Exploring the Correlates of Isolationism:
A Longitudinal Analysis of U.S. Public Opinion on Foreign Policy, 1974-2016

Michael R. Fitzgerald
Treston L. Wheat
Morgan T. Webber
Michael R. Fitzgerald Jr.

Department of Political Science
The University of Tennessee-Knoxville

Prepared for delivery at the 74th Annual Conference of the Western Political Science Association, April 12 to 15, 2017 at the Hyatt Regency, Vancouver, BC

Fitzgerald, Wheat, Webber, and Fitzgerald Jr.
Exploring the Correlates of Isolationism:
A Longitudinal Analysis of U.S. Public Opinion on Foreign Policy, 1974-2016

Introduction

The role of public opinion in foreign policy making is an important and enduring issue for those concerned with international affairs. Mass public attitudes about foreign relations have received extended and intensive scrutiny for the better part of a century, from the end of World War I (Lippmann 1922) through the Cold War (Lippman 1955; Merritt 1972), and into the War on Terror (Nacos, Shapiro, and Isernia 2000; Holstoi 2004). Over these many decades, the American public has struggled as to the extent to which the US should stay out (isolationism) or engage actively (internationalism) in international affairs. Thus, Gabriel Almond observed at the opening stage of the Cold War:

> Within a brief decade the American people have been torn from the privacy of civilian pursuits and thrust into a position of world leadership. A nation which by virtue of its geographic position and internal resources, its domestic institutions and traditions, had long rejected the strains of continuous participation in world affairs, has suddenly acquired a lonely and unwanted prominence (1950: 3).

Although nearly seven decades have passed since Almond's landmark study *The American People and Foreign Policy*, the discomfort of a significant segment of the American public with "continuous participation in world affairs" endures. The 2016 presidential campaign, and its aftermath, highlight the continuing presence of uncertainty and suspicion, if not downright hostility, among a significant segment of the mass public toward overseas involvement and international alliances—harkening back to the pre-WWII movement to keep "America First."

As a global power, the United States has larger role to play in tackling salient issues like climate change, free trade agreements, transnational terrorism, and rogue regimes. However, political dynamics have changed, and the president must now deal with a public less supportive of internationalism. The American public's opinion on foreign policy will augment or constrain the ability for him to confront the oscillations of international affairs. The question arises as to why the public has changed its views of foreign policy, or if there were even significant changes. Perhaps the changes are marginal, but marginal changes can have a significant influence on policy. Small increments of change create new and interesting possibilities in foreign policy. A fuller understanding of the changing nature of public opinion and foreign policy can better explain the fluctuations in foreign policy over time and in the future.

The 20th century and beginning of the 21st saw significant changes in the American public's attitude toward foreign policy decisions. Early in the 1900s America behaved and thought as an imperialist power, acquiring lands and intervening in international disputes. Following this America entered into decades of isolation, which ended with World War II and the Cold War. After the Cold War ended the world saw the rise of a multipolar system where new issues and alliances became salient, especially following the terrorist attacks on 9/11.

Initially eager to support the Bush administration's foreign policy, the public soon turned against them. Donald Trump's election in 2016 seems to be a mitigation of the previous internationalist consensus among the American public. Trump tapped into the isolationist strand of the electorate and used "America First" to describe his foreign policy framework, a phrase which has a specific connection to isolationism from the 1930's. Historically the heartland of America has tended towards isolationism more than other parts of the country, like Senator Robert A. Taft from Ohio. Taft led the conservative coalition in America in opposition to President Franklin D. Roosevelt's domestic and foreign policy agendas. The Democrats lost this part of the country, which was quintessential to Trump's victory. Understanding this part of the American electorate is essential to understanding why people support particular candidates and movements.

The relationship between US public opinion and American foreign policy is of long-standing interest and enduring concern to scholars, public officials, the popular media, and the public itself (Almond 1950; Merritt 1972; Holsti 2004). As Jacobs and Page succinctly note: "An ample body of qualitative and quantitative research, then, indicates that U.S. foreign policy and the policy preferences of government officials are substantially influenced by public opinion" (Jacobs and Page 2005:109). Most especially, the state of public opinion about foreign policy among mass and elite publics has been a staple of national polling organizations from post-War, through the Cold War, and into the new world order—or disorder of the post-Cold War world. Perhaps most fundamental has been concern about the extent to which the American public, over time, has been willing to support US involvement in international affairs and the nature of that involvement (Dieck 2015). Lingering always, as the "phantom at the feast," has been the fear that the American public at a critical moment would return to pre-WWII isolationism.

Better to understand the relationship between foreign policy and public opinion, this paper addresses the basic research question: To what extent has US public opinion about American involvement in foreign affairs changed over time? To answer this question, we examine public opinion about American involvement in foreign affairs from 1974 to 2016, using the national surveys conducted on behalf of the Chicago Council on Global Affairs. We focus on that segment of the public, fluctuating in size but ever present, that holds the opinion that the US should stay out of world affairs. Continuity and change in this view, which we define as *isolationist*, are systematically tracked against the backdrop of focusing events and through successive presidential administrations. The correlates of isolationism are identified and key relationships explored. Our analysis concludes with a predictive model applied to explaining variance in isolationism and presidential preferences during the 2016 presidential campaign.

Factors That Influence Public Opinion

Political opinions have a plethora of influences that include framing by elites, cues from the media, religion, and partisanship. The literature on political communication indicates that the role of public opinion seems to reflect decisions and arguments by elites on a particular subject rather than public opinion influencing policy makers directly (Jacobs and Page 2005; Berinsky 2007). Others find that the media, elites, and the public have an interconnected relationship that influences policy. Matthew Baum and Philip Potter find that "the media's framing of elite rhetoric has an independent causal effect on public perceptions of conflict characteristics, and

through this process, on foreign policy" (Baum and Philip Potter 2008:40). International relations scholars in the tradition of liberal institutionalism have argued that domestic audience costs, i.e. public opinion, consistently influence the war making by countries, both democracies and autocracies (Tomz 2007; Weeks 2008; Gibler and Hutchison 2013). Audience costs are important because the public or important political groups will sanction (remove from power or weaken the regime) if state leaders fail to implement a certain policy or if the policy fails. James Fearon (1994) argues specifically that audience costs have the potential to escalate international disputes. Political leaders will take actions that "focus the attention of relevant political audiences and create costs that leaders would suffer if they backed down."

One particularly important means by which information enters into the public debate is through elites in government, business, media, etc. that has access to information to the average citizen does not. Elites can utilize this information to influence public opinion on foreign policy issues in different ways through advocacy and their policies. Cavari (2013) shows that elites within the Republican and Democratic Parties helped formulate and determine attitudes toward Israel, Arabs, and the Middle East. The changing religious cleavages within the two parties affected how each would support Israel; when Evangelical Christians aligned with the Republican Party, the party became more pro-Israel. However, this was not the only catalyst for the divergence of support for the Jewish state. Once Evangelicals had firmly settled with the Republicans by the end of the 1990s, elites furthered the division. Cavari shows this by looking at roll call voting within Congress as a lagged variable. As he notes, one increased percentage point in polarization increased the Republican/Democrat divide by .14 while one increased percentage point in Evangelicals moving into the Republican Party increased the divide by .21 points (Cavari 2013:17). Berinsky (2007) also found that elite divisions were important in determining public division or unity in support of war. Gadarian (2014) and Rojecki (2008) demonstrate how elites can manipulate public opinion to increase public support for their foreign policy. For example, Gadarian offers evidence from an experiment where pictures of terrorist attacks increases support among Democrats for stronger President Bush's counter-terrorism policies by statistically significant amount (Republicans and Independents remained the same).

The most powerful elites in the government, though, have the ability to increase public support for their foreign policies through speeches, public papers, and press conferences (Kiousis and Stromback 2010; Drury et al. 2010; Tedin et al. 2011; Zhang and Meadows 2012). Certain types of communication, though, matter more and can move public opinion on a foreign policy issue. Tedin et al. determined that President Bush's speech from the Oval Office increased support for the Iraq war while his State of the Union did not. And Drury et al. found that presidential rhetoric can influence the less political informed with the independent variable being how much news an individual consumed. Presidents also have the power to use policy to influence public opinion (Whang 2011). Whang shows that the use of sanctions during an international crisis can increase a president's approval rating by over 4% (Whang 2011:797). In addition to domestic politicians, foreign elites also have the ability to influence American public opinion on foreign policy (Grieco et al. 2011; Hayes and Guardino 2011). Hayes and Guardino look specifically at the support for the Iraq war in 2003, and the authors offer evidence that when foreign opposition was at its maximum as seen in the media then public support for the war decreased by 9 percentage points (Hayes and Guardino 2011:841). It is not entirely controversial to point out that elites can influence the public in different ways, but these studies interestingly

show how elites can move the public to their preferred position, especially those elites in government like Congressional party leaders and the president.

The media in the US has changed significantly over the last few decades, but it still plays an extremely important role in determining the public's opinion about foreign policy issues. Powlick and Katz (1998) argue that the public responds to controversy among elites because they are passive on foreign policy issues. Their model puts together an interconnecting relationship between governments, the media, and interest groups. This concept continued into the 2000s. Because the media is the primary source for the public on foreign policy issues, Soroka (2003) determined that issue priming and salience contributed to public support for more defense spending. These set forth the general theory and framework by which the media can influence public opinion. In addition, one of the media's most effective tools concerning the influence they have over the public deals with framing of the issues (Bolch-Elkon 2007; Sheafer and Dvir-Gvirsman 2010; Althaus and Coe 2011; Yang and Liu 2012; Bayulgen and Arbatli 2013). Lecheler et al. define news framings as the "process by which certain facets of social reality are emphasized by the news media, while others are pushed into the background" (2015:341). New framing gives more weight to certain concerns while removing it from other ones. Journalists will decide which perspective to offer and amplify "certain perspectives while quelling others" (Shah et al. 2002:343).

Bloch-Elkon (2013) offers an interesting perspective by showing how the media influenced government policy and public opinion during the Bosnian crisis in the early 1990s. The research showed two significant ways the media can influence opinion: pictures and a security focus. Photographs of the ethnic cleansing and the crisis increased the public's belief that the issue was important. In addition, if the media criticized the president for not using the military enough to enhance security, then public opinion against military intervention would decrease. Bloch-Elkon submits that "the press, supported by public opinion, might have helped articulate a rationale for humanitarian military intervention in Bosnia, urging government intervention" (Bloch-Elkon 2007:42). Looking a conflict in which the US was not involved, Bayulgen and Arbatli assess whether the media influenced Americans' opinion about who started the war between Russia and Georgia in 2008. They found that those who followed the conflict on TV, in newspapers, and from radio were significantly more likely to blame Russia, but the results for those who got their opinion from the Internet were not statistically significant. The media has the ability to frame and therefore influence the public debate on an issue, which will ultimately manipulate how people will assess foreign policy actions.

Even though the media can frame issues to increase or decrease support for a foreign policy, the public also takes "cues" from the media and other sources. Kertzer (2013) interestingly looks at micro and macro-level analysis and finds that one's foreign policy opinions have similar cues to domestic policy consideration. One's foreign policy opinions at the micro level typically follow the path of the economy. If the economy is doing poorly, then people support a less interventionist foreign policy. However, there is a distinction at the macro level, where this effect is only seen among the less knowledgeable. High-knowledge individuals tend to take the global security environment into consideration more than the domestic economy. Sirin (2011) also found differences in support of the Iraq war at the beginning between the politically informed and uninformed. When looking at war more specifically, the public's

opinion comes from expectations more than other cues (Gelpi et al. 2007; Gelpi 2010; Sidman and Norpoth 2012). Gelpi notes that the news will affect the public if it is considered an unexpected event, and Sidman and Norpoth show that expectations of defeat or victory determines public support for a particular war. Like elites in government and campaigns the media can also influence the public through imagery in and tone of the news (Gelpi et al. 2012; Zhang and Meadows 2012; Gadarian 2010). Gelpi et al. shows that patriotic imagery can influence people's opinions about counterterrorism whose primary interest is not terrorism, but Gadarian shows that images of terrorism increases support for hawkish policies among people who believe terrorism is a high threat. During real conflicts, though, the public will experience a "rally 'round the flag" effect that can come from the media's coverage of major events (Oneal and Bryan 1995; Newman and Forcehimes 2010; Chatagnier 2012). The media has a significant ability to influence public opinion, but context matters. Events outside of the norm and connected with emotions like fear or patriotism can change public opinion on foreign policy.

American political thought has historically held religion to inform and elucidate political opinions beginning with John Winthrop's sermon declaring the future colony in Massachusetts a "shining city upon a hill." Today religion still plays a role in determining how people view foreign policy and war (Baumgartner et al. 2008; Simon and Lovrich 2010; 2012; Taydas et al. 2012; Paxton and Knack 2012; Djupe and Calfano 2013; Lacina and Leed 2013; Guth 2012; Olson et al. 2014). Taydas et al. looks at different religious traditions in America to see how much each group approves of Obama's foreign policy in the Middle East. The research looked at both *identity* and *attendance* rather than just the former, and their results show that religion plays a significant role in determining support for Obama's foreign policy. Secularists were the most likely to support Obama across the board while evangelicals were the most likely to oppose his policies. For example, "seculars are 14 percent and mainline Protestants almost 17 percent more likely than evangelicals to support Obama's foreign policy" and "[s]eculars are 14 percent and non-Christians 22 percent more likely than evangelicals to approve of Obama's handling of terror" (Taydas et al. 2012:1233). Evangelicals are also significantly more likely to agree with the invasion of Afghanistan than seculars, Catholics, and non-Christians. Interestingly, though, all groups similarly viewed Islamist terrorism as a threat. On the other hand, Guth looked at how religion can influence the general philosophy of foreign policy and public opinion about it. Harkening back to Winthrop's sermon, Guth asserts that religious traditionalism and evangelicalism significantly increases the likelihood that one believes in foreign policy exceptionalism for America.

Although religion and theology play a role in public opinion concerning foreign policy, general political values also contribute to how people view foreign policy concerns (Walldorf 2010; Falomir-Pichaster et al. 2011; Kertzer et al. 2014; Liberman 2014; Brancati 2014). Brancati learns that generally the population is not motivated to promote democracy because of values, but there is a significant minority of the population that does support democracy promotion based on this value. Kertzer et al look at individual and binding morals of people and how that influences opinions about foreign policy, which they categorize as cooperative internationalism, militant internationalism, and isolationism. If an individual prioritizes relieving harm and caring about the welfare of others, the individual will more likely support multilateral approaches to issues like global warming but will less likely support the use of the military.

Another key predictor for public opinion on domestic issues comes from an individual's partisan and ideological connections. This also holds for opinions about foreign policy (Urbatsch 2010; Leal and Nichols 2013; Hildebrandt et al. 2013; Milner and Tingley 2013; Kim 2014; Flynn 2014; Wagner 2015). Wagner looks at how conservatives approach foreign policy, and he argues that the movement cannot be pigeonholed as either dovish or hawkish. There is a continuum. He argues that the failures of the Bush presidency encouraged those who were not neoconservatives to come forward as well as having the hawks focus less on war to increase electoral capabilities. Furthermore, research shows that public opinion does matter and can influence policy in direct ways (Mack et al. 2013). For example, Hildebrandt et al. specifically shows that popular support consistently correlates with Congressional voting on humanitarian intervention. Other research also points to voters and the public influencing trade and economic policy, not just war (Kleinberg and Fordham, 2010; Urbatsch, 2013; McClean and Whang, 2014; Choi 2015). This holds with research from international relations theory and audience costs where leaders of countries are prevented or coerced into policies because of public opinion (Baum 2004; Knecht and Weatherford 2006; Tomz and Weeks 2013).

This paper explores one of the most fundamental aspects of public opinion relating to foreign relations: the extent to which individuals over the past four decades think it would be better for the United States to remain active in or stay out of foreign affairs. A recurring question in American foreign policy is the potential threat of a relapse into the isolationism that characterized U.S. politics before World War II. Indeed, in presidential election years it is common for one major party candidate or another to accuse their opponent as promoting a return to an isolationist past. But, what does a close analysis of forty-four years of U.S. public opinion reveal? Who are the isolationists and do they pose anything but an ephemeral challenge to the dominant perspective that the U.S. is served best by its long-term commitment to active engagement in international affairs? The following analysis is designed to cast light upon that question.

Data and Methods

The purpose of this research is to track the extent to which isolationism is prevalent among the US mass public over time. It seeks as well to explore the extent to which isolationism consistently relates to the background characteristics of the public. The data for the study were obtained from the Chicago Council on Global Affairs (CCGA) national surveys of American Public Opinion and US Foreign Policy from 1974 to 2016. These surveys originally were quadrennial polls, however, beginning in 2004, the CCGA shifted to conducting them every two years. For purposes of symmetry in analysis, and better to trace long-term patterns, we base this analysis on the ten quadrennial surveys spanning the forty-four years from 1974 to 2010. The latest survey, conducted in June of 2016, is used to bring our analysis up-to-date. These surveys are especially suitable for our purposes because, with minor variations in wording, respondents were consistently the following question: "Do you think it would be best for the future of the country if we take an active part in world affairs or if we should stay out of world affairs?" Thus, by using the responses to this question over four decades, we were able to track the proportion of the American public that thought it would be best if we "stayed out of world affairs—which is our operational definition of isolationism. Those who indicated it would be best if we were active in world affairs are considered "activists" and those who wanted to stay

out of world affairs are considered "isolationists." To what extent, and why, has isolationism, the proportion of the public that is isolationist, varied over time? To answer this question, proportion of activists/isolationists is tracked over time and considered in the context of major international events and presidential administrations.

Who are the isolationists among the American public and are they consistently drawn from the same demographic and political backgrounds? To answer this question, for each survey the percentage of activists and isolationists (dependent variable) are cross-tabulated with background and political variables (independent variables). These relationships are evaluated using the Chi Square test of statistical significance. Only relationships at the .05 level of significance or better (2-tailed test) are considered significant for this purpose. Because background information was not gathered in exactly the same way for every survey, it became necessary to recode the independent variables into the same categories across the eleven polls. In addition to the standard background demographic and political variables (race, education, age, gender, partisan identification, and political ideology), a measure of attention to foreign affairs news is included in the analysis. From 1974 through 2016, respondents were asked (with minor variation in wording) if they were "very interested, somewhat interested, or not at all interested" in foreign affairs news. Religion was not included as a variable in this study because it was not included in six of the eleven surveys. Further, when it was included, the coding was very inconsistent. The categories used to define the study variables are provided in Table 2.

The last stage of the study employs linear regression to measure the extent to which variance in isolationism can be explained by the demographic and political correlates identified as consistently significant in the bivariate analyses. Finally, to assess the relative importance of isolationism as a factor in the 2016 presidential campaign, we add it to other independent variables to explain whether those surveyed in June, before the party conventions, planned on voting for Hillary Clinton or Donald Trump.

Findings and Analysis

Isolationism, Events, and Presidencies

The proportion of the US public that thought it would be best if the US was active or stay out of foreign affairs is reported in Figure 1. Figures 2 and 3 present the trend lines within the context of important events and across presidencies. These results show that between 1974 and 2016 public support in America for an activist foreign policy or isolationism has varied over time. Activism has consistently been the dominant strand of thought. Although high in 1974 (74%), support for activism waned through 1982 (63%), and then rose close to its previous high in 1986 (72%). From then until 1998 activism remained around 70%, but it significantly increased following the September 11 terrorist attacks (78%). Consistently after this peak, isolationist sentiment grew from 22% in 2002 to 33% in 2016. These changes in public opinion, though, did not happen in a vacuum. Historic events, presidential leadership, ideology, and the media all play a part in determining how and why these changes took place. It takes time for people to adjust to the reality of the world, and the observed changes over time happen because of the influence of these variables.

One of the trends visible from looking at views on isolationism/activism next to historic international events is that when significant problems or losses arise so does the belief in isolationism. The mid-to-late 1970s saw tremendous pressure placed on America from abroad, starting with losing the Vietnam War and eventual fall of Saigon. This is often seen as a loss for America and America's prestige in the world. In addition, Arab countries placed an embargo on the U.S. because of its support for Israel during the Yom Kippur War. Towards the end of the decade in 1979, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan and Iranian protestors took over America's embassy while holding diplomats hostage. During these events, support for isolation increased from 1974-82. Starting in the 1980's, though, isolationist tendencies declined during the Reagan administration and certain foreign policy successes like the invasion of Grenada and retaliatory bombings against state sponsors of terror. Although support for isolationism increases slightly following the Reagan administration, it remained relatively stable during the early-to-mid 1990's, probably due to the combination of foreign policy successes and failures. America was successful with the Gulf War, fall of the Berlin Wall, and dissolution of the Soviet Union, but the country was not successful in Somalia or Rwanda.

Decreasing isolationist sentiment started in the later 1990's surrounding NATO intervention in the Kosovo War against Serbia and acts of terrorism by al-Qaeda, primarily on September 11, 2001. The 2002 survey records the lowest support for isolationism in the 44 years the survey was done. However, the invasion of Iraq under the Bush administration, its descent into a civil war, the Arab Spring, and the withdrawal of troops in Iraq under Obama go along with increased support for isolationism. There are possible explanations for the variations over time when seen through the framework of contemporary event. First, the media provides cues that could help influence how people perceive America's role in the world. Photographs and video footage of America's embassy being taken over in Iran, or reports of Soviet interventionism, or pictures of dead American soldiers and Iraqi civilians could all provide cues to the public on what they think should be happening. Also, cues from the economy, like during the Arab oil embargo that caused waiting lines at gas stations or the financial crisis, will influence people's opinions on American activism. Second, expectations of success could also influence people's opinions on isolationism. People expected victory in Vietnam and Iraq II, but America lost both of those wars. On the other hand, successful missions in Grenada, Iraq I, and Kosovo align with less support for isolationism. Finally, along the lines of expectations, audience costs may also play a role. The public may "punish" leaders who fail in foreign policy by removing their support for activist policies, which reduces the leaders' political capital and ability to push for an activist agenda.

From Ford to Obama, the differences between Republican and Democratic administrations were, on average quite striking. The proportion of the public that is isolationist varied substantially more among Republican presidents than it does for their Democrat counterparts, with standard deviations around the respective means of 4.5 to 1.1 respectively. For, democratic administrations it is essentially *invariant* from Carter to Obama. Explanations for this oscillation can include influence by elites where presidents set the tone of foreign policy, framing of the issues by the president, and ideology/partisanship. As the commander-in-chief and leader of foreign policy, the president can present to the public what he sees as America's role in the world, either pulling back or staying active. Presidents Ford and Carter after the Vietnam War saw a reduced role for the United States; Ford believed this for strategic reasons while

Carter did not believe America would win the Cold War. Reagan entered the presidency in opposition to these ideas and consistently sought engagement, both militarily and diplomatically, throughout the world. Presidents Bush (41), Clinton, and Bush (43) also believed in greater activism, though for different reasons, international stability, promotion of liberal values like human rights, and promotion of democracy through force respectively. During each administration, the president would also frame the issues, not just setting a tone. For example, Reagan believed the Soviet Union to be an "Evil Empire" that not only had to be contained, but rolled back, and Bush (43) thought that America should fight the evils of Islamist terrorism by bringing democracy and regime change to the Middle East. The foundation, though, for setting the tone and framing the issues comes from ideological orientations of each party and president. All of this may be what sets Obama apart as he directly called for disengagement from the world and preferred a "leading from behind" approach rather than direct intervention and unilateralism.

Relationship Patterns

The results of cross-tabular analysis are presented in Tables 2 through 8. Important patterns emerge from the relationships revealed in these data arrays. As revealed in Table 2, four of the background variables were associated with activism and isolationism at a statistically significant level in at least ten of the eleven surveys: world affairs interest, education, age, and race. Gender was associated with activism/isolationism in all but four of the eleven surveys. The relationship between isolationists and the political variables, however, proved the most tenuous, rising to a statistically significant level of association in only six and three survey years respectively. It is worth noting that beginning in 1982, and excluding 1994 when party identification was not obtained, partisanship was associated with activism or isolationism in six of the last eight quadrennial surveys. Although political ideology was not associated with activism/isolationism at the required .05 level of probability in the surveys taken from 1974 through 1998, it was in each of the three surveys conducted after the turn of the century. When it comes to whether the members of the public tend to be activist or isolationist, the most recent surveys reveal that partisanship and ideology matter more than ever.

Tables 3 to 8 break out the proportion of isolationists by group over time. When isolationism is cross tabulated with interest in foreign affairs it turns out that those who have low interest in foreign affairs tend toward strongly toward isolationism. Indeed, the 44-year isolationism average for low interest respondents averages nearly half of those surveyed (48.7%). This is an average level of isolationist sentiment approached only by respondents with the lowest level of educational attainment (43.8%) and in the youngest age category (39.4%).

Race tends to matter when it comes to isolationism. For most of the era, blacks were consistently more isolationist than whites, often by striking margins. The differences between whites and blacks were especially large from 1974 through 2002, when the average gap in isolationism was 15-points. From 2006 to 2016, blacks were more isolationist than whites by an average of only 3-points. The narrowing of the gap is attributable to the rise of isolationism among whites, particularly in 2016. Those respondents in the other category of race essentially mirror the pattern between whites and blacks—they are consistently more isolationist; roughly one-in-three were isolationist on average (35%). As the proportion of Hispanics in the other category has risen, this group has proven somewhat more isolationist than Blacks. After 2002,

the gap between whites and others was 5.7 points, which was nearly 3-points higher than the white-black difference.

When it comes to isolationism, educational attainment matters even more than race. As educational attainment increases isolationism decreases. Across groups, the lowest proportion of isolationists is found among those with college degrees (mean=17%). At the other end of the educational spectrum, those with the lowest level of education are consistently the most isolationist (mean=45%). Only those with low interest in foreign affairs news had a higher 44-year average (48%). The isolationist gap between the least and most educated respondents averaged 28-points during the entire period. The gap began diminishing after 1990. The average difference between those who did not graduate from high school and those who had college degrees averaged 34% for 1975 through 1990 and 24% in the year thereafter.

The relationship between isolationism and age tends to be a little more complicated than that found among other groups. Those individuals found in the two youngest groups were consistently the most isolationist (means=42 and 33) than those in the middle two age groups (means=27 in both). Those respondents 65 and over, however, between 1978 and 1998 (predominantly the World War II Generation) were consistently more isolationist than those in middle ages (the Vietnam Generation). Beginning in 2002, as the Vietnam Generation began to dominate the 65 and over category, the proportion of isolationists in the oldest group waned. Since 2002, there has been an increase in isolationist levels in all groups. Age and isolationism clearly have a significant relationship, as it has been deemed statistically significant in every year surveyed except for 1994.

Women are more likely to support isolationism than men in every survey, although it is apparent that gender matters less than interest, race, age, and education. The average isolationism gap between men and women from 1974 to 2010 is 5-points. But for certain years, especially 1978-1986, 1994, and 2010, the gender gap ranged from 8 to 10 points (mean=8). Clearly, in those years gender mattered, with women considerably more likely to be isolationist than men.

With respect to isolationism, the differences Republicans and Democrats were the largest in 1982, 1990, 2006, and 2016. In these surveys, Democrats were more isolationist than Republicans. Independents, tended to be consistently more isolationist than Republicans throughout the period. From 1990 to 2010, Democrats and Independents had essentially the same proportion of isolationists. In 2016, however, Independents markedly more isolationist than Democrats.

The relationship between isolationism and political ideology has provided dynamic. Based on the average percentage of isolationists within each ideological grouping over 44-years, conservatives and liberals did not differ. Those respondents who consider themselves as Middle of the Road, were somewhat more isolationist, on average, than their more ideological counterparts. After 2002, however, evidence of important ideological differences becomes apparent. The isolationism among Conservatives increased steadily while it was declining by comparable margins among Liberals. Isolation among Middle-of-Road respondents, after a lull in 2002, began to rise in 2006 and 2010. Following a low point in 2002, liberals increased in

their isolationism markedly by 2016, although at lower levels than Middle-of-Roaders and Conservatives.

While examining groups that change often is important to the analysis of isolationism, it is also pertinent to look at the groups that change the least. This list includes whites, males, independents, conservatives, and individuals with college degrees. Throughout the years surveyed, it appears that these groups have experienced the least amount of change.

In summary, the pattern of relationships between isolationism and selected demographic and political groups reveals that largest proportion of isolationists tend to be drawn from among those with the least interest in foreign affairs. Isolationists are more likely to be non-whites, young, and female. The youngest segments of the public, and those with lower levels of educational attainment, tend to be the most isolationist. The patterns for political groupings are less certain, consistent, and clear between 1974 and 2016, but isolationism across partisan and ideological groupings appears to be on the rise.

Focusing on 2016: Explaining Isolationism and Presidential Preference

The presidential primary campaign of 2016 provided an especially dramatic and dark context for the conduct of the Chicago Council of Global Affairs national survey of public opinion. The issue of American involvement in foreign affairs assumed an especially prominent role in the primary and general election debates, with Donald Trump proffering a promise to put "America First." Trump's campaign brought isolationism to the fore as a focal point of contention with the internationalist background, experience, and positions of Hillary Clinton. An excellent in-depth descriptive analysis of the differences between Trump and Clinton supporters on a variety of foreign policy issues is found in the CCGA report of the survey (Smeltz et al. 2016). The long-term pattern of relationships between isolationism and selected demographic and political groups is clear, but how well do these variables explain isolationism in 2016? And, to what extent does isolationism explain respondent preference for either Donald Trump or Hillary Clinton?

Predicting Isolationism

Linear regression was used to determine which background and political characteristics (independent variables) best predict whether a respondent was *activist* or *isolationist*. This required the conversion of the original categorical variables into binary form (0/1). The values for each recode and the regression results are presented in the Appendix. The coefficients for the linear regression model of isolation are presented in Table 9. The standardized regression coefficients show the relative strength of each independent variable in explaining variance in isolationism. The independent variables in the regression model account for approximately 10 percent of the variance in isolationism. Under statistical control, the best predictors of whether a respondent is isolationist is attention to foreign affairs, education, and age. Not as strong, but statistically significant, are party identification and ideology. Gender and race are not statistically significant predictors at the .05-level of probability. A more comprehensive explanation of

isolationist sentiment among the mass public will need to extend beyond the variable set in this study.

Predicting Presidential Preference

Table 10 shows the result of adding *isolationism* to the background and political characteristics set of independent variables to predict presidential preference. Again, we focus on the relative strength of these variables based on the standardized coefficients. Together, these variables account for approximately twelve percent of the variance in presidential preference, with race, isolationism, and ideology as the three strongest predictors. Table 11 demonstrates what happens when party identification is added as a factor in presidential preference. It simply overwhelms the other independent variables and the explained variance in presidential preference increases to seventy-five percent. The power of isolationism as a predictor diminishes substantially when party identification is factored into the model, but it remains a statistically significant independent variable. Considering how close the final vote in November turned out between Clinton and Trump in several key states, the marginal contribution of isolationism seems, nevertheless, important.

Implications and Conclusion

Despite isolationists consistently comprising an appreciable proportion of the American public during the past forty-four years, isolationism seems to have gained little traction in US foreign policy. Our findings suggest that this is because the isolationists tend to emerge from those groups (younger, less educated, nonwhite, least interested in foreign affairs news) that are historically the least engaged in the political process, but the changes in demographics could influence future support for isolationism. Isolationism consistently has remained a minority viewpoint among the US public for nearly a half-century. This is one of the major features of continuity in public opinion about foreign relations. This study found considerable *change within continuity* over time, both within and among various groups. Still, why does the minority isolationist segment of the mass public matter? This minority is relevant because it is a substantial minority and is unlikely simply to recede into the background in the future. It is more likely that, as happened in 2016, political figures periodically will continue to rise and give it voice and influence. Isolationists can make a difference in the outcome of close elections. And, as the winners of elections like to remind us, "elections have consequences."

Based on the patterns from the data, interesting implications arise based on the changing nature of American society. First, race has a strong correlation with support for isolationism, and America is becoming an increasingly diverse country. Although the gap between whites and blacks narrowed after 2002, there is a higher gap between whites and other on average. Whites are becoming a smaller part of the population and in the coming decades will become less than half the population. This means that the American population will become increasingly isolationist as Hispanics and blacks make up a larger part of the country. Second, women are more isolationists than men, and as women gain more social equity, especially in government,

support for isolationism may become more prominent. Third, a challenge to increasing isolationist sentiment is the better access to education and global news. More Americans are going to college, and education matters more than race when determining support for isolationism. In addition, through the Internet people can access information on global events as never before. Events can even be followed live through social media. Yet this does not mean that interest in foreign affairs will increase along with access to the information as the average in foreign affairs is barely above half.

President Obama sought to change the tone of American foreign policy by pursuing multilateralism and less direct military intervention. Also, global events during the Obama administration have been problematic for the United States, like the Arab Spring, rise of ISIS, Chinese expansionism, Ukrainian revolution, and continued economic stagnation.

The problems of the Obama administration seem to have influenced the rise of President Trump's "America First" foreign policy view that has infused isolationism back into decision making. Although this is not the same isolationism of the past, Trump indicated in his campaign, cabinet appointments, and initial policies that he wished to retreat from "failures," which included leaving Russia to interfere in other countries, the Assad regime to remain in Syria, renegotiating established trade agreements, and limiting immigration. A steady rise of isolationism in the American public means that he could find political support in continuing such policies, but the electorate will continue to receive cues from the media, government, and economy that will inform their opinions on whether Trump's policies are successful. Like other presidents, Trump will set the tone for foreign policy in the country, and his successes or failures will influence the continued rise or halting of isolationist sentiments in the public. Understanding the influences on support for isolationism is necessary to know better what foreign policy the public will support. Government actions do not happen in a vacuum, and American leaders take into consideration public opinion, which can expand or limit options. These surveys over time provide the contextual knowledge to gain this understanding. The Obama administration's policy changes in tandem with the promised new direction promised by its successor, will likely continue to influence how the American population views interventionism and isolationism in the future. Only time and continuing surveys will tell that tale.

References Cited

Almond, Gabriel A. *The American People and Foreign Policy*. New York: Praeger, 1950.

Althaus, Scott. L., and Kevin Coe. "Priming Patriots: Social Identity Processes and the Dynamics of Public Support for War." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 75, no.1 (2011): 65-88, doi: 10.1093/poq/nfq071.

Baum, Matthew A. "Going Private: Public Opinion, Presidential Rhetoric, and The Domestic Politics of Audience Costs in U.S. Foreign Policy Crises." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 48, no. 5 (2004): 603-631, doi: 10.1177/0022002704267764.

Baum, Matthew A., and Philip B. K. Potter. "The Relationships Between Mass Media,Public Opinion, and Foreign Policy: Toward a Theoretical Synthesis." *Annual Review of Political Science* 11 (2008): 39-65.

Baumgartner, Jody C., Peter L. Francia, and Jonathan S. Morris. "A Clash of Civilizations? The Influence of Religion on Public Opinion of U.S. Foreign Policy in the Middle East." *Political Research Quarterly* 61, no. 2 (2008) 171-179, doi: 10.1177/1065912907307288.

Bayulgen, Oksan, and Ekim Arbatli. " Cold War Redux in US–Russia relations? The Effects of US Media Framing and Public Opinion of the 2008 Russia–Georgia War." *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 46, no. 4 (2013): 513-527, doi: 10.1016/j.postcomstud.2013.08.003.

Berinsky, Adam J. "Assuming the Costs of War: Events, Elites, and American PublicSupport for Military Conflict." *Journal of Politics* 69, no. 4 (2007): 975-997.

Bloch-Elkon, Yaeli. " Studying the Media, Public Opinion, and Foreign Policy in International Crises: The United States and the Bosnian Crisis, 1992–1995." *Press/Politics* 12, no. 4 (2007): 20-51, doi: 10.1177/1081180X07307184.

Brancati, Dawn. "The Determinants of US Public Opinion Towards Democracy Promotion." *Political Behavior* 36, no. 4 (2013): 705-730, doi: 10.1007/s11109-013-9256-y.

Cavari, Amnon. "The Short-Term Effect of Going Public." *Political Research Quarterly,* 66, no. 2 (2013): 336-351, doi: 10.1177/1065912912448931.

Chatagnier, J. Tyson "The Effect of Trust in Government on Rallies 'Round the Flag." *Journal of Peace Research* 49, no 5 (2012): 631-645, doi: 10.1177/0022343312440808.

Choi, Youngmi. "Constituency, Ideology, and Economic Interests in U.S. Congressional Voting: The Case of the U.S.-Korea Free Trade Agreement." *Political Research Quarterly* 68, no. 2 (2015): 266-279, doi: 10.1177/1065912915577818.

Dieck, Helene and Richard J. Finneran. *The Influence of Public Opinion on Post-Cold War US Military Interventions*. New York: Palgrave Macmillian, 2015.

Djupe, Paul A., and Brian R. Calfano. "Divine Intervention? The Influence of Religious Value Communication on U.S. Intervention Policy." *Political Behavior* 35, no. 4 (2012): 643-663, doi: 10.1007/s11109-012-9211-3.

Drury, A. Cooper, L. Marvin Overby, Andrian Ang, and Yitan Li. "Pretty Prudent" or Rhetorically Responsive? The American Public's Support for Military Action." *Political Research Quarterly* 63, no. 1 (2010): 83-96, doi: 10.1177/1065912908327230.

Falomir-Pichastor, Juan M., Andrea Pereira, Christian Staerkle, and Fabrizio Butera. (2011). Do All Lives Have the Same Value? Support for International Military Interventions as a Function of Political System and Public Opinion of Target States." *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations,* 15, no. 3 (2011): 347-362, doi: 10.1177/1368430211424919.

Fearon, James D. "Domestic Political Audiences and the Escalation of International Disputes." *American Political Science Review* 88, no. 3 (1994): 577-592.

Flynn, Michael E. "The International and Domestic Sources of Bipartisanship in U.S. Foreign Policy." *Political Research Quarterly* 67, no. 2 (2014): 398-412, doi: 10.1177/1065912914521898.

Gadarian, Shana Kushner. "The Politics of Threat: How Terrorism News Shapes Foreign Policy Attitudes." *The Journal of Politics* 72, no. 02 (2010): 469-483, doi: 10.1017/s0022381609990910.

Gadarian, Shana Kushner. "Scary Pictures: How Terrorism Imagery Affects Voter Evaluations." *Political Communication* 31, no. 2 (2014): 282-302. doi: 10.1080/10584609.2013.828136.

Gelpi, Chritopher. "Performing on Cue? The Formation of Public Opinion Toward War." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 54, no. 1 (2010): 88-116, doi: 10.1177/0022002709352845.

Gelpi, Christopher, Laura Roselle, and Brooke Barnett. "Polarizing Patriots: Divergent Responses to Patriotic Imagery in News Coverage of Terrorism." *American Behavioral Scientist* 57, no. 1 (2012): 8-45, doi: 10.1177/0002764212463358.

Gelpi, Christopher, Jason Reifler, and Peter Feaver. "Iraq the Vote: Retrospective and Prospective Foreign Policy Judgments on Candidate Choice and Casualty Tolerance." *Political Behavior* 29, no. 2 (2007): 151-174, doi: 10.1007/s11109-007-9029-6.

Gibler, Douglas M. and Marc L. Hutchison. "Territorial Issues, Audience Costs, and the Democratic Peace: The Importance of Issue Salience." *The Journal of Politics* 75, no. 4 (2013): 879-893.

Grieco, Joseph M., Christopher Gelpi, Jason Reifler, and Peter D. Feaver. (2011). "Let's Get a Second Opinion: International Institutions and American Public Support for War." *International Studies Quarterly* 55, no. 2 (2011): 563-583. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-2478.2011.00660.x.

Guth, James L. "The Religious Roots of Foreign Policy Exceptionalism." *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 10, no. 2 (2012): 77-85, doi: 10.1080/15570274.2012.682497.

Hayes, Danny and Matt Guardino. "The Influence of Foreign Voices on U.S. Public Opinion." *American Journal of Political Science* 55, no. 4 (2011): 831-851.

Hildebrandt, Timothy, Courtney Hillebrecht, Peter M. Holm, and Jon Pevehouse. "The Domestic Politics of Humanitarian Intervention: Public Opinion, Partisanship, and Ideology." *Foreign Policy Analysis* 9, no. 3 (2013): 243-266, doi: 10.1111/j.1743-8594.2012.00189.x.

Holsti, Ole R. *Public Opinion and American Foreign Policy.* Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2004.

Jacobs, Lawrence R. and Benjamin I. Page. "Who Influences U.S. Foreign Policy?." *American Political Science Review* 99, no. 1 (2005): 107-123.

Kim, Dukhong. "The Effect of Partisanship, Sophistication, and Political Contexts on Belief in Democracy Promotion." *Politics & Policy* 42, no. 5 (2014): 658-692, doi: 10.1111/polp.12095.

Kertzer, Joshua D. "Making Sense of Isolationism: Foreign Policy Mood as a Multilevel Phenomenon." *The Journal of Politics* 75, no. 01 (2013): 225-240, doi: 10.1017/s0022381612000989.

Kertzer, Joshua D., Kathleen E. Powers, Brian C. Rathbun, and Ravi Iyer. "Moral Support: How Moral Values Shape Foreign Policy Attitudes." *The Journal of Politics* 76, no. 03 (2014): 825-840, doi: 10.1017/s0022381614000073.

Kiousis, Spiro, and Jesper Strömbäck. "The White House and Public Relations: Examining the Linkages Between Presidential Communications and Public Opinion." *Public Relations Review* 36, no. 1 (2010): 7-14, doi: 10.1016/j.pubrev.2009.08.013.

Kleinberg, Katja B., and Benjamin O. Fordham. "Trade and Foreign Policy Attitudes." *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 54, no. 5 (2010): 687-714, doi: 10.1 177/0022002710364128.

Knecht, T., and M.S. Weatherford. "Public Opinion and Foreign Policy: The Stages of Presidential Decision Making." *International Studies Quarterly* 50 (2006): 705-727.

Lacina, Bethany, and Charlotte Lee. "Culture Clash or Democratic Peace?: Results of a Survey Experiment on the Effect of Religious Culture and Regime Type on Foreign Policy Formation." *Foreign Policy Analysis* 9 (2013): 143-170, doi: 10.1111/j.17438594.2012.00183.x.

Leal, David L., and Curt Nichols. "Military Family Attitudes toward Senior Civilian Leaders in the United States." *Armed Forces & Society* 39, no. 1 (2012): 53-77, doi: 10.1177/0095327x12441327.

Lecheler, Sophie, Mario Keer, Andreas R.T. Schuck, and Regula Hänggli. "The Effects of Repetitive News Framing on Political Opinions over Time." *Communication Monographs* 82, no. 3 (2015): 339-358, doi 10.1080/03637751.2014.994646

Liberman, Peter. "War and Torture as 'Just Deserts'." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 78, no. 1 (2014): 47-70. doi: 10.1093/poq/nft081.

Lippman, Walter. *Public Opinion.* New York NY: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1922.

Lippmann, Walter. *The Public Philosophy: On the Decline and Revival of the Western Society*, 1955.

Mack, W. R., Karl DeRouen, and David Lanoue. "Foreign Policy Votes and Presidential Support in Congress." *Foreign Policy Analysis* 9, no. 1 (2013): 79-102, doi: 10.1111/j.1743-8594.2011.00166.x.

McLean, Elena V., and Taehee Whang. " Designing Foreign Policy: Voters, Special Interest Groups, and Economic Sanctions." *Journal of Peace Research* 51, no. 5 (2014): 589-602, doi: 10.1177/0022343314533811.

Merritt, Richard L. "Public Opinion and Foreign Policy," *Policy Studies Journal* 1, no. 2 (1972): 86-91.

Milner, Helen V., and Dustin H. Tingley. "Who Supports Global Economic Engagement? The Sources of Preferences in American Foreign Economic Policy." *International Organization* 65, no. 01 (2011): 37-68, doi: 10.1017/s0020818310000317.

Nacos, Brigitte L., Robert Y. Shapiro, and Pierangelo Isernia, eds., *Decisionmaking in a Glass House: Mass Media, Public Opinion, and American and European Foreign Policy in the 21st Century.* Lanham MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000.

Newman, Brian, and Andrew Forcehimes. "'Rally Round the Flag' Events for Presidential Approval Research." *Electoral Studies* 29, no. 1 (2010): 144-154, doi: 10.1016/j.electstud.2009.07.003.

Olson, Laura, Cigdem Kentmen, and Zeyep Taydas. "Religion and Public Opinion about Foreign Policy Tools among Americans." Paper presented at International Studies Association--Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales Joint International Conference (July 2014).

Oneal, John R., and Anna Lillian Bryan. "The Rally 'Round the Flag Effect in U.S. Foreign Policy Crises, 1950-1985." *Political Behavior* 17, no. 4 (1995): 379-401.

Paxton, Pamela, and Stephen Knack. "Individual and Country-Level Factors Affecting Support for Foreign Aid." *International Political Science Review* 33, no. 2 (2012): 171-192, doi: 10.1177/0192512111406095.

Powlick, Philip J., and Andrew Z. Katz. "Defining the American Public Opinion/Foreign Policy Nexus." *Mershon International Studies Review* 42 (1998): 29-61.

Rojecki, Andrew. "Rhetorical Alchemy: American Exceptionalism and the War on Terror." *Political Communication* 25 (2008): 67-88, doi: 10.1080/10584600701807935.

Shah, D. V., M. D. Watts, D. Domke, and D. P. Fan. "News Framing and Cueing of Issue Regimes: Explaining Clinton's Public Approval In Spite Of Scandal." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 66, no. 3 (2002): 339–70.

Sheafer, Tamir, and Shira Dvir-Gvirsman. The Spoiler Effect: Framing Attitudes and Expectations Toward Peace." *Journal of Peace Research* 47, no. 2 (2010): 205-215, doi: 10.1177/0022343309353110.

Sidman, Andrew H., and Helmut Norpoth. " Fighting to Win: Wartime Morale in the American Public." *Electoral Studies* 31, no. 2 (2012): 330-341, doi: 10.1016/j.electstud.2012.01.008.

Simon, Christopher A., and Nicholas P. Lovrich. "Citizen Support for Military Expenditures: A Longitudinal Analysis of U.S. Public Opinion, 1999--2002." *Armed Forces & Society* 36, no. 3 (2010): 454-480, doi: 10.1177/0095327x09339899.

Sirin, Cigdem V. "Public Support for Military Interventions across Levels of Political Information and Stages of Intervention: The Case of the Iraq War." *Armed Forces & Society* 38, no. 2 (2011): 252-272, doi: 10.1177/0095327x11418321.

Smeltz, Dina et al. *America in the Age of Uncertainty: American Public Opinion and US Foreign Policy.* Chicago IL: The Chicago Council on Global Affairs, 2016. https://www.thechicagocouncil.org/issue/public-opinion.

Soroka, Stuart N. "Media, Public Opinion, and Foreign Policy." *Press/Politics* 8, no. 1 (2003): 27-48, doi: 10.1177/1081180X02238783.

Taydas, Zeynep, Cigdem Kentmen, and Laura R. Olson. "Faith Matters: Religious Affiliation and Public Opinion About Barack Obama's Foreign Policy in the "Greater" Middle East." *Social Science Quarterly* 93, no. 5 (2012): 1218-1242, doi: 10.1111/j.1540-6237.2012.00920.x.

Tedin, Kent, Brandon Rottinghaus, and Harrell Rodgers. "When the President Goes Public: The Consequences of Communication Mode for Opinion Change across Issue Types and Groups." *Political Research Quarterly* 64, no. 3 (2011): 506-519, doi: 10.1177/1065912910370685.

Tomz, Michael R. and Jessica L. P. Weeks. "Public Opinion and the Democratic Peace." *American Political Science Review* 107, no. 4 (2013): 849-865.

Urbatsch, R. "Isolationism and Domestic Politics." *Journal of Conflict Resolution,* 54, no. 3 (2010): 471-492, doi: 10.1177/0022002709357891.

Urbatsch, R. (2013). Industries, Occupations, and Trade Policy Preferences. *Political Behavior, 35*(3), 605-620. doi: 10.1007/s11109-012-9206-0

Wagner, Richard. "The Decline of Military Adventurism in the Conservative Big Tent: Why Grassroots Conservatives in the United States Are Embracing a More Cautious Foreign Policy." *SAGE Open* 5, no.1 (2015): doi: 10.1177/2158244015575556.

Walldorf, C. William. (2010). Argument, institutional process, and human rights sanctions in democratic foreign policy. *European Journal of International Relations, 16*(4), 639-662. doi: 10.1177/1354066109344015

Weeks, Jessica L. "Autocratic Audience Costs: Regime Type and Signaling Resolve." *International Organization* 62, no. 1 (2008): 35-64.

Whang, Taehee. "Playing to the Home Crowd? Symbolic Use of Economic Sanctions in the United States." *International Studies Quarterly* 55, no. 3 (2011): 787-801, doi: 10.1111/j.1468-2478.2011.00668.x.

Yang, Yi Edward, and Xinsheng Liu. "The 'China Threat' through the Lens of US Print Media: 1992–2006." *Journal of Contemporary China,* 21, no. 76 (2012): 695-711, doi: 10.1080/10670564.2012.666838.

Zhang, Cui, and Charles Williams Meadows. "International Coverage, Foreign Policy, and National Image: Exploring the Complexities of Media Coverage, Public Opinion, and Presidential Agenda." *International Journal of Communications* 6 (2012): 76-95.

Zukin, Cliff. *A New Engagement: Political Participation, Civic Life, and the Changing American Citizen.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.

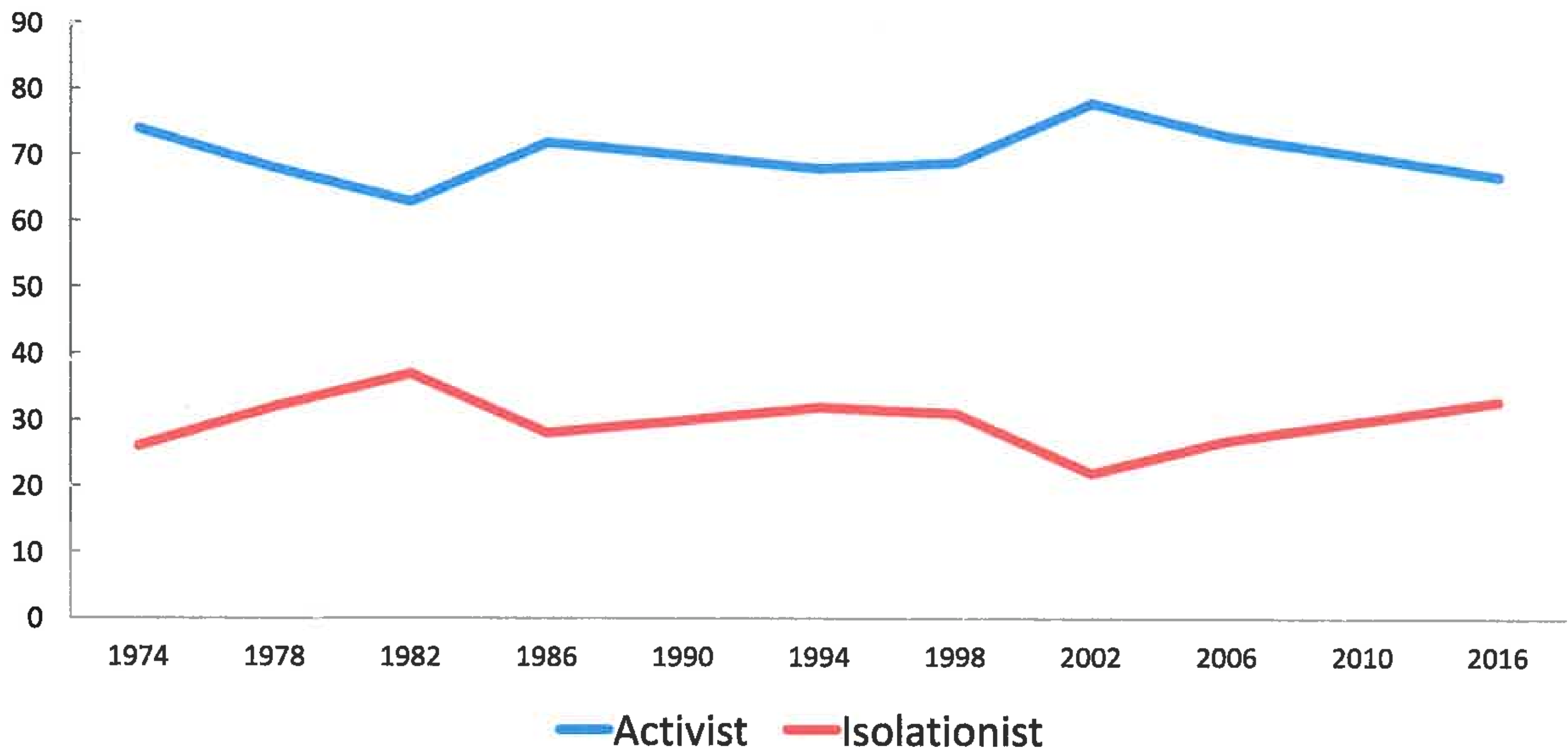

Figure 1 Public Opinion Should US Be Active in Foreign Affairs? 1974-2016

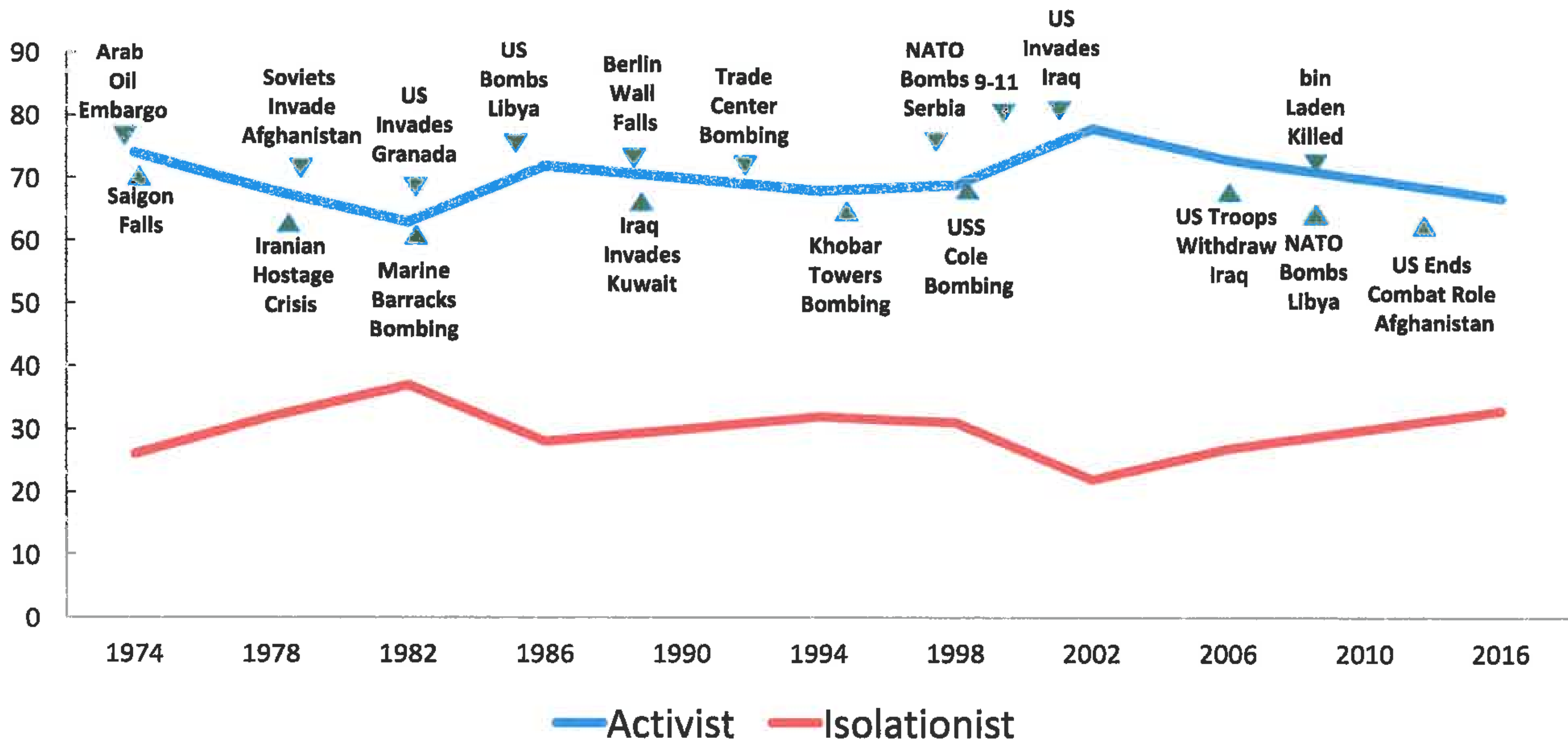

Figure 2 Focusing Events and Foreign Affairs Activism, 1974-2016

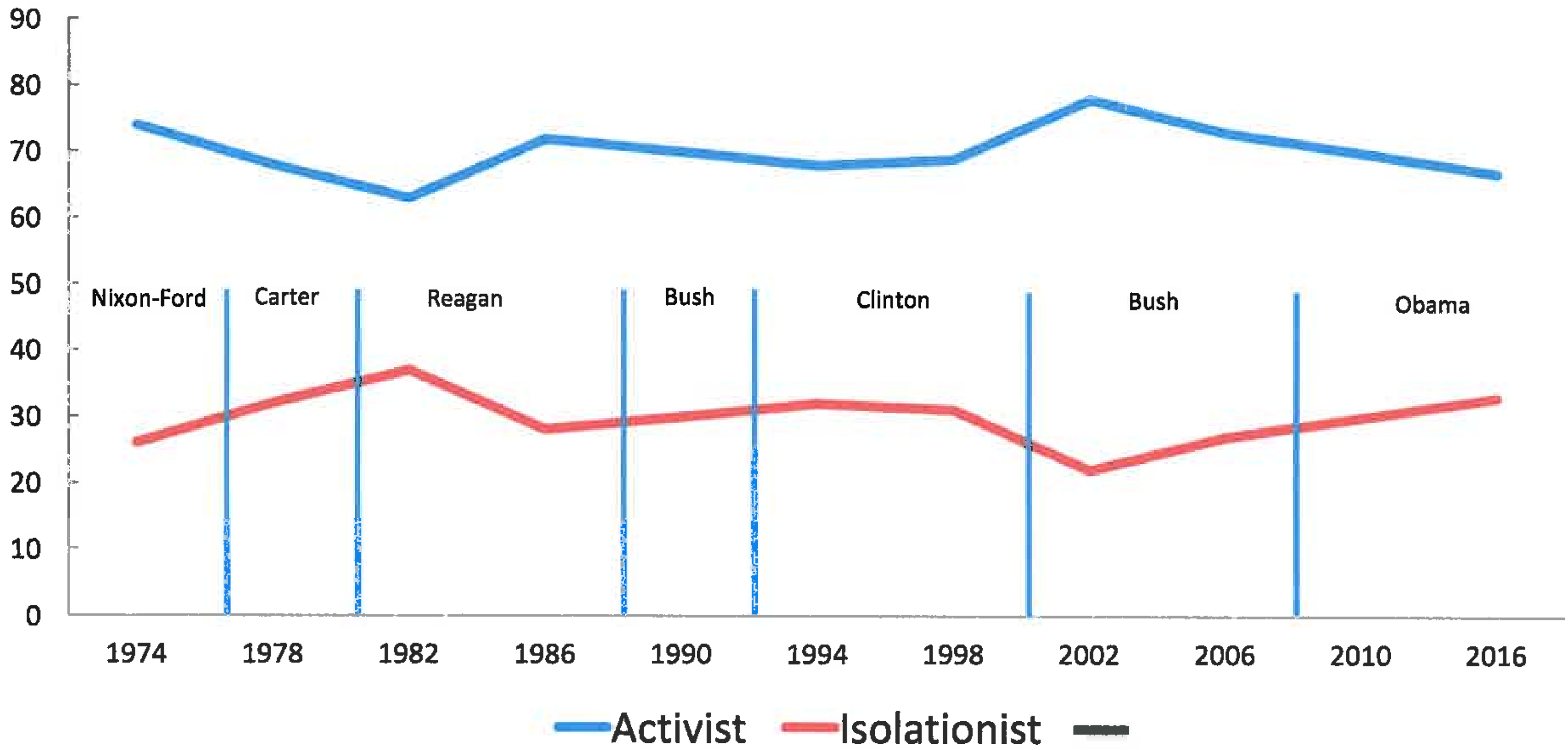

Figure 3 Public Opinion About Foreign Affairs by Administration, 1974-2016

Table 1 Isolationism by Administration, 1974-2016

	Isolationist %	President	Republican Admin	Democrat Admin
1974	25.9	*Ford*	*25.9*	
1978	31.7	*Carter*		*31.7*
1982	36.5	*Reagan*	*36.5*	
1986	27.6	*Reagan*	*27.6*	
1990	29.9	*Bush*	*29.9*	
1994	32.2	*Clinton*		*32.2*
1998	30.9	*Clinton*		*30.9*
2002	21.9	*Bush*	*21.9*	
2006	27.2	*Bush*	*27.2*	
2010	30.1	*Obama*		*30.1*
2016	32.5	*Obama*		*32.5*
Mean	29.9		28.3	31.8
Std. Dev.	4.04		4.5	1.1
Range	22-37		22-37	30-33

Table 2 Relationships Summary of Statistical Significance, 1974-2016

	Attentive	Education	Age	Race	Gender	Party	Ideology
1974	◆	◆	◆	◆	O	O	O
1978	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	O	O
1982	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	O
1986	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	O
1990	◆	◆	◆	◆	O	◆	O
1994	◆	◆	O	O	◆	NA	O
1998	◆	◆	◆	◆	O	O	O
2002	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	O
2006	◆	◆	◆	O	O	◆	◆
2010	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	O	◆
2016	◆	◆	◆	O	◆	◆	◆

◆Denotes statistically significant at .05 level of probability; ODenotes not statistically significant at .05 level
NA denotes information not available in survey

Attentive = Interested in foreign affairs news, Not interested in foreign affairs news
Education = Less than HS diploma; HS diploma, Some post-HS, College degree(s)
Age = 18-24, 25-34, 35-49, 50-64, 65 and older
Race = White, Black, Other
Gender = Male, Female
Party = Republican, Democrat, Independent; not asked in 1994
Ideology = Conservative, Middle-of-Road, Liberal

Table 3 Percent Isolationist by Attention to Foreign Affairs News, 1974-2016

	Inattentive	Attentive
1974	37.2	22.3
1978	53.8	26.9
1982	50.4	31.7
1986	40.7	22.7
1990	48.2	27.0
1994	53.7	29.7
1998	46.5	28.5
2002	47.6	25.1
2006	44.1	24.1
2010	56.6	24.2
2016	57.5	26.5
Mean	48.7	26.2
StDev	6.5	2.9
Range	37-57	22-32

Table 4 Percent Isolationist by Education, 1974-2016

	Less Diploma	HS Diploma	Some Post HS	College Degree(s)
1974	35.7	25.7	21.7	13.2
1978	50.3	33.1	25.4	11.3
1982	53.4	38.3	34.8	19.3
1986	49.6	30.7	20.6	11.7
1990	50.7	33.1	24.1	14.1
1994	42.9	40.6	31.3	17.9
1998	44.1	35.7	29.6	19.6
2002	44.8	31.2	21.9	13.1
2006	30.5	33.4	28.4	18.8
2010	44.7	36.8	31.1	18.3
2016	35.0	40.0	34.5	24.1
Mean	43.8	34.5	27.6	16.5
StDev	7.4	4.4	5.1	4.1
Range	31-53	26-41	21-35	11-24

Table 5 Percent Isolationist by Age Group, 1974-2016

	18-24	25-34	35-49	50-64	65 +
1974	41.5	20.6	23.9	23.5	25.4
1978	38.9	32.3	25.3	29.4	37.5
1982	51.7	32.1	30.6	34.2	43.0
1986	33.6	24.4	22.0	27.1	34.9
1990	37.6	32.3	26.2	27.2	32.1
1994	40.8	33.8	29.2	29.0	33.0
1998	45.4	40.5	25.6	22.9	32.1
2002	39.2	28.1	19.7	15.2	20.7
2006	20.8	34.4	25.3	24.8	23.8
2010	39.4	38.4	32.1	26.4	22.8
2016	43.8	44.2	40.1	28.3	22.6
Mean	39.4	32.6	27.3	26.1	29.9
StDev	7.9	6.7	5.5	4.7	7.2
Range	21-52	21-44	20-40	15-34	21-43

Table 6 Percent Isolationist by Race, 1974-2016

	White	Black	Other
1974	24.9	37.2	35.0
1978	30.4	44.9	33.3
1982	35.1	49.6	35.3
1986	25.7	43.7	32.4
1990	27.7	49.2	39.0
1994	31.8	37.1	27.3
1998	27.4	45.5	36.5
2002	19.7	36.2	20.8
2006	26.3	27.9	30.5
2010	29.0	31.7	35.1
2016	32.9	37.3	28.8
Mean	28.3	40.1	32.0
StDev	4.2	7.1	5.0
Range	20-35	28-50	27-39

Table 7 Percent Isolationist by Gender, 1974-2016

	Male	Female
1974	24.9	26.9
1978	28.2	35.1
1982	31.6	41.8
1986	23.8	31.6
1990	28.3	31.5
1994	27.6	36.8
1998	30.4	31.5
2002	19.5	24.3
2006	26.4	28.1
2010	26.4	33.9
2016	29.5	35.5
Mean	26.9	32.4
StDev	3.5	5.0
Range	20-38	24-44

Table 8 Percent Isolationist by Party and Ideology, 1974-2016

	Republican	Democrat	Independent		Conservative	Middle	Liberal
1974	21.1	25.2	28.3		25.7	24.8	20.7
1978	30.1	33.0	29.2		30.0	30.9	32.0
1982	28.6	41.7	35.5		32.9	37.9	35.0
1986	21.0	34.7	24.3		23.7	29.4	29.3
1990	23.2	32.1	32.0		26.4	30.6	31.0
1994	NA	NA	NA		29.1	32.3	31.6
1998	28.0	30.9	31.7		30.4	30.5	31.1
2002	17.5	23.5	23.7		21.3	22.9	20.0
2006	21.1	29.9	29.8		21.9	33.8	21.6
2010	24.9	29.9	29.2		25.9	37.1	25.7
2016	32.3	27.4	34.5		31.0	37.5	27.2
Mean	24.7	29.7	30.7		27.1	31.5	27.7
StDev	4.9	5.5	3.4		3.8	4.8	5.2
Range	18-40	24=47	24-42		21-33	23-38	20-35

Table 9 Linear Regression Model for Isolationism, 2016

	Unstandardized B	Std Error	Standardized Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	.546	.039		14.128	.000
Attentive	-.277	.032	-.236	-8.654	.000
Education	-.105	.025	-.110	-4.116	.000
Age	-.102	.025	-.110	-4.050	.000
Race	.078	.043	.050	1.811	.070
Gender	.027	.024	.030	1.122	.262
Party ID	.081	.026	.088	3.140	.002
Ideology	.056	.028	.055	2.022	.043

R=.330 R^2=.109 Adjusted R^2=.104 Std Error of Estimate=.433

Table 10 Linear Regression Model for Presidential Preference, 2016 (without Party ID)

	Unstandardized B	Std Error	Standardized Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	.544	.041		13.201	.000
Attentive	-.041	.035	-.031	-1.168	.243
Education	-.072	.026	-.070	-2.738	.006
Age	.119	.027	.115	4.430	.000
Race	-.483	.045	-.270	-10.747	.000
Gender	-.067	.025	-.067	-2.674	.008
Ideology	-.119	.027	-.110	-4.341	.000
Isolationist	.149	.029	.135	5.172	.000

R=.353 R^2=.125 Adjusted R^2=.120 Std Error of Estimate=.469

Table 11 Linear Regression Model for Presidential Preference, 2016 (with Party ID)

	Unstandardized B	Std Error	Standardized Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	.061	.027		2.237	.026
Attentive	-.010	.022	-.007	-.437	.662
Education	-.041	.016	-.040	-2.499	.013
Age	.058	.017	.056	3.470	.001
Race	-.088	.027	-.053	-3.216	.001
Gender	-.014	.016	-.014	-.897	.370
Ideology	.009	.019	.008	.477	.633
Isolationist	.043	.018	.038	2.336	.020
Party ID	.839	.017	.839	49.796	.000

R=.868 R^2=.753 Adjusted R^2=.751 Std Error of Estimate=.249

APPENDIX

Variable Values for Cross-Tabulations

Isolationist 1=Activist; 2=Isolationist
Attentive = Interested in foreign affairs news, Not interested in foreign affairs news
Education = Less than HS diploma; HS diploma, Some post-HS, College degree(s)
Age = 18-24, 25-34, 35-49, 50-64, 65 and older
Race = White, Black, Other
Gender = Male, Female
Party = Republican, Democrat, Independent; not asked in 1994
Ideology = Conservative, Middle-of-Road, Libera

Binary 0/1 Values for Regression Analysis

Isolationism 0=Activist;1=Isolationist
Attentive 0=Not interested/low interest; 1=Interested/high interest
Education 0= Less than college degree; 1=College degree
Age 0=18-49; 1=50 & older
Race 0=White & other; 1=African American
Gender 0=Male; 1=Female
Party ID 0=Democrat; 1=Republican [Independents excluded]
Ideology 0=Liberal & Conservative; 1=Moderate/Middle-of-Road
Presidential Preference 0=Clinton; 1=Trump