

Willingness to Provide Post-War Aid to Iraq and Kuwait: A One-Year Follow-Up

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Skitka, McMurray and Burroughs (1991) examined willingness to provide post-war foreign aid to Iraq and Kuwait, collecting data within 48 hours of the beginning of the ground war, and then again immediately following the cease-fire. Their results indicated that attributions of responsibility were the most frequently cited justifications for the amount of aid allocated to Iraq. Of those subjects who invoked Iraqi responsibility to justify their aid allocations, 63% provided no assistance to Iraq, as compared to 23% who cited any other justification. Higher levels of conservatism and priming subjects with a pessimistic economic forecast heightened these effects. The study reported here is a one-year follow-up of Skitka et al. 1991. In sharp contrast to the 1991 study, priming subjects with either an optimistic or pessimistic economic forecast had no effect on their perceptions of the economy: all subjects perceived the U.S. economy to be in very bad health. Moreover, the idea that the U.S. could not afford to help replaced attributions of responsibility as the predominant justification for withholding foreign aid from both Iraq and Kuwait. Results are interpreted in the context of the contingency model of distributive justice.

The United States is still one of the most prosperous countries in the world. Because of our relative prosperity, the rest of the world looks to us for a variety of different kinds of assistance ranging from famine relief to direct military intervention in local conflicts. Because foreign aid can be viewed as a form of allocation decision making or international helping, the social psychological literature on allocation preferences, distributive justice, and helping should be useful in predicting whether people will support providing different kinds of foreign aid (see also Taormina & Messick, 1983). Empirical examination of foreign aid allocation preferences also provides an interesting arena to test the generalizability of social psychological theory to new domains. The study we report here is a one-year follow-up of Skitka, McMurray & Burroughs' (1991) application of the contingency model of distributive justice to study of willingness to provide foreign aid to Iraq and Kuwait after the Persian Gulf War.

Despite considerable historical precedent for U.S. intervention and post-war foreign aid (e.g., the U. S. provided a great deal of support to Japan, Germany, and most of Europe after World War II, as well as to South Korea after the Korean conflict),

there had been little investigation of public support for these practices, especially people's willingness to assist countries perceived as instigators of war. The Persian Gulf conflict presented an opportunity to study these issues.

Skitka et al. (1991) asked subjects the total dollar amount the United States should provide to help rebuild Iraq and Kuwait (at that time, estimates were placed at \$80 billion and \$40 billion respectively), to explain their allocations in an open-ended format, as well as make a number of ratings about how they perceived or felt about the Iraqi and Kuwaiti government and people. Half of the subjects were primed with an optimistic U.S. economic forecast, and half were primed with a negative U.S. economic forecast before making their aid allocation decisions. Data were collected at the very onset of the ground war (Feb. 26 and 28, 1991), and again the morning after the cease-fire was announced (April 30, 1991).

Based on our laboratory research (see Skitka & Tetlock, 1992, in press), relative resource availability, attributions of responsibility, affective reactions (e.g., anger and sympathy), and political orientation of the allocator were likely predictors of willingness to provide assistance. Our model of allocation decision making predicts that allocators first consider the relative availability of resources. When there are not enough resources available to cover all claims, allocators engage in attributional analysis: Why does this particular claimant need

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assistance? To the extent that claims are due to internal-controllable causes (e.g., this person needs an organ transplant because he or she smoked too much, did not exercise, and continued to overeat, despite doctor's warnings of eminent organ failure), negative affect is aroused, and aid is withheld (see also Weiner, 1986).

Claimants with other causes of need arouse positive affective reactions (e.g., sympathy), and receive help under scarcity as a joint function of need and efficiency (i.e., resources are allocated to minimize suffering and waste among those not responsible for their predicament).

Under no scarcity, liberals choose to help everyone, whereas conservatives continue to withhold resources from those personally responsible for their plight. Research across a broad array of allocation domains (organs for transplant, AZT for AIDS patients, job training for the unemployed, see Skitka & Tetlock, 1992; in press) consistently supports the model.

In our examination of willingness to provide postwar assistance to Iraq and Kuwait, we found that consistent with our laboratory findings, perceived responsibility for the war was the most frequently cited justification for withholding assistance from Iraq (see also Unger & Lemay, 1991). Conservatives held the Iraqi people and leaders more responsible for the war than liberals, were less sympathetic with the Iraqi citizenry, and were less supportive of providing postwar assistance. Of those subjects who invoked Iraqi responsibility for the war to justify their aid allocations, 63% provided no assistance to Iraq, as compared to 23% of those who cited any other justification. Priming subjects with a pessimistic economic forecast (i.e., resource scarcity) heightened these effects. Manipulations such as whether subjects were to assume that Saddam Hussein would be in- or out-of-power, the relative salience of the neediness and devastation of the countries had no impact on subjects' decisions to provide or withhold assistance.

These results contributed to a growing body of research that indicates people are least likely to help those whose need they attribute to internal-controllable causes (e.g., Reizenzein, 1986; Weiner, 1986). The results also underscored that ideological orientation of the perceiver and resource scarcity are important moderators of this general finding (see also Skitka & Tetlock, 1992; in press).

The one-year follow-up study was designed to investigate whether the results were stable once the "passion-of-the moment" and the height of the

patriotic fervor created by the war diminished.

Method

Subjects

Data were collected the Spring of 1992. Fifty-five subjects participated in the study in return for class credit. None of the subjects had participated in the earlier study.

Procedure

Subjects completed questionnaires in small groups after being presented with background information that included one of two economic forecasts:

Positive economic forecast: The positive economic forecast included statements such as "economic indicators all point to a rapid end to the recession, and an enormous economic upswing by as early as this summer," as well as, "economic indicators suggest we will be able to afford to provide assistance to both Iraq and Kuwait."

Negative economic forecast: The negative economic forecast included statements such as "This was the first war that coincided with a severe economic recession. It is clear that the United States is experiencing an enormous economic set back because of the Savings and Loan bail-out crisis and the huge budget deficit."

Subjects were then presented with the same estimates of the total cost of rebuilding both Iraq (\$80 billion) and Kuwait (\$40 billion), and were asked the dollar amount they felt the United States should provide, and in an open-ended format, to describe why. Subjects then completed the same 7-point rating scales indicating their degree of sympathy, anger, pity for the citizens of (separately) Iraq and Kuwait, as well as their perception of responsibility for the war on the part of Iraq, Kuwait, the U.S., as well as the individual leaders of these countries.

Ideological orientation was assessed using Altemeyer's (1988) Right-Wing-Authoritarianism (RWA) scale, Katz & Hass's (1988) humanitarianism scale, Rasinski's (1987) personal values (egalitarianism/proportionality) scales, and a single 10-point self-report liberalism-conservatism measure.

Data reduction for the present study was based on the principal component weights identified in

Skitka et al. (1991), yielding a single measure of ideology that reflected high authoritarianism, self-reported conservatism, and low egalitarianism. Similarly, three principal components solutions were used for dependent measures: Perceived Iraqi Responsibility (e.g., Iraqi government responsible for the war, Hussein responsible for the war, negative loadings for Kuwaiti responsibility for the war), Sympathy for Iraqi Citizens (high sympathy and pity, and low anger toward the Iraqi citizenry), and U.S. Responsibility for the War (President Bush responsible for the war, U.S. government responsible for the war).

The open-ended explanations for aid allocations were coded using the same scheme as Skitka et al. (1991), by the same two independent coders.

Results

In the 1991 study, the scarcity manipulation yielded very robust differences in perceptions of the health of the U.S. economy (mean difference of 1.10 on a five point scale). However, one year later, there was virtually no effect for our economic prime, $t(53) = .04$, *ns.*, mean difference of .02 on a 5-point scale. Moreover, the means for both groups indicated that they perceived the U.S. economy to be in very poor health—in other words, there a ceiling effect for scarcity.

How much assistance was provided? Iraq received proportionately less than half as much of the total needed to rebuild than Kuwait ($M = 16.70\%$ and 27.50% respectively), $t(52) = 2.65$, $p < .05$. In both cases, the amount of aid subjects thought should be provided to Iraq and Kuwait dropped relative to our 1991 sample, when subjects provided on average 22.1% of the total needed to rebuild Iraq, and 39.5% of the total needed to rebuild Kuwait.

In 1991, perception of Iraqi responsibility was the most frequently cited justification for withholding aid from Iraq. The 1992 results revealed some dramatic changes (see Table 1 for details). Iraqi responsibility was mentioned nearly four times less frequently in 1992 than 1991. In sharp contrast to our earlier results, we saw a dramatic increase in withholding assistance from both Iraq and Kuwait because subjects perceived "the U.S. can not afford to help." Another notable change was the extent to which subjects diffused responsibility to help. In the 1991 sample, a large number of subjects suggested that the coalition should share the costs of helping to rebuild Iraq and Kuwait, whereas remarkably few mentioned this possibility in 1992.

Table 1. Percentage of subjects who gave each kind of justification for aid allocations to Iraq and Kuwait.

Justification	1991		1992	
	Kuwait	Iraq	Kuwait	Iraq
U.S. can not afford	9.3	13.3	42.6	40.7
Iraqi responsibility		36.2		9.3
U.S. should help	13.3	6.7	18.5	7.4
In exchange for oil or American jobs	8.7	.	.	.
Can afford to help themselves	12.0	3.3	7.4	1.9
Coalition should share cost	18.0	20.0	7.4	1.9
Humanitarian aid only	6.0	4.0	3.7	7.4
U.S. helped enough by fighting	10.7	.	3.7	.
Iraq should pay war reparations	3.3	.	3.7	.

Note: A lone decimal point (.) indicates the coding category was not used when explaining aid allocation to that country or with that sample.

Pearson correlations indicated that higher conservatism was associated with lower levels of sympathy for the Iraqi people [$r(50) = -.38$, $p < .01$], and marginally related with lower perceptions of U.S. responsibility for the war [$r(50) = -.21$, $p = .06$]. Not surprisingly, higher perceptions of U.S. responsibility for the war were negatively correlated with perceived Iraqi responsibility for the war [$r(52) = -.27$, $p < .05$].

Aid to Iraq

Subjects who cited scarcity as the justification for their aid allocations provided less than half as much aid ($M = \$8.09$ billion) as those who did not mention scarcity ($M = \$15.56$), $t(52) = 1.86$, $p < .05$. Of those who cited scarcity of resources as their justification for withholding aid, 63.6% provide no assistance at all to Iraq, as compared to 46.9% of the subjects who cited any other justification for their aid allocation. Interestingly, those who cited scarcity as an explanation for withholding were no less sympathetic toward the Iraqi citizenry than those who did not, $t(52) = 1.18$, *ns.* Therefore, subjects withheld aid because they simply did not believe the U.S. was in a position to help. Perceived scarcity did not lead to derogation of the Iraqi citizenry (e.g., anger), unlike the perceptions of personal responsibility that predominated justifications of withholding aid in 1991. Finally, subjects

who withheld assistance from Iraq due to perceived U.S. economic woes were not significantly different in political orientation than those who invoked other justifications, $t(50) = 0.30, ns$.

Consistent with the 1991 results, those subjects who did mention Iraqi responsibility ($n = 5$) for the war provided less assistance to Iraq ($M = \$2$ billion) than those who did not ($M = \$14.24$ billion), $t(52) = 3.68, p < .01$. Within group variances were not sufficiently stable to test whether subjects who invoked Iraqi responsibility were less sympathetic toward the Iraqi people than those who did not or whether there were ideological differences.

Aid to Kuwait

Those who also cited scarcity as their justification for withholding assistance from Kuwait provided significantly less aid ($M = \$5.87$ billion) than those who did not ($M = \$14.93$ billion), $t(48) = 3.30, p < .05$. Of those who cited scarcity as their justification for withholding aid from Kuwait, 45.5% provided no assistance at all to Kuwait, as compared to 25.8% of the subjects who cited other reasons for their aid allocations to Kuwait.

Discussion

It is clear from the results of this study that concern with the economy completely overwhelmed perceived responsibility and hostility toward Iraq as a primary motivation for withholding postwar assistance not only from Iraq, but also Kuwait. By the spring of 1992, Americans' awareness of the economic recession had increased, and their belief in the messages being sent out by the Bush administration that the economy was recovering had diminished to the point that they did not "buy" our economic forecast manipulation—a dramatic turnaround from only one year earlier.

One possible explanation for these results is that the attention span of the American public is limited. After the war was over, attention moved from an outward (the U.S. as the "world's policeman" and Bush's "new world order,") to an inward focus (e.g., domestic problems)—a result probably exacerbated by the beginning of major campaigning for the forthcoming presidential election.

However, the fact that perceived severe scarcity of economic resources engulfed the field is consistent with predictions from the contingency model of distributive justice (Skitka & Tetlock, 1992). Before moving on to winnowing out claimants on the basis of attributional analysis, allocators are predicted by this model to first consider the

relative availability of resources. In most of our subjects' minds, there were no resources to distribute to either Iraq or Kuwait, and their reasoning stopped there. In other words, the vast majority of subjects never made it to the second stage of the model. Perceived scarcity was so severe they did not move on to attributional analysis of why Iraq or Kuwait needed help, or attributions of blame.

In addition, the results of this study were remarkably consistent across liberals and conservatives. Liberals and conservatives were equally likely to invoke the poor U.S. economy as a justification for withholding assistance from Iraq and Kuwait. There were no significant relationships between ideology and perceived responsibility for the war on the part of Kuwait, Iraq or the U.S., and only a moderate correlation of conservatism with lower levels of sympathy for the Iraqi people. These results are in sharp contrast to data collected either during or immediately following the war in 1991 that revealed strong connections between political orientation and a whole host of attitudes and attributions about the war (e.g., Unger & Lemay, 1991; Greene, Tighe, Conti & Saxe, 1991), in addition to differential willingness to provide postwar assistance (Skitka, et al., 1991). These results are consistent with experimental research that indicates that situational constraints overwhelm ideological differences in willingness to help when scarcity is severe, and that only when scarcity levels are ameliorated do we find differential allocation patterns for liberals and conservatives (Skitka & Tetlock, 1992; in press).

Whether or not the United States should become involved in external conflicts, and whether this involvement should be in the form of humanitarian aid or military intervention continues to be a hotly debated issue in American politics—a fact well demonstrated by current concern about what the United States' role should be in Bosnia. Future research might consider studying political orientation, attributional analysis, and the perceived relative availability of resources on willingness to provide varying levels of different kinds of assistance that also vary on the dimension of "intrusiveness" into local sovereignty.

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