*Public Expectations of War During the Cold War**

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Since 1944, various polling organizations have asked the American people some 200 times of their expectation of world war. This paper analyzes these responses—i.e., war expectations—and, by using regression analysis shows how fluctuations in war expectations are associated with content analytic measures of Cold War activities. Investigation of three educational groups reveals education-based differences of war optimism and pessimism. Finally, a "psychology of expectations" is explored in which war expectations are associated with other perceptions.

In national opinion surveys conducted since 1944 the American public has been asked some 200 times about its expectations of war. The questions, in various permutations, have been of the form, "Do you expect the United States to fight in another world war within the next____years?"

Responses to this question can be taken as a kind of indicator of the public's perceptions of international tensions. When the international environment has sputtered with threats, troop movements, or crises involving the big powers, the public's concern about World War III has risen. When apparent calm prevails the public has been relatively sanguine about the imminent danger of major war.

This study investigates the responses of the public to this series of questions, particularly for the Cold War period. Parts I and II deal with various concerns about the shape and behavior of the data to be used. Then three basic areas of investigation follow: The first (Part III) is an effort to determine what activities in the international environment affect the public's expectations of war. It will be found, of course, that belligerent noise and activity tend to encourage war fears while conciliatory noise and activity tend to reduce these fears. The study will attempt to deal with a variety of more finely-tuned considerations. For example: does the public react mainly in the short run or the long run to international belligerence? —that is, are people affected mainly by last week's crisis (or lack thereof) or by the whole tenor of tensions over the last year?

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The second basic area of investigation (Part IV) breaks down war expectations for three educational groups—college, high school, and grade school educated—and seeks to determine if educational groups react differently to international tensions.

The third area of investigation (Part V) develops some ideas about a possible "psychology of expectations," and assesses the possibility that those who are optimistic about war are alike on other attitudinal dimensions as well.

Historical Limits: The Cold War.

For the most part the discussion will focus on a single limited historical period: the era of the Cold War that can be said to have lasted from shortly after World War II until about 1963. To a considerable degree, then, this study is a historical one—although many of the suggestions and conclusions developed (particularly in Part V) probably have wider relevance.

The major reason for restricting the study mostly to this period is a practical one: that's where the data are. While the polling agencies asked the war expectation question frequently during the 1940s, 1950s, and into the early 1960s, they dropped the question almost entirely after that—since 1963 the question has been asked only a few times.

While one should not strain too much to make a virtue of this necessity, it does seem that a rather pronounced and fundamental change in American-Soviet relations occurred in the year after the 1962 Cuban missile crisis. It can be argued that the Cold War—or an important phase of it—ended in 1963 with the signing of the partial test ban treaty. Differences remained, but, despite Vietnam, the Soviet-American dialogue continued into the 1970s at a comparatively civil level and was soon to become codified under the term "detente;" since 1963, a series of unprecedented agreements between the two major powers on arms control, trade, and international policy have been reached.

Furthermore around 1963 there was a noticeable shift in Sino-Soviet relations as the Sino-Soviet disagreement, simmering for several years, broke into explicit antagonism and at times seems nearly to have erupted into war. For the American public this meant the image of the "enemy" changed and so, to a degree, did its perception of the Cold War. Before 1963 the chief opponent was seen to be the Soviet Union or the Sino-Soviet bloc. After that time, particularly during the Vietnam War, China

alone was seen to be the chief enemy.[1] In the 1970s, of course, antagonisms with China were also to mellow.

This study focuses on a fairly coherent historical period in which the United States was generally seen to be in active confrontation with a single, monolithic enemy headquartered in Moscow.[2]

I. The War Expectation Question

The dependent variable in this study is the expectation by the American public of major war. As indicated, this is measured by response to poll questions of the form, "Do you expect the United States to fight in another world war within the next . . . years?" Some indications of the behavior of the war expectations trend line are given in Figure 1.[3]

The Shape of the War Expectation Data.

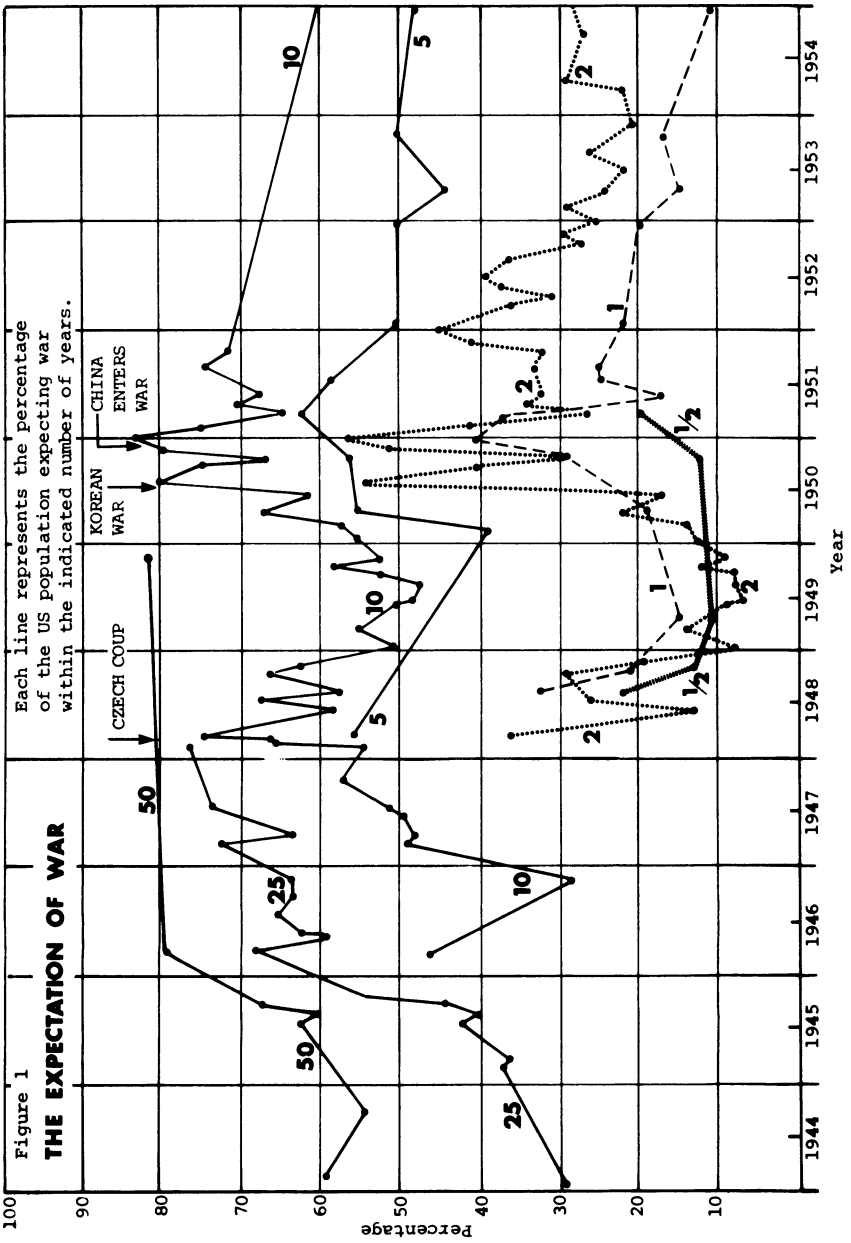
The data have a basic integrity, a face validity, to suggest they are coherently measuring what they purport to measure—public perceptions of international tensions. This is of particular concern since the data extend back into the 1940s when polling procedures were relatively crude (see Mueller, 1973, chap. 1; Glenn, 1970).

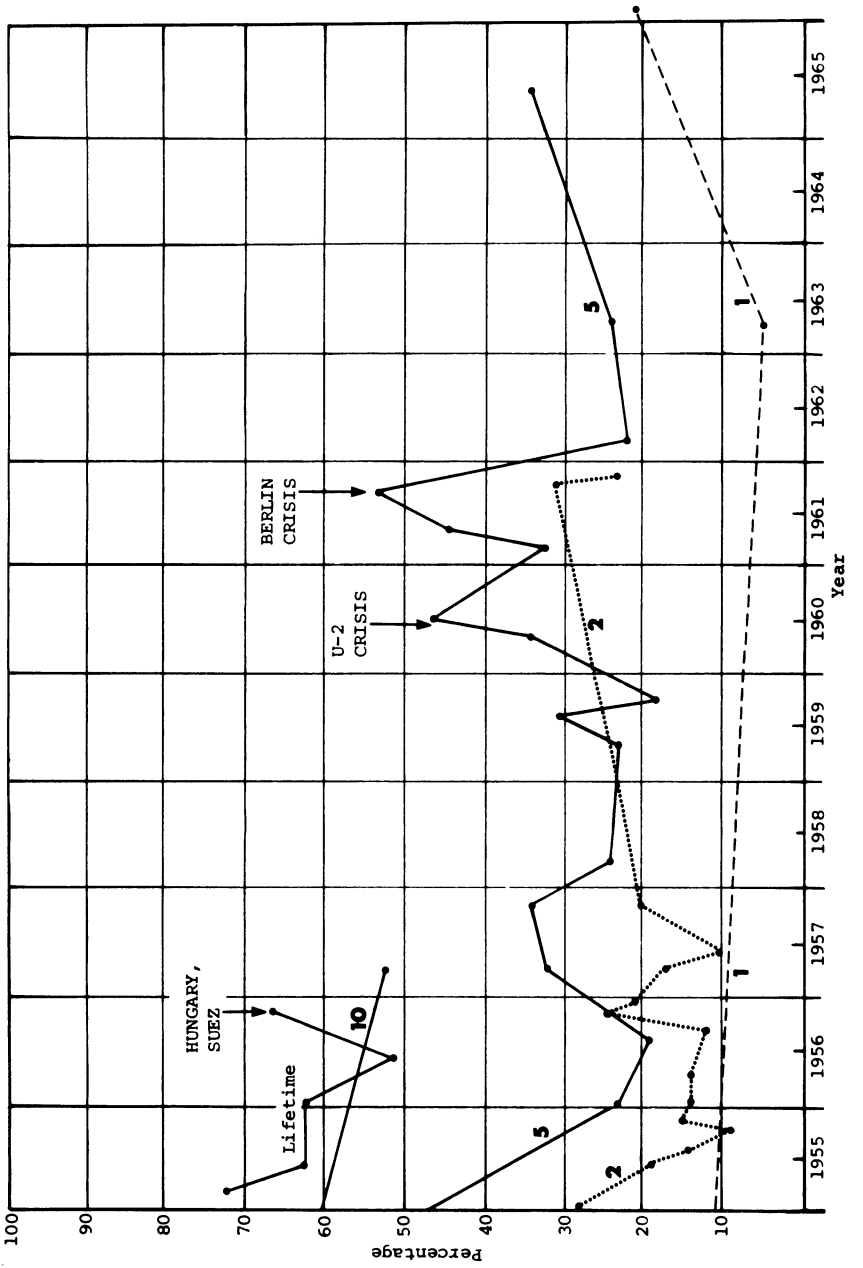
Figure 1 indicates, for example, the way concern about war rose with the onset of the Cold War in 1945 and 1946, the Czech coup in 1948, the Communist victory in China in 1949, at the beginning of the Korean War in June 1950, with the entrance of the Chinese Communists into the war at the end of 1950, with the events in Hungary and Suez in November 1956, with the U-2 crisis in mid-1960, and with the Berlin Crisis in 1961.

[1] Poll data show a pronounced shift. Asked, "Looking ahead to 1970, which country do you think will be the greater threat to world peace—Russia or Communist China?" In 1961 Russia was chosen 49 percent to 32 percent for China. By the end of 1964, the choice was more than reversed: 20 percent for Russia, 59 percent for China (Gallup, 1972, pp. 1711, 1881, 1908–9.)

[2] For a comparison of American foreign policy attitudes before and after 1963, including a discussion of lowered expectations of war after 1963, see Mueller (1977).

[3] These data have been compiled principally from the archives of the Roper Public Opinion Research Center. Additional data came from the Survey Research Center of the University of Michigan, from the library of the National Opinion Research Center, and from published materials including *Public Opinion Quarterly, Opinion News, Gallup Opinion Index*, Cantril and Strunk (1951), Withey (1962), and Scott and Withey (1958).





Question Wording.

For the analysis only questions of these basic forms will be used: (1) "Do you expect (think) the United States (we) (this country) will fight in (will find itself in) (is likely to get in) (will get involved in) another world war (an all-out war with Russia) (major war) within the next _____years?"; (2) "Do you expect (think) there will be another world (big) war within the next_____years?"; (3) "If a world war does come, do you think it's likely to happen within the next_____years?" The time periods asked about in the questions are 6 months, 1 year, 2 years, 5 years (in one case, 4), 10 years, 25 years, 50 years, and "in your lifetime."[4]

On quite a few surveys, war expectation questions were paired. The questions stepped up: "Do you expect war in 10 years?" (if no) "In 25?"; or they stepped down: "Do you expect war in 10 years?" (if yes) "In 5?" This phenomenon has been scrutinized and it does not appear that such sequential questions garnered much different responses from direct formulations.

It seems clear, however, that this is about all the leeway one can give on the question-wording issue and still expect the time-period numbers to scale properly. In the mid-1940s the Roper Poll posed a more optioned question that added words about "probabilities" and "chances": "Do you think there will probably be another big war during the next 25–30 years, or do you think there is a fairly good chance to avoid it?" Fewer people expected war in 25 or 30 years when the question was posed this way than expected it in *10 years* when the question was simply asked in the usual way. Clearly the option, "there is a fairly good chance to avoid it," was quite attractive to many respondents.[5]

[4] Before the Korean War it was common for the questions simply to refer to "another war" rather than "another world war," but it seems a safe assumption that everyone at that time took the question to refer to a war like World War II or World War I, not to a more limited conflict. When the Korean War broke out and the respondents could be expected to visualize another kind of war, the questions invariably asked specifically about "world" or "all-out" wars. The difference became significant when Korea and Vietnam furnished examples of what limited wars could be like. A direct comparison is possible in a poll conducted in Spring 1976. Half the sample was asked if they expected the U.S. to fight in a "war" in 10 years, while the other half was asked about a "world war". Fifty-seven percent expected a "war", 43 percent expected a "world war" (National Opinion Research Center: National Data Program for the Social Sciences).

[5] Another comparison is with a Gallup question posed in late 1959. The respondents were asked to look ahead 20 years and then to choose from a list "which

Thus, it is clearly meaningless to say that the questions tell us in any precise sense how many people actually believed world war was imminent. The number could be substantially altered by simply reformulating the question stimulus along the entirely sensible lines of the Roper question just discussed. But as long as the peculiarly biasing aspects of question wording are held constant, meaningful *comparative* statements about increased or decreased war expectations can be made.[6]

Distribution of Data Points over Time.

Any secondary analysis of survey data is at the mercy of the polling agencies' whims about when to ask a specific question. As Figure 1 shows, the war expectation questions were very popular with the agencies during the postwar period up through the 1950s. Thereafter, the questions were asked somewhat less frequently and then, after 1963, almost not at all.

Although the data for the Cold War period are reasonably abundant, there are two important, rather painful, gaps even in this period. First, it seems the question was going out of fashion with the polling agencies even in 1962 and consequently there are virtually no data for the Cuban missile crisis late in that year. Second, for some reason the war expectation question was not posed between April 1958 and May 1959; the tense crisis of summer 1958 (when American troops landed in Lebanon), therefore cannot directly be included in the analysis. Although some extrapolation may be possible from other parts of the data set, these two gaps will have to be borne in mind as the analysis proceeds.[7]

II. Measures of International Tensions

If the public's expectation of major war rises and relaxes as a function of international conflict, it is important to have nonpoll measures of this tension to serve as independent variables. The measures used here were

of these things do you think will have happened by then." One of the items was "atomic war between Russia and America." By this measure fewer people in 1959 expected world war in 20 years than expected it in 5 years by the usual measure.

[6] For further discussion of this issue, see Mueller (1973, chap. 1). See also Payne (1951), Hyman (1972), and Schuman and Presser (1977).

[7] It should also be observed that the various forms of the war expectation question were not asked uniformly over the entire period. The two- and the five-year questions cover almost the entire Cold War, but the 50- and 25-year, and the six-month and "lifetime" questions were asked over more limited time periods (see Figure 1).

adopted from the data on Western and Soviet behavior derived by William A. Gamson and Andre Modigliani for their important study, *Untangling the Cold War* (1971).

Gamson and Modigliani explain their measures at length in their book, so only a summary need be given here. For each day of the Cold War period, from January 1946 to December 1963, they derived four scores: one each for Western and Soviet "refractory" or belligerent behavior and one each for Western and Soviet "conciliatory" behavior. The scores were calculated by applying content analytic procedures to the front page of the *New York Times*. Articles pertaining to Western or Soviet belligerent or conciliatory behavior were selected out. They were then weighted according to the size and prominence of the headline. This weighting made use of the convenient fact that the editors of the *New York Times* make decisions about the importance of the day's events and express these decisions through the amount of play they give to articles in the paper.

Gamson and Modigliani discuss at length the problems of using the *New York Times* as a data source. They find the prominence an article received in the *Times* "reflects with considerable accuracy the prominence that such a story gets in newspapers around the world" (1971, p. 159).[8] Thus, it would seem that their measures can be taken as quantitative reflections of the information being distributed to the American public by the mass media about international events.

The Shape of the Gamson-Modigliani Data.

A plot of the Gamson-Modigliani scores reveals a good deal of coherence; peaks of belligerent and conciliatory activity are seen in expected places. It should be noted, however, that there is a positive relationship in the data (r's of around .20) between belligerent and conciliatory behavior, particularly for the West, when scores are cumulated by periods of one month or larger. That is, while there are periods when most of the behavior on the international Cold War scene is belligerent and other periods when

[8] It may be that the *Times* editors sometimes stressed certain events more than would be justified in historical perspective, or that they understressed others. But that is of no real problem for the present study since the concern here is with the public's contemporary assessment of international events, not with the historian's longer-range judgment. As it happens, Gamson and Modigliani investigate this issue and conclude "the importance assigned events when they occurred is not greatly different from that which experts would assign these events today" (1971, p. 166).

it is mostly conciliatory, crisis periods in particular tend to be a complex clutter of belligerent *and* conciliatory behavior; threats are made and troops are moved, but offers of settlement are also proferred. October 1962 forms a most spectacular example: it tended to be a record month for belligerent and conciliatory behavior for both sides.

If, however, one takes shorter periods—ten days for example—this positive relationship is no longer found, since this tends to splinter crisis periods into belligerent and counciliatory phases. Consequently, the regression analysis will apply the Gamson-Modigliani measurements both in short-term and in long-term clusters. This should make it possible to assess the impact on public expectations of war both of the immediate crisis (if any) and of the longer-term international environment.[9]

Use of the Scores as Independent Variables

The daily Gamson-Modigliani scores were obtained and fashioned into a number of independent variables to be applied as predictors of public expectations of war in regression analysis.[10] The belligerence and conciliatory scores were calculated for various time periods preceding the time a given poll was in the field. For all the polls a "send-out date" is available—or, in a half-dozen cases, could be sensibly estimated. This is the date the questionnaires are sent out to the field to be administered by the

[9] Other features of the data might be mentioned. The range of behavior of the four Gamson-Modigliani measures is not the same. To begin with, the belligerence scores are, on the average, several times larger than the conciliatory scores. In part, perhaps, this reflects the tendency of the newspapers to find belligerence more newsworthy and easier to focus on. But, of course, it also is a reflection of the fact that there was much more international disagreement than agreement in the Cold War period. In addition, Western belligerence scores are, on the average, 50 percent higher than Soviet belligerence scores and vary 50 percent more widely. It seems unlikely that the West was really that much more belligerent than the Soviet bloc during the Cold War period, and this phenomenon is doubtless attributable to the tendency of the newspapers to be more sensitive to pronouncements coming out of the White House than out of the Kremlin.

These features of the Gamson-Modigliani measures could have been dealt with by standardizing the measures. The focus of this study, however, is on the American public's perceptions of international events, not on the events' objective reality or their relationship to more olympian concepts. Consequently, if the public is being bombarded disproportionately by news of Western belligerence, that is a fact that should not be obscured by the use of homogenizing statistics. The study, then, shows a preference for applying the raw Gamson-Modigliani scores.

[10] The daily scores were generously made available by Professor Modigliani.

interviewers. Interviewing is generally carried out within a week or two after the interview schedules are received in the field. The Gamson-Modigliani scores were accordingly calculated for five time periods: (1) the ten-day period before the questionnaires were received in the field; (2) the month before this time; (3) the two-month period before interviewing; (4) the four-month period; and (5) the year period. Consequently, it was possible to see how war expectation related both to short-term events and to events cumulating over a long period.

Some additional manipulations of these basic variables were also applied. Among them: (1) the *total* belligerent behavior (Soviet plus Western) for a period; (2) a cumulative score in which recent events are weighted more heavily than less recent ones; (3) a composite score for each period in which a standardized conciliatory score is subtracted from a standardized belligerence score for each coalition.

III. Variables That Affect the Public's Expectation of War

The basic Gamson-Modigliani measures were fashioned into various variables as indicated in the previous section and, together with some additional variables to be discussed, were applied in a regression analysis. Scores of equations were examined. The outcome of this analysis is given in Table 1 and the discussion below attempts to make substantive sense of this table by assessing both the variables that proved to be valuable contributions to the equation as well as those that did not.[11]

Table 1 displays two regression equations in vertical format. The first column essentially creates the dependent variable by applying dummy variables for each of the time periods asked about in the set of survey questions. As can be seen, the coefficients for the dummy variables neatly arrange themselves in ascending order as the time periods increase.

Once the data have been set up in this way, the various independent variables are applied in the second column of Table 1. Two-thirds of the remaining variance is explained (the R^2 is increased from .70 to .90), and various of the Gamson-Modigliani measures relate firmly to the dependent

[11] The Gamson-Modigliani calculations of belligerent and conciliatory behavior begin in January 1946. This means complete data for retrospective estimates of the Cold War up to a year in duration are possible from January 1947 on. Accordingly, this phase of the analysis covers the 1947–1963 period, for which there are 160 data points.

variable.[12] Thus, *although international tensions have been measured by two entirely independent methods*—by sample surveys of public opinion and by content analysis of newspaper coverage—*it is clear that there is a solid correspondence between the two data sets.*

Opinion Response to Belligerent International Behavior

The Gamson-Modigliani variables that relate most firmly to the variable defined in the first column of Table 1 are the belligerent measures. Three variables proved to be relevant.

(1) As noted earlier, various measures of belligerence were applied and the one that fit best is included in the equation—the total amount of belligerent behavior (Western plus Soviet) occurring in the two months before the poll was taken. Several similar variables would have done almost as well. These included measures of total belligerent behavior for a one- or four-month period, and Western and Soviet belligerent behavior, taken separately, for a one-, two-, or four-month period. Of course, these variables are all highly correlated with the variable that did enter the equation (and with each other) and, once it is in, their further contribution is nil.

[12] The equation contains a goodly amount of autocorrelation. There are time series techniques to deal with autocorrelation, but they all presuppose that the data points are equally spaced and, as a glance at Figure 1 makes evident, that is not remotely a feature of the war expectation data: observations are very clustered at some points, very sparse at others. Accordingly only simple, direct regression techniques are applied and, as something of a hedge against accepting estimates that may be unreliable or biased, coefficients are included in the equation only if they have a very high degree of statistical significance (considerably more than twice their standard error). As can be seen in Table 1, this test is passed by all the included variables except for the one which taps "Western belligerent behavior, 4–12 mos. previous"; reasons for the apparent relative weakness of this variable are discussed in the text.

It might also be noted that, to a degree, many of data points are not strictly independent of each other. As noted above, on quite a few surveys two forms of the war expectation question were asked; e.g., "Do you expect war in 2 years? [If not:] In 5?" These are treated as separate data points in the analysis and, indeed, examination of the responses to these kinds of questions suggests that the gap between them was by no means precisely uniform. This aspect of the data does, however, give certain surveys more weight in the analysis than others. But since certain time periods are already heavily weighted because the polling agencies frequently asked the war expectation question during them, it didn't seem particularly necessary to complicate the analysis by dealing specifically with this single aspect of the weighting problem.

Interestingly, these measures all correlated better with war expectation than did measures of belligerent behavior covering the year before the poll. Thus, the American public's expectations of war seem to be determined most by the amount of belligerent behavior in the period up to four

TABLE 1

Regression Results for War Expectations

Dependent variable: Percentage of the population expecting war as found on 160 polls between 1947 and 1963. (Mean: 38.19. Standard deviation: 20.58.)

	Equation Including Time Dummy Variables Only, b	Equation Including All Variables, b	Standard Error
Intercept (half year)	15.40	1.84	
Independent variables			
(A) Dummy variables for question periods			
One year	6.29	7.76	
Two years	9.63	13.33	
Five years	23.98	32.33	
Ten years	46.13	47.95	
Twenty-five years	56.10	63.35	
Lifetime	47.20	59.39	
(B) Gamson-Modigliani scores			
Total belligerent behavior, previous 2 mos.		0.03	0.007
Western belligerent behavior, previous 10 days		0.14	0.045
Western belligerent behavior, 4–12 mos. previous		0.004	0.004
Soviet conciliatory behavior, previous 4 mos.		−0.05	0.017
(C) Variables concerning the Korean War			
Dummy variable for June 1950–March 1953 period		13.87	1.375
Dummy variable for March 1953–July 1953 period		7.48	3.491
Log of time since July 1953 (in years)		−6.12	2.376
R^2	.70	.90	
Standard error of estimate	11.44	6.75	

months before the poll date; they are noticeably less sensitive to belligerence more distant than that.

(2) To this, one must add a consideration about extremely recent Western belligerent conduct. As can be seen in Table 1, an important additional contribution is made by the variable measuring the amount of Western belligerence in the ten-day period before the poll was administered. This, despite the fact that it is fairly strongly correlated with the first belligerence variable ($r = .59$) and that it is a relatively imprecise measure since it taps a period that varies considerably in how distant it is from the exact moment of the interview. It is to be expected that this variable would make an even more impressive contribution if it were more precisely measured; if, for example, each survey were taken apart by the exact date of interview and the ten-day period were calculated for each respondent.[13]

The power of the variable seems to be a reflection of a phenomenon observable in Figure 1: the quick fall-off in the expectation of war shortly after a major international crisis. This can be seen most clearly in the spikes in the two- and ten-year lines in 1950. Although the North Korean and the Communist Chinese attacks—and the American response to them—caused popular expectation of world war to soar to new levels, the highest peaks of anxiety did not last long.

The short-term variable that seems to be operative is *Western* belligerent behavior. The Soviet ten-day belligerence variable has no additional strength after the first belligerence variable (summing total belligerent behavior over two months) is in the equation. This suggests that it is Western belligerent behavior, whether initiating or reacting, that American opinion is sensitive to in the short run. Western short-term behavior is likely to be clearer, less ambiguous, and more readily interpretable than Soviet behavior on its own.

(3) A small (and less than statistically significant) additional con-

[13] An extreme illustration of the immediate impact of major events can be seen by some data from an NORC poll that was in the field at the end of November 1950 as the Chinese Communists entered the Korean War and the Americans countered:

	Interviews Nov. 24–27	Interviews Nov. 28–Dec. 2
Expect world war in 10 years	73%	82%
Expect world war in 2 years	37%	58%

tribution from the belligerence variable comes from a variable that measures the amount of Western belligerent behavior in the period between four and twelve months before the poll was in the field. This adds a small effect for the more distant international events not covered in the first of the belligerence variables. As will be seen at the end of Part IV, this phenomenon is related to the respondent's education, and its true impact can be better assessed when the population is broken down into educational groups.

Opinion Response to Conciliatory International Behavior

It is clear that American popular expectations of war react favorably to evidence of *consistent* conciliatory behavior on the part of the Soviet bloc. The variable that best taps this measures the amount of Soviet conciliatory behavior for the four-month period before the poll, but those covering the two-month period or the year period would do almost as well.

However, variables covering short periods do *not* do well. Increased Soviet conciliation in the ten-day period before the poll is associated, in fact, with slightly *increased* expectations of war. Thus, Americans appear to treat Soviet conciliatory initiatives with suspicion and some hostility, but can be won over if the conciliatory phase lasts for a few months.[14]

The analysis suggests, then, a public swamped by signals of belligerence and suspicious of conciliation. Nonetheless, the public could be cautiously won over ("lulled into complacency" a cold warrior might call it) by continuously conciliatory signals coming out of the Soviet camp. Such a pattern did set in after 1963, and the ease with which the public slid from a Cold War orientation to one of detente is in consonance with the patterns found.

Opinion Response to the Korean War

The Korean War has a rather special effect in the data. Although there were many crises and troop movements during the 1946–1963 period, the experience of actually being in a war was particularly strong. Even a simple dummy variable that takes on the value of one for the period from mid-1950 to 1953 gives an impressive contribution.

Through analysis of residuals, some efforts were made to specify the

[14] As noted, Western conciliatory behavior is rather closely associated with measures of belligerent behavior. After quite a bit of testing, it did not seem possible to separate out a clear-cut independent effect on war expectations of Western conciliatory behavior.

effect the Korean War had on American expectations of war; the results are included near the bottom of Table 1. Two dummy variables were used for the course of the war itself. One is used for polls conducted during the period from the start of the war in June 1950 until the death of Stalin in March, 1953, at which point the apparent prospects for peace improved considerably. The other is used for the period from March 1953 until the armistice was signed in July 1953. As expected, the first of these two variables has a greater magnitude (13.87) than the second (7.48). Both are highly significant statistically.

Other research has suggested that there was a distant lingering effect of the Korean War. People only gradually came to believe that the war was really over and that true peace might be a real possibility (Mueller, 1973, pp. 170–72). Accordingly a variable was constructed that measured in logarithmic form the amount of time (in years) that passed since the armistice was signed (starting with one). The variable proved effective and suggests a decline in war expectations of some 6 percentage points in the 9 years after the Korean War ended with that decline being achieved disproportionately in the first years of the post-Korean War period.

The analysis thus stresses how important the Korean War was in influencing Cold War apprehensions. Not only did it cause the greatest fears of World War III even after other measures of belligerence have been included in the analysis, but the lingering traumatic effect of that war is seen even in polls conducted years after it was over. As the Cold War is assessed and reassessed in light of Vietnam and other later events, there may be some tendency to downplay Korea's importance in influencing the "Cold War mentality." This would be a severe mistake.

Opinion Response to Domestic Tensions

Some data suggest that people who are pessimistic about war are also pessimistic about the economy: there are those, for example, who expect World War III *and* a major depression *both* to occur within the next two years (Sheatsley, 1949–50). This observation was applied by including independent variables tapping the state of the economy. Two were used: (1) the unemployment rate for the month preceding the poll and (2) the *change* in the unemployment rate over the year preceding the poll.

These variables were not strong enough to be included in the regression equation; *there appears to be no direct relation between the fortunes of the economy and the expectations of war.* However, as will be discussed more fully in Part V, it *is* the case that pessimists and optimists are inclined to be consistent in their views of the world: that is, those pessimistic

about war also likely to be pessimistic about the state of the economy. It's just that a decline in the economy does not appear to increase the number of war pessimists or vice versa.

Summary

Belligerent behavior had the largest impact on the public's expectations of war during the Cold War—the total amount of belligerence for a few months before the polling date together with an added impact for short-term Western belligerence. In addition, there was some damping of war expectations if the Soviets had been perceived to be behaving in a conciliatory manner for several months. Finally, the Korean War had a special added impact, while the fortunes of the U.S. economy seemed to have no separate effect on war expectations.

As seen in this measure, then, the "mood" of the American public was briefly sensitive to short-term crises, but most determined by longer term (but not *long*-term) forces. In volatility, war expectations fall somewhere between the radical shifts found by Almond (1950) in examining the public's interest in world affairs and the "stable permissive mood" found by Caspary (1970) in examining general qualities of internationalism. The issue of volatility is discussed further in the next section.

IV. War Expectations for the Educational Groups

This section separates the public into the three educational groups—the college-educated, the high school-educated, and the grade-school educated—to see how, if at all, these three standard groups differ in their expectation of war. It has been possible to obtain educational breakdowns for the war expectation question in 184 cases.

The Educational Groups: Differences in War Optimism and Pessimism.

Table 2 displays figures somewhat similar to those in the *first column* of Table 1. These are the intercept and question dummy values for each educational subgroup. Unlike Table 1, data are included for polls going back to 1944 and the 50-year question can therefore be included.[15] The

[15] It is helpful also to include a dummy variable for the Korean War since, without it, the values for 25-year expectations would be lower than those for 10-year expectations. Why this should be the case can be seen from the peculiarities of the time periods over which the questions were asked (see Figure 1): the 10-year question was asked frequently during the Korean War, the 25-year (and the 50-year) question not at all.

TABLE 2

Intercept and Dummy Values for Educational Groups
($N = 184$)

Question period of war expectation	Education Groups[a] (Percentages) College	High School	Grade School
Half year	1	7	15
One year	2	10	20
Two years	8	16	24
Five years	26	34	42
Ten years	51	57	57
Twenty-five years	53	58	55
Lifetime	64	67	63
Fifty years	65	68	61
Value of Korean War dummy variable	19	18	13

[a] Each value is the intercept (half-year expectation) plus the dummy variable for the added effect of the given time period. For example, the three "Five year" figures are 1+25, 7+27, and 15+27, in order.

differences among the educational groups depend on the time period of the questions—the well-educated are far less likely to expect a war, on the average, within a few years. One might conclude that the well-educated are basically optimistic about such matters. However, if one looks at the long-term estimates (ten years and longer), the differences among the educational groups diminish greatly and even begin to *reverse*.[16]

Consequently, it appears that *the well-educated are generally just as fatalistic about world war as the poorly-educated but that the well-educated*

[16] This explains why Withey (1962, p. 13), looking at a two-year question, concludes the well-educated are disproportionately optimistic about the likelihood of a war, while a NORC report (*Opinion News,* May 28, 1946, p. 2), looking at 25- and 50-year questions finds no difference by education. It suggests the danger of generalizing from data obtained for a single formulation of a question.

are less likely to see the war immediately around the corner.[17] More detailed assessment, however, indicates that things are rather more complicated.

In Table 3 the educational gap in war expectation is reduced to a single number for each poll question. The number represents the remainder when the percentage of the college-educated expecting war is subtracted from the percentage of grade school-educated expecting war. A positive number means those who a grade-school education were more likely to expect a war than were the college-educated; a negative number suggests the reverse. Those with a high school education fall rather consistently between the other two groups. This simplifies the data quite a bit, of course, but it is a way to get the data into a form where a tabular presentation can be reasonably communicative. Comparison of the table with the complete data array suggests that minimal violence is done by this convenient summary measure.

During World War II, the college-educated were more likely to expect another world war within 50 or 25 years, but with the onset of the Cold War, the grade school-educated caught up with them in this expectation: the long-term expectation of war among the college-educated increased by some 10 or 15 percentage points while it increased among the grade school-educated by around twice that much. Thereafter, however, it is the expectations of the well-educated that were to prove volatile.

In general, the pattern for educational differences on war optimism after the Cold War began seems to be as follows. There is a tendency for the well-educated to be relatively optimistic about a world war in the short run (5 years or less), but no educational group seems to be consistently optimistic about war in the long term (25 years or more). Meanwhile, the gap in expectations of war in a middling period (10 years) can go either way, depending on events: the relative optimism of the well-educated can be narrowed or even reversed at a time of major international tension (as during the Czech coup or the Korean War). Furthermore, the comparative optimism of the well-educated about war in the short-term (2 to 5 years) can also be reduced during such times of special tension.[18]

[17] This holds for the war expectation question as worded. However, for a period in the mid-1950s NORC, after posing a 2-year war expectation question, asked those who did not expect a war in that brief time period if they felt "it *will be possible* to avoid," or if "we *can* avoid," a war with Russia entirely. The well-educated readily grasped onto this "possibility" option and thus appear as optimists.

[18] For a similar postwar pattern in which the well-educated came to agree with the poorly-educated on a pessimistic international perception, see Caspary (1968). For a related trend during the Vietnam War, see Mueller (1973, pp. 122–127).

TABLE 3

Difference in Percentages between Grade School and College Education Groups in Expectations of War[a]

Month	Year	Expectation of War, in Years							
		50	25	10	5	2	1	½	Life Time
JAN	44	−14	−2						
SEP	44	−16							
FEB	45	−2	−7						
MAR	45	−9	−3						
JUL	45	−8	−5						
JUL	45		11						
AUG	45	−3	2						
SEP	45	3	5						
OCT	45	−3	−8						
MAR	46	3	3						
MAR	46		−2	11					
MAY	46		2						
MAY	46		−1						
JUL	46		2						
SEP	46		8						
SEP	46		9						
NOV	46		10	16					
MAR	47		5	10					
APR	47		2	10					
JUN	47			6					
JUL	47			7	14				

TABLE 3 (Cont.)

Difference in Percentages between Grade School and College Education Groups in Expectations of War[a]

	Month	Year	Expectation of War, in Years: 50	25	10	5	2	1	½	Life Time
	OCT	47				10				
	FEB	48			2	9				
	FEB	48				8				
Czech	MAR	48				11	6			
coup	MAR	48				−1		12		
	JUN	48				6		10		
	JUL	48				8		15	17	
	AUG	48				5				
	OCT	48				4		11		
	NOV	48				4		14	16	
	JAN	49			13		6			
	MAR	49			5		3			
	APR	49			8		7	17	11	
	JUN	49			4		9			
	JUL	49			14		9			
	AUG	49			17		10			
	SEP	49			8		9			
	OCT	49			17		15			
	NOV	49	2		7		11			
	JAN	50			8		7			
	MAR	50			8	20	7			

TABLE 3 (Cont.)

Difference in Percentages between Grade School and College Education Groups in Expectations of War[a]

	Month	Year	Expectation of War, in Years: 50	25	10	5	2	1	½	Life Time
	APR	50			4	10	13	17		
Korea	JUN	50			1		10			
	JUL	50			−7		8			
Inchon	SEP	50			−14		24			
	OCT	50			−3	4	9	16		
	NOV	50			−1		5		7	
China	NOV	50			−7		10			
enters	DEC	50			−9		4	7		
	FEB	51			−7		6			
	MAR	51			−6	7	12	22	21	
	APR	51			−10		5			
	MAY	51			−10		3	13		
	JUL	51				5		16		
	AUG	51			−6		8	18		
	OCT	51			−4		6			
	NOV	51					23			
	JAN	52				8	14	20		
	MAR	52					13			
	APR	52					16			
	MAY	52					18			
	JUL	52					20			

TABLE 3 (Cont.)

Difference in Percentages between Grade School and College Education Groups in Expectations of War[a]

Month	Year	Expectation of War, in Years							
		50	25	10	5	2	1	½	Life Time
AUG	52					23			
OCT	52					16			
DEC	52				14	24	18		
JAN	53					14			
FEB	53					25			
APR	53				1	15	9		
JUN	53					14			
AUG	53					23			
OCT	53				15	22	14		
APR	54					28			
SEP	54					22			
JAN	55				14	26	12		
MAR	55								−5
JUN	55					20			−9
AUG	55					15			
OCT	55					12			
NOV	55					15			
JAN	56				−7	16			16
APR	56					16			
JUN	56								−12

TABLE 3 (Cont.)

Difference in Percentages between Grade School and College Education Groups in Expectations of War[a]

			Expectation of War, in Years							
	Month	Year	50	25	10	5	2	1	½	Life Time
Hungary, Suez	SEP	56				11	19			
	NOV	56					16			4
	JAN	57					13			
	APR	57			14	19	22			
	NOV	57				20				
	APR	58				15				
	MAY	59				15				
	AUG	59				35				
	OCT	59				15				
	JUN	60				25				
	JUL	60				28				
	MAR	61				22				
	MAY	61				21				
	SEP	61				17				
	MAR	62				18				
	APR	62				15		6		
	JUN	65				18		23		

[a] Example: If 50 percent of grade school educated and 64 percent of the college educated expect war on a given poll, the score will be −14.

Regression Analysis of War Expectation for the Educational Groups

Table 1 gave the results of a regression analysis for the Cold War period for the full poll sample. A related analysis was carried out for each of the three educational groupings. The results for these groups are for the most part similar to each other and to the results for the full poll. In general, of course, Cold War events affect everyone to some degree and in the same direction: the Korean War, for example, caused a universal increase in the expectation of war even if, as noted above, the well-educated were more strongly stirred than the less well-educated.

The regression analysis suggests that *the chief difference among the educational groups is related to short-and long-term effects of international events: the poorly-educated are affected mostly in the short range, the well-educated in both the short and long range.*

However, it is *not* that the poorly-educated are peculiarly likely to react wildly to last night's headline. The variables that tap belligerent and conciliatory behavior for the 10-day period or the month period before the poll was conducted, in fact, do about equally well for all education groups. Rather, the break seems to be around a point four months before the poll was conducted. Events older than that, whether belligerent or conciliatory, whether Western or Soviet, have little impact on the war expectation levels of those with only a grade school education, but they do seem to have an effect on the expectations of the college-educated. The values for those with a high school education fit neatly between.

It is this phenomenon that probably explains the way the belligerence variables align themselves in Table 1. All education groups are affected by the belligerent events that occur in the few months before a poll goes to the field and, accordingly, variables that reflect this are major contributors to explaining war expectation levels. The additional, relatively small contribution made by belligerent events occurring in the period between 4 and 12 months before the poll is something that seems mostly come from a minority group—the better-educated members of the survey population.

Conclusion

The image, then, that the poorly-educated are fatalistic and the well-educated are optimistic must be tempered somewhat. The well-educated seem equally concerned about *eventual* calamity; they just aren't inclined to see it around the corner. Furthermore, crisis events during the Cold War could often make them about as fatalistic about war in the short run as the poorly-educated.

Also while it is true the poorly-educated tend to think in shorter time terms than the well-educated (Lipset, 1960, pp. 114–15), they are not peculiarly likely to be sensitive to *immediate* crises. Rather, the perspective of the poorly-educated seems to take into account events occurring over a period of a few months. The well-educated are also sensitive to events over this term. In addition, however, the well-educated consider longer-range (older) events while the poorly-educated do not.

V. Toward a Psychology of Expectations

In a brief study from the late 1940s, Paul Sheatsley suggested a "psychology of expectations." He observed that there were many people who expected *both* World War III *and* a major depression to occur within the next two years. He notes: "It appears that certain types of individuals just naturally expect the occurrence of unhappy events, even when those events may be mutually exclusive, whereas others take a generally optimistic view" (1949–50, p. 686).

To investigate this area, poll questions asking about the expectation of war were cross-tabulated with a large number of other policy questions posed on the same polls during the Cold War period. Hundreds of such tables were analyzed, and it would be impossible to array them all here. Looking at the set as a whole, however, it was clear there were some quite consistent patterns. Some of these were rather straightforward, others comparatively complex. What follows, then, is a summary of the findings of this rather diffuse search.

(1) Sheatsley's observation is supported by data from these polls: there is a tendency for those who are optimistic or pessimistic in one area to be similarly disposed toward another area. A number of polls that had the war expectancy questions on them also asked about expectations about the economy and, as Sheatsley would expect, those who see World War III around the corner were also inclined to see a depression or a faltering economy around the same corner.[19]

(2) Not surprisingly, those who are pessimistic about war in general tend also to be gloomy about other international prospects. They expect the Korean peace talks to fail, to find Russia increasingly unwilling to

[19] As observed in Part III above, however, there is little or no direct causal relationships between economic and international expectations. While expectations of war have fluctuated, they have done so in reaction to changes in the international tension level, not noticeably in coordination with changes in the economic health of the country.

compromise, to envision an imminent Russian or Communist attack in Europe or elsewhere, and so on.

(3) Not so obvious is how war optimists and pessimists feel about other international issues. Are optimists inclined to be doves (because they have faith in the ultimate goodness of the human character) or hawks (because they have faith in mankind's ability to affect its own destiny in ways including the application of military force)?

The former speculation proves to be the sounder: war optimists tend to be doves, pessimists hawks. Optimists tend to support arms limitations and urge flexibility and compromise in peace talks. They abhor the thought of using or threatening to use nuclear weapons, of helping Chiang Kai-shek invade the mainland, of bombing Chinese supply bases, of preventive war.

A similar and related pattern emerges on questions that, while not asking about war and military policy, tap a more general internationalist dimension: war optimists tend to be internationalist in a nonmilitary sense, pessimists tend to be isolationists. Compared to pessimists, optimists are inclined to think the United States should stay active in world affairs; they support foreign economic aid, international exchanges and meetings, the United Nations, American concern with others, continued relations with the Soviet Union, and admission of Communist China to the U.N.

(4) Optimism, then, appears to be a general phenomenon—people optimistic about war tend to be optimistic about other matters; this optimism is associated with a dovish and internationalist position on world affairs, at least during the Cold War period, while pessimists are inclined to be hawks and isolationists.

However, some poll questions, or sets of questions, force optimists and pessimists into a kind of exquisite dilemma by putting the optimism-pessimism dimension in conflict with the hawk-dove or internationalist-isolationist dimension. For example, they ask "Do you think our tough military policies will help the cause of peace?" How does one answer that if, on the one hand, one is (as a dove) opposed to belligerent military policies, and, on the other hand, one is (as an optimist) inclined to believe that everything is likely to work out for the better?

In every case the optimism-pessimism dimension wins out. Consequently one finds the following curiosities: (a) although war optimists (as doves) think the hydrogen bomb should not be used and should be restricted by international agreement, they nevertheless are optimistically inclined to think its existence makes war less likely; (b) although they tend to disapprove the American policy of toughness toward Russia and of

military buildup, they still think that policy will ultimately lead to "real peace;" (c) although they do not urge "strong steps" in Korea, they don't think this would risk war with China; (d) although they oppose bombing China or helping Chiang Kai-shek to invade, they think such a policy would tend to end the fighting in Korea rather than leading to an "even worse war" or causing the Russians to enter the war.

(5) When the optimism-pessimism is *in harmony* with the hawk-dove or internationalist-isolationist dimension on a question, the differences between the war optimists and pessimists becomes very large indeed. This is found, for example, in a question that plays both to optimism-pessimism and internationalist predispositions: "Do you think it's hopeless to work along with the Russians in the United Nations?" War optimists answer firmly in the negative, pessimists in the positive.

(6) There is one other finding, a rather curious one, that emerges from this analysis of cross-tabulations. On some questions the war optimism-pessimism dimension was found to bend back on itself: that is, extreme optimists and extreme pessimists were found to be more like each other than they were like those in the middle. For this part of the analysis three kinds of expectation groups were distinguished: (1) those who expected war in the *short term*, 2 years or less; (2) those who expected war *within a longer time period*, 10 years or "eventually," but *not* within the next 2 years; (3) those who think war *can be avoided* entirely or who, anyway, do not expect it within the next 10 years. It was possible to separate out these three groups on individual surveys conducted between 1948 and 1957.

In the case of the three dimensions (optimist-pessimist, hawk-dove, and internationalist-isolationist), everything fell into a neat line: those who expect war in the 3 to 10 year period score about midway between the extreme optimists and the extreme pessimists. On a number of survey questions, however, it is clear that extreme pessimists (those expecting a war in 2 years) and extreme optimists (those expecting to avoid war entirely or denying its likelihood in the next 10 years) are more like each other than they are like the group in the middle. This is particularly the case with questions about continuing present military policies. On these issues, the middle group is inclined to act like "followers"—to be most supportive to present policy (see Mueller, 1973 chaps. 4 and 5). The other two groups tend to be less supportive.

Accordingly, the middle group is more likely than the other two groups to find the United States did the "right thing" in entering the

Korean War, to support military aid and the stationing of U.S. troops in Europe and Asia, to agree to continuing and further sacrifices (and higher taxes) to support the war effort and the defense program, to want to help defend other nations (like Iran or Yugoslavia or Formosa) should they be attacked by the Communists as Korea was, to approve the continued testing of the hydrogen bomb, to disapprove a pull-out from Korea or from Berlin, to support the government's plan to bring West Germany into NATO.

This bending-around-the-middle, this agreement by those on the extremes, probably is due to a set of countervailing inclinations. The extreme optimists are inclined to be doves and therefore less in favor of American military assertiveness. The extreme pessimists, while they see military solutions as wise and inevitable, are inclined to be isolationists somewhat in the 1930s sense and want to see the United States unentangled abroad.

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