

International Relations Scholars, U.S. Foreign Policy, and the Iraq War

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On September 26, 2002, thirty-three leading scholars of international relations (IR) signed an advertisement in the *New York Times* saying, “military force should be used only when it advances U.S. national interests. War with Iraq does not meet this standard.” They argued that “[e]ven if we win easily, we have no plausible exit strategy” and that the United States should concentrate on defeating al Qaeda rather than going to war in Iraq. It is impossible to know how widely their views were shared at the time, but the signatories were among the most prominent IR and security scholars in the country. The year after the United States went to war in Iraq, against the advice of these academic experts, on October 12, 2004, a group calling itself Security Scholars for a Sensible Foreign Policy issued an open letter to the U.S. public signed by 851 scholars of IR and national security policy. The letter described Bush’s policy in Iraq as “misguided” with “overwhelmingly negative” results for U.S. national security. The vast majority of the most prominent scholars of foreign affairs in the United States signed the letter, including twenty past presidents of the American Political Science Association. IR scholars may agree on little else, but they agreed in the first decade of the 21st century that U.S. policy in Iraq had strayed dangerously off course.

Students of U.S. foreign policy have long understood the importance of foreign policy elites—variously described as opinion leaders, opinion makers, policy influentials, the effective public, and foreign policy experts—in influencing policymakers’ preferences and shaping public response to foreign policy events and initiatives (Almond 1960; Holsti and Rosenau 1977;

Oldendick and Bardes 1982; Rosati and Creed 1997; Rosenau 1961; Wikttkopf 1990). These elites include knowledge-based experts within think tanks and the academy, as well as other specialists and professionals. Research on “epistemic communities,” “networks[s] of professionals with recognized expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge within that domain or issue-area” (Haas 1992, 3), has highlighted the role of knowledge-based experts in the foreign policy process (Adler and Haas 1992; Jacobs and Page 2005), and much ink has also been spilled on the role of think tanks, in particular (i.e., Abelson 1996, 2002, 2006; Wiarda 2010).

In recent years, increasing numbers of IR scholars in universities and colleges have turned their attention to bridging the gap between the academic and policy communities and increasing the policy-relevance of IR scholarship (i.e., Desch 2009; Jentleson 2002; Walt 2005), but very little has been written that empirically examines the role of academics in shaping U.S. foreign policy. This is unfortunate since, as Newsom (1995-96, 52) notes, scholars “should have the most knowledge and insight to offer to policymakers. Challenges to conventional wisdom and provocative explorations of international issues are part of the domain of the scholar and teacher and are precisely what is often missing in the official policy world.”

In this paper we present several important first steps toward understanding the role of academics in shaping U.S. foreign policy—identifying their policy views on one of the most salient foreign policy issues of this generation, the U.S. War in Iraq; exploring how those views differ from public opinion more generally; and assessing the extent to which scholarly opinion was reflected in the public debate. To determine how IR scholars’ views on the invasion of Iraq differed from those of the public, we compare the answers of IR scholars at U.S. colleges and

universities to those of the U.S. public on similar opinion survey questions. To this end, we analyze data from a unique series of surveys of IR scholars conducted by the Teaching, Research, and International Policy (TRIP) project. These data come from surveys of IR faculty in the United States conducted in 2004, 2006, and 2008.¹ These surveys measure IR scholars' opinions across a number of questions regarding U.S. foreign policy and international relations. We compare these data with information on public opinion compiled by the Roper Center. We also explore the public debate on the Iraq War by examining op-ed pieces in national newspapers from the time of the invasion.

Together, these data show that scholarly opinion differed markedly from that of the general public in the run-up to and throughout the war in Iraq, but academic views were not well represented in the public discourse on the war. First, we find that IR scholars opposed the war in Iraq from the beginning. Unlike public opinion, scholarly opinion showed no “rally ‘round the flag’” effect, in which an international crisis or war generates significant, short run increases in public approval of the president (Mueller 1973). Second, scholarly opinion on the war remained remarkably stable over time. The actions and rhetoric of U.S. policy officials and important events, such as the beginning of the Iraqi civil war in 2006 or the reduction of violence in Iraq following the “surge” in 2007, did not change scholarly opinion, although these events had significant effects on public opinion. Third, differences in opinion between IR scholars and the general public can be explained in part by ideology, as conservative IR scholars were more likely than liberal scholars to support the invasion, and liberal scholars far outnumber their conservative counterparts. Even when we control for ideology, however, we find that IR scholars overwhelmingly rejected central components of the Bush administration's Iraq policy in far greater percentages than did the general public. At the same time, scholars' views on the war

cannot be explained by their theoretical commitment to particular paradigms or schools of thought: once we control for ideology, realist scholars were no more likely than liberals or others to oppose the war. Finally, we find that IR scholars were not well represented in the public debate on Iraq. This debate largely ignored the scholarly consensus against the war. Whether because IR scholars were not sharing their views beyond the walls of the ivory tower or because their views were being ignored, the op-ed pages of the nation's largest newspapers systematically over-represented pro-war arguments relative to the actual balance of scholarly opinion.

Our findings suggest that being a member of the IR academy has some independent effect on scholars' policy preferences. The data cannot reveal whether this effect is driven more by principled or epistemic ideas. Nevertheless, the extraordinary level of consensus on the war in Iraq—and the fact that those shared policy views are not a function of political beliefs, theoretical commitments, or general opposition to the use of force—suggests that IR faculty in the nation's colleges and universities form a community of academic experts. This scholarly community generally supports military intervention under certain conditions, but its members did not see those conditions in Iraq in 2003.

This paper proceeds in four parts. In the next section, we present public opinion data on the Iraq invasion. Next, we contrast these data with results from the TRIP survey of IR scholars and show that the differences cannot be explained fully by alternative explanations. In the third section, we examine opinion pieces published in leading U.S. newspapers to show that the consensus among IR scholars was not reflected in the press and public debate. Very few IR scholars were published on op-ed pages, and when scholars did publish op-eds, their views often were not representative of the consensus among their colleagues. In the conclusion we consider the implications of our findings for the IR discipline and for U.S. foreign and security policy.

Before proceeding, it is important to highlight briefly what we do not address in this paper. We do not explain why IR scholars failed to sway U.S. policy on Iraq. We show that academic views did not receive much media attention, but a complete explanation of the decision to go to war in Iraq is outside the scope of the paper. Nor do we seek to explain why IR scholars were ignored in the policy process, although that too is an important research question that follows from findings in this study. Our aim is more modest: we show that IR specialists hold views distinct from those of the general public and that, in the Iraq case, academic opinion was not well represented in the press or reflected in U.S. foreign policy. As IR scholars become increasingly interested in making their research more relevant to policy makers (see Avey and Desch 2012; Jentlesen 2002; Walt 2005), they also will need to learn to make their voices heard in the policy process.

Public Opinion on Iraq

As a baseline for comparison with scholarly opinion, in this section we briefly outline public opinion trends on Iraq.² Existing scholarship explores the impact of various factors—including the avoidance of casualties (Mueller 1973), beliefs about the rightness of the war and the likelihood of victory (Feaver and Gelpi 2004; Gelpi, Feaver, and Reifler 2005), ethnocentrism (Kam and Kinder 2007), and partisanship (Jacobson 2007)—on public support for military action. We examine basic trends in support for the Iraq War, but we do not explore the reasons for that support other than to show that U.S. public opinion tended to be sensitive to events on the ground in Iraq—including the formation of a transitional government, the 2005 elections, increased sectarian violence in 2006, and the promise of elections in 2010. In general,

these public opinion trends show that, following an initial surge of significant support for the invasion, support for the U.S. war in Iraq declined over time.

To study public support for the Iraq War, we gathered polling data from the Roper Center, which compiles publicly available data on U.S. public opinion from a number of sources.³ All the surveys discussed here employ similar methodologies, including nationally representative samples. Sample sizes typically range from 600 to 2,000 respondents. We compare survey questions with similar wording to ensure that differences in marginal responses across surveys reflect shifts in opinion rather than differences in phrasing.⁴

In the early stages of the U.S. war in Iraq, which began in March 2003, Americans overwhelmingly supported the invasion. A Gallup/CNN/USA Today Poll conducted in March found that over 70 percent of Americans favored military intervention. Jacobson (2007) notes that after September 11, 2001 President Bush benefitted from a rally ‘round the flag effect to gain the largest approval rating of any U.S. president since the advent of polling. This effect also characterized early views on the war in Iraq.

Public support declined over time, as Figure 1 demonstrates. This decline began almost immediately after the invasion and accelerated after key real or perceived setbacks in the U.S. prosecution of the war. It was not until late 2005 and early 2006, however, that fewer than half of respondents supported the war. Through the 2007 surge and 2008 presidential election, support dropped even further to below 40 percent. In short, U.S. opinion on the use of force in Iraq was overwhelmingly positive at first and declined significantly over time. This support also appeared sensitive to events on the ground, and over time rally effects diminished before disappearing altogether.

Figure 1 here

Public support for the Bush Administration's arguments for invasion and, later, for continued occupation of Iraq reflects similar trends: decline over time punctuated by responses to specific events. Initially, members of the Bush Administration argued that a pre-emptive strike against Saddam Hussein's Iraq would benefit U.S. security in the long run, both by preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction by a rogue regime and by slowing state-sponsored support for international terrorist networks. A March 2003 Gallup/CNN/USA Today poll measured the extent to which the public's attitudes matched the Administration's rationales for an invasion. Specifically, it asked whether each of the following "reasons for taking military action against Iraq . . . is—or is not—a goal worth going to war over:

- A. Freeing the Iraqi people from the rule of Saddam Hussein.
- B. Destroying Iraq's capabilities of producing and using weapons of mass destruction.
- C. Making the United States safer from terrorism.
- D. Paving the way for a peace agreement between the Israelis and Palestinians."

The results of the poll show that Americans believed that the need to destroy Saddam's WMD capability and to make the United States safer from terrorism were the most important reasons for an invasion. Eighty-seven percent of respondents believed that each of these goals was worth fighting for. At the same time, 81 percent thought that freeing the Iraqi people from Saddam's rule justified the war. In contrast, only 54 percent believed that facilitating an Israeli/ Palestinian peace warranted war in Iraq.

The need to disarm Saddam was discredited after inspectors failed to find any WMD stockpiles, and the Bush Administration turned its focus instead to issues of U.S. security and terrorism. An interesting pattern emerged among responses to polling questions about whether the invasion of Iraq and/ or removal of Saddam Hussein from power would enhance U.S. security by reducing the threat of terrorism: public support for the war increased rather than decreased over time. At the time of the invasion in 2003, as Figure 2 illustrates, the rally 'round the flag effect in support for the war did not inhibit skepticism for one of its key justifications. At that time, only 9 percent of Americans believed that the removal of Saddam would reduce the likelihood of a terrorist attack against the United States.⁵ The public became less skeptical, however, as the Iraq war progressed through the end of the Bush Administration without further terrorist attacks on U.S. soil. Similar to public opinion about the invasion, public perceptions of the security rationale were not stable over time.

Figure 2 here

After the invasion and overthrow of Saddam, the U.S. administration shifted its rhetoric to the importance of establishing and maintaining a stable and democratic Iraq. Again, as Figure 3 illustrates, public views on this rationale changed over time, often in response to events and perceived progress on the ground in Iraq. The formation of a new Iraqi government after the fall of Saddam became the centerpiece of the Bush Administration's policy (Bremer 2005). But the formation of the Transitional Government, the subsequent introduction of democratic elections in 2005, and increased sectarian fighting in 2006 did not provide the stability or political reconciliation that the U.S. Administration had forecast. Unlike support for the Administration's

argument about the link between Iraq and American security, which remained relatively flat until the 2005 Iraqi elections, public beliefs about the progress of efforts to achieve a democratic government in Iraq rose dramatically in 2005 before falling in 2006. Later, belief in Iraq's transition to democracy rose when elections were scheduled for early 2010. Even with this uptick, however, by 2008 fewer than half of U.S. respondents believed that the United States was making progress toward establishing democracy in Iraq.

Figure 3 here

Public perceptions of the timeframe for establishing democracy in Iraq reflect a similar pattern: initial optimism (at least in relative terms) followed, first, by a waning belief that democracy would ever be possible and, later, by increased confidence. Table 1 presents responses over time to the CBS News Poll question, "Which of these do you think is most likely? 1. Iraq will become a stable democracy in the next year or two, OR 2. Iraq will become a stable democracy, but it will take longer than a year or two, OR 3. Iraq will probably never become a stable democracy." Any early optimism was relative since, regardless of the year of the survey, very few Americans ever thought that Iraq would become a democracy in the immediate future. As time progressed, however, fewer and fewer respondents thought democracy would be achieved, even in the long-term. Concomitantly, the proportion of Americans who thought that Iraq would never become a democracy rose. At the same time that U.S. hope for progress toward democracy in Iraq declined, another pattern emerged: U.S. public opinion responded to particular events on the ground in Iraq. In December 2003, only six percent of respondents believed that Iraq would become a democracy in the next year or two, and 59 percent believed

that it would become a democracy eventually. By December 2006 these percentages slipped dramatically to three and 32 percent, respectively, before climbing again in 2007.

Table 1 here

Scholarly Opinion

Scholarly opinion on the Iraq war differs significantly from public views. The Teaching, Research, and International Policy (TRIP) surveys of IR faculty in the United States provide various measures of IR scholars' opinion on U.S. foreign policy toward Iraq. Comparing these views with those of the general public, we find two main points of difference: the IR experts opposed the war from the outset, and their views did not change substantially over time. After reviewing the TRIP survey's methodology and findings, we outline scholarly opinion on the war in Iraq and consider alternative explanations for the gap between public and scholarly opinion. We conclude that there is a significant epistemic effect associated with studying and teaching international relations within the U.S. academy.

Survey Methods

The TRIP project surveyed scholarly opinion in three separate rounds in 2004, 2006, and 2008.⁶ Each survey attempted to identify all faculty at four-year colleges and universities in the United States who do research in the IR sub-field or who teach IR courses. The overwhelming majority of respondents have jobs in departments of political science, politics, government,

social science, international relations, or international studies, or in professional schools associated with universities.⁷

Each survey used a list of four-year colleges and universities compiled by *U.S. News and World Report (USNWR)*.⁸ To that list TRIP researchers added the Monterey Institute and nine military schools that were not rated by *USNWR* but that have a large number of political science faculty who teach courses on IR. The sampling frame includes all faculty who teach or research trans-border issues as they relate to some aspect of politics. Hence, the population includes political scientists specializing in American politics who study trade and immigration. This broad definition includes those scholars who create knowledge, teach students, and provide expert advice to policy makers about trans-border issues, whether they adopt the “IR” moniker themselves or not.⁹

We sampled IR faculty members at these schools through a systematic series of web searches, emails, and communications with department chairs, staff, and individual scholars. The 2008 survey identified 4,126 individuals who appeared to research and/or teach IR, compared to 2,705 in 2006 and 2,320 in 2004.¹⁰ In all, 1,719 scholars responded to the 2008 survey, either online or through the mail, while 1,112 responded in 2006 and 1,084 in 2004. Additional individuals in the sample may have been misidentified by this selection process, but they were not removed because they never informed the TRIP research team that they did not belong in the sample. Had these individuals been removed from the denominator, the response rate would have been higher. For this reason, the response rates reported here—42 percent in 2008, 41 percent in 2006, and 47 percent in 2004—are conservative estimates.

IR Scholars and Support for the Iraq War

Using the results of the 2004, 2006, and 2008 surveys, we compare IR scholarly opinion with public support for the U.S. war in Iraq. The pattern that emerges in scholarly opinion is different than the trends in public opinion described above. First, while the U.S. public overwhelmingly supported the invasion from the outset, scholars opposed the war. The rally effect observed in the general population did not occur among experts. Second, whereas public opinion proved volatile, declining over time and changing in response to events in Iraq, expert opinion was stable.

From the beginning scholars overwhelmingly opposed the war. In the 2004 survey only 15 percent of IR faculty reported that they had supported or strongly supported the U.S. decision to go to war in 2003. Seventy-eight percent reported opposing or strongly opposing the invasion. In fact, the most frequent response, given by 52 percent of all IR scholars, was that they strongly opposed the U.S. invasion of Iraq. Ideally, we would have data on faculty opinion in 2003, at the outset of the war. In recent retrospective analyses of the ten-year anniversary of the Iraq War some scholars have rightly argued that retrospective surveys asking people how they felt about something in the past may be biased and, in this case, may over-represent scholarly opposition to the Iraq War (Drezner 2013). The 2004 results reported here, however, include the responses to a survey conducted when the United States had just overthrown Saddam and public support for the war was still high—in other words, when respondents were more likely to be biased in favor of the war. Moreover, all contemporaneous qualitative evidence points toward broad opposition by scholars to the war (Jackson 2007). All the surveys, even if retrospective, are stable over time, finally, and do not fluctuate as the situation on the ground improved for the United States after the surge.¹¹ Respondents' views had not changed significantly by 2006, for example, when they were asked the same question, even though political violence between Shiites and Sunnis

had escalated and there may have been a temptation for respondents to retroactively believe that they had been opposed to the war at the outset.¹² IR experts had made up their minds on Iraq much earlier, and they remained nearly unified in this opinion. Figure 4 summarizes public and expert opinion on the Iraq invasion.

Figure 4 here

Levels of expert support for each of the Bush Administration's rationales for going to war in Iraq also reflect the stability of scholarly opinion. The TRIP survey asked IR scholars whether they believed that the U.S. decision to go to war with Iraq would end up enhancing U.S. security, decreasing U.S. security, or having no impact. The experts were much less likely than the general public to believe that the war in Iraq would improve U.S. national security, and their views tended to be stable over time. Only nine percent of scholars in 2004 believed that the invasion definitely or probably would benefit the United States, while seven percent in 2006 and eight percent in 2008 felt the same. A scant one percent of IR experts in 2004 and 2006 and two percent in 2008 believed that the U.S. war definitely (as opposed to probably) would make the United States more secure. In contrast, 59 percent of the scholars surveyed in 2004, 62 percent in 2006, and 45 percent in 2008 thought the war definitely would decrease U.S. security.

Compared to public opinion on the U.S. invasion of Iraq, scholarly opinion was overwhelmingly negative and static. At the same time, as Figure 5 shows, the early years after the invasion saw only a modest divide between scholarly and public assessments of the security effects of the war. IR faculty were more skeptical than the general public, but the distance between the two groups' views was relatively small. Over time, however, as public perceptions

shifted to include more optimistic appraisals of the effect of the war on U.S. national security, the gulf widened because expert opinion remained constant and more pessimistic.

Figure 5 here

One area where the views of IR scholars and Bush Administration officials overlapped is the assessment of the likelihood that Iraq would become more democratic without a U.S. invasion. In 2006 the TRIP survey asked about the likelihood of a democratic Iraq today and in 10-15 years had the United States not invaded. As Figure 6 shows, IR scholars overwhelmingly believed that Iraq would not have transitioned or become stable or democratic on its own. In 2006 IR scholars remained skeptical, however, that even with the U.S. invasion, Iraq would be a stable democracy within 10-15 years.

Figure 6 here

Given differences in question wording, it is difficult to directly compare public and scholarly attitudes about the likelihood of democracy emerging in Iraq. The TRIP survey only asked about a democratic Iraq in 2006, moreover, so it is impossible to track changes over time on this question. Within these constraints, we see that, while 32 percent of the public believed in 2006 that Iraq could become a democracy eventually, as Figure 6 shows, only 15 percent of the more skeptical scholars agreed.

What explains IR scholars' attitudes?

The TRIP survey allows us to explore IR faculty's skepticism about the Iraq war by examining possible determinants of both support for the invasion and beliefs about its effects on U.S. security. There are several potential explanations for the gulf between scholarly and public opinion described above: IR scholars could be uniformly dovish on the use of force and so universally opposed to military intervention; they could be overwhelmingly liberal in their political beliefs and their liberalism could have driven them to oppose a conservative administration's use of force in Iraq; or they could be overwhelmingly realist in their theoretical commitments and so opposed to the use of force where U.S. interests may not be directly at stake. As we show, none of these explanation accounts for IR scholars' attitudes on the Iraq War or the gulf between expert and public opinion.

First, scholars of international relations might overwhelmingly be "doves" who fundamentally oppose the use of force under nearly all conditions. According to such an explanation, it was not the peculiarities of the Iraq case that drove academic opposition to the invasion, but the nature of the offensive military action more generally. This hypothesis does not stand up to empirical analysis: IR scholars are not unquestioningly opposed to the use of force. Indeed, the scholars and the general public agreed on another contemporary use of force issue, the need for increased U.S. troops in Afghanistan. When asked in the fall of 2008 whether a redeployment of U.S. troops from Iraq to Afghanistan was likely to increase, decrease, or make no difference to U.S. national security, 57 percent of IR scholars responded that an Afghan "surge" would benefit the United States.¹³ Only 14 percent of IR experts believed that the surge would decrease U.S. security. This finding is virtually identical to the 59 percent of the public who in December 2008 responded to a CNN/ Opinion Research Corporation poll that they would

favor a decrease in U.S. combat troops in Iraq and an increase in U.S. combat troops in Afghanistan.¹⁴

Despite their opposition to the invasion of Iraq, IR scholars are often bellicose on questions of the use of force to protect U.S. security, so long as the intervention is multilateral. The 2006 TRIP survey asked about support for possible invasions of North Korea and Iran, two countries included in President Bush's "Axis of Evil" that were, at the time of the survey, generally believed to be pursuing WMD development. Figure 7 shows that, as they had in Iraq, IR scholars in 2006 opposed a U.S. invasion of North Korea (70 percent) and Iran (77 percent).¹⁵ When asked if they would support United Nations mandated multilateral military action, however, 53 percent said yes about North Korea and 48 percent agreed for Iran.¹⁶ IR scholars do not oppose the use of force across the board, and they generally do not oppose military action to stop the development of nuclear weapons by rogue regimes. Rather, they often favor such action when it is done in concert with multilateral bodies such as the United Nations. These observations suggest that expert opposition to war in Iraq cannot be explained by any dovish aversion to military intervention.

Figure 7 here

Second, those IR scholars who were more ideologically disposed towards the Bush Administration and more likely to support its policies might simply have been too few in number to influence opinion in an academy that is often criticized for being overly liberal. Even if scholars as a group do not mirror the ideological or partisan landscape of the U.S. public, those who describe themselves as conservatives may have been more likely to support an invasion,

while liberals may have been more likely to oppose it, and liberals may simply have outnumbered conservatives. The TRIP survey findings certainly support conventional wisdom about the liberal academy: in 2008, 75 percent of IR faculty described themselves as liberal, while ten percent called themselves conservative; in 2006, 70 percent were liberal and 14 percent conservative; and in 2004, 69 percent were self-described liberals and 13 percent conservative. In such a liberal academy it would not be surprising to find overwhelming opposition to war in Iraq.

Indeed, as Table 2 shows, ideologically conservative scholars were far more likely than liberals or moderates to support the U.S. invasion of Iraq. In 2004 and 2006, respectively, 42 and 38 percent of conservative experts opposed the invasion, compared to 82 and 81 percent of moderates and 94 and 97 percent of liberals. While 58 percent of conservative experts in 2004 and 62 percent in 2006 reported that they had supported the 2003 initiation of war, only six percent of liberals in 2004 and three percent in 2006 said they had supported the administration's 2003 decision. Politically moderate IR experts leaned heavily against the war, with only 18 percent and 19 percent in 2004 and 2006, respectively, supporting the invasion of Iraq.

Table 2 here

Ideology, however, does not completely explain the gulf between experts and the public on Iraq. In 2004, conservative scholars were about 20 percent more likely than conservative members of the public to oppose the war. Figure 8 below shows that among the general public, about 80 percent of political conservatives supported the war, compared with less than 60

percent of conservative scholars. As public support for the war in Iraq declined from 2003 to 2007, even political conservatives began to doubt the wisdom of the invasion. Among conservatives in both groups, in fact, opinion on the war had converged by 2007; that is, conservative public support declined by 2007 to the relatively unchanged level of support among conservative IR scholars. If anything, conservative support within the academy for the war increased slightly from 58 percent in 2004 to 62 percent in 2006.

Figure 8 here

Finally, realism, long considered the dominant paradigm in IR, might explain academic opposition, since that school of thought dictates that a country should use force only when there are clear threats to national interests. Indeed, many realists disliked the idea of intervening in Iraq for strategic reasons: they believed that Saddam's regime posed only a minimal threat that could be contained by other means and that going to war in Iraq would drain resources from other strategic concerns, especially the war in Afghanistan and the need to defeat al Qaeda.¹⁷

There are several problems with the argument that realist opposition to the Iraq War explains the gap between scholarly and public opinion on the issue. First, the conventional wisdom is simply wrong: realists do not dominate the IR discipline. In 2004 and 2006, only 25 percent of IR scholars described themselves as realists, and that number fell to 21 percent in 2008.¹⁸ Indeed, there are roughly equal numbers of liberals (21 percent in 2008) and realists (20 percent) in the faculty sample, but IR scholars overwhelmingly opposed the war. Second, while prominent realists—such as Kenneth Waltz, Stephen Walt, and John Mearsheimer—vocally opposed the war, self-described realist respondents were *more* likely on average to support the invasion (25 percent) than were liberals (11 percent), constructivists (3 percent), or Marxists (2

percent). Brian Rathbun (2012) shows us, however, that politics and paradigm often co-vary: realists are political moderates, but they tend to be more conservative than adherents to most other theoretical schools of thought. Once we control for ideology, we find that realists are no more likely than liberals or those who do not adhere to a particular paradigm to support or oppose the war in Iraq (Maliniak et al 2007b; Maliniak et al 2012). There is no statistically significant correlation between realism, or any other paradigm, and scholars' views on whether the United States should have gone to war in Iraq or whether that war would enhance U.S. security. Similarly, once we control for paradigm, the effects of political ideology diminish.¹⁹

Our findings suggest the existence of a body of shared policy beliefs among IR scholars. These beliefs may derive from shared knowledge of the field, shared normative principles, or both. We know that they do not reflect a shared normative aversion to war. We also know that they do not reflect a commitment to specific paradigmatic tenets, since liberals and realists alike opposed U.S. policy in Iraq. This suggests the plausibility of another explanation, that IR scholars' shared knowledge of world politics, causal beliefs about civil and international war, and preferred policy solutions constitute them as an "epistemic community"—"a network of professionals with recognized expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge within that domain or issue-area" (Haas 1992, 3)—whose effects on respondents' views on the Iraq war outstrip those of political ideology, paradigm, and general views about the use of force. Members of an epistemic community share causal beliefs, problem-solving tools or skills, and preferred solutions (Adler and Haas 1992). Previous work has shown that such communities often form in scientific and technological areas, where members share common understandings of policy problems and solutions. Epistemic communities may influence policy by helping to identify a policy problem.

A complete test of the claim that the beliefs of an epistemic community of IR scholars explain scholarly opposition to the war in Iraq would require that we establish the existence of such a community prior to the events we are studying here and that we show that the beliefs shared within this community were knowledge-based, rather than norm-based. We do not do that here. We do show, however, that a group of experts who share similar training and knowledge also share policy beliefs about the use of force and particularly about the use of force in Iraq in the first decade of the 21st century. We also can show, moreover, that those shared policy views are not (or not entirely) a function of political beliefs, theoretical commitments, or general opposition to the use of force. IR scholars generally support military intervention under certain conditions, but they did not see those conditions in Iraq in 2003 and beyond.

Scholarly Consensus Ignored

The U.S. public overwhelmingly supported the Bush Administration's decision to go to war in Iraq, while IR scholars overwhelmingly rejected the policy from the outset, suggesting that these academics may comprise a knowledge-based community that influenced their thinking about the Iraq War. Previous research suggests that such a network or community of professionals may influence policy by providing information to national leaders and speaking authoritatively about their area of expertise. Epistemic communities have shaped public debates, internal policy deliberations, and policy outcomes on issues as diverse as marine pollution (Haas 1989, 1990), ozone depletion (Haas 1992), global warming (Demeritt 2001), trade in services (Drake and Nicolaidis 1992), and arms control (Adler 1992).

A complete understanding of why the IR community failed to influence US policy (or even the public discourse) toward Iraq is outside the scope of this paper. Certainly, part of the

reason may have to do with the nature of epistemic communities, which tend to have the greatest impact in conditions of uncertainty (Adler and Haas 1992). In retrospect, the lead-up to the war in Iraq was characterized by unfounded assumptions and faulty intelligence, but it was not characterized, at least publicly, by uncertainty among policy makers in the Bush Administration. Instead, even the small number of skeptics within the State Department and the Central Intelligence Agency who were initially uncertain about whether Iraq had operational WMD, eventually came to believe that Iraq did have such capability. Indeed, many of the Administration's critics shared the widespread belief that Iraq possessed WMD, but nevertheless encouraged a continued policy of containment (Walt and Mearsheimer 2002/03; Woodward 2004). In any case, IR scholars' expertise and policy prescriptions in this issue area were not reflected in the Administration's Iraq policy.

As important, and perhaps part of the reason for policy makers' neglect of scholarly opinion, this expertise was not well represented in the U.S. media, which portrayed expert opinion on the war as divided. We know from the findings of the TRIP survey and other sources (e.g., Jackson and Kaufmann 2007), however, that scholarly opinion was strongly unified. The media's presentation of a balance of opinion meant that it was relatively easy for both the public and the policy-making elite to mistakenly assume that there existed a robust debate among the experts. The pages of the major U.S. newspapers highlighted a biased sample of expert opinion, or did not print the evaluations of IR scholars as frequently as those of politicians, journalists, pundits, and Iraqi expatriates.

Public opinion, elite opinion, and the media interact to influence each other and U.S. foreign policy. Baum and Potter (2008) present a framework for understanding this relationship during a military conflict. The public's foreign policy attitudes generally are less informed and

less deeply felt than are their beliefs about pocketbook or moral issues, so their demand for information about foreign policy during the early stage of a conflict is low. As the conflict continues, however, and especially as casualties mount, the public is likely to demand more information from the media. This increased demand on the media helps close the information gap between national leaders and the public. In the Iraq case it appears that, as the public received more information about the war, opinion shifted against U.S. policy and closer to the opinion of the IR scholars. Even if the public had sought more information from the media early in the conflict, however, what they would have found was a relatively balanced, and therefore biased, sample of expert opinion. Public attitudes on foreign policy may be more malleable and open to persuasion by the media than are domestic or budget views (Berisky and Druckman 2007), but the pages of the major dailies painted a view of the situation in Iraq that did not accurately reflect the overwhelming opposition to the war among IR scholars.

To measure media coverage of Iraq in the lead-up to and shortly following the 2003 invasion, we perform content analysis on opinion pieces in three major national newspapers: the *New York Times*, *USA Today*, and the *Wall Street Journal*. These news sources represent only a small percentage of the total news exposure Americans likely received on the issue, but we believe that these three newspapers reflected the content and tone of the larger debate within the wider media. In terms of editorial policies (if not reportage), the *New York Times* is generally considered a left-of-center paper, the *Wall Street Journal* is generally thought to be right-of-center, and *USA Today* is considered more middle-of-the-road. Insofar as these papers reflect prevailing liberal, conservative, and moderate opinions, respectively, we believe that they present a representative snapshot of the debate over the Iraq invasion in the mainstream media.

For each newspaper, we listed the universe of opinion pieces on the specific subject of a U.S. invasion published between the 11 September 2001 and December 2003, a period ranging from 19 months before to nine months after the invasion. The *New York Times* included 354 op-eds, the *Wall Street Journal* had 296, and *USA Today* published 89 opinion pieces on an Iraq invasion. We coded each op-ed on a five-point scale measuring the extent to which it was pro-war or anti-war. A score of 1 indicates that the article was anti-war; 2 indicates it was leaning anti-war; 3 signifies a neutral position on the issue; 4 means it was leaning pro-war; and a score of 5 indicates that the op-ed was pro-war. Table 3 presents the mean score for each newspaper. The *New York Times* receives a mean score of 2.6, leaning slightly against war. *USA Today*'s editorial policy was neutral with a score of 2.9. The *Wall Street Journal* leaned fairly strongly toward war with a score of 4.4. Averaging across the three papers produces an overall mean score of 3.3: the pages of the nation's major newspapers showed an overall balance of expert opinion, even leaning slightly toward a U.S. war against Iraq.

Table 3 here

Expert opinion printed in the nation's major dailies differed markedly from the reality in the academy, where IR scholars overwhelmingly opposed war. Simply looking at the mean scores across the papers, however, masks another trend: the right-of-center *Wall Street Journal* presented a strong and consistent pro-war perspective, while the left-of-center *New York Times* leaned only slightly anti-war. The middle-of-the-road *USA Today* projected a relatively neutral stance toward the invasion. Overall, op-ed coverage was either relatively balanced or skewed toward supporting the invasion. This finding should not be surprising. Mueller (1994, 75)

reported about the 1991 Persian Gulf War that the editorial team of the *Los Angeles Times* had pegged its coverage to public support for President George H. W. Bush's Iraq policy: since support for the war at the time was running 80 percent in favor and 20 percent against, the paper's coverage needed to be 80 percent positive. Regardless of the reason for the particular balance of published opinion pieces in 2003 and beyond, the op-eds did not reflect the largely anti-invasion views among scholarly experts of international relations.

Few of the op-eds published about the Iraq War were authored by academic experts, and on balance the scholars whose essays were published were more "pro-war" than their fellow experts in the academy. IR scholars authored only five percent of all op-eds published on the topic of the Iraq War. These scholars were not representative of the larger IR community: their average score was 3.1, leaning slightly pro-war but far more hawkish than IR scholars in general. We cannot know whether IR scholars were submitting op-ed pieces that were going unpublished. At the end of the day, though, we can say that very few scholars were heard on the most important foreign policy issue facing the United States.

Conclusion

Scholars of international relations, experts on the workings of world politics and the use of force, opposed the U.S. war in Iraq early and strongly. Overwhelmingly united against the war from the outset, scholars did not exhibit the same rally effect shown in the early public support for the 2003 invasion. Public opinion grew gradually more disenchanted over time, only beginning to creep up again in 2008, but academic opinion was stable and relatively insensitive to events on the ground in Iraq. Perhaps more striking, scholarly opposition to the war holds even when we control for ideology and paradigm; conservatives within the academy were far

more likely than their conservative counterparts in the general public to oppose U.S. policy in Iraq, and realists were not more likely than liberals or others to oppose the war.

Rather, the IR academic community bears many markings of an epistemic community with shared causal beliefs and policy solutions. Our data does not allow us to conclude that the academic consensus resulted from epistemic beliefs, rather than normative beliefs or both epistemic and normative ideas combined. We can say that, despite the consensus among IR scholars, academic experts were not well represented in the public debates leading up to and the early stages of the war. Indeed, most Americans probably were not even aware of the overwhelming scholarly consensus against war, since the editorial pages of the nation's major newspapers appear to have privileged a balance of views over an accurate representation of the opinions of IR experts within the academy.

We do not know why scholarly opinion against the war did not find its way onto the op-ed pages of America's major newspapers. IR scholars may simply have chosen to remain silent. This seems unlikely, however. Several dozen highly influential scholars placed an ad in the *New York Times* in 2002 opposing the use of force in Iraq, and hundreds of IR scholars signed an open letter in the *New York Times* in 2004 opposing what they saw as the Bush administration's "misguided" policy in Iraq. It is doubtful that they would then hide their heads in the sand, or that even a small minority of those scholars would not continue to try to influence U.S. policy in Iraq by writing analyses, op-eds, and articles.

Walt (2009) suggests one reason why scholars may have chosen not to speak out against the war. He describes a news story about a well known IR scholar who believes that academics remained silent because they knew they could not influence the Bush administration. This scholar noted, "I don't think all the academics in the world could have had much impact on

American public opinion. . . I don't think academics matter." In fact, the Bush administration's inattention to scholarly opposition to Iraq policy stands in stark contrast to the role in the policy process often played by academic experts from other disciplines. When economists agreed in 2008 that a tax holiday on the nation's federal gasoline tax would not accrue benefits to most citizens, the experts' views were accorded serious public attention.²⁰ Similarly, the consensus among scientists who study the upper atmosphere has framed the debate about the need for an international agreement to reduce ozone depletion. Political elites often craft policy that diverges from scholarly opinion (as the Bush administration did on global climate change, for instance), but it is unusual and striking for political leaders, the press, and the public to ignore experts to the degree that they disregarded the academy on the Iraq war.

Previous research on publications in IR journals over the last 30 years (Maliniak et al 2011), as well as the TRIP faculty surveys (Peterson et al 2005; Maliniak et al 2007; Jordan et al 2009; Maliniak et al 2011), portray a scholarly discipline that wants to be policy-relevant: large numbers of scholars consult for the U.S. government, believe that IR scholarship is useful to policy makers, and intend their research to be prescriptive. For this reason, scholars often lament and are puzzled by the irrelevance of their work to policy makers (Walt 2005; Nye 2008). At the same time, however, little scholarly research in the field actually draws links to current policy debates, except after a major international event (Maliniak et al 2011). It should not be surprising, then, that policy makers often do not listen to IR scholars. Nearly a decade of war in Iraq, however, has helped galvanize a movement toward greater policy relevance for the IR discipline. Numerous efforts to study and improve the interaction between the academy and the beltway have emerged in recent years, as academics strive for a greater role in the policy process and seek to ensure that their voices will be heard on major national security issues.²¹

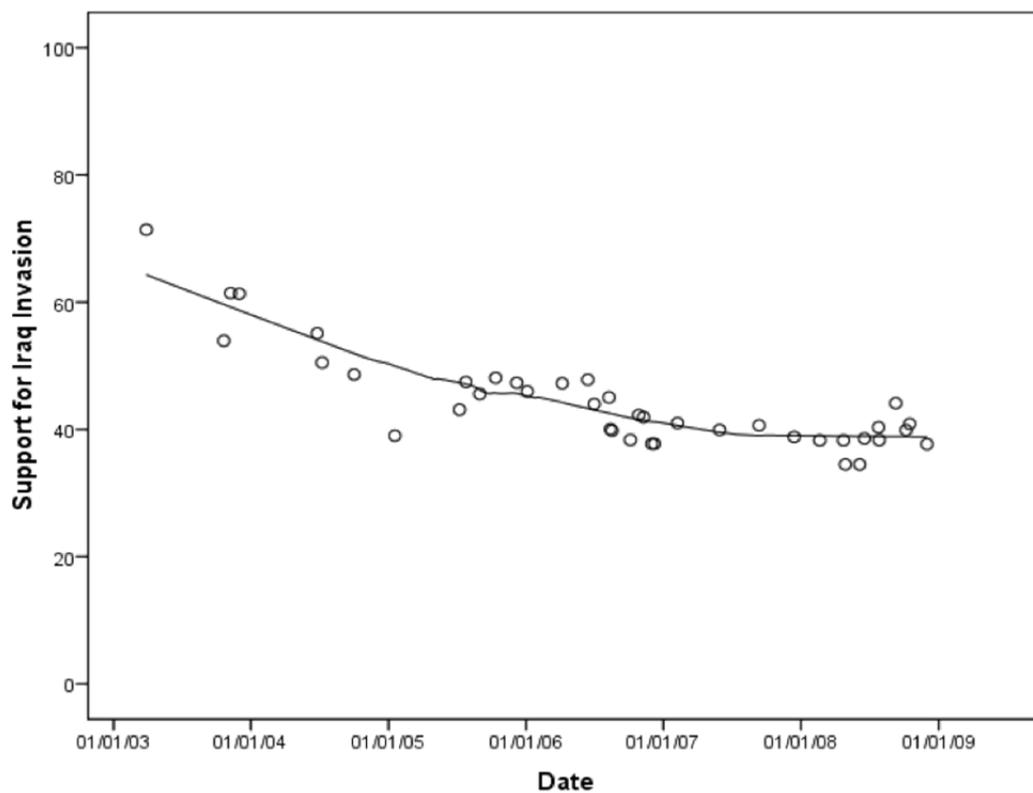
Figure 1: Public Support for the Iraq War²²

Figure 2: Public beliefs about whether an Iraq invasion enhanced US security²³

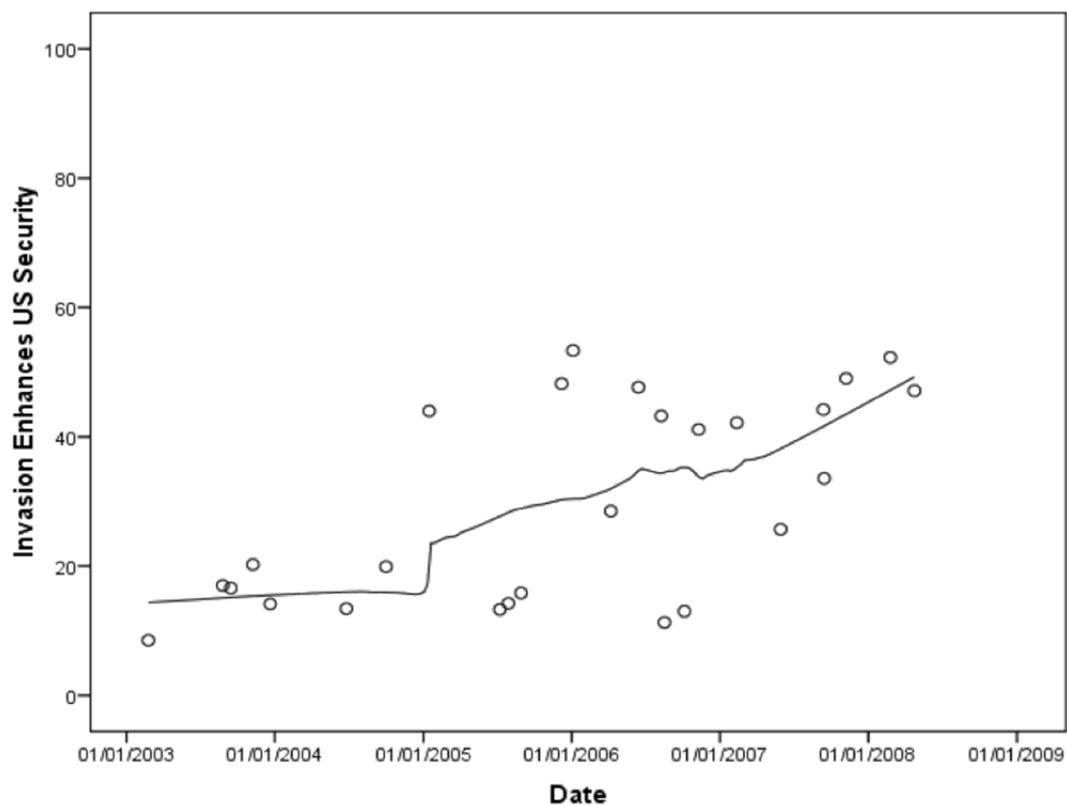


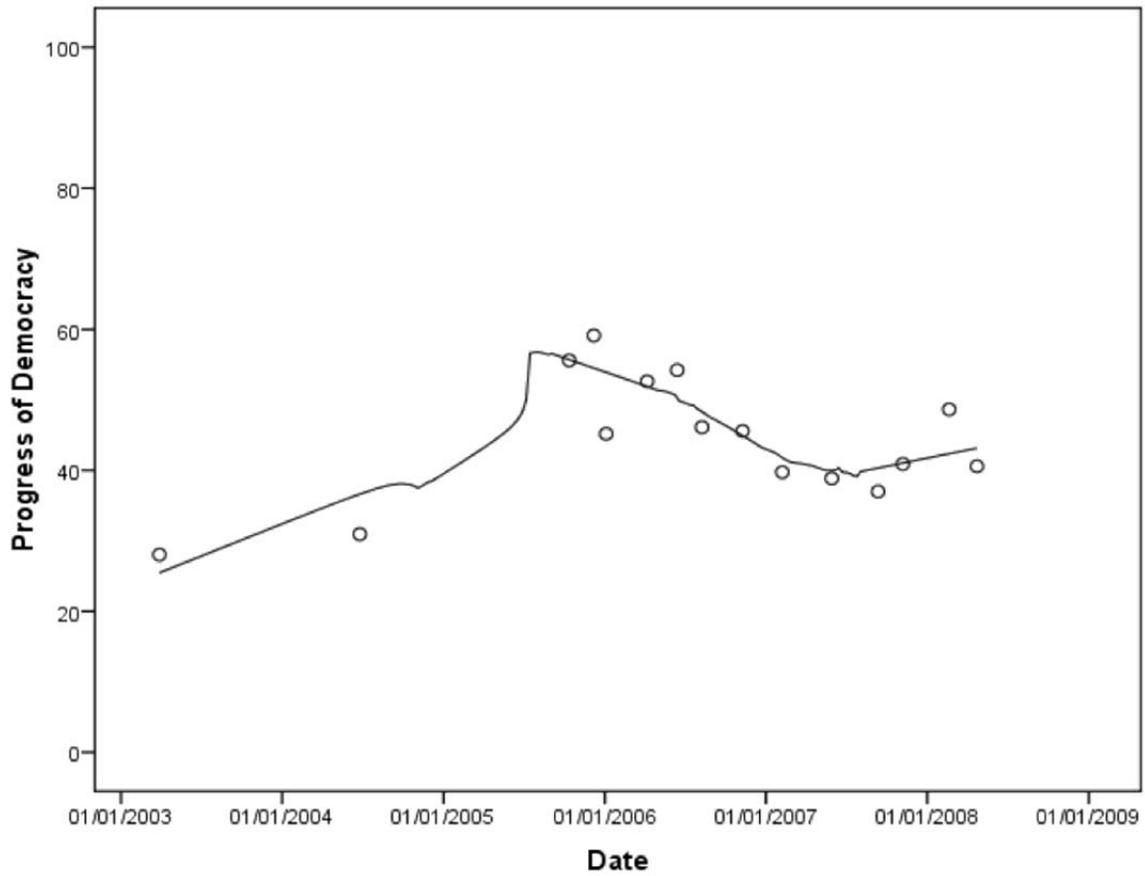
Figure 3: Public beliefs about the progress of democracy in Iraq²⁴

Table 1: Public Perception of Likelihood of Democracy in Iraq²⁵

	In the next year or two	Longer	Will never become a democracy	Don't know
December 21-22, 2003	6%	59%	31%	4%
August 29-31, 2005	6%	42%	48%	4%
July 21-25, 2006	5%	39%	54%	2%
December 8-10, 2006	3%	32%	61%	3%
September 14-16, 2007	4%	40%	53%	3%
May 30-June 3, 2008	5%	31%	61%	4%

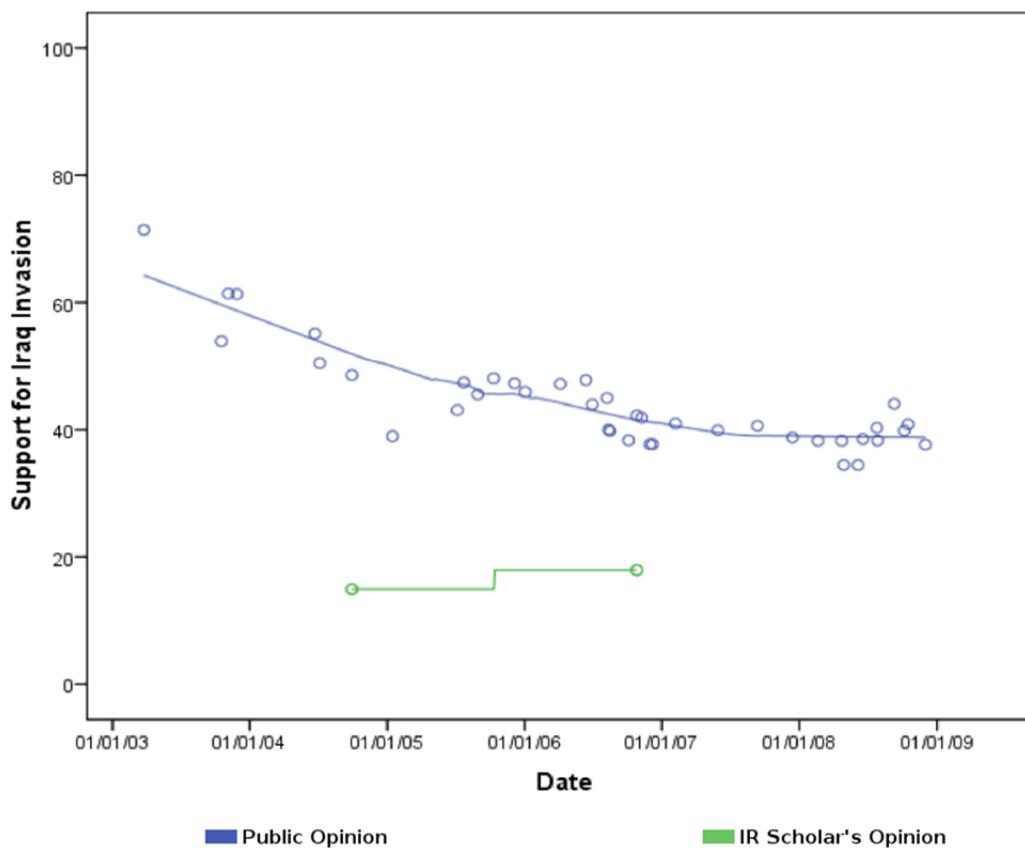
Figure 4: Public and Expert opinions about invasion²⁶

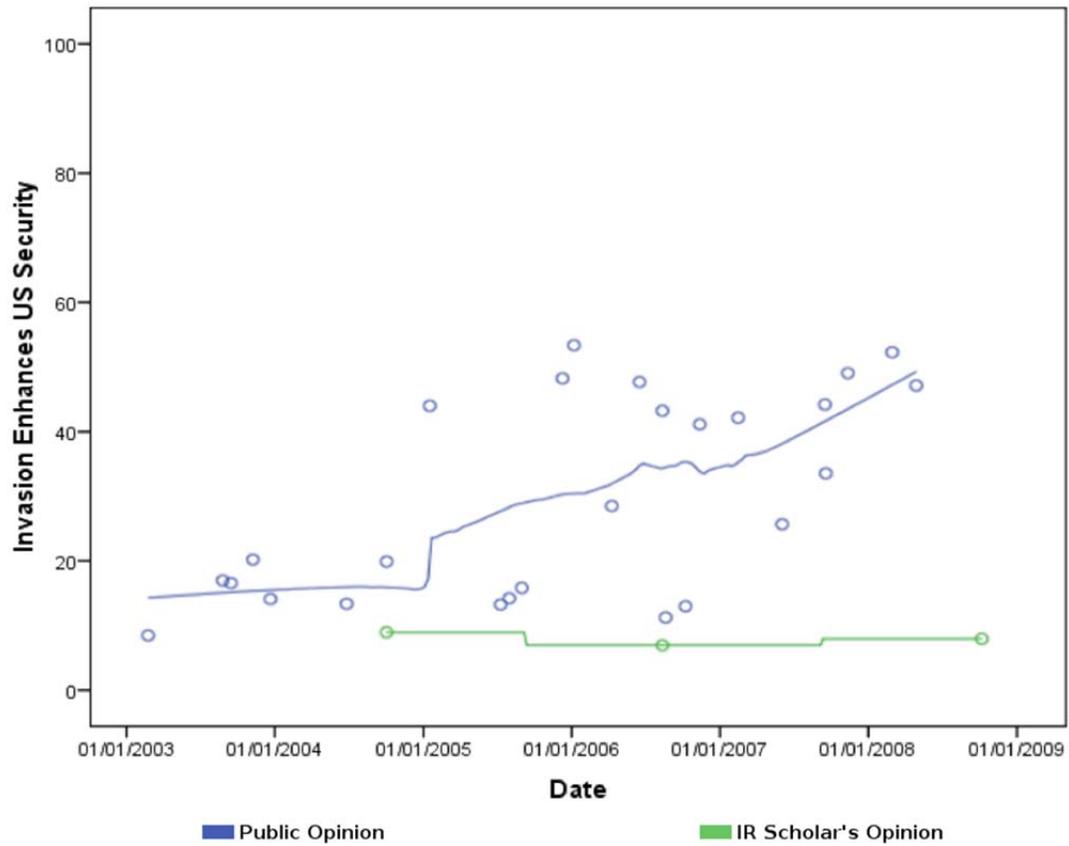
Figure 5: Public vs. Expert Opinion: Will Invasion Enhance U.S. Security

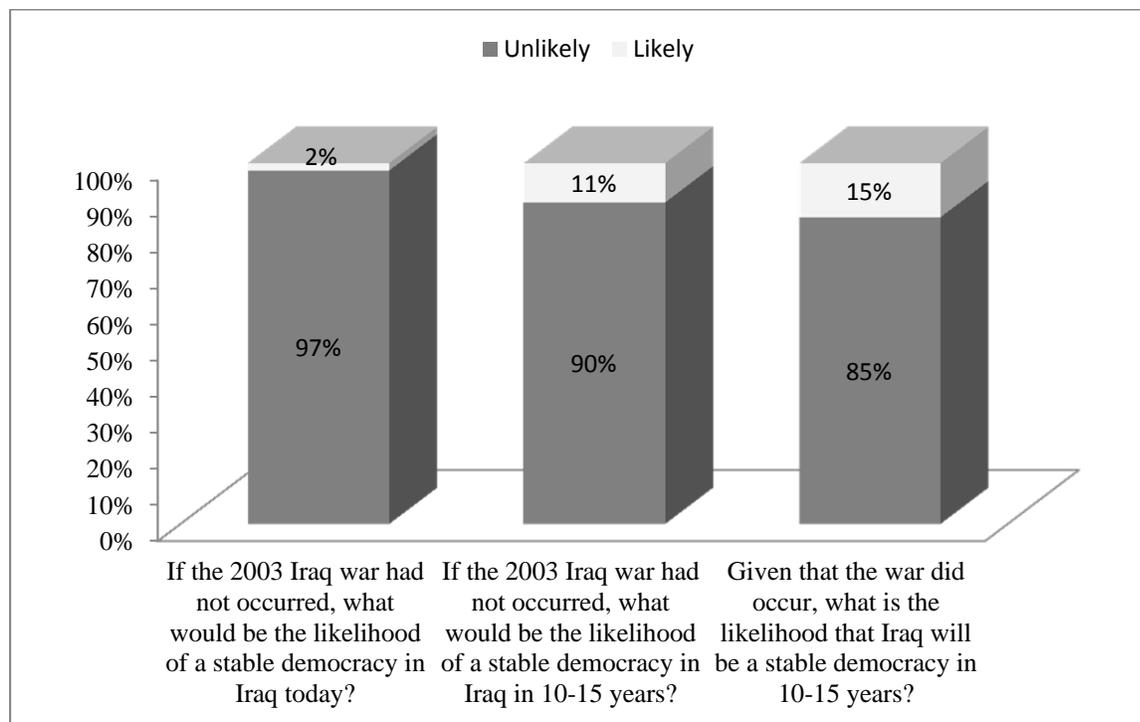
Figure 6: IR Expert Perceptions of Democracy in Iraq (2006)

Figure 7: Expert Support for Unilateral and Multilateral Action against North Korea and Iran (2006)

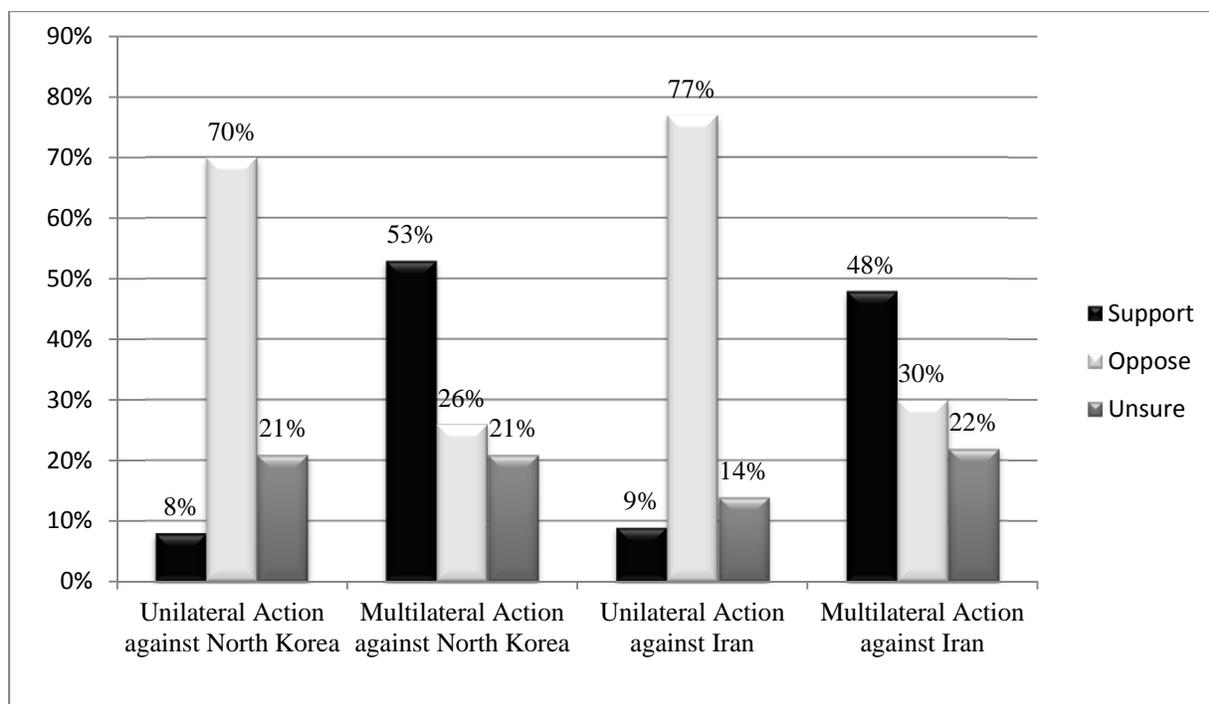


Table 2: Ideology and IR Scholars Support for 2003 Invasion**Support Iraq Invasion (2004 Percent)****Yes****No**

Conservatives	58	42
Moderates	18	82
Liberals	6	94

Support Iraq Invasion (2006 Percent)**Yes****No**

Conservatives	62	38
Moderates	19	81
Liberals	3	97

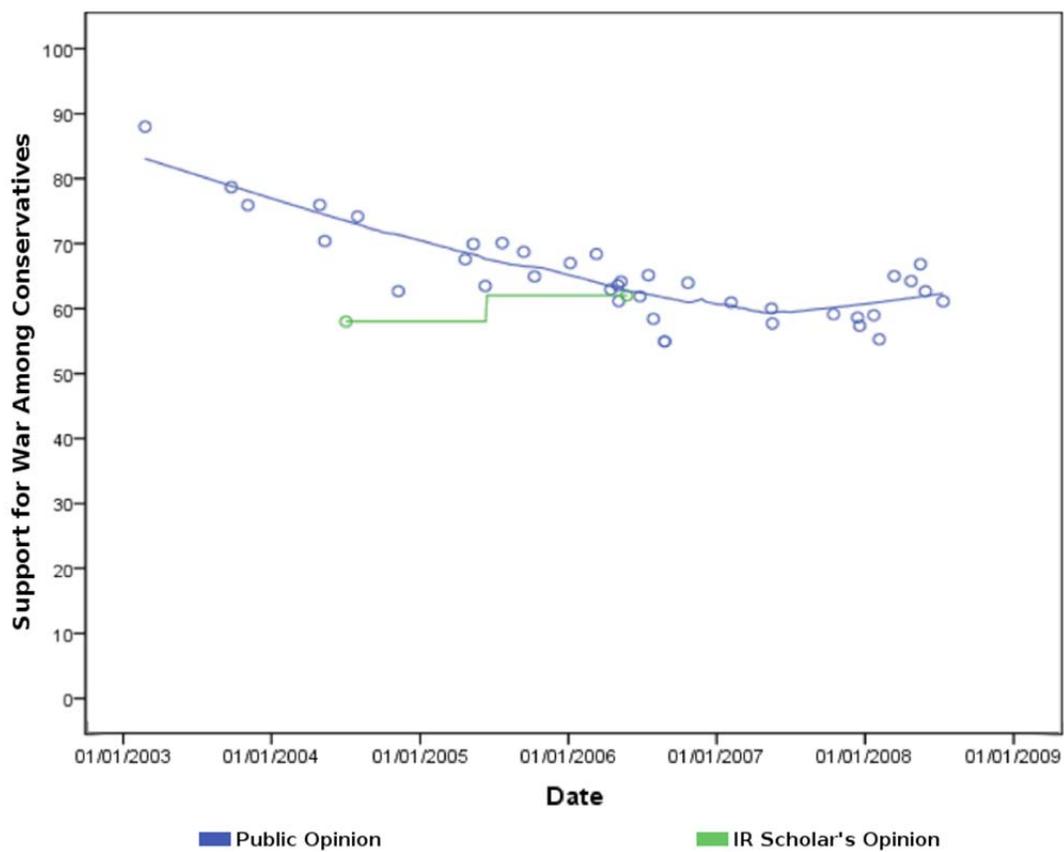
Figure 8: Support for the War Among Political Conservatives²⁷

Table 3: Balance of Opinions Expressed in Major US Newspapers regarding Iraq Invasion

	New York Times	USA Today	Wall Street Journal	Total
<i>Mean</i>	2.6	2.9	4.4	3.3
<i>Count</i>	354	89	296	739

1=anti-war and 5=pro-war.

	Support for Iraq War (1=Strongly opposed, 5=Strongly supported)					Belief that War enhanced U.S. Security (1=**put the category term here) 5=Strongly enhance				
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
WMD	5.661*** (0.521)				5.241*** (0.533)	5.353*** (0.434)				4.918*** (0.455)
Mideast Expert		.816*** (0.214)			.832** (0.366)		.681** (0.213)			0.375 (0.328)
Conservative			3.093*** (0.239)		1.718*** (0.348)			3.029*** (0.236)		1.615*** (0.332)
Realism				1.401*** (0.206)	0.266 (0.416)				1.419*** (0.201)	0.705 (0.381)
Liberalism					-0.292 (0.396)					-0.077 (0.380)
Marxism					-1.556 (1.797)					-1.256 (1.777)
Constructivism					-1.384**' (0.643)					-0.023 (0.589)
Constant	-5.407*** (0.501)	-2.297*** (0.116)	-2.766*** (0.134)	-2.479*** (0.125)	-5.614*** (0.552)	-4.999*** (0.410)	-2.193*** (0.111)	-2.663*** (0.128)	-2.419*** (0.121)	-5.332*** (0.450)
N	1102	1102	1102	1102	1102	1102	1102	1102	1102	1102
Pseudo-R2	0.5603	0.0177	0.2211	0.0562	0.6235	0.554	0.0121	0.2093	0.0582	0.6041

Note: Results from an ordered logit, robust standard errors in parentheses. *** sig at 1% ** sig. at 5%.

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¹ The 2004 survey included all faculty at U.S. colleges and universities who taught or did research in IR; the 2006 survey covered both U.S. and Canadian IR faculty members; and the 2008 survey included faculty in ten countries. We report only U.S. responses in this paper. For a comparison of U.S. and Canadian results see Lipson et al 2007, and Maliniak et al 2007a. For a ten-country comparison, see Jordan et al 2009; and Maliniak et al 2011. The TRIP survey also was conducted in 2011, but it no longer included questions on the war in Iraq.

² For related analyses of U.S. public opinion on the Iraq War, see Mueller 2005.

³ These data are available at <http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/>

⁴ At the time of the invasion in the late winter/early spring of 2003, survey questions took the form “Do you favor or oppose the US war with Iraq?” (Gallup/CNN/USA Today Poll, March 2003). Post-invasion (2004-2009), the question asked respondents the question retrospectively, usually in a form similar to “Looking back, do you think the United States did the right thing in taking military action against Iraq, or should the U.S. have stayed out?” (e.g., CBS News Poll October 2006).

⁵ February 2003 CBS News Poll.

⁶ The survey also was conducted in 2011, but it did not include any questions on Iraq.

⁷ An “IR scholar” is defined as an individual with an active affiliation with a university, college, or professional school, which excludes many IR experts employed in government, private firms, or think tanks.

⁸ In 2007-08 the *U.S. News and World Report* report on American higher education included 1,406 colleges and universities. On the 2004 survey see Peterson et al 2005a, and Peterson et al 2005b. On the 2006 survey see Maliniak et al 2007a, and Maliniak et al 2007b. On the 2008 survey see Jordan et al 2009, and Maliniak et al 2011.

⁹ In 2008 there were 1,406 schools in our sample, while there were 1,199 in 2006 and 1,157 in 2004. See Jordan et al 2009; Maliniak et al 2007a; Peterson et al 2005a.

¹⁰ Of the 4,673 individuals originally contacted in 2008, 547 respondents did not belong in the sample because they had died, changed jobs, retired, or been misidentified. We do not include these individuals in calculations of the response rate. 133 of the original 2,838 individuals were removed from the 2006 sample for similar reasons, while 86 of 2,406 were removed in 2004.

¹¹ Ideally, we would have access to snap polls that survey scholarly opinion in real time, just as we have public opinion polls that serve this purpose. The TRIP Project is conducting a pilot project of such a snap poll program in 2013-14.

¹² In 2008 scholars were not asked whether they had supported the Iraq War in 2003. This question was asked, however, of IR scholars in nine other countries. Much like U.S. responses in 2004 and 2006, only 11 percent of non-U.S. scholars surveyed in 2008 said that they had supported the war in 2003, and 80 percent reported having opposed it.

¹³ Fifty percent responded that the surge would somewhat increase U.S. security, while seven percent said it would sharply enhance it.

¹⁴ Thirty-seven percent of the 1,096 respondents opposed such a plan, and four percent didn’t know or were undecided.

¹⁵ The exact wording of the questions was: “If North Korea/Iran continues to produce material that can be used to develop nuclear weapons, would you support or oppose the US taking military action against North Korea/Iran?”

¹⁶ The exact wording of the questions was: “If North Korea/Iran continues to produce material that can be used to develop nuclear weapons, and the UN Security Council votes to use military force against North Korea/Iran, would you support or oppose the international community taking military action against North Korean/Iran?”

¹⁷ For example, see the 2002 *New York Times* ad opposing the war.

¹⁸ By 2011 only 16 percent of IR scholars considered themselves realists.

¹⁹ Using an Ordered Logit, we regress ideology and paradigm on support for the Iraq War as well as beliefs about whether or not the Iraq War would increase U.S. security. These results are reported in Appendix A.

²⁰ For a discussion of the gas tax controversy, see <http://gastax08.blogspot.com>.

²¹ Examples include the Cambridge-based Tobin Project, the Carnegie Corporation’s Cult of the Irrelevant Project, and the Bridging the Gap Project. As important, the U.S. government has self-consciously shifted resources toward applied IR and social science research in order to assist policy planning, intelligence analysis, or implementation of foreign policy in the field through the DOD’s Minerva Project, USAID’s Higher Education Solutions Network, and through the DOD’s Human Terrain Project.

²² Sources include data from CBS News (September, October, December 2003; July, August 2005; December 2006, September 2007), Gallup/CNN/USA Today (March 2003), Hart-Teeter/NBC/Wall Street Journal (November 2003), NBC/Wall Street Journal (June 2004, July 2005), PSRAI/Pew (July 2004, December 2005), CBS News/New York Times (October 2004; July, August, October 2006), LA Times (January 2005), Pew Research Center (October 2005; January, April, June, August, November 2006; February, May September 2007; February, April, June, September, October 2008), CNN/ORC (April, June, July, December 2008), USA Today/Gallup (July 2008), Time (October 2008).

²³ Includes data from: CBS News & CBS News/New York Times Polls (February, August, September, December 2003; October 2004; July, August 2005; August, October 2006; September 2007) to the question: "As a result of U.S. military action against Iraq, do you think the threat of terrorism against the United States has increased, decreased, or stayed about the same?" NBC News/Wall Street Journal Polls (November 2003; June, October 2004; July 2005) to the question: "Since the United States has taken military action against Iraq to remove Saddam Hussein from power, do you think the threat of terrorism against the United States has increased, decreased, or stayed about the same?" Pew Research Center Poll (December 2005; January, April, June, August, November 2006; February, May, September, November 2007; February, April 2008) to the question: "As I read a few specific things about Iraq, tell me if you think we are making progress or losing ground in each area: Preventing terrorists from using Iraq as a base for attacks against the U.S. and its allies."

²⁴ Figure 3 shows responses over time to the following question on the Pew Research Center Poll: "As I read a few specific things about Iraq, tell me if you think we are making progress or losing ground in each area: establishing democracy in Iraq." Responses used from March 2003; June 2004; October, December 2005; January, April, June, August, November 2006; February, May, September, November 2007; February, April 2008.

²⁵ CBS News Polls from 2003-2008.

²⁶ Scholarly opinion is from the 2004 and 2006 TRIP surveys. Public opinion is from the same sources reported in Figure 1.

²⁷ Data on scholarly opinion comes from the 2004 and 2006 TRIP surveys. Public opinion data is from the same sources as cited in Figure 1.