

EWIS 2019 Call for Papers

Foreign Policy and Public Opinion: State of the Art and Future Research Avenues

Workshop Convenors:

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Workshop summary

This workshop seeks contributions on public opinion and foreign policy focused, in particular, on the elite-masses nexus and mediating actors, and non-democratic and non-Western cases. There is a rich literature on public opinion and foreign policy. Much of the existing research was extensively on democratic states, in particular, the United States and European cases (e.g. Eichenberg 1989; Risse-Kappen 1991; Holsti 1992; Foyle 1997). Yet, scholars have argued that democratic constraints on foreign policy are not automatic (e.g. Baum and Potter 2015). Recent studies have shown that public opinion can matter to foreign policy decision-making in non-democratic states and (semi-) authoritarian regimes (e.g. Zhao 2013, Ozdamar 2016, March 2018). We still know little about the conditions under which decision-makers in such regimes are or become more attentive to public opinion and the institutions or channels through which citizens in such states can express their opinions in meaningful and effective ways. This growing scholarship calls for a look at the differences between and within regime types regarding foreign policy (e.g. Eichenberg 2017; Bell and Quek 2018). It suggests that some assumptions premised on democratic institutions need to be revisited. Equally, foreign policy scholars have long studied publics' acquisition of information, the media's role and what underlies attitudes to and the salience of foreign policy (e.g. Oppermann and Viehriig 2009; Clements 2011; Hildebrandt et al. 2013). A new look at information acquisition, attitude formation on and salience of foreign policy is timely in light of advances in new technology, particularly social media, and in the age of populism and the by-passing of the traditional media.

We welcome papers exploring the public-elite nexus, investigating interaction and direction of influence, including channels of information, mediating factors and actors that may shape attitudes. We are looking for work addressing the methodological, theoretical and empirical gaps. We encourage applications looking at single country case studies as well as using comparative frameworks. Paper proposals can include but are not limited to the following topics:

- Consensus and contestation between elites and the public
- Processes and relations, channels and direction of public-elite influence
- Actors influencing and/or influenced by public opinion
- Feedback loops and links between the masses and decision-makers
- The instrumentalisation of public opinion in foreign policy decisions
- Is there a global public opinion and how does it manifest in policy-makers' decisions?
- Ideas, culture, beliefs, norms and public opinion
- Institutional settings and social contexts favourable or mitigating public opinion's effect
- Case studies of non-democratic or authoritarian regimes
- Non-Western states cases