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PRAEGER SPECIAL STUDIES IN
INTERNATIONAL POLITICS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Western European Perspectives on International Affairs

PUBLIC OPINION STUDIES
AND EVALUATIONS

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at the time of the Cuban missile crisis we had a variety of conflicting comments about the European reaction. The USIA data give us means to examine carefully at least one aspect of that reaction--to find out the extent to which the Western European public even knew of the crisis, their views of its origins and outcomes, their estimates of President Kennedy's handling of the situation. To be sure, other aspects, such as the views of elites or of the press, are equally important. But survey data give us a good beginning.

Second, the standardization of the questionnaires among the survey countries no less than the fact that many questions were repeated often in the years after 1952 make the USIA foreign public opinion data particularly interesting to students of cross-national political behavior. They can with some degree of accuracy evaluate the impact of events upon image formation and change among the Western European masses, as well as to differentiate the attitudes and perceptions of different segments of national populations and to ascertain which of these were persistent over time.

Ultimately, the series of USIA surveys can be used for a computer simulation of aspects of the Western European political system. By treating all the individual surveys for each country as a single national survey, it is possible for any question asked over time to break down the entire population surveyed into respondent-types, each large enough for treatment in a statistical manner. The respondent-types would be based on a variety of socio-economic variables: region, city-size, socio-economic status, sex, religion, ethnicity, political identification, and so forth. A German respondent-type, then, might be "middle-aged, politically conservative, Catholic businessmen in small Bavarian towns," or "young, socialist, Protestant housewives in North German cities." It would then be possible to isolate issue-clusters of questions contained in the surveys: "attitudes toward the United States," "membership in European integrative organizations," "prospective outcomes in the East-West struggle," "NATO and the defense of Europe." By delineating the distribution of attitudes on each issue-cluster within each respondent-type, and by varying assumptions about the salience of particular issues, it should be possible to predict the reactions

and attitudinal shifts in response to foreign policy positions that the United States could conceivably take on each of these major issues.²⁰

Such computer simulations are by no means simple, and they are far from realization today. Eventually, however, they can make a twofold contribution. For one thing, they can add to our understanding of the Western European political system, if in no other way than by forcing us to think through the implications of some of our assumptions about this system. For another, they could be useful in the formulation of United States foreign policy. Policy-makers could in effect use computers to test the consequences of a variety of alternative decisions in terms of probable Western European public reactions.

WESTERN EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVES ON INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

The compilation of data and analysis in this volume is but a first step in the direction of such sophisticated approaches. Its primary aim, as we indicate in our preface, is to make available in the form of a handbook some results from the USIA surveys. A few points about the principles underlying the compilation, its format, uses, and limitations may be noted here. Researchers interested in investigating further the methodology and results of the surveys will find the punchcards and code books as well as study specifications at The Roper Public Opinion Research Center, Williams College, in Williamstown, Massachusetts.

The Selection of Countries and Surveys

The compilation in Part II of this volume includes data from only four countries: France, West Germany, Italy, and Great Britain. For two reasons, one of them quite practical and the other stemming from our primary research interests, data from concurrent surveys in other countries are omitted. In the first place, the USIA did not undertake frequent polls in such countries as Belgium or Denmark; therefore, we do not have the fullness of data and the time series that are available for the four countries listed above. And second, the project that originally prepared this

compilation focussed on these four countries, leaving little time for the consideration of mass attitudes in the smaller European democracies. At some later date it may be possible to correct this omission, conceivably through the publication of separate handbooks of public opinion data.

Except in rare instances, the compilation reports only those surveys that were conducted on a cross-national basis among the four countries. It generally excludes results from single-country and spot surveys. Sometimes, as may be seen in Table 1.1, the original investigators divided the respondents into roughly equal subsamples, administering separate questionnaires ("Form A" and "Form B") to each. This procedure permitted greater flexibility in the survey design: It enabled the investigators to ask more questions of their respondents, and to check variations in responses that might have been due to the phrasing of individual questions. Where the split-sample technique was used, the tables in this volume designate the form as well as the size of the subsample.

The Selection of Questions

It would have been ideal to have included all questions asked by the USIA during the decade from 1952 to 1963. Such a compilation, however, would have been several times longer than the present one. Instead, we chose to concentrate on those questions that seemed to be more or less directly relevant to issues of arms control, European integration, the Western Alliance, European-American relations, and the Cold War. This meant the reluctant exclusion--reluctant, since even these have some bearing on our main interests--of questions on aspects of life in the United States, some international conferences, and other topics.

More important, this volume contains only closed-end questions, that is, those requiring from interviewees one from among a specific set of responses. For purely technical reasons (again, primarily space), it omits open-end questions despite the painfully obvious fact that they contain a wealth of valuable information. Responses to a question such as "Have you a favorable or unfavorable impression of what the American Government has been doing in foreign affairs recently?" give the researcher an idea of over-all atti-

TABLE 1.1
SAMPLE SIZES OF USIA SURVEYS IN WESTERN EUROPE, 1952-63

USIA Survey Number	Form	Date	Number of Respondents in Survey			
			France	West Germany	Italy	Great Britain
XX-1	-	September, 1952	1345	1591	1505	1503
XX-2	-	October, 1954	847	836	808	832
XX-3	-	February, 1955	900	820	814	805
XX-4	-	June, 1955	800	857	826	800
XX-5	-	August, 1955	800	865	802	800
XX-6	-	December, 1955	805	813	803	814
XX-7	A	April, 1956	406	420	448	403
	B		394	443	463	403
XX-8	A	November, 1956	651	589	605	605
	B		576	570	604	605
XX-9	A	May, 1957	602	611	634	605
	B		598	589	635	627
XX-10	-	November, 1957	802	813	807	800
XX-11	A	October, 1958	622	610	635	611
	B		596	585	637	587
XX-11.5	-	November, 1959	1070	1258	691	1000
XX-12	A	February, 1960	608	599	591	613
	B		620	623	579	608
XX-12.5	-	May, 1960	1000	1010	1011	1150
	A		659	572	600	633
XX-13	B	June/July, 1961	671	573	600	650
XX-14	A	June/July, 1962	692	614	672	614
	B		615	620	672	647
XX-15	-	February, 1963	1200	1202	1200	1186