

Continuity and Change in the Domestic and Foreign Policy Beliefs of
American Opinion Leaders*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Two years ago historian and former presidential adviser Arthur Schlesinger, once a vocal critic of American intervention in the Vietnam war, wrote that the age of American internationalism was coming to an end. Looking back on the commitment to collective security during the Cold War, he described the hope that "Americans had made the great turning and would forever after accept collective responsibilities" as "an illusion."

It is now surely clear that the upsurge in American internationalism during the Cold War was a reaction to what was seen as the direct and urgent Soviet threat to the security of the United States. It is to Joseph Stalin that Americans owe the 40-year suppression of the isolationist impulse. The collapse of the Soviet threat faces us today with the prospect that haunted Roosevelt half a century ago--the return to the womb in American foreign policy. . . . The isolationist impulse has risen from the grave, and it has taken the new form of unilateralism.¹

Schlesinger's essay went on to describe declining support for internationalism across the entire spectrum of American society, from the "housewife in Xenia, Ohio," to members of the Council on Foreign Relations, to many officials in Washington.

As we approach both the millennium and the end of the first decade of the Cold War, are we indeed witnessing a fundamental redefinition of the U.S. role in the world along the lines described in Schlesinger's obituary for "a magnificent dream?" For almost six decades since Pearl Harbor there has been a widespread belief among American leaders that vital national interests require the U.S. to play an active leadership role in world affairs; disagreements among elites have tended to focus not on the desirability of assuming the burdens--and enjoying the benefit--of international leadership but, rather, on the goals, strategies and tactics that should be employed in implementing that role. For example, even the sharp

differences between incumbent Jimmy Carter and challenger Ronald Reagan that surfaced during the 1980 presidential campaign were not about whether the U.S. should take an active position in world affairs, but rather about the goals, values, and strategies that should inform and guide the country in its international undertakings. Reagan emphasized the need to restore a military status that he charged had been compromised by the misguided pursuit of détente and arms control by the Nixon, Ford, and Carter administrations, and to confront more forcefully an evil and expansionist Soviet empire. In contrast, Carter was no more inclined than Reagan to reduce America's internationalist stance, but he sought to use that leadership position in the service of rather different goals and values. His definition of a "foreign policy that the American people can be proud of" included an emphasis on arms control rather than arms racing and promoting such values as human rights. Thus, if Schlesinger's diagnosis of contemporary American foreign policy has correctly unearthed a surge toward isolationism and unilateralism it would be a watershed in thinking about foreign affairs comparable to that triggered by the attack on Pearl Harbor more than half a century ago.

How compelling is the thesis that we are undergoing such a fundamental change in beliefs about the country's appropriate role in the world? What evidence suggests that Schlesinger may in fact have discerned an important transformation in American thinking about foreign affairs? Several points come to mind. First, as has been noted by Schlesinger and so many others that it has almost become a cliché, the U.S. has lost the guiding beacon of the Cold War; opposition to the expansion of Soviet influence was so widely regarded a vital national interest that it provided a default position for American policymakers that usually prevailed in the absence of a powerful case to the contrary. Not only are the links between core American interests and the outcomes of post-Cold War conflicts such as those in Haiti, Somalia, and Bosnia harder to establish, but it may not be easy to agree even upon the indicators of success or failure of military intervention in such conflicts.

Recent elections might offer some additional grounds for supporting Schlesinger's analysis. The 1994 midterm elections provided the Republicans with majorities in both the Senate and House for the first time in 52 years. The Republican "contract with America" included several provisions with isolationist and unilateralist overtones. Moreover, the presidential candidacies of Patrick Buchanan and Ross Perot, while ultimately failing to gain either the Republican nomination or the White House, represented non-trivial alternative conceptions of the general U.S. role in international affairs, as well as of preferences on such specific issues as trade and protectionism, alliance, commitments, immigration policy, and the like. It is by no means certain that results of the 1992 and 1996 elections are the final acts in semi-isolationist and unilateralist challenges within either political party.

Although generational theses have rarely provided wholly persuasive explanations of continuity and change in foreign policy, the 1990s have in fact witnessed a major change at the leadership level that might plausibly be linked to ways of thinking about international affairs. The defeats of George Bush and Bob Dole in the 1992 and 1996 elections represent the "last hurrah" of a generation that came to adulthood during World War II, a conflict in which both Bush and Dole served with valor. Indeed, until Bill Clinton's inauguration, all post-World War presidents save Ronald Reagan had had combat experience. In contrast, the current leaders in the White House, House of Representative [Newt Gingrich], and Senate [Trent Lott] share an important common experience--extraordinary efforts to escape military service.

But the case for a fundamental change in American orientations toward world affairs is not entirely compelling because there are also some reasons to suspect that continuity has not fully given way to change during recent years. Surveys of the general public reveal that a substantial majority of Americans continue to support an "active role in world affairs," a point acknowledged by Schlesinger but dismissed as little more than lip-service to "euphonious generalities in support of internationalism" because of declining public enthusiasm for some more specific international goals.² Nor have opinion leaders, the most

internationalist stratum of American society for many decades, shown much inclination to abandon their views in this respect.³

More detailed studies, drawing on evidence from the late 1980s and early 1990s, have generally found that even the startling events marking the end of the Cold War, culminating in disintegration of the USSR, did not give rise to equally dramatic changes in public opinion. Appraisals of quite specific aspects of foreign affairs--for example the perceived level of threat from the Soviet Union--may have changed to reflect international events, but the basic structures of attitudes toward foreign affairs proved quite resistant to change.⁴ If the spectacular developments of 1988-1992 did not yield substantial changes in foreign policy orientations, are there compelling reasons to believe that those of the four subsequent years have done so? Several acute observers of the American political arena noted in the early 1980s that the formulation of American foreign policy had become increasingly marked by strident partisan and ideological bickering.⁵ There is little evidence that the end of the Cold War or events of the post-Cold War period have softened, much less bridged, these partisan and ideological cleavages. More specifically, it is not wholly clear that recent years have witnessed the emergence of a bipartisan post-Cold War consensus favoring isolationism and unilateralism.

In short, one can develop a plausible line of reasoning in support of two quite contradictory hypotheses, the first of which summarizes Schlesinger's lament.

Hypothesis 1. The United States is undergoing a fundamental shift in orientation toward world affairs; more specifically, the trend is in the direction of a more isolationist and unilateralist stance.

Hypothesis 2. Continuities in American orientation toward world affairs tend to outweigh changes; that is, changes are concentrated on attitudes toward quite specific questions of means, strategies, and tactics, while the more basic beliefs, including preferences on the

extent of American international involvement and attitude structures, have remained relatively stable.

The analyses that follow focus on evidence of change and continuity in American orientations toward world affairs among one important constituency--opinion leaders. They will do so by analyzing three related but distinct aspects of elite opinion that may exhibit either change or continuity, beginning with trends on some important questions that have been posed over an extended period of time spanning the Cold War, the end of that conflict, and the initial years of the post-Cold War period. Data will be presented on attitudes on such issues as the proper U.S. role in the world, appropriate foreign policy goals, and the circumstances that might warrant the use of American military power.

The second stage of the of analysis will assess change and continuity in attitude structures on [1] foreign policy issues, [2] domestic issues, and [3] the relationship between attitudes toward domestic and foreign policy issues. Which attitudes cluster together, and how tight are the links among them? During the Cold War, for example, there were very close links between assessments of Soviet foreign policy goals, support for a policy of containment, the preferred level of American defense spending, the desirability of erecting a missile defense system, views on the United Nations, and many other important aspects of foreign and defense policy. On the other hand, opinions on such questions as trade and relations with Israel, while not lacking in controversy, tended to be independent of stances on Cold War issues. Have these patterns persisted despite the end of the Cold War? Alternatively, have new patterns among attitudes emerged? Or has the end of the Cold War dissolved prior attitude structures without replacing them with new ones? Similarly, earlier surveys have shown that there are tight links between such disparate domestic issues as school busing for purposes of integration, capital punishment, school prayer, income redistribution, protection of the environment, and the Equal Rights Amendment. To what extent have these patterns persisted?

The analysis of attitude structures will also examine the linkages between views on domestic and foreign policy issues to determine whether cleavages on these issues overlap or cut across each other. During the 1940s and 1950s, they were largely independent. Warren Campbell and his associates summarized the dominant pattern that emerged from studies of public opinion during the years immediately following World War II. "Across our sample as a whole in 1956 there was no relationship between scale positions of individuals on the domestic and foreign attitudinal dimensions."⁶ Partisanship characterized responses to domestic issues but not to foreign policy issues. V.O. Key uncovered a similar pattern. Assessing the relationship between internationalism--a willingness to tolerate international involvement--and domestic liberalism, he concluded, "The lines of cleavage in the two policy areas did not coincide."⁷ Other studies came to similar conclusions.⁸ In contrast, evidence from the period since the mid-1970s suggests that overlapping rather than cross-cutting cleavages characterize many aspects of attitudes on domestic and foreign policy.⁹

The third stage of the analysis examines the socio-demographic correlates of domestic and foreign policy attitudes, again with a view toward identifying continuities and changes. Most of the evidence from the 1970s and 1980s revealed that party identification, ideology, and education were among the strongest sources of attitudes.¹⁰ Have these patterns persisted into the mid-1990s or have they been replaced by new ones? For example, have cleavages defined by gender or generation supplemented or replaced those of party and ideology?

In summary, the pages that follow will be guided by two hypotheses--one emphasizing continuity and the other stressing change during the two decades ending in 1996--with respect to three aspects of American elite opinion: substantive aspects of the country's foreign relations, attitude structures, and the socio-demographic correlates of such opinions.

II. DATA AND METHODS

The Foreign Policy Leadership Project surveys, initiated in 1976 and replicated every four years since, provide the primary sources of evidence for the analyses that follows. Each of the six surveys was conducted by means of a long questionnaire that was mailed to samples of approximately 4,000 opinion leaders whose names had been drawn from such general sources as Who's Who in America, and Who's Who of American Women, as well as more specialized directories listing leaders in occupations that are under represented in Who's Who, including media leaders, politicians, military officers, labor leaders, State Department and Foreign Service Officers, foreign policy experts outside government, and the like. In two cases--chief editorial writers of high circulation newspapers and students at the National War College--the entire population of the groups rather than samples were included in the survey. Forty-four of the items on the 1996 questionnaire have been included in each of the six surveys, providing an opportunity to track trends on responses to them across a twenty-year period.

Return rates for the FPLP surveys have ranged between 53 and 65 percent. In 1996, 2,141 opinion leaders filled out and returned the questionnaire for a return rate of 54 percent. As in the previous five surveys, return rates across occupational groups varied rather widely. Whereas only one third of the labor leaders returned their questionnaires, well over 55 percent of foreign policy experts, military officers, and those whose names were drawn from Who's Who in America and Who's Who of American Women did so. The relatively low return rate from labor leaders is one of the constant features in the six surveys.

III. TRENDS IN ATTITUDES

Foreign policy

Twelve of the questions in the 1992 and 1996 surveys address aspects of the proper U.S. role in the world, and some of them had also been included in the preceding four studies. The results, summarized in Table 1, provide only modest evidence of a systematic and widespread stampede toward withdrawal from world affairs during recent years. Indeed, the most apparent change occurred in 1992, and that was in the

direction of assuming more rather than fewer international obligations. Whereas in the surveys conducted during the Cold War--those from 1976 through 1988--only about one-third of the opinion leaders agreed that the United States "should take all steps including the use of force to prevent the spread of communism," the two most recent surveys revealed that solid majorities have agreed that the U.S. should be prepared to use force to "prevent aggression by any expansionist power" [Table 1, item C]. Although one should avoid reading too much into responses to any single question, these data would appear to call into question the charge that Americans have only cared about stopping aggression by communist countries--some asserted that they did so to an obsessive if not pathological degree--and that, with the disappearance of the Soviet threat, they have lost an interest in maintaining a stable world order.

Responses to several other questions would also seem to challenge the validity of Schlesinger's fears of a rush to isolationism and unilateralism. Since 1992 there has been a rather sharp decline in support for the propositions that the U.S. should let its allies shoulder their own defense burdens [item E], and that "America's conception of its leadership role in the world must be scaled down" [item F]. Moreover, only a quarter of the respondents agreed with a restrictive view of the country's vital interests wherein they are "largely confined to Western Europe, Japan and the Americas" [item I].

The 1996 survey did, however, find some rather modest evidence of reduced support for internationalism and multilateralism. Compared to 1992, Patrick Buchanan's call for a foreign policy that puts the U.S. first, second, and third [item G] gained some support, as did the proposition that the U.S. should limit its international role to preserving peace and stability [item J]. Additionally, only one respondent in ten was willing to intervene in the domestic affairs of other countries in the name of peace and democracy [item L]. The lack of enthusiasm for the latter proposition may represent increased support for isolationism or, alternatively, it may indicate that, after sobering experiences in Vietnam, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Somalia, and elsewhere, Americans have become somewhat skeptical about the consequences of

such interventions, no matter how well intended. This result is consistent with Jentleson's finding that a "pretty prudent public" supports the use of force to restrain aggressor states but not to impose internal changes within another country.¹¹

On balance, then, the evidence in Table 1 would appear to provide rather meager support for the thesis of a post-Cold War American retreat into isolationism and unilateralism. Although support for some items with isolationist and unilateralist implications [items G,J,K, and L] increased during the four year interval ending in 1996, it is also worth noting that none of them gained the approval of as many as one respondent in three.

Further insight into trends on American thinking about international affairs may be gleaned from a cluster of questions about the importance of various foreign policy goals. Many of the items have appeared in each of the six FPLP surveys, as well as in six studies conducted between 1974 and 1994 by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations. The evidence in Table 2 provides considerable support for the thesis of declining importance attached to foreign affairs, especially when the 1996 results are compared with those of the survey four years earlier. However, a longer term perspective indicates that in several cases the 1992 results may represent an anomaly. For example, the importance attributed to strengthening the United Nations [item C] reached an exceptionally high level in 1992, no doubt in part because the successful Gulf War of 1991 was conducted under the formal authorization of several Security Council resolutions. Support for the goal of strengthening the U.N. declined quite sharply in 1996, but to a level that was quite typical of each of the other surveys. A similar pattern emerged on several other questions, including the importance of protecting weaker nations, a goal that probably received higher than normal support in 1992 as a result of the successful liberation of Kuwait a year earlier [item D].

That said, the evidence in Table 2 rather strongly suggests a declining sense of urgency about many foreign policy goals, especially about those clustered under the heading of "world order economic issues."

The end of the Cold War has coincided with an especially sharp decline in importance attributed to combating hunger [item G] and improving the standard of living in less developed countries [item H]. Moreover, the 1996 results on these questions are not merely a drop from abnormally high levels in 1992; they are part of a longer term trend that has sometimes been labeled "compassion fatigue."

Goals that formed the core of American foreign policy during the Cold War did not evoke a great deal of urgency in 1996 but, with one exception, the results do not represent a sharp shift. Not surprisingly, "containing communism" has ranked as the least important goal since the end of the Cold War.

Energy security [item I] continues to be an important goal, but two other economic interests--protecting jobs [item J] and business interests [item K]--have never been regarded by those taking part in the FPLP surveys as being of great urgency. Nor have these opinion leaders ever ascribed much importance to promoting such American values as human rights [item N] and democracy [item O] abroad. Finally, two items introduced in the 1996 survey do not permit a trend analysis; they reveal that stopping the flow of illegal drugs into the U.S. [item I] ranks among the most important goals, whereas controlling illegal immigration [item M] does not.

Despite the changes that appear in Table 2, the 1996 results resemble those from 1992 in one respect: the top ranking goals in both surveys are identical [if we exclude the drug question that did not appear in 1992]: preventing nuclear proliferation, arms control, international economic cooperation, energy security, and global environmental protection. It is also worth noting that the lowest ranking goals are quite similar in the two surveys.

One of the major themes in Schlesinger's essay is that Americans have allegedly lost a willingness to risk casualties in undertakings that may be vital to the security of allies and the preservation of a decent world order. One of the new questions in the 1996 FPLP survey asked respondents to indicate whether

they favor or oppose the use of American military forces in a dozen hypothetical situations which span a broad range of issues and geographical areas. As indicated in Table 3, support for the deployment of U.S. forces varies widely, from a high of 88 percent who would support such action if Russia were to invade Western Europe, to a low of only three percent who would do so if a civil war were to break out in South Africa.

Several generalizations emerge from the evidence in Table 3. First, support for assisting traditional allies and friendly nations is quite high. By margins of well over two-to-one, leaders taking part in the 1996 survey favor using U.S. troops were Western Europe, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, or Israel to come under attack, and a majority also support coming to the assistance of Poland should that former Warsaw Pact member be attacked by Russia. On the other hand, there is clearly very limited enthusiasm for American military intervention in civil wars, irrespective of geography; overwhelming majorities of opinion leaders would stay out of such conflicts, whether in the Western hemisphere--Mexico, Cuba and Haiti--or in such distant countries as Rwanda and South Africa. A factor analysis revealed the existence of strong loadings--ranging from .55 to .79--on three distinct factors: traditional security concerns [Western Europe, Saudi Arabia, Israel, South Korea, Taiwan, Poland], Latin America [Cuba, Panama, Haiti, Mexico], and Africa [South Africa, Rwanda].

Because prior FPLP surveys did not include a comparable question, it is not possible to determine whether the results in Table 3 represent a significant change from views that may have been espoused earlier. It does seem clear, however, that substantial numbers of respondents favor military undertakings in support of security commitments that originated during the Cold War. It is at least a debatable point whether the manifest reluctance to undertake comparable actions in civil conflicts in less developed countries constitutes compelling evidence of a retreat to isolationism or merely a prudent recognition that such interventions are likely to entail higher risks and costs than rewards.

The deployment of American troops to Bosnia has probably been the most controversial post-Cold War American military intervention. The opening question in the 1996 FPLP survey asked respondents to express their views on President Clinton's decision to send American troops to Bosnia, both at the time of the Dayton Agreement [November 1995] and "today" [during the second quarter of 1996 when the survey was conducted]. As the questionnaires were returned during a period of some two months, the date of the postmark was recorded. Had there been any dramatic development in Bosnia involving American troops--for example, similar to the ambush in Somalia that resulted in the deaths of eighteen soldiers--the analysis could have taken that into account with a pre-event/post-event comparison. Fortunately no such event took place. The results reported at the top of Table 4 indicate solid but not overwhelming support for the deployment in Bosnia, both at the time of the decision and at the time the questionnaire was completed.

The bottom half of Table 4 reveals the extent to which those taking part in the 1996 survey report experiencing a change of opinion during the months between President Clinton's decision on the Bosnia deployment and "today." Answers to these two questions were used to classify respondents into seven groups, ranging from "supporters" [those who favored the Bosnia undertaking at both times] to "critics" [consistent opponents of the troop deployment]. The results indicate that opinions on this issue remained relatively stable as fewer than 20 percent of the opinion leaders indicated that their views had undergone a change.

Given some of the circumstances surrounding the situation in Bosnia--including the absence of a traditional American security commitment to the area, the difficult terrain that reduces the effectiveness of high technology military hardware, the long history of ethnic rivalries in the area, and the manifest reluctance of top-ranking military leaders to commit American forces to the conflict--the level of support for the military intervention suggests that most opinion leaders are quite willing to become involved in even rather difficult peacekeeping operations. Whether that support would have survived substantial American

casualties is far from certain, however. A 1995 Gallup survey indicated that, among the general public, the strong support for involvement in Bosnia would decay in direct proportion to projected casualty levels in a series of hypothetical scenarios.¹² Thus, while the evidence in Table 4 would appear to challenge part of Schlesinger's argument, it does not, fortunately, provide a full test of his thesis that Americans are no longer willing to support military undertakings should they result in casualties.

Domestic policy

Although this paper focuses on foreign affairs, there is a rationale for also introducing data on domestic issues. As noted earlier, in contrast to decades immediately following World War II, one of the features of public opinion during the post-Vietnam period has been a tendency for attitudes on domestic and foreign policy to converge along partisan and ideological lines. That trend has some important implications; for example, on efforts to create foreign policy coalitions that cut across differences on domestic issues, as both the Truman and Eisenhower administrations were often able to do. The question to be addressed in the next section is whether the trend toward overlapping rather than cross-cutting cleavages has abated. A brief examination of attitudes toward several domestic issues will lay the groundwork for that analysis.

The FPLP surveys since 1984 have included a cluster of items asking the opinion leaders to express their opinions on several of the more controversial domestic issues. The resulting responses are summarized in Table 5. The first twelve items, on attitudes toward economic [items A-F] and social issues [items G-I], have been used to construct scales that will be discussed later.

The economic issues reveal some shift between 1992 and 1996 toward conservative positions, with very sharp changes on taxes and the defense budget and rather small ones on income redistribution and tuition tax credits. The other two issues yielded changes in opposing directions, with greater support for easing environmental regulation, but declining agreement on reducing restrictions on nuclear power plants.

In contrast, responses to the items on the social scale remained quite stable during the four year interval between the 1992 and 1996 surveys; none of the changes exceeded five percent. Reduced support for school busing and the Equal Rights Amendment, policies often favored by liberals, were somewhat offset by very slight gains for the pro-choice position on abortion and declining agreement that gay teachers should be banned from public schools.

On the remaining issues, several points stand out. First, responses to the questions that have been asked over an extended period of time have remained quite stable. Although trade has become an increasingly contentious issues in recent years--opposition to trade liberalization was at the center of the presidential campaigns conducted by Patrick Buchanan, Ross Perot, and Steve Forbes--opinion leaders taking part in the FPLP surveys have never expressed much enthusiasm for protectionism, even though the question includes the core argument for such a policy: "to protect American industries and jobs." Nor has drug legalization, whether of marijuana or cocaine, elicited support from as many as three respondents in ten. Similar stability is evident in support for a balanced budget amendment, which has fallen just short of 50 percent each time, and in the strong support for AIDS testing. Finally, it is ironic that two of the most emotional issues in contemporary American politics, abortion and hand gun control, resulted in the most one-sided distribution of responses among the domestic issues in the 1996 questionnaire. Support both for keeping the government out of abortion decisions and for placing stringent controls on the sale of hand guns exceeded 80 percent; on the former issue, the 1996 results are almost precisely the same as those from the previous three surveys. That these two issues have become so contentious in the Congress and elsewhere no doubt arises at least in part from the powerful and well-funded campaigns by the Christian right to reverse the Roe v. Wade Supreme Court decision on abortion, and by the National Rifle Association to attack any restrictions on the sale and ownership of weapons.

IV. ATTITUDE STRUCTURES

Foreign policy

Much of the research during and immediately after World War II measured public opinion on a single isolationist-to-internationalist scale, but most of the recent studies have shown that attitudes on foreign affairs are better describes in multi-dimensional terms.¹³ A series of studies of public opinion by Wittkopf has demonstrated that there are two "faces of internationalism." Attitudes toward two dimensions--support for or opposition to militant internationalism [MI] and cooperative internationalism [CI]--are necessary for describing the beliefs structures of both elites and the general public.¹⁴ Dichotomizing and crossing these two dimensions yields four types, with quadrants labeled as hard-liners [support MI, oppose CI], accommodationists [oppose MI, support CI], internationalists [support both MI and CI], and isolationists [oppose both MI and CI]. Analyses of the five FPLP surveys conducted between 1976 and 1992, although using somewhat different methods and questions than those employed by Wittkopf, revealed that the MI/CI scheme is an effective way of classifying opinion leaders' foreign policy beliefs; knowing how respondents are classified provides powerful predictors of their attitudes on a broad array of international issues.¹⁵

The items that constitute the militant internationalism and cooperative internationalism scales, as well as responses to them in the six FPLP surveys, are presented in Table 6. Although it would have been desirable to maintain precisely the same wording for all questions, international realities--notably the disintegration of the Soviet Union--made it necessary to make some changes in the MI scale in 1992. The seven items that constitute the CI scale have remained constant across all six surveys [Table 7]. Because the questions employ different response options ["agree strongly" to "disagree strongly" and "very important" to "not important at all"], the aggregate results have been transformed to a scale of 1.00 to -1.00 for ease of comparison and to facilitate summing responses for each scale.

The data summarized in Table 6 indicate that, when responses to the MI items are aggregated,

attitudes on that scale remained stable during the four year period ending in 1996. However, this overall result masks some pronounced changes on specific questions. As noted earlier [Table 1], willingness to "take all steps including the use of force to prevent aggression by any expansionist power" declined, although a majority of opinion leaders still approve such an open-ended commitment. Other changes of more than marginal magnitude include a less benign view of Russia's foreign policy goals and reduced support for a military policy of "striking at the heart of the opponent's power." The results indicate that, in the aggregate, respondents are almost exactly at the midpoint [-0.04] of the MI scale, as they were in 1992.

The trend on cooperative internationalism is more easily summarized. Although each of the FPLP surveys has shown an overall favorable attitude toward CI, support for all seven items constituting that scale declined in 1996 from the levels recorded four years earlier; more precisely, the overall support fell from 0.47 to 0.33 on a scale of 1.00 to -1.00. As noted above [Table 2], the importance attributed to such foreign policy goals as strengthening the United Nations and combatting world hunger fell rather sharply. From a longer range perspective, however, the 1996 results on the CI scale are about in line with those of the first four FPLP surveys [1976-1988].

Each respondent was scored on both the MI and CI scales, with 0.00 serving as the cutting point between supporters [those with a score greater than 0.00] and opponents [those with a lower score]. Table 8 reveals the distribution of opinion leaders when they are classified according to the MI/CI scheme. Accommodationists and internationalists, the two groups defined as supporting cooperative internationalism, account for about three-fourths of the entire leadership group, as they did in the surveys conducted between 1976 and 1988. But, as suggested by the results reported in Table 7, the opponents of CI--the hard-liners and isolationists--gained at the expense of the internationalists and accommodationists when the 1996 results are compared to those four years earlier.

The figures at the bottom of Table 8 indicate that the MI and CI scales exceed the conventional

requirements for reliability. But an important additional test is this: Does the MI/CI classification scheme provide significant insight into attitudes toward other foreign policy issues? In the first five FPLP surveys the answer was clearly "yes," but has this pattern extended into 1996, or has there been a significant change in this respect?¹⁶ Table 9 provides at least a partial answer. As in several earlier surveys, respondents were asked to assess several broad approaches to world peace, ranging from U.S. military superiority to narrowing the gap between rich and poor nations. If the MI/CI classification scheme serves to predict other foreign policy attitudes, hard-liners should be most inclined to rely solely upon military-security measures, isolationists should be somewhat skeptical of most proposals, accommodationists should place most reliance on efforts to pursue cooperative policies and institutions, and internationalists should favor a broad range of both military and cooperative approaches. The responses summarized Table 9 largely bear out these patterns, with significant differences among the four groups on all of the approaches to peace. A similar conclusion applies to a broad range of other questions that appeared in the 1996 survey.

These results suggest that, as in previous FPLP surveys, the MI/CI scheme provides an effective way of classifying opinion leaders. However, a number of analysts have suggested that a weakness of this classification scheme is that it fails to address adequately an important distinction between those who would seek to gain international goals through multilateral efforts in conjunction with allies and through international institutions, on the one hand, and others who prefer that the U.S. pursue its interests unilaterally, unfettered by the need to coordinate policies and compromise with other countries.¹⁷

In order to address this problem, ten items in the 1996 survey were used to construct a unilateral-multilateral scale. [Table 10]. The questions address several general aspects of unilateralism and multilateralism, as well as quite specific questions about whether the U.S. should be willing to contribute to multilateral peacekeeping forces and the acceptable command structures of such deployments. Correlations among the responses to items in the unilateralism-multilateralism scale are all positive, range

between .10 and .62, and average .30. The reliability coefficient [alpha] of the scale easily exceeds the conventional requirement of .70.

Although only a small minority of respondents believes that the United Nations is a "very effective" instrument for peace, the results summarized in Table 10 indicate that very substantial proportions of opinion leaders support multilateral undertakings in general and, more specifically, those conducted under auspices of NATO and the United Nations. In light of the hammering that the U.N. has taken from both the Clinton administration and its Republican critics, to say nothing of the myth that the Secretary General of that organization ordered U.S. troops into a fire fight that killed 18 of them in Somalia, it may seem somewhat surprising that a substantial majority [54 percent] of the respondents expressed a willingness to have American troops serve under a U.N.-appointed commander in peacekeeping undertakings.

Responses to the individual items on the scale suggest that a strong majority of the opinion leaders are classified as multilateralists. More specifically, when the scale is divided into four equal intervals, the 2,141 respondents who took part in the 1996 survey are distributed as follows: Strong multilateralists [31.7%], moderate multilateralists [41.3%], moderate unilateralists [21.4%], and strong unilateralists [5.7%].

The unilateral/multilateral distinction can be added to the MI/CI scheme to create a classification scheme of eight types; that is, each of the four MI/CI groups--hard-liners, isolationists, accommodationists, and internationalists--would further be divided into a unilateralist and multilateralist group. Unless it can be shown, however, this further subdivision of the leadership sample enhances our insight into thinking about international affairs, the value of doing so is rather limited. The evidence from the 1996 survey in fact supports the importance of the distinction between unilateralism and multilateralism. The point may be illustrated by revisiting the cluster of items asking respondents to appraise the effectiveness of various approaches to world peace. As indicated in Table 11, the distinction between unilateralists and

multilateralists does reveal consistently significant differences. For example, compared to the unilateral internationalists, the multilateral internationalists are consistently more inclined to rate as "very effective" approaches that require acting in conjunction with other countries [arms control, trade, international organizations, international communication, collective security, narrowing the rich nation-poor nation gap, etc.], while expressing less support for such unilateral measures such as military superiority. Similar patterns can be discerned among the two variants of hard-liners, isolationists, and accommodationists.

Several other scales have been created from responses to the 1996 survey, including two focusing on orientations toward human rights and support for the deployment of American forces abroad. Inasmuch as this paper is already excessively long, however, these will not be described here. They will be introduced briefly in the last section that deals with the socio-demographic correlates of foreign and domestic policy attitudes. Before turning to that, however, it remains to describe a method for classifying respondents according to their domestic policy preferences. The data in Table 5 serve as the means for doing so.

Domestic policy

The classification scheme for domestic issues assumes that a single liberal-to-conservative may not be adequate because respondents may have policy preferences on economic issues that do not necessarily correspond ideologically to those on social issues; therefore, it may be useful to distinguish between them. For present purposes, on economic issues liberals were assumed to favor:

- an active role for government in regulating the economy.
- an active role for government in regulating activities that may threaten the environment.
- taxation for purposes of income redistribution, while opposing tax policies that provide benefits mainly for the more affluent.

On social issues, it was assumed that liberals support:

- an active role for government in promoting the interests of those who have traditionally been at a disadvantage owing to race, class, gender, or other attributes.
- a ban on the death penalty, at least in part because it has been inflicted disproportionately upon some traditionally disadvantaged groups.

In contrast, conservatives were assumed to favor the following positions on economic issues:

- removing or reducing governmental restrictions on economic activity.
- reducing taxes.
- a large defense budget to ensure a strong national defense.

On social issues, conservatives were assumed to oppose:

- an active role for government in attempting to legislate equality between classes, sexes, races, or other groups.
- an active role for government in support of those who challenge "traditional values."

These premises were incorporated into scoring responses to the first twelve items on economic and social issues in Table 5. Each respondent was then given two scores, the first based on responses to the six economic issues and the second derived from preferences on the six social issues.¹⁸ A cutting point of 0.00 was used for each of the scale. The two scores were then used to classify each respondent into four groups: liberals [liberal on both scales], conservatives [conservative on both scales], populists [liberal on economic issues, conservative on social ones], and libertarians [conservative on economic issues, liberal on social ones].¹⁹ The distribution of those taking part in the four FPLP surveys since 1984, displayed in Table 12, reflects the increasing conservatism on economic issues in 1996 and the resulting gains among conservatives and libertarians. In contrast, responses to the social issues showed little change in 1996; gains among conservatives were offset by a decline in populists.

Linkages among attitude scales

As noted earlier, previous FPLP surveys revealed not only strong correlations between various measure of foreign policy attitudes, but also between opinions on domestic and foreign policy. The 1996 results indicate that these connections have persisted rather than changed. The links can initially be explored by examining how the opinion leaders, when classified according to their foreign policy orientations, responded to questions on domestic issues. The next step is to reverse this procedure, analyzing appraisals of foreign policy goals by leaders when they are grouped according to their domestic policy orientations.

As indicated in Table 13, there is a consistently strong and statistically significant relationship between foreign policy orientations and preferences on both economic and social/value domestic policy issues. Compared to the multilateralists, the unilateralists typically take the more conservative position; within these two groups, the accommodationists and hard-liners usually have the most liberal and most conservative policy preferences, respectively. Even on the four issues that find all eight groups on the same side--abortion, protectionism, drug legalization, and reducing Medicare/Medicaid growth--the gaps across the groups are quite large; for example, agreement that the government should stay out of abortion decisions ranges from 58 percent to 93 percent.

There are also large but somewhat less striking differences on foreign policy goals when opinion leaders are grouped according to their domestic policy orientations. Three of the goals listed in Table 14 resulted in broad agreement across all four groups: preventing nuclear proliferation is uniformly the top priority, defending allies rates as moderately important, and there is little enthusiasm for promoting democracy abroad. For the remaining foreign policy goals, however, the dominant pattern is one of very large differences between liberals and conservatives, with populists and libertarians arrayed in the middle. The largest gaps are on such goals as protecting the environment, international economic cooperation, combating hunger, arms control, strengthening the United Nations, improving the standard of living in

developing countries, and human rights--all most highly ranked by the liberals--and military superiority, fighting drug trafficking and illegal immigration, goals given much higher priority by the conservatives.

The relationship between the militant/cooperative internationalism and the domestic policy classification schemes is displayed in Table 15. As in the previous three surveys, the 1996 results indicate a strong and persisting pattern of overlapping rather than cross-cutting cleavages, especially among hard-liners and accommodationists. One modest change worth noting is the increasing number of liberals--from 23 percent to 29 percent--among the internationalists. Some liberals, who typically had opposed American military interventions during the Cold War, have come to support such actions in recent years; prominent examples include Arthur Schlesinger, whose essay was cited earlier, and New York Times columnist Anthony Lewis. At the same time, the isolationists include an increasing number of conservatives. These modest changes notwithstanding, the dominant pattern of persisting linkages between attitudes toward domestic and foreign policy is evident.

The convergence of opinions may also be seen in a brief review of correlations among some of the other attitude scales. Table 16 reveals the relationship between multilateralism/unilateralism and orientations toward both domestic and foreign policy issues. The multilateralist respondents are predominantly accommodationists on foreign policy and liberals on domestic issues, whereas unilateralists have a strong tendency toward hard-line and conservative policy perspectives. At a more specific level, policy preferences on Bosnia--as reported in Table 4 above--are clearly linked to more general foreign policy perspectives, as measured by the MI/CI classification scheme. [Table 17]. Among internationalists and accommodationists, supporters of the deployment of American forces to Bosnia outnumber critics by very large margins, whereas critics predominate among isolationists and hard-liners.

Finally, Table 18 reports the correlations among various attitude scales, including several that have not been described in the previous pages. The overall pattern confirms that there are strong linkages

between all of the scales. In that respect, 1996 results resemble those of the earlier surveys.

V. SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CORRELATES OF OPINIONS

FPLP surveys prior to 1996 revealed that deep cleavages on both domestic and foreign policy issues were rooted in partisan, ideological and, to a lesser degree, occupational differences. In contrast, neither gender nor generation proved to be especially powerful sources of opinion differences.²⁰ Many surveys of the general public have found that education is closely linked to international attitudes, but the FPLP samples are so heavily skewed toward the high end of educational attainment--virtually all respondents have had a college degree and about three-fourths of them have also earned a graduate degree--that differences grounded in levels of education are likely to be quite modest.

The figures in Table 19 provide a summary overview of the relationship between foreign policy orientations based on the MI/CI classification scheme. The evidence of continuity dominates indications of change, as ideology and party have clearly persisted as the most powerful predictors of orientations toward foreign affairs throughout the two decades covered by the FPLP surveys. Table 20 presents the comparable correlations for the domestic policy classification scheme. The pattern of relationships is quite similar for both realms of policy in that ideology and party are the dominant correlates of attitudes; the major difference is that the correlations are consistently higher on domestic issues. As these figures suggest, there are close links between party and ideology; even to a stronger degree than in the earlier FPLP surveys, the correlation between party and ideology in 1996 is exceptionally high [$\phi=.75$] as increasing numbers of Republicans [78 percent] identify themselves as conservatives, while Democrats are predominantly on the liberal side [68 percent] of the ideology scale; conservative Democrats [six percent] and liberal Republicans [four percent] are a vanishing breed among the rosters of American leaders. On the other hand, evidence of either a "gender gap" or a "generation gap" among these opinion leaders is relatively scarce. The tables that follow will illustrate the scope of ideological and partisan cleavages, and

also highlight a few anomalies within those patterns.

An earlier table [Table 2] summarized assessments of several foreign policy goals in the six FPLP surveys. When the 1996 responses are grouped by party preferences, they reveal substantial differences, ranging upward from 14 percent on most of the goals; exceptions include a near-consensus on the importance of preventing the spread of nuclear weapons and rather muted differences on several less highly rated goals: defending allies, protecting weaker nations, protecting the jobs of American workers, and promoting democracy abroad. [Table 21].

Even sharper partisan differences are evident on most domestic policy issues. [Table 22]. With one notable exception, the responses of Republicans differ sharply from those of Democrats. Although all of the differences except on trade policy are statistically significant, in several instances the more relevant point is that leaders of both parties are found on the same side. Both Democrats and Republicans overwhelmingly want to keep the government out of abortion decisions and to place stringent controls on the sale of handguns, and both oppose legalizing drugs.

Another perspective on domestic and foreign policy emerges from a question that asked opinion leaders to judge the current level of government spending a wide range of programs as "too low," "about right," or "too high." The results, summarized in Table 23, once again reveal deep partisan divisions. Compared to Republicans, Democrats were consistently more inclined to judge that current spending was "too low" for domestic programs ranging from welfare to education to the environment, as well as for foreign economic aid. In contrast, more Republicans felt that current levels of defense spending are too low. Only two programs--highways and bridges and space exploration--yielded much agreement across party lines. There was little support for increasing foreign military assistance, but significantly more Democrats than Republicans wanted to slash expenditures for these programs.

Although partisan cleavages are evident on a very large majority of issues broached in the 1996

survey, there are also some interesting exceptions. Eastward expansion of NATO received strong support across the political spectrum, with three-fourths of Republicans, Democrats and independents expressing their approval. A more general pattern that emerges from the data is strong bipartisan agreement on most trade issues. [Table 24]. A majority of respondents opposed erecting trade barriers; rated protecting jobs and the interests of American businesses abroad as a foreign policy goal of limited importance; and approved major steps toward trade liberalization, including NAFTA, GATT, and the World Trade Organization agreements. The grant of "most favored nation" trade status to China divided opinion leaders almost evenly, but the cleavages cut across rather than along party lines. Finally, bipartisan agreement on trade liberalization appears to arise from the widespread belief--shared by Republicans, Democrats, and independents--that economic competition, whether with Europe or Japan, does not constitute a threat to the United States. It should be noted that the absence of partisan divisions on trade issues in 1996 represents continuity rather than change in the view of opinion leaders. None of the earlier surveys uncovered much evidence of support for protectionism among either Democrats or Republicans; as in 1996, trade has consistently stood out as one of the few issues that gave rise to agreement across party lines.

Compared to partisan divisions, those rooted in ideology are even broader on most questions.²¹ Yet within an overall pattern of deep ideological cleavages, there are also indications of occasional convergence between the most liberal and most conservative opinion leaders. The point is illustrated in responses to a cluster of questions asking respondents to assess several recent U.S. foreign and defense policy decisions. Table 25 reveals that on most issues there is a steady increase or decrease in support as one moves across the ideological spectrum, and the gaps are typically quite large. For example, the Haiti intervention received overwhelming support from liberals and far less from conservatives, whereas exactly the opposite was the case with respect to increasing trade sanctions on Cuba and reducing the American

contribution to the United Nations budget. But on five of the issues a quite different pattern emerged, wherein the strongest approval for U.S. decisions is found in the ideological middle, and the most liberal and most conservative respondents are the least supportive. Further, each of these issues deals with trade policy: MFN status for China, NAFTA, pressure on Europe and Japan to open their markets, GATT and the World Trade Organization, and support for American firms doing business in China. Thus, whereas trade issues remain relatively free of partisan differences, they tend to pit those in the center of the ideological spectrum against those on both ends. This pattern tends to conform rather closely to debates in Congress on such issues as NAFTA several years ago, and the coalitions that are emerging on China's trade status this year, in which such liberals as Dick Gephardt are aligned with the Christian right in opposing the president and Republican congressional leaders, all of whom support renewal of MFN.

Ideological cleavages are even deeper on domestic issues. As revealed in Table 26, only a single question--opposition to erecting trade barriers--found all five ideological groups on the same side. The proposition that abortion decisions should be left to women and their doctors was widely supported by four groups and just missed gaining the support of the most conservative leaders. It is also worth noting that the huge gaps are not confined to those on the end points of the ideological spectrum; on most issues there is a very large difference between the "somewhat liberal" and "somewhat conservative" respondents. Similarly sharp differences emerge from the question in which leaders were asked to assess spending levels for various government programs. [Table 27]. Except for widespread agreement that the government is not spending enough on highways and bridges and rather tepid support for additional spending for space exploration, there are significant differences on allocations for all the programs.

Table 28 summarizes the relationships between attitude scales, including several that have not been discussed above, and five background attributes of respondents. These figures confirm once again the importance of ideology and party, the more modest relationship between occupation and attitudes and,

finally, the relative weakness of generation and gender as sources of attitudes on several measures of domestic and foreign policy. Although this general conclusion covers the majority of issues, there are some exceptions. For example, gender has consistently been among the weakest correlates of domestic and foreign policy attitudes, but that generalization does not extend to international trade. Table 24 revealed that trade stands out as one issue on which divisions do not fall along partisan lines. In contrast, there is a very real gender gap on most aspects of trade, with women typically expressing significantly less support for trade liberalization. (Table 29). The stronger support among women for erecting trade barriers against foreign goods appear to be linked to greater concern for American jobs, a higher sensitivity to human rights in China and elsewhere, and a somewhat heightened view of threats arising from trade competitors. These 1996 results represent continuity rather than change, however, because each of the previous FPLP surveys also revealed significant gaps between men and women on trade issues, with the latter espousing the more protectionist views.

VI. CONCLUSION

The focus of this paper has been on continuity and change in the foreign policy attitudes of American opinion leaders. In order better to understand the nature and scope of cleavages among these elites, some data on domestic policy issues have also been introduced. What generalizations emerge from the analyses?

First, the evidence tends to suggest a greater degree of continuity than change in the views of American elites during the four year period ending in 1996. Whether attention is directed at responses to specific issues, attitude structures, or the socio-demographic correlates of orientations toward domestic and foreign policy issues, similarities between the 1996 survey and those that preceded it are more numerous and striking than evidence suggesting a transformation of elite thinking. There are some exceptions, to be sure. The movement toward a more somewhat conservative stance on economic issues

that is evident in the policies of both Congress and the White House is also reflected in the FPLP data. Moreover, there is a declining sense of urgency about aspects of cooperative internationalism that focus upon poor nations. Hints of a convergence between the most liberal and least liberal leaders on trade issues also represents something of a change. Nevertheless, the evidence of continuity is far stronger. Even the striking agreement among Democrats, Republicans, and independents on trade issues--an island of agreement in an ocean of partisan discord--does not represent a major change.

Second, the evidence on the more specific charge by Arthur Schlesinger that the United States is abandoning a long heritage of responsible internationalism in favor of isolationism and unilateralism receives only modest support in these findings. Once again, the data are mixed in some respects, but the dominant theme is that most opinion leaders are no less prepared than they were four years earlier--or even during the Cold War--to accept major international responsibilities, and to do so in cooperation with allies and other countries.

Yet these findings are not sufficient to dismiss Schlesinger's warnings out of hand, if only because the present analyses have focused only on a single group. A multitude of studies have shown that, compared to the general public, leaders are more favorably inclined toward internationalism and multilateral cooperation; indeed, this may be the closest thing we have to an iron law of American public opinion. If there were strong indications that the gap between the opinion leaders and the general public in this respect is in fact widening--a topic that is beyond the scope of this paper--then the policy implications depend on the direction of influence between leaders and the general public. If one posits that the dominant pattern of influence in the long run is from the latter to the former, than Schlesinger's essay may well serve an early warning of a major turning point.

Finally, at the policy-making level there are some indications of growing unilateralism. The misguided and probably illegal Helms-Burton Act, which seeks to impose American domestic law upon the

trade policies of other nations while abandoning Washington's long-standing and principled objection to secondary boycotts, is a notorious example. Thus, although the bulk of the evidence reviewed above does not provide a great deal of support for fears such as those expressed by Schlesinger, neither can they be dismissed as unworthy of concern.

ENDNOTES

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1. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. "Back to the Womb: Isolationism's Renewed Threat," Foreign Affairs **74** (July/August 1995):5. The sources of American multilateralism and engagement toward maintaining a stable international order, as well as some reasons why such policies may be more problematic in the post-Cold War era, are discussed in John Gerard Ruggie, "The Past as Prologue: Interests, Identity, and American Foreign Policy," International Security **21** (Spring 1997):89-125.
 2. Schlesinger, 7. For a thoughtful and nuanced statement of the isolationist position on political-strategic issues, see Eugene Gholz, Daryl G. Press, and Harvey M. Sapolsky, "Come Home America: The Strategy of Restraint in the Face of Temptation," International Security (Spring 1997):5-48. These authors avoid three flaws that mar many isolationist proposals: They do not reread Cold War history in the light of the

Soviet collapse to argue that the U.S. should not have contained the USSR after World War II; they do not advocate a policy of retrenchment across all issue-areas by specifically exempting international economics; and, recognizing that isolationism might not be a policy for all seasons, they spell out the conditions that might require its abandonment.

3. John E. Rielly, ed. American Public Opinion and U.S. Foreign Policy, 1975. Chicago: Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, 1975. Also similarly titled monographs edited by Rielly in 1979, 1983, 1987, 1991, and 1995.

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11. Bruce W. Jentleson, "The Pretty Prudent Public: Post Post-Vietnam American Opinion on the Use of Military Force." International Studies Quarterly **36** (1992):49-73.
12. Survey #105362, October 19-22, 1995. In George Gallup, Jr, The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion in 1995. Wilmington DE: Scholarly Resources, 1996, 158.
13. Wittkopf, 1990, 1995; Ronald H. Hinckley, People, Polls and Policy-Makers: American Public Opinion and National Security. New York: Lexington Books, 1992; and William O. Chittick, Keith R. Billingsley, and Rich Travis, "A Three-Dimensional Model of American Foreign Policy Beliefs," International Studies Quarterly **39** (1995):313-331. For a somewhat similar multidimensional way of categorizing approaches to U.S. post-Cold War strategy, see Barry R. Posen and Andrew L. Ross, "Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy," International Security **21** (Winter 1996/97):5-53.
14. Wittkopf, 1990.
15. Ole R. Holsti and James N. Rosenau, "The Structure of Foreign Policy Beliefs Among American Opinion Leaders--After the Cold War," Millennium **22** (1993):235-278; and Holsti, 1996, chapter 4.

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16. The evidence for the 1976-1992 FPLP surveys is summarized in Holsti, 1996.
17. Hinckley, 1992; and Chittick, Billingsley, and Travis, 1995.
18. The reliability coefficients [alpha] for the economic issues scales have ranged between .70 and .75. The 1996 figure was .75. For the social issues scale, alphas have been slightly higher, with a range of .74 to .78. The 1996 figure was .75
19. A very similar classification scheme with the same category labels was developed independently by Kenneth Janda, Jeffrey M. Barry, and Jerry Goldman, The Challenge of Democracy: Government in America, 4th ed., Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1994. Ronald Hinckley has expanded this classification scheme by categorizing respondents according to their answers to three questions--whether the government should be more or less involved in economic, social, and value engineering. The resulting eight groups range from libertarians (who believe that the government is doing too much in all three areas) to statists (who believe that government should do more in all of them). The other six groups are conservatives, egalitarians, materialists, populists, moralists, and liberals. The same three questions appear in the 1996 FPLP survey. When respondents are classified in this way, the results are highly correlated with those derived from the scheme described in Tables 5 and 12 above.
- Still another effort to classify American belief systems on domestic politics is described in Michael Barone, "The New Americans: A New U.S. News Poll Shatters Old Assumptions About American Politics," U.S. News and World Report, July 10, 1995, 18-23.
20. For a more detailed analysis, see Holsti, 1996, chapter 5.
21. Multivariate analyses confirm the primacy of ideology and, to a somewhat lesser degree, of party as

sources of foreign policy beliefs, as well as the relative weakness of generation and gender.