $(-\alpha, \alpha, S)$  does not exist. If it is in P's interest to play  $S$ , both  $\theta$  and  $\beta$  situations will lead to  $\alpha$ , because:

$$EU_A(\alpha|S, \beta) > EU_A(-\alpha|S, \beta)$$

$$\beta - \varepsilon > 0$$

as described above.

*Proposition 2.* When  $\tau_a < \beta - \varepsilon < 0$ , I still use the cut point  $\hbar$  to differentiate P's choice.

If  $p < \hbar$ , P's best strategy would be to support. However, now  $A_\beta$  and  $A_\theta$  have differing incentives.

$A_\beta$  will play  $\alpha$  if:

$$EU_A(\alpha|S, \beta) > EU_A(-\alpha|S, \beta)$$

$$\beta - \varepsilon > 0$$

which is now false. Therefore,  $A_\beta$  will play  $-\alpha$ .

$A_\theta$  will play  $\alpha$  if:

$$EU_A(\alpha|S, \theta) > EU_A(-\alpha|S, \theta)$$

$$\theta > 0$$

which is always true. Therefore,  $A_\theta$  will play  $\alpha$ . This new information allows P to update her posterior belief, with

$$\frac{p \times 0}{(p \times 0) + ((1 - p) \times (1))} = 0$$

Thus, a separating equilibrium is expressed by the triple  $(-\alpha, \alpha, S)$ , when  $\beta - \varepsilon < \tau_a < 0$  and  $|\tau_p| < |\gamma|$ .

## Appendix 2: Robustness Analysis

In this Appendix I present several robustness checks that were carried out to further probe the plausibility of the statistical results reported above. I examine the exogeneity of the costly action measure,<sup>110</sup> and the potential for autocorrelated errors and selection bias. In all cases, the strong support for the informational argument remains consistent.

### *Autocorrelated Errors*

In the previous models, any unmodeled correlation within the residuals would bias the resulting inferences. A Prais-Winston regression framework allows one to model a specific form of residual autocorrelation, where  $\rho_{Prais}$  measures the size of the correlation between the previous residual and today's residual.<sup>111</sup> As can be seen from Table 8, the Prais-Winston estimation strategy does not meaningfully alter the substantive size or statistical significance of any of the coefficients. A Hausman test of the differences between the OLS and Prais-Winston information model results provides an insignificant  $\chi^2(df = 11)$  of 5.23 ( $p = .919$ ). In fact, the largest interpretable change is that low approval is now significant at the .05 level rather than the .10 level as in the OLS model. The consistency of the OLS and Prais-Winston results increases one's confidence that the statistical inferences are consistent with the underlying data generation process.

### *Selection Bias*

As a second robustness check, I expand the 1950 to 1998 analysis to include all presidential polls, even those that do not include rally events. This increases the number of observations from 63 to 793 (in the first stage). I then use a Heckman selection model to investigate whether the rally-event findings are an artifact of selection bias. For example, it is possible that some unobserved factors both make a rally event more likely and lead to a larger rally.

110. I also investigated the linearity of the costly-action measure. Neither a log-linear nor quadratic model provided a statistically superior fit to the data.

111.  $\rho_{Prais}$  is computed from a first-stage GLS estimate.

**TABLE 8.** *Prais-Winston regression results for the informational model and the rally*

|                                   | <i>Coefficient/(SE)</i> |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| COSTLY SIGNAL                     | 1.262***<br>(.486)      |
| DIVIDED GOVERNMENT                | 4.869***<br>(1.722)     |
| TERM LIMITED                      | -3.945**<br>(1.86)      |
| LOW APPROVAL                      | -4.47**<br>(2.534)      |
| PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION YEAR        | -3.487**<br>(1.533)     |
| SCANDAL                           | -5.086***<br>(1.571)    |
| INFORMATION LAWS                  | 6.589***<br>(2.414)     |
| TRUST IN GOVERNMENT               | .343**<br>(.163)        |
| CHANGE IN APPROVAL ( <i>t</i> -1) | -.136<br>(.191)         |
| CHANGE IN APPROVAL ( <i>t</i> -2) | -.462***<br>(.123)      |
| APPROVAL ( <i>t</i> -1)           | -.234**<br>(.118)       |
| <i>Constant</i>                   | -4.554<br>(9.788)       |
| <i>Observations</i>               | 63                      |

*Notes:* Standard errors are in parentheses. \*\*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\* $p < .05$ ; \* $p < .10$ .

If these unobserved factors are correlated with the variables of interest, an analysis ignoring the selection of rally events might lead to biased inferences.<sup>112</sup>

To create the results in Table 9, I model both the decision to participate in a foreign policy event (first stage, not presented) and the resulting rally (second stage). This is done by including all polls of presidential approval in the first-stage equation, along with the three instrumental variables described below. I present both the full information maximum likelihood estimates (FIML) as well as the two-step estimates for the rally stage. The statistical significance, direction, and magnitude of the coefficients remain consistent. Costly action, divided government, freedom of information laws, and trust in government increase the expected rally, while active term limits, weak approval, scandals, and presidential election years decrease the expected size of the rally. In the Heckman FIML model, the difference between a rally that involves large-scale fighting under conditions of divided government

112. The instruments used to identify the selection equation are explained below and are the same as those used to identify the rally-costly-signal system of equations. For a description of the model, see Heckman 1976.

TABLE 9. Heckman selection models and the rally

|                                   | <i>FIML</i>         | <i>TwoStep</i>      |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
|                                   | (1)                 | (2)                 |
| COSTLY ACTION                     | 1.214**<br>(.533)   | 1.311***<br>(.482)  |
| DIVIDED GOVERNMENT                | 4.464***<br>(1.847) | 4.707***<br>(1.714) |
| TERM LIMITED                      | -3.747**<br>(2.093) | -3.976**<br>(1.997) |
| LOW APPROVAL                      | -4.081*<br>(2.509)  | -4.131**<br>(2.452) |
| PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION YEAR        | -3.092**<br>(1.737) | -3.293**<br>(1.61)  |
| SCANDAL                           | -4.392**<br>(2.297) | -4.613**<br>(2.159) |
| INFORMATION LAWS                  | 6.966***<br>(2.86)  | 6.927***<br>(2.859) |
| TRUST IN GOVERNMENT               | .321**<br>(.165)    | .334**<br>(.162)    |
| CHANGE IN APPROVAL ( <i>t-1</i> ) | -.071<br>(.162)     | -.06<br>(.162)      |
| CHANGE IN APPROVAL ( <i>t-2</i> ) | -.414***<br>(.15)   | -.423***<br>(.144)  |
| APPROVAL( <i>t-1</i> )            | -.191**<br>(.109)   | -.2**<br>(.104)     |
| <i>Constant.</i>                  | -14.91*<br>(11.261) | -13.465<br>(11.289) |
| <i>Observations</i>               | 793                 | 793                 |

Notes: Standard errors are in parentheses. FIML = full information maximum likelihood. \*\*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\* $p < .05$ ; \* $p < .10$ .

and a popular executive<sup>113</sup> and a rally involving the same level of force but initiated under conditions of unified government in a presidential election year by an executive with weak approval is greater than 9 percent. The measure of association between the selection and rally equation is large and positive ( $\rho = .759, se_{\rho} = .301$ ) but not significant at the .10 level ( $p$ -value = 0.178). Additionally, a generalized Hausman test<sup>114</sup> cannot reject the null hypothesis that the coefficients from the OLS estimation are unbiased. Future research using selection and other multiple equation models is necessary to further test these potentially intertwined relationships.<sup>115</sup>

113. Defined as approval greater than 52 percent. In this case, I set approval to 55 percent.

114. Where estimates from the OLS regression and second-stage Heckman model are compared to each other.

115. All variables except the costly-signal measure are included in the first-stage model. It is by definition zero when a rally event is not present.

*Endogenous Signals*

In a final battery of tests I explore the possibility that the costly-action measure is endogenous to the rally. In the signaling model presented above, the same factors that lead to action make a rally more likely. For example, when the public perceives a  $\theta$  world as highly likely (high  $p$ ), both action and support are likely. The literature on diversionary conflict<sup>116</sup> also suggests a leader is likely to choose a specific foreign policy action only to gain a popularity boost or only in situations where a rally is inevitable. If leaders are choosing costly action only when support is forthcoming for other reasons, the previous models have reversed the empirical relationship. It is not costly actions that cause support, but expected support that is causing costly action.<sup>117</sup> This raises the question, are the costly-signal results a product of endogeneity rather than the hypothesized data generation process?

The most direct way of dealing with endogeneity is to explicitly model both the process of presidential support and the costliness of the action. To do this, one must identify instruments that are correlated with the costliness of the signal sent, but not with presidential support. There are four steps in this process. These involve locating instruments, testing whether they are correlated with the potentially endogenous variable, testing whether they are uncorrelated with the residual from the second stage, and finally testing whether the single-equation OLS estimates are biased.

To identify instruments, I combine my discussion of temporary information asymmetries between leaders and the public with work on U.S. uses of force by Gowa and Fordham.<sup>118</sup> What I seek to uncover are sources of information that affect leadership actions but do not influence the rally intensity. Gowa and Fordham both suggest that international events and capabilities drive U.S. decisions to use force.<sup>119</sup> Wars break out, territorial disputes erupt, and ethnic conflicts flare around the world and the U.S. executive must decide how to react, if at all. As discussed above, to make these decisions, the president has access to information gathering and centralizing institutions. Immediate intelligence on these hot spots is likely to be collected and analyzed within the government. Several key components of this analysis are unlikely to be known publicly at the time of the crisis.<sup>120</sup> For example, how many actors of what strength are involved in ongoing international crises?<sup>121</sup> During the Cold War, a highly relevant question was how capable the other superpower, the USSR,

116. See Levy 1989, Mitchell and Prins 2004, and Enterline and Gleditsch 2000.

117. This implies that the residuals are correlated with the independent variable. Under these conditions, the estimated coefficients represent an unappealing mix of the correlation between  $x$  and  $y$  and  $y$  and the residuals. I should point out that all single-equation tests of the rally effect suffer from this potential inferential pitfall.

118. See Gowa 1998; and Fordham 2002.

119. Gowa and Fordham disagree over whether domestic variables such as divided government drive U.S. action. My model does not rely on Gowa's implied zero-restrictions. One operational change I make to these models is to measure threats around the world using disputes rather than wars and to include a capability measure of the states involved in these conflicts. This is needed because of the shorter time frame of the data here and the low frequency of wars.

120. The multiyear efforts by the Correlates of War (COW) project to code military-relevant capabilities data historically is a testament to the immediate public opacity of much of this information. However, this information does eventually become available both in the form of publicly available data and government estimates through information release policies.

121. Admittedly, the United States being a hegemonic power for much of this time complicates the exogeneity of international events. However, all empirical tests of this proposition support the usefulness of the instruments. If this analysis was replicated out of the U.S. context, regional crises could be included instead of all crises, and the capabilities of territorial or positional rivals included as threats.



was of offsetting any U.S. foreign policy gains. It is likely that the executive, but not the public, has access to the estimates of the capabilities and identities of potential allies and adversaries. As such, measures of these concepts may prove to be useful instruments (correlate with foreign policy action but remain uncorrelated with rally intensity). My specific operational indicators of this intelligence include the log of the military capabilities of the USSR during the Cold War,<sup>122</sup> the log of the U.S. capabilities, the number of states involved in an ongoing dispute, and the sum of the military personnel of those states involved in these ongoing disputes as exogenous variables<sup>123</sup> to predict the action a president chooses.<sup>124</sup>

These potential instruments should predict the costliness of a presidential action and be exogenous to the rally. Specifically, I use the log of the proportion of capabilities controlled by the USSR during the Cold War,<sup>125</sup> the number of disputants, and the military personnel controlled by those disputants to measure the potential costs of U.S. action. I also include the log of U.S. capabilities<sup>126</sup> to capture the U.S.'s ability to pay the costs of action. To the extent that my assumption of these specific public-executive information deficits is false, I should find that these instruments are endogenous to the rally.

Next, I turn to tests of the correlation between these instruments and costly action. Empirically, useful instruments will be jointly statistically significant and explain a large portion of the variance in the potential endogenous regressor. This can be measured using an F-test that the instruments are all simultaneously zero and  $r^2$  measures from the first stage. In this case, I reject the null hypothesis that all of the coefficients measuring the effect of the instruments on costly action are 0 ( $p \leq 0.01$ ). Additionally, the uncentered  $r^2$  is .88 and the partial  $r^2$  is .25. The partial  $r^2$  is the most useful statistic because it only measures the amount of variance explained by the instruments, rather than mixing information on the instruments with the other exogenous variables. In both of these cases (the F-test and partial  $r^2$ ), the results suggest that the instruments satisfy my first condition, a significant and meaningful correlation with costly action. Substantively, this implies that hot international conditions and a weak rival make action more likely.

I also must show that the instruments are uncorrelated with the residuals from the second-stage rally equation. This implies that the instruments are exogenous to the rally. The exogeneity of the instruments can be tested both together and then separately for each of the variables. For this purpose of joint testing I report the Sargan overidentification statistic, which tests the null hypothesis that the correlation between all of the instruments and the second-stage residuals is zero. The Sargan statistic is equal to the uncentered  $r^2 \times N$ , where the  $r^2$  is derived from running an auxiliary regression of the residuals from the instrumental variable model on the instruments.<sup>127</sup> In this case, the Sargan statistic is 2.49, with a p-value of 0.476. Therefore, I cannot reject the null hypothesis of exogeneity jointly for all

122. Several different indicators of Soviet capabilities were also investigated. None of these changes altered the results or proved to be superior instruments.

123. The capabilities, dispute, and military personnel information comes from the COW project; see Jones, Bremer, and Singer 1996. I use the military personnel of those involved in international events, not including those that the United States is already actively involved in, in the previous thirty days.

124. Many hot spots around the world will flare regardless of U.S. presidential approval scores. Further, the end of the Cold War decreased the costs of U.S. action since the USSR was no longer capable of deterring U.S. intervention. Finally, the greater the military capabilities of the United States, the greater the freedom of foreign policy action.

125. As measured by the COW project.

126. Again, from the COW project.

127. The statistic is distributed  $\chi^2$ . The similar Hansen-J statistic and Bassman tests report substantively identical results.

**TABLE 10.** *Testing the exogeneity of each instrument using C-statistics (null of exogeneity)*

| <i>Variable</i>            | $\chi^2(df)$ | <i>p-value</i> |
|----------------------------|--------------|----------------|
| USSR CAPABILITIES          | 1.059(1)     | 0.304          |
| U.S. CAPABILITIES          | 0.108(1)     | 0.743          |
| DISPUTES ONGOING           | 0.768(1)     | 0.381          |
| CAPABILITIES OF DISPUTANTS | 0.605(1)     | 0.437          |

of the instruments. The possibility remains that one or more of the instruments could still be problematic, although taken together they appear unrelated to surprisingly large or small rallies (large or small residuals in the second stage). Difference-in-Sargan statistics, known as C-statistics, are computed in this case, measuring the change in the Sargan statistic as I remove one instrument. These results are reported in Table 10. As in the joint test, in no case can I reject the null hypothesis that each instrument is exogenous to the rally. Statistically, this implies that I have useful exogenous instruments.

Finally, I can use these instruments to estimate the effect of costly action on the rally in a two-stage framework. What I am looking for is evidence that my previously reported OLS results were positively biased due to endogeneity. However, when examining the endogeneity of the costly action in an instrumental variable framework, the post hoc costliness of an action remains an important predictor of presidential approval. The two-stage least square (2SLS) and generalized method of moment (GMM) results are presented in Table 11. These methods attempt to model the simultaneous relationship between an executive choosing a signal and the resulting rally. Models 2 and 3 include the computation of Newey-West autocorrelation consistent estimates with 2- and 3-lagged errors respectively. The most conservative model predicts that large-scale fighting increases immediate presidential support by 9 percent more than verbal events, all else equal. The costly-action coefficient is consistently statistically significant at the .05 level. The consistency between the 2SLS, GMM and OLS models is confirmed by the insignificant Wu-Hausman F and Durbin-Wu-Hausman  $\chi^2$  tests of endogeneity ( $F(1,50) = 1.81, p = 0.185$ ;  $\chi^2(1) = 2.19, p = 0.138$ ). These statistics measure whether significant bias can be detected in the OLS estimates as compared to the 2SLS model. The failure to reject the null of insignificant bias suggests that the reported OLS findings are consistent.<sup>128</sup>

128. Note that the failure to reject exogeneity is conditional on the model. While the signaling model suggested endogeneity it also specified several variables, which were included in the model, that should have controlled for much of this correlation between the action and the error term. To probe this idea further, I ran a simple bivariate two-stage model where the rally was a function of costly action. The same instruments were retained. In this case, the costliness of the action did appear to be endogenous, with a significant Wu-Hausman F-test ( $F(1,57) = 2.81, p = 0.098$ ), at the .10 level. Therefore, it is only when one controls for the other seven informational variables, and removes from the error term the factors that make both action and the rally more likely, that the costly-action measure is not biased in an OLS framework.

**TABLE 11.** *Two-stage least squares and GMM results for the informational theory and the rally (endogenous costly action)*

|                                   | IV                   | GMM1                | GMM2                 |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
|                                   | (1)                  | (2)                 | (3)                  |
| COSTLY ACTION                     | 2.645***<br>(.989)   | 2.652***<br>(.998)  | 2.657***<br>(1.004)  |
| DIVIDED GOVERNMENT                | 4.894***<br>(1.718)  | 4.898***<br>(1.746) | 4.9***<br>(1.767)    |
| TERM LIMITED                      | -3.216*<br>(2.051)   | -3.215*<br>(2.085)  | -3.212*<br>(2.108)   |
| LOW APPROVAL                      | -3.485*<br>(2.503)   | -3.497*<br>(2.515)  | -3.502*<br>(2.527)   |
| PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION YEAR        | -3.392**<br>(1.597)  | -3.391**<br>(1.621) | -3.39**<br>(1.636)   |
| SCANDAL                           | -5.627***<br>(2.042) | -5.63***<br>(2.072) | -5.633***<br>(2.094) |
| INFORMATION LAWS                  | 6.256**<br>(2.884)   | 6.244**<br>(2.932)  | 6.231**<br>(2.965)   |
| TRUST IN GOVERNMENT               | .412***<br>(.172)    | .412***<br>(.174)   | .412***<br>(.176)    |
| CHANGE IN APPROVAL ( <i>t</i> -1) | -.057<br>(.162)      | -.057<br>(.163)     | -.057<br>(.163)      |
| CHANGE IN APPROVAL ( <i>t</i> -2) | -.432***<br>(.144)   | -.431***<br>(.142)  | -.43***<br>(.142)    |
| APPROVAL ( <i>t</i> -1)           | -.208**<br>(.104)    | -.209**<br>(.104)   | -.209**<br>(.105)    |
| <i>Constant</i>                   | -12.836<br>(10.502)  | -12.804<br>(10.629) | -12.772<br>(10.705)  |
| <i>Observations</i>               | 63                   | 63                  | 63                   |

*Notes:* Standard errors are in parentheses. \*\*\**p* < .01; \*\**p* < .05; \**p* < .10.

## References

- Althaus, Scott L. 2002. American News Consumption during Times of National Crisis. *PS: Political Science and Politics* 35 (3):517–21.
- Baker, William D., and John R. Oneal. 2001. Patriotism or Opinion Leadership?: The Nature and Origins of the “Rally ’Round the Flag” Effect. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 45 (5):661–87.
- Baum, Matthew A. 2002. The Constituent Foundations of the Rally-Round-the-Flag Phenomenon. *International Studies Quarterly* 46 (2):263–98.
- Baum, Matthew, and Tim Groeling. 2004. Crossing the Water’s Edge: Elite Rhetoric, Media Coverage and the Rally-Round-the-Flag Phenomenon, 1979–2003. Paper presented at the 100th Annual American Political Science Association Meeting, September, Chicago.
- Baumgartner, Frank, and Bryan D. Jones. 2005. *The Politics of Attention: How Government Prioritizes Problems*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Bond, Doug, Joe Bond, Churl Oh, J. Craig Jenkins, and Charles Lewis Taylor. 2004. Integrated Data for Events Analysis (IDEA): An Event Typology for Automated Event Data Development. *Journal of Peace Research* 40 (6):733–45.

- Brody, Richard A. 1991. *Assessing the President: The Media, Elite Opinion, and Public Support*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.
- . 1994. Crisis, War and Public Opinion: The Media and Public Support for the Gulf War. In *Taken By Storm: The Media, Public Opinion, and U.S. Foreign Policy in the Gulf War*, edited by W. Lance Bennett and David L. Paletz, 210–27. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Brody, Richard A., and Catherine R. Shapiro. 1989. Policy Failure and Public Support: The Iran-Contra Affair and Public Assessments of President Reagan. *Political Behavior* 11 (4):353–69.
- Bueno de Mesquita, Bruce, Alastair Smith, Randolph Siverson, and James D. Morrow. 2003. *The Logic of Political Survival*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- Chapman, Terrence L., and Dan Reiter. 2004. The United Nations Security Council and the Rally 'Round the Flag Effect. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 48 (6):886–909.
- Clinton, William J. 2004. *My Life*. New York: Knopf.
- Colaresi, Michael. 2004. Shooting Doves: Government Criticism and External Threat. Paper presented at the Conference on Leaders, American University, March, Washington, D.C.
- Enterline, Andrew J., and Kristian S. Gleditsch. 2000. Threats, Opportunity, and Force: Repression and Diversion of Domestic Pressure, 1948–1982. *International Interactions* 26 (1):21–53.
- Fearon, James D. 1994. Domestic Political Audiences and the Escalation of International Disputes. *American Political Science Review* 88 (3):577–92.
- . 1998. Bargaining, Enforcement, and International Cooperation. *International Organization* 52 (2):269–305.
- Fordham, Benjamin O. 1998. The Politics of Threat Perception and the Use of Force: A Political Economy Model of U.S. Uses of Force. *International Studies Quarterly* 42 (3):567–90.
- . 2002. Another Look at 'Parties, Voters, and the Use of Force Abroad.' *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 46 (4):572–96.
- Gelpi, Christopher. 1997. Democratic Diversions: Governmental Structure and the Externalization of Domestic Conflict. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 41 (2):255–82.
- Gibbs, David N. 1995. Secrecy and International Relations. *Journal of Peace Research* 32 (2): 213–28.
- Gowa, Joanne. 1998. Politics at the Water's Edge: Parties, Voters and the Use of Force Abroad. *International Organization* 52 (2):307–24.
- Guisinger, Alexandra, and Alastair Smith. 2002. Honest Threats: The Interaction of Reputation and Political Institutions in International Crises. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 46 (2):175–200.
- Heckman, James. 1976. The Common Structure of Statistical Models of Truncation, Sample Selection and Limited Dependent Variables, and a Simple Estimator for Such Models. *Annals of Economic and Social Measurement* 5 (3):475–92.
- Hetherington, Marc J., and Michael Nelson. 2003. Anatomy of a Rally Effect: George W. Bush and the War on Terrorism. *PS: Political Science and Politics* 36 (1):37–42.
- James, Patrick, and Jean Sébastien Rioux. 1998. International Crises and Linkage Politics: The Experience of the U.S., 1953–1994. *Political Research Quarterly* 51 (2):781–812.
- Jentelso, Bruce W. 1992. The Pretty Prudent Public: Post-Post-Vietnam American Public Opinion on the Use of Military Force. *International Studies Quarterly* 36 (1):49–74.
- Jentelso, Bruce W., and Rebecca L. Britton. 1998. Still Pretty Prudent: Post-Cold War American Public Opinion on the Use of Military Force. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 42 (2):395–417.
- Jones, Daniel M., Stuart A. Bremer, and J. David Singer. 1996. Militarized Interstate Disputes, 1816–1992: Rationale, Coding Rules, and Empirical Patterns. *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 15 (2):163–213.
- Kaufmann, Chaim. 2004. Threat Inflation and the Failure of the Marketplace of Ideas: The Selling of the Iraq War. *International Security* 29 (1):5–48.
- Kennedy, Robert F. 1969. *Thirteen Days: A Memoir of the Cuban Missile Crisis*. New York: Norton.
- Kernell, Samuel. 1978. Explaining Presidential Popularity: How Ad Hoc Theorizing, Misplaced Emphasis, and Insufficient Care in Measuring One's Variables Refuted Common Sense and Led Conventional Wisdom Down the Path of Anomalies. *American Political Science Review* 72 (3): 506–52.

- King, Gary, and Will Lowe. 2003. An Automated Information Extraction Tool for International Conflict with Performance as Good as Human Coders: A Rare Events Evaluation Design. *International Organization* 57 (3):617–42.
- Kissinger, Henry. 1995. *Diplomacy*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Lake, David A. 1992. Powerful Pacifists: Democratic States and War. *American Political Science Review* 86 (1):24–37.
- Leeds, Brett Ashley, and David R. Davis. 1997. Domestic Political Vulnerability and International Disputes. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 41 (6):814–34.
- Levy, Jack. 1989. The Diversionary Theory of War: A Critique. In *Handbook of War Studies*, edited by Manus I. Midlarsky, 259–88. London: Unwin-Hyman.
- Lippmann, Walter. 1922. *Public Opinion*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company.
- . 1927. *The Phantom Public: A Sequel to "Public Opinion."* New York: Macmillan.
- Lupia, Arthur, and Mathew D. McCubbins. 1998. *The Democratic Dilemma: Can Citizens Learn What They Need to Know?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Martin, Lisa. 2000. *Democratic Commitments: Legislatures and International Cooperation*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- McGillivray, Fiona, and Alastair Smith. 2000. Trust and Cooperation Through Agent-Specific Punishments. *International Organization* 54 (4):809–24.
- Mitchell, Sara McLaughlin, and Brandon C. Prins. 2004. Rivalry and Diversionary Uses of Force. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 48 (6):937–61.
- Morgenthau, Hans Joachim. 1967. *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*. New York: Knopf.
- Morton, Rebecca B. 1999. *Methods and Models: A Guide to the Empirical Analysis of Formal Models in Political Science*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mueller, John E. 1973. *War, Presidents, and Public Opinion*. New York: Wiley.
- . 1970. Presidential Popularity from Truman to Johnson. *The American Political Science Review* 64 (1):18–34.
- . 2003. Blip or Step Function. Paper Presented at the 44<sup>th</sup> Annual International Studies Association Meeting, February–March, Portland, Ore.
- Neustadt, Richard E. 1960. *Presidential Power: The Politics of Leadership*. New York: Wiley.
- Oneal, John R., Brad Lian, and James H. Joyner, Jr. 1996. Are the American People ‘Pretty Prudent’? Public Responses to U.S. Uses of Force, 1950–1988. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 40 (2):261–79.
- Polsby, Nelson W. 1964. *Congress and the Presidency*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.
- Prados, John, and Margaret Pratt Porter, eds. 2004. *Inside the Pentagon Papers*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.
- Reiter, Dan, and Allan C. Stam. 2002. *Democracies at War*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Roper, Burns W. 1969. The Public Looks at Presidents. *The Public Pulse* 4 (1):1–2.
- Rosato, Sebastian. 2003. The Flawed Logic of the Democratic Peace Theory. *American Political Science Review* 97 (4):585–602.
- Russett, Bruce M. 1993. *Grasping the Democratic Peace: Principles for a Post-Cold War World*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Schlesinger, Arthur Meier, Jr. 1978. *Robert Kennedy and His Times*. New York: Houghton Mifflin.
- Schultz, Kenneth A. 2001. *Democracy and Coercive Diplomacy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schultz, Kenneth A., and Barry R. Weingast. 2003. The Democratic Advantage: Institutional Foundations of Financial Power in International Competition. *International Organization* 57 (1):3–42.
- Stiglitz, Joseph. 1999. On Liberty, the Right to Know, and Public Discourse: The Role of Transparency in Public Life. Oxford Amnesty Lecture, Oxford, England.
- Waltz, Kenneth. 1967. *Foreign Policy and Democratic Politics: The American and British Experience*. Boston: Little, Brown.