

ATTITUDES TOWARD WAR: CHANGING TIMES AND CIRCUMSTANCES

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. Attitudes toward war as an instrument of national policy have traced out a volatile pattern, depending on the success or failure of particular foreign policy initiatives. Such fluctuations are typical of public opinion in areas such as foreign policy issues characterized by low mass information levels and high levels of chauvinism. Here we will consider opinion changes over nearly two decades in attitudes in the United States toward war.

. A 1961 survey based on student responses found a population which could be classed as hawkish and war approving as a policy alternative. These respondents clearly reflected the geopolitical views embodied in the concepts of the containment doctrine (Putney & Middleton 1962). By contrast, a 1972 study showed that student attitudes toward war had dramatically shifted (Handberg 1972-1973). Apparently traumatized by the American war experience in Viet Nam, the students rejected war as a suitable policy alternative for the United States. Speculation then about the likelihood that such an attitude would continue beyond the Viet Nam War was inconclusive. In both studies, attitudes toward war were measured by the pacifism scale developed by Putney & Middleton (Figure 1), and the results are shown in Tables 1 and 2.

. We will now extend the inquiry to the summer of 1979 from a test of a science attitudes scale on a sample of 157 registered voters in Orange County, Florida, which included the pacifism scale (Handberg & Maddox 1980). These respondents were demographically typical registered voters who were primarily Democrats (60%), but split more evenly in actual party preference (Democrat, 43%, Republican 40%). The sample slightly over-represents females (57%), while the nonwhite proportion is close to the community profile (14%). The mean age was 47 years

with an average formal education level of 13 years. The dominant occupational categories were housewife, white collar worker, and retired. About 21 percent were college graduates, and the median income level was \$ 16,500.

. A conclusion from Table 1 is that the 1979 sample falls somewhere between the 1961 hawkish and war-ready sample, and the more pacifist sentiments of the 1972 sample. The 1979 survey came prior to the Iran hostage crisis, which may have accentuated the militarist aspects of public opinion in the United States. The earlier differences by sex reported by Putney & Middleton do not appear in this sample. Males and females are similar according to this index. This similarity of attitudes by males and females is found across a wide range of social issues.

. Unlike the student surveys, education was a variable in this sample. No significant differences were found by educational level. Republicans were marginally less pacifist than Democrats. Given the evidence that many people take their cues from the President, the Democratic partisans were more pacifist as an indirect reflection of President Carter's more pacifist position before the Iranian revolution.

. The most obvious differences on the issue of war occur along racial lines. Black respondents are decidedly more pacifist, and reject war as a policy alternative. The pattern is not unexpected. Since the Viet Nam War, black voters have been least supportive of American involvement in foreign conflicts. Blacks have felt that as a social group, blacks have borne a disproportionate share of the social costs incurred in such foreign adventures. Younger voters were not significantly more pacifist than others. As reported earlier, public attitudes toward war are clearly a situational artifact rather than adherence to a

FIGURE 1: PUTNEY-MIDDLETON PACIFISM SCALE

- 1* The U.S. must be willing to run any risk of war which may be necessary to prevent the spread of Communism.
- 2 If disarmament negotiations are not successful the U.S. should begin a gradual program of military disarmament: i.e., disarm whether other countries do or not.
- 3* Pacifist demonstrations picketing missile bases, peace walks, etc. are harmful the the best interests of the American people.
- 4 The U.S. has no moral right to carry its struggle against communism to the point of risking destruction of the human race.
- 5 It is contrary to my moral principles to participate in war and the killing of other people.
- 6 The real enemy today is no longer communism but rather war itself.
- 7* Pacifism is simply not a practical philosophy in the world today.

* Items reversed in scoring for the scale.

TABLE 1: TEMPORAL SHIFTS IN AGREEMENT WITH THE PUTNEY-MIDDLETON PACIFISM SCALE

Item	Males			Females			Total		
	1962	1972	1979	1962	1972	1979	1962	1972	1979
1	78%	22%	56%	64%	32%	57%	72%	25%	56%
2	4	30	17	9	34	12	6	31	14
3	50	17	42	37	15	40	44	17	41
4	30	83	66	40	90	55	34	85	59
5	15	43	28	20	66	36	17	49	33
6	26	65	45	37	73	58	31	67	53
7	60	41	67	45	27	52	54	37	59
(N)	(697)	(109)	(64)	(502)	(41)	(90)	(1199)	(150)	(157)

TABLE 2: ATTITUDE SHIFT ON PUTNEY-MIDDLETON PACIFISM SCALE BY POLITICAL PARTY PREFERENCE & RACE

Item	Republican		Democrat		Race	
	1972	1979	1972	1979	White	Black
1	33%	63%	21%	53%	61%	23%
2	9	13	38	15	12	27
3	30	46	12	39	42	18
4	85	63	88	55	47	59
5	33	31	53	35	27	64
6	55	56	78	56	52	64
7	58	71	30	52	65	14
(N)	(33)	(52)	(81)	(94)	(132)	(22)

general moral position (Erskine 1972-1973). The moderating of the earlier anti-war attitudes indicated in the later sample illustrates the marked shifts in public opinion as their perception of the situation shifts.

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moral thinking, a person thinks with the subtlety of a relativist, but is capable of putting him/herself in the shoes of the rest of the World's people. This quality of enlightened empathy is the bedrock of principled thinking.

. Kohlberg's focus is narrower, and consistently aims at the cognitive antecedents of moral behavior. His levels are levels of understanding. Perry's commitment involves decision. Kohlberg is more directly involved than Perry in the content of moral behavior. Kohlberg's research reveals broad moral universal principles. For the reader interested in moral development, there is opportunity for a penetrating look into the thought and value patterns of a group of elitist students in Perry's work. Kohlberg offers a more comprehensive perspective with a much wider range of articles and empirical studies.

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process may include a reverse flow, and the rating process inherently permits reevaluation in both directions. The distributions seen here, however, are much more consistent with the hypothesis of a net downward flow which operates at a very restrained pace over the early part of the life cycle.

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