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Christopher Gelpi et al. *Paying the Human Costs of War: American Public Opinion and Casualties in Military Conflicts.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2009.

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American public opinion on military missions is one of the most popular subjects in the foreign-relations field and a significant determinant in the decision-making process of policy makers. The public's concerns about casualties during military missions not only influence electoral campaigns but also US foreign policy. In their book, *Paying the Human Costs of War,* Christopher Gelpi, Peter D. Feaver, and Jason Reifler explore the links between the public's support for war and its toleration of casualties. They argue that the public's "expectations of success" in an ongoing conflict and its "belief in the rightness of war" are the two key attitudes that determine support for military missions and tolerance of casualties.

Gelpi, Feaver and Reifler not only question but also build upon previous scholarly models to reveal how the public's perceptions of foreign and domestic affairs influence attitudes toward military conflicts. Their argument reiterates the scholarly consensus that the American public is not "casualty phobic" and they are quite rational in their cost-benefit analysis of foreign policies (15). The authors first examined the aggregate data of surveys conducted during US military missions in Korea, Vietnam, Lebanon, Somalia, and Kosovo to explore American attitudes toward warfare. Through a detailed reexamination of the quantitative evidence, they found that the political scientist John Mueller's "simple association" thesis, which assumed a direct correlation between mounting casualties and decline in public support especially in the last phases of the Korean and Vietnam Wars, was inadequate to explain the public's willingness to support the missions, despite higher casualties, in their earlier phases. They questioned whether the decline in public support was due simply to casualties or to another factor. They therefore examined conflicts across different periods of "success, failure and stalemate" only to find that the "relationship between casualties and war support is far more varied" (33).

In addition to the historical aggregate data, the authors also used individual-level survey data to ascertain the public attitude towards humanitarian

and/or security-oriented missions. In order to explore individual opinions, they created survey questions regarding US involvement in hypothetical military conflicts, such as eliminating Iranian WMD programs, defending South Korea from a North Korean invasion, stopping starvation in the Congo, or continuing military action in Iraq. The results indicated that the public had the highest casualty tolerance for a South Korea defense operation that was categorized as both a security-oriented and humanitarian mission.

The difference between humanitarian and security-oriented missions has not always been very clear. Most military interventions before and after World War II combined humanitarian rhetoric with security-oriented concerns in primary policy objectives (PPO) such as bringing democracy, fighting fascism, or ending genocide. The Iraq War, for instance, possessed both humanitarian and security-oriented aspects which influenced people in different ways to support or not support the mission. It seems therefore that, regardless whether policies are humanitarian or security-oriented, the public's reactions will vary according to the particular mission. One of the many strengths of the book is the authors' acknowledgement of the different factors that have a direct or indirect effect on the public's foreign-policy judgments.

Using experimental hypotheses, the authors reexamined arguments made by scholars such as Bruce Jentleson, Eric Larson, Steven Kull and I. M. Desler regarding the factors that influence the public's judgments of foreign policy. As these scholars and many others have argued, principal policy objectives (PPO), the decisions of domestic and international elites, multilateral support for American foreign policies (UN and NATO), local casualty numbers, the media and the impact of gender and race differences all proved to have a significant impact on the public's belief systems. Policy makers need to take these factors into consideration because directly or indirectly they influence the public's belief in the rightness of wars and the success of the United States.

The Iraq War became a test case for these analyses. The authors argue that the public's belief in the rightness of the war and its future success influenced casualty tolerance and support for the war until 2006. For instance, attitudes about Iraq played a key role in determining voters' choices in the 2004 presidential election. Primary policy objectives, the elite consensus, multilateral agreements, party identification, and gender and race differences all contributed to the public's belief that President Bush did the right thing by attacking Iraq in 2003. As the authors stress, the decline in support for the war after 2006 was caused by the erosion of public expectations of success, not by the mounting casualties (242).

Although the data analyses revealed that the American public has "coherent foreign policy belief systems" which have influenced its thinking on specific military conflicts, the authors also point out that its "factual knowledge about foreign affairs was limited" (219). The question then is, How can a public which lacks basic factual knowledge about policy making and policy makers have coherent and rational opinions about foreign policy? The authors' comments about differences between the "structure" and the "substance" of public opinion fail to provide a persuasive answer to this question.

A major drawback of the book is the preponderance of quantitative analyses and technical explanations. Although they form the core of the argument, they also make the book a challenge for readers who are uninformed about quantitative research. Moreover, such detailed quantitative analyses require correct representation of the data on the statistical charts. To take one example, the problem in the representation of data in Figure 5.1 (128) might well confuse the uninformed reader.

Despite a few shortcomings, however, this is a well-thought-out, well-organized and well-written book. In particular, the concluding summaries at the end of each chapter provide excellent reviews and syntheses of the arguments. The authors have posed many questions that should open new horizons for scholars and policy makers.