

Understanding IO Legitimation

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INTRODUCTION

The most recent conflict between a United States-led coalition and Iraq illustrates the important political role of multilateralism—and specifically international organizations (IOs)—in the conduct of foreign policy and military intervention in particular. International support of the intervention seems to have hinged largely on United Nations (UN) approval rather than on the substantive goals of the policy itself, which did not vary significantly during most of the episode. President Bush’s September 12, 2002, speech before the General Assembly brought a “collective sigh of relief” (*Washington Post*, 15 September 2002, p. A23) from an international community fearful of unilateralism and sparked a marked rise in support for U.S. policy. This newfound support came despite no change in the circumstances of the standoff itself: objectively, Iraq was no more or less of a threat. For most states, continued backing from that point was contingent on Security Council involvement.

U.S. foreign policy leaders were acutely aware of the benefits of Security Council authorization and weeks of effort by the Americans and British went into securing a resolution approving force so that the link between intervention and UN approval could be as explicit as possible. Perhaps for different reasons, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan echoed the need for authorization in a March 11 column in the *Wall Street Journal* and raised the question of legitimacy directly.

Has that moment to use force arrived? That is the decision that the members of the Security Council now face. It is a grave decision indeed. If they fail to agree on a common position, and some of them take action without the council’s authority, the

legitimacy of that action will be widely questioned, and it will not gain the political support needed to ensure its long-term success, after its military phase.

Both U.S. policymakers and Annan saw a correlation between the UN's imprimatur and support for the war. When the Security Council failed to produce an authorizing resolution and the coalition chose to operate without its endorsement, favorability towards the war among governments and publics indeed plummeted. It has remained low ever since.

In short, the UN was a key variable in determining whether the action was perceived as justified and worthy of support. This raises an interesting puzzle for students of international relations (IR). Why did the endorsement of an IO seem to play such an important role? Why did foreign leaders and publics care whether the U.S. and its coalition obtained explicit UN support?

The answer to these questions has traditionally rested on the notion of *legitimation*. IR scholars, international lawyers, policymakers, and journalists alike explain the benefits of working through IOs in terms of what I label the 'legitimation effect': Receiving the imprimatur of an IO confers legitimacy on a given policy, thereby increasing support or at least reducing the political fallout of pursuing the policy. This occurs even in cases of state actions that are widely understood as self-interested. If *legitimacy* as an institutional property conveys the sense that its rules and actions are appropriate and ought to be supported, *legitimation* is the process by which institutions transfer this legitimacy onto the actions of other actors. Legitimacy, that is, can be "exported" from the institutional holder to other actors (Hurd 2002: 38-9). Through this process, the relevant community perceives the endorsed actions as more worthy of support.

While there is a virtual consensus around the notion that IOs confer legitimacy, there is less agreement on—and very little understanding of—the causal mechanisms underlying this

observed legitimation effect. The goal of this chapter is to provide a plausible set of hypotheses for how IO endorsement translates into reduced political costs for a state pursuing the use of military force. Consistent with the theme of this book, the framework explicitly spans rationalist and constructivist approaches to international relations, and also incorporates arguments from political psychology, a field that does not fit neatly into the rationalist-constructivist dichotomy so often reified in the IR literature. It grounds itself in two assumptions that are common to all three theoretical perspectives: political actors often behave instrumentally and strategically, and the transmission of information among actors is central to explaining political behavior. Though theorists across IR paradigms disagree over precisely how actors behave instrumentally (e.g., what goals they pursue) and over precisely what sort of information is transmitted among actors and how, instrumental behavior and information transmission are central components of important works across these paradigms.

I consider three possible audiences for legitimation: the domestic public in the state contemplating action (the “sender”), leaders in third-party states (i.e., other than the target), and third-party domestic publics. I then identify four potential pathways by which the legitimation effect might occur: (1) IOs as a commitment device, (2) IOs as a signaling device, (3) IOs as providers of information shortcuts, and (4) IOs as facilitators of norm mobilization. Strategic framing by political leaders, who are often in a position to choose and enhance the information received by publics, is an important aspect of the third and fourth pathways. All four pathways may contribute to the legitimation effect, though they operate through different causal mechanisms and focus on different intended audiences. As I elaborate below, the first two are likely to matter more with respect to state leaders whereas the latter two primarily affect publics.

Importantly, we have no reason to assume that different audiences respond similarly to IO approval; legitimation may operate through a variety of causal mechanisms *simultaneously*, depending on who is sending and receiving information. IR theorists tend to circumscribe their theoretical horizons by focusing on certain actors and ignoring others. Understanding that interaction can take place among multiple actors simultaneously, and that the behavior of these actors may be driven by distinct logics and interests, helps us broaden the scope of our theorizing.

I therefore begin by including all four pathways into a single framework. In terms of the goals outlined by the volume's editors, the most basic function of the exercise is to facilitate *dialogue* among theorists working in different traditions. By making disparate assumptions about the rationality and motivations of key actors, I also make a *domain of application* argument that certain pathways of legitimation are better at explaining the roles of certain actors, even within the same episode. These scope conditions help shed light on variation across and within cases. The framework also lays the groundwork for *competitive theory testing* by suggesting models from different approaches that can be tested against each other. None of these goals could be achieved if we conducted our inquiry within the confines of a single theoretical paradigm.

The next section briefly reviews the extant literature on IOs and legitimacy and points to some theoretical shortcomings. The following section outlines my assumptions about actors and information, assumptions that are limiting enough to provide coherence to the argument but broad enough to foster theoretical synthesis. The fourth section presents the theoretical framework, laying out the various pathways by which legitimation plausibly occurs. Section V provides some observations from the 1990-1991 and 2003 conflicts with Iraq (hereafter referred

to, respectively, as the Gulf War and the Second Iraq War, or Iraq War II). The goal is not to provide a definitive test but rather to draw tentative lessons and to refine and narrow the hypotheses concerning legitimation. The final section offers conclusions and returns to the volume's central themes.

LITERATURE ON LEGITIMATION AND IOs

Scholars who address the question of why states choose to conduct statecraft through IOs often point to the legitimacy conferred by doing so. In his seminal article, Inis Claude points to the “collective legitimization” effect of the UN. The UN, he argues, “has come to be regarded, and used, as a dispenser of politically significant approval and disapproval of the claims, policies, and actions of states” (Claude 1966: 367), and thus working through the UN or other IOs can provide political cover even for activities that are essentially unilateral. In the case of military intervention, for example, working through an IO supplies a legitimacy that can be used to justify the use of force (Luard 1984). Legal scholars have traditionally seen international law and organizations operating in precisely this manner, that is, as “lending legitimacy to the exercise of power” (Krisch 2003: 41; see also Chayes 1974; Schachter 1984; and Caron 1993).

More sophisticated versions of the legitimation argument have been provided recently by social constructivist scholars who argue that states may choose a multilateral approach—especially one involving an international institution—because it is deemed more legitimate or ‘appropriate’ than unilateralism. There are weak and strong versions of this norm-based argument. The weaker version assumes that multilateralism is used as a tool by leaders to appeal to other states and publics in order to reduce the political costs of a foreign policy. Martha

Finnemore (1996b: 181), for example, concludes that humanitarian intervention “must be multilateral if states are to accept it as legitimate....Further, it must be organized under UN auspices or with explicit UN consent.” In one formulation, this desire to be perceived as acting legitimately leads states to compete strategically for the Security Council’s symbolic power (Hurd 2002). The strong version proposes that states choose to work through IOs because they have *internalized* a norm of multilateralism and a desire to behave appropriately. States may perceive their interests and very identity in terms of the legitimacy inherent in multilateralism and IO approval.¹ The norms of obeying and working through legitimate institutions become constitutive of an actor’s identity, leading automatically and habitually to conformity (Wendt 1999: 273; Finnemore and Sikkink 1998).

Though both constructivist accounts of legitimation rely on the role of norms, the stronger version sees the leaders of sender states as acting according to an internalized logic of appropriateness whereas the weaker version sees them driven by a logic of consequences (though the intended audience may be driven by a logic of appropriateness, a point I elaborate below).² I focus on the weak version since the strong version is inconsistent with my assumption of instrumental, strategic behavior and (more importantly) faces both empirical and theoretical problems. First, states do not consistently behave multilaterally when doing so is inconvenient, as a principled approach would dictate. A multilateralist norm likely exists in the international community, but it has not, in Finnemore and Sikkink’s (1998) terminology, reached the internalization stage of its ‘life cycle’. Second, to argue that actors behave in accordance with certain norms because they define their identities in terms of obeying those norms is potentially

¹ This possibility is discussed in Hurd 1999. On multilateralism as a principled approach, see Ruggie 1993.

² On the distinction between these logics, see March and Olsen 1989.

circular. One might say that the stronger version of the normative argument faces its own “revealed preferences” problem by assuming certain interests based on observed behavior.³

Ultimately, as Claude (1966: 368) himself recognized, leaders who seek legitimation through IO approval do so to “buttress their positions” not to make themselves more “comfortable.”

Legitimacy arguments are not confined to law scholars and constructivists—rationalists and Realists also point to the legitimation effect of IOs. Hans Morgenthau (1985: 34) argues that legitimate power, including power exercised “in the name of the United Nations,” is more influential than “naked” power. Those writing in the rationalist tradition frequently refer to the legitimation function of international institutions and describe IOs as conferring legitimacy on state actions,⁴ though they typically do so without providing a theoretical account of the process. Recent exceptions have used rational choice insights to explore the mechanisms behind IO legitimation and why states seem to have coordinated around the Security Council as a uniquely influential endorser of interventions (Voeten 2005; AUTHOR).

The Gulf War experience, coupled with the increased propensity of states to seek cover from the UN and regional bodies for peacekeeping and enforcement actions, has made it clear that the legitimation effect is real and more policy-relevant than ever. But despite the virtual consensus that IO legitimation matters, the literature still raises as many questions as it answers. Claude, for example, provides no explanation for *why* the UN has such a powerful effect on how state behavior is perceived, offering only that UN approval is important because statesmen attach importance to it (1966: 374). Constructivist arguments are more nuanced but the causal

³ I am not arguing that internalized norms never impact state behavior. There is no question, for example, that decisionmakers categorically rule out certain options due to ethical norms proscribing certain behaviors (see, e.g., Thomas 2001).

⁴ Examples include Keohane 1984: 92; Lake 1999: 239-40; and Schultz 2003: 105.

mechanisms are nevertheless not very well specified. Michael Barnett, for example, echoes Claude's logic when he argues that the UN "has this legitimacy and [moral] authority by virtue of the fact that member states invest legitimacy in it" (1997: 540). The rationalist-materialist tradition refers to IO legitimation but has even less to say about the underlying mechanisms. A recent survey of work on IOs and legitimacy aptly concludes that few terms have been used with less precision than *legitimacy* (Luck 2002: 47). Ian Hurd, a leading theorist on the issue of IO legitimacy, observes that even when IR scholars take the issue of legitimacy seriously, they "generally fail to spell out the process by which it operates" (1999: 380).

An important phenomenon has clearly been identified. I seek to add causal content to legitimacy-based explanations of why IO approval matters by identifying the specific mechanisms at play. This chapter helps us 'get to the bottom' of the legitimation phenomenon.

ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT ACTORS AND INFORMATION

The inter-paradigm interest in legitimation points to an inter-paradigm approach to theorizing it. There is no reason rationalist and constructivist accounts cannot be complementary (Fearon and Wendt 2002), just as the logic of consequences and the logic of appropriateness are not mutually exclusive as motivators of behavior (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998; March and Olsen 1998). Studies of international institutions in particular have found that "the same or similar institutions may perform a variety of influence functions" consistent with different theoretical orientations (Snidal and Thompson 2003: 221). I synthesize elements of the rationalist and constructivist paradigms and also incorporate insights from political psychological and communications research, which I see as providing the (often ignored) microfoundations for much IR theorizing.

The framework presented here builds on two areas of common terrain that unite rationalist, constructivist, and psychological approaches to IR: a focus on *instrumental behavior* and a focus on *information transmission*. Instrumental, strategic behavior is of course a bedrock assumption of rational choice theory; political actors strive to maximize utility, often by reacting to and anticipating the behavior of others. While work in psychology has shown that decisionmakers do not efficiently maximize utility due to cognitive limitations and biases, actors are nevertheless understood as goal-oriented (Kahneman et al. 1982; Jervis 1976).

A major and growing branch of constructivism also treats political actors as engaged in efforts to manipulate their environment and other actors, and instrumental behavior is an increasingly common assumption in constructivist theorizing. Actors motivated by values, ideas and culture may behave just as instrumentally as those motivated by material self-interest. Finnemore and Sikkink (1998: 910) refer to this as “strategic social construction,” whereby “actors are making detailed means-ends calculations to maximize their utilities, but the utilities they want to maximize involve changing the other players utility function in ways that reflect the normative commitments of the norm entrepreneurs.” Thus human rights, environment, and peace activists may “seek to maximize their influence or leverage over the target of their actions,” usually political elites (Keck and Sikkink 1998: 3; see also Klotz 1995 and Price 1998). International actors may also use “social influence” to impose rewards and punishment on actors to encourage conformity with norms (Johnston 2001). A logic of consequences prevails in all of these cases insofar as actor behavior is instrumental, and this behavior is strategic insofar as interaction and influence are central. While not all constructivists embrace this turn in the literature, convergence around the assumption of instrumentality has the virtue of opening a theoretical space for rationalist-constructivist synthesis.

Politics would not be interesting without information transmission of one sort or another. Theories based on information transmission have a long pedigree among both rationalists and constructivists, and this is certainly the case in the political psychology tradition. For rational choice theorists, new information can be sent strategically and used by recipients to update beliefs. For example, hands-tying sends information about future behavior that can overcome commitment problems and costly actions may serve to signal preferences and distinguish among types. Institutions in this tradition solve collective action dilemmas largely by providing information from a centralized source and by facilitating credible commitments (Keohane 1984; Milgrom et al. 1990; Martin 1992). For its part, constructivism relies heavily on communication and dynamics such as teaching/learning, persuasion, deliberation, and argumentation—all manifestations of information transmission.⁵ Many of these arguments are founded on micro-theories from social psychology, and much of the psychology literature in political science is centered on the broad phenomenon of political communication.⁶ As one set of political psychologists notes, “much of political life revolves around the transmission of ideas and information” (Nelson et al. 1997: 221).

Instrumental behavior and information transmission serve as bridging assumptions to facilitate theorizing across IR paradigms. My approach is also synthetic in that it answers recent calls to incorporate domestic politics into the study of international institutions (Martin and Simmons 1998; Cortell and Davis 1996; Drezner 2003), the dynamics of which remain poorly understood. I include the role of domestic publics in the framework, however I do so in a novel way: while most studies in the ‘two-level games’ and ‘audience costs’ traditions look at the

⁵ Examples include Finnemore 1996a; Johnston 2001; Keck & Sikkink 1998; Risse 2000; Mitzen 2005; and Checkel 2001.

leadership's domestic public, I also focus on publics *abroad* as an important target of legitimation strategies.

My inclusion of both state leaders and domestic publics as targets of legitimation adds a theoretical richness to the argument. I argue that legitimation and the information transmission underlying it operate differently for these two types of actors, leading to the possibility that multiple causal pathways operate simultaneously.⁷ I assume that leaders and publics are different in two key respects: the latter are more boundedly rational and are more likely to be motivated by norms. Statesmen are afforded access to considerable information regarding international affairs and are professionally tasked with analyzing it. This is not true of publics. Since each individual has negligible influence on foreign policy, members of the public have little incentive to gather information on foreign affairs and to engage in strategic calculation regarding international events. Foreign policy leaders know this and adopt political strategies accordingly. In his memoirs, former U.S. Secretary of State Dean Acheson (1969: 375) describes how the truth about international issues was presented in a stylized way in order to influence the public favorably:

In the State Department, we used to discuss how much time the mythical “average American citizen” put in each day listening, reading, and arguing about the world outside his country. Assuming a man or woman with a fair education, a family, and a job in or out of the house, it seemed to us that ten minutes a day would be a high average. If this were anywhere near right, points to be understandable had to be clear.

⁶ For a good collection of examples, see Mutz, Sniderman & Brody 1996.

⁷ In a similar spirit, Abbott and Snidal (2002) argue that “value actors” and “interest actors” interact in the process of legalization, leading to a mixture of interacting influence strategies based on both material and normative logics.

If we did make our points clearer than truth, we did not differ from most other educators and could hardly do otherwise.

Moreover, since publics do not face the exigencies of international competition, they are more likely than their leaders to be motivated by norms and a logic of appropriateness. As one Canadian diplomat explains, most Canadian citizens are “genetically attuned to multilateral action” and view multilateralism, especially UN approval, as an important norm. Policymakers, on the other hand, are more calculating: “We have a national interest in strengthening international legal frameworks. We like to think it’s a matter of principle, but it really comes out of our position in the world.”⁸ This explains why actors motivated by principles and values use material and electoral leverage to change the policy choices of political elites; the latter have not internalized the relevant norms even when their publics have.⁹

These characteristics of publics make them hungry for information shortcuts and ‘heuristics’ in assessing foreign policies and more likely to make assessments based on normative criteria. They also imply that publics are generally more susceptible to manipulation by elites than are other states leaders, making framing strategies useful in appeals to domestic audiences. These distinct assumptions about the motivations of the relevant actors—leaders and publics—become important as I outline the various hypotheses in the next section. Once we conceptualize legitimation as instrumental information transmission to multiple audiences, the varied characteristics of those audiences opens up the possibility of multiple causal pathways by which legitimation operates.

⁸ Author’s interview with a senior Canadian diplomat, November 14, 2003.

LEGITIMATION AS INFORMATION TRANSMISSION: FOUR PATHWAYS

States seek approval from IOs for use-of-force policies because doing so lowers the political costs of action that might otherwise be imposed by third-party states (that is, states other than the target of coercion) and which are potentially high. This reduction of political costs constitutes the observed legitimation effect of IOs. I suggest four potential pathways by which IO legitimation operates: commitment, signaling, information shortcuts, and norm mobilization. They are summarized in Table 1 at the end of this section. The first two rest on the notion that channeling its policy through an IO imposes constraints on a coercer. This allows the sender government to either credibly commit to a limited policy or to signal limited intentions, leading to a reduced perception of threat among third parties and thus more international support. Commitment and signaling appeal to foreign leaders, who are relatively efficient and well-informed utility maximizers and are concerned primarily with the national security implications of another state's use of force.

However, leaders often face domestic political barriers to pursuing intervention or to supporting another state's intervention. The third pathway treats IO approval as providing new information to boundedly rational and poorly informed publics, who use the fact of endorsement by an independent body as a shortcut in assessing whether the proposed actions are justified and whether their consequences are acceptable. The fourth pathway treats publics as primarily concerned with the norm of multilateralism and IO approval. Framing the coercion as a collective, IO-based—and therefore legitimate—activity can change how publics view the

⁹ See Klotz 1995 (where the public cares about racial discrimination but politicians care only about elections) and Keck & Sikkink 1998 (where activists use “material leverage” to change government policy).

policy, thereby increasing public support based on a logic of appropriateness. Whereas the first two pathways generate international support through *interstate* mechanisms, the last two pathways render international support viable from the perspective of the *internal* politics of sender and third-party states.

The Interstate Pathways: Commitment and Signaling

By coercing through IOs, even the most powerful states are subjecting themselves to various checks and balances. The sender is agreeing to receive multilateral input regarding whether coercion is warranted, what sort of policy is appropriate, and what timetable should be followed in its implementation. Turning to an IO commits a sender to multilateral decision-making and various restrictions on its freedom of action. These constraints, however, can be politically beneficial: Self-imposed constraints reduce the threat posed by a coercing state to others, helping to produce the legitimation effect.

These processes begin with the rules (such as Security Council resolutions) and information generated by IOs, which may facilitate certain behaviors while placing constraints on others. IO rules often define the limits of legitimate measures and the transparency generated by working under IO auspices allows third-party leaders to determine for themselves whether the implemented policy is proportionate and defensible. The sender may welcome this scrutiny since suspicion will be the default.¹⁰ Even powerful states, then, are often able to achieve their goals at lower political cost by accepting IO constraints.

¹⁰ Reflecting this logic, Downs, Rocke and Siverson (1985) show that poor information can lead to unnecessary arms races.

Channeling statecraft through a formal organization transforms how it is perceived by sending politically significant information.¹¹ Even if the motivation and capacity come largely from one state, a formalized multilateral approach to coercion “reassures the international community that operations have limited and legitimate goals” (Robert 1993: 6-7). G. John Ikenberry (1999, chap. 6) illuminates this logic in his explanation for the persistence of the American-led postwar order as based on the ability of institutions to restrain the exercise of power. Because the U.S. is constrained by various institutions, and especially since these institutions were created by the U.S., American *leadership* is not perceived as *domination*. David Lake (1999) has aptly referred to the achievement of this state of affairs, especially since the end of the Cold War, as “Gulliver’s triumph.” Similarly, by imposing constraints in a given episode, IOs facilitate legitimation by limiting a state’s ability to behave opportunistically and by absolving it of the appearance of aggression. The political costs inflicted by third-party states are lowered accordingly. The sender thus benefits from approval and support while other states benefit from an assurance of restraint.

Constraints imposed by an IO may only serve as a mechanism for credible commitments if such commitments are costly to break. For this to be the case, the costs of backing out—of switching to a strictly unilateral or more ambitious strategy—must be high. This is often the case in terms of internal politics—breaking a commitment could lead to high domestic audience costs (Fearon 1994)—as well as at the international level, where greater and more rapid imposition of political and reputational costs would result. As commitments become more institutionalized

¹¹ Formal IOs play a qualitatively unique role when it comes to legitimation. They are more centralized and independent from states than other institutions (Abbott and Snidal 1998), and thus they typically impose greater constraints on those that work through them. Moreover, IOs are standing bodies with more diverse interests than ad hoc multilateral coalitions (which share interests by definition), making the information they generate more credible (AUTHOR).

(with legal contracts serving as the ultimate example), the costs of renegeing, and thus the credibility of the commitment, increase. Once a state commits to working through a formal IO and accepting its constraints, only under extreme circumstances would it be wise to rebuff the IO and assume a more aggressive, unilateral posture.

A sender state that hopes to reassure third parties that its goals are limited and unthreatening may also attempt to communicate information about its intentions. The decision to work through an IO can serve as an informative signal because it imposes costs on a coercer that a more aggressive state (i.e., one with intentions that threaten third-party states) would be unwilling to pay. We can learn about an actor's preferences, or 'type', by observing costly behavior. IOs impose such costs in the form of increased transaction costs of decisionmaking and limits on freedom of action.

History shows that IOs impose constraints that dilute the power of even the strongest states. To begin with, any multilateral approach to foreign policy increases the costs of decision-making and of implementing policy.¹² Beyond complicating operations, institutional obligations can restrict the set of policy options available to a state. Even NATO, an IO comprised of relatively like-minded states, imposed profound constraints on its superpower leader's decision-making autonomy (Fox and Fox 1967; Weber 1991). Some policy restrictions come prior to the process of seeking IO approval. Once a state chooses to act through an IO, it is faced with engaging in public discussion and generating some degree of consensus, and will thus rule out the most ambitious policies up front. Moreover, turning to an IO in a given episode may impose costs on a state's *future* freedom of action. Each time a coercer works through an IO it increases expectations that it will do so in the future. Jeanne Kirkpatrick cites those who are "concerned

that, in seeking UN authorization for action in Kuwait, Somalia, and Bosnia, the [George H.W.] Bush administration is creating and reinforcing the idea that the use of force is legitimate only if it is authorized by the UN” (quoted in Luck 2002: 60-1). Even in ways that are difficult to detect, then, a state that chooses to work through an IO signals that it is willing to have very real limits placed on its maneuverability and its unilateral ability to impose its will.

Signaling and commitment are, of course, analytically distinct strategic problems. While signaling refers to the difficulty of conveying one’s motives or intentions, commitment is an issue when actors’ incentives changing over time. In theory, if the commitment problem is solved there is no need to signal since all types will be bound. On the other hand, it is true that many of the same strategies that help states credibly commit, such as self-imposing costs and giving other actors power, also help them to signal, making these two pathways difficult to distinguish in practice.

The Domestic Audience Pathways: Information Shortcuts and Norm Mobilization

Public approval can be crucial for a government contemplating the use of force or coercion. National public opinion generally disapproves of intervention abroad unless publics perceive a reasonable cause—this is why, for example, statesmen always provide a principled justification for going to war.¹³ For third-party governments the task of garnering public support is even more complicated than for the government using force. Even if foreign leaders decide they have

¹² On the complications involved in implementing policies through NATO and the UN in Bosnia and the Gulf War, see Haass 1994: 31

¹³ See Kelsen 1996: 65. More generally, Francis Boyle (1993: 387) argues that, “invariably it has proven to be the case that executive branch decision-makers publicly attempt to justify their foreign policies in terms of what is legally/ morally right or wrong for the consumption of domestic, allied and international public opinion.”

in interest in supporting a coercer's policies, they may still face significant domestic barriers to doing so; they must convince their publics and interest groups that supporting *another* country's military goals is justifiable. Thus, leaders in the sender state must be sensitive to their own public and interest groups at home, to be sure, but they must also account for the domestic political environment in other countries, whose governments may withhold support or even impose costs on a coercer for their own domestic political reasons.

IO legitimation seems to have an important effect on domestic publics. American and European citizens show a strong preference for multilateral action in general and IO-approved policies in particular (Kull and Destler 1999; Sobel 1996). I propose that channeling policies through an IO could help mitigate the potential obstacle posed by domestic politics through two mechanisms, both involving information transmission but relying on different assumptions about the public audience.

The first assumes that publics assess foreign policy issues through a logic of consequences lens and are concerned with making informed decisions, but that they do so with very limited information and limited incentives to gather information. Publics therefore seek 'information shortcuts'¹⁴ in order to assess foreign policy issues. Though the average citizen is not privy to the same information and dialogue as national leaders, if she knows that a body of states with varied interests has endorsed the coercion, this will influence her assessment of responsibility and justification. Moreover, leaders can use framing strategies to enhance the salience of IO approval as an informative event. This is a relatively "thin" view of framing that treats it as a tool for presenting certain information about reality to an audience. As Robert

¹⁴ A substantial literature shows that voters have little substantive knowledge of most policy issues and that, as a result, they simplify and seek shortcuts to engage in "low-information reasoning" (Popkin 1991; Sniderman et al. 1991).

Entman (1993: 52) describes it, “To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text.” While frames stress certain carefully chosen aspects of reality, most nevertheless convey real information about the world. This information—in our case, the fact that an IO has offered approval—serves as a heuristic that allows members of the public to formulate reasoned beliefs about a policy.

The second legitimation mechanism involving domestic audiences assumes that publics are driven by internalized norms of appropriate behavior when assessing whether policies are justified. In a process of ‘norm mobilization’, frequently stressed in the constructivist literature, IO approval leads to increased domestic support. Framing also plays a central role in norm mobilization. Most scholars of framing see frames as serving to define an issue rather than simply providing information. Framing highlights certain aspects of an individual’s belief system (as distinct from a person’s beliefs about the state of the world) and changes how the individual defines an issue (Jacoby 2000). Framing a coercive episode as multilateral or as a defense of international rules may shape how an individual feels about military intervention as a policy option. This process functions by making the action more consonant with felt norms, not by providing factual information about events that can be used to update. As Nelson, Oxley and Clawson (1997: 226) argue with respect to framing, “Frames may supply no new information about an issue, yet their influence on your opinions may be decisive through their effect on the perceived relevance of alternative considerations.”

Framing plays a key role in providing information shortcuts and in mobilizing norms, and publics are especially susceptible to framing strategies in the area of foreign policy, where it is often national political leaders who determine news content (Hayward 1994: 224). This presents an opportunity for state leaders. Jarol Manheim (1993: 156, 170) has shown that the strategic

management of information, especially during a conflict, allows leaders to mobilize support domestically and, indeed, to shape “the very definition of the circumstances and objectives of the conflict on terms most favorable to one’s needs.” What he calls “strategic communication” thus “plays a significant role in framing, influencing, and implementing foreign policy.” This political strategy is so powerful that it can even transcend borders: Political elites in one country can manipulate information to mold public attitudes and policymaking in another (see Manheim and Albritton 1984; and Merritt 1980). Transnational social activists, for example, routinely use strategic framing to shape the normative context of issues and the way in which interests are perceived (Keck and Sikkink 1998).

Returning to IO legitimation, leaders in the coercing state will as a matter of course seek to frame events in order to align their policy agenda with prevailing interests and norms at the domestic level. And other state leaders who have determined that they have an interest in supporting the sender will pursue a similar strategy at home. In this way, leaders are able to minimize domestic obstacles by satisfying the public’s need for a justification, whether based on a cost-benefit assessment of the policy or on a sense of what is appropriate. The last two pathways of legitimation outlined here are a good case of what Robert Putnam (1988) calls ‘reverberation’ between domestic and international politics: A factor at the international level (working through an IO) affects domestic politics (public support), which in turn influences international politics (third-party governments support the sender).

Table 1 illustrates the four pathways of IO legitimation hypothesized in this section.

[Table 1 here]

OBSERVATIONS FROM THE IRAQ WARS

With explicit Security Council authorization in the first episode and none in the second, the U.S.-led interventions against Iraq in 1991 and 2003 provide a natural comparison for thinking about the role of IOs as legitimizers. The purpose of this section is *not* to test the validity of the four proposed pathways. While a discussion of the cases may lend some plausibility to them, the primary goal here is to work from the four pathways to develop a more refined set of hypotheses regarding IO legitimation. I offer several observations to this end.

UN Approval Correlates with International Governmental Support

As a general observation, the Iraq cases do support the notion that Security Council approval produces a legitimation effect with respect to third-party governments. In the days leading up to the second Iraq war, Bush administration officials maintained that international support for the action was substantial and growing. On March 18, Colin Powell announced that 45 governments had agreed to be part of the famous “coalition of the willing,” and Press Secretary Ari Fleischer highlighted the extent of international support: “I think it’s fair to say that the United States...would act with a rather robust and significant size of coalition of the willing, by any measurement.”¹⁵ Once fighting began, Donald Rumsfeld proclaimed that “the coalition in this activity is larger than the coalition that existed during the Gulf War in 1991.”¹⁶ There was a

¹⁵ White House. Press Briefing by Ari Fleischer. Office of the Press Secretary, March 18, 2003.

¹⁶ Quoted in *Washington Post*, 21 March 2003, p. A29.

concerted attempt by U.S. leadership to portray the action as multilateral and as reflecting collective interests.

These claims regarding the size of the coalition are questionable and, more relevant for our purposes, this support did not seem to reflect a perception that U.S. policy was especially *legitimate*. While there are multiple reasons to support a coercing state that have little to do with legitimacy, the legitimation effect should produce support with distinct characteristics. In particular, legitimation should be reflected in widespread support from governments that is both public and active.

When we compare the Gulf War to Iraq War II, it is clear that the support was of a different nature. To begin with, 15 of the 45 countries on the State Department list did not wish to be publicly named; their preference not to be associated with the intervention indicates that their support was not driven by a sense that the policy was legitimate. Even among those on the public portion of the list, many were very small and strategically insignificant and the support was often passive or indirect. Japan, for example, committed to participating only in post-war activities, a contrast to its \$10 billion contribution to the conduct of the Gulf War. Turkey, a key U.S. ally in the region and an active member of the 1991 coalition, granted the U.S. rights to use its airspace but denied access to its territory for ground troops. Spanish Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar staunchly promoted UN authorization of the war but nevertheless supported it, although in the end he announced he would not send combat troops, a decision that was met with cheers in the Spanish parliament.¹⁷ In fact, very few of the public supporters of the war contributed in a meaningful way. Britain's contribution of about 45,000 combat troops was supplemented by 2,000 from Australia and 200 from Poland. Albania pledged 70 troops, but

only for noncombat roles, and Denmark provided a submarine and a naval escort. These totals do not approach the 160,000 coalition troops, 500 aircraft, and more than 60 naval ships—not to mention \$54 billion in payments—that contributed to Operation Desert Storm (even with its more modest goals).

Moreover, several politically key countries did not support the second war at all, including a glaring lack of support from neighbors and allies such as Germany, France, Canada and Mexico, and from Security Council veto wielders China and Russia. And Arab hearts and minds were clearly skeptical: not a single Arab nation was a public member of the U.S.-led coalition in Iraq War II. This situation was very different in 1991, with Bahrain, Egypt, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and the United Arab Emirates all contributing personnel (including tens of thousands of combat troops) or equipment, or both, to the military operation. As one former Defense Department official noted of the purportedly large coalition assembled by George W. Bush, “This is more window dressing than reality. This is not your father’s Gulf War.”¹⁸ Notable from the perspective of legitimation are the absence of public governmental support and of direct support to the operation itself. Both were in abundance in 1991: 41 countries provided some combination of personnel, equipment and money to the operation, and this does not include several countries (Colombia, Ethiopia, Finland, the Ivory Coast, Malaysia, the Soviet Union, and Zaire) that voted for Resolution 678, thereby publicly supporting the war. If one were to use the same criteria used by the White House to count coalition membership in the 2003 war, which lumps together those offering material and logistical assistance with those

¹⁷ “Spain: No Combat Role in Iraq War,” available at <www.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/meast/03/18/sprj.irq.spain>. Spain did send personnel for medical support and anti-mining, as well as three ships.

¹⁸ Lawrence Korb, quoted in William Douglas, “Powell: 45 Nations in Coalition of the Willing,” *Newsday*, March 19, 2003.

offering mere rhetorical support, the size of the ‘coalition’ for the Gulf War would total about 100 countries.¹⁹

The White House did receive two very public displays of support from European governments before the war. The first was the Letter of Eight, orchestrated by the UK and Spain and signed by their leaders and those of Denmark, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Poland and Portugal. The letter was published in the *Wall Street Journal* and several European newspapers on January 30. While it expressed solidarity with Bush’s efforts to “rid the world of the danger posed by Saddam Hussein’s weapons of mass destruction,” it stopped short of endorsing a war in the near term. The second was the letter of the Vilnius 10, a group of Central and Eastern European leaders, published on February 5, the same day as Powell’s intelligence presentation to the Security Council. On closer inspection, it is doubtful whether the Vilnius 10 letter reflected a heartfelt commitment to the war. The text, which professed strong support for the U.S., was presented to these leaders as a take-it-or-leave-it offer (with a suggestion that they not leave it) by an American with close ties to the Pentagon and in consultation with the Bush administration. All ten countries were candidates for NATO membership and they were presented with the letter just weeks before Congress was to vote on their candidacy. Further evidence of U.S. influence came in the text itself: it contained a reference to Powell’s “compelling evidence,” even though none of the signatories had yet seen that evidence.²⁰

Table 2 compares the wars in terms of active and public governmental support of the U.S.

[Table 2 here]

¹⁹ For this estimate, see *Washington Post*, 21 March 2003, p. A29.

IOs Are a Weak Commitment Device

With regard to the particular interstate pathways underlying the legitimation effect, the Iraq cases suggest that the Security Council does not serve as an especially effective commitment device. While the U.S. did indeed work through the Security Council at every stage of the Gulf War, Bush always proclaimed his right to operate unilaterally if necessary and claimed afterwards that he would have conducted the war even without UN approval. The more recent episode is a starker example. After starting down the Security Council path, the Bush administration decided to simply abandon the body once it realized approval was not forthcoming. In other cases, such as the Cuban Missile Crisis and Kosovo, the U.S. has ‘tested the waters’ at the Security Council and then chosen other options (the OAS and NATO) when sufficient support was lacking. In these cases, the U.S. had not tied its hands and retained the luxury of simply walking away from an UN-based strategy.

One problem with the commitment mechanism is that the wording of Security Council resolutions is often too ambiguous even on paper to represent a clear commitment. The debate over the meaning of “serious consequences” in Resolution 1441 offers a good example: the U.S. interpreted this as authorization to use force while most other states did not. In Afghanistan, the U.S. relied on Resolution 1373 as a supplier of the Security Council’s blessing. While this resolution appeared to give sweeping authorization, it was vague and spurred a debate among international lawyers as to whether it technically authorized the use of force (Byers 2002: fns. 7, 8).

²⁰ For a history of these two letters, on which this paragraph draws heavily, see *Financial Times*, 28 May 2003, p. 19.

So while the Security Council can indeed impose costly constraints on a state, it is doubtful that it serves as a clear and credible technology for imposing irreversible commitments, at least with respect to powerful states during particular episodes. Reversing the commitment may be politically costly but it is possible, as the 2002-2003 episode shows. On the other hand, it is precisely the anticipated costs and constraints of working through the UN that demonstrate the plausibility of the signaling pathway. A major motivation for steering off the Security Council path in Iraq War II was a fear of the entanglements that IO-based intervention would pose. Donald Rumsfeld was reportedly afraid of repeating the NATO experience in Kosovo, where target selection for bombing was “subject to constant bickering among NATO members who demanded a say in the choice of targets and, on occasion, vetoes” (*The Independent*, 29 March 2003, p. 23). This lesson helps explain his refrain that “the coalition must not determine the mission,” but rather vice versa. When states do decide to work through an IO, they suffer various costs in terms of constraints, multilateral input, and delays—cost that help separate aggressive from less threatening types with more modest goals. This suggests that we should focus especially on the signaling pathway in our effort to understand how legitimation influences state leaders.

Observations Regarding the Sender’s Domestic Audience

IO approval does matter to domestic publics. Before the second Iraq War, a majority of the U.S. public wanted the president to seek more allied support and to seek another UN resolution before using force.²¹ With the domestic audience in mind, and still hoping for an authorizing resolution,

²¹ Pew Global Attitudes Project, report of March 18, 2003.

Bush administration officials made their case for war—Bush in his January 28 State of the Union address, Colin Powell before the Security Council, and Condoleezza Rice in a *New York Times* Op-Ed²²—based largely on Saddam Hussein’s failure to comply with Security Council resolutions, especially resolutions 687 (the 1991 ceasefire resolution) and 1441. War against Iraq would be a defense of the UN’s rules and credibility, they argued.

More detailed observations help us clarify the role of domestic audiences. An important phenomenon stands out based on evidence from the two episodes: Public support in the U.S. rallied behind the president and the intervention in both cases once conflict began, while Security Council authorization—or a lack thereof—had little effect. This is despite a professed desire by Americans in both cases for a UN-based approach. Once troops are committed and an intervention becomes a *fait accompli*, public support will almost always swing in favor of the mission and the leader. This is the well-known “rally-round-the-flag” effect (Mueller 1973). This factor had a far more important impact on U.S. domestic opinion than the IO legitimation effect.

In his exhaustive analysis of public opinion before, during and after the Gulf War, John Mueller finds the same pattern repeated in virtually every opinion poll. The public rallied to Bush’s support when he took a strong stand against Iraq in early August (following the August 2 invasion of Kuwait), with roughly 80% of the public supporting his August 8 decision to send troops to Saudi Arabia. This support slipped until mid-October as the rally effect wore off but then remained remarkably stable until the outbreak of war on January 16. Once conflict began, support for intervention skyrocketed. From October on, writes Mueller (1994: 23-4), “despite the post-election troop buildup, the UN vote [of November 29] and deadline, the release by Iraq

²² The column was entitled “Why We Know Iraq is Lying” and was published on January 23, 2003.

of all hostages, various meetings with Iraqi leaders..., and a major debate and war vote along partisan lines in Congress, these levels of support did not change much until war was initiated.”

While about 60% of Americans supported U.S. military involvement in the three months leading up to the war, this figure jumped above 80% immediately after hostilities began. Asked if they approved of Bush’s handling of the situation with Iraq, polls showed a dramatic jump before and after the war’s start. Gallup found a jump from 62% (January 11-13) to 86% (January 17-20), CBS and the *New York Times* showed a jump from 58% to 82% (same dates), and the *Los Angeles Times* showed a jump from 64% (January 8-12) to 88% (January 17-18) (Mueller 1994: Tables 7, 9 and 13).

By contrast, the signal event of Security Council endorsement, its November 29 resolution authorizing the use of “all necessary means,” had only a brief and modest effect on U.S. attitudes toward military intervention in polls that tracked them over time (Mueller 1994: 32). To further investigate the effect of the UN on public opinion, we can also compare polls that prime respondents with information about the Security Council authorization to those which do not. For example, an ABC/*Washington Post* poll used the following wording: “As you may know, the United Nations Security Council has authorized the use of force against Iraq if it doesn’t withdraw from Kuwait by January 15th. If Iraq does not withdraw from Kuwait, should the United States go to war with Iraq to force it out of Kuwait at some point after January 15, or not?” The results of this survey did not reveal any significant differences when compared to results from a poll with similar questions with no accompanying information about UN authorization.²³ In other words, there seemed to be only a modest legitimation effect—whether

²³ In Mueller 1994, compare Table 63 to Table 52. On the other hand, compare Tables 57 and 58, which show modestly higher support when respondent are told (or reminded) of the Security Council resolution.

resulting from norm mobilization or the supply of an information shortcut—when it came to the U.S. public.

An analogous pattern emerged in Iraq War II. The rally effect was strikingly similar: 76% of Americans supported the use of force against Iraq on April 9 of 2003 (almost three weeks into the war), versus 77% in late January of 1991 (two weeks into the war).²⁴ The rally effect in the second case seems to have drowned out a pre-war desire for UN authorization and involvement. While about two-thirds of Americans said war would be justified only if the UN found serious Iraqi violations, and more than 60% felt UN weapons inspectors should be given more time and that the U.S. should wait for UN approval,²⁵ these sentiments were not strong enough to prevent widespread support once the war was under way. In fact, the rally effect is so powerful that for some people it seems to override concerns over the policy itself. A Program on International Policy Attitudes poll conducted just after the war began showed that, of those who approved of the war, 18% said they supported the decision not because it was “the best thing for the U.S. to do” but because they “support Bush’s decision because he is president.” 21% expressed that while they did not agree with Bush’s decision to invade unilaterally, they “still support the President” (PIPA 2003: 4). These poll results suggest that Bush could count on support from many who did not agree with the substance of the policy.

The lesson drawn from these episodes is that the domestic public in the primary sender state is likely not the most important audience of the legitimation effect since their propensity to rally behind military intervention offsets their concern with IO approval. Once leaders present their public and their legislature with a *fait accompli* by deploying troops and then by initiating

²⁴ Pew Research Center, “Bush’s Ratings Rose Last Night,” News Release, April 10, 2003, p. 10.

²⁵ *L.A. Times*, 17 December 2002; *New York Times*/CBS News poll, conducted February 10 to 12, 2003.

conflict, the influence of IOs one way or another is minimal. This helps explain why presidents in successive episodes—Bush Sr. in Iraq, Clinton in Haiti (1994), and Bush Jr. in Iraq—all expressed their determination to intervene abroad with or without Congressional approval. They knew publics would rally and Congress would be rendered impotent once intervention became inevitable (see Schultz 2003).

The UK was in a distinct position in both wars: it was not the primary sender but was a major participant. For the British public in the Gulf War, Resolution 678 also seems to have made little difference. The percentage who favored military action remained in the low 60s before and after November 29 (King 2001: 347). A rally effect did occur, however: while only 63% favored using ground forces in December, the number had climbed to 82% by late January (during the bombing phase of the campaign) (Ibid.: 348, 353). In the lead-up to the 2003 war, Tony Blair, facing the largest anti-war demonstrations in his country's history, was in a difficult position. While U.S. officials did not feel pressed to seek an additional resolution on top of 1441, Blair desperately pressed the White House to go the extra step, despite the political dangers posed by the possibility of failure. On January 31, Blair visited Bush with the primary objective of obtaining U.S. support of a second resolution. According to the *Financial Times* (29 May 2003, p. 17) "Mr. Bush and his top aides had been decidedly lukewarm about the idea....But in Britain, political pressures were taking their toll on the prime minister. Opposition to war was hardening among the public, within his party and even in the cabinet." In the end the U.S. joined the cause for a second resolution in order to assist Blair with his political situation. As one U.S. official put it, "...it's increasingly obvious to folks in all capitals that a new resolution would be a very good thing. And it has to be said that Blair politically really needs it" (quoted in *Washington Post*, 19 February 2003, p. A1).

Figure 1 tracks British public opinion regarding the Second Iraq War over time. It shows that the public was sensitive to UN involvement, but, as in the U.S., the rally effect ultimately overwhelmed concerns over UN approval. In the summer of 2002, most Britons did not view the war favorably. Thereafter, four events were influential: (1) Bush's speech before the UN General Assembly on September 12, which led many to believe he was pursuing UN authorization and boosted support substantially; (2) the terrorist attacks in Bali in early October, which sparked a short-lived shift to plurality support; (3) the passage of SC Resolution 1441 on November 8, which had a distinct positive effect on approval; (4) and the realization that war was inevitable and the start of the war itself, which together generated a rally effect of more than 30 percentage points in approval.

[Figure 1 here]

This cursory evidence shows that the domestic audience in an intervening state displays an abstract preference for IO approval but tends to rally behind its leaders regardless. This suggests that concern over domestic politics at home are not what motivates sender governments to pursue IO legitimation.

UN Approval Influences International Public Opinion

The framework also suggests that legitimation should be reflected in favorable attitudes on the part of publics in other countries. Indeed, since publics abroad are less likely to be motivated by strategic or material needs in deciding whether or not the policy of another country is justified

and worthy of support, international public opinion may be an ideal measure of how legitimate a foreign policy is.

The issues of government support and public attitudes are of course closely linked insofar as the likelihood of the former is determined partly the political constraints posed by the latter. Evidence of these constraints abounds. During the Gulf War, French President Francois Mitterrand explained to James Baker that reliance on Article 51 for justification to his domestic audience would not be enough. “Fifty-five million French people are not international lawyers. We need that resolution [to authorize the use of force] to ensure the consequences it will entail” (Baker 1995: 315). Brian Mulroney of Canada also struggled to ‘sell’ support of the mission to his public (Bush and Scowcroft 1998: 342). Arab leaders were in an especially difficult position. Among the Arab public, even those who were strongly opposed to Iraq’s invasion saw the U.S. role as a separate matter and were strongly opposed (Heikal 1992: 239). The prospect of a U.S. military presence shifted attention from Iraqi aggression to the issue of western intervention. Nevertheless, while the Arab League voted to reject a ‘foreign’ intervention, the ministers of the Gulf Cooperation Council gathered to issue a statement to proclaim that this rejection of foreign involvement did not apply to any collective international measures mandated by the UN (Lesch 1991: 36).

Two days after the bombing of Iraq had begun for the Second Iraq War, the White House announced to the press that “the population of the coalition of the willing is approximately 1.18 billion people around the world.”²⁶ This figure was based on the populations of the 35 countries whose governments had shown some sort of tangible commitment to the coalition. The administration was imputing a link between state and society preferences that simply was not

²⁶ White House. Press Briefing by Ari Fleischer. Office of the Press Secretary, March 20, 2003.

there. Indeed, public opposition to the war was so strong that governments found it difficult to actively and publicly support the war, even if they thought doing so was in their international interest. In an article written just before the outbreak of war, Fareed Zakaria (2003) argues that, “Countries are furtive in their support for the administration not because they fear Saddam Hussein but because they fear their own people. To support American today in much of the world is politically dangerous.” He goes on to note that the U.S. had the support of a clear majority of the public in only one country, Israel. “If that is not isolation, then the word has no meaning.”

Opinion polls conducted around the world before and after the war paint a dramatic picture. A Gallup International poll conducted in January 2003 showed that the populations of 41 countries were confident that a war against Iraq was likely “in the next few months” but few were in favor. When asked if their country should support the action, majorities in only the U.S. (73%) and Australia (53%) responded positively, along with pluralities in the UK (44% for, 41% against) and Romania (45% for, 41% against). In the remaining 37 countries, there was no public support for war. Majorities in many countries were opposed to military action against Iraq regardless of the circumstances, including 83% in Argentina, 79% in Uruguay, 74% in Spain, and 60% in France, and 59% in Russia. In many countries UN authorization was the key to support; it raised favorable attitudes toward the war by 30-50% in most EU countries, by 46% in Canada, by 56% in Australia, by 52% in New Zealand, by 29% in India, and by 35% in Nigeria.²⁷

²⁷ These results are part of the “Iraq Poll 2003”, available at <www.gallup-international.com/surveys.htm>.

An EOS Gallup Europe poll conducted at the end of January and released January 29 showed an almost universal aversion toward military intervention without UN backing.²⁸ When asked if military intervention by their own country would be justified without an authorizing decision by the UN, no fewer than 82% of the EU's population and 75% of the population of the 13 EU candidate countries responded negatively. 80% of the EU's population felt that U.S. intervention would not be justified without UN support. Among the hypothetical circumstances that made members of the European public view intervention favorably, Security Council authorization had an impact equal to "if Iraq threatens other countries in the region" and "if UN inspectors discover weapons of mass destruction."²⁹ In other words, remarkably, approval by the UN had an equal impact on whether war was perceived as justified as the substantive circumstances surrounding the threat Iraq posed to the international community.

This poll also revealed widespread suspicion of the American motives and doubt as to whether the U.S. foreign policy should be trusted. Among the population of the EU 2004, 72% overall and a majority in every country viewed oil as the principal motivation for U.S. intervention in Iraq. The UN was perceived as more capable than the U.S. of effectively fighting terrorism, and 72% viewed the activities of the UN on the international scene as positive, compared to only 44% for the U.S. So not only was U.S. intervention in Iraq not perceived as legitimate, its role as an international actor more generally was viewed unfavorably.

As war became inevitable, the U.S.'s image in the eyes of the world plummeted. A survey by the Pew Global Attitudes Project in mid-March, 2003, showed an increasingly

²⁸ "International Crisis Survey: Public Opinion Survey in 30 European Countries," available at <www.eosgallupeurope.com/int_survey>.

²⁹ These results are based on the composition of the European Union as of 2004, i.e., the 15 members at the time plus the ten incoming members. Those who viewed intervention as justified under these circumstances totaled 56%, 57% and 57%, respectively.

negative view of America (see Table 3). Between 2002 and 2003 alone, favorable views of the U.S. declined by over half, from an average of 70% to 34%. Few in Europe felt the war was justified. According to one observer, for example, “the prevailing attitude in Russian society (which is by no means pacifist) is that the war is unjust, driven by greed and colored by arrogance” (Baev 2003). Once Saddam Hussein’s regime had been toppled, despite the fact that most surveyed felt the war had been a success, they still did not feel it was justified. Of 45 countries surveyed by Gallup International in their “Post War Iraq 2003 Poll”, majorities in only eight countries—Denmark, the UK, Albania, Israel, the U.S., Australia, the Philippines and Nigeria—felt U.S. military action was justified.

[Table 3 here]

Public attitudes in the Muslim world became (and continue to be) especially extreme. During the course of the war, one commentator noted “a wave of anger against the war, and against America and its allies in general, in the Muslim world.”³⁰ Among Turks, 60% believe that U.S. military action against Iraq is part of a broader U.S. war against unfriendly Muslim nations.³¹ As time passed following the war, the U.S.’s image among Muslim countries declined further. A May 2003 poll conducted by the Pew Global Attitudes Project showed fear of the U.S., mistrust of President Bush, and weakening support for the war on terrorism. In seven of eight Muslim countries surveyed, majorities expressed fear of a U.S. military invasion of their

³⁰ “Those Awkward Hearts and Minds,” *The Economist*, 1 April 2003.

³¹ The Pew Global Attitudes Project, survey report of March 18, 2003.

country. Favorable opinion of the U.S. had fallen to 15% in Indonesia (down from 75% two years prior) and to just 1% in Jordan.

Skeptics of IO legitimation might argue that higher levels of support in the first war were overdetermined since the mission was seen as a more justified response to a specific, aggressive action by Iraq. In fact, we might well have expected more support for the U.S. in the second war. From the perspective of publics, in both cases the U.S. was providing what was widely perceived as a collective good to the international community: The same polls that show Europeans' lack of support for Iraq War II also show that the vast majority viewed Iraq as a threat to world peace. Moreover, there were widespread pro-U.S. sentiments following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. From the perspective of state leaders, the material incentives to support the U.S. in 2003 were probably higher given the possibility of sharing in spoils (i.e., reconstruction and oil contracts). So while the cases are by no means identical—in particular, the first intervention was in response to such stark aggression by Saddam—we can reasonably infer that the variable of Security Council approval helps explain divergence in the legitimation effect across the two cases.

CONCLUSION

As is so often the case, in the words of Tierney and Weaver, “no single rationalist or constructivist model appears to offer a complete (or even adequate) explanation for observed variation.” This is certainly the case with the IO legitimation phenomenon. This chapter has sought to provide some causal content to the notion of IO legitimation through an exercise in theoretical synthesis. While scholars, journalists and policy-makers all stress the ability of IOs to

confer legitimacy on policies, the legitimation effect is often referenced without any attempt to delineate the underlying mechanisms. I have suggested a set of plausible pathways, based on information transmission, by which IO approval increases support for state policies. By making different assumptions about leaders and publics, I am able to make a ‘domain of application’ argument that rational choice theory best explains the behavior of leaders while psychological and normative explanations have more to say about publics.

In general, the brief study of the two Iraq wars shows that a lack of Security Council authorization in the second case resulted in less support of the nature that should be associated with legitimized policies, namely active and public support from governments and feelings among domestic publics that the policy is justified. This supports the notion that the IO legitimation effect is real. Based on evidence from the two Iraq cases, the most promising hypotheses for further research into legitimation are that it operates through (1) signaling to other state leaders, (2) providing an information shortcut to publics abroad, and (3) framing and norm mobilization to publics abroad. There is little evidence that the domestic public in the coercing state is much affected by an IO’s imprimatur, and we have reason to question the ability of IOs to serve as commitment devices.

One virtue of this framework is that it does not privilege any single IR theoretical paradigm. This makes sense as a first cut since rationalist and constructivist theorizing have both made substantial contributions to the study of international institutions. Nevertheless, I do limit the analysis by assuming that those seeking legitimacy from IOs do so for instrumental reasons, not simply because they are motivated by a normative desire to behave legitimately. A growing body of literature in the constructivist vein makes precisely this assumption: even actors

motivated by internalized norms, or values, may adopt instrumental strategies to influence other actors who may themselves be motivated by material interests rather than norms.

The information transmission framework is amenable to further empirical testing, though the burden is relatively high. The most difficult empirical hurdle involves demonstrating that the intended recipients of information transmission do indeed receive the information and react as the hypothesized pathways predict—that is, that leaders feel more reassured as a result of costly signaling and that publics come to believe that coercive policies are legitimate as a result of updating and normative concerns. Several important questions should be addressed in refining the theoretical arguments. Is each of these pathways operative and equally important in every case? If not, under what conditions is each causal mechanism likely to be most important? We can begin to speculate about these questions. For example, for low-salience events, where domestic publics are not likely to play a political role, the inter-state pathways should be most important. By contrast, when policies touch well-established norms—for example, in the case of humanitarian intervention—the roll of norm mobilization and framing targeted at publics is likely to play a prominent roll in the legitimation process.

To be most useful, theoretical synthesis should do more than stimulate debate among academics concerned with abstract paradigms—synthesis is not an end in itself. To remain grounded in the real world, synthetic theorizing should be ‘problem-driven’ and should focus on important issues either historically or in terms of contemporary policy. The role of international organizations in the use of force is without question a pressing issue for academics and practitioners alike, and yet it remains poorly understood. This chapter helps guide us toward a better understanding.

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Table 1. Four Pathways of IO Legitimation

| Pathway | Target | Assumptions about Target | Causal Mechanism | Logic |
|-----------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|
| Credible Commitment | Third-party leaders | Rational-material | Self-binding; updating | “consequences” |
| Signaling Restraint | Third-party leaders | Rational-material | Costly signals; updating | “consequences” |
| Information Shortcuts | Domestic audiences | Boundedly rational | Heuristics; framing; updating | “consequences” |
| Norm Mobilization | Domestic audiences | Value-driven | Framing; normative concerns | “appropriateness” |

Table 2. Governmental Support as Evidence of Legitimation

| | IRAQ 1991 | IRAQ 2003 |
|---|---|-----------------------|
| ACTIVE SUPPORT— MILITARY EQUIPMENT | 21 Governments | 5 |
| ACTIVE SUPPORT— PERSONNEL | 39 Governments | 9 |
| ACTIVE SUPPORT— FINANCIAL | 8 Governments (about \$40 billion to U.S.) | 0 |
| PUBLIC SUPPORT | 100+ Governments | About 35 ^a |

^aBased on formal letters, the State Department list, and the those that expressed support of the authorizing resolution circulated in the Security Council.

Table 3. Pew Survey: Favorable View of the U.S. (%)

| | 1999-2000 ^a | Mid-2002 | March 2003 |
|---------|------------------------|----------|------------|
| Britain | 83 | 75 | 48 |
| France | 62 | 63 | 31 |
| Germany | 78 | 61 | 25 |
| Italy | 76 | 70 | 34 |
| Spain | 50 | -- | 14 |
| Poland | 86 | 79 | 50 |
| Russia | 37 | 61 | 28 |
| Turkey | 52 | 30 | 12 |

^a1999-2000 figures from the Office of Research, U.S. State Department

Figure 1. British Approval/Disapproval of Attack on Iraq, 2002-2003

