The Dubious Correspondence of U.S. Defence Spending Policy and Public Opinion
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One test of democratic representation is said to be the degree to which mass public opinion corresponds to the decisions of legislators, as measured by the content of public policy. There is significant debate over the level of sophistication of mass public opinion, and also the level of obligation that policy-makers have in the process of transference of opinion *into* policy. This short paper considers some of this discussion on correspondence between opinion and policy generally, and then focuses on the degree to which public opinion towards U.S. defence spending (and defence policy, broadly speaking) is reflected in actual defence spending budgets. If correspondence is in evidence, it can be said that there is policy consistency and responsiveness, but if only the direction of public preferences is addressed (and not also proportionality in the response), then there may be evidence of a significant democratic deficit.

Many analysts, both critics and defenders of the *democratic linkage* model (Brooks, 1985:251), begin their discussion by assessing opinion-policy linkage. As notes Brooks, “consistency between opinion and policy may occur frequently and is interpreted as evidence of significant democratic input (‘linkage’) in the policy-making process” (Brooks, 1985:251. See also Hartley and Russett, 1992:905, Wlezien, 1995:981, Wlezien, 1996:81, Page and Shapiro, 1983:175, Stimson et al., 1995:560). Wlezien agrees that “elected officials are expected to be sensitive to public opinion and to attempt to represent that opinion in policy because of the threat of electoral sanction” (Wlizien, 1996:81).

Page and Shapiro (1983:175), find that a high level of congruence between policy and public opinion is evident in the several hundred U.S. surveys they compared and that had been run between 1935 and 1979. The surveys explored American attitudes across a wide range of policy issues, and where there was “significant change in Americans’ policy preferences”[1] (there were 357 instances), policy outputs were compared after a one-year lag.[2] Sixty-six percent of cases indicated congruence between policy change and opinion change when “no-change” and “uncertain” cases were removed. Page and Shapiro argue that when “weak cases” are also removed, 87% of the remaining cases find a positive opinion-to-policy correlation.

Page and Shapiro’s evaluation contrasts strongly with Brooks, whose assessment is that evidence for linkage is low. Brooks finds that 58.5 percent of all cases examined indicate an absence of congruence between government and public opinion (1985:254). He also finds that there is greater incongruence for redistributive issues, an indication (he argues) that policy-makers are even less inclined to follow public opinion that challenges either "the economic elite's continued predominance" or "existing inequalities in economic and political power" (256).

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[1] Page and Shapiro defined significant change as 6% change or more in either direction in public preferences (1983:177).

[2] They also compared “no lag”, two, three and four year lags, and note that correspondence becomes evident when sufficient time is allowed to lapse, and the policy process can be properly engaged (1983:177).

Monroe's more recent data (1998:20) indicate a moderate level of correspondence between opinion and policy. 55% of all cases show consistency between majority preferences and subsequent policy decisions in the 1981-1993 period. While this is an indication of alignment, contrary to what Brooks' data show, it is also a drop from 1960-1979 where data indicated 63% consistency. Monroe points out that his early data and that of Page and Shapiro are on the most part consistent with one another (1998:8). His primary interest, however, is in the more recent downturn in opinion-policy correspondence. Monroe's explanations for the change point to several potential methodological discrepancies in the data collection processes,[3] increased partisanship and ideology-driven governance, a widening divide between Congress independence and the White House, committee shifts and changes in the "behaviour of the U.S. Supreme Court", and a sharp increase in the bias against change after 1974 (1998:24).

Monroe's observations about methodology may be a partial explanation for the contrary conclusions drawn by Brooks. Whereas Page and Shapiro considered "significant change in Americans' policy preferences" as 6% change or more (Page and Shapiro, 1983:177), Monroe "exclud[ed] 'no opinion', 'don't know' and similar categories" and checked for consistency based on support or opposition to policy change in the remaining salient issues.[4] But Brooks' standards for "consistency" may have differed from the standards for correspondence measured by others.[5] Brooks also chose to include all cases with greater than 3% "difference between majority and minority opinions" (Brooks, 1985:253). He notes that while his instruments for determining the "nature of public opinion" were generally "straightforward", some cases were "not as clear-cut". In those instances, a panel of "six expert judges" was used to clarify "nebulous or even contradictory" policy.

Dynamic Representation, Thermostat Effect, Issue Salience

Some have noted that public opinion correspondence may not only be evidence of opinion leading public policy, but also opinion reacting to policy direction originating from policy-makers' own preferences. That observation recognizes that responsiveness can be enhanced where there is a dynamic and interactive process, (in which policy makers respond to public opinion, but where public opinion may also be directed – or manipulated -- by policy-maker leadership).[6] A more critical evaluation of that relationship is found in Ginsberg's view that governments orchestrate opinion poll content in order to later legitimate their own policy goals (in Sharp, 1999:12). One may prefer to view this as a leadership prerogative or as manipulation of publics, even though the resulting correspondence between policy and public opinion may not be affected.

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[3] Monroe suggests that at least some of the discrepancy may have been due to "greater availability of survey data" in recent years, which resulted in a "relatively greater number of obscure suggestions that were never on the public or government agenda", the "intensive concentration of survey questions on some topics" and not others (resulting in the perception of increased salience), and different time lags permitted in assessing correspondence (Monroe,1998:22-23).

[4] There is much opportunity for debate over the process of selecting "salient" issues. As Monroe notes, (1979:7), "there seems to be no purely objective way" to determine the "important" issues.

[5] One notes a greater sensitivity to labour interests in the tone of Brooks' study. His interest may have been greater in capturing inconsistency between public preference and public policy, and for that reason the criteria for what defines "consistent" may have been more strict.

Wlezien's concept of a thermostat effect suggests that a dynamic relationship exists between policy-making and publics, whereby public preference for spending will react to spending practices, and vice versa, in a cyclical fashion (what he refers to as "dynamic representation" [Wlezien, 1996:98-100]). His method of calculating public preferences begins by discounting median public opinion (those who held status quo preferences) and then subtracting "the percentage of people who think we are spending 'too much' from the percentage of people who think we are spending 'too little'" (Wlezien, 1995:985). Wlezien tracked public preference responses to a range of social programs, as well as defence spending. He concludes that the thermostat effect is proof that the aggregated public is "reasonably well-informed about what policymakers do over time, at least in the defense spending domain and across a set of social spending domains" (1995:995).

A cycle of interaction between policy-makers and publics may also be evidence of an effective process of policy learning. Sharp notes, for instance, that public knowledge of technical subjects, subjects of low interest, and subjects likely to "elicit superficial reactions" may not be the stuff of unsophisticated publics' consideration. Political elites in fact may play a role in educating the public and thereby "transforming non-attitudes into meaningful preferences that can reasonably be expected to anchor policymaking" (Sharp, 1999:239). While this may herald a subsequent dynamism that produces a more robust democracy, it may also reveal a locking-in of policy preference by elites (and then also by publics) that may "over time cause policy to drift outside the zone of public acceptance" (Sharp, 1999:35).

Sharp's focus is on social welfare policy areas, where she finds that issue salience (and therefore the ***type*** of policy issue) is a fundamental consideration for tracking opinion-policy coherence. But, she argues, it is still "foolhardy to attribute policy change exclusively to the pressures of prevailing public opinion" when it is as likely (or more likely) linked to "social movements, organized interests and political elites" (Sharp, 1999:259).[7]

Some researchers have found variations in the extent of correspondence between opinion and policy. Page and Shapiro note that "salient large-change social issues" show greater opinion congruence than economic, welfare and foreign policies. They found 50% agreement on "matters of collective security" and "national defence" (53%), but 78% congruence on "large-change social issues" and 66% congruence on economic and welfare issues (1983:182). Page and Shapiro found that as issue salience increased, the greater was the congruence (1983:181).[8] Wlezien finds significantly greater responsiveness (and immediate negative feedback) for defence spending over other social spending[9], even though there is a clear disproportionate and lagged response to public support (see figure 1 in Wlezien, 1996:87). (The difference in correspondence found between Page and Shapiro, and Wlezien, may be explained by the relative ambiguity in the categorization of "national defence" as compared to the more precise "defence spending".)

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[6] It is legitimate to ask whether the initiation needs to be from public opinion in this process, in order for genuine representation to be in evidence. If decision makers or media lead in policy formation, and public opinion subsequently follows, is this manipulation of public opinion?

[7] On a significant normative note, Sharp points out that pandering to public opinion is not necessarily always in the best interests of democracy. She offers the example of the resistance of southern U.S. states to reformulating civil rights legislation (Sharp, 1999:250).

Other factors that are seen to affect opinion-policy correspondence have included gender[10] and social class, institutional type (Presidential office as compared to Congress or the judiciary), the type of state (centralized or federal), the quality and availability of information through the media[11], and issue complexity. According to Soroka and Wlezien (2003:27), the division of powers in national governance structures affect the degree to which public opinion is efficiently transferred to policy makers, and through policy makers into measurable policy.[12] Stimson et al., in testing for "policy liberalism of American government, 1966-90"[13] (1995:558), found that although the U.S. Presidency, Senate, House of Representatives and Supreme Court[14] all immediately convert "public opinion into public policy" (1995:560), there are differences in the speed and degree of institutional responsiveness. While confident in the veracity of their evidence for

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[8] "Salience" was defined as the reduction in proportion of those surveyed answering "don't know" or "no opinion". It is not certain that declaring positively or negatively to a survey question is necessarily a strong indicator of issue salience (prominence). Page and Shapiro acknowledge that their coding of responses was "not perfect" (1983:181). It could be argued that prominent issues that are also complex, technical or newly introduced, may not be conducive to simplistic responses. If so, "congruence" in some cases may be an indicator of simplistic thinking held by a large percentage of the public, and shared (or desired) by opinion-makers, whereas those publics more favourable to closer scrutiny of problems before responding either way ("no opinion") are not having their cautions considered. Consider for instance the difference in public perceptions where [1.] 25% believe too much is spent, 70% believe spending should not change, and 5% believe not enough is spent; as compared to [2.] 60 percent believe too much is spent, 0% are satisfied with the status quo, and 40% believe too little is spent. The "desire for change" would be the same (20% too much), but the spread of public preferences is quite different.

[9] Wlezien describes the public opinion-defending spending policy relationship as "best case" (1996:100).

[10] Modigliani finds that women were more likely than men to fall into the "isolationist-disengagement camp", because of a disposition towards the "traditional female sex role" which "places a lower value on active intrusions into new and distant environments" (1972:977). Eichenberg observes that women respondents show a greater inclination than before to support military intervention, and to share men's views on defence spending. Women are still "less supportive of the use of military force for any purpose, involving any type of military action, in every historical period" (Eichenberg, 2003:137). However the author finds that the rationale for use of force plays significantly into the calculus of support for intervention for both men and women, and relevant defence spending is therefore implicated. Because of data like Eichenberg's it is not clear whether the instruments for determining "support for defence spending" are precise enough in many of the studies under consideration in the current paper, if we are to properly assess the linkage of public preferences **for specific uses** of military budgets to actual budget allocations.

[11] Iyengar argues that there is a possibility that news viewers and programs react to the same cues, and therefore issue "salience" among publics may not be driven by media agenda-setting. Iyengar admits this conclusion would be contrary to expected results, although still of interest (1979:410).

[12] Brooks, however, found little evidence that a more centralized government authority (such as in the United States) was more inclined to representation than less centralized states, such as Canada and Britain (Brooks, 1985:255). One may need to consider the caveats noted earlier about Brooks' data, in assessing whether the difference in correspondence noted by Brooks reveals a bias towards Labour Party responsiveness.

[13] This arguably is also a blunt instrument for measuring opinion-policy cohesion, particularly in defence and foreign policy areas. Does "liberalism" require more or less defence spending, more or less multilateralism, more or less international activism?

[14] The Supreme Court is least responsive to electoral pressure, and also least responsive to public opinion (Stimson et al., 1995:560).

"domestic policy mood" responsiveness, Stimson et al. do admit that they "do not fully understand movement in public policy".

Several studies recognize the importance of separating evidence for a causal relationship between public opinion and public policy, from a spurious relationship where both opinion and policy are driven by the same world events or other externalities.[15] Some researchers, including Stimson et al. (1995)[16], have employed time series analysis in an effort to circumvent what might otherwise be a methodological failing. However Stone argues that whatever the apparent correspondence, logic suggests that if policy-makers react to the same objective stimuli that mass publics do, they must also be motivated by "the anticipated reactions of the general public".

Whether driven by, or leading, public opinion, politicians must take it into consideration when calculating the balance between their personal policy preferences, their partisan loyalties and their electoral risks.[17] Sensitivity to public interests and potential for policy revision are constrained by partisanship and electoral vulnerability but, as Stimson et al. note, pleasing constituents or ignoring the party line has it limits. A sea change in public opinion may not be manageable in short time frames because politicians can normally only "modify their behavior at the margin". Therefore, it should not be expected that electoral candidates will turn somersaults, even if they are inclined to "engage in strategic behavior" in order to "maximize electoral payoff". Leadership contenders, on the other hand, may "push ahead of the curve", hoping to anticipate public preference changes up the road (Stimson et al., 1995:545). According to the same authors, eventually "large-scale shifts in public opinion yield correspondingly large-scale shifts in government action" (p559).

Issue Salience and Defence Spending

That conclusion is of interest in the context of this paper's primary focus, which is the extent to which public preferences towards defence spending (particularly in the United States) have an impact on defence spending policy. American public opinion preferences towards defence spending are affected by many of the same methodological issues outlined above and that face most policy domains. If polling questions about defence spending preferences are ambiguous, for instance, responses may convey inadequate information to policy-makers.[18] If polling results are contrary to legislators' designs, politicians may pick and choose survey results that better fit existing personal, institutional or partisan agendas. Part of any evaluation of defence policy responsiveness lies in the assessment of whether public evaluations of salient issues are "rational" enough or rapid enough to be taken into consideration by policy-makers.

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[15] Stone suggests that because it may be "impossible to empirically distinguish reciprocal influence from responsiveness" (Stone:24), both models are probably correct and do not invalidate one another.

[16] Stimson et al. note that while their ordering and time lag methodology does not means policy doesn't affect public opinion preferences, "it definitively precludes the possibility of opinion responding to **current** policy" (emphasis added).

[17] Some argue that electoral proximity should clearly reveal responsiveness. Brooks would disagree (Brooks, 1985:258).

[18] Where public opinion polls have artificially or incompletely crafted questions, Gaubatz notes, aggregated public opinion appears to reveal a "serious problem of intransitivity". The result, he notes, is that the "aggregate policy preference that would emerge from a distribution of individual preferences such as this is very much a function of how the question is asked or of what mechanism is used to figure the result"

Knopf argues that "the greatest portion of public responsiveness is instantaneous" (1998:557), and that therefore the traditional view that the public is slow to react to threat perceptions, is false.[19] Knopf found that the public generally reacts in a moderate (and arguably rational) fashion to available information emanating from "real-world developments" (1998:565). And yet, he notes, the "opinion swing is not particularly large", which hints at the existence of pre-existing broader preferences, or a resistance to change, that may be immune to strategic shifts in the international climate. However, public preferences that are consistent with the direction of global patterns, may still not "tell us whether actual majority preferences tend to be in tune with [real] international circumstances" (1998:565).[20]

Jentleson and Britton address this discrepancy somewhat and find that "principal policy objectives" (PPO) held by policy-makers influence how mass publics make judgements about defence policy choices that justify military interventions (and presumably also defence expenditures financing those missions). They argue that variations in PPO "have a greater and more consistent impact on public support levels than interests, risk, multilateralism, or elite cues" (1998:414, see also Eichenberg, 2003:137-8). In the six post-Cold War cases they analyzed and that occurred between 1992 and 1996,[21] the authors found that responding to humanitarian imperatives, interest in foreign policy restraint (of target regime) and then presidential cues all caused significant increases in public support for intervention; while congressional opposition and risk assessments caused significant reductions in public support. However any justifiable "humanitarian intervention" (which draws a full 28.8% increase in support) will trump opposition to intervention based on risk to U.S. personnel (-17.6%) by more than 10%.[22] While the American public continues to prefer non-military responses to crises[23], they maintain a "basic understanding of the need to use military force to restrain foreign policy aggression", but also a reticence over becoming embroiled in an intractable military entanglement (2003:415).

(1995:545-6). Sharp points to the importance of designing questions so that responses aren't distorted, and so that choices include "finding a policy position that is responsive to the moderate middle" (Sharp: 1999:29).

[19] Using data produced by Hartley, Jeffrey Knopf (1998:556) finds that public opinion reflects the impact of change in net defence spending most graphically immediately after the change occurs (no lag time) and less so as lag time measures increase.

[20] This discussion may appear to be somewhat laboured at this point, but it is significant for the argument that follows, which is that momentous events of the scale of the end of the Cold War and fall of the Berlin Wall may elicit some public response (and policy response). This does not mean that the scale of response is proportionate with the scale of the event, or that the response has been sustained.

[21] Somalia, Rwanda, North Korea, Haiti, Iraq and Bosnia.

[22] While factors such as multilateral responses, interests and risk are less in evidence as independent influences affecting public preferences, they may be "subsumed" in the raw scores (Jentleson et al, 1998:414).

[23] At the same time, foreign policy and defence spending both appear to have dropped in the list of American public issue interests.

Contrary to conventional wisdom that indicates there is an irrational (nationalistic) "rally 'round the flag" effect that occurs when U.S. presidents authorize the use of military force, at least one study finds that presidential popularity has risen[24] in only 38 out of the 102 cases of intervention in the period 1950 through 1984 (Lian and Oneal:279-283). This suggests that policy of this type may have less direct impact on public opinion than expected, particularly where public opinion and government intervention policy are similarly driven by real world events. The authors point out that the president's ability to manipulate events for electoral gain is constrained by the media and the shadow of political opponents.[25]

Defence spending and the problem of proportionality

Even given a certain agreed rationality to public opinion on defence spending and defence policy issues, there are many reasons that might justify policy-makers not responding in lockstep to public opinion. There is wide debate over whether public opinion may be more volatile, less rational or ill informed about complexities only experts (let alone politicians) can absorb.[26] That being the case, it is not surprising that Hartley and Russett find that ***real world events, not public opinion***, are the greatest influence on U.S. military spending decisions (1992:910). While there are several factors influencing ***public*** preferences towards defence spending, including current economic climate and Democratic vs. Republican partisanship, Wlezien found the "preferred level of spending appears to follow the flow of United States-Soviet relations" (1995:988).[27] To measure this, he coded a "like/dislike" of Russia scale as a proxy for the public perception of a Soviet threat. His results showed that while a "net dislike" of the Soviet Union coincided with increased public support for defence spending, a much greater level of responsiveness (more than four times as great) was related to most recent defence appropriations – public support for new spending falls after increases in defence spending, and rises after decreases in defence spending. In other words, public perceptions of over- or under-spending on defence are in some ways disconnected, *or can be disconnected*, from perceived security threats.

Changes in defence spending levels may indeed reflect a thermostatic effect (as suggested by Wlezien), but the overall impact on the total military budget's size may still be marginal. Hartley and Russett point out that "for every 1%

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[24] In the study, the rally effect was measured by comparing popularity in the last available poll before and first poll immediately after the interventions. Prominent crises that were well reported brought the largest increases in support for the presidents' popularity rating, "but the benefit to the president is still small, only 1-3% on average, depending on the group polled and the definition of 'prominently reported'" (Lian and Oneal, 1993:287).

[25] Lian and Oneal also optimistically concluded that "dramatic international actions that do not involve the use of force must necessarily generate significant rallies" (295).

[26] See Hartley and Russett, 1992:905-906, for example.

[27] Wlezien did find that there was a possible "guns or butter trade-off" in evidence (1995:989), whereby support for/opposition to levels of defence spending were inversely related to support for/opposition to social program spending. He also found that optimistic economic forecasts favoured increased defence spending.

change in support for (or opposition to) increased spending there is about a $.33 billion increase (or decrease) in defense spending. This is a small but not insignificant effect, especially considering that swings in public opinion were as large as 25% during the late 1970s and early 1980s" (1995:911). But, Hartley and Russett admit, the public does not have an "overwhelming impact" on the total ($300 billion) military budget.[28]

Is a significant change in the public perception of threat reflected in U.S. military spending?

Hartley and Russett found that when controlling for other influences on policy, public opinion does exert "an effect on military spending in a way that is substantively plausible as a cause" (although during the Cold War, perception by policy-makers of change in Soviet military spending -- not public opinion pressure directly -- was the "greatest influence on [policy] change").[29] This effect of public opinion on policy, they note, is systemic and not an erratic occasional relationship (1992:911).[30]

However, Wlezien finds that overall, the public seems to have a subjective "ideal" defence (and social) spending level "in mind", and that amount is an increase "by about 4 to 8% on an annual basis" over any current level of spending. If so, then policy-makers, sensitive to public opinion, may not feel obliged to assess defence spending needs by keeping a close eye on strategic threats. This is particularly true if, as Knopf finds, the greatest "portion of public responsiveness [to defence spending change] is instantaneous", based principally on an ideal level of spending, but somewhat disconnected from real world threats (or threat reductions). As Wlezien points out, policy makers "appear to respond solely to the most recent information about public preferences when appropriation decisions are made" (Wlezien, 1996:88). Therefore if policy-makers respond quickly to public pressures to cut or to raise spending, the extent of budget change may be of much lower magnitude than real world threats assessments would seem to justify.

Bartels (cited in Russett et al., 1994:18-19) has indicated that changed attitudes about the Soviet threat were "necessary but not sufficient to precipitate significant restructuring of defense spending preferences" as "only the most informed stratum of the general public has so far succeeded in grasping… the *implications"* of changed circumstances or how they should impact U.S. defense policy. Russett et al. found that 80% of those who in 1988 had thought the Soviet

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[28] While a 1% change in public opinion represents $.33 billion change in the budget allocation for defence, 1% of $300 billion is $3 billion.

[29] They determined that "if the percentage of public opinion favoring increases in military spending rises, then the level of military spending will increase. Conversely, if the percentage of public opinion opposing increases in military spending rises, then actual spending trends [do] come down" (Hartley and Russett, 1992:911). Hartley and Russett also found that: the gap between US and Soviet spending was not a significant factor; and that the greater the increase in the deficit, the increased pressure against increased military spending.

[30] They also found that public policy did not itself subsequently affect public opinion -- "public opinion may in fact be exogenous to policy on military spending" (1992:911). This finding, argues Wlezien, came as a result of Hartley and Russett failing to measure uncombined public preferences for defence spending at "roughly the same point in time in each year". By not doing so, the authors "may mask public responsiveness to policy (and exaggerate representation)" (Wlezien, 1996:85-86).

Union constituted a serious threat "*did not* think the same about Russia in 1992". An "overwhelming majority" also felt U.S. defence spending should be cut. Despite these indicators of public interest in spending shifts, the "fight over how much" should be cut may have been decided by the battle between "ideological groups" or the invention of new threats, real or imagined. Russett et al. argue that any dramatic change in attitudes towards post-Cold War level spending, to be acted upon, will need to be deeply embedded both in government institutions and in the practice of the media.

As notes Knopf, this non- responsiveness by policy-makers may dominate the post-Cold War stage, and obscure security assessments that may have been exaggerated. He points out that publics arguably "should have reacted even more strongly to the growth of Soviet spending" than they did. However, "recognizing that the question of whether majority opinion is sensible is in fact a different question from whether change at the margin is sensible." He asks: "How often does the majority preference seem to reflect an appropriate response to external conditions?" (Knopf, 1998:562, 566).

Page and Shapiro ponder the same question, noting that "political responsiveness" requires only that "*some* movement of policy, however big or little, in the same direction as an opinion shift" must be visible. Stubbing (in Higgs and Kilduff, 1993) finds that anticipated cuts in spending "are simply deferred to the next year's budget, and the overall total is never cut below the minimum level acceptable to the military leadership".

In that context, we might ask ourselves what effect on U.S. military spending should we have expected from the global transformations that signaled the end of the Cold War?[31] U.S. defence spending did "bottom out" in 1998 when substantial defence cuts related to the post-Cold War "peace dividend" were implemented. Former Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara in 1990 argued that cutting the defence budget in half would "enhance America's security" and Senator Sam Nunn, chairman of the Armed Services Committee, "called for slashing $7 billion from the $295 billion proposed by the Administration for the next fiscal year, and $190 billion over the next five years" (Gieger, 1990).

However, spending began to increase in 1999, and has every year since then. Current U.S. defence spending levels are close to those at the peak of the Cold War and are expected to rise to US$480 billion per year by 2007.[32] Conetta and Knight's evaluation (1997) of the current malaise finds that "despite the real 21% reduction in US spending during the period 1986-1994, the change in what 'potential threat states' spend produced a change in America's relative position equivalent to a 1986 US spending ***increase*** of 157 percent" (emphasis added)[33].

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[31] Russett et al. (1994:19) note that support for defence spending reductions actually preceded the end of the Cold War.

[32] See Clements et al, Murray, Regehr, "AFP", Shah and Hellman in the bibliography for estimates.

[33] Shah notes that the "nine potential enemies" of the US (seven "rogues" plus Russia and China) combined spent on 31% of the U.S. military budget (estimated to be US$399.1 billion for 2004).

Conclusion

This paper, in its review of public policy and public opinion correspondence, finds moderate to strong evidence of a "linkage" between the two. The strength of that relationship may vary from country to country, by issue type and in duration and intensity. There are occasions where mass public opinion initiates an effect on policy decision-making, or where policy in turn influences public perceptions, perhaps in an interactive manner. Both the "thermostat" model that suggests a cycling between policy and opinion, and the policy learning process, have strong explanatory power for clarifying this relationship, although there is no certainty that the relationship is a causal one.

Defence spending direction is among the more salient public policy issues and shows a level of correspondence with public preferences (Wlezien's "dynamic representation"), but also to world events. It is possible that both the public and opinion-makers are reacting similarly to those events. Nonetheless, there are also indications that defence-spending shifts do not correspond proportionately to dramatic changes in the strategic environment. This is probably a reflection of institutional resistance, but also evidence that public insistence on dramatic reorientation in defence policy, in the wake of the demise of the Soviet threat and close of Cold War confrontation, has not been effectively sustained.

It may be premature to acknowledge irrevocability of this broken linkage between public post-Cold War expectations and U.S. defence spending policy. However, the widely held concern is a palpable one, particularly as new threats seem to provide "suitable" justification for increased defence spending. This paper concludes, as did Russet et al., that democratic theory itself is challenged where old ways continue to "persist after a fundamental change in the international system".[34]

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[34] Page and Shapiro conclude with a cautionary note that is also consistent with this paper's findings: "Even to the degree that policy does react to public opinion, one should be cautious about bestowing the normative imprimatur of 'democracy' without taking account of the quality of that opinion: what kind of information it is based on, what has influenced it, and perhaps how closely it corresponds with objective standards of citizens' interests. Even if public opinion is truly a proximate cause of policy, it may itself be affected by factors not wholly compatible with normative concepts of democracy." (1983:189).

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