

WHEN ALLIES ACT: THE ROLE OF EUROPEAN PUBLIC OPINION IN THE 2011 MILITARY
INTERVENTION IN LIBYA

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ABSTRACT

Megan M. Poole: When Allies Act: The Role of European Public Opinion in the 2011
Military Intervention in Libya
(Under the direction of Milada Anna Vachudova)

This thesis investigates the conditions under which decisions for military intervention are constrained by public opinion. Prior studies have identified electoral cycles and legislative checks as potential constraints on foreign policy making, but the interaction of these constraints and public opinion has gone largely unobserved. This thesis utilizes the 2011 NATO intervention in Libya as a case study to test whether the presence of upcoming elections or strong legislative checks on military deployment decisions are sufficient to motivate governments to make decisions about military intervention that are consistent with public opinion. My findings suggest that governments are chiefly constrained to public opinion through immediate electoral pressures. Strong legislative checks on foreign policy failed to prove sufficient to constrain foreign policy to opinion. These findings suggest that the inclusion of public opinion is critical for foreign policy analysis. Also, with NATO contributions held hostage by electoral time horizons and public sentiment, it may be difficult for NATO to move beyond shifting coalitions of those willing to contribute to missions.

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INTRODUCTION

In February 2011 protests in Libya escalated into violence between rebel and government forces. By March, Muammar Gaddafi's forces were preparing attacks on the rebels and the civilian population of Benghazi (STRATFOR 2011). On March 17, 2011 the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1973, providing a mandate for a no-fly zone, arms embargo, asset freezes, and 'all necessary means' to protect civilians in Libya (United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973: 3-5). UN mandate in hand, a coalition of forces headed by the British and French implemented a no-fly zone and naval blockade on Libya, thwarting military attacks by Gaddafi. On March 23, NATO launched Operation Unified Protector (OUP) to take over the mission in Libya (NATO 2011b).

Despite being members of an alliance that was granted a UN mandate for a military mission to protect civilians, fourteen of NATO's 28 members did not contribute to OUP. Many of the noncontributing NATO members simply lacked the resources required to enforce a no-fly zone and naval blockade, much less to conduct air strikes. For as long as NATO has existed, European states have used their scarce military capabilities to justify sitting on the sidelines during military operations. So from this angle there is little to be learned from intervention in Libya. However, a number of European NATO members, notably Germany and Poland, were militarily capable yet refused to contribute to the mission. In public statements on military intervention in Libya, many leaders evoked public

opinion as a significant factor in their decision-making (Bell & Hendrickson 2012: 156). In this thesis I ask: Does public opinion explain why some European states chose not to participate in OUP, while others contributed?

I use Libya as a case study and test two factors which I hypothesize determine whether a NATO member's decision about military intervention is constrained by public opinion: the proximity of the next election, and the strength of any legislative check on government decisions for military deployment. My electoral constraint hypothesis recognizes that governments are always concerned about staying in power, but that these concerns are more acute in the immediate run up to an election (Gaubatz 1991). I hypothesize that if there is an election on the horizon then public opinion determines whether or not a government chooses to participate in military intervention. My legislative constraint hypothesis recognizes that public opinion exerts pressure on parliaments and if parliaments have significant influence over military deployments, they possess multiple veto points over policies that diverge from public opinion (Dieterich, Hummel, and Marschall; Wagner, Peters, and Glahn 2010). I hypothesize that if there is a strong legislative check on foreign policy then public opinion drives the decision over military intervention. Conversely, I hypothesize that the absence of immediate electoral pressure or weak legislative checks on foreign policy, grants governments discretion to consider factors other than public opinion (e.g. alliance politics, humanitarian responsibilities, idiosyncratic factors).

My findings suggest that governments are chiefly constrained to public opinion when elections are on the horizon. Strong legislative checks on foreign policy are not sufficient to constrain governments to public opinion in their decision for military intervention. As predicted, the impact of weak electoral and legislative constraints is indeterminate; in other

words, these constraints are not enough to predict government decisions for military intervention. My findings however suggest that a lack of electoral pressure combined with weak legislative checks on foreign policy is sufficient to expect governments to contribute to NATO interventions *regardless* of public opinion.

My thesis breaks new ground by showing that the timing of elections relative to a decision over military intervention is a significant intervening variable, moderating the role of public opinion in foreign policy making. At the same time, I cast doubt over the role of parliaments as ‘transmission belts’ for public opinion on foreign policy. My study integrates factors that scholars previously identified as important democratic constraints on military action, but whose interaction with actual public opinion has been largely neglected.

This thesis also suggests lessons for NATO’s future missions. In the wake of OUP, many commentators argued that Libya not only exposed capabilities deficits among European allies, but also a lack of political will (Clark 2011; Gates 2011; Hallams & Schreer 2012; Howorth 2012). My finding that governments are chiefly constrained to public opinion through immediate electoral pressure calls into question any broad conclusions about the future of NATO based on European political willingness to contribute in Libya. Since the timing of elections is a dynamic and changing mechanism for public opinion to influence foreign policy, the lessons from European participation in OUP may be limited. Contributions to other NATO missions may vary according to changing electoral time horizons. This means that the specific constellation of contributing and abstaining countries assembled for NATO’s 2011 mission may not be indicative of future missions, when different countries face different electoral constraints. Nevertheless, the mission in Libya, a humanitarian intervention without ground troops, is the type of mission that NATO and its

European members will likely face again in the coming decades. If an election is on the horizon, I show that public opinion is highly likely to determine whether or not a government chooses to participate in a NATO military operation. My theory that electoral cycles can drive decisions about military intervention can be tested to help explain intervention decisions in the past – and to predict intervention in the future.

The rest of this thesis is divided into five parts. First, I explore the theoretical literature that has informed my hypotheses, and explain how my study breaks new ground. Second, I outline the theoretical expectations associated with my electoral and legislative constraint hypotheses. Third, I discuss my research design, case selection, and evidence. Fourth, I present my empirical analysis, first testing my electoral and legislative constraint hypotheses and subsequently looking into the necessity and sufficiency of combinations of electoral and legislative constraining conditions. I augment the results of this initial analysis by process tracing suspected sufficient conditions through the decision-making processes of two key countries: Denmark and Poland. Finally, I conclude by qualifying my results and discussing the implications of my findings for NATO and academic discussions of public opinion-foreign policy linkages.

I. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section explores the literature on the role of public opinion and domestic institutional structures in foreign policy making. I demonstrate how this thesis incorporates public opinion and domestic structures to analyze foreign policy in a new way. In this section I include findings from Holsti (1992) and Risse-Kappen (1991) about the important but inconsistent role public opinion plays in foreign policy. Second, I discuss Gaubatz's (1991) focus on the role of electoral cycles in moderating decisions for military action. Finally, I consider various legislative structures that are thought to moderate decisions for military action (Auerswald 1999; 2000; Clark and Nordstrom 2005; Reiter and Tillman 2002; Wagner et al. 2010).

The role of public opinion in foreign policy has not always been widely accepted in the scholarly community. In the early 1990s, Holsti (1992) and Risse-Kappen (1991) reinvigorated scholarly discussion on the subject by establishing that public opinion does influence foreign policy and that this influence presents important avenues for research. Focusing on American public opinion, Holsti (1992) affirms the impact public opinion has on foreign policy, but recognizes that the opinion-policy link is the least well-developed area of existing literature. My thesis contributes not only to this underdeveloped aspect of the discussion, but also to the neglected study of public opinion in foreign policy *outside* American politics. The role of public opinion in American foreign policy is better studied

than that of other countries. This neglect continues despite studies that demonstrate, for example, that European public opinion on foreign policy is as stable and coherent as opinion in the United States (Isernia, Juhasz, and Rattinger 2002).

While public opinion does influence foreign policy, the link between opinion and policy is not unequivocal. Risse-Kappen (1991) argues that public opinion influences foreign policy, but that this influence is indirect. Risse-Kappen (1991) stresses the importance of domestic structures as intervening variables between public opinion and foreign policy. The decision of some European countries to join the coalition of the willing in Iraq despite oppositional public opinion demonstrates that decisions on military deployment do not always correlate with public opinion (Chan and Safran 2006; Dieterich et al. 2008; Mello 2012; Schuster and Maier 2006; Tago 2009). Yet, instances of disregard for public opinion do not undermine the argument that public opinion plays a role in foreign policy making, but rather highlight the complexity of the link between opinion and foreign policy. Risse-Kappen's (1991) investigation of institutional opportunity structures for public influence in foreign policy incorporates this complexity. Risse-Kappen's approach also provides the point of departure for my study of the interaction between public opinion and electoral and legislative constraints on decisions for military intervention.

In the study of the influence public opinion has on decisions for military action, it is implied that elected politicians prioritize re-election. Gaubatz (1991) hypothesizes that the power of society relative to the state varies within election cycles, with society strengthened close in time to an election. Gaubatz (1991) differentiates between democracies facing immediate elections and democracies facing no immediate elections, finding that democracies get into more wars early in the election cycle, and fewer wars as elections near.

My electoral constraint hypothesis builds on Gaubatz's (1991) study in two aspects. First, Gaubatz (1991) finds significant correlation between the election cycle and the decision for military conflict, but acknowledges shortcomings in terms of causal inference. By focusing on the impact of the timing of elections in a single case study I better isolate the role of the election cycle in the policymaking process. Secondly, Gaubatz (1991) assumes a war-averse public for the purposes of his study. My electoral constraint hypothesis investigates the interaction between public opinion and the timing of elections, accounting for the neglected reality of actual public sentiment.

My legislative constraint hypothesis builds on academic work that explores how domestic institutional structures influence decisions for military action. First, I draw on Auerswald's (1999; 2000) theoretical relationship between democratic subtype and military action. Auerswald (1999) predicts that more majoritarian systems (Westminster and semi-presidential) are less constrained than less majoritarian systems (coalition parliaments and presidential). Auerswald (1999; 2000) argues that the established rules of interaction between the executive, legislature, and the public determine whom the executive is accountable to and the extent to which the legislature can challenge the executive. Second, I incorporate Reiter and Tillman's (2002) and Clark and Nordstrom's (2005) arguments that single-party majority governments are less constrained in their foreign policy making than coalition governments. Finally, I utilize Wagner et al.'s (2010) distinction between parliaments with and without an ex ante veto over military deployments, arguing that countries without an ex ante veto are less constrained than countries with parliaments that can veto military deployments. Wagner et al. (2010) stress that while the ex ante veto is not

the only aspect of parliamentary control over military policy, it is the strongest means a parliament has to constrain the decision for military action.

The insights from this literature allow me to classify states with strong or weak legislative checks on foreign policy (see Table 4). States with strong legislative checks on foreign policy include coalition parliamentary or presidential systems with a coalition government and/or a parliamentary ex ante veto over military deployments. States with weaker legislative checks include Westminster parliamentary or semi-presidential systems with a single-majority government and/or the absence of a parliamentary ex ante veto over military deployments. As with my electoral constraint hypothesis, I build on the existing literature by explicitly focusing on the interaction between public opinion and legislative constraints on foreign policy. Unlike the existing literature, which assumes a conflict-averse public, this thesis investigates the directional pull of public sentiment. This allows for a study of public sentiment that balances the costs of military intervention with other considerations, for example humanitarian responsibilities and alliance obligations.

II. THEORETICAL EXPECTATIONS

In this section, I outline what decisions I expect European governments to make about military intervention given my electoral and legislative constraint hypotheses. These theoretical expectations are based on the literature examined in the previous section and guide the remainder of this thesis. Overall, I use a comparative approach to test the conditions under which foreign policy is constrained, or even determined by, public opinion. This approach integrates factors previously identified as important in understanding decisions made by governments about military intervention, but whose interaction with public opinion has been largely neglected.

With my electoral constraint hypothesis (H1), I build on Gaubatz's (1991) theory that governments are more constrained to public opinion in their foreign policies in the run-up to an election than if there are no immediate electoral pressures. In other words, whether public opinion constrains government decision-making is moderated by the electoral cycle. This leads to two predictions:

H1a: If a government faces an immediate election, this condition is sufficient to motivate governments to make decisions about military intervention that are consistent with public opinion.

H1b: If a government does not face an immediate election, this condition is necessary but not sufficient for governments to diverge from public opinion in decisions about military intervention.

Hence, I expect to see foreign policy that mirrors public opinion in countries where governments are facing elections within a year: Governments engage in military intervention if public opinion is supportive, and stay on the sidelines if public opinion is opposed. In the absence of upcoming elections, I expect governments to be less constrained to public opinion, facing the necessary condition for foreign policy to diverge from public opinion. Still, the absence of electoral constraints is not sufficient to predict whether foreign policy will actually diverge from public opinion. I expect this to vary as governments have some flexibility to weigh public opinion against other political factors.

My legislative constraint hypothesis investigates how legislative constraints moderate the influence of public opinion on government decisions over military intervention. My investigation of countries with strong or weak legislative constraints lead to two hypotheses (H2):

H2a: If a government faces strong legislative checks on foreign policy making, this condition is sufficient to motivate governments to make decisions about military intervention that are consistent with public opinion.

H2b: If a government faces weak legislative checks on foreign policy making, this condition is necessary but not sufficient for governments to diverge from public opinion in decisions about military intervention.

In sum, I predict that states with stronger legislatures are more constrained by public opinion in their foreign policies because the executive is less able to overcome domestic opposition. Therefore, I expect governments facing strong legislative constraints to intervene if public opinion is supportive of military intervention, and abstain if public opinion is opposed. Conversely, states with weaker legislatures are less constrained by public opinion because these states are better able to overcome domestic opposition in foreign policy making. This executive power relative to the legislature could be utilized to pursue foreign policy that indulges other policy objectives while diverging from public opinion. But, the absence of a strong legislative constraint is not sufficient to predict whether foreign policy will actually diverge from public opinion.

III. RESEARCH DESIGN

In this section I explain my decision to focus on the 2011 NATO intervention in Libya, how I select case countries, the evidence I employ, and how I operationalize my variables. This thesis focuses on a small number of cases and investigates the conditions under which outcomes occur, rather than estimating the average effect of a set of independent variables. When determining whether a decision for military intervention aligned with public opinion, causal relations are expressed in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions (Ragin 1987; 2000). Necessary conditions are conditions that must be present for an outcome to occur but do not guarantee such outcome. Sufficient conditions are conditions that always lead to an outcome, but such outcome may also occur without the condition present. I recognize the possibility of different paths to the same outcome and that individual conditions may not be singularly necessary or sufficient; I therefore examine the sufficiency of combinations of casual conditions as well (Ragin 2000: 91-95). The conditions investigated in this analysis (timing of elections, legislative checks on foreign policy) are understood as intervening between an initial condition (public sentiment towards foreign policy) and a final outcome (foreign policy decision that mirrors or diverges from public opinion) (Mahoney 2012).

a. Case Selection: Libya

Studying whether or not states chose to intervene in Libya in 2011 allows me to control for a number of variables. First, the selection of Libya conforms to the findings of public salience literature. This literature suggests that instances of international crises raise foreign policy issue salience to a level that captures the attention of the public and thereby the attention of the government to public opinion (Oppermann and Viehrig 2009).

Second, Libya is the first NATO mission to take place after the divisive 2003 invasion of Iraq and years of unpopular NATO engagement in Afghanistan. I argue that Iraq and Afghanistan, both involving massive ground troop deployments, were exceptional cases of post-Cold War military deployment. On the other hand, the mission in Libya, as well as NATO actions in Serbia in the 1990s, were limited military interventions without the deployment of ground troops and intended to prevent the slaughter of civilians. Libya and Serbia are more characteristic of the sort of mission NATO and European governments may see repeated in the coming decades (Valasek 2011). The nature of the military intervention in Libya therefore makes this study generalizable beyond Libya, pointing to implications that can be considered across similar instances of NATO military interventions.

Third, the intervention against Gaddafi's regime had a humanitarian rationale and was endorsed by international and regional bodies (Valasek 2011). To many, Libya represented the sort of mission European countries would most likely find appropriate for military intervention, given the humanitarian rationale, international mandate, and the strategic importance of North Africa (Howorth 2012). However, German abstention from UN Resolution 1973 undermined the prospects for a EU mission. Subsequently, European

contributions to OUP were mixed. Given this, the study of the role of public opinion in European involvement in Libya provides insight into implications for NATO and the EU.

b. Case Selection: Case Countries

My cases meet three criteria: (1) they have democratic political institutions, (2) they are militarily capable of contributing to OUP, (3) and they are members of the EU and NATO. As a threshold for uncontested democratic political institutions, I utilize the Polity IV Country Reports (2010) data, insuring that included countries scored an 8 or above on the combined autocracy-democracy scale (Marshall and Jaggers 2010).¹ Military capability is determined by whether member states spent at least 2,000 million US dollars on military spending in 2011 (NATO 2011a).² I limited my cases to members of both the EU and NATO because commentary in the wake of OUP highlights the lack of a EU response to the crisis in Libya, and the varied responses of EU member states to the subsequent military intervention. Given the centrality of the EU's lack of a role in Libya, this case selection enables me to comment on the implications of Libya for the role of EU member states within NATO.³

To enhance cross-case comparability and control for varying national interest in Libya, I applied three further criteria. First, Libya's former colonial power Italy is omitted to

¹ Out of NATO's members, this criterion excluded Turkey.

² This threshold has been utilized to determine military capability to contribute to OUP by other authors, for example by Chapell (2011). Out of NATO's members, this criterion excluded Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Hungary, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Slovakia, and Slovenia.

³ Out of NATO's members, this criterion excluded Albania, Canada, Iceland, Norway, Turkey, and the US.

avoid confounding any results with the complexities of post-colonial ties.⁴ Second, during the 2011 crisis Gaddafi explicitly used migration as a ‘weapon’ against European countries, framing the threat from Libya in terms of refugee flows (Coticchia 2011: 54). Yet, as demonstrated by Italy, Malta, Cyprus, and Greece having to plead in Brussels for European solidarity in the face of an influx of North African refugees, such migration concerns were not deeply held by European countries beyond this part of the Mediterranean (Spiegel 2011). To control for extraordinary migration pressures emanating from Libya, Greece is also excluded from my set of cases.

Finally, Belgium and Portugal are excluded from this analysis due to unusual domestic political circumstances. In Belgium, the decision to intervene in Libya was taken nearly 300 days into a record-long period of government crisis under the rule of a temporary government. This temporary government faced different political incentives and institutional constraints than Belgian governments usually face. Hence, it is not possible to test the role of the Belgian legislature and public in constraining foreign policy to public opinion (Gertis 2011; Presseurop 2011). Portugal is omitted because on March 23, 2011, the same day NATO launched OUP, Portugal’s Prime Minister stepped down after the parliament rejected an austerity bill meant to prevent Portugal from seeking an international bailout (Alvarenga and Bugge 2011). Given the timing of this political upheaval, Portugal is considered unable to contribute to OUP.

Based on these criteria, I select nine European NATO countries for my analysis. Table 1 lists my cases, their Polity IV scores (2010) and military expenditures as of 2011. Nine cases are sufficient to look for cross-country trends rather than country-specific

⁴ On Italy and the 2011 intervention in Libya see Lombardi (2012).

phenomenon. My empirical analysis of these cases is also complimented by more nuanced process tracing in key case countries. These key case countries are identified in response to the initial empirical analysis of my cases. Due to the limitations of this paper, I focus on countries that, in this initial analysis, demonstrated the most striking results. This process tracing provide further evidence for my conclusions and strengthens my casual inference.

My case selection allows me to control for alternative explanations for decisions

Table 1. Case Countries

	Polity IV (2010)	Mil. Expenditures (2011, in mil. USD)	% of total crude oil imported from Libya (2010)	Arms Exports to Libya (in mil. euro) 2005-2009	Political Orientation of Government
Czech Rep	8	2,448	--	3.11	Right
Denmark	10	4,518	--	--	Right
France	9	53,444	15.7%	210.15	Right
Germany	10	48,140	7.7%	83.48	Right
Netherlands	10	11,339	2.3%	--	Right
Poland	10	8,908	--	2.03	Right
Romania	9	2,380	--	--	Grand Coalition
Spain	10	13,984	12.1%	7.69	Left
UK	10	63,567	8.5%	119.35	Right

Polity IV (Marshall and Jagers 2010) scores represent the combined autocracy-democracy scale with scores of 10 representing the most democratic. Military expenditures data was drawn from a 2011 NATO report, *Military Spending of the NATO countries from 1990 to 2011*. Percent of total crude oil imported from Libya as of 2010 comes from an International Energy Agency report on Libya (2011). Data on total European arms exports to Libya from 2005 to 2009 was drawn from a database published by the Guardian in 2011. The author determined the political orientation of each government from the Parties and Elections in Europe database. “—“ indicates data missing from original source.

about intervention in Libya. First, some international relations approaches reject the role of domestic politics in foreign policy making. For example, theories derived from the realist tradition privilege systemic factors, such as relative power or alliance dependencies, over domestic political factors. Even a cursory look at my case countries casts doubt on the applicability of these theories in Libya. Not only was the intervention in Libya motivated by humanitarian aims rather than balance-of-power politics, but among my cases those that intervened and those that did not include large and small states, eastern and western states, and Atlanticist and Europeanist states.

Second, it is possible to argue that domestic politics did affect European foreign policy making towards OUP, but that national interest accounts for the variation in European involvement and not pressure from domestic public opinion. Such arguments point to economic ties, specifically oil and arms trade between European NATO allies and Libya, or to security concerns associated with migration. I contend that such national interests provide an incomplete portrayal of the domestic political incentives and constraints facing European governments in their decision on OUP. My selection of case countries demonstrates that even when controlling for concerns for migration, European policies present significant variation. Moreover, my case countries had relatively comparable economic interests in Libya in terms of oil and arms trade (Table 1 includes indicators of these economic interests).

Finally, it is possible to recognize that domestic public opinion influences foreign policy, but highlight alternative intervening variables to explain the varying constraint public sentiment places on foreign policy. For example, some argue that partisan politics help explain European contributions to Operation Iraqi Freedom (Mello 2012; Schuster and Maier 2006). These authors argue that right-of-center parties were more prone to military action

and more likely to send troops to Iraq in solidarity with the conservative American government that was leading the coalition (Mello 2012; Schuster and Maier 2006). In the case of Libya, partisan effects are less clear-cut. OUP was conducted with the lukewarm support of a left-of-center American government and the humanitarian rationale of OUP, associated with the liberal internationalist tendencies of left-of-center governments, complicates the hypothesis that right-of-center governments are more prone to military action. Overall, the partisan hypothesis appears inconclusive in Libya.

c. Data and Operationalization

This study derives the position of each country towards contributing to OUP from news coverage, policy statements, and NATO documentation of the mission in Libya. Whether each case country militarily intervened in Libya as part of OUP is then combined with public opinion data on the attitudes of citizens. This helps determine whether the decision about intervention in Libya aligned with public opinion. The 2011 Transatlantic Trends Survey (TTS) provides cross-country public opinion data for all case countries except Denmark and the Czech Republic (Kennedy et al. 2011). This survey was conducted from May 25, 2011 to June 20, 2011 and asked respondents to what extent they approve or disapprove of military action in Libya by international forces. The timing of the poll is problematic, as the poll was conducted just after the decision whether to intervene was made. Yet, TTS public opinion data is the best available measure for public opinion towards OUP since the availability of cross-country data is important for my analysis. Czech public opinion is omitted from TTS and so I draw from a Czech poll by the Center for Analysis and

Empirical Studies (Johnston 2011). The Czech poll posed a slightly different question, asking respondents whether the military campaign against Gaddafi was justified, rendering the Czech poll an imperfect but adequate supplement to TTS. This poll was conducted between March 24 and 29, 2011 giving it a comparable timeline with the TTS poll. Similarly, I utilize Danish public opinion data from a Danish Gallup Poll conducted the same week (Buley 2011). This poll asked Danes whether they support Danish military involvement in enforcing a no-fly zone in Libya. These poll results are presented in Table 2.

The European Election Database and Parties and Elections in Europe database provide data on the timing of elections in case countries (Nordsieck 2013; Norwegian Social Science Data Services 2013). If a country was hosting a general, legislative, presidential, and/or regional election within 2011, that country is coded as facing an immediate election. If the next election was after 2011, the country is coded as facing no immediate election. Upcoming election dates are also presented in Table 2.

In terms of my legislative constraint hypothesis, I utilize a number of sources to index three kinds of legislative constraints: democratic subtype, whether a single-party majority runs the government, and whether parliament has an *ex ante* veto over military deployments. The descriptive data for these legislative constraints is presented in Table 2. I utilize the US Central Intelligence Agency's World Factbook (2013) field listing for government type, Polity IV (2010) details of governing coalitions, and Wagner et al.'s (2010) information on legislatures in each case country. For each aspect of legislative checks on foreign policy, weak checks are coded as 0 and strong checks are coded as 1. The sum of the three categories of legislative constraints represents the overall legislative constraint on foreign policy making in each country. This places my case countries on a scale from 0 to 3 with 0

Table 2. Case Country Data for Empirical Analysis

	Approve of OUP	Disapprove of OUP	Date of next election	Democratic sub-type	Nature of governing coalition	Presence of ex ante veto	Contribute to OUP
Czech Rep	43.7%	34.4%	Presid- Jan. 2013	Parliamentary	Coalition	Absent	Did not intervene
Denmark	78%	--	Parli- Sep. 2011	Parliamentary	Coalition	Present	Intervened
France	58.4%	38.8%	Senate- Sep. 2011; Presid- Apr. 2012	Semi- presidential	Single- party majority	Absent	Intervened
Germany	38.4%	58.3%	State elections befor, after OUP	Parliamentary	Coalition	Present	Did not intervene
Netherlands	64.8%	31.4%	Parli- Sep. 2012	Parliamentary	Coalition	Absent	Intervened
Poland	35.4%	47.4%	Parli- Oct. 2011	Parliamentary	Coalition	Absent	Did not intervene
Romania	40.37%	50.69%	Parli- Dec. 2012	Semi- presidential	Coalition	Absent	Intervened
Spain	53.09%	41.12%	Called early elections, Jul. 2011	Parliamentary	Coalition	Present	Intervened
UK	55.04%	40.36%	Parli- May 2015	Westminster	Coalition	Absent	Intervened

Public opinion data from the 2011 Transatlantic Trends Survey for all countries except the Czech Republic and Denmark. Czech public opinion from a Czech poll by the Center for Analysis and Empirical Studies and data on Denmark comes from a Danish Gallup Poll. Date of next election derived from election statistics provided by the European Election Database. Democratic subtype identified by author by looking at various databases and secondary-sources on the form of government in European countries. Single-party majority and coalition governments were identified through the European Election Database and the Parties and Elections in Europe database. The presence of absence of an ex ante veto of military deployments utilized Wagner et al.'s (2010) coding of parliamentary veto powers. Wagner et al.'s (2010) data covered parliamentary powers up to 2004. I have updated this dataset to account for a change of law since this time, notably in Spain in 2005. The author, in consult with NATO sources, news coverage, and secondary-literature, determined the contribution of each country to OUP. “—“ indicates data missing from original source.

representing those countries with the weakest legislative role in foreign policy making and 3
representing those with the strongest legislative role.

IV. EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

Under what conditions are foreign policy decisions constrained to public opinion? I begin my analysis by focusing on the case study of Libya and whether the electoral cycle moderates the constraint public opinion has on foreign policy. I first distinguish between governments facing immediate elections and those facing no immediate electoral pressure. I determine that governments in four countries (Denmark, France, Germany, and Poland) faced immediate elections, while five governments did not (Czech Republic, Netherlands, Romania, Spain, and the United Kingdom).⁵ I then compare public sentiment towards military intervention in Libya to the decision made by each country on whether to contribute to OUP.

In each country facing immediate electoral pressures, the decision about military intervention in Libya correlated with the preferences of the public. Denmark and France faced publics that favored military action and both countries contributed to NATO's intervention. Germany and Poland faced publics that opposed military intervention and both countries refused to contribute to OUP. This evidence supports my hypothesis (H1a),

⁵ Spain is designated as having no immediate election, despite holding elections in November 2011. These elections were called early due to domestic political issues unrelated to the decision to intervene in Libya. Since the decision to call for early elections was made in July 2011 (after the March 2011 decision on Libya), I contend that Spain was absent immediate electoral pressure during decision-making over military intervention in Libya.

suggesting that immediate electoral pressure motivates governments to make decisions about military intervention that are consistent with public opinion.

The absence of near term elections proves to be a necessary but not a sufficient condition for governments to disregard public opinion in foreign policy making, supporting hypothesis H1b. The Netherlands, Spain, and the UK faced public sentiment that favored military intervention and each country decided to contribute to NATO's mission. Hence, despite being free from electoral pressures, these governments remained true to public opinion in their foreign policies. On the other hand, both the Czech Republic and Romania pursued foreign policies that disregarded public sentiment. The Czech government faced a public that favored intervention, yet the government chose not to contribute to OUP. Romania faced a public opposed to intervention, yet the government decided to contribute to NATO's mission. Overall, these results suggest that the electoral cycle moderates whether foreign policy is constrained by public opinion (see Table 3). When a government faces immediate electoral pressures, public opinion will be reflected in foreign policy decisions. It is only absent these electoral pressures that governments may ignore public opinion.

I follow a similar approach to test my legislative constraint hypothesis that countries with stronger legislative checks on foreign policy are more likely constrained to public opinion. I first determine whether my case countries have strong or weak legislative checks on foreign policy. I draw from the democratic subtype, nature of governing coalition, and presence of an ex ante veto data presented in Table 2, and code weak checks as 0 and code strong checks as 1. For democratic subtype, less majoritarian systems (coalition parliamentary and presidential systems) are coded 1 and more majoritarian systems (Westminster parliamentary and semi-presidential systems) are coded 0. Second, countries

with coalition governments are coded 1 and countries with a single-party majority are coded 0. Finally, countries where parliament has an ex ante veto over deployments are coded 1 and

Table 3. Empirical Test: Electoral Constraint Hypothesis

	Public opinion	Timing of elections	Contribution to OUP	Policy correlates opinion?
Czech Republic	For	No immediate election	No intervention	No
Denmark	For	Immediate election	Intervention	Yes
France	For	Immediate election	Intervention	Yes
Germany	Against	Immediate election	No intervention	Yes
Netherlands	For	No immediate election	Intervention	Yes
Poland	Against	Immediate election	No intervention	Yes
Romania	Against	No immediate election	Intervention	No
Spain	For	No immediate election	Intervention	Yes
United Kingdom	For	No immediate election	Intervention	Yes

Public opinion refers to overall public sentiment towards international military intervention in Libya and is drawn from the public opinion data presented in Table 2. Timing of elections is similarly determined by simplifying the upcoming election dates presented in Table 2 into the presence or absence of an election within a year of the decision to intervene in Libya.

countries without an ex ante veto are coded 0. The sum of these legislative constraints represents the overall legislative constraint on foreign policy making, placing my case countries on a scale from 0 to 3. I condense this scale into a dichotomous category, where countries with overall scores of 0 or 1 have weak legislative checks and countries with overall scores of 2 or 3 have strong legislative checks (see Table 4). I determine that six countries (Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, and Spain) face strong legislative checks on foreign policy making, while three countries (France, Romania, and the UK) face weaker legislative constraints.

Table 4. Legislative Constraints of Case Countries

	Democratic subtype	Nature of governing coalition	Presence of ex ante veto	Total Legislative constraint
Czech Rep	1	1	0	2
Denmark	1	1	1	3
France	0	0	0	0
Germany	1	1	1	3
Netherlands	1	1	0	2
Poland	1	1	0	2
Romania	0	1	0	1
Spain	1	1	1	3
UK	0	1	0	1

My analysis of these legislative constraints and whether foreign policy decisions correlate with public opinion delivers mixed results. These results do not support the hypothesis (H2a) that a strong legislative check on foreign policy is sufficient to motivate governments to make decisions about military intervention that are consistent with public opinion. While Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, and Spain are constrained by strong legislative checks on foreign policy and their decisions towards Libya reflected public opinion, this does not hold true for the Czech Republic. The Czech government faced favorable public opinion and strong legislative checks, yet abstained from intervening in Libya. Given the small size of my set of cases, this divergence casts doubt that strong legislative checks are sufficient to constrain foreign policy to opinion (see Table 5). The

hypothesis (H2b) that weak legislative checks on foreign policy are necessary for governments to ignore public sentiment is similarly unsupported by my evidence.

Table 5. Empirical Test: Legislative Constraint Hypothesis

	Public opinion	Legislative Constraint	Contribution to OUP	Policy correlates opinion?
Czech Rep	For	Strong legislative constraint	No intervention	No
Denmark	For	Strong legislative constraint	Intervention	Yes
France	For	Weak legislative constraint	Intervention	Yes
Germany	Against	Strong legislative constraint	No intervention	Yes
Netherlands	For	Strong legislative constraint	Intervention	Yes
Poland	Against	Strong legislative constraint	No intervention	Yes
Romania	Against	Weak legislative constraint	Intervention	No
Spain	For	Strong legislative constraint	Intervention	Yes
UK	For	Weak legislative constraint	Intervention	Yes

These initial results suggest that in the case of immediate elections, electoral pressures are sufficient to constrain policy to opinion. This accounts for the decision of four out of nine case countries (France, Denmark, Poland, and Germany). Since my legislative constraint hypothesis fails to independently account for the decisions of the five remaining countries, I now test whether the combination of facing no upcoming elections but having strong or weak legislative constraints is sufficient to account for government decisions towards OUP.

Figure 1 presents this combined analysis of public sentiment, electoral horizons, and the strength of legislative checks. This analysis reveals six paths that lead to the foreign

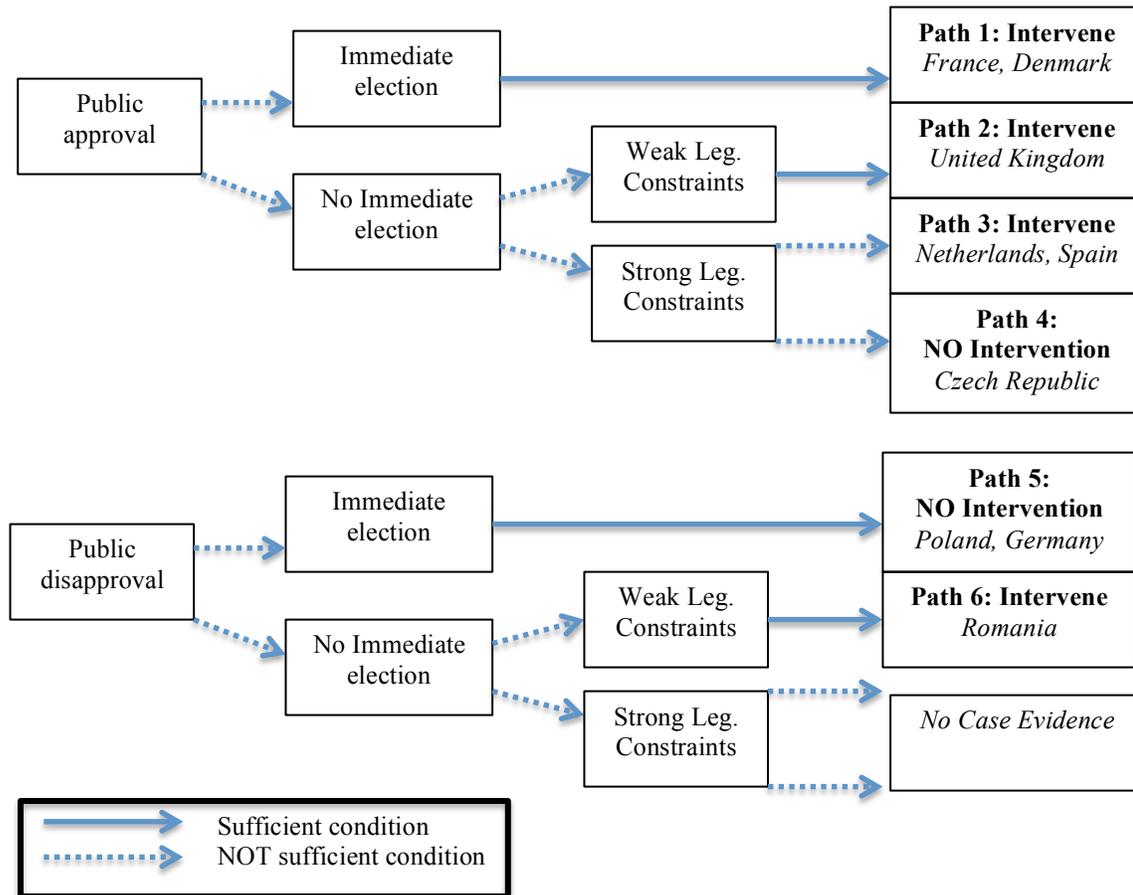
policy decisions made by my case countries. Path 1 and Path 5 were previously identified and suggest that, regardless of the strength of legislative checks on foreign policy making, an immediate election is sufficient to constrain governments to public opinion in their foreign policy making. A lack of immediate electoral pressure in combination with strong legislative constraints is indeterminate. These conditions are not sufficient to constrain foreign policy to public opinion or consistently predict that governments will ignore public opinion. This is demonstrated in the divergence between the Netherlands and Spain (Path 3) and the Czech Republic (Path 4). Conversely, my evidence suggests that a lack of immediate electoral pressure in combination with weak legislative checks on foreign policy is sufficient for governments to intervene *regardless* of public opinion. Path 2 and Path 6 show that all case countries without immediate elections and with weak legislative constraints chose to intervene militarily in Libya. This raises the possibility of an interventionist bias in these strong states. Such bias is beyond the scope of this analysis, but presents an avenue for further research.

a. Key Case Studies

Since my initial analysis suggests that immediate elections are singularly sufficient to constrain policy to opinion, I now present two key case studies –Denmark and Poland – to strengthen casual inferences from these findings. Denmark and Poland are both cases where an upcoming election was identified as singularly sufficient to constrain policy towards Libya to the dictates of public opinion. In Denmark, the public approved of military intervention, the government faced upcoming elections, and Denmark intervened as part of

OUP. The Polish government faced upcoming elections but the public was opposed military intervention and Poland abstained from NATO's mission. By focusing on the details of

Figure 1. Paths to Observed Outcomes



Danish and Polish decision-making about Libya, these case studies provide further evidence of the role of elections in constraining governments to public opinion in their decisions about military intervention.

In a 2011 speech, US Secretary of Defense Robert Gates (2011) commended Norway and Denmark for striking one third of the targets in Libya despite having provided only twelve percent of allied strike aircraft. Secretary Gates also pleaded publically for Germany

and Poland to contribute to the campaign but both countries steadfastly refused to become involved (Cloud 2011).⁶ With the exception of Secretary Gates singling out Denmark and Poland for their contrasting positions towards OUP, these two countries have otherwise been characterized by a marked degree of similarity. Denmark and Poland are Atlanticist countries and are amongst those NATO members who were small but militarily capable of contributing to OUP (Bell & Hendrickson 2012; Wivel 2013). Denmark and Poland both contributed in Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq, gaining reputations as active supporters of NATO (Bell & Hendrickson 2012: 154; Jakobsen 2012: 106-107). As of 2010, Denmark's military expenditures amounted to \$4,504 million, accounting for 1.5 percent of Danish gross domestic product (GDP). Poland out spent Denmark, with military expenditures hitting \$8,781 million, accounting for 1.9 percent of GDP (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute 2012).

Further, Denmark and Poland had comparable national interests in Libya. While 71 of Libya's crude exports go to Europe, 58 percent of these exports end up in Italy, Germany, France, Spain, or the UK. The remaining 13 percent is dispersed the rest of Europe (Energy Information Agency 2013). In the case of Denmark and Poland, only PGNiG, a state-controlled Polish oil and natural gas giant, was operating in Libya as of 2011 (Nolan 2011). Danish oil interests in Libya were limited to general, global oil and shipping interests (James 2011). Additionally, Denmark and Poland had only marginal migration concerns emanating from Libya (Spiegel 2011). Finally, center-right coalition governments governed both Denmark and Poland, with the Liberal, Conservative, and Danish People's parties governing

⁶ Gates also appealed to the Netherlands, Spain, and Turkey to contribute to air strikes, as these countries had limited their contributions to non-offensive support.

Denmark and Civic Platform (PO) and Polish People's party (PSL) forming Poland's conservative government (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2013; Pidd 2011).

Denmark and Poland both face strong legislative constraints on foreign policy, though there is still variation between the two. The Danish parliament possesses an *ex ante* veto over military deployments while the Polish parliament does not (Wagner et al. 2010: 47-48, 80-81). Additionally, a tradition of minority governments pushes Danish politics towards consensus. Together, this makes Denmark one of the most legislatively constrained countries in Europe. Poland is comparatively less constrained, yet despite differences in legislative constraints, the Polish government was motivated to mirror public opinion in its policy towards Libya. Turning individually to each country, an examination of the discourse of Danish and Polish leaders reveals the attempts each government made to assuage voters with their decision towards Libya in the run up to their 2011 parliamentary elections.

i. Denmark

With minority governments and a parliamentary *ex ante* veto over military deployments, any decision for military intervention faces high institutional hurdles in Denmark. With numerous legislative veto points over foreign policy, a first look suggests that it is very difficult for Denmark to pursue any military intervention or similarly activist foreign policy. Yet, as humanitarian crisis loomed in early 2011, a domestic consensus arose in support of intervening in Libya. A March 2011 Gallup Poll revealed that 78% of Danish voters supported military involvement in enforcing the UN mandated no-fly zone over Libya

(Buley 2011). With Denmark facing parliamentary elections upcoming in September 2011, this support for intervention was not ignored in Danish foreign policy circles.

With the support of a significant majority of the Danish electorate, the Danish government and a wide spectrum of Danish parliamentarians began to perceive OUP as good domestic politics, as well as an opportunity for Denmark to pursue its wider foreign policy interests. Danish foreign policy elites and parliamentarians began publically to characterize intervention in Libya as an ideal opportunity for Danish foreign policy. The *Danish Foreign Policy Yearbook 2012* characterizes the intervention in Libya as a perfect war from a Danish perspective: Libya's humanitarian rationale tapped into the Danish commitment to promote UN norms, stability in North Africa was perceived to be a Danish national security interest, and the Danish air force, unengaged elsewhere, was available so Denmark could 'do its part' as a member of NATO (Jakobsen & Moller 2012: 108-109, 111).⁷

With eyes on the upcoming September 2011 elections, Danish elites seized OUP as a good foreign and domestic political move. Danish participation in OUP was approved unanimously by parliament. Such political consensus was critical, mitigating the political risk associated with military deployment in the face of upcoming parliamentary elections. Danish Prime Minister Lars Loekke Rasmussen announced Denmark's support for OUP and explained that while Denmark is a small country, they recognize and uphold their international responsibilities (Ahram Online 2011). Rasmussen made Danish F-16s available to NATO without caveats and dropped 11% of the total bombs dropped during OUP (Jakobsen & Moller 2012: 114, 119).

⁷ For more on post-Cold War Danish foreign policy, see Wivel 2013.

ii. Poland

In contrast with Denmark, the Polish parliament does not have an ex ante veto over military deployments, though the nature of the Polish parliamentary system still erects some legislative checks over foreign policy. Looking at legislative constraints alone suggests that Poland could more easily engage in military intervention than Denmark, but public opinion on the eve of elections complicates this assumption. Polish parliamentary elections immediately followed the decision about Libya. Yet, unlike in Denmark, no opposition parties were calling for action in Libya. In light of split Polish public opinion that was generally unfavorable towards military intervention in Libya, Poland's conservative coalition government was ill advised to intervene in Libya if they wished to maintain office beyond 2011.

Lacking public and parliamentary consensus in support of intervening in Libya, the Polish government was unable to disperse the political risk of a military intervention in the face of upcoming elections. Therefore, citing public opinion as a key reason, Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski announced Poland's refusal to contribute to OUP (Bell & Hendrickson 2012: 155-156). Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk assured his public that Poland would only take part in military action in Libya if there were 'immediate dangers' to Polish and NATO security (Economist Intelligence Unit 2011). Lacking public support and wishing to avoid suffering the domestic political costs attached to the decision about Libya, Tusk presented the military intervention in Libya as 'European hypocrisy.' In these accusations, Tusk pointed to Europe's inconsistency over human rights, namely cozy relations with Arab Spring dictators (Reuters 2011). With Poland scheduled to take over the

EU presidency in July 2011, Tusk also suggested that a neutral Poland might serve as a more credible mediator for the EU in post-intervention Libya (Dylla 2011).

Polish foreign policy elites characterized the intervention in Libya very differently than their Danish counterparts. Foreign policymakers from the two countries perceived different political incentives or disincentives for contributing to OUP and responded to public sentiment with different portrayals of the Libya mission. Denmark, empowered by supportive public opinion, embraced the narrative of humanitarian and alliance responsibility in the name of Danish national interest, and intervened in Libya. Conversely, Poland faced more mixed public opinion and the conservative government risked blowback at the ballot box if they took initiative in Libya. Therefore, Poland rejected the narrative of humanitarian and alliance responsibility, suggesting an alternative role for Poland as a neutral EU negotiator and refused to intervene in Libya. Overall, the interaction of different public opinions with electoral pressures constrained Danish and Polish decisionmakers to different policies towards OUP. Danish and Polish leaders presented voters very different interpretations of the choice for military intervention in Libya. These differences were not so much the result of holding deep and differentiated views of humanitarian intervention, but rather, Danish and Polish leaders faced different political incentives in light of public sentiment and pressing parliamentary elections.

V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The scope and character of NATO's intervention in Libya can help us understand what to expect next time a humanitarian crisis compels the allies to act. This thesis investigates the conditions under which governments mirror public opinion in their foreign policies and asked whether public opinion helps explains why some European countries intervened in Libya, while others sat on the sidelines. My findings suggest that governments are constrained to public opinion in their decisions about military intervention when they face upcoming elections. If there are no elections in the near future, governments have the flexibility to either mirror or disregard public opinion. My findings also suggest that when governments do not face an immediate election and have only weak legislative checks on foreign policy, governments pursue military intervention *regardless* of public opinion. This finding presents the possibility of an interventionist bias, but this bias is outside the scope of this analysis, presenting an avenue for further research.

This thesis adds to the existing literature on the role of public opinion in foreign policy by explicitly focusing on the interaction between public opinion, the electoral cycle, and legislative constraints on foreign policy. My findings support Gaubatz's (1991) argument that the electoral cycle moderates government choices for military action, but suggest that the effect of the electoral cycle on this choice depends on the direction and strength of public opinion. Gaubatz (1991) assumes that a war-averse public prevents the

initiation of military conflict in the face of an upcoming election, yet my analysis of Libya showed instances where the public favored military intervention and leaders decided to intervene despite upcoming elections. My findings also cast doubt on the role of parliaments as a ‘transmission belts’ for public opinion, especially when there are no pressing elections. Further research is required to better determine the role of parliaments in constraining foreign policy to public opinion.

Overall, my results indicate that considering public opinion is critical for understanding government decisions about military action, but also that public opinion cannot be considered in a vacuum. Other domestic political arrangements, chiefly the electoral cycle, must be considered. Additionally, when utilizing public opinion in foreign policy analysis, scholars must set aside assumptions of a war-averse public and recognize that public sentiment can either dissuade or encourage governments to take military action.

This thesis also contributes to policy discussions about the future of NATO and European willingness to contribute to the alliance. In the wake of OUP, commentators compiled lists of good, contributing NATO members, and bad, free-riding NATO members. My findings suggest that such commentaries should be tempered. European contributions to OUP do not necessarily represent a lasting delineation of willing and unwilling member states. Rather, the actions taken by European governments towards Libya reflect national public sentiments within varied electoral time horizons. The enthusiastic contributors of OUP may abstain from coming missions, while countries on the sidelines of the Libyan intervention may step up to lead NATO’s next mission. My findings suggest that future European contributions will depend on the tides of public opinion and the timing of NATO’s next mission relative to national elections.

Finally, while I argue that the implications of which countries were willing or unwilling to contribute to OUP are limited, the results of this thesis are still important for NATO. Because electoral horizons and public sentiment vary across so many allies, it may be difficult for NATO to move beyond continually shifting coalitions of those willing to contribute to missions. With NATO contributions held hostage by electoral time horizons and public sentiment, my findings only add to the ongoing uncertainty as to whether NATO can consistently and continually fulfill its *raison d'être*.

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