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The Domestic Foundations of Confidence in the United Nations

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THE DOMESTIC FOUNDATIONS OF CONFIDENCE IN THE UNITED NATIONS¹

Abstract

Given the range of United Nations programs, it is not surprising that public support for the organization varies widely. The United Nations has been criticized as overly bureaucratic, reluctant to act, and unable to enforce its declarations. In countries where the UN has acted, the population has not always welcomed the intervention. However, many people are committed to the UN mission and strongly support its initiatives. This research seeks to explain the variation in public support for the United Nations among citizens in forty-one member states. Using data from the World Values Survey, we consider the impact of knowledge, political interest, nationalism, territorial identification, ideology, and government trust on public opinion of the

United Nations. All the explanatory variables in our analysis are significantly related to confidence in the UN in the expected direction, with the exception of nationalism (which is significant in the opposite direction than anticipated) and ideology (which is not significant). This research indicates that public opinion on the UN is a function of individual values and attitudes toward public institutions. We suggest that given limited knowledge, trust in governing institutions is a core value underpinning public opinion on foreign policy issues.

1. Introduction

We begin with the premise that it takes a leap of faith for citizens to provide enthusiastic support to a large multinational organization such as the United Nations. Given competing national priorities, a general aversion to taxes, and the mixed experiences some people have had with UN peacekeeping, citizens worldwide are understandably skeptical about an international institution that is complex, broad in scope, poorly understood, and not always successful. Although many people benefit from UN development programs and UN peacekeeping operations, others feel poorly represented or underserved by the United Nations. At the extreme, the UN is perceived as a worthless organization that violates national sovereignty. While most people understand that we live in an interdependent world in which the fallout from problems in one country is often global, they also know that large governmental organizations are frequently inefficient and inflexible. Citizens may understand that health crises and environmental pollutants spill across borders, yet they perceive that smaller-scale initiatives to combat these problems are less bureaucratic and more cost efficient (Schario and Konisky 2008). Thus, public support for international organizations varies within and among states. Some groups of people are clearly more inclined to support the United Nations, while others are more skeptical of its impact. In order to explore this variation, our study uses data from the World Values Survey to assess variation in public confidence in the United Nations.

A poll conducted in 2005 for the BBC World Service by the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) found that the United Nations received favorable ratings in 23 of the 32 countries. Averaging across countries, 59% of respondents rated the UN as having a positive influence. However, among the 19 countries where respondents were also surveyed in the previous year, the percentage of people rating the UN positively had dropped by an average of ten points. PIPA director Steven Kull attributes this drop to UN corruption investigations and the failure to achieve significant progress in Iraq and Darfur (PIPA 2006).

A majority of Americans support the United Nations, in spite of leaders who criticize the organization. Yet, there is a long history of movements to end US involvement in an institution that Richard Nixon declared in 1967 was "obsolete and inadequate" for dealing with crises during the Cold War (Keefer n.d.). The John Birch Society launched its "get US out of the UN" campaign in 1959; its allegation that the UN represents "One World Government" continues to the present day. Jeane Kirkpatrick, former US Ambassador to the UN, wrote an op-ed column in 1983 asserting that negotiations at the UN Security Council "more closely resemble a mugging" of the United States "than either a political debate or an effort at problem solving" (Kirkpatrick 1988, 229-231). In 2005, President Bush appointed John Bolton as Acting US Ambassador to

the UN. A decade earlier, Bolton claimed, "There is no such thing as the United Nations. There is only the international community, which can only be led by the only remaining superpower, which is the United States" (Watson 2005). Despite these attacks by US leaders, polls conducted over the past two decades indicate a consistent level of support in the United States for a strong United Nations (Page and Bouton 2006).

Outside of the US, there are a range of opinions about the United Nations and its many activities. Citizens of some states are openly hostile to the United Nations, partly in response to their having been targeted by the UN for human rights or Security Council violations. Because of the activities of the Human Rights Council and the Security Council in condemning Israel's occupation of Gaza and the West Bank, many Israelis are extremely critical of the UN. Both Turks and Greeks are highly critical of the United Nations because the organization's four-decade-old peacekeeping operation in Cyprus has not helped resolve the conflict in a manner acceptable to either party. A 2008 poll of seven majority Muslim nations finds people perceive that the UN is dominated by the US and that there is dissatisfaction with the UN's attempts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (PIPA 2006). On the other hand, people in the Scandinavian countries have been steadfast in their support for the United Nations. In other countries, such as India, Ghana and Mali, many have benefited from UN humanitarian activities for years, and appear to have a degree of confidence in the UN that reflects their gratitude for UN-sponsored development and humanitarian programs.

Attitudes towards the UN resemble public opinion toward other international institutions. In a 2005 PIPA poll, overall international public support for the UN, at 59%, was only slightly stronger than support for the World Bank (55%). Overall support for NGOs was 60%, and support for the IMF was somewhat lower at 47% (PIPA 2006). Thus, public opinion on the UN seems to be indicative of general public support for large international organizations, and our findings about the basis of public opinion for the UN may be equally applicable to other international institutions. Thus, this study is significant beyond its immediate impact as an explanation of international public opinion on the United Nations. Our analysis sheds light more generally on the tendency of people to accept or reject institutions that transcend their nation-states. We aim to understand more clearly why some people see themselves as world citizens and accept obligations to an entity beyond their national government, while other individuals are more wary of this transfer of sovereignty and funds.

What explains the variation in public support for the UN and other international institutions? To what extent do these survey responses reveal differences in underlying values and attitudes about government and society? Our research indicates that the most important explanations for variation in global opinion about the UN are connected to concepts of political trust and low information rationality that were originally developed in the context of US public opinion. Popkin's (1991) theory of "low information rationality" demonstrates that the US public, even with limited knowledge of specific policy issues, uses pre-existing attitudes and ideology to make reasonable policy choices. Applying the "low information rationality" to the case of public opinion on the UN, we expect that poorly informed people will rely on pre-existing views of government and territorial identity to help shape their opinion of the UN. Our analysis of individual-level data from the World Values Survey demonstrates that support for the United Nations is a function of public knowledge, trust, and territorial self-identification. We posit that

with limited specific information, respondents rely on readily available attitudes and values to inform opinion. This is especially likely in the context of foreign policy, since most citizens are less familiar with international organizations and events than they are with circumstances and institutions in their own country.

2. Public Opinion and International Relations

This study draws on a variety of literatures, from the very general research on foreign policy and public opinion to specific studies of the comparative impact of trust on confidence in the UN. Early research on public opinion and foreign policy focused on the United States. The “Lippmann-Almond consensus,” held that US public opinion on foreign policy is ill informed and erratic. Theorists described foreign policy as loosely constrained by public opinion and portrayed public opinion as providing the “permissive limits” (Almond 1950) or “system of dikes” (Key 1961) through which foreign policy could flow. According to this notion, a disinterested and volatile public would accept most foreign policy initiatives as long as the policies were within a range of acceptability. This conclusion was criticized by scholars who find American opinion on foreign policy more rational and consistent (Page and Shapiro 1982; Hurwitz and Peffley 1987; Aldrich 1989; Holsti 1992; Page and Bouton 2006).

Outside of the US, much research on public opinion and foreign policy has examined attitudes toward the European Union, particularly public opinion on the expansion of the EU’s operations and powers (Niedermayer and Sinnott 1998) and on the question of the future enlargement of the EU (Kentman 2008; Tanasiou and Colonescu 2008). One prevailing perspective on public opinion on the EU is that criticism and support of the organization is primarily a reflection of the popularity of the national government (Anderson 1998; Franklin, Marsh and McLaren 1994; Kritzinger 2003). Overall support of the EU depends also on the perceived economic benefits of membership. Low-income groups, whose jobs and social welfare benefits are threatened, are most likely to oppose the EU (Gabel 1998). Hooghe and Marks (2005) use Eurobarometer data to measure the relative impact of economic calculus and community identity on European public opinion. They find that both factors are important, but that identity has a stronger impact on public opinion than does economic self-interest. The impact of identity on support for the EU is complex; Europeans have multiple and overlapping identities, including regional, ethnic, national, and European (Klandermans *et al.* 2003; Risse 2003). Hooghe and Marks (2004) find that nationalism is positively associated with public support for the EU. However, they also note that national identity has been mobilized in opposition to the EU in cases in which the political parties are polarized on the EU and the radical right is powerful. Building on the work of Hooghe and Marks, Garry and Tilley (2009) demonstrate that economic factors condition the impact of identity on public opinion of the EU. Specifically, they find that living in a member state that receives a relatively large share of assistance from the EU acts as a “buffer” that dilutes the negative impact of nationalism on Euroscepticism. Similarly, living in a state that is relatively well off economically and thus attractive to immigrants, results in more skeptical attitudes towards the EU. Garry and Tilley conclude that the national identity and economic utilitarian indicators of public opinion on the EU are complementary, not contradictory.

The factors that shape attitudes toward the UN and other international organizations may be different from those found in the EU, where the costs and benefits of membership are more

evident and the issue of territorial identity is more salient. This article, therefore, seeks to advance our understanding of the determinants of global public opinion on international organizations. The relationship between knowledge and opinion in foreign policy-making is an important element of this research. A public that understands the institutions, goals, and costs of the United Nations will be more inclined to support the organization. Correct information in a variety of foreign policy issue areas has a direct impact on public opinion (Gilens 2001). Examining the relationship between knowledge and support of the UN in 28 countries between from 1989-1991, Millard (1993) finds that favorable opinion of the UN arises when the public is knowledgeable about the institution and substantially involved in UN matters. Public knowledge is also positively correlated to support for foreign aid programs in the United States and Europe (Diven and Constantelos 2009).

While recognizing that public knowledge of specific foreign policy information is poor, Popkin and Dimock (2000) demonstrate that a weak information base does not prevent the public from expressing rational foreign policy opinions on immigration and international trade. They argue that the public responds rationally, employing a range of other mechanisms to inform their choices: "People lacking familiarity with institutions and policy processes may simply draw upon *different* sources when assembling their beliefs" (216). Citizens draw on core values and beliefs when assembling foreign policy opinions in a "low information" environment (Brewer and Steenbergen 2002; Hurwitz and Peffley 1987). The impact of core values on foreign policy is complex, however. Personal beliefs are difficult to quantify and to disentangle from other factors (Goldstein and Keohane 1993).

Extensive cross-national research on trust has demonstrated its impact on attitudes toward government and policy. There is ample evidence in the American politics literature that US citizens are deeply distrustful of government (Citrin 1974; Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 1995), and that both social and political trust have declined over the past four decades (Uslaner 2002). Hetherington (2004) demonstrates that trust is an important factor in determining why Americans are more favorably disposed towards some programs than others, and Uslaner (2002) notes that trusting societies are more likely to redistribute resources from the rich to the poor. In a cross-national study, Pharr et al. (2000) report an overall decline in public confidence in government, but they note important differences among countries. In Europe, researchers report varying levels of confidence in government institutions. For example, Miller and Listhaug (1990) find that public opinion is more trusting in Norway than in other states. Cross-national analysis of political confidence indicates that trust in government institutions is a function of individual well-being and government responsiveness. In a study of public confidence in twenty-five democracies, Catterberg and Moreno (2005) find that corruption undermines political trust, though not as much in Latin America as in other regions.

Social and political trust are important factors underlying the public's overall foreign policy orientation (Brewer and Steenbergen 2002) and its support of specific foreign policy initiatives. Brewer et al. (2004) argue that trust of other nations ("international trust") helps shape American attitudes towards internationalism and military action in Iraq. Analyzing European and US attitudes toward foreign aid, Diven and Constantelos (2009) show that stronger support for foreign aid in Europe is related to greater European confidence in government institutions. Although the level of support for international governance in foreign and defense policy varies

by institution and issue (Everts 1998; Schoen 2008), it tends to strengthen when citizens have favorable evaluations of specific experiences in these policymaking areas (Schoen 2008).

Recent scholarship has incorporated core values into multivariate analyses of public opinion on international organizations. In developing countries, public support of the major international economic organizations depends on evaluations of economic conditions, as well as ideological self-placement and basic attitudes about the desirability of a free market. Left opposition to the IMF and World Bank becomes more pronounced during fiscal crises, when countries are receiving loans from these international institutions (Edwards 2009). Using data from the third wave of the World Values Survey (1995-1996), Torgler (2008) finds in a thirty-eight country analysis that political trust, the level of corruption, and territorial identification with the world (as opposed to the nation or locality) are associated with confidence in the UN. With the passing of ten years between the third wave and the recently released fifth wave of the World/European Values Survey, sufficient time has elapsed to warrant a fresh look at the factors shaping world opinion of the UN.²

3. Research Design

This study analyzes public confidence in the United Nations using data from the fifth wave (2005-2008) of the World/European Values Survey.³ The survey contacted nearly 83,000 respondents from fifty-six countries.⁴ Building on prior research findings, we examine the impact of political interest and knowledge, nationalist sentiment, territorial identification, self-placement on a left-right ideological scale, and confidence in national political institutions. Dummy variables for individual countries are included in the analysis in order to capture the impact of distinctive national characteristics and experiences. The model is specified below:

$$UN\ confidence = a + education + interest\ in\ politics + nationalism + territorial\ identification + ideology + confidence\ in\ national\ government + country\ dummies + e$$

The hypotheses, expectations, and rationale for the variables are outlined in the following sections. The pooled cross-national model is estimated using OLS multiple regression analysis with SPSS.

A. The Dependent Variable

Attitudes toward the United Nations were measured in fifty-one countries using question V147 of the World Values Survey.⁵ The text of the question follows:

I am going to name a number of organizations. For each one, could you tell me how much confidence you have in ...

--the United Nations:

1. *'A great deal of confidence'*
2. *'Quite a lot of confidence'*
3. *'Not very much confidence'*
4. *'No confidence at all'*

Table 1 provides the mean scores for national confidence in the United Nations in the fifty-one countries where this question was asked. The highest levels of confidence are found in Vietnam, Ghana, Mali, Sweden, and India. The lowest levels of confidence in the UN are found in Iraq, Argentina, Morocco, Turkey, and Serbia. The total mean score for the pooled sample in the World Values Survey is 2.60 (n=65,335), while the country average is 2.58 (n=51).

Table 1: Mean Support for the UN by Country, 2005-2008
(rank ordered from most to least supportive)

Country	mean	s.d.	n	Country	mean	s.d.	n
Vietnam	1.70	0.750	1193	Colombia	2.58	0.993	2833
Ghana	1.93	0.863	1417	Malaysia	2.58	0.857	1200
Mali	2.06	0.986	1354	Australia	2.59	0.771	1393
Sweden	2.12	0.657	987	Trinidad & Tob.	2.60	0.865	935
India	2.16	1.010	801	Britain	2.64	0.850	905
Burkina Faso	2.22	0.992	1136	Russia	2.64	0.924	1547
China	2.28	0.767	822	Chile	2.67	0.900	904
Zambia	2.31	1.013	1423	Ukraine	2.70	0.903	759
Finland	2.33	0.680	999	Andorra	2.72	0.779	986
Romania	2.34	0.832	1493	Cyprus	2.73	0.978	1049
S Africa	2.35	0.911	2471	Germany	2.75	0.798	1893
Japan	2.36	0.700	893	Slovenia	2.75	0.739	942
Bulgaria	2.39	0.874	854	Ethiopia	2.77	0.860	1359
S Korea	2.39	0.725	1182	Netherlands	2.78	0.764	967
Italy	2.40	0.771	953	Jordan	2.80	1.164	999
Spain	2.42	0.713	1132	Peru	2.83	0.896	1291
Indonesia	2.46	0.850	1812	USA	2.83	0.804	1199
France	2.50	0.866	976	Thailand	2.86	0.830	1530
Mexico	2.50	0.974	1499	Taiwan	2.92	0.801	1151
Switzerland	2.50	0.772	1192	Egypt	2.93	0.981	2790
Poland	2.54	0.794	840	Serbia	3.00	0.829	1145
Rwanda	2.54	0.858	1162	Turkey	3.03	0.949	1216
Iran	2.55	0.857	2542	Morocco	3.12	0.843	869
Moldova	2.55	0.899	972	Argentina	3.14	0.814	862
New Zealand	2.56	0.789	789	Iraq	3.53	0.875	2324
Brazil	2.57	0.982	1393	Total (pooled)	2.60	0.933	65335

Source: World/European Values Survey, fifth wave, question v147. Scale: 'A great deal of confidence' = 1, 'quite a lot' = 2, 'not very much' = 3, 'no confidence' = 4'.

Public confidence in the United Nations is not a perfect test of public opinion or the public's willingness to spend scarce public funds on this international institution. It may be that some citizens support the general role and objectives of the United Nations, but are not *confident* in the institution as it currently functions. Nonetheless, this survey question is the best approximation we have of public attitudes toward the United Nations. Our model includes six hypotheses to explain cross-national variation in attitudes toward the United Nations. They are presented in the sections that follow.

B. Hypothesis 1: Support for the United Nations is positively associated with higher levels of education.

The first area we examine is the impact of knowledge and political interest on public opinion. Polls conducted by PIPA suggest that Americans are more likely to support US foreign programs when they are informed about the size of those programs.⁶ To some extent, the level of public support for the United Nations may be a function of ignorance about the organization's mission and size.

How does a lack of knowledge influence public support of the UN? We argue that limited knowledge causes respondents to underestimate the positive impact of UN programs and overestimate the tax burden that UN dues place on their government. In addition, media outlets have focused public attention on reports of UN elitism or corruption, but are less likely to report the daily work of the organization in providing vaccinations and support for refugees. Still others may be poorly informed about the structural and financial limitations of the UN; thus, they may be disappointed that the UN does not do more to alleviate suffering or resolve disputes in their region.⁷

In order to assess knowledge of foreign programs, we use a measure that asks respondents to identify the highest level of education attained. Although this variable does not refer specifically to knowledge of the UN, we assume that respondents with higher levels of education are more likely to have accurate knowledge about the United Nations and its programs. Assuming that better information creates support, we hypothesize that this variable will be positively and significantly related to confidence in the UN. The independent variable measuring the "highest educational level attained" is scored from 1-9 with 1 as the lowest and 9 as the highest education level attained. We predict that higher levels of education lead to greater confidence in the UN. Given the scaling of these variables, a negative correlation provides evidence that our hypothesis is accurate.

C. Hypothesis 2: Support for the UN is greater among people who say that politics plays an important part in their life.

It is logical that knowledge of international organizations such as the United Nations is also a function of political interest. We assume that people who say that "politics plays an important part in their life" are likely to be more familiar with the United Nations and its institutions than people who are less politically active. We posit that familiarity with the UN is positively related to support for the organization. Politically astute observers who are familiar with the scope of the UN, the size of its budget, and its achievements are more likely to express confidence in the

organization. Thus, we expect that interest in political matters is positively related to confidence in the UN. To measure this relationship we use variable 007 from the World Values Survey. The question asks:

Please say, for each of the following, how important it is in your life:

Politics:

- 1. 'Very important'*
- 2. 'Rather important'*
- 3. 'Not very important'*
- 4. 'Not at all important'*

We expect that political interest will be positively correlated with confidence in the United Nations.

D. Hypothesis 3: People who are more intensely proud of their national heritage are less supportive of the United Nations.

Two variables from the World Values Survey are used to measure the internationalist sentiment and geographic identification of the respondent. The first, variable V209, asks about national pride. Assuming that people place themselves on a continuum that runs from extreme nationalism to a total lack of pride in their state, this variable tests whether those who aver more nationalist pride are less likely to be supportive of the UN. This variable is coded 1-4, with 1 representing the greatest nationalist sentiment and 4 representing the least nationalist sentiment. We expect that people who are very proud of their own nationality are less supportive of the United Nations. Extreme nationalists are presumed to favor the ideals of their own country and to see the UN as potentially undermining national sovereignty. The World Values Survey question asks:

How proud are you to be [Nationality]?

- 1. 'Very proud'*
- 2. 'Quite proud'*
- 3. 'Not very proud'*
- 4. 'Not at all proud'*

If our hypothesis holds true and nationalism precludes internationalism, then this variable should be negatively correlated with positive public opinion on the UN.

E. Hypothesis 4: People who identify themselves as world citizens are most likely to be supportive of the United Nations.

Acknowledging that people's territorial identification may be complex, and that there may not be a direct trade-off between nationalism and internationalism, we use a second question from the World Values Survey (V210) to measure geographic self-identification. Respondents receive the following prompt:

I see myself as a world citizen.

1 'Strongly agree'

2 'Agree'

3 'Disagree'

4 'Strongly disagree'

We expect that people who identify themselves as citizens of 'the world' are more likely to be supportive of the United Nations. By contrast, people with a more parochial geographic self-identification are likely to be less supportive of the UN. We hypothesize that lower values on this variable will be associated with greater confidence in the United Nations (i.e., a positive correlation).

F. Hypothesis 5: People who consider themselves to be more leftist are more likely to be supportive of the United Nations.

Given the historically internationalist nature of the socialist and communist movements, it is plausible that left-leaning partisans would be supportive of an international organization such as the UN. In addition, the positions the UN advocates on redistribution of resources, human rights, women's rights, and population policy lead us to believe that a leftist ideology would be associated with support of the UN. In this regard, the UN may be perceived differently from international lending institutions like the IMF. Meanwhile, partisans of the right, opposed to redistributive programs of the state, may be equally suspicious of international institutions.

We use self-placement on the left-right political spectrum as an indicator of the values held by respondents, and we anticipate that respondents with a more left-leaning self-placement on the ideological spectrum are likely to be more internationalist, and thus more supportive of the UN. The question asks respondents to place themselves on a left-right ideological scale, positioned from 1 (far left) to 10 (far right). The text of the question is:

In political matters, people talk of "the left" and "the right." How would you place your views on this scale, generally speaking?

We expect that this variable will be positively correlated with confidence in the UN, indicating that respondents' support for the UN diminishes if they are further to the right on the ideological scale.

G. Hypothesis 6: Higher levels of trust in domestic institutions of government are positively associated with public support for the United Nations.

In a democratic republic, citizens must place their faith in government representatives to make policies and implement programs in the public interest. When that trust is challenged, public support for programs wanes. Eventually, trust in government institutions and the governing system itself may be jeopardized. Hetherington (2004) notes that trust is particularly important when the benefits of programs are not immediately apparent. He cites the example of public education and notes that support for public education is naturally higher among citizens with school-aged children. Among those without school-aged children, support or disapproval for government funding will be strongly influenced by the level of trust in government. In the case

of international transfers of taxes via organizations such as the UN, citizens in “donor” countries must have confidence in multiple layers of government, including their own governments, the multilateral organization, and governments of net recipient countries. Given the disconnect between the citizen donor/tax-payer and the recipient, a lack of confidence in international programs is understandable. Indeed, one factor frequently cited by critics of foreign aid is the prevalence of government corruption and unnecessarily high military spending in recipient countries.⁸

The interconnectedness of trust is an important element of our argument. We posit that trust in national governing bodies and trust in international organizations such as the UN are linked. Trust in the international organization may depend on having trust in one’s own national government. To test this hypothesis, we have included an independent variable based on a WVS question about trust in national governing institutions. The wording of the question used to test this hypothesis is as follows:

E075: I am going to name a number of organizations. For each one, could you tell me how much confidence you have in them: is it a great deal of confidence, quite a lot of confidence, not very much confidence or none at all?

...The government (in your nation's capital)

- 1. 'A great deal'*
- 2. 'Quite a lot'*
- 3. 'Not very much'*
- 4. 'None at all'*

We expect that the relationship between domestic trust in government and support of the UN will be positive and significant, demonstrating the interconnected nature of political trust.

H. Country Dummy Variables

In order to capture the impact of country-specific influences on public opinion on the United Nations, we also included in the analysis a 0-1 dummy variable for each country.⁹ The populations of each country share a range of experiences that help frame their national opinion of the UN. This includes a number of aspects of the state’s history and cultural heritage which will uniquely influence national perceptions of large international organizations such as the UN. These country-specific factors include (but are not limited to) past and present experience with the United Nations, including UN peacekeeping involvement in the country or in regions of unique interest to that country. Elements of national political culture will also be captured by the country dummy variables. In addition, the history of UN contributions to the country’s well-being through disaster relief, health care, food aid, or development assistance may also have a national-level impact.

4. Findings

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between the independent variables and confidence in the United Nations.¹⁰ We use listwise deletion of cases with missing data, which reduces the number of cases in the regression analysis to 36,791

individuals from forty-one countries. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 2. Variables testing the first and second hypotheses both are significant and in the predicted direction. Higher levels of education are significantly associated with greater confidence in the UN, as hypothesized. Higher levels of political interest were also significantly related to positive public opinion on the UN. Clearly, educated people who are interested in politics are better informed and more supportive of the United Nations.

The third and fourth hypotheses test whether an individual's sense of nationalism and territorial identification are associated with support of the UN. We hypothesized that people who are proud of their nationality are less inclined toward internationalism and thus less supportive of the UN. The findings in our model contradict our predictions; pride in one's nation is significantly and positively related to confidence in the UN. Rather than confidence in the UN existing at the opposite end of the spectrum from nationalism, the two phenomena overlap. The respondents who lack pride in their own nationality also express a lack of confidence in the UN. Newly-established states (former Soviet and Yugoslav republics, for example) are neither nationalistic nor supportive of the UN. It appears that individuals who are uncomfortable with governance structures in their own states are also unlikely to feel confidence in international governing bodies. On the other hand, long-standing states with firmly-entrenched nationalism (Northern and Western Europe, for example) are more supportive of the UN. These data suggest that nationalism "spills over" to support for the UN. When people are comfortable with the sovereignty of their own state, they seem to be more likely to accept the jurisdiction of an international organization such as the United Nations. Though we did not anticipate this finding, it seems to support our conclusions about the importance of trust in government in general as a precursor to support of the UN.

In contrast to simple nationalism, the findings on territorial self-identification did prove to be significantly related to UN confidence, in the predicted direction. Respondents who consider themselves to be world citizens are more likely to support the UN. Those who most strongly identify with their local or regional geographic groupings are less likely to be UN supporters. Given the more specific nature of the territorial identity variable, it is logical that it predicts public opinion on this foreign policy issue.

The findings presented in this model contradict our expectations with regard to self-placement on a left - right ideological spectrum. Our hypothesis is that respondents who express a more leftist ideology will be more supportive of the UN. Contrary to our expectations, the analysis reveals that the relationship between ideology and UN support is not significant. One explanation for this counter-intuitive finding is that respondents in some non-western or non-democratic countries may not employ the left - right ideological spectrum in the manner that is commonly understood by US and European researchers. In certain countries, respondents may be unaware of how their political views would be reflected on a left - right political spectrum.¹¹ Self-placement on this spectrum could vary widely across settings and it is possible that our hypothesis reflects a western or U.S. bias. For example, the more radical left in some countries would view the United Nations as a tool of western imperialism and would not support the organization's stated mission. We tested the possibility that the impact of ideology is curvilinear; that is, the extreme left and right wings are united in their dislike of the UN. However, the results of these tests showed that political extremism was not correlated with

antipathy toward the UN.¹² The relationship between ideology and international public opinion on the United Nations merits additional analysis.

The relationship between confidence in the national government and confidence in the United Nations was strongly significant, as predicted. It appears that citizens who trust their national governments transfer this confidence to support for international organizations such as the United Nations. Clearly, both nationalism and confidence in domestic government are positively associated with support of the United Nations. People who are wary of their central government are also wary of international organizations. This finding provides evidence in favor of the importance of building political trust in all institutions of government as a foundation for positive public opinion on international organizations.¹³

The adjusted R-square for the model is .223, indicating that this model captures a relatively small share of the variation in public opinion on the UN.¹⁴ In order to make full use of the World Values Survey (and thus be able to use data at the individual level) we used some measures that were less than ideal. For example, because there were no direct measures of knowledge of the UN, we used levels of education and political interest as indirect indicators of this variable. We believe that if the survey questions measured more directly knowledge of the UN, the R-square would be higher.

Table 2: Results of OLS Regression Analysis

Coefficients^a					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	1.471	.031		47.498	.000
Highest educational level attained	-.011	.002	-.029	-5.670	.000
Politics important	.022	.005	.024	4.880	.000
How proud of nationality	.028	.007	.022	4.219	.000
I see myself as a world citizen	.085	.006	.075	15.414	.000
Self positioning in political scale	-.000	.002	-.002	-.415	.678
Confidence: The Government	.325	.005	.323	62.768	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Confidence: The United Nations

Model Summary

N	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
36,791	.473	.224	.223	.793

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5. Discussion

The results of the multiple regression analysis present straightforward evidence of the relationship between public opinion on the United Nations, political interest and knowledge, territorial identification, and political trust. This research indicates that attitudes toward international organizations such as the UN are based on trust, and are not merely the result of recent events. Although it is tempting to think of public opinion on foreign policy as bound by one administration or current events, we find evidence of differences in public opinion that are based on fundamental and durable factors such as knowledge and confidence in government. Additional research should be undertaken to understand better the other values and attitudes that underlie opinion on international and multilateral initiatives.

Public opinion on foreign policy initiatives seems to vary at both the individual and the state level. Citizens in some states have developed positive or negative attitudes towards the UN because of their experiences with the organization. Referring back to Table 1, it is worth noting that some of the states whose populations are most disillusioned with the UN have had negative experiences with that organization in the recent or not-so-recent past. Among the most critical are populations in Iraq, Argentina, Morocco, Turkey, and Serbia. People in some of these countries have been on the receiving end of UN sanctions; other populations believed that the UN interfered with their right to territory (Morocco in Western Sahara) or were unhappy with the UN's handling of territorial disputes (Serbia in the Yugoslav conflicts, Cyprus and Turkey in the Cyprus conflict, Argentina in the Falklands/Malvinas conflict). Given the UN sanctions and the problems with the oil-for-food program, it is no surprise that Iraqi public opinion on the UN was negative when people in that country were surveyed in 2005. Other states that fall well below the mean UN confidence score of 2.58 include a number of places in which UN missions have been problematic, such as Ethiopia and Jordan. By contrast, the states with the greatest confidence in the UN include those that have recently benefited from UN intervention or humanitarian assistance: Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Mali. Thus, although the analysis in this model concentrates our attention at the individual level, we acknowledge the impact of state-level experiences with the UN.

We are able to make several observations about the impact of individual-level variables on public opinion on the UN. An important contribution of this research is identifying the impact of confidence in government institutions on foreign programs. Whereas trust in government has long been known to be an important indicator of support for domestic programs such as education and health care, it is clear that public support of foreign programs is a function of confidence in government as well. The results of this research indicate that there is a strong connection between confidence in domestic government and confidence in international organizations. This finding provides support for Popkin's theory of "low information rationality," suggesting that core values stand alongside knowledge as relevant factors in the formulation of public opinion on foreign policy.

This examination of international support for the United Nations demonstrates that education, political interest, geographic identification, and political trust are all important predictors of opinion on foreign policy. Although a measure of variance in public opinion on foreign policy

may be based on current events, a growing body of evidence suggests that foreign policy attitudes are deeply rooted and fundamental.

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Notes

¹ Earlier versions of this article were presented at the International Studies Conference in San Francisco (March 2008) and the World International Studies Conference in Ljubljana, Slovenia (July 2008). The authors thank Cooper Drury for his valuable comments.

² The fifth wave of the WVS/EVS is the same survey as the fourth wave of the WVS. Both numbering systems are used on the organization's website.

³ We previously analyzed the fourth wave of the WVS/EVS (1999-2004) and found nearly the identical results to those found in the present analysis.

⁴ The authors gratefully acknowledge the World Values Survey / European Values Survey. Data sets and a description of the survey are available at: www.worldvaluessurvey.org.

⁵ This ordinal variable approximates an interval variable, and it will be treated as such.

⁶ One PIPA (2001) report indicates that when asked how much money should be devoted to foreign aid, the majority of respondents propose an amount far higher than the actual amount. When asked for an "appropriate amount," the median response was ten percent of the federal budget. This was approximately ten times the actual spending level.

⁷ Looking at developing countries only, Edwards (2009) finds that more highly educated individuals, whose incomes may fall from liberal global economic regimes, are less supportive of international economic organizations.

⁸ See, for example, Eurobarometer (2003) and PIPA (2001).

⁹ We exclude one country in order to prevent the occurrence of perfect multicollinearity.

¹⁰ We treat all scaled variables as interval data.

¹¹ There is some evidence for this: the left-right variable generated by far the largest number of "don't know" responses.

¹² Political extremism was operationally defined as holding a value of "1" or "10" on the left-right scale. The correlation remained low even when the definition was relaxed to include scores of "1-2" and "9-10".

¹³ It is certainly possible that an alternative factor led to the correlation between confidence in national and international political institutions. The most likely factor would be a more generalized personal proclivity to trust others ("social trust"). We tested this possibility by adding WVS question v23 to the model ("Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you need to be very careful in dealing with people?"). An analysis of the revised model indicates that "Trust in people" is not

a statistically significant predictor of “Confidence in the UN”; “Confidence in [your] government”, however, retained its statistical significance (at the .05 level).

¹⁴ The adjusted R-square without the country dummy variables was 0.132. Thirty-two of the forty country dummy variables were statistically significant; eighteen were not.