Dear Junior IO Scholars Workshop participants:

I'm looking forward to presenting a manuscript I have prepared for *Cambridge Elements'* International Relations Series (international organization subcategory).

I would especially appreciate your advice on the introduction and theory chapters, which include a bit of new material, but welcome comments on the entire project. I hope this text can fit into a standard international relations Ph.D. seminar and be part of the canon on domestic theories of IOs and/or constructivism. Your ideas on how to make that goal a reality, and any other feedback, are all appreciated!

Thank you,
Jon

Social Cues

How the Liberal Community Legitimizes Humanitarian War

Jonathan A. Chu

Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore

Version 19 November 2023

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Chapter 1: The Debate on Institutional Legitimacy

Since Claude Inis observed that the United Nations could legitimize foreign policy, nearly sixty years of scholarship has sought to theoretically specify and empirically demonstrate what it means for an international institution to confer legitimacy.[1] In particular, this scholarship has focused on explaining why institutions can seemingly legitimize the use of military force in international politics. The focus on war stems from the strong presumption in Realist international relations theory that institutions do not matter in the realm of "high" politics involving security issues.

In this literature, Constructivist scholars like Martha Finnemore and Ian Hurd explain institutional legitimacy as being able to change beliefs about what behavior is appropriate or what *ought* to be obeyed.[2] So ultimately, when a policy like military intervention is legitimized, people will be more supportive of enacting that policy. In a study of armed humanitarian intervention, Finnemore argues that when an institution endorses a policy, it is "signaling broad support for the actor's goals" and that the purpose in intervening is not merely self-serving."[3] Examining the Security Council specifically, Hurd theorizes that institutions can confer legitimacy because they generate favorable and fair outcomes or follow appropriate procedures in their conduct.[4] These pathways to legitimacy are a result of a social processes, generated by political actors' interactions with the institutions.

Another line of research argues that institutions legitimize the use of armed force by legalizing it.[5] This ability stems from the fact that legality can signal a threat to international peace and security, and people may care about legality for a variety of intrinsic and instrumental reasons.[6] From this perspective, the Security Council has the sole authority under the current international legal system to authorize international uses of armed force outside the realm of self-defense, and thus should have a unique ability to legitimize war.[7]

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[1] Claude 1967, Chapter 4.

2 Barnett 1997; Finnemore 2003; Hurd 2007.

[3] Finnemore 2003, 82.

[4] Hurd 2007, 67-73. Claude (1967, 114) also discusses how the UN's legitimacy could emerge from its Switzerland-like neutrality.

[5] Tago 2005, 589; Tago and Ikeda 2015, 392.

[6] Chong 1993; Koh 1997; Finnemore and Sikkink 1998; Goodman and Jinks 2013; Hafner-Burton, LeVeck, and Victor 2016; Guzman 2008; Tomz 2008.

[7] Frank 2002.

Subsequent researchers have recast the concept of institutional legitimacy in rationalist and game-theoretic terms, producing a family of arguments which I refer to as the (rationalist) institutional design theories. To begin, in a seminal study of the Security Council, Erik Voeten analogized the Council to an elite pact and argued that its policy endorsements are signals of reassurance about whether war would provoke great power conflict and disrupt the international system.[8] More recently, a series of articles and award-winning books by Alexander Thompson and subsequently Terrence Chapman advanced more general theories of international institutions. These theories emphasize how institutions can send informational signals about the merits, costs, benefits, and unbiasedness of war.[9] So when an institution endorses a policy, it is not changing people's beliefs about appropriateness as argued by the constructivists, but instead, their calculations about the material outcomes of war. To explain *why* institutions can send such signals, these theories focus on certain institutional properties— independence (or neutrality) and conservativeness. Independence stems from the diversity of an institution's membership and conservativeness stems from whether the institution poses a high legislative hurdle to approving a policy. Because the Security Council is more independent and conservative, the authors predict it wields more influence than other institutions like NATO.

This arc of scholarship has made a profound impact on international relations theory. It has taken the field from general skepticism about the relevance of international institutions to what is now the "conventional wisdom." That is, international institutions, and the Security Council in particular, allow governments to reassure, signal, and ultimately persuade skeptical audiences like public opinion and foreign elites about the legality and cost-benefit merits of their foreign policy.[10]

However, some puzzling cases and subsequent research reveal the need for additional theory and evidence to better understand these institutional dynamics. For one, the historical record includes anomalies in which the lack of Security Council authorization seemed negligible. For example, in 1999 the United States and NATO allies conducted an armed humanitarian intervention in Kosovo without the approval of the Security Council. But rather than condemning the United States, much of the

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[8] Voeten 2005.

[9] Thompson 2006 (published in *International Organization*); Chapman 2007 (*Journal of Conflict Resultion)*; Chapman 2009 (*International Organization*); Thompson 2009 (winner of the International Studies Association's best book award on international organization and multilateralism); Chapman 2011 (winner of the American Political Science Association's best book award on conflict).

[10] Researchers also provide related insights into how information signaling works in the international political economy. Gray (2009), for example, shows how the European Union signals information about risk and a country's economic performance. See also, Brutger and Li (2002) and Gray and Hicks (2014).

international community declared the illegal intervention legitimate,[11] and even several non-western members of the Security Council did not want to condemn the intervention.[12] Indeed, legal scholars have long debated the legitimacy of the Security Council.[13]

In the political science literature, theoretical and empirical critiques of the institutional design perspectives have also emerged, calling into question the argument that an institutions membership composition affects its ability to persuade domestic audiences.[14] Some experimental research verifies the hypothesis that international institutions can change people's foreign policy views but simultaneously challenges the specific claims they affect people's beliefs about the merits of war and that the Security Council is uniquely suited to do so.[15] Together, these studies find that international institutions influence politics via domestic channels, as the conventional wisdom states. However, they also reveal a lack of consensus over *why* this influence exists and *which* institutions can wield it.

Reinterpreting Legitimization as a Social Cue

This book provides a contrasting perspective and brings the debate about institutional legitimacy back into a "constructivist" framework. But unlike existing constructivist approaches that are from the structural tradition, it focuses on people's political and social identity as a source of legitimacy. It starts with the premise that institutional legitimacy is in the eye of the beholder, so to theorize and uncover evidence about it, one must first begin with the audience of legitimacy: people.

Specifically, I argue that people develop attachments to social groups and thus develop social identities. When they do, they will care more about what their fellow group members think, while discounting the views of outgroups. From this point of view, institutions can legitimize a policy when they represent a person's identity and social group. More specifically, when an institution "legitimizes" a policy, it is sending a *social cue* about how a certain behavior or policy would be viewed by the ingroup, and the social implications of a policy on norm abidance, group participation, and status and image. Legitimizing also exerts direct social pressure on ingroup members to adopt conforming

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[11] Independent International Commission on Kosovo 2000.

[12] Source (accessed on 10 November 2023): https://press.un.org/en/1999/19990326.sc6659.html.

[13] E.g., Caron 1993; Henkin 1999.

[14] Hainmueller, Mummolo, and Xu (2019) provide an empirical critique; Fey, Jo, and Kenkel (2015) question the formal model behind the information theory, though a rebuttal by Chapman and Pascoe (2015) highlights why we might interpret this critique with caution.

[15] Tingley and Tomz 2013; Recchia and Chu 2022.

opinions. These "mechanisms" of legitimacy contrast with material perspectives that focus on how cues transmit information about the material cost and benefits of a policy. Lastly, the social theory also specifies how individual or coalitions of ingroup members can send social cues as well, but institutionalized social cues are more influential.

In this book, I further develop this general argument by theorizing how social cueing manifests in the domain of humanitarian wars by liberal democracies. I focus on this area of international politics because it is normatively and politically consequential,[16] and it is a domain where the concept of institutional legitimacy has been widely debated by political scientists, legal scholars, and policymakers, and in public discourse.[17] Specifically, I hypothesize that the liberal community vis-à-vis NATO can send social cues that shape how domestic and foreign citizens in the community think about humanitarian intervention. This phenomenon occurs because democratic audiences perceive NATO as representing their social group.[18] In contrast, cues from outgroup countries and more diffuse organizations like the Security Council will exert less influence.

For evidence, I employ a multi-method research design that draws from historical polls, case studies of U.S. intervention, analysis of media content, an original policymaker survey, and a novel series of nine national surveys and survey experiments conducted in the United States, Japan, and Egypt. Through this research, I made several discoveries that support the social cue theory. During humanitarian interventions, the Security Council and NATO are salient institutions among citizens in liberal democracies. They appear in print news, television, and political speeches. Thus, it is likely that their policy positions and actions will provide cues to the public. The historical record of U.S. intervention reveals that Americans are generally skeptical of proposals to deploy unilateral military force without institutional approval, such as in the case of Rwanda and Syria. They are more enthusiastic about intervention when formal institutional backing is involved, but do not make a

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[16] I do not evaluate whether humanitarian intervention "works." However, even authors who argue that intervention is flawed and would not have stopped the genocide in Rwanda find, by their own analysis, that a "minimal" intervention could have saved 75,000 Tutsi lives (Kuperman 2001, Table 7-1).

[17] E.g., Finnemore 2003; Caron 1993; Henkin 1999. In chapter 2, I address whether the theory would have scope conditions that limit its application to humanitarian interventions, and in the conclusion chapter, I further discuss questions about generalizability.

[18] To be clear, my theoretical account only requires people to perceive NATO as representing the democratic community, particularly relative to other institutions, which it establishes with data. This perception may or may not be built on hypocrisy or illusion. To provide an analogy, religious organizations have historical been motivated and sustained by impure or hypocritical reasons, but that does not change the fact that their members perceive group belonging.

substantial distinction between obtaining NATO's sole approval versus both NATO and the Security Council's backing.

Thus, the case record finds that ingroup cues from NATO and the liberal community raise domestic public approval, while the additional endorsement of the Security Council adds little extra. To show that this finding is causally identified, I use survey experiments to measure the effect of social cues on mass opinion. The resulting data demonstrate the causality found in the historical record. I additionally show that after a Security Council cue, NATO's endorsement still increases public approval, which contradicts the conventional wisdom. Lastly, I provide direct evidence that social cues from the liberal community influence public opinion, but its cues via NATO exert an even stronger influence.

Three additional empirical results demonstrate how NATO's cues are indeed social cues rather than signals about an intervention's costs and benefits. First, NATO's influence is strongest among those who associate NATO with the liberal community and who express the strongest affinity with its member countries. Second, NATO affects public opinion via the causal mechanisms theorized: concerns about norm abidance, group participation, and status and image. Third, NATO still exerts influence after removing its ability to change people's cost-benefit calculations, implying that its institutional cue is not solely about material information transmission.

I then examine the effect of institutions on three foreign audiences. I show that the causal effects of the liberal community and NATO on support for U.S. humanitarian intervention replicate in Japan, demonstrating how their legitimacy is not limited to the West. Similarly, in the case of foreign elites, members of the UK parliament prefer humanitarian intervention with NATO but not the Security Council's approval over the reverse. However, NATO does not wield a similar authority among the Egyptian public. Instead, the Arab League's cues have a significant effect on them, which is consistent with the social cue theory. Taken together, the evidence shows that the liberal community and NATO can legitimize humanitarian wars by sending influential social cues.

Plan of the Book

The remainder of the book proceeds as follows. Chapter 2 presents my theory of social cues in two main parts. It first explains how social cues work in generic terms so scholars can understand the theory's general logic and apply it to other phenomena. Then, it develops the theory in the specific context of humanitarian intervention by the community of liberal democracies. Next, the chapter

outlines several alternative explanations for NATO's influence: its military strength, ability to facilitate burden sharing, and geographic and racial identity. The chapter closes by summarizing the key pieces of evidence that appear in the book.

The next three chapters test my theory. Chapter 3 tests the theory in the context of American public opinion on U.S. humanitarian intervention. It shows that social cues by the liberal community and NATO play a powerful role in mobilizing American support for humanitarian intervention. Chapter 4 answers the question of *why* NATO can influence people's views on humanitarian intervention by showing that its cues are indeed *social* cues. Chapter 5 turns to foreign audiences, examining the Japanese and Egyptian publics, as well as policymakers in the United Kingdom.

The next two chapters provide additional analysis and discussion on how my theory and evidence impact the debate on institutional legitimacy and international relations theory more broadly. Chapter 6 circles back to reassess the conventional wisdom regarding the Security Council's primacy in conferring institutional legitimacy. It shows that some evidence that was previously interpreted as consistent with conventional wisdom about Security Council primacy can instead be re-interpreted as being consistent with the social cue theory. It then directly tests the assumptions underlying the conventional wisdom and their potential defenses, demonstrating that they do not pass empirical muster. Chapter 7 assesses the academic and policy implications of my book. It explains how the book advances the field's understanding of institutional legitimacy, forum shopping,[19] and individual values in international relations, and concludes with a brief discussion about the future of liberal democratic community and humanitarian war.

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[19] Voeten 2001; Lipscy 2017.

Chapter 2: A Theory of Social Cues

This chapter develops a novel theory of social cues to explain how political communities and international organizations (IOs) legitimize and therefore influence people's views on armed humanitarian intervention. It interprets legitimization as a social process in which some stimulus leads people to conform with their group and view a behavior or opinion as consistent with their identity. I develop this theory in two parts, first as a general argument on how social groups send institutionalized social cues and then as a specific theory to explain how IOs influence humanitarian wars by the liberal democratic community in the post-Cold War era. Following my theory, the chapter considers alternative explanations, scope conditions, and caveats, it concludes by summarizing the hypotheses evaluated in the subsequent evidentiary chapters.

The General Argument on Social Groups and Institutionalized Social Cues

My theory begins with premises rooted in social and political psychology, including social identity theory, while innovating by developing a new theory for how institutions can send social cues. People develop social identities when they identify with a particular group of individuals or a social group. Social groups form around ascriptive attributes like age, race, and gender but can also be formed around ideologies, hobbies, professions, and other qualities. By identifying with such groups, people develop a sense of who they are and what social circles they belong to, and on the other hand, who they are not and who does not belong to their social circle. Social psychologists refer to this process as developing a sense of "us" versus "them." Echoing social identity theory's general proposition about ingroup-outgroup differentiation, research discusses how group formation in international politics generates "relational comparisons," or the characteristics and practices that distinguish group members from outsiders.[20] Thus, within a social group, a sense of we-ness and ingroup-outgroup distinction exists.

People identifying with a group will also internalize the group's collective well-being and begin to adopt perspectives from their group as a whole. For example, I may feel pride or

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[20]Abdelal et al. 2009, 20-4.

embarrassment on behalf of my sports team, ethnicity, country, or any other group I identify with. Social psychologists describe this phenomenon as people developing a social self or collective social identity,[21] leading them to experience "collective self-esteem" and emotions on behalf of their group's experiences.[22] Furthermore, when somebody internalizes such a collective identity, they will make intergroup comparisons (contrasting with comparisons between self and others at the individual level).[23] They will care about how their group interacts and relates to other groups. People want their group to do well broadly, beyond material well-being.

This concept of collective identity is central to international relations scholarship of the psychological tradition, where scholars demonstrate how countries, governments, and their citizens belong to certain social groups in the international system.[24] Furthermore, due to internalizing the nation's collective identity, citizens of Germany, for example, think about the world from the perspective of their country Germany as a social actor in international politics. Relatedly, international relations research often also highlight how social identities can transfer from country to individual: if countries belong to a social group, then that country's citizens also perceive themselves as belonging to such a group. For example, Germany is part of Europe, so to some degree, Germans share a collective European identity. Overall, groups of countries and their citizens can develop ingroup identities over economic, political, social, and other dimensions, in addition to geography.

People's identities influence their opinions, decisions, and behavior both as an individual within a group and as someone who has internalized their group's collective well-being. Beginning with individual behavior, people identifying with a group will increasingly hold views and behave consistently with its norms and practices. Theorists from the social psychology tradition attribute this phenomenon partly to self-esteem. People want to feel good about themselves or have a high sense of self-esteem, and the benchmark for self-evaluation often stems from the markers of status and good or bad behavior of the social groups they belong to. Economists have rationalized people's incentive to affirm their identities as an "identity-based payoff." This payoff comes from the identity-affirming actions of oneself or others.[25]

Researchers have observed identity-based behavior in a variety of domains. The most robust empirical finding is probably ingroup favoritism, the phenomenon of people favoring other members

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[21] Brewer and Gardner 1996.
[22] Crocker and Luhtanen 1990; Branscombe and Wann 1994.
[23] Brewer and Gardner 1996.
[24] Mercer 1995; Wendt 1999; Johnston 2008.
[25] Akerlof and Kranton 2000.

of their identity group. This favoritism can manifest in essential acts like providing health care to everyday acts like helping a stranger who has dropped her groceries.[26] In international relations, researchers find that people favor providing humanitarian assistance to their racial and religious peers.[27] During the Russian invasion of Ukraine, for example, researchers found a sense of collective European identity helps to explain receptivity to Ukrainian refugees.[28] Popular commentary also echoed these findings and further pointed out the relative lack of receptivity to Syrian refugees fleeing from conflict.[29] Ultimately, ingroup favoritism has been documented in all social, economic, and political human relations.[30]

Beyond ingroup favoritism, I argue that social group identification leads people to develop three key preferences. First, group members will seek to behave consistently with their group's norms and practices and to engage in actions that further the values and goals of the group, as opposed to those of an outgroup.[31] They may find intrinsic value in promoting the group's values, while they also may fear social opprobrium for violating group norms or going against their peers. Behaving consistent with community norms could be with respect to specific norms or a more general and intangible desire to do what is "right" or "appropriate." For example, a Christian may want to act according to specific norms and practices relating to charity or marriage and the family or more generally want their thoughts and actions to represent being a "good" Christian.

Second, group members will seek to participate in group activities. Individuals and governments would prefer to do things alongside their peers, whether going out for a movie or engaging in a multilateral foreign policy. On the other hand, people may also have a "fear of missing out" when they are left out of the activities of their social group. Third, group members will also seek to maintain a good image among their peers. Maintaining a good image can be an end in and of itself for the sake of having good self-esteem, but it can also contribute to one's sense of status within the group.[32] Such a desire could manifest in social ladder climbing as well. Importantly, an individual can want a good image not only for themselves but also for their group as a collective within a larger community. For

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[26] E.g., Hall et al. 2015; Choi et al.2022.

[27] Chu and Lee 2022.

[28] Politi et al. 2023.

[29] https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/europe-racism-ukraine-refugees-1.6367932.

[30] Meanwhile, outgroup animus or hate is less consistently documented.

[31] See especially Duque (2018)'s concept of social closure.

[32] While status can draw from attributes such as wealth and military might, here I conceptualize status as a social-relational concept, following Weber 1978; Duque 2018. Renshon 2017 focuses on status as a positional concept or maker of hierarchy.

example, as a political scientist, I might want a good image among my peers, but I also want the political science discipline as a whole to be held in high regard by other disciplines. While distinct, these three behaviors are also interrelated and mutually reinforcing. They ultimately help to affirm one's identity and sense of belonging within a social group and the group's collective well-being.

Group members may want to promote group values and norms, participate in group activities, and maintain a good image for themselves and their group; however, doing so might not be so straightforward. Group activity requires coordination. Group members, especially novices, may also be unsure about what actions align with group norms and values and what behaviors would increase status. This uncertainty may pose an especially high barrier to new or peripheral members of a group. For example, a person may consider themselves a member of the U.S. Republican Party, but that does not mean they are always cognizant of the party's core discussions, practices, and viewpoints. To provide another example, a person might identify as Christian, but their religious group identification does not necessarily mean that they know everything about how their beliefs and actions would or would not conform to appropriate Christian behavior. Put another way, one can identify with a social group but not necessarily understand, internalize, and be in sync with the group's values and practices.[33] Given this uncertainty over how to be a "good" member of a social group, people will seek social cues from others.

Social cues can help people overcome the challenges of conforming to and affirming one's identity. The dynamic of social cueing occurs when a "sender" sends a cue to a "recipient," and the recipient perceives the sender as belonging to its social group. The transmission of a social cue could be direct or indirect. For example, a sender could relay its opinion directly to a recipient, or a sender can publicly declare its opinion on a matter while the recipient observes that declaration. Cues include statements or actions that endorse a point of view, type of behavior, or policy. However, they do not involve imposing a direct material cost or benefit on a recipient's behavior, distinguishing them from coercive threats or inducement.

More specifically, social cues affect recipients in two ways.[34] First, as previously implied, social cues can reduce uncertainty over the social implications of holding an opinion or adopting a policy, like humanitarian intervention. This function parallels existing arguments about how people

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[33] An identity group can even form around a certain set of core values, but over time, abandon those values and practices while still waving their group's banner. This is organized hypocrisy in identity politics.

[34] I build upon but deviate from existing work on how like-minded or similarly biased could influence one another (E.g., Calvert 1985; Brady and Sniderman 1985; Lupia and McCubbins 1998) by instead focusing on how identity and socialization can shape people's preferences for policy.

look to heuristics to fill gaps in their knowledge. But unlike these existing theories,[35] the cue recipient's uncertainty is not necessarily about the objective material cost and benefits or likely success of a policy or behavior. Instead, a social cue can answer questions about how holding an opinion, engaging in a behavior, or participating in some event will affect the cue recipient's social identity and group belonging. These questions include, will my fellow group members consider holding this opinion or engaging in this behavior as consistent with our group's norms and values? Will my peers (or will peer countries) participate in this behavior or event? Will voicing a particular opinion or engaging in a behavior improve my (or my group's) good image and status within my community?[36] These three questions reflect considerations about norm abidance, group participation, and image and status stakes.

Second, social cues also affect recipients directly. They exert peer pressure that socializes recipients into conforming to a belief or behavior without explicit reward or punishment. Instead, recipients change their opinions or behavior through an almost automatic process of emulation, mimicking, and conformity. From this point of view, even if people are not uncertain about the social implications of an action, they are still susceptible to the influence of social cues. Thus, taken together, social cues perform a dual role of social influence: they resolve uncertainty about the social implications of behavior and directly socialize group members into conformity.[37] This dual role can be interpreted as legitimizing a point of view or behavior.

Who or what types of entities can send social cues? The sender and recipients of these cues can be individuals, groups of individuals, or formal bodies or organizations. Ingroup cues (i.e., cues from fellow group members) exert the most social influence. Indeed, experimental research shows that people will update their beliefs about norms and, as a result, change their behavior after gleaning information from fellow group members.[38] Consistent with this finding, other studies also finds that cues from the like-minded can influence people's trade attitudes.[39] Yet other research finds that cues from social peers can exert just as strong of an effect on people's opinions on foreign policy as political elites.[40] Among ingroup peers, people may be especially influenced by veteran and high-status group

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[35] For examples, see Thompson 2008; Chapman 2011; Grieco et al. 2011.

[36] People may have instrumental and non-instrumental reasons for valuing status, and the theory and empirics do not attempt to disentangle the two (Johnston 2008, 82-84; Renshon 2017).

[37] Here, I use the term social influence more broadly than Johnston (2008), which defines the concept as "a class of microprocesses that elicit pro-normative behavior through the distribution of social rewards and punishments." Johnston's definition focuses on the cost and benefits element, while I additionally consider direct social pressure that elicits conformity.

[38] Gershon and Fridman 2022, Study 5

[39] Brutger and Li (2022).

[40] Kerzter and Zeitzoff (2017).

members, as opposed to group novices.[41] On the other hand, people tend to discount cues from outgroup members and might even react with aversion or backlash to a particularly demonized or distant outgroup member.

Social cues are particularly impactful when they are institutionalized. By institutionalized, the theory refers to a designation that marks a cue-sender as representing a particular social group. The designation could come from rules, a title, or a formal organization. The designation can elevate the status of an individual or group within their community. For example, a religious leader with a certain title can send cues about the social implications of various behaviors for members of a particular religion. The role of a religious leader is institutionalized (e.g., a pastor of a church or an abbot of a temple), and religious leaders are better positioned than other ingroup members to send social cues about what constitutes identity-congruent behavior within that religious group. To provide another example, the European Union or its high commissioner are formal institutions that could effectively send social cues to the community of European states and citizens, compared to other ingroup members like the German government or some high official that happens to be European.

Institutions increase the impact of a social cue in two related ways. First, institutionalization helps to distill and clarify the social meaning of a person's cue. A person, country, or other entity can have multiple identities, so when it sends a cue, observers may not know how to interpret it. Returning to the example of a religious leader, a pastor (who I'll call Mike) could also be a parent, political party member, engineer, or another professional. If plain-clothes Mike attends a town hall meeting and voices a policy stance, observers from within that religion may not know how to interpret his opinion. Sure, they can assume that Mike's stance is at least partly informed by religion, but other unrelated factors could also inform it. In contrast, if he stated the same views from the pulpit, ingroup observers receive, process, and act upon such a statement in the context of their religious identity and social group belonging.

Second, institutions can play a "logistical" role in coordinating group decision-making and facilitating the delivery of a social cue to group members. Without an institution, disparate group members may have difficulty coordinating to determine the group's goals, agenda, and actions. Even if key members of a social group can agree on something, they may have trouble communicating that view to other group members. In particular, their cues may have difficulty reaching their intended audience if the group is large and dispersed. Institutionalization often involves creating a variety of communication practices and channels that help social cues reach group members. Such

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[41] Johnston 2001; 2008.

communication channels include social media, mailing lists, and gatherings or conferences. Institutionalization can also increase the visibility of cues by attracting media attention. So, overall, social cues sent through institutions representing an identity group are likely to have greater reach and be clearer signals of ingroup norms.

To summarize the theory's implications in general terms, people are more likely to support policies and engage in behavior endorsed by the social group to which they belong. At the same time, they are more likely to discount the opinions of outgroup members. These endorsements are social cues. Social cues affect the behavior of ingroup members both directly—through a "normative nudge" effect that triggers emulation and conformity—but also by changing beliefs about the social implications of a certain viewpoint or behavior (i.e., norm abidance, group participation, and image and status stakes). Social cues are stronger when sent through institutionalized channels, including formal organizations representing a particular social group. This phenomenon of social cueing legitimizes behavior from the perspective of the cue's recipient.

Social Cues by the Liberal community and NATO

In three parts, I will now apply the social cue theory to international politics, and specifically, to understanding how international institutions legitimize and therefore influence the domestic politics of humanitarian wars waged by liberal democracies since the end of the Cold War. Applying the argument will allow me to generate a series of testable hypotheses regarding how the Security Council, NATO, and their member governments affect people's views on humanitarian intervention.

The first part of the argument states that citizens and governments are more likely to support policies endorsed by the social group to which they belong. At the same time, they are also more likely to discount the opinions of outgroup members. In the context of U.S. humanitarian intervention, what is the relevant social group? A significant research agenda on political communities argues that the United States, along with the other democracies that are the primary participants of humanitarian military operations, is embedded in a society of democratic nations. Such a group of democracies contrasts with outgroup countries under authoritarian rule, a closed economic system, and a lack of fundamental rights.[42] This view was undoubtedly propagated to the masses during the Cold War, as

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[42] E.g., Deutsch et al. 1957; Risse-Kappen 1996.

states on both sides framed the world as ideologically divided by the good and bad.[43] Of course, such views may have been elite-driven and motivated by material interest, and the survival of NATO could be motivated by considerations other than democracy.[44] Even still, the idea that democracies share an identity took a life of its own even after the fall of the Berlin Wall.[45] Indeed, reflecting on the enduring nature of political identities, Peter Katzenstein observes that political actors "attribute far deeper meanings to the historical battles that define collective identities than to the transient conflicts of daily politics."[46]

In addition to representing a distinct social group, the liberal community is defined or constituted by a set of norms and practices.[47] Group members follow a "logic of appropriateness" or share beliefs about how they should behave.[48] These beliefs might be codified into formal rules, or they might exist informally as commonly understood expectations or a "community of practice." For liberal democracies, governments and their citizens adhere to norms against coercive bargaining, which manifests as the well-known Democratic Peace; however, these norms do not necessarily apply to interactions with outgroup nations.[49] Relevant to this study, these countries also adhere to norms of consultation, which highlight the need for collective deliberation with other democratic states when conducting foreign policy.[50] In other words, there is a norm or regularized practice among democracies of valuing the policy endorsement of other group members.[51]

The implications of a social distinction between democracies and non-democracies are borne out in hard evidence. On the macro level, researchers show that democratic ideological and normative

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[43] But even earlier, political thinkers from Immanuel Kant to Thomas Paine wrote about the special relation among representative governments.

[44] See the debate, for example, between Thies (2009) and Sayle (2019). To be clear, my theoretical account only requires people to perceive NATO as representing democracy, which it establishes with data. This perception may or may not be built on hypocrisy or illusion. For example, religious organizations have historical been motivated and sustained by impure or hypocritical reasons, but that does not change the fact that their members perceive group belonging.

[45] See Snyder 1991 for an incisive argument on how norms and ideas embedded in top-down, elite rhetoric and "myths" could take root in domestic society, develop a life of their own, and subsequently affect policy from the bottom up.

[46] Katzenstein 1996a, 3.

[47] Katzenstein 1996b; Adler 1997; Wendt 1999

[48] March and Olsen 1998

[49] Doyle 1986; Maoz and Russett 1993; Tomz and Weeks 2013

[50] Risse-Kappen 1995; Adler 2008, 204-6

[51] I do not take a stance on whether this is due to habit, practice, or norms.

group distinctions affect which states wage war with one another,[52] enter into military alliances,[53] and perceive other governments as threatening.[54] Indeed, an analysis of UN General Assembly voting records shows that commitments to liberalism create a coherent "liberal order" grouping in international affairs.[55]

Figure 1. Americans can better relate to foreigners from democratic systems.
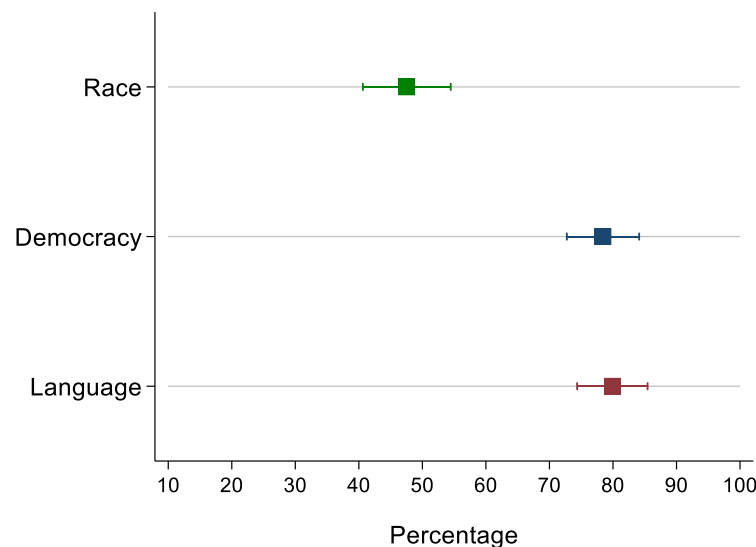
Note: The question asked, "What allows people from different countries to relate with one another?" N=704. Survey USA-5.[56]

On the micro-level as well, several studies in various countries and contexts show that democracy and its values affect both mass public and policymaker attitudes toward national security.[57] Research also documents how democratic leaders appeal to shared liberal values and finds that such rhetoric affects citizen attitudes toward military alliance policy. Even further buttressing these findings, a survey of Americans showed that about 78 percent of the respondents thought that sharing a political system was Somewhat, Very, or Extremely Important for determining whether citizens from different

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[52] Doyle 1986; Maoz and Russett 1993.

[53] Lai and Reiter 2000.

[54] Risse-Kappen 1995.

[55] Bailey, Strezhnev, and Voeten 2017.

[56] Further for all surveys in this book, including question wording and sample descriptions, are recorded in the Online Appendix.

[57] Herrmann and Shannon 2001; Johns and Davies 2012; Lacina and Lee 2013; Tomz and Weeks 2013; Tomz and Weeks 2020; Chu 2019.

countries could relate to one another. 80 percent of the respondents saw sharing a language, one of the most important indicators of sharing identity, in the same way. In contrast, only about 45 percent held the same opinion about sharing the same race (see Figure 1). To reiterate the general theory, however, not all group members necessarily understand or follow the norms, practices, and opinions idealized by the overarching liberal community. People may have some sense of what other countries are "on the same team" and would like their country to do what the "good" side does but only have a thin understanding of the group they identify with. This discussion brings us to the dynamics of social cueing.

The second part of the argument demonstrates how international organizations, and NATO in particular, embody and institutionalize the democratic social group of countries. In international politics, group behavior among states—whether it be the deliberation of policy, the conduct of joint operations, or other types of collective action—often occurs in the context of a multilateral IO. When thinking about the liberal democratic community, a long tradition of scholarship observes that NATO has become emblematic of this group of countries, especially relative to other IOs like the Security Council.[58] This research agenda is often traced back to Karl Deutsch and colleagues' seminal 1957 study of the North Atlantic community, which tied its security relationship to its countries' commitment to a shared set of norms and values.[59] Subsequent work shows how appreciating NATO's function as a political community of norms and values provides new insight into its institutional survival and operational practices,[60] as well as how its members maintain peace and engage in conflict.[61] For these reasons, NATO is an ingroup IO for democratic nations. In contrast, the Security Council may represent some democracies but includes autocratic countries like China and Russia. Thus, the Security Council represents a more diffuse group of the broader international community or is viewed as a club of great powers rather than a club of democracies.[62]

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[58] This is general observation does not deny exceptions like the autocratic Turkey in NATO. The existence of deviants does not negate the existence of the entire group. Furthermore, this argument does not claim that NATO's *initial* formation was necessarily caused by shared identity: See Rathbun (2011, chapter 5) for a discussion of the structural-realist conventional wisdom and a new argument about how the domestic politics of generalized trust played a role in the formation of NATO. Also, note how the social theory could complement Rathbun's notion of generalized trust. It could be the case that mass support for IOs could be a result of generalized trust, but it could also be the case that such trust is contingent on social group identification, so it is strongest for ingroup members.

[59] Deutsch et al. 1957.

[60] Risse-Kappen 1996; Adler 2008.

[61] Adler and Barnett 1998.

[62] See Voeten 2005 on the Security Council as an elite pact.

Of course, viewing NATO as representing an ideational community is not meant to dismiss its function as a military alliance. Still, even NATO itself recognizes its additional social role in advancing democratic norms and group cohesion. Historically, at least since the end of the Cold War, NATO's branding and formulation of its strategic concept even places promoting and defending liberal democratic values and community on equal footing with traditional security concerns. This can be gleaned through reading NATO's Strategic Concept documents, NATO's most important public-facing articulation of its purpose, principles, and goals. The first four formulations of NATO's Strategic Concept (1950 to 1968) emphasized its role as a militarily strong alliance, though it still outlined its role in safeguarding democracy. Since its fifth iteration (1990), however, the Strategic Concept heavily emphasized the social role of NATO in building and representing a "shared community" of liberal democratic values.

Today, NATO explicitly states that one of its core tenets is that: "NATO promotes democratic values and enables members to consult and cooperate on defense and security-related issues."[63] To this end, NATO and its affiliates often portray their relationship as value-driven and group-oriented. For instance, on 29 June 2017, NATO tweeted, "We are an Alliance of like-minded countries…We are united…#WeAreNATO."[64] Another tweet by the U.S. Mission to NATO highlights the group's ideational coherence, "SecDef Mattis: For nearly 70 years the #NATO alliance has served to uphold the values upon which our democracies are founded."[65] Similarly, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Linda Thomas-Greenfield tweeted, "NATO is the most powerful and successful alliance in history, and it's built on the foundation of shared democratic values." Far from frivolous attempts to socialize a community, NATO's attempt to build a collective identity can be strategic: if its members share an identity, they are more likely to contribute to the organization's overarching goals.[66] But whatever the motivation, these acts of socialization have led individuals in the community to identify with the larger group.

Indeed, American public opinion reflects NATO's dual role as a military alliance and community builder. A survey summarized in Figure 2 shows that most Americans associate "NATO" with the terms *friends*, *democracy*, and/or *military*. Importantly, they are more likely to associate

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[63] https://www.nato.int/nato-welcome/

[64] https://twitter.com/nato/status/880498081707565056

[65] https://twitter.com/USNATO/status/1005060527704375296

[66] For example, see Akerlof and Kranton (2005) for an application of this argument to how economic organizations might benefit from promoting identities among their members. Finnemore (1993)'s argument is similar, but the direction of influence is flipped: states seeking to belong in the community of modernized states will absorb the norms of IOs.

NATO with concepts relevant to a liberal community, such as *friends* and *democracy*, than the UN Security Council. Another telling feature of the data is that *friends* was the most frequently selected attribute. As described in the general theory, group members and especially novices will often superficially associate with the group before internalizing all the group's values. Recall the example of a person identifying as Christian and associating with other church members but not necessarily deeply understanding all the tenets and values of Christianity.

Figure 2. Americans associate NATO with the military, democracy, and friends.
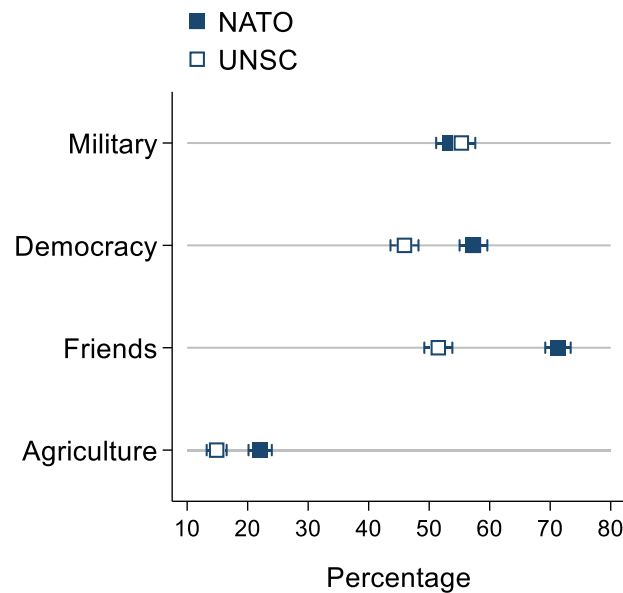
Note: Question asked, "What do you associate with the [North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)/United Nations Security Council]?" Response options were randomized. N=1,790. Data are from Survey USA-6.

The third and final part of the argument explains what it means for the liberal democratic community to send social cues regarding humanitarian intervention to ingroup members. Here, the senders of social cues are the countries within the liberal community institutionalized by NATO, and the recipients are the citizens residing in these countries, which could include laypersons or event elites. Social cues in this context are endorsements (or lack thereof) of foreign policy. They can be sent through several channels, including legislation or legislative votes and statements or speeches by state officials and leaders. An example of a specific country sending a social cue via legislative voting would

be the UK Parliament's 2013 vote against supporting a U.S.-led intervention in Syria. Another example from NATO includes the North Atlantic Council's vote to authorize intervention in Kosovo in 1999. Operating outside an institution, foreign leaders and representatives of IOs can also directly reach and influence public opinion, as Hayes and Guardino (2013) document in the 2003 Iraq War. These policy positions are then channeled to citizens through the media and domestic elites attempting to garner policy support by appealing to the endorsements of "foreign voices."

The liberal community's policy endorsements are social cues that influence its ingroup members. Second, these social cues directly exert social pressure, prompting group members to conform to the sender's stance on humanitarian intervention. Second, they also clarify the social implications of intervention for members of the liberal community, answering questions about how intervening would affect their country. Is intervention in line with group norms, which include championing liberal values and human rights, and is it simply appropriate or the right thing to do? Will other ingroup countries also participate in the intervention? Will engaging in intervention harm or improve their country's image or status?[67] The answer to these questions influences people's understanding and expectations about pro-norm behavior, group belonging, and image and status, ultimately affecting their preference for humanitarian intervention policy.

Next, we can distinguish the specific role of NATO as a socializing institution for the liberal community. As discussed in the general theory, NATO can clarify the social meaning of cues sent by its member states while also amplifying the reach of its policy endorsements. To elaborate on the first point about clarifying social meaning, when a state endorses a course of action, it may not be clear why they are doing so. For example, if the UK supports military intervention, it could be for parochial national interests that do not necessarily reflect the liberal democratic community. But if the UK makes the same policy recommendation under the banner of an IO like NATO, the message takes on a different meaning depending on what idea or social group the IO symbolizes. Put another way, IOs could clarify the social meaning of a government's policy position, strengthening its social cue.

Regarding the second point, IOs like NATO could also play a logistical and communication role among its member states and the mass public. For governments, IOs help disparate community members coordinate and centralize their decision-making,[68] implying that individual governments may fail to reach collective decisions (for example, about an intervention policy) without a formal

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[67] Establishing the plausibility of this claim, Matsumura and Tago (2023) find that multilateral use of force increases a person's evaluation of their own country's status.

[68] Keohane 1984; Abbott and Snidal 1998.

organization. Concerning the public, IOs may also increase the salience and accessibility of a policy cue, as IOs may have more international media exposure than individual countries.[69] As the subsequent empirical chapters show, NATO receives substantial news coverage both in print and television cable media. Thus, IOs could help a community of countries coordinate on a policy position and ensure that their views gain public attention.

To conclude, the social cue theory provides a coherent and distinct theoretical perspective on the social dynamics among the liberal community regarding humanitarian interventions. It implies that democratic citizens will take social cues from democratic states, and these ingroup cues will be stronger when channeled through an institution like NATO. Furthermore, once they receive such an ingroup policy endorsement (or rejection), they will downplay the views of outgroup members or institutions like the Security Council. I argue these cues matter because they exert social influence and provide guidance about how to fit in and gain good standing within the community of democracies. But could there be other alternative reasons why these ingroup cues, especially those from NATO, influence people's policy preferences?

Alternative Explanations & Scope Conditions

I now examine alternative explanations and scope conditions for the social cue theory. My theory predicts that NATO and the liberal community should strongly affect how members of the democratic ingroup think. Evidence consistent with this expectation provides prima facie evidence for my theory and would pose a major challenge to the conventional wisdom, which instead emphasizes the importance of obtaining Security Council approval. Nevertheless, there could be other explanations for NATO's primacy, which I lay out here and evaluate in the subsequent chapters.

The first two alternative explanations have to do with people's material considerations. First, people may believe that IOs facilitate burden sharing. If they do, an endorsement by an IO like NATO could imply that their country would have to expend fewer resources to participate in the intervention. Existing research on burden sharing does not necessarily conclude that NATO would be superior to the Security Council in facilitating burden sharing, but this is a reasonable alternative explanation.[70] In particular, when NATO supports intervention, it usually means it will commit material resources to that cause. In comparison, a Security Council authorization does not necessitate direct UN

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[69] See for example Chapman 2011, ## for the exposure of IOs in U.S. newspapers.
[70] E.g., Martin 1993; Recchia 2015.

involvement. Second, and relatedly, people may follow the cues of NATO because they perceive NATO to be a strong military alliance that can wage military intervention.[71] This military capability relates to burden sharing, but it could also improve the likelihood of a successful military intervention, and people tend to like successful policies.[72] The Security Council, in contrast, could be seen as not having a strong and effective military.

A third, non-material alternative explanation focuses on race and regionalism. It similarly emphasizes identity and ideational factors rather than material and security concerns. Scholars have long observed that NATO, the North Atlantic community, and even the broader liberal community overlap with a racial group centered in North America and Western Europe.[73] From this perspective, NATO's influence should be understood as an ingroup signal among white Western countries rather than among democracies more generally. All three of these arguments provide an alternative logic for why people might respond more enthusiastically to a NATO-backed intervention compared to one authorized by the Security Council.

Considering Policy Domain, Time, and Political Elites

The influence of social cues could be contingent on three factors. The first is the issue domain. The theory is being applied to the realm of armed humanitarian intervention. Rathbun (2007) observed that, at least among elites, support for community is a fundamental foreign policy value, and such a disposition strongly predicts support for humanitarian military operations. This observation implies that social considerations might be important in policies like humanitarian intervention, where other-regarding motivations are salient. In contrast, social considerations might hold less weight for critical national security matters. For example, a country responding to a foreign invader would care little about seeking institutional approval to defend itself.

The second is the time period. The theory in its general form—that IOs representing an identity can send social cues—is being applied to the case of the post-World War II liberal community. As a social theory, the specific application is contingent on the social context. For example, it is hard to imagine that a social group of democracies was as salient in earlier centuries, and perhaps after the post-Trump era, democracy may once again retrench from being a salient identity grouping in global

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[71] Bush and Prather 2018.

[72] Gelpi, Fever, and Reifler 2009.

[73] E.g., Hemmer and Katzenstein 2002.

politics.[74] More generally, even deeply embedded identities can change in the long run.[75] Nevertheless, even if the specific application may change, the theory provides broader lessons about social identity and legitimizing role of institutions international politics, which I further discuss in the conclusion.

Finally, the theory may have scope conditions relating to the political actor. This book focuses on domestic and international public opinion, which are intrinsically important political actors for the above reasons. Chapter 5 examines foreign elites to some extent, but they are not the focus of my study. So, one might ask, does the theory apply to elites? For example, a lawyer in the State Department may prioritize legal considerations. A military elite may prioritize considerations about burden sharing and military success. Policymakers may already be directly informed about the foreign policy matter and do not require a second opinion from an international institution.

While different elites may have distinct priorities, they are also people, and recent research cast doubt on the exaggerated distinction between elites and the public.[76] One might instead argue that when it comes to foreign policy, elites are even more socialized than the mass public into certain modes of thinking, given their greater and more direct exposure to international politics. Indeed, the Washington Post analyzed polling by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs and found that "[a] new poll suggests that maybe American voters and D.C. foreign policy elites aren't so different after all."[77] Specifically regarding attitudes toward NATO, the analysis found that:

> Looking more closely at the details on foreign policy, it's possible to find more agreement [between the public and policymaking elite]. Despite Trump's harsh words about NATO, a consensus exists among all groups polled that the United States should either maintain or increase its commitment to the organization; fewer than 1 in 10 in any group supported leaving NATO. Meanwhile, though Trump had questioned the wisdom of U.S. support for allies such as Japan, South Korea and Germany, there was widespread support for keeping U.S. military bases in these countries.

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[74] However, whether U.S. President Donald Trump's rhetoric has fundamentally shifted American identity in world politics remains an open question. In fact, after Trump assailed NATO during his campaign, the U.S. Congress reacted by bringing forth a bipartisan resolution to affirm the U.S.'s commitment to NATO (Accessed 31 May 2016 at: http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/05/18/exclusive-in-rebuke-of-trump-house-resolution-defends-nato/). A PEW study also found that "[w]hile Trump recently called into question the value of U.S. participation in NATO, Americans overwhelmingly view NATO membership as beneficial for the United States…Large majorities in both parties say NATO membership is good for the U.S." (Accessed 14 June 2016 at: http://www.people-press.org/2016/05/05/public-uncertain-divided-over-americas-place-in-the-world/). In any case, the theory does not claim that identities last forever, and the conclusion revisits the idea of identity change.

[75] Kranton 2016.

[76] Kertzer 2022.

[77] Source (accessed 13 October 2023): https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2017/04/20/a-new-poll-suggests-that-maybe-american-voters-and-d-c-foreign-policy-elites-arent-so-different-after-all/.

Corroborating this logic, some existing studies find that IOs do not just influence mass opinion but elites as well. For example, Schultz (2003) argues that a president seeking to wage war can invoke an IO's authorization to help break gridlock among domestic elites. Likewise, Thompson (2009) argues that IOs, and particularly the Security Council, can convince foreign elites to support war. Furthermore, elites themselves often explicitly express their desire for institutional legitimacy. For example, leading up to the 2011 Libya intervention, top policy makers including U.S. Secretary of State Hilary Clinton considered "international authorization" to be a necessary condition for intervention (Chivvis 2014: 55).

One might point out another way elites differ: they form their opinions in a group setting; however, existing research casts doubt on whether group opinion formation differs fundamentally from that of individuals.[78] Lastly, even if elites like military officers have different priorities,[79] many are still sensitive to public pressures.[80] So overall, elites are also humans subject to social pressures, and even if they have different priorities, they still consider public opinion.

Summary of Evidence

I test various implications of the social cue theory in Chapters 3 through 5 and then of the conventional wisdom in Chapter 6. Below is my roadmap of evidence:

- **Evidence from American interventions (Chapter 3):** Historical polls from 1990 to 2013 show that humanitarian interventions backed by the liberal community and NATO enjoy high support from the American people. The Syria case shows that IO approval is critical for raising public support. Comparing Bosnia and Kosovo shows that NATO, with or without the Security Council, can generate public support.
- **Causal effect of social cues on domestic audiences (Chapter 3):** Cues from NATO and the liberal community affect American support for U.S. humanitarian intervention. Once Americans learn about NATO's position, the Security Council has little effect, but not the reverse. Additionally, the liberal community's influence on public opinion is stronger when institutionalized via NATO.
- **Demonstrating the social nature of NATO's influence (Chapter 4):** NATO's endorsement effect is greatest among (1) those who associate NATO with democracy and community and (2) those who express the greatest affinity with NATO's member countries. In contrast, NATO's influence is not impacted by its association with military power.

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[78] Kertzer 2023.

[79] For example, Recchia (2015) shows how military elites raise concerns about risks and operational costs in military intervention policymaking.

[80] Tomz, Weeks, and Yarhi-Milo 2020; Lin-Greenberg 2021; Chu and Recchia 2022.

- **Social cue causal mechanisms (Chapter 4).** NATO's cues change people's beliefs about norm-abidance, group participation, and image and status. These factors, in turn, affect people's opinions on humanitarian war. In contrast, material factors relating to financial and human costs and benefits cannot fully explain the cueing effect.
- **Foreign citizens (Chapter 5):** The relative effects of the liberal community, NATO, and the Security Council reported in Chapter 2 are also present in the Japanese public. This finding shows that social cues by the liberal community and NATO affect foreign audiences and are not solely racialized cues that operate in the West. In contrast, NATO and the Security Council do not significantly affect Egyptian public opinion, but the Arab League does. This finding is consistent with the social cue theory.
- **Foreign elites (Chapter 5):** Substantially more members of the United Kingdom Parliament (MPs) would rather have NATO's backing for humanitarian intervention than the Security Council's if they could only have one or the other.
- **Reassessing Legal approaches (Chapter 6).** The Kosovo case calls into question whether the Security Council's legal authority influences popular perceptions of legitimacy (Chapter 2). Here, additional observational and experimental evidence shows that the Security Council's influence is not on knowledge about international law.
- **Reassessing arguments about institutional independence and conservativeness (Chapter 6).** The fact that NATO has such a robust effect on public opinion undermines arguments about the importance of institutional independence and conservativeness. Here, I show that this finding is not due to political ignorance, as people generally correctly understand that the Security Council is more independent and conservative. I also use individual-level variation in people's beliefs to show that their assumptions about institutional neutrality and conservativeness do not moderate the institution's (whether it be NATO or the Security Council) effect on public opinion.

Chapter 3: Evidence from American Interventions

My fellow Americans, today our armed forces joined our NATO allies in airstrikes against Serbian forces responsible for the brutality in Kosovo.

Bill Clinton, U.S. President, 1999 address to the American Public

This chapter tests the claim that democratic countries seeking to raise domestic support for humanitarian war can do so by obtaining the approval of international institutions. It does so in the context of the United States, which has played an outsized role in contemporary humanitarian interventions since the end of the Cold War. The United States is typically the primary intervening party or a major contributor to intervention that provides financial, political, and military support to coalitions led by others. If the social cues argument is correct, then the liberal democratic community vis-à-vis NATO should influence American support for war more than the Security Council and the broader international community.

Drawing from different forms of evidence, the two sections of this chapter show that the liberal community does in fact influence American public opinion. The first section examines American considerations of intervention from Somalia to Syria, focusing on historical polls, media, and presidential speeches from these cases. The second section brings to bear original experimental data, drawing from opinion polls conducted in the United States, to demonstrate the causal effect of IOs on mass opinion and the disaggregated effect of IOs compared to their member countries. As the social cues argument predicts, NATO has a distinct causal effect on U.S. public opinion above and beyond the Security Council. Additionally, NATO allows the liberal community to send institutionalized cues that are more influential than those they would otherwise be able to send without NATO.

The Post-Cold War Historical Record

Contemporary humanitarian wars are primarily a policy of the liberal democratic community, and a bulk of them have been led by the United States. All of these military interventions have been multilateral and conducted under the auspices of an international organization, which include the Security Council and NATO. On the other hand, proposals for intervention have been abandoned when securing institutional approval proved impossible. This section reviews historical opinion polls from recent cases of U.S. intervention, and then delves deeper into the case of Syria and a paired comparison

of Bosnia and Kosovo. The case of Syria reveals the difficulty of rallying support for a unilateral intervention, while the pair of Balkan cases show how NATO can drive humanitarian intervention with or without the Security Council's blessing.

What do the broad, descriptive patterns tell us about the post-Cold War era of humanitarian intervention? Table 1 summarizes the historical relationship between the UNSC, NATO, the liberal community, and American public support for humanitarian intervention.[81] It includes cases in which the U.S. considered humanitarian intervention and opinion polls were available. Column 1 names the case. Columns 2 through 4 give the policy position of the Security Council, NATO, and the liberal community. NATO's policy position on intervention is generally equivalent to the policy position of the liberal community. But when NATO did not consider the case of intervention (i.e., when NATO is N/A in the table), the country positions of the liberal community are coded using public statements and actions of NATO's member states. Finally, Columns 5 and 6 give the percentage of respondents that supported intervention, both for each case and for the aggregation of cases that fall under the same category of multilateralism.

Table 1: American support for armed humanitarian intervention, from Somalia to Syria.

Cases	Endorse Intervention?			% Supporting War	
	Security Council	NATO	Liberal community	By Case	Average
Rwanda 1994	No	N/A	Mostly No	28	31
Syria 2013	No	No	No	33	
Kosovo 1999	No	Yes	Yes	53	53
(Libya 2011)	(No)	(Yes)	(Yes)	(56)	(55)
Somalia 1992	Yes	N/A	Mostly Yes	74	
Haiti 1994	Yes	N/A	Mixed	34	55
Bosnia 1994	Yes	Yes	Yes	57	
Libya 2011	Yes	Yes	Yes	56	

Note: This table summarizes data from historical surveys conducted in the United States during episodes of potential humanitarian intervention. NATO is coded N/A when the case was considered "out of area" at the time. The Rwanda poll was taken before France's Operation Turquoise, which received Security Council approval. The Libya case might be classified under "NATO Only" because the Security Council resolution arguably did not cover the airstrikes that led to a regime change. Polls are from the Cornell Roeper Database. Detailed information on the polls, along with coding notes, are in Online Appendix.

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[81] The polls cited in this table specifically ask for people's support for military intervention for humanitarian reasons. They do not include questions like, "Do you agree with how President Clinton is handling the situation in Somalia?"

The record reveals three broad classes of humanitarian interventions. Interventions with no systematic international support (e.g., Syria), ones in which NATO and the club of democracies support intervention but the broader international community vis-à-vis UNSC does not (Kosovo), and interventions with widespread international backing (Bosnia). Public opinion in these three groups suggests that Americans prefer war with international backing over wars without it. Only 28 to 31 percent of the public supported intervention without foreign approval, while a majority supported interventions with some degree of IO approval (about a 22 to 25 percentage point difference in support). Interestingly, Americans do not reveal a preference for interventions with both UNSC and NATO approval over interventions with only NATO approval.[82] These patterns are consistent with the identity theory's prediction that once a cue from the ingroup is received, the additional cue from other countries has little added effect.

Syria: Unpopular Unilateralism

The case of Syria demonstrates the difficulty of legitimizing and mobilizing mass support for humanitarian intervention without the international community's approval, even when many other factors would predict high support for intervention. Following the Arab Spring, domestic opposition against Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's regime grew, eventually escalating into a full-scale civil war by 2012. The conflict was gruesome, and there was clear documentation of mass war crimes and human rights violations by the Assad regime.[83]

Several conditions predict high public support for intervening the Syrian crisis. First, there were massive human rights violations, and there was a humanitarian crisis as tens of thousands of civilians were killed in 2011 and 2012. Second, the civil war had massive international spillover effects. As early as 2012, hundreds of thousands of refugees had already fled the country, and that figure increased to the millions by 2013.[84] Third, one of the most robust international norms was violated: the taboo against chemical weapons.[85] In particular, the Syrian government was found to have used nerve gas, among other chemical weapons, to kill over 1,000 civilians in 2013.

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[82] Some might argue that Libya should be classified as a "*NATO Only*" intervention because the UNSC's resolution arguably did not cover the NATO airstrikes against Qaddafi. This finer point, however, is likely too technical to be relevant to the public and does not change the overall substantive trends.

[83] See, for example, documentation submitted to the UN Human Rights Council under resolutions A/HRC/S-17/1 and A/HRC/Res/19/22.

[84] Source (accessed on 17 November 2023): https://www.mercycorps.org/blog/facts-syria-crisis.

[85] Price 1997.

Fourth, American credibility was on the line. In 2012, President Barack Obama publicly stated that "[w]e have communicated in no uncertain terms with every player in the region that that's a red line for us and that there would be enormous consequences if we start seeing movement on the chemical weapons front or the use of chemical weapons."[86] This view was broadcast widely among the American and international public. Indeed, when chemical weapons were subsequently used, Obama began earnestly courting rallying domestic and international support for military intervention in Syria. If action were not taken in response to the use of chemical weapons, American credibility would be harmed.[87]

Fifth, respected domestic elites advocated for military action, at least among the Democrats. Obama was a highly popular president who was publicly adamant in making the case for war. Other high-level officials like Secretary of State, and previous senator, John Kerry also made major appearances to advocate for intervention.[88]

Given the scale of the humanitarian disaster, international spillover effects, violation of international norms, cost of American credibility, and elite cues among the Democrats, one would expect high public support for intervention in Syria, especially among American Democrats. However, reality did not meet this expectation. Multiple opinion polls conducted in late 2012 revealed that less than 35 percent of Americans supported military action, even if intervention were limited to airstrikes. Furthermore, Democrats were equally if not even more apathetic than Republicans.[89]

So why was intervention so unpopular? When these opinion polls were conducted, all of the above factors would have predicted otherwise. Still, other key factors were consistent with lukewarm public support—namely, the lack of international backing for intervention. Given the Assad regime's ties with Putin, the Security Council vis-à-vis a Russian veto would have rejected any proposal to authorize the use of force. Knowing this, President Obama sought support from key ingroup allies like Britain and France for a multilateral and potentially NATO-led intervention. At a press conference in Stockholm, he stated that the "international community's credibility is on the line."[90] But Obama had no luck. In August 2013, Britain's Parliament voted against PM David Cameron's proposal to back the

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[86] Obama 2012a.

[87] This was the view not just of analysts and pundits, but even Obama himself, who remarked at a press conference that, "American and Congress's credibility is on the line" (Epstein 2013).

[88] See Kerry 2013, and also Peter Baker and Michael R. Gordon, "Kerry Becomes Chief Advocate for U.S. Attack – NYTimes.com," *The New York Times*, August 30, 2013, source (accessed 13 November 2015): http://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/31/world/middleeast/john-kerry-syria.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.

[89] See Pew 2013; United Technologies (accessed via Roeper iPoll) 2013.

[90] Epstein 2013.

U.S.[91] France showed similar reluctance. "For months, polls have shown growing opposition among the French for having their military join U.S.-led strikes against Syria […] French opinion hardened against military action after the British Parliament voted against intervention on Aug. 29."[92] If the U.S. were to intervene, it would be unilaterally, but this approach was highly unpopular.

Of course, it is impossible to draw a definitive causal link between unilateralism and the lack of mass support for intervention. There are many other factors at play, though as described, many of those factors would have worked against establishing a link between unilateralism and low support. One might note that American support could reflect the lack of domestic elite consensus. Failing to secure international approval, Obama sought the backing of Congress. He was committed to legitimizing intervention by obtaining institutional approval, despite believing he had the authority to initiate an intervention without that approval.[93] Congress did not support Obama; however, this signal of domestic elite disapproval did not come until later in September, after the polls cited in this study.[94] The American public did not want intervention before Congress rejected Obama's plan, and they still did not want it after. Ultimately, the United States and Russia brokered a deal to remove chemical weapons from Syria,[95] and Obama backed away from his red-line threat and decided against intervention.

Kosovo versus Bosnia: What does the additional Security Council approval add?

Comparing American attitudes toward U.S. intervention in Bosnia versus Kosovo in the 1990s reveals how NATO's approval, regardless of the Security Council's position, is sufficient for garnering U.S. public approval. The intervention in Bosnia received the backing of the Security Council and NATO. In contrast, Kosovo was only supported by the liberal community, specifically through NATO, and authorized by its North Atlantic Council. But despite this difference, American opinion on the war was similar. 57 percent of Americans supported intervention in Bosnia, whereas 53 percent supported

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[91] Source (accessed 4 March 2016): http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-23892783.

[92] Source (accessed 4 March 2016):http://world.time.com/2013/09/09/et-tu-paris-frances-hollande-faces-growing-opposition-against-syrian-intervention/.

[93] Obama stated, "I possess the authority to order military strikes." Source (accessed 11 November 2023): https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/running-transcript-president-obamas-sept-10-speech-on-syria/2013/09/10/a8826aa6-1a2e-11e3-8685-5021e0c41964_story.html.

[94] Source (accessed 10 October 2023): https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/groups-watch-syria-congress/story?id=20214789.

[95] Source (accessed on 13 October 2023): https://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/15/world/middleeast/syria-talks.html.

intervention in Kosovo. This difference might be deemed a "null effect" in statistical jargon. It raises the question, if the Security Council is so important for legitimizing war, why was there so little difference in public opinion?

One might wonder, perhaps the Security Council *did* substantially raise public support in the case of Bosnia, *but* other factors counteracted its legitimizing effect. Perhaps, but such other plausible factors are either similar between the two cases or different in ways that should have only increased public support for Bosnia. To begin with the similarities, these intervention cases are in the same geographic area and share historical and cultural roots. That is not to say they are the same conflict, but from the standpoint of public opinion, they are more similar than not. Americans are generally ignorant about specific countries, but they still draw from stereotypes and general impressions about broader regions of the world when forming their opinions. Next, the same U.S. president ordered both of these interventions, and mass sentiment toward foreign policy is often tied to the president, the most visible decisionmaker in American foreign policy.

What about the differences, other than the institutional backing? There are some salient differences, but their impact on public opinion should, in theory, only make approval for Bosnia higher, adding on top of the Security Council effect, rather than lower and counteracting the Security Council. First, time and war wariness. This factor is a folk wisdom in American foreign policy. Americans do not like long wars and do not like overextending over multiple wars. But here, Bosnia was first, and Kosovo followed. If war wariness were an overriding factor *ex ante*, one should expect that after intervention in Bosnia, the American public would react with "not another one!" Yet, without the Security Council's blessing, the Kosovo intervention enjoyed almost as high support. A second factor is the nature of the humanitarian crisis. This factor is potentially more of a similarity than a difference, but in any case, it does not cut against the Security Council's supposed legitimizing effect in Bosnia. Specifically, in both cases, tens of thousands of innocents were killed in war crimes, but the overall language used in Bosnia was stronger. In Bosnia, the language of genocide was often invoked, including by the UN General Assembly. In Kosovo, commentators, lawyers, and institutions generally used language falling short of genocide, primarily classifying the disaster as ethnic cleansing.[96] For example, the Wall Street Journal reported, "Despite Tales, the War in Kosovo Was Savage, but Wasn't Genocide."[97] In legalese, political communication, and everyday language, genocide holds a heavier

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[96] Contrast the Wikipedia articles on the "Bosnian Genocide" versus "War Crimes in Kosovo," which includes primary source references to how international institutions like the UN and international courts described the two crises (accessed 13 October 2023).

[97] Source (accessed on 13 October 2023): https://www.wsj.com/public/resources/documents/pearl123199.htm.

weight in the discourse of humanitarianism and human rights. This fact would imply that the crisis in Bosnia would spur substantially greater support for intervention than the subsequent one in Kosovo, but it did not.

In sum, comparing the interventions in Bosnia and Kosovo helps us detect any substantial relationship between the Security Council's approval and public support for using military force, conditional on NATO's support. There appears to be none. Instead, U.S. President Bill Clinton was able to rally just as much support for intervening in Kosovo as he was in Bosnia. It is telling that in his speech justifying war to the American people, he invoked the fact that the U.S. would be intervening with "NATO" and "allies" in nearly every third sentence, just as much as he appealed to humanitarian considerations regarding brutality and the death of the innocent.[98] Thus, taken together, obtaining the liberal community and NATO's backing has been central to America's significant history of humanitarian intervention.

Experimental Evidence

The historical record draws a clear connection between the liberal community, vis-à-vis NATO, and American opinion on humanitarian intervention. Yet, several questions remain about whether international institutions *cause* public opinion to change. First, one may wonder if public opinion affected the approval of institutions, rather than the other way around. In Syria, for example, maybe France and Germany withdrew support for intervention because they felt that reticence among the American public would not be surmountable even with their endorsement. Second, others may point to idiosyncratic factors rather than systematic patterns about NATO and the Security Council as the real drivers of public opinion, especially given the scarcity of cases. Somalia, for example, was the U.S.'s first contemporary case of humanitarian intervention just after the widely popular First Gulf War. The "warm glow" of the First Gulf War, rather than international consensus, could explain the public's enthusiasm for intervention. In the Syria case, maybe it was a religious bias, rather than the lack of institutional backing, that posed a barrier to intervening on behalf of the primarily Muslim

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[98] Source (accessed 12 November 2023): https://edition.cnn.com/ALLPOLITICS/stories/1999/03/25/clinton.transcript/#:~:text=PRESIDENT%20CLINTON%3A%20My%20fellow%20Americans,from%20a%20mounting%20military%20offensive.

victims of civil war.[99] Both selection bias and idiosyncrasies could be especially pernicious to making causal inferences.

Thus, I turn to additional evidence from my original surveys to assess whether NATO's cues cause public opinion to change. Within these surveys, I also use an original experimental research design to disentangle the effect of the liberal community from its institutionalized cues sent via NATO, which is impossible to do only using historical data.

Research Design

My research strategy for isolating the effect of IOs is to embed experiments within public opinion surveys about humanitarian intervention. In this chapter, I present evidence from three of these surveys conducted in the United States from 2015 to 2017, while other chapters discuss similar surveys fielded in both the United States and other countries.

In these surveys, survey respondents read a hypothetical news article about a violent humanitarian crisis in which "[m]ilitary groups fighting in [foreign country] have killed thousands of civilians, including women and children, and have left tens of thousands homeless and starving." The "[foreign country]" is randomly displayed as Azerbaijan, Burma (Myanmar), Chad, Colombia, or Yemen, which are all countries representing different regions with a history of civil conflict.

Next, respondents read about the Security Council and NATO's stance on using military force, and this is where the experiment comes in. In the first survey, respondents are randomly assigned to read one of three potential scenarios: both NATO and the Security Council oppose intervention (*Both Oppose)*, only NATO supports intervention (*NATO Only*), and both IOs endorse intervention (*Both Endorse*). The U.S. government supports intervention across all of the treatment groups, so only the endorsement of international institutions is randomized. After all, it's a moot point if the U.S. government does not want to intervene.

The second and third surveys are variations on the first, designed to test additional questions about what happens when only the Security Council endorses intervention (*UNSC Only*) and the potential distinct effects of the liberal community versus its cue via NATO. I will elaborate upon these two surveys later.

Finally, after reading about the humanitarian crisis and the policy stances of the two IOs, respondents are asked to express their support for armed humanitarian intervention. "In this situation, do you support or oppose the US sending its military to help civilians in [country]?" There were six

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[99] Chu and Lee 2023.

possible replies: support or oppose a little, a moderate amount, or a great deal, but the analysis below reports the binary outcome support versus oppose intervention, for ease of interpretation. People's answers to this question form the study's main dependent variable, *Support for Intervention*. The full text of these surveys is in the online appendix.

NATO and the Security Council's Cueing Effect

Figure 3. NATO raises support for intervention, the Security Council adds little extra.
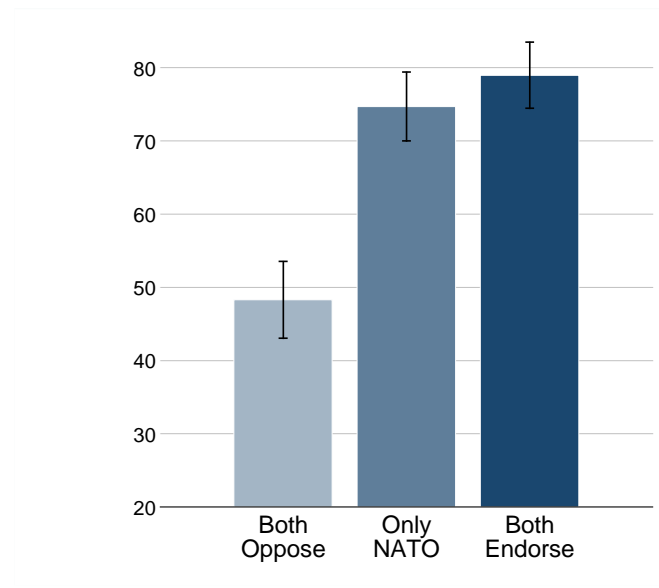
Note: This figure shows the percentage of respondents supporting intervention depending on NATO and the Security Council's policy position. 95% confidence intervals are given. N=1,000. Data are from Survey USA-1.

The first survey in the series, administered to a nationally representative sample of Americans by YouGov, allows us to estimate the main effect of IOs on public opinion (Survey USA-1). The data from this survey confirm the social cue theory's predictions. Figure 3 summarizes its main results and shows that moving from a situation where NATO and the Security Council oppose intervention (*Both Oppose*) to one where NATO endorses intervention but not the Security Council (*NATO Only*) raises *Support* by 26.4 percentage points. This difference is a substantial and statistically significant effect (p<0.01). By contrast, the additional impact of the Security Council's endorsement (moving from *NATO Only* to *Both Endorse*) is substantively small (4.3 points) and statistically insignificant (p=0.20).

Thus, as hypothesized, an ingroup cue from NATO raises public support for war, and once the ingroup cue is received, the broader cue from the Security Council will have little effect.

Bolstering the external validity of these findings, the 26.4-point effect derived from the experiment mirrors the historical data shown in the previous section, which showed a 22-point difference between the *NATO only* and dual endorsement situations. Furthermore, these results are robust to limiting the sample of respondents to the sophisticated public and liberal internationalists (see Online Appendix), which implies that the effect is present among those who are attentive to international affairs.[100]

I now turn to Survey USA-2, which replicates the three scenarios in the first survey but adds a fourth scenario in which only the Security Council but not NATO supports intervention (*UNSC Only*). This scenario is unusual from a historical standpoint since it is hard to imagine a case where NATO explicitly rejects intervention but the Security Council, which includes veto-holding NATO members, endorses intervention. Nevertheless, this unusual case is useful for evaluating theory. Specifically, critics may argue that there is a generic first versus second cue effect, so the fact that receiving *NATO Only* has a large effect and *IOs Endorse* does not further boost public opinion is an artifact of NATO providing the first cue, and any second cue will be less valuable. This second survey can address this concern.

Figure 4 on the left-hand side shows the level of public support in each of the four conditions. It replicates the main results from Survey #1, where *NATO Only* was substantially higher than *Both Oppose*, but *Both Endorse* is trivially greater than *NATO Only*. In contrast, while *UNSC Only* does increase public support, the additional endorsement of NATO in *Both Endorse* still generates additional (and even greater) public support. The right-hand side of the figure combines NATO and the Security Council's effect sizes conditional on each other into an average effect. It shows that the effect of NATO is 15.7 percentage points and the Security Council is 6 percentage points. These results demonstrate that NATO has a greater effect on American public opinion than the UNSC, not just when it is the first policy endorser. Furthermore, these data contradict the view that citizens cannot distinguish between NATO and the Security Council.

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[100]Wittkopf (1990, Ch. 5) finds that elites are more internationalist than the general population. Milner and Tingley (2016) find that liberal internationalists form a coalition that drives U.S. foreign policy.

Figure 4. NATO has a greater effect than the Security Council.
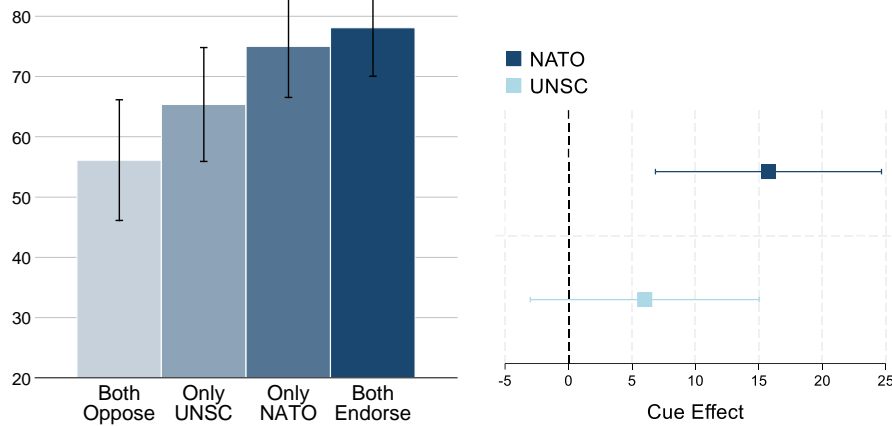
Note: The figure on the left shows public support for intervention in four scenarios regarding NATO and the Security Council's stance on intervention. The figure on the right reports the average treatment effect of each IO. 95% confidence intervals are given. N=408. Data are from Survey USA-2.

The Power of Institutionalized Cues

In the first two surveys, survey takers read information about the IOs and their member countries. While this research design choice helped to increase the realism of the survey,[101] it does not allow for disentangling the effect of the IOs from the countries they represent. In contrast, this third survey tests the social cue theory's claim that the countries in the liberal community can influence public opinion, but its social cues are stronger when institutionalized by NATO (Survey USA-3).

As in the previous surveys, some respondents were experimentally assigned to read that "The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) [opposes/supports] taking military action to help these civilians. NATO members include the U.S., Canada, and several European countries." But to distinguish the effect of NATO from the effect of its named countries, other respondents read that NATO supports/opposes military action without mention of any particular countries, while others read that "U.S., Canada, and several European countries" support/oppose military action without mention of NATO. This design creates six experimental groups (*Only Countries, Only NATO,* or *Both Countries*

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[101] News and political speeches relating to IOs and military intervention generally mention both the IO and key countries. For example, when the Security Council authorizes the use of force, news articles will often also mention the voting record of the permanent five members.

and NATO either support or oppose military action).[102] As before, the dependent variable measures people's support for military intervention.

Figure 5 summarizes the results of this survey, confirming the social cue theories predictions. When the liberal community sends a social cue (*Only Countries Named)*, public support for war shifts by about 15.5 percentage points. When it sends the same cue via NATO (*Both Named*), public support shifts by about 32.8 percentage points. The effect of naming only NATO is included for logical comprehensiveness but is challenging to interpret. Even though it does not mention NATO's member countries, respondents can easily infer that several democratic countries support intervention simply from hearing "NATO." What this data does help to clarify, though, is whether the cue's effect relies primarily on naming countries. The results show they do not: the cue effect under that condition is 24.8 percentage points.

Figure 5. The Liberal community's social cue has a stronger effect when it is sent through NATO.
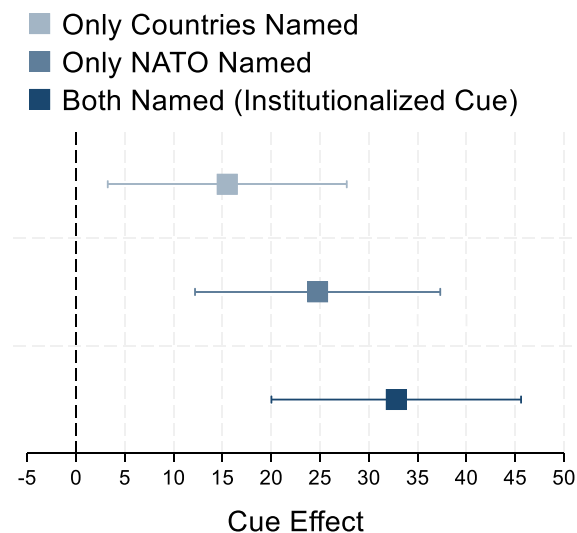
Note: This figure shows the cue effect on public support for intervention depending on whether countries in the liberal community, NATO, or both are named. N=598. Data are from Survey USA-3.

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[102] Because Surveys #1 and #2 already establishe that NATO's endorsement effect is independent of the UNSC, this version did not mention and vary the policy position of the Security Council, which helps to increase statistical power for the NATO experiment.

Lastly, the social cue theory states that institutions do not just clarify the social meaning of a cue, but they also can also play a logics and communication role by increasing the cue's reach. Without NATO, individual governments in the liberal community might not otherwise be able to coordinate on a policy position and then have their collective endorsement of policy reach domestic audiences. The point cannot be tested in a survey experiment since all survey takers are shown the social cue directly. It is difficult to establish the causal effect of institutionalization on a cue's accessibility and reach in the real world, as it is impossible to randomize the existence of NATO. Nevertheless, observational data can help to assess the claim's plausibility. Figure 6 shows how, during the 2011 Libya intervention episode, NATO generally received more airtime on American cable TV than the key NATO countries who were advocating for intervention, France, and the United Kingdom. This pattern is consistent with the theory's claim that institutionalized cues obtain more visibility.

Figure 6. NATO receives more cable news airtime than its member countries.
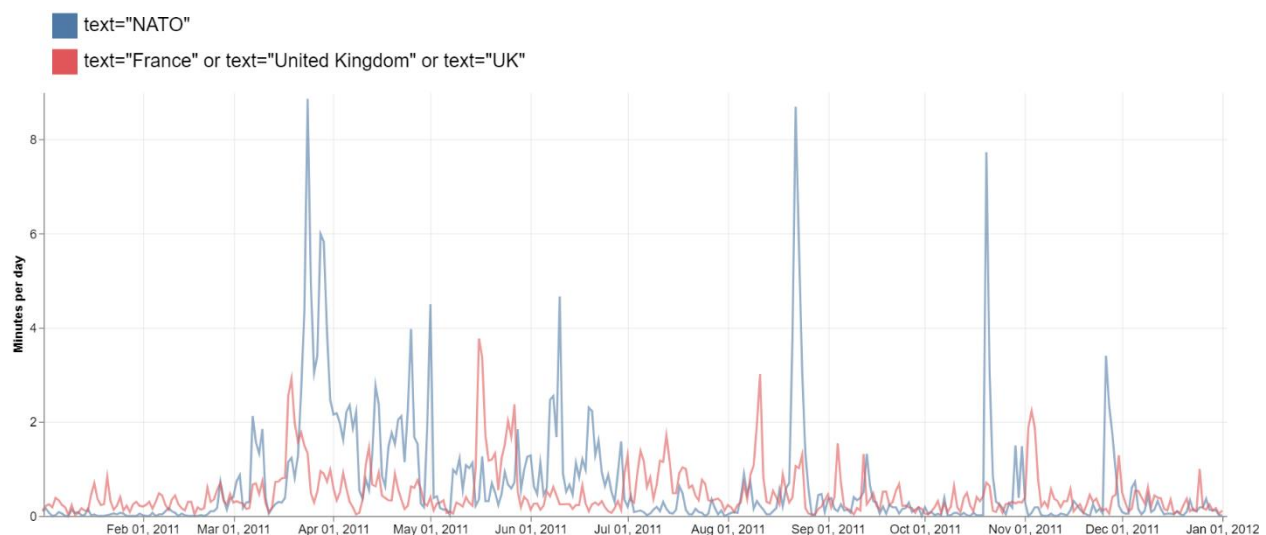
Note: This figure measures the TV news salience of NATO versus specific NATO Countries surrounding Libya intervention episode. The graph is produced by the Stanford Cable TV News Analyzer, https://tvnews.stanford.edu/. The web tool is for "count[ing] the screen time of who and what is in cable TV news…The dataset includes near 24-7 recordings of CNN, Fox News, and MSNBC."

Taken together, the historical and experimental evidence in this chapter demonstrates that the liberal community and NATO have a powerful effect on American attitudes toward humanitarian intervention, one that is likely stronger than even the Security Council. Furthermore, cues by the liberal community have more impact and greater reach when they are channeled through NATO.

Chapter 4: Evidence of Social Cuing

The evidence thus far supports the social cue theory by showing that NATO and the liberal community affect mass support for humanitarian intervention. I now assess the causal mechanisms that explain *why* NATO affects public opinion, drawing from the data on the American public. The identity theory argues that, because Americans identify with NATO's member countries, NATO raises support for intervention by revealing the social implications of deploying military force. NATO can also shift public opinion directly by exerting social influence. I test three implications of this argument. First, the NATO effect should be the largest among Americans who most closely identify with NATO's member countries. Second, mediation analysis should reveal that NATO affects people's support for intervention by changing their beliefs about norm abidance, group participation, and image and status. Third, the effect of NATO should not disappear when accounting for material factors.

Test #1: Examine Subgroups that View NATO as an Ingroup

The social cue theory implies that NATO's effect is most substantial among Americans who view NATO as an ingroup community of democracies and most closely identify with NATO's member countries. I test this in two ways. First, I estimated the effect of NATO's cue on different groups of people, depending on how they perceived NATO (Survey USA-3). To measure how people perceived NATO, I asked them "When you hear 'NATO,' which of the following words or phrases come to mind? Please select all apply." The survey taker could then choose from a list of choices that include *friends* and *democracy*, which were relevant to the liberal community concept, in addition to *military*, *agriculture*, *foreign investment*, *freeloaders*, *enemies*, *none/don't know*. The order of these choices was randomly displayed. About 80 percent of the respondents selected *friends*, *democracy*, or *military*, consistent with the "correct" understanding of NATO.[103]

With this data, I classified individuals who selected *friends* or *democracy* as explicitly perceiving NATO as a "liberal community." I then estimated NATO's cue effect on this group's support for intervention. The theory predicts that NATO's cues will influence members of this group

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[103] 3% Agriculture; 6% Enemies; 7% Freeloaders; 6% Don't Know; 34% Foreign Investment. In retrospect, the jargon "foreign investment" could have been interpreted as "investing in foreign stuff," which might have led to the unusual high response in this category. Overall, however, this data shows that the mere acronym "NATO" was interpreted by a substantial amount of the sample in an intelligible way.

more than those outside of it. I also classified individuals who selected *military* as seeing NATO from the security perspective. I then similarly estimated NATO's impact on members of this group compared to those outside of it. The theory does not predict whether perceptions of NATO's military features matter, but the comparison is useful for benchmarking. Figure 7 displays the results. Consistent with the theory, the effect of NATO is about 15 percentage points among those who did not associate NATO with the words *friend* or *democracy*, while it is about 30 points, nearly double, among those who do.

Figure 7: NATO's effect is stronger among Americans who associate it with "democracy" or "friends" (community).
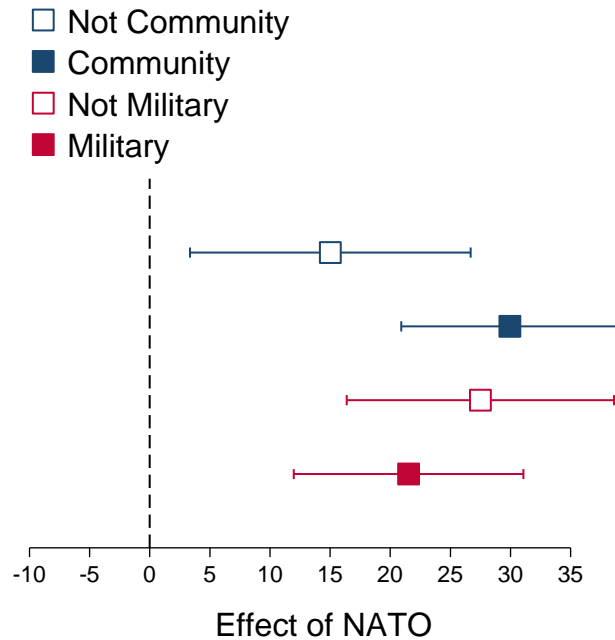
Note: This figure reports the effect of NATO's endorsement on public support for war depending on whether or not respondents associated NATO with the words "democracy" or "friend" (i.e., community) or "military." 95% confidence intervals are given. N=598. Data are from Survey USA-3.

By contrast, whether people associate NATO with the military or not, NATO's cueing effect is about the same. If anything, associating NATO with the military reduces NATO's influence. This dampening effect is about -6 percentage points, though it is statistically indistinguishable from zero (p= 0.42). These patterns show that NATO's cueing effect cannot be explained by Americans liking

the idea of a strong military organization backing their foreign policy. Instead, Americans may be sensitive to the prospects of warmongering abroad, so NATO's military side can be detrimental to its influence on public opinion.

Figure 8: NATO's effect is greater among Americans who identify with NATO's member countries.
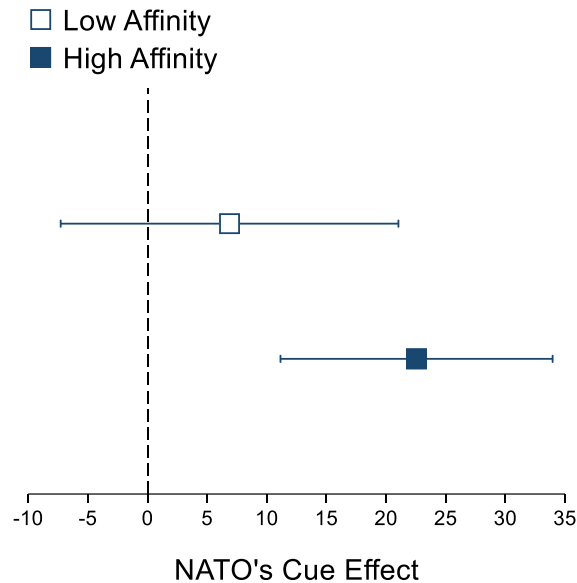
Note: This figure reports the effect of NATO's endorsement on public support for war among survey takers with Low or High Affinity toward NATO's member countries. 95% confidence intervals are given. N=408. Data are from Survey USA-2.

Turning to a second approach, I analyze NATO's effect on public support for war conditional on people's affinity with NATO's member countries (as opposed to the concepts people associate with NATO itself). In Survey USA-2, I also measured people's affinity with NATO's member countries by asking survey takers whether the following four countries "share a friendly, neutral, or hostile relationship with the U.S.": Canada, Germany, France, and the United Kingdom.[104] For the analysis, I split the sample in half based on people's average affinity toward these four countries. Figure 8 shows that NATO's cueing effect is about 6.9 percentage points among those who express relatively low

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[104] I also asked about China and Russia. Together, this encompasses two countries that are only in NATO, only in the Security Council, and in both IOs. Data from all countries are in Appendix D.

affinity toward the four NATO countries. In contrast, it is about 22.6 among those who express high affinity toward those countries. The difference in effect sizes is substantially large, about 16 percentage points (p=0.086). As the theory implies, NATO's cue has the most potent effect among Americans who share a close affinity toward NATO's member countries.

Test #2: Directly Estimate Social Causal Mechanisms

Next, I analyze six causal mechanisms (or mediators) that might explain NATO's endorsement effect on public support for war (Survey USA-1). The first three mechanisms are associated with the social cue argument. The mechanism *Norm Consistency* captures beliefs about whether intervention conforms to one aspect of pro-norm behavior, whether the U.S. is using force for humanitarian reasons.[105] *Group Participation* indicates respondents' beliefs about whether other countries will join the operation. *Benefit Image/Status* measures perceptions about whether an intervention would improve or damage the U.S.'s "reputation."[106] The next three mechanisms are unrelated to the social cue theory, though the social cue theory does not rule them out either. The mechanism *Prevent Contagion* indicates people's expectations about whether *not* intervening would lead to a spread of conflict. *Retaliation Unlikely* records beliefs about whether other countries would punish the United States for using military force. *Casualties Unlikely* measures expectations about American casualties.

With these expectations in mind, I will estimate the extent to which each of these six causal mechanisms are significant links between NATO's cue and public opinion. To do so, I use a statistical procedure called causal mediation analysis (Imai et al. 2011), which has three steps. The first step is to estimate the effect of the treatment (i.e., NATO) on each mediator. The second step is to estimate the effect of each mediator on the outcome, support for war. The third and final step is to use statistical information from the first two steps in a simulation process to estimate how much the treatment's effect on the outcome is channeled through each mediator.

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[105] Considerations about what is pro-norm could, however, take a less concrete form and reflect beliefs that intervention is simply the right thing to do or morally appropriate. This measure cannot capture this broader concept and thus might be interpreted as biased against the social cue theory.

[106] In the survey, I asked respondents to evaluate how intervention would affect the U.S.'s "reputation," generically speaking (i.e., not a reputation for resolve or something else specifically). I thought that reputation would be a more colloquial term that captures the academic concepts of status and image, which are jargon. In retrospect, I realized that the colloquial use of reputation is probably closer to image but not the hierarchical concept of status.

Figure 9 displays the results from steps one and two. The left panel shows the effect of the treatment on each mediator. The estimated probit coefficients are reported in terms of predicted probabilities. When NATO recommends intervention, people are more likely to believe that intervention benefits U.S. status, will attract group participation, and will follow humanitarian norms. Additionally, NATO's policy cues make people more likely to believe that intervention can prevent crisis contagion while not significantly changing people's beliefs about the chances of international retaliation and casualties. The right panel illustrates each mediator's effect on people's support for intervention. The mediators are not experimentally varied, so I include control variables (not reported in the figure) to guard against confounding from omitted variables.[107] Each mediator affects people's support for humanitarian intervention but to different degrees. Concerns about status have the most considerable effect, while concerns about retaliation have the smallest effect.

Figure 9. Potential mechanisms that explain NATO's effect.
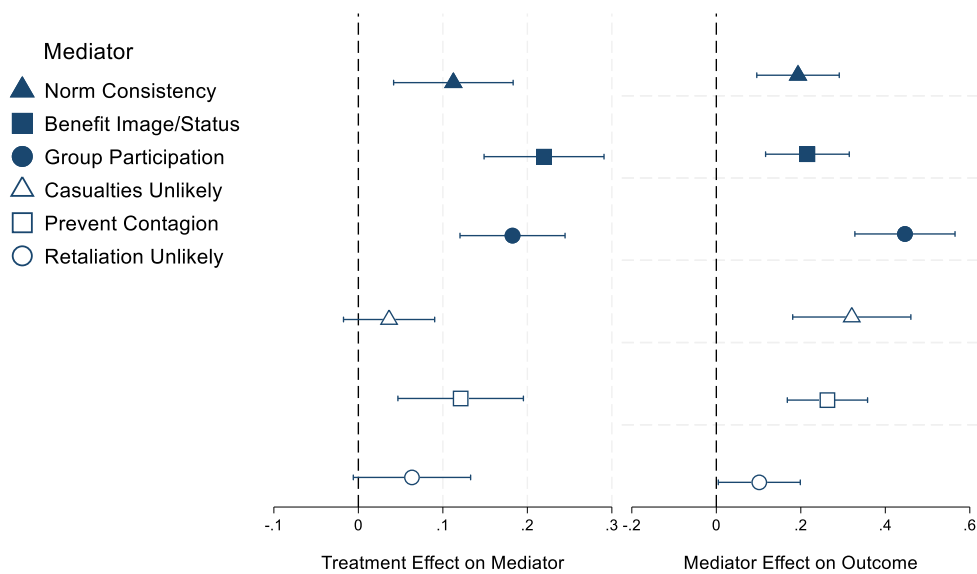
Note: This figure gives the predicted marginal effects from probit coefficient estimates. The left panel plots the NATO effect on six mediators, and the right panel plots those mediators' effect on people's intervention support, controlling for potential confounds. The treatment, mediator, and outcome variables are binary. Estimates from the control variables are not displayed. Each of the 12 estimates is obtained from a separate regression. 95% confidence intervals are given. Data are from Survey USA-1.

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[107] The control variables are gender, age, education, income, race, religion, ideology, party identification, voter registration, internationalism, beliefs about human rights, and news interest.

Combining these two steps allows me to estimate each mediator's average causal mediation effect (ACME),[108] or the extent to which each mediator can explain why NATO's cues influence public opinion on war. Table 2 reports each ACME. Recall Chapter 3 in which Survey USA-1 revealed that NATO raises public support by about 26.4 percentage points. Beginning at the top of the table, the analysis shows that 1.5 of those 26.4 percentage points are channeled through people's changing beliefs about whether intervention would be consistent with humanitarian objectives and thus pro-norm.[109] The results show that the other two social mechanisms—group participation and image/status considerations—are statistically significant. NATO's effect on public opinion also owes to its ability to shift beliefs about whether the humanitarian crisis would spread (*Prevent Contagion*).

Table 2. Social mechanisms explain NATO's effect on public opinion.

Mediator	Mediation Effect (Percentage Points)
Norm Consistency	**1.5**
Group Participation	**3.9**
Benefit Image/Status	**6.4**
Casualties Unlikely	1.0
Prevent Contagion	**3.2**
Retaliation Unlikely	0.4
NATO's Effect Left Unexplained	10.0

Note: this table shows the mediation effects of six factors that might explain why NATO raises support for intervention. Bolded numbers indicate statistical significance at the 0.05 level. Data are from Survey USA-1.

Meanwhile, people's expectations about international punishment and casualties are not significant mediators.[110] The last column reports the amount of NATO's effect left unexplained by the

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[108] The analysis executes the procedures outlined in Imai et al. (2011) using statistical software programmed by Hicks and Tingley (2011). The Online Appendix gives a technical overview of this analysis.

[109] As mentioned above, this is probably an underestimate of my original concept of norm abidance since I only measure humanitarian norms and not broader impressions of appropriateness.

[110] The insignificant "casualty effect" might seem unusual. But to clarify, it does not contradict the claim that casualties affect public opinion (e.g., Mueller 1973; Gartner 2008). The right panel of Figure 9 shows that *Casualties* affect Support.

mediation analysis: its 26.4-point overall effect minus the sum of all six mediation effects. As the social theory argues, NATO also exerts direct social pressure on ingroup members that can shift their opinion on intervention. Presumably, some of this "direct pressure" is captured by the 10.0 percentage points left unexplained, but this interpretation cannot be tested directly. In any case, the causal mediation analysis supports the social cue theories on whole.

Test #3: Rule out Non-Social Mechanisms

In this chapter's final section, I show that NATO's endorsement effect remains *even after* explicitly accounting for "objective" cost-benefit factors, such as the number of lives that would be saved, the financial and human costs of military action, and the mode of intervention. To rule out these alternative factors, Survey USA-4 included the original experiment in which NATO supports or opposes military action (*NATO*), while additionally randomizing whether respondents received or did not receive information about military action's material cost and benefits. Specifically, those who received information read that "[m]ilitary action would save the lives of about [80 thousand OR 620 thousand] civilians. The operation would cost the U.S. government about [$850 million OR $4.1 billion], but the U.S. would avoid risking casualties by not sending ground troops." Those who did not receive the information received no additional text.

If NATO's cue raises public support for intervention by providing information about the *material consequences* of military action, directly providing that information to respondents should reduce the effect of NATO. However, the analysis is summarized in Figure 10 and shows that informing people about the material costs of intervention does not substantially reduce the effect of NATO's cues. When the information treatment holds constant the financial and human cost of intervention, the effect of NATO is 26.9 points. When these factors are not fixed, the effect of NATO drops slightly but insubstantially to 25.7 points.[111] Thus, these material factors cannot fully explain NATO's effect on public opinion.[112]

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[111] The Online Appendix shows the effect of NATO depending on the exact degree of financial cost and estimated lives saved. People do generally prefer interventions that are more beneficial at lower cost, but the substantive conclusions about the NATO effect are the same.

[112] This resonates with existing research. In a study of how the EU signals to investors, Gray (2009) discovers that once "the EU endorses a country's policies, market expectations for that country's performance converge. Interestingly, this suggests that markets pay less attention to the actual path of reform than to the EU pronouncements on it" (Gray 2009, 932).

Figure 10: Material factors (financial costs and anticipated casualties) do not explain NATO's effect.
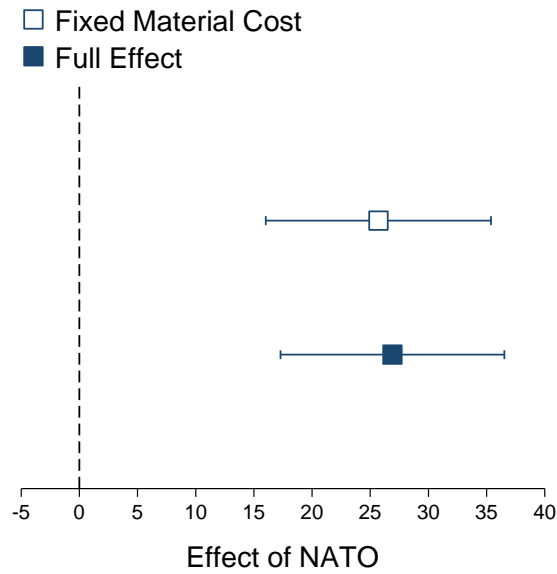
Note: This figure reports the effect of NATO on public support for intervention depending on whether survey takers received information about the material costs of intervention (i.e., whether the material costs are "fixed"). N=766. Data are from Survey USA-4.

Chapter 5: Foreign Audiences

Chapters 3 and 4 demonstrated how social cues from the liberal community and NATO affect domestic public opinion on armed humanitarian intervention. This chapter turns to international opinion, focusing on public and elite audiences within liberal democratic countries. There are three reasons for this focus, the first two having to do with practical relevance and the last with theory. First, liberal democracies are the primary countries directly participating in multilateral humanitarian interventions. Second, public opinion is more likely to affect international politics in democratic than in autocratic countries.[113] Lastly, the social cue theory is about how institutionalized cues help to rally ingroup members, which in this case is the community of democracies.

For these reasons, the evidence below examines the Japanese public and members of parliament (MPs) in the United Kingdom as cases of foreign audiences relevant to U.S. intervention policy. That said, the closing section of this chapter will also examine how IOs affect public opinion in Egypt, a country outside the liberal community. The theory does not rule out NATO affecting Egyptian public opinion because some Egyptians may feel an affinity toward the liberal community. Still, the theory does imply that institutions with more proximate identities, such as the Arab League, should exert more substantial influence on the aggregate.

To preview, my analysis produces three main results. First, social cues by the liberal community, especially when institutionalized by NATO, affect Japanese public opinion. Second, MPs in the UK Parliament preferred an intervention backed by NATO but not the Security Council over the opposite scenario. Lastly, in Egypt, a side-by-side experimental comparison of cues from the Security Council, NATO, and the Arab League reveals that only the Arab League significantly affects public opinion. These findings support the social cue theory.

Japanese Public Opinion on U.S. Intervention

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[113] Public opinion can affect the foreign policy of some autocracies, but still less so on average compared to the democratic context (Weeks 2008; Weeks 2014).

Here, I show how cues from the liberal community and NATO raise Japanese support for U.S. intervention. But before doing so, I explain why Japan is relevant to humanitarian intervention by liberal democracies like the United States.

The Policy and Theoretical Relevance of Japan

Evaluating my theory in the case of Japanese public opinion will yield both practical and theoretical insight. First of all, Japan is a critical player in U.S. foreign policy and collaborates directly with NATO, making U.S. soft power in Japan politically important. Japan's postwar constitution limits its ability to use military force, and it thus relies on the United States for security. Nevertheless, Japan retains substantial foreign policy discretion, such as in its foreign aid programs and deployment of non-combat troops (i.e., its military, the Self Defense Force or SDF). During this post-war period, Japan joined the United Nations and has become particularly active in UN activities like peacekeeping.

Furthermore, since the early 1990s, especially with Japan's growing wariness of China and disillusionment with the Security Council,[114] Japan deepened its association with NATO. Japan is one of NATO's "partners across the globe" and cooperates with NATO across several domains, such as humanitarian relief and state building. For example, Japan contributed over $2 billion to the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan.[115] The highest levels of Japan's political leadership have also engaged with NATO, such as Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's participation in the 2022 NATO Summit in Madrid. Many of these dynamics reflect NATO and its democratic partners' response to growing Chinese power. Outgroup threat is, after all, one of the quickest ways to spur ingroup solidarity. While serving a strategic purpose, these partnerships are solidified by their shared identity and norms. For example, a joint statement by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and PM Kishida characterized the relationship as being between "natural partners, who share common values of freedom, democracy, and the rule of law, as well as strategic interests."[116]

These high-level politics have seeped down to the domestic level as well. Japanese public discourse and opinion feature the country's relations with the United States, including on matters of U.S. military intervention, as well as its dealings with the Security Council and NATO. Two pieces of evidence verify this claim. First, the content of Japanese newspapers reveals that U.S. military

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[114] Japan has been unsuccessful in joining the Security Council's permanent membership (Reinhard 2000).
[115] Source (accessed on 11 April 2023): https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_72931.htm%3FselectedLocale%3Den.
[116] Source (accessed on 11 April 2023): https://japan.kantei.go.jp/content/000122397.pdf. More broadly, Chu, Ko, and Liu (2021) show that social, value-based rhetoric builds support for alliances.

intervention and IOs are salient in Japan. Table 3 summarizes the number of Japanese news article headlines that include the search terms United States, UNSC, and NATO, along with the benchmark terms WTO and SDF.[117]

Table 3: Japanese news during armed interventions by three different U.S Presidents.

Search term	Jan to June 1999 Kosovo, Clinton		Jan to June 2003 Iraq, Bush		Jan to June 2011 Libya, Obama		Total
	Asahi	Yomiuri	Asahi	Yomiuri	Asahi	Yomiuri	
U.S.	436 (38%)	477 (44%)	726 (6%)	581 (58%)	251 (50%)	153 (37%)	2,624 (49%)
Security Council	72 (6%)	55 (5%)	161 (13%)	176 (18%)	21 (4%)	24 (6%)	509 (10%)
NATO	347 (30%)	330 (31%)	25 (2%)	37 (4%)	31 (6%)	34 (8%)	804 (15%)
WTO	110 (10%)	93 (9%)	69 (6%)	57 (6%)	8 (2%)	12 (3%)	349 (7%)
SDF	179 (16%)	118 (11%)	227 (19%)	148 (15%)	195 (39%)	196 (47%)	1063 (20%)
Total	1144	1073	1208	999	506	419	5349

Note: Numbers represent count and (column-wise percentages) of headlines that include certain search terms. From top to bottom, the Japanese search terms for the headlines were "アメリカ OR 米国"; "国連安全保障理事会 OR 安保理"; "NATO OR ナトー OR 北大西洋条約機構"; "WTO OR 世界貿易機関"; "自衛 OR 自衛隊". The searchers were conducted using the *Asahi Kikuzo II Visual* and the *Yomidasu Rekishikan (databases)*.

It shows that the country's top liberal and conservative newspapers, the Asahi and Yomiuri Shimbun, reported substantially on relevant topics in the 6-month windows surrounding episodes of U.S. military intervention across three different U.S. presidencies: March 1999 Kosovo (Clinton); March 2003 Iraq (Bush); and March 2011 Libya (Obama). In 1999 Kosovo, when the U.S. intervened with NATO without Security Council authorization, newspapers reported more about NATO than the UNSC and its military (347 versus 179 headlines). Surrounding the Iraq invasion, the U.S. received an astoundingly high degree of attention for its unilateralism (726 headlines). The UNSC and NATO played a more equal role in Libya, as reflected in their roughly equal coverage. Overall, the U.S. was the most salient topic, and the UNSC and NATO were more frequently reported upon than the WTO and sometimes even the SDF.

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[117] To ensure that the term is a substantial article topic, the data counts *headlines* instead of articles that mention the search term anywhere.

Second, the Japanese public is meaningfully aware of NATO and the UN, as demonstrated by opinion polls summarized in Table 4A-B. A panel of twenty-four surveys conducted online monthly from October 2011 to September 2013 by researchers at Waseda University shows that about 60 to 65 percent of survey takers correctly identified NATO as an IO enshrining a military alliance among the U.S., Canada, and European countries. It also finds that about 55 to 60 percent of the respondents knew that the UN Secretary-General was from South Korea at the time (Ban Ki Moon). The correct choices were randomized among three reasonable but incorrect answers, and respondents were allowed to select "Don't Know."[118] These results indicate that Japanese citizens are reasonably knowledgeable of the UN and NATO.

Table 4A: Japanese Knowledge of NATO

Q: Which IO is called by the abbreviation NATO?	
Answer Choices	Min to max percentage across surveys
An organization…	
To protect the environment of the Artic	3.7 to 5.5
To promote free trade on the North American continent	16.3 to 20.2
A military alliance among the US, Canada, and major European countries	59.7 to 65.1
To promote cultural exchange between South and North America	0.7 to 1.5
Don't Know	12.4 to 15.7
Sample Size	2,071 to 3,481

Note: The answer choice order was randomized, except for "don't know," which was always given last. The data are from a 2011 to 2013 monthly panel survey. The table reports the minimum to maximum range across twenty-four surveys. Data are from the "Survey on the Image of Foreign Countries and Current Topics," Research Institute of Contemporary Japanese Systems at Waseda University, which are archived at and available from Institute of Social Science, The University of Tokyo.

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[118] For NATO, incorrect choices are an organization to protect the environment, to promote North American free trade, and to promote South and North American cultural exchange. For the UNSC, incorrect choices are USA, China, and Ghana.

Table 4B: Japanese knowledge of the UN

Q: Where is the current United Nations Secretary General from?	
Answer Choices	Min to max percentage across surveys
USA	4.2 to 5.9
People's Republic of China	3.1 to 6.3
Ghana	5.7 to 8.5
South Korea	56.9 to 61.7
Don't Know	21.8 to 26.4
Sample Size	2,071 to 3,481

Note: Ibid.

The salience of IOs and U.S. intervention in Japanese society is politically relevant because its public opinion affects the country's foreign policy. While other domestic actors like the bureaucracy and media are influential,[119] Japanese citizens still matter to foreign policymaking.[120] In an exhaustive study of the public's impact on foreign policy since the end of WWII, Paul Midford concludes that "Japanese public opinion is influential because it is stable, coherent, and, regarding beliefs about the utility of military force, not easily or quickly swayed by elite attempts to influence it."[121] Other research further finds that Japanese citizens tend to be a "conservative" force on statecraft, constraining policy-makers from pursuing more militaristic actions such as contributing to U.S. military operations.[122] This is consistent with the broader literature on the role of public opinion in providing democratic constraints on their governments.[123]

Thus, overall, Japan and Japanese public opinion are relevant and responsive to the broader foreign policies of liberal democracies, including involvement by IOs like the Security Council. This case background demonstrates that cues from IOs like NATO can plausibly reach foreign audiences like the Japanese public. This fact increases the real-world relevance of my subsequent experimental analyses. Lastly, international relations research often overlooks East Asian cases,[124] and this

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[119] Johnson 1975; Shinoda 2007
[120] Risse-Kappen 1991, 508-9; Katzenstein 2008, 19.
[121] Midford 2011, 7.
[122] Bobrow 1989; Berger 2003; Midford 2006.
[123] E.g. Aldrich et al. 2006; Baum and Potter 2015; Tomz, Weeks, and Yarhi-Milo 2020; Chu and Recchia 2022.
[124] Johnston 2012

shortcoming is especially relevant to testing my social cues argument. Specifically, investigating Japanese public opinion helps me to confront questions about whether the liberal community and NATO's influence reflect a regional identity versus a broader democratic identity. If the patterns found in American opinion do not replicate in Japan, we should be less confident that the "liberal community" extends beyond the West. Studying Japan helps address these critical questions.

Survey Implementation and Design

I commissioned Nikkei Research to field two national surveys fielded in Japan.[125] Nikkei fielded the first survey in March 2015 to 12,233 respondents[126] and the second replication survey in December 2015 to 3,587 respondents. Nikkei administered online and used stratified random sampling procedures to meet demographic and geographic targets based on the *Jūminkihondaichō* (Basic Resident Register). Because both surveys replicated the same substantive results, I combined the data in the results below. The disaggregated results are in the online appendix.[127]

Both surveys included a vignette-based experiment similar to the one used in the U.S. survey described in Chapter 2. However, the Japanese scenario was about a U.S. humanitarian intervention rather than an intervention conducted by the respondent's country, Japan. To briefly re-summarize, the survey vignette contained three main sections. First, it described (in Japanese) a humanitarian crisis emerging from a civil war in a foreign country. Second, it randomized information about whether NATO and the Security Council opposed or endorsed a U.S. humanitarian intervention into the crisis (*Both Oppose, NATO Only, UNSC Only, Both Support*). To test the hypothesis about whether social cues are stronger when institutionalized, it also independently randomized information about the cue-sender: whether both the IO and its member countries were named, or just the IO or the member countries. Lastly, after explaining that the U.S. took military action under one of the four main social cue conditions, it asked respondents to express their approval of the U.S. military operations.

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[125] Online Appendix A provides the Japanese and English translation of the survey.

[126] Due to a technical error, Nikkei Research collected more respondents than the targeted two thousand respondents. The error did not affect the randomization or any other components of the survey.

[127] I thank Mike Tomz and Masaru Kono for allowing me to include my question module in their larger Japanese public opinion project. I am also indebted to the research team at Waseda University for providing professional and thorough localization and translation work.

Effect of Social Cues on Japanese Public Opinion

The results of the two Japanese surveys replicate the main findings from the U.S. study. First, as Figure 11 reports, NATO's policy endorsement affects Japanese support for U.S. humanitarian intervention more strongly than the Security Council. As the left-side figure shows, a sole Security Council cue modestly increases public approval: the increase from *Both Oppose* to *UNSC Only* is about 7 percentage points. However, the clearer ingroup cue by NATO raises support more. The increase from *Both Oppose* to *NATO Only* is about 16 percentage points. Furthermore, obtaining the approval of both IOs has no added effect on public approval above and beyond just obtaining the approval of NATO. Turning to the right-side figure, the analysis also shows that the average NATO treatment effect is about 9 percentage points higher than the average Security Council treatment effect.

Figure 11. NATO has a greater effect than the Security Council (Japan).
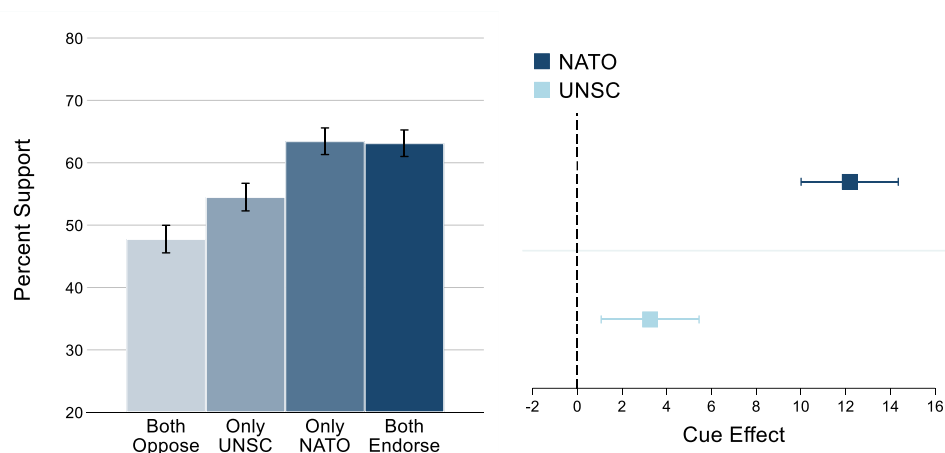

Note: The figure on the left shows public approval of U.S. intervention in four scenarios regarding NATO and the Security Council's stance on intervention. The figure on the right reports the average treatment effect of each IO. 95% confidence intervals are displayed. N=7,852. Data are from Survey JPN-1 & JPN-2.

Next, the data also reveal that the liberal community is more influential when sending its social cues through NATO. Specifically, the liberal community's endorsement effect is about 3 percentage points greater when channeled through NATO (comparing the top two estimates). While the effect size is modest, it is statistically significant and replicates the findings from the U.S. study.[128] Moreover,

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[128] Also, as previously mentioned, a survey experiment setting provides a difficult test for demonstrating the full effect of cue institutionalization, since the amplification and coordination effects of institutionalization are obscured in a survey setting where the cue is presented directly to viewers.

due to the greater number of observations available in the Japan surveys, I could assess the effect of institutionalized cues from the broader international community, as represented by the Security Council. My theory argues that institutions can clarify the social meaning of a cue, but the international community is not a specific social group. Indeed, as Figure 12 shows, institutionalizing its endorsement thus does not add much to its effect on Japanese public opinion (comparing the bottom two estimates).

Figure 12. The policy cue has a stronger effect when it is sent through NATO.
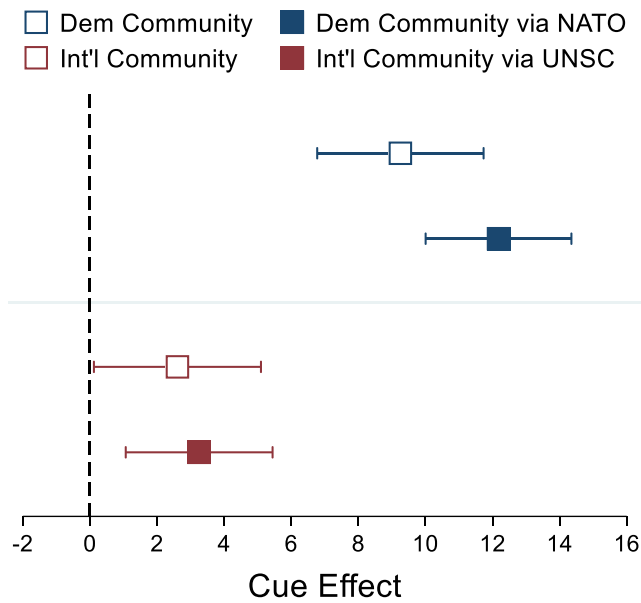
Note: This figure shows the effect of NATO and/or its country's endorsement effect on public support for intervention, given in percentage points. N=7,852. Data are from Survey JPN-1 & JPN-2.

Generalizability of the Japan Case

Japan is a policy-relevant case suitable for theory testing and is thus intrinsically valuable to study. Still, researchers might wonder how the results speak to other countries. While countries differ on countless dimensions, Japan would likely be a middling case regarding the effect of IO cues on public approval for at least two reasons. First, there are cross-cutting forces in modern Japan-U.S. relations. Japan is a close liberal democratic ally of the U.S. that generally expresses affinity toward Americans, which could make its citizens disregard the external endorsement of IOs. It is also, however, anti-militaristic and wary of entrapment by overly hawkish U.S. policies, which could make its citizens especially interested in hearing what an institutional institution thinks.[129] Japan is thus not a clear case for being particularly susceptible or immune to the cues of IOs.

Second, Japanese beliefs about whether the U.S. has a positive or negative impact on the international system (which approximates their potential concerns about U.S. military intervention) are close to the average of dozens of other countries. In a 2010-11 BBC World Service Poll, the difference in percentages of Japanese who believed the U.S. to be a positive versus negative influence in the world was 25 points, compared to an average of 18 points among twenty-five other countries representing various regions and regime types.[130] Countries more pessimistic about the U.S., like Germany (-7 points) and China (-20 points), might value an IO's authorization even more than Japan. In contrast, countries with more optimistic views about the U.S., like Italy (38 points) and South Korea (55 points), will presumably care less about an IO's second opinion.

On whole, the Japan study demonstrates that social cues by the liberal community and NATO affect foreign public opinion as they affect domestic opinion in the United States. Furthermore, because Japan is an Asian liberal democracy, this evidence challenges claims about how the liberal community effect is restricted to the "West." These results are likely generalizable to other contexts, which I will explore in the following two sections.

Foreign Elites: A Survey of UK Parliamentarians

Social cues do not just influence everyday citizens but political elites as well. After all, elites are also social human beings who care about norms, group belonging, and status. When compared to

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[129] Izumikawa 2010, 129-32.
[130] The complete list is available in the Online Appendix.

a general public that is preoccupied with bread-and-butter issues, political elites could be expected to be even *more* conscientious about their country's adherence to international norms and standing among peer nations. Indeed, seminal research about social dynamics in international relations initially focused on state and elite-level dynamics.[131] Earlier arguments about the signaling effects of IOs also focused on foreign elite audiences.[132]

To examine how elites might respond to social cues from NATO and the Security Council, I surveyed members of parliament (MPs) in the United Kingdom House of Commons.[133] The United Kingdom is a critical player in the politics of humanitarian intervention, and these MPs are often directly involved in high-level policymaking, including holding relevant cabinet minister positions. Specifically, I contracted YouGov to poll a representative sample of 103 MPs.[134] YouGov's fieldwork took place in March and April 2023. While I could not conduct a survey experiment on the MPs as I did with the U.S. and Japanese public,[135] I did survey a representative sample of them on a question relevant to the social cues theory. That question was the following:

In a given situation, international organizations might disagree on whether humanitarian intervention should be allowed. In which of the following two situations would you personally be more likely to support humanitarian intervention? We understand that in reality there are many factors to consider, but we'd just like to hear your general intuition.

- The Security Council approves of an intervention, but NATO has refrained from giving its endorsement due to the opposition of key NATO members.
- NATO approves of an intervention, but the Security Council has refrained from giving its endorsement due to the opposition of key Security Council members.
- Don't Know.

In essence, this question asks respondents to compare the two experimental conditions *UNSC Only* and *NATO Only*. The social cue theory predicts that the MPs would favor NATO approval without the Security Council over the reverse because NATO approval represents a more explicit ingroup cue. Figure 13 summarizes the results of this survey question and confirms the social cue theory's prediction. 21 percent of MPs prefer humanitarian intervention with the Security Council but not

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[131] Johnston 2008.

[132] Voeten 2005; Thompson 2009.

[133] See Chu and Recchia (2022) for the first published use of this sample in political science.

[134] YouGov conducts targeted sampling and then applies post-sample weights on respondent party, gender, electoral cohort, and geography to give a sample that is representative of the House of Commons.

[135] Specifically, the maximum sample was about 100 and would not generate sufficient power for my experimental design. Furthermore, YouGov's reputation team ensures long-term relations with the elite sample, which includes making sure survey questions do not include deception and hypothetical situations that deviate too much from policy relevance, which places restrictions on the possible types of survey experiments.

NATO's approval, while 47 percent prefer NATO but not Security Council approval. That is a 26 percentage point difference. Elite policymakers, not just members of the public, generally care more about ingroup cues.

Figure 13. UK Parliamentarians prefer humanitarian intervention with NATO but not Security Council's endorsement, compared to the reverse.
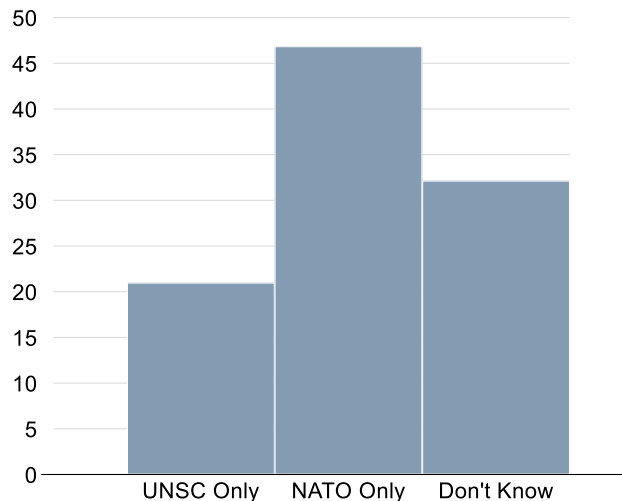
Note: This figure shows the percentage of MPs in the UK Parliament who would rather support humanitarian with the Security Council but not NATO's endorsement (UNSC Only) versus NATO but not the Security Council's endorsement (NATO Only), or stated they "Don't know." N=103. Data from Survey UK-MP.

Egypt, Outside the Liberal community

To test some final implications of the social theory, I conducted a survey experiment outside the democratic context: Egypt. The Egypt survey mirrors the U.S. and Japanese studies, except the main experiment presented Egyptian survey takers with the policy position of three different IOs: the Security Council, NATO, and the Arab League. So, there were eight different conditions since each IO was independently randomized to either approve or disapprove of humanitarian intervention. Like

the Japan study, the dependent variable is support for U.S. humanitarian intervention. The survey was fielded by Qualtrics in Arabic to a diverse sample of 1,839 Egyptians.[136]

The social cues theory implies that people will care first and foremost about ingroup cues. This implies that, in the aggregate, the Arab League's cue should have the most substantial effect on Egyptians because it represents an Arabic regional and cultural identity. NATO may also affect Egyptian mass opinion if some respondents identify with the liberal community, perhaps due to Egypt's recent struggles for democracy especially after the Arab Spring. But this prediction is less concrete. Lastly, the Security Council may or may not affect Egyptian public opinion. It would be for reasons outside the social cues logic if it does.

Figure 14. In Egypt, only the Arab League Cue significantly affects Public Opinion on US Intervention.
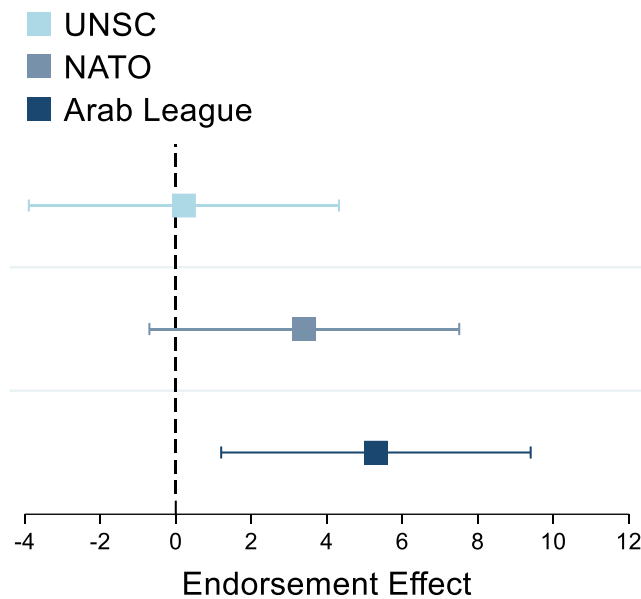
Note: This figure shows the endorsement effect of each IO averaging across the possible conditions of the other two IOs. N=1,839. Data from Survey EGY.

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[136] I thank Scott Williamson and our contracted professional translators for their assistance in implementing this survey. English and Arabic versions of the survey text are in the Online Appendix.

The data confirm my theoretical expectations. Figure X shows that the Arab League's policy endorsement does affect Egyptian approval of U.S. humanitarian intervention. An endorsement by the Arab League raises public support by almost 6 percentage points, and that effect is statistically significant. NATO also appears to have an effect, though it is not statistically distinguishable from zero. Lastly, the Security Council has virtually no impact on Egyptian public opinion, at least when its cue is placed side-by-side cues from the democratic and Arabic communities (i.e., NATO and the Arab League).

Chapter 6: Revisiting the Conventional Wisdom

The preceding chapters provide robust evidence for this book's central claim that the liberal community and NATO can send social cues that legitimize war among domestic and international audiences. These findings already call into question the conventional wisdom, which emphasizes the Security Council's primacy. Here, I will address this tension more explicitly in three parts. First, I provide a deeper theoretical discussion of the conventional wisdom. Then, I revisit past empirical findings that were originally interpreted as consistent with the conventional wisdom and show how they are instead compatible with the social cue theory. Lastly, I address potential rebuttals from the conventional wisdom.

Security Council Primacy in Legitimizing War

The dominant view among international relations scholars is that the Security Council has a particularly powerful legitimizing effect on people's views about war. Governments seeking to launch a military intervention will try to secure the Security Council's approval because this approval will convince otherwise skeptical domestic and international audiences to support intervention. In fact, four distinct theories all reach this conclusion, the first of which emphasizes legality and the remaining three of which emphasizes rational institutional design.

The first approach argues that institutions legitimize military force by legalizing it. To elaborate, since the creation of the United Nations, international law bans international wars with only three exceptions: self-defense, collective self-defense, and military force authorized by the Security Council.[137] Under this system, the Security Council has broad authority to legalize the use of armed force to address, as a last resort, threats to international peace and security. The scope of this authority has come to include using the military to intervene in humanitarian crises. It does so by passing a "Chapter VII" resolution, which requires 9 of the 15 members' affirmative votes and no dissenting votes from the permanent five members, China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Under this doctrine, ad hoc collation and even organizations like NATO do not have the same authority to legalize war.

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[137] Frank 2002.

International law and legalization could change how people think about war for several reasons. To begin, and most directly, Security Council legalization could convince people that a crisis poses a "threat to international peace and security" that can only be addressed via a military operation. But even if people have no idea what a Security Council authorization means from a technical standpoint, they could more generally prefer legal policies over illegal policies. This general preference could be for normative reasons, as many scholars document a global norm that favors legality, especially in countries with a legalistic culture that respects the rule of law.[138] But people's preference for acting legally could also be for more calculative reasons. For example, Guzman (2008) finds that countries could want to comply with international law to avoid reciprocity, reputation costs, and retaliation.[139] Thus, the Security Council's blessing could grant "legal legitimacy" to uses of military force,[140] which could attract supporters for various instrumental and normative reasons.

A second argument views the Security Council not as a legal body but as an "elite pact" whose approval can reassure governments and citizens about the consequences of war.[141] Furthermore, the Security Council has become uniquely situated to provide such reassurance. For one, "the institutional design of the [Security Council] did make it a more viable candidate than alternative institutions."[142] Additionally, the political origins of the Security Council, as an IO brokered by the post-war great powers, and its track record checking powerful countries like the U.S., have led the international community to collectively view the Security Council as an effective pact and coordinating device for global security. Security Council authorization signals that war will neither trigger great power conflict nor destabilize the international system. This signal, in turn, could placate opposition to military action. In contrast, institutions like NATO should be inferior in achieving these goals.[143]

The third and fourth existing arguments focus on how certain IOs can provide useful information to people evaluating a policy. In general, ordinary citizens and even policymakers who are not directly involved in a particular foreign policy problem may hold insufficient information about whether a foreign policy like humanitarian intervention is a good idea and would produce good outcomes. These are "rationally ignorant" observers who want to learn more without expending the

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[138] Chong 1993; Koh 1997; Finnemore and Sikkink 1998; Goodman and Jinks 2013; Hafner-Burton, LeVeck, and Victor 2016

[139] For evidence on how international law shapes public preferences via the reputation mechanism, see Tomz 2008.

[140] Tago 2005, 589; Tago and Ikeda 2015, 392.

[141] Voeten 2005, 528.

[142] Voeten 2005, 547.

[143] *Ibid.*, 541-2.

great effort needed to become experts on the issue. Furthermore, these observers may fear that the person or country proposing a policy may have hidden intentions or incentives to misrepresent the merits of the policy.[144] Thus, these observers will seek a cue, endorsement, or "second opinion" from another. This is where IOs come in. Certain types of IOs, with particular arrangements of member countries, are better suited to provide a second opinion to these rationally ignorant observers about the costs, benefits, and intentions behind war. But which type of IOs can do this?

One version of this perspective is that *independent or neutral* IOs can best transmit useful information to observers.[145] Drawing from formal models on the informational role of legislative committees,[146] this line of argument theorizes that IOs with a more heterogeneous or diverse set of members are more independent. When people hear that a independent IO endorses a policy, they will think it is worth supporting. The logic here is that if a diverse group of countries can agree on a policy, people will perceive such a policy as producing good consequences or at least not harmful. Focusing on how the Security Council can influence foreign political leaders and public opinion, Thompson (2009) notes that "in security matters, the Security Council…comes closest to operating as a neutral representative of the international community in a case of military intervention."[147] He further explains that "this logic helps explain why regional organizations, comprised of a less diverse set of states, do not produce a legitimation effect equivalent to that of the Security Council," including "the more parochial NATO."[148] This view thus implies that the Security Council, which includes a heterogeneous set of countries, dominates more homogenous IOs like NATO in legitimizing foreign intervention.

Another version of this perspective argues that *conservative* IOs transmit the most useful information to observers.[149] In the case of military intervention, conservative IOs are ones that infrequently support war or pose a "high legislative hurdle" to war. When such a conservative IO does condone war, observers should conclude that war is a good idea or would produce good outcomes. Again, this line of argument predicts that the Security Council will be especially powerful in raising support for war. In contrast, policy endorsements from more hawkish IOs that do not pose as high of a hurdle to authorization, like NATO, should not communicate much helpful information to observers.

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[144] Fang 2008.

[145] Thompson 2009; Bush and Prather 2018. Thompson (2006) uses the term neutral, Thompson (2009) favors the term independent.

[146] Krehbiel 1991.

[147] Thompson 2009, 37.

[148] *Ibid.*, 38.

[149] Ibid.

The logic being, if a warmongering institution supports war, that does not tell me much about whether war is a good idea.

To date, these four arguments represent the dominant wisdom in international relations scholarship: The Security Council has international legal authority, forms an elite pact, is a independent arbiter, and is conservative in authorizing the use of military force. For these reasons, it is distinctly well-positioned to mobilize international support for war. Even research that does not argue that the Security Council is uniquely influential nevertheless focuses on it or deems it to be superior to other institutions.[150]

Reframing Existing Studies

Given this book's finding about ingroup cues from the liberal community and NATO, how can we make sense of extant studies that had claimed evidence for the conventional wisdom? Upon closer scrutiny, these past findings are consistent with the social cue theory. To begin, studies attempting to use historical data to study the effect of IOs on public opinion were found to be inconclusive because there is insufficient historical variation in the institutional design and membership distribution within these IOs.[151] Thus, the core assumptions about institutional independence and conservativeness cannot be directly tested.

Next, two existing experimental studies might be interpreted as evidence for the conventional wisdom. A closer look, however, reveals that one is consistent with the social cue theory and a second provides evidence for it. The first study conducted a national survey experiment in the U.S. via telephone, and it estimated that the joint endorsement of NATO and the Security Council raises American support for war by about 24 to 27 percentage points.[152] This effect mirrors the roughly 30 percentage point effect I discovered when comparing *Both Oppose* with *Both Endorse* in Survey USA-1, described in Chapter 3. Thus, while the authors' finding is consistent with the conventional wisdom, it is also consistent with the social cue theory.

The second study draws from an experiment fielded in Japan.[153] It analyzes approval of the U.S. uses of force under four conditions: the U.S. (1) receives unanimous UNSC approval, (2) receives

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[150] E.g. Finnemore 2003; Fang 2008; Brooks and Valentino 2011; Lipscy 2017.
[151] Hainmueller, Mummolo, and Xu (2017, 25-8) make this observation.
[152] Grieco et al. 2011, Table 3.
[153] Tago and Ikeda 2015.

Security Council approval but with Russia and China abstaining, and four non-permanent members voting no, (3) does not receive Security Council approval due to Russia and China's veto, and (4) does not attempt to receive Security Council approval due to anticipated opposition. They find that the first three conditions receive higher levels of public support than the fourth condition, but they are indistinguishable from one another. The authors attribute this to an "A for effort" effect: governments receive a public boost for attempting to receive Security Council authorization. The social cue theory provides an alternative interpretation: Japanese approval increases so long as the U.S. receives the approval of its fellow liberal democratic countries like the UK and France, while it discounts the opposition of outgroup countries like China and Russia. Having made sense of these past studies from the perspective of my theory, I now turn to reexamine the conventional theories.

Reexamining Legal Theories

The previous chapters provided evidence that the Security Council, the only institution that has the authority to legalize humanitarian war, has only a modest effect on domestic and international audiences. The interpretation of this evidence *most* favorable for the legal argument is the following. First, people care about international law, just not to a large degree, which is why the Security Council has a modest effect on public opinion, as demonstrated in the U.S. and Japan surveys. Second, however, people care less about international law if they receive the ingroup cue, which reveals their priorities and the dominance of social approval over legality. This is clear from the experimental evidence and the historical record of comparing cases like Kosovo and Bosnia.

Here, I challenge this modest version of the legality argument by addressing two potential critiques of my interpretation. The first critique might be that the general population is inappropriate for evaluating the importance of international law. After all, most people do not know much about international law.[154] To address this question, I measured people's beliefs about the law and show that they do not substantially moderate the cue effect of IOs. Specifically, in Survey USA-1, I quizzed survey respondents: "Under international law, which of the following organizations do you think can authorize the use of military force in another country? Please select all that apply." The response

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[154] Note, however, that the legal theories do not require the public to explicitly know the technicalities of international law to be influenced by it. The causal story for norm internalization can begin at the institutional level (i.e., international law), but then be transmitted to the public via political elites and transnational actors who might transmit the norm (i.e., the need for UNSC approval to engage in humanitarian intervention) without transmitting the particular legal knowledge.

options were the following: United Nations Security Council; North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO); International Court of Justice (ICJ); Global Military Council; None of the above.[155] I split the sample into those who "Know Law" and those who "Don't Know Law," depending on whether respondents correctly selected the Security Council exclusively. Less than a quarter of the sample was classified as knowing international law (237 out of 1,000).

Figure 15. Beliefs about International Law do not affect NATO's Influence
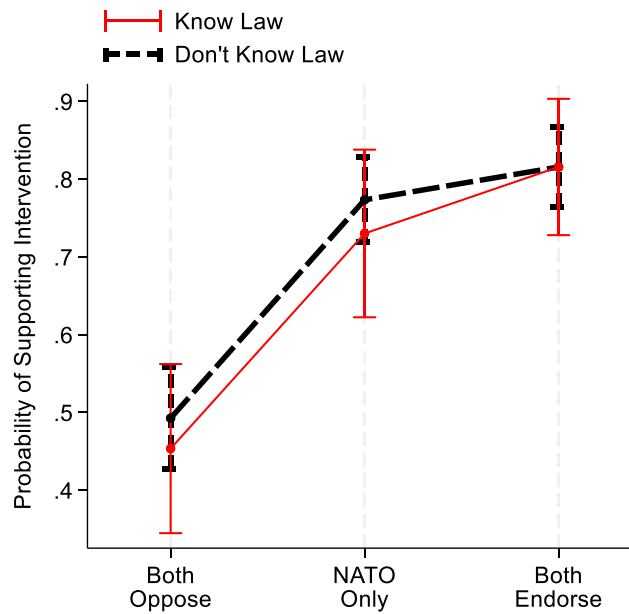
Note: Using probit coefficient estimates, this figure shows the predicted probability of supporting intervention for each treatment group, conditional on whether respondents know international law (N=237) or do not (N=763). Those who "Know Law" correctly identified the UNSC as the sole IO that can authorize armed interstate interventions. 95% confidence intervals are displayed. These data are from Survey USA-1.

Using this data, I assess whether the Security Council and NATO's endorsement effects differ depending on whether respondents know or do not know the law. Figure 15 summarizes the results of

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[155] These options were presented in randomized order, except "None of the above" always appeared last. "Global Security Council" was a red herring.

this analysis and shows that there is no substantial difference. Those who believe only the Security Council can legalize war were still vulnerable to NATO's social cues (i.e., moving from *Both Oppose* to *NATO Only* along the red solid line). To be fair, there is some evidence consistent with the legal argument. Knowledge of international law does suppress public support for intervention in the scenarios that lack Security Council approval (i.e., the solid red line is lower than the dotted black line across *Both Oppose* and *NATO Only*). This difference, however, is modest if not trivial.

A second critique is that the true effect of international law appears only when information about international law is directly presented to respondents. From this point of view, concerns about international law follow the logic of "out of sight, out of mind." It could also reflect the belief that international law primarily affects politics via public discourse and argument: failure to obtain Security Council approval allows political opponents to argue that an interventionist country has violated international law. If this is the case, then the following hypothesis should be true: *the effect of NATO's endorsement on support for intervention is smaller when respondents are informed about international law than when they are not.* If people are directly told that intervention is legal *if only if* the UNSC approves it, then the effect of NATO should be diminished.

I test this hypothesis using data from Survey USA-4. In this survey, I independently randomize (1) whether respondents receive the *Both Oppose* or the *NATO Only* scenario and (2) whether respondents receive an explicit statement about international law. All respondents read: "The United States is considering taking military action to help civilians in this crisis." Respondents selected to receive the explicit statement about international law additionally read: "To be legal under international law, taking military action in this situation requires United Nations Security Council authorization." Figure 16 summarizes the resulting data. It shows that whether respondents are informed about international law or not (black dotted or red solid line), public approval increases when NATO approves intervention. If anything, information about international law increases the NATO effect, as the slope of the red line is steeper, though the difference is not statistically significant.

The legal information does, however, decrease public approval when both NATO and the Security Council oppose intervention: when *Both Oppose*, public support for intervention is about 8 percentage points lower when respondents are informed about the legal requirements for war. In other words, informing people about international law makes them responsive to Security Council disapproval *if and only if* NATO is also disapproving. However, once NATO approves intervention, people disregard questions of legality. This finding is consistent with other research showing that international law shapes public opinion insofar as it resonates with people's more fundamental norms and values. For example, Chu (2019) shows that international humanitarian law only restrains people's

willingness to torture enemy prisoners of war if the other country reciprocates good behavior. When the other country does not, however, they support torture just as if there were no international law. Thus, legalization can only reinforce fundamental norms about wartime reciprocity, just as legalization can only reinforce more fundamental desires about receiving ingroup approval in the case of multilateralism and humanitarian intervention.

Figure 16. Explicit information about international law does not suppress NATO's influence.
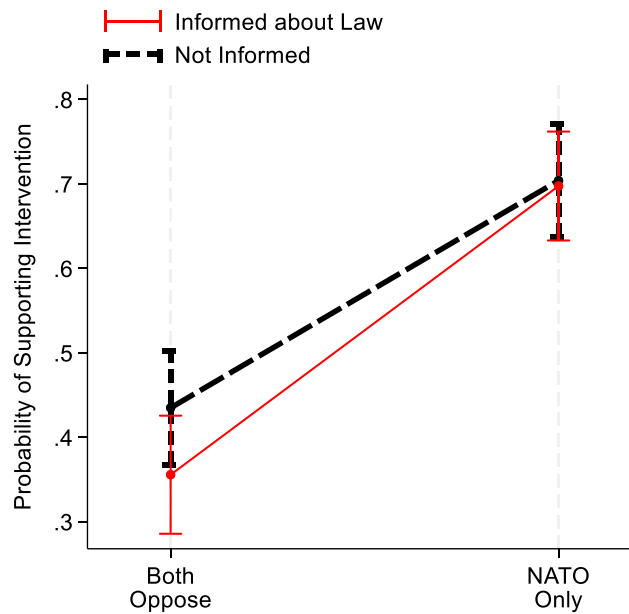
Notes: Using probit coefficient estimates, this figure shows the predicted probability of supporting intervention for each treatment group, conditional on whether respondents are (randomly) informed about international law (N=375) or not (N=386). 95% confidence intervals are displayed. The data are from Survey USA-4.

Reexamining Institutional Design Theories

I now turn to institutional design theories from the conventional wisdom. Recall that these theories argue that the Security Council, because of its institutional independence and conservativeness, can relay influential information about the cost, benefits, and consequences of war

through its policy endorsements. However, the evidence presented in the previous chapters should be troubling for these theories: the Security Council exerted only a modest effect on American and Japanese attitudes and UK policymakers preferred a NATO-backed intervention. Moreover, Chapter 4 shows that NATO's effect on public opinion cannot be explained by its ability to change beliefs about the material cost and benefits of war. It appears that the Security Council is not as crucial as these theories would predict, nor can the domestic influence of IOs solely be explained by transmitting information about material consequences.

As I did with the legal arguments, I will assess three potential defenses for the institutional design theories. First is another political ignorance critique. Critics might point out that much of the public does not hold "correct" perceptions about the Security Council and NATO. So, the problem is not with the theory but whether the theory generalizes to a largely clueless public. Several pieces of evidence contradict this argument. For one, the politically engaged public responds to the cue of IOs in ways that resemble the mass public. Analysis reported in the Online Appendix shows that college-educated Americans who are registered to vote and frequently follow international political news respond to ingroup cues perhaps even more acutely than the mass public. This result also aligns with the finding reported in Chapter 5 about the UK MPs, who are knowledge policy elites that should be likely to "correctly" perceive the Security Council's institutional properties.

Table 5. Japanese perceives the Security Council to be more Independent and Conservative than NATO

	Perceives the IO as…		
	Independent (politically)	Independent (human rights)	Conservative (politically)
Security Council			
Not at all	24%	16%	11%
Somewhat	55%	44%	34%
Very	21%	40%	55%
NATO			
Not at all	71%	69%	56%
Somewhat	28%	30%	39%
Very	1%	1%	5%

Note: N=3,587. Data are from Survey JPN-2.

Second, critics may also argue that there are just too many differences between NATO and the Security Council, and thus comparing their relative effects cannot directly test assumptions about their institutional properties. Chapter 4 presented several pieces of evidence to show that NATO's effect can be attributed to social cueing; however, this positive evidence for my theory is not negative

evidence for other theories. So here, I directly analyze the institutional design theories' central assumptions about independence and conservativeness, which existing approaches operationalize using the diversity and distance of preferences of an institution's member countries.[156] Specifically, in the Japan survey, I measured each respondent's beliefs about NATO and the Security Council's member countries to create a independence and conservativeness score at the individual level. I report my research procedures in greater detail in the Online Appendix, but the results are clear. As summarized in Table 5, the aggregate public correctly perceives the Security Council as independent and conservative relative to NATO. Thus, the overall weakness of the Security Council endorsement effect cannot be explained by mass ignorance about its institutional properties.

The data also allow individual-level analysis. Using multivariate regression analysis, I estimated how perceiving each IO as independent or conservative affects the ability of that IO to change people's support for humanitarian intervention. As summarized in the final row of Table 6, the interaction between the *IO* and *Property* (which can be either independence or conservativeness) is generally positive, as the conventional wisdom would predict. That is, viewing the Security Council or NATO as more independent or conservative amplifies the effect of its cues on public opinion. However, the size of that effect is small, and it is also not statistically distinguishable from having no effect. These statistical findings are particularly problematic for the institutional design theories.

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[156] Thompson (2009, 34) operationalizes institutional independence (or neutrality) using the diversity or heterogeneity of its membership. Research studies measure an IO's conservativeness using the *distance* between an IO's pivotal member and the cue recipient (Chapman 2011, 51-56). See also Chapter 5 for a specific discussion about foreign public opinion.

Table 6: Perceptions of institutional independence and conservativeness do not moderate the effect of IOs.

Independent Variables	Property = Independent (Human Rights)		Property = Independent (Politically)		Property = Conservative (Politically)	
	UNSC	NATO	UNSC	NATO	UNSC	NATO
IO Endorsement	0.016	**0.152**	0.019	**0.122**	0.002	**0.170**
Property^{IO}	0.074	0.040	**0.078**	-0.025	0.034	-0.065
IO*Property	0.061	-0.043	0.066	0.048	0.086	-0.074

Note: This table reports the marginal effects from four separate probit regressions, conditional on other variables being held at their means. The dependent variable is Approval, which takes the value of 1 if the respondent approves of U.S. intervention and 0 if they disapprove. The following control variables are not displayed here: gender, age, education, ideology, voting status, cosmopolitanism, isolationism, and exceptionalism. However, the null effect of IO*Property does not depend on the inclusion of control variables. Estimates significant at the 0.05 level are in bold. N=1,407. Data are from Survey JPN-2.

Third, and lastly, institutional design theorists might point out that the effect of IOs is only meant to be felt among a specific subset of people. Specifically, IOs help reassure citizens *skeptical* of an interventionist country's motives and of the impact that war would have on the international system.[157] If this is the case, then the reassuring effect of IOs, and the effect of the Security Council in particular, should be greatest among those who believe the interventionist country is a reckless and *imprudent* actor in international affairs.

I test this argument regarding the effect of IOs among war-weary citizens, again using data from the Japanese public opinion on U.S. intervention. I asked the survey takers: "Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: 'The U.S. generally makes good decisions about using military force in other countries.'" Depending on their answers, respondents were grouped into three categories: those who agreed, those who neither agreed nor disagreed, and who disagreed. These three groups were labeled as those who believe the U.S. to be *Prudent*, *Neutral*, or *Imprudent*.

Figure 17 displays the effect of IOs among these groups. Contrary to the information theories, the more skeptical the audience is of U.S. military power, the more they turn to NATO for political reassurance. Whether the survey taker viewed America as a prudent, neutral, or imprudent military power, the effect of a Security Council cue is about 2 to 3 percentage points. In contrast, the effect of NATO grows with the survey respondent's increasing belief that the

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[157] Voeten 2005; Fang 2008; Thompson 2009; Chapman 2011.

United States is an imprudent power, peaking at 14 points among the most skeptical respondents. This trend implies that NATO plays a reassurance role. However, the effect of a NATO cue is about 9 percentage points among those least skeptical of the United States (i.e., those who believe the United States is prudent), implying that NATO's cue is not just about reassuring skeptical audiences.

Figure 17. Skeptics of U.S. military power seek reassurance from NATO, not the Security Council.
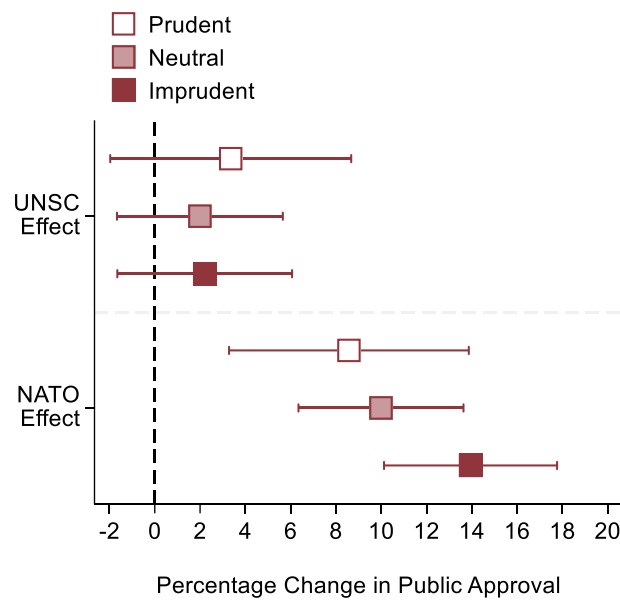
Note: This figure shows the effect of the Security Council and NATO on public support for intervention, conditional on whether the survey respondents view the U.S. as a prudent, neutral, or imprudent military power. N=6,090. 95% confidence intervals are given. Data are from Survey JPN1 & 2.

Material and power-centric perspectives cannot make sense of these findings. If people only had material concerns about unchecked military power in the international system, it would make little sense to seek reassurance from NATO, an organization often associated with a warmongering West. Instead, the social cue theory can demystify the data. Japanese citizens skeptical of the United States look to the liberal community and NATO for reassurance, and even

if they do not seek reassurance, they still will respond to social pressure to approve U.S. intervention when faced with an ingroup cue. To summarize this chapter, I find new evidence that cannot validate core assumptions made by existing theories of IOs, and that past evidence can be reframed as consistent with my theory of social cues.

Chapter 7: Implications

Nearly every humanitarian military intervention since the end of the Cold War has been backed by an international organization (IO).[158] This striking pattern in international relations is as about law-like as the democratic peace and contradicts the Hobbesian view of international anarchy, where institutions serve little purpose. It instead shows that countries cooperate over foreign policy vis-à-vis institutions, even when doing so may be costly and jeopardize their policy autonomy. American interventions from Bosnia to Kosovo to Libya, for example, were ridden by debates over their involvement with IOs like the UN Security Council and NATO. Meanwhile, in cases like Syria, a lack of institutional approval proved detrimental to President Obama's proposals for interventions. Indeed, in studying this phenomenon, Martha Finnemore famously argued that in the post-WWII era, "to be legitimate, humanitarian interventions must be multilateral."[159] Yet, to this date, researchers continue to debate why this apparent legitimization effect exists. My book provides a breakthrough in the debate. In this concluding chapter, I elaborate upon what this means in the context of scholarship and policy.

Where the Scholarship now Stands

My theory of social cues contributes to international relations scholarship on how international institutions legitimize war, in particular by developing the application of social identity theory in international relations.[160] While some scholars have pointed to the political relevance of legitimacy as far back as the 1960s,[161] the realist perspective that dominated throughout the Cold War viewed institutions as primarily reflecting power distributions in the international system, either being paralyzed like the Security Council or facilitating geopolitical competition like NATO. As the Cold War waned and then eventually ended, and with the global flourishing of cooperation via international institutions, scholars began to develop structural and state-level accounts of how international institutions matter. Some of them, particularly those writing from a constructivist approach, returned to the illusive idea of institutional legitimacy and provided greater specificity about what it means and

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[158] Schultz 2003; Finnemore 2003.

[159] Finnemore 2003, PP.

[160] E.g., Johnston 2008; Abdelal et al. 2009. But also see social identity approaches to understanding organizational influence in the economics literature (e.g., Akerlof and Kranton 2005).

[161] Inis 1967.

how it influences politics.[162] Subsequently, researchers writing from a rationalist perspective reframed legitimization as process in which institutions, as a result of their institutional design and membership composition, transmit information that causes audiences to update their cost-benefit calculations and beliefs about a country's motives for pursuing various foreign policies.[163]

This book brings back the role of social norms, with a focus on identity, into the story of how legitimacy works. Specifically, it argues that social communities and international institutions, depending on the identities they represent, influence citizens by sending social cues about whether military intervention is normatively appropriate and will be viewed by peer countries in a positive light. Applied to the phenomenon of humanitarian intervention, the argument implies that the liberal community and NATO vis-à-vis their liberal identity has a powerful effect on the citizens and elites of democracies, the primary participants of these human rights operations. The evidence I have presented in the preceding four chapters substantiates these claims, while ruling out alternative explanations relating to burden sharing, political ignorance, NATO's military strength, and the liberal community's conflation with a Western identity. As result of this book, scholars will now have to contend with a new explanation for how and why international institutions matter in international relations.

In making this contribution, I also cast doubt on existing explanations rooted in international law and rational institutional design. The Security Council's authority to legalize do not seem to matter to people in the face of ingroup cues, even when they are given information about international law.[164] Similarly, the Council neither seems to exhibit the informational functions past research has theorized, and its shortcoming cannot be explained by political ignorance. Chapter 6 provides an especially powerful set of arguments and contradicting evidence for the conventional wisdom, including a discussion of how existing evidence could be reframed in terms of the social cues theory. Nevertheless, this book would not be possible without the conventional wisdom's insight on how institutions can channel influence through domestic politics, by influencing the views of citizens and elites. So even as I provide contrasting views, I would like to contextualize my contribution within the broader advances of the literature.

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[162] Barnett 1997; Finnemore 2003; Hurd 2007.

[163] Voeten 2005; Thompson 2009; Chapman 2011.

[164] Of course, legalization can matter for other reasons. International legalization can have implications for domestic laws and bureaucratic practices, for example. Thus, my findings should not be taken as implying international law does not matter more generally.

Impact on Other Debates: Forum Shopping, Institutional Change, and Individual Values

      This book also provides a new perspective on other related literatures. To begin, my findings have implications for understanding forum shopping in international relations. Erik Voeten's classic paper on forum shopping observes that the UNSC has rarely vetoed resolutions regarding military intervention since 1990.[165] This pattern persisted despite members like Russia and China who generally eschew military interventions, including humanitarian wars. The paper argues that these countries do not simply exercise their veto because interventionist countries have a credible outside option to the Security Council. In the case of humanitarian intervention, the most salient outside option is NATO. Why might NATO be a credible outside option and is there evidence for its credibility? Addressing these unanswered questions, this book shows that NATO is a credible outside option that can exert pressure on politics within the Security Council because it can help interventionist countries mobilize domestic and foreign support for intervention.

      My findings about NATO also suggest a new way to interpret Philip Lipscy's work on institutional change. Lipscy (2017) argues that international institutions change when competing institutions give member states outside options, allowing them to threaten exit if the primary institution does not change to meet their needs. This book challenges Lipscy's application of his theory to the Security Council but in a way that ends up supporting his central thesis.[166] Lipscy argues the following:

> [T]he Security Council has been able to draw on the universality of UN membership and representation among the most powerful members of the international system to facilitate […] legitimizing and authorizing the uses of international force […] As sources of legitimacy, limited-membership multilateral security arrangements, such as NATO, are clearly second-best options.[167]

He then argues that the Security Council has been relatively resistant to change because it lacks viable competitors. In contrast, I find that the Security Council has a credible competitor in legitimizing war: NATO. However, I also believe that the Security Council has in fact changed during the period NATO has become a credible outside option. Specifically, as NATO increasingly became involved in multilateral military intervention in the 1990s, the Security Council was pressured to adapt one of its core institutions: its ability to authorize war under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. The original intention of the UN Charter was to ban international conflict unless there was a threat to international peace and security. Such a threat to international peace and security could only be determined by the

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[165] Voeten 2001.

[166] Lipscy 2017, Chapter 8.

[167] Lipscy 2017, 21.

Security Council, as per Chapter VII. However, in the post-Cold War era, coinciding with NATO's increasing involvement in military interventions, the Security Council's application of Chapter VII increasingly covered *domestic humanitarian* crises, which are neither interstate nor security and clearly beyond the intentions of the Charter's founders. Thus, NATO provided Western governments with a credible outside option that forced the Security Council to change its application of the Chapter VII institution, which ultimately supports Lipscy's thesis.

Lastly, my book also sheds light on how international institutions affect individual behavior. The "behavioral revolution" in international relations ushered in new research agendas,[168] and among them is one that seeks to understand how international law might influence domestic norms and understanding of political violence.[169] For example, can information about human rights treaties or the Geneva Conventions reduce people's approval of various types of political or wartime violence? My study brings together a couple of existing findings in this literature to generate a deeper insight into this question: *international institutions can shape behavior and opinion only insofar as they resonate with people's fundamental identities, norms, and values*. This book finds that institutions like NATO can influence mass policy preferences when the institutions resonate with the people's social identity. I have shown in previous work that international law can reduce public support toward wartime torture only when its application is consistent with people's commitments to the norm of reciprocity.[170] As Amitav Acharya argues, the spread and influence of international norms only take hold if they fit in with local conditions.[171] In this sense, international institutions screen and then constrain.[172]

Future Research

Future research should explore whether social cue theory generalizes to other domains (i.e., external validity).[173] This book already explored several dimensions of generalizability: it drew from multiple samples across various countries and compared experimental and historical data. I suspect that assessing generalizability in terms of outcomes or the dependent variable—for example, people's support for economic assistance or a military ground invasion versus airstrikes—would yield results similar and correlated to the ones reported here. Instead, future work might focus on whether social

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[168] Hafner-Burton et al. 2017.

[169] E.g., Wallace 2013; Hafner-Burton et al. 2016.

[170] Chu 2019.

[171] Acharya 2009.

[172] Simmons and Hopkins 2005.

[173] My discussion of generalizability is loosely informed by Egami and Hartman (2023).

cueing matters beyond the humanitarian intervention context. For example, could social cues help to change views and behavior regarding public health, the environment, and the global economy?[174] The social cues theory may also be relevant in several areas of comparative politics, such as understanding social mobilization in light of ethnic and other identity politics.

Researchers should consider innovating theoretically as well, as critical questions remain. For one, this book did not theorize about delegitimization. From the social cue theory's perspective, delegitimization may happen in two respects. First, a political actor or institution may become delegitimized, and thus lose its ability to send effective social cues, if it seen as not appropriately representing, embodying, or displaying loyalty to the group. Second, demonized outgroups can send social cues as well, but such cues might delegitimize behavior from the perspective of the cue recipient. In any case, these are just initial propositions to encourage further theoretical development.

It would also be useful to explore why people sometimes listen to social cues but other types of cues in other cases. Returning to public health and the environment, these are areas in which cues from technical experts might be especially relevant to policy: would social cues be less important in areas where there is "objective" technical expertise, and if so, why? Another remaining theoretical question is, how do people respond to cues from competing or intersecting salient identity groups? We know people hold different identities, but international relations scholars have made relatively less progress in understanding the consequences of multiple identities. Overall, there is still much to explore in understanding why and when social cues work.

Liberal Community and Humanitarian War

Beyond theory, getting the story right with regards to whether and how international institutions legitimize war has practical ramifications. In reflecting on the international community's evolving experience with humanitarian intervention in the 1990s, UN Secretary General Kofi Anan articulated the following dilemma posed by the UN framework:

> If, in those dark days and hours leading up to the genocide, a coalition of States had been prepared to act in defense of the Tutsi population, but did not receive prompt Council authorization, should such a coalition have stood aside and allowed the horror to unfold? To those for whom the Kosovo action heralded a new era when States and groups of States can take military action outside the established mechanisms for enforcing international law,

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[174] Research regarding the Covid pandemic explores whether trusted community or religious leaders could help with vaccine campaigns. (e.g., Vyborny 2022; Wijesinghe et al. 2022), but it does not explicitly engage with the concept of social cueing. Regarding international economics, see Gray (2009) and Brutger and Li (2022).

one might ask: Is there not a danger of such interventions undermining the imperfect, yet resilient, security system created after the Second World War, and of setting dangerous precedents for future interventions without a clear criterion to decide who might invoke these precedents, and in what circumstances?[175]

The Security Council, the sole authority for authorizing humanitarian wars, was also prone to gridlock. Its institutional conservativeness was designed to prevent disputes among the post-World War II great powers but may have grave human costs during a rapidly unfolding humanitarian crisis. On the other hand, allowing alternative multilateral frameworks to guide international military action could undermine the UN and lead to unintended consequences for the international system.

My research does not directly address this ethical problem, but it does have implications for it. Optimistically, unilateralism is unpopular both domestically and globally. Given the ability of these audiences to constrain leaders,[176] governments will thus face difficulty waging war on their own. We observed this to be the case when U.S. President Obama was forced to back down on his plan to launch a military intervention in response to the Syrian government's use of chemical weapons in 2013. However, and more pessimistically from the standpoint of those who would like to see more restraint in international politics, governments seeking multilateral backing do not necessarily need Security Council authorization to legitimize their foreign policy. Obtaining the support of he like-minded, especially among a relatively developed and institutionalized social group like the liberal community, provides most if not all the legitimizing benefit of multilateralism.

More generally, this book also speaks to the value of seeking advice from political allies. In an era when the value of alliance relationships is under contestation, with political leaders like Donald Trump lambasting them, this research demonstrates how such relationships can grant governments the ability to generate the mass support often needed to maintain a successful foreign policy. While not without its faults, liberal democracies have stood together for over half a century. But norms, identities, and institutions can wither over time and their survival should not be taken for granted, especially in this era of authoritarian assertiveness and democratic decline. An erosion of the liberal community would come at a great cost for many reasons, one of which being the restricted ability of democratic governments to conduct humanitarian foreign policy.

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[175] Source (accessed on 17 November 2023): https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/1999-09-20/secretary-general-presents-his-annual-report-general-assembly.

[176] On domestic public constraints, see Baum and Potter 2015; Tomz, Weeks, and Yarhi-Milo 2020; Chu and Recchia 2022. On foreign publics, see Goldsmith and Horiuchi 2009; Goldsmith and Horiuchi 2012. On foreign elites, see Thompson 2009.

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