ANNUAL REVIEWS

Annual Review of Political Science

Elites in the Making and Breaking of Foreign Policy

Elizabeth N. Saunders

Security Studies Program, School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University, Washington, DC, USA; email: elizabeth.saunders@georgetown.edu

Annu. Rev. Political Sci. 2022. 25:219–40

First published as a Review in Advance on December 13, 2021

The *Annual Review of Political Science* is online at polisci.annualreviews.org

https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-041719-103330

Keywords

elites, foreign policy, public opinion, leaders, populism, polarization

Abstract

Scholarship on elites and foreign policy has made important advances in identifying who elites are, what elites want, and how elites influence foreign policy. This review assesses these advances, focusing on the tension between elites' expertise, on the one hand, and resentment of elites as selfish or unrepresentative of the people's interests, on the other. What remains missing in the literature on elites and foreign policy are the dynamics of elite politics. The same elites can behave very differently in different settings, and elites frequently do not get what they want on foreign policy despite strong preferences. To understand this variation, we need more research on three kinds of elite politics: how elites attain their positions; their incentives once they arrive in those positions; and how elites relate to each other and to mass publics. Without attending to elite politics, we miss important sources of state behavior.

INTRODUCTION

The last two decades have dramatically illustrated the strange position of foreign policy elites. The aftermath of the Iraq War and the unequal recovery from the 2008 global financial crisis led to backlash against elites and contributed to a resurgence of populism, most prominently in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Brazil. But this period has also shown how much power elites still have in foreign policy and the consequences of putting foreign policy in the hands of those with little interest in its strategies or practices. In the United States, President Donald Trump tried to break the norms, institutions, and even the personnel of American foreign policy (Jervis et al. 2018). To be sure, pressure on foundational elements of foreign policy had been building before Trump (Busby & Monten 2008, Goldstein & Gulotty 2021, Kupchan & Trubowitz 2007), and parts of this foundation proved resilient (Chaudoin et al. 2017, Deudney & Ikenberry 2018). But his presidency, along with British Prime Minister David Cameron's decision to call the Brexit referendum, showed that the choices of individual elites can help unravel both the formal and informal underpinnings of international cooperation.

Alongside these events, international relations (IR) scholars have made significant theoretical and empirical advances in how we understand elites and foreign policy. Much of this research starts at the top, with studies of leaders and their influence on international relations (Horowitz & Fuhrmann 2018). New quantitative data, new qualitative data and digitized records, and new methodological tools have allowed research on elites to evolve in new directions. Survey and laboratory experiments using public and elite samples have helped map the differences—or lack thereof—among elites (Hafner-Burton et al. 2013), and between elites and regular citizens (Kertzer 2020), as well as the efficacy of elite messages about foreign policy (Guisinger & Saunders 2017).

This review assesses scholarly advances in the study of elites and foreign policy. To guide this assessment, I focus on the recurring tension between elites' experience and expertise, on the one hand, and resentment of those same elites as selfish or unrepresentative of the people's interests, on the other. Advocates of technocratic expertise emphasize the former, while populists amplify and exploit the latter, positing a stark divide between "two homogeneous and antagonistic camps, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite'" (Mudde & Kaltwasser 2017, p. 6). The coronavirus pandemic brought near-daily examples of the simultaneous demand for and vilification of elite expertise. A clear example was the 2021 Italian political crisis, which led to the fall of a populist government and Italy's subsequent turn to Mario Draghi, the technocratic former president of the European Central Bank, to serve as prime minister. In the realm of conflict, the end of the US war in Afghanistan brought criticism of the elites who perpetuated the war, while the elites who managed the US withdrawal amid the unexpectedly rapid collapse of the Afghan government drew both criticism for planning failures and praise for the logistical efforts during the evacuation.

What are the stakes for understanding the role of elites in the making or breaking of foreign policy? Theories of international relations downplay the role of elite characteristics, generally assuming elites are rational, strategic actors constrained by the international system or political institutions that aggregate societal preferences (or both). But if aspects of elites or their interactions alter how states make foreign policy, then we may be missing crucial sources of state behavior. The scholarly literature highlights differences between public and elite preferences (Jacobs & Page 2005) and public–elite gaps in political behavior (Kertzer 2020). Yet we know that most people do not pay much attention to foreign policy, and this inattention is rational in a busy world where even elites do not pay attention to all issues (Saunders 2015). If the public effectively delegates foreign policy to elites (Berinsky 2009), then some differences in preferences may not be surprising. But if foreign policy depends partly on elite characteristics, how can we know whether

elites make policy choices based on their expertise or competence rather than their own interests, which may or may not align with those of the nation or society as a whole? With trends concentrating more power in the hands of leaders and fraying the already-tenuous links between societal preferences and elites, the dynamics of elite preferences and influence only become more important in understanding foreign policy.

Three aspects of elites help address our understanding of the often-fraught, outsized influence they have in foreign policy. First, recent research has shed much better light on who elites are—the traits, backgrounds, and experiences that influence their attitudes and decision making. Second, we know much more about what elites want—their preferences, which may reflect societal interests but may also stem from backgrounds, positions, or expertise. Third, research has illuminated mechanisms of elite influence over foreign policy choices—influence over other elites as well as over the public.

Despite this progress, a major ingredient is still missing from each of these advances: the dynamics of elite politics. Studies of elites and foreign policy would benefit from addressing three kinds of politics. The first is the politics of elite selection, which shapes the distribution of elites in foreign policy roles. Beyond chief executives, the selection of many crucial foreign policy elites remains mostly unexplored. Second is the politics of elite incentives after arriving in a foreign policy position. These incentives may differ markedly from the incentives that elites faced before they took up such a position, may vary from position to position, and can change over time. An implication is that simply knowing elite traits may not be enough, since they may interact with incentives, and thus the same person may behave quite differently in different roles. Third is the politics of elite interaction, which affects mechanisms of elite influence. These interactions include relationships between leaders and other foreign policy elites as well as how elites relate to the public. Elite interactions have changed over time in response to both institutional changes and shifts in the political environment, and these changing interactions help explain why elites frequently do not get what they want, even when they have strong preferences.

Without addressing these features of elite politics, the danger is that that we will end up repeating many of the same mistakes from earlier waves of research. We need more research on how elites attain their positions; their incentives once they arrive in those positions; and how elites relate to each other and to mass publics—because recent history has only reinforced the reality that no matter how much elites are reviled, they still make or break foreign policy.

To keep this review tractable, I concentrate on elites and foreign policy in democracies, but I draw on insights from recent IR research on autocratic elites. I cover two topics only briefly, given that they have been the subject of several recent review essays: the study of leaders (Horowitz & Fuhrmann 2018, Krcmaric et al. 2020) and the study of elite cognition (Davis & McDermott 2021, Hafner-Burton et al. 2017, Kertzer & Tingley 2018).

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY "ELITES" IN FOREIGN POLICY?

Defining who counts as a foreign policy elite is notoriously difficult. A useful starting point comes from Hafner-Burton et al. (2013, p. 369), who define elites as "the small number of decision makers who occupy the top positions in social and political structures" and are usually "primed and selected for service in many ways—through the schools they attend, their connections to existing elites, performance on the job, and other factors." They argue that two dimensions capture much of the difference between elites and nonelites: first, elites "control the deployment of resources—such as money and political power," and second, they "tend to have large amounts of context-specific experience" which affects how they "deploy heuristics and other simplified representations of complex tasks, allowing for highly efficient decision-making on complex matters" (pp. 369–70).

This second dimension echoes the classic analysis of Jervis (1976). Jervis argues that bias is an important part of what makes a foreign policy decision maker; it allows elites to use their prior beliefs to filter incoming information and make decisions efficiently (ch. 4). Bias, in a sense, is what we pay elites for.

But even these useful definitional starting points come with complications. What about someone with little "context-specific experience" who suddenly ascends to a position of power in foreign policy, such as a leader with little foreign policy experience, a legislator appointed to a crucial foreign policy position without significant relevant experience, or a bureaucrat suddenly thrown into a new role? Elites tend to have more foreign policy knowledge (or incentives to acquire it) than the average citizen, but if knowledge is highly domain specific, what do we make of elites with knowledge of one region or issue facing a task related to a new area? Additionally, the relational variables highlighted by Hafner-Burton et al. (2013)—especially "connections to existing elites"—have received less attention: Elites may (or may not) rise to important foreign policy positions because of their relationships with the leader or other elites, or lack thereof.

In this review, I try to distinguish between general elites, who may occupy high positions outside of foreign policy settings but are adjacent to or affected by foreign policy decisions (for example, business elites, or legislators with no direct foreign policy role or expertise), and foreign policy elites, who either have relevant expertise or occupy positions that control significant foreign policy resources. This distinction allows exploration of lateral movement across elite circles. Even leaders may lack foreign policy experience when they take office, as in the case of most recent US presidents (Saunders 2017).

EARLIER WAVES OF RESEARCH ON ELITES AND FOREIGN POLICY

Political science debate over the role of elites is by no means new. For example, Robert Dahl's work on pluralism in democratic governance (Dahl & Levi 2009) was in part a response to the work of those like C. Wright Mills, who argued in *The Power Elite* (1956) that a small group of political, economic, and military elites formed an "interlocking directorate" with outsized power over American society (p. 8).

In the foreign policy realm, a touchstone in the study of elites is the bureaucratic politics approach, or the "pulling and hauling among individuals with differing perceptions and stakes" (Allison & Halperin 1972, p. 57). But the bureaucratic politics approach remains difficult to apply in practice. In a trenchant critique, Bendor & Hammond (1992) raise two important points that continue to loom over this research. First, the bureaucratic politics approach is "simply too complex" (p. 314), placing a high evidentiary burden on researchers studying foreign policy decisions. Second, and surprisingly, the bureaucratic politics approach contains very little politics. In the US context, Bendor and Hammond argue that the missing politics includes the nature of hierarchy in the executive branch, which may affect the politics inside it; political support that presidential appointees may enjoy outside the executive branch, giving them leverage over the president; and the politics of information.

Although the study of elites fell out of favor with the rise of structural realism (Waltz 1979), Jervis (1976) and others developed a vibrant research program applying insights from political psychology to IR (see Davis & McDermott 2021 for a review). Much of this research focused on high-level decision making on questions of security and conflict, while scholars of international political economy (IPE) tended to focus on interest groups or domestic and societal cleavages and preferences (Moravcsik 1997, Putnam 1988, Rogowski 1987). Constructivist scholars highlighted shared ideas and norms, whether generated by norm entrepreneurs (Finnemore & Sikkink 1998) or epistemic communities (Adler & Haas 1992).

The end of the Cold War ushered in a renewed focus on how regime type and democratic institutions influence international relations and foreign policy (e.g., Schultz & Weingast 2003). The important characteristic of elites here was their wish to retain office (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003). Most theories effectively assumed away other aspects of elites, either because institutions averaged them out or because they were endogenous to societal preferences.

DIMENSIONS OF ELITE CHARACTERISTICS

Just as the public is not homogeneous in its views of foreign policy (Berinsky 2009, Kertzer & Brutger 2016), elites also vary significantly in their characteristics, and to the extent foreign policy depends on elites, understanding this variation is essential to understanding foreign policy choices. One path is to examine functional groups of elites (e.g., political, military, economic, legal, union, academic, or think tank elites). While useful in many respects, a functional approach ignores the often porous boundaries between these groups over the course of elite careers. This permeability is demonstrated, for example, when military elites run for public office or serve in high bureaucratic posts (Gelpi & Feaver 2002, Lupton 2021), or when economic elites serve in government or international organizations (Seabrooke & Tsingou 2021).

Table 1 lists types of elite characteristics and categorizes roughly when or how elites, compared to people in general, acquire them. One point of confusion in the study of elites is that elites have some traits and characteristics simply because they are drawn from the general population. Other characteristics apply to elites generally, while some elite characteristics are

Table 1 Elite characteristics[a]

Characteristics	General population	Elites	Foreign policy elites
Ascriptive (reviewed by Krcmaric et al. 2020)	Age, race, gender	Drawn from general population (distribution differs)	Drawn from general population (distribution differs)
Socializing (reviewed by Krcmaric et al. 2020)	Schooling, SES	Higher education, military service, business experience, SES/wealth, power	Organizational culture
Cognitive/behavioral (reviewed by Davis & McDermott 2021, Hafner-Burton et al. 2017, Kertzer & Tingley 2018)	General cognitive tendencies (e.g., risk aversion, seeking information shortcuts)	Feelings of power or status, general overconfidence	Domain-specific knowledge, experience, or heuristics; overconfidence in area of expertise
Relational (nonpartisan)	Peer influences, community ties	Peer networks, nonpolitical career ties, relationship to (potential) leader, accountability or market pressures	Foreign policy community ties, relationship to leader, hierarchy within institutions, diversity within organization
Political/partisan (subset of relational)	Party identification as family or community tie or social identity	Partisan, electoral, or career incentives	Partisan-based career or electoral incentives, control of party-related foreign policy resources or decision-making authority

[a]Categories may overlap or interact. List of characteristics not exhaustive. Abbreviation: SES, socioeconomic status.

specific to foreign policy elites because of knowledge or experience. Some foreign policy elites begin their careers in the foreign policy arena, while others start in different elite domains, such as business. Of course, there may be overlap or gray areas, and population-level variables continue to influence elites or interact with other characteristics.

Table 1 also groups elite characteristics into five general categories. The first two are well-summarized by Krcmaric et al.'s (2020) recent review of the "personal biography approach" to studying leaders. The first category comprises ascriptive characteristics, such as age, race, and gender (the latter two can, of course, also have socialized elements). The second contains characteristics acquired through "socializing experiences" (Krcmaric et al. 2020, p. 137), such as military service, education, or occupation. Ascriptive characteristics apply to all people; some socializing experiences may affect only a portion of the population, and people may have multiple such experiences over their lifetimes. Third is the category of cognitive or behavioral characteristics (Davis & McDermott 2021, Hafner-Burton et al. 2017, Kertzer & Tingley 2018). Some cognitive tendencies may be distributed throughout the population, while others are specific to elites generally, such as biases that stem from power or status (Renshon 2015), or to foreign policy elites specifically, such as domain-specific experience or knowledge (Hafner-Burton et al. 2013).

The final two types of characteristics relate individuals to other people or to their environments. In the fourth category are relational characteristics—how people are connected to each other or to institutions, communities, or networks. Some relational characteristics are relevant to the population at large, such as peer influences (Kertzer & Zeitzoff 2017), while others relate to elites generally or to foreign policy elites specifically (Goddard 2012). The fifth category focuses specifically on political characteristics, which can be thought of as a subset of relational characteristics but deserve study in their own right. Again, some of these characteristics apply to all or most people. For example, partisan affiliation can apply to all citizens, and research suggests partisanship is at least partly socialized through the family and can serve as a social identity (Green et al. 2004, Mason 2018). Other political characteristics apply only to elites, such as political experience, standing in the political party or foreign policy hierarchy, or clout with leaders.

This categorization illuminates several features of elites. First, the same characteristic may have different influences on the same person at different points in that individual's life. Second, different types of characteristics may interact and may shape the odds of being selected into elite positions. Socializing, relational, or political characteristics can influence cognitive biases, as well as the odds of becoming a foreign policy elite. As Kertzer (2020) argues in an insightful meta-analysis of elite–public gaps in political behavior, some characteristics that seem related to "eliteness" are attributable to demographic characteristics that are overrepresented or distributed differently in elite samples compared to masses (as indicated in the top row of **Table 1**). Third, as the following discussion illustrates, there is far more recent research on the first three types of characteristics (ascriptive, socializing, and cognitive) than on the final two (relational and political) or on the interactions among them.

One general concern about studying elite characteristics is that political institutions might constrain elites so much that they have little latitude. But research on leaders shows that leader characteristics influence military conflict across regime types, although the effects are stronger in autocracies, where dictators face fewer constraints (Horowitz et al. 2015). Furthermore, institutional constraints on foreign policy, and therefore elites' room for maneuver, vary even within democracies and across issue areas (Baum & Potter 2015, Hyde & Saunders 2020). And as discussed below, elite influence over foreign policy can vary within countries over time, including in the United States, where presidential power in foreign policy has expanded.

WHO ARE FOREIGN POLICY ELITES?

One major advance in the study of foreign policy elites is that we simply know much more about who they are. At the leader level, the *Archigos* data set (Goemans et al. 2009) provides systematic coverage of basic characteristics such as dates of service, gender, and age for leaders 1875–2004, as well as coding whether they left office in a regular or irregular manner and their fate after their tenure. Building on this progress, the Leader Experience and Attribute Descriptions (LEAD) data set (Horowitz et al. 2015) provides a rich trove of leaders' background characteristics and experiences and allows empirical tests of how both ascriptive characteristics (like age, race, and gender) and socializing experiences (like education and military service) affect foreign policy outcomes. Several studies find that autocratic leaders with rebel, revolutionary, or military experience are more conflict prone (Colgan & Weeks 2015, Horowitz et al. 2015). A notable trend in research on leader characteristics is a lopsided focus on international security and conflict behavior rather than IPE. The study of leaders and IPE is a promising avenue of research, however. For example, Fuhrmann (2020) shows that leaders with business backgrounds are more likely to free-ride on collective security contributions.

Beyond the chief executive, studies of IPE have explored a broader range of elites, although studies of ascriptive or socializing experiences remain generally rare. Some scholars have examined the socializing effects of education and prior experience, for example, on finance ministers or central bankers with US graduate degrees in economics that socialize them in the neoliberal tradition (Nelson 2014). Fewer studies investigate the backgrounds or traits of security elites, with the notable exception of veterans in Congress or the executive branch (Gelpi & Feaver 2002, Lupton 2021) in the United States and, more rarely, elsewhere [e.g., Staniland et al. (2020) examine the backgrounds and careers of Pakistani military elites]. The Global Leadership Project expands coverage of mainly ascriptive and socialized characteristics to the "top ten" most powerful elites in each country (Gerring et al. 2019). Likewise, apart from military backgrounds, there is little research on the ascriptive characteristics or socializing experiences of legislators who influence foreign policy. Notably, studies of either security or IPE generally do not address individual-level characteristics of media elites.

We also know more about how domain-specific knowledge and experience affect the way elites think, and how those with specific expertise or experience in foreign policy differ from other elites and from the mass public. Much progress in the cognitive study of elites and foreign policy comes from behavioral research using elite samples (see Kertzer & Renshon 2022). These studies highlight many positive and some negative aspects of elite expertise. For example, Hafner-Burton et al. (2013, pp. 370–73) find that experienced elites are less loss averse, more successful in iterated strategic games, more aware of other players' behavior in strategic interactions, more effective at using heuristics to process information, and more cooperative overall, but also more prone to overconfidence. Renshon (2015, pp. 664–66) likewise notes that actual or subjective feelings of power can have positive and negative effects on behavior. These studies complement qualitative research on the content of elite beliefs. Scholars have found that such beliefs influence foreign policy decisions even in the realm of nuclear politics, where we would expect leaders to be highly constrained (Whitlark 2017).

Relational elite characteristics are an area of uneven progress. Few studies investigate leaders' relationships with other elites, whether through shared experience or service, loyalty, or even adversarial history. The hierarchical relationship among elites in the executive branch—which Bendor & Hammond (1992) highlight as crucial for understanding bureaucratic politics—can also alter how ascriptive, socializing, or cognitive elite traits manifest in foreign policy making. Using a principal–agent framework, Saunders (2017) shows that the same elites behave differently

when serving under a leader with foreign policy experience versus one without, because experience serves as an implicit monitoring device that limits some of the negative effects of expertise (such as overconfidence) while harnessing more of the positive.

There has been less emphasis on the relationships among elites in scholarship on security and conflict, with some exceptions in the reinvigorated study of diplomacy. A few studies examine the politics of diplomatic appointments (Arias & Smith 2018, Hollibaugh Jr. 2015) and the role of elite networks (Goddard 2012). Filling in the picture of the backgrounds and experiences of those who fill crucial diplomatic roles is an important avenue for future research.

The relationships and interactions among elites feature more prominently in studies of global governance (Avant et al. 2010) and IPE. These include studies of professions (Seabrooke & Henriksen 2017), transnational networks of activists (Carpenter et al. 2014) and regulators (Bach & Newman 2010), judges on international courts (Voeten 2007), and elites who hold shared ideas about best practices (McNamara 2002, Zvobgo 2020). This research emphasizes how elites police the boundaries of acceptable action, reproduce and spread the knowledge that defines parts of foreign policy, and seek to increase the power and reach of the institutions or networks in which they are embedded. Still, the relationship between economic or global governance elites and national leaders is a missing link.

As Krcmaric et al. (2020, p. 140) note, the role of political experience is a significant missing element in the study of elite backgrounds. Shared political experience and partisan ties can be an important relational connection among elites, influencing not only the odds of selection into elite foreign policy roles but also preferences once individuals begin their tenure in those roles. For example, in national security, many executive branch officials are drawn from the "bench" of prior officials in the leader's party. Furthermore, legislative staff are steeped in both substance and politics (and provide another pool of potential executive branch officials). As the next section details, political experience and career trajectories can also interact with other forms of elite experience or expertise. For example, elites with political experience may be more sensitive to what is politically possible than to what is most technocratically desirable or to the distributional implications of policies (Milner & Tingley 2015). Partisan or political considerations may also interact with or dominate substantive concerns, particularly for elected elites and members of their staffs whose roles focus on politics.

Overall, new data on the identities, backgrounds, and demographic characteristics of elites, as well as the cognitive effects of domain-specific knowledge and experience, have not only illuminated how elites influence particular foreign policy outcomes but also shown how the composition of elites may be a structural influence on foreign policy. As Kertzer (2020) argues, compositional differences between elites and masses are important not necessarily because elites want different things, but rather because the distribution of characteristics like age, gender, and race is different in the elite population as compared to the mass public.

Despite this progress on understanding who foreign policy elites are, the dearth of studies on the relational connections and political experience of foreign policy elites is a significant drag on our ability to trace the role of elites in making and breaking foreign policy. As Krcmaric et al. (2020) note, many studies (most of which are in the domain of American or comparative politics) find few or weak connections between ascriptive characteristics or socializing experiences and outcomes. Studies of elite characteristics struggle to link to foreign policy outcomes in part because they tend to skip the intermediate steps of interacting these variables with politics or relationships. It remains unclear whether changes in elite composition would necessarily translate into dramatically different elite foreign policy behavior, since many things can happen to elites when they move into particular foreign policy roles, serving particular leaders, that are either independent of or interact directly with ascriptive or socialized characteristics. For example, feminist IR

theory and research on female preferences highlight the distinctly male nature of foreign policy and its practices, as well as alternatives favored or promoted by women across many international issues (Brutger & Guisinger 2021, Eichenberg 2019, Enloe 2014, Tickner & True 2018). Yet, findings in American and comparative politics show uneven connections between women's presence in politics (descriptive representation) and policies that benefit women or comport with their preferences, even when there are quotas for women in legislatures or other political roles (Clayton 2021).

In the case of elite characteristics, the main ingredient missing is the politics of elite selection. Krcmaric et al. (2020) note that leader selection is a difficult problem, but most research in IR has focused on the effects of leadership turnover (Wolford 2007), on the selection of top leaders in autocracies (Colgan & Weeks 2015), or on how public opinion influences selection in democracies. Studies of the latter, using conjoint experiments of hypothetical candidates, have found mixed results: In separate studies in the United States and Israel, Tomz et al. (2020) find that the public favors candidates whose foreign policy position (operationalized as hawkish or dovish) is closer to their own; in Pakistan, Clary & Siddiqui (2021) find that the public only modestly penalizes hypothetical candidates who advocate friendlier relations with India.

Given the generally low salience of foreign policy in elections and the high concentration of elite power in foreign policy, the role of leaders in selecting foreign policy elites is a clear avenue for future research. As Bendor & Hammond (1992) note, defining hierarchy within elite circles is important to understanding elite politics. Theory and past research suggest a tractable set of selection scenarios. First, when selecting advisers or others for foreign policy roles, leaders may see a trade-off between loyalty or closeness versus competence in a specific area. For example, Lindsey (2017) argues that diplomacy through autonomous agents is more credible when diplomats are biased toward the interests of the foreign country, while advisers optimally share a leader's preferences—leading them to "face some level of bureaucratic conflict" (p. 555). Network analysis of top foreign policy advisers would help identify the degree to which loyalty or connections to the leader compete with past foreign policy experience or competence.

Second and relatedly, leaders vary in the extent to which they seek to exert direct control over foreign policy—as did presidents John F. Kennedy, who sought to serve as his own Secretary of State, and Richard Nixon, who centralized foreign policy in the White House to an extreme degree—versus obtaining diverse advice in the "multiple advocacy" tradition (George 1980). The principal–agent framework can usefully address these delegatory ideal types. Third, leaders may select advisers to compensate for or complement their own backgrounds or expertise, leading to group dynamics that can differ from how any one individual's traits matter. For example, Saunders (2017) shows that the president's foreign policy experience acts as a monitoring device that reins in the potentially pernicious biases of experienced agents, while inexperienced presidents delegate so credibly to their foreign policy agents that agent bias is magnified.

Third, party politics looms over the selection of foreign policy elites in many democracies, not only in relation to leaders but also in the socializing and promotion of elites up the foreign policy ladder. Leaders may appoint foreign policy advisers to balance or appease party factions, or selectively appoint from the opposition party, as Democratic presidents have frequently done with Secretaries of Defense—leading to distributions of views within administrations and subsequent internal politics (Saunders 2018). As discussed below, partisan polarization is an important trend affecting foreign policy and may influence the pool of potential foreign policy elites.

Last, selection effects may be difficult to observe or may stymie even those who are appointed to foreign policy roles. For example, scholars of gender have long studied, with mixed results, whether there must be a "critical mass" of women in power before their presence translates into policy change (Clayton 2021, pp. 245–46). In a more cynical view of gender quotas, Bush & Zetterberg (2021) argue that in the pursuit of foreign aid, electoral autocracies pursue gender

quotas to enhance their reputation for democratic practices at the expense of real democratic change. In research on cabinet ministers, Krook & O'Brien (2012) find that women's appointments, especially to high-prestige posts that include foreign policy, are best explained by political variables like women's status in the political elite, reinforcing the necessity of examining recruitment into foreign policy positions from the pool of general elites and understanding who enters politics (Gulzar 2021). Relatedly, Barnes & O'Brien (2018) find that women tend to be appointed as defense ministers when the defense portfolio has evolved to include new, more "feminized" meanings (p. 356), but otherwise women remain excluded. One can imagine similar dynamics underpinning selection by race, although empirical work is scarce, reflecting both the rarity of appointments and the dominance of White perspectives in the field (Vitalis 2016).

While a unifying theory of elite selection is unlikely, studying the politics of elite selection should help us better understand the conditions under which we should expect intra-elite conflict in the bureaucratic politics sense, when we should expect elites to reflect or promote the leader's interests, and when we should expect separate elite interests to dominate.

WHAT DO FOREIGN POLICY ELITES WANT?

A central question in studies on elites and foreign policy concerns what elites want. Do elites reflect societal or public preferences (Moravcsik 1997)? Do they channel the leader's preferences (Bendor & Hammond 1992)? Or do elites act on their own preferences stemming from their positions, experience, or expertise? In autocracies, we expect elites to have distinct stakes in the regime's survival and to receive benefits from dictators who want to keep them happy lest they organize a coup, an incentive structure that can distort foreign policy (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003). In democracies, however, we still have a highly incomplete picture of elite preferences, especially as they relate to leaders and to other elites. It is not only populists who accuse elites of pursuing foreign policies that serve their own interests. For example, President Obama's deputy national security advisor, Ben Rhodes, dubbed the Washington foreign policy establishment "the Blob," highlighting its advocacy of interventionism (Samuels 2016, Walt 2018).

Scholars have continued to make advances in studying the longstanding proposition that elites represent and channel societal preferences (Fordham 2019). For example, using the Change in Source of Leader Support data, Mattes et al. (2015) show how democracies can dampen the effect of a change in leaders with different supporting coalitions on foreign policy, leading to greater policy stability. Other research highlights impediments to elite representation of societal interests. In the arena of trade policy, for example, Guisinger (2017) shows that many groups in American society hold protectionist views, including women and African-Americans, but that those preferences do not find expression in policy partly because the elites who advocate for those groups balance so many other competing priorities. Political opportunity costs also influence foreign policy: For example, the scarcity of legislative floor time can delay treaty ratification when parties have other priorities (Kelley & Pevehouse 2015).

Experience in foreign policy roles or specific foreign policy expertise also shapes elite preferences. For example, career diplomats have country-specific knowledge that leads them to prefer cooperation with the countries where they serve (Malis 2021). Similarly, in a study of preferences for international trade cooperation, Hafner-Burton et al. (2014, pp. 864–66) find that patience and strategic reasoning—traits that elites are more likely to have than the general public—shape preferences over treaty design and overall willingness to join treaties.

A different approach to find out what elites want is to ask them in surveys. New tools have made surveys and survey experiments on elite populations more feasible (for reviews, see Dietrich et al. 2021 and Kertzer & Renshon 2022). Surveys conducted by the Chicago Council on Global

Affairs have long been and remain an important source of knowledge of elite attitudes in the United States (Page & Bouton 2006). Other surveys have examined elites in a specific issue area such as trade (Hafner-Burton et al. 2014), or examined foreign policy elites in other countries such as India (Ganguly et al. 2016). A growing body of scholarship is based on foreign policy–related survey experiments conducted on elite samples. Examples include elites in the Chicago Council samples in the United States (Busby et al. 2020), current and former members of the Knesset in Israel (Tomz et al. 2020), legislators in Uganda (Findley et al. 2017), and NATO elites (Hardt 2018). Although it is difficult to generalize findings across so many issues, many of these studies find elite-specific tendencies.

In democracies, scholars often study elite preferences in relation to public attitudes, characterized in the US context by Page & Bouton (2006) as the "foreign policy disconnect." As Kertzer (2020) shows in a meta-analysis of elite–public opinion gaps, the differences between elite and public opinion, as expressed in surveys, are narrower than one might expect, in part because many elites are more like the relatively uninformed masses [see also Saunders (2015) on differences in elite information]. Differences in the distribution of elite orientations or ascriptive attributes, rather than elite expertise or experience, may account for a significant portion of the difference between elite and mass political behavior. To the extent that such traits are distributed differently among elites, however, they help explain why elites may be more or less prone to support certain policies, such as the use of force [for example, Kertzer (2020) notes that men are overrepresented among decision makers].

But while direct surveys and experiments on elite samples offer the advantage of studying those with the greatest access to foreign policy, they are less suited to capturing the interaction of elite preferences with elite incentives. Just as Zaller (1992) argued in the case of public opinion, elite opinion as expressed in surveys is only part of the story. As Zaller noted, "in constructing their opinion statements, people make greatest use of ideas that are, for one reason or another, most immediately salient to them—at the 'top of the head'" (p. 1). But what is top-of-mind for an elite in a survey setting may differ from salient considerations in a real-world crisis. This difference arises not merely because a survey environment differs from the real world—rather, it is because for elites, political or career considerations, which are hard to capture in a survey context, may be highly salient in the moment. Whereas for the public "every opinion is a marriage of information and predisposition" (Zaller 1992, p. 6), for elites most opinions are a marriage of information, predisposition, and politics.

Elite incentives—whether partisan, career, bureaucratic, or organizational—may interact with or dominate other characteristics that shape elite preferences. For example, the incentive for some elites to take action that is "against type" is a theme of many studies of both conflict and cooperation (Kreps et al. 2018, Mattes & Weeks 2019, Schwartz & Blair 2020, Trager & Vavreck 2011). Political roles or ambitions can incentivize such behavior and dominate not only substantive concerns but also ascriptive traits. For example, Wallace (2014) finds that party is more important than race or ethnicity for explaining the voting behavior of Latino members of Congress, even on an issue highly salient to Latinos, such as immigration. Political incentives can even dominate party loyalty, however. Chief executives have incentives to act counter to type, and legislators with leadership ambitions have incentives to break party stereotypes. For example, many Democratic senators who supported the Iraq War had significant doubts but believed voting for war would help their presidential prospects (Draper 2020, pp. 227–31).

Elite incentives also complicate representation of public preferences. In addition to juggling different priorities, elites may confront different incentives when they acquire new roles, affecting how they pursue their preferred outcomes and how their traits affect foreign policy. Consider the role of gender and the use of force. In a meta-analysis of survey experiments on public samples,

Barnhart et al. (2020) find that women consistently favor more peaceful options than men, and using observational data, the authors argue that suffrage was a powerful driver of the democratic peace because it gave political voice to a group with more pacific preferences. In a public opinion experiment, however, Schwartz & Blair (2020) find that women leaders have political incentives to act tough to counter stereotypes of weakness, a conclusion that dovetails with the observational findings of Schramm & Stark (2020) that female leaders in democracies are more likely to initiate conflicts than their male counterparts.

Other approaches also overlook elite incentives. Critiques of the apparently homogeneous elite consensus on many topics often ignore variation in how elites end up implicitly or explicitly backing a particular set of foreign policies. Guisinger's (2017) arguments about competing elite priorities, plus cross-cutting preferences on trade prior to 2016, suggest that elites were not as uniformly in favor of free trade as the lack of protectionist political debate would suggest. And the case of the Iraq War vote illustrates that partisan politics can generate an apparent elite consensus that masks variation in beliefs—many Democrats feared being tarred as weak, a fear that goes back to the beginning of the Cold War and the "Who lost China?" debate.

The point is not that any of these approaches to elite preferences are wrong; it is that elite incentives complicate how we understand elite preferences. The same person can face changing incentives that interact with sincere preferences derived from ascriptive, cognitive, or socialized characteristics over the course of a career. Elite incentives often get in the way of elites pursuing or getting what they would really prefer in a world without political or career fallout. Similarly, incentives can prevent elites from representing their ascriptive traits or the interests of the portion of society for which they advocate.

HOW DO ELITES INFLUENCE FOREIGN POLICY?

The third area of progress is in understanding the mechanisms through which elites influence foreign policy. Recent scholarship sheds more light on the mechanisms of elite information transmission. Scholars of public opinion and foreign policy have long known that elites play a key role in providing cues and information to the public, and the explosion of survey experiments on foreign policy–related topics has deepened that knowledge so much that covering this research is beyond the scope of this review. But there is elite-level variation in the quality and reach of elite-to-public information transmission. As Baum & Potter (2015) show, access to robust and independent media and the number of opposition parties explain variation in whether democratic publics are informed enough about their leaders' wartime decisions to hold them accountable.

Related work suggests the importance of media elites and the general media landscape, although this is an area IR has barely begun to explore. Baum & Groeling (2010) show in the US context that the media has incentives to overrepresent newsworthy cues, such as opposition-party support or same-party criticism of the president (see also Hayes & Guardino 2013). Using a cross-national sample from 113 countries of newspaper coverage of the 2011 Libyan civil war and the Arab Spring, Baum & Zhukov (2015) find that in democracies, the preference of media firms for events signaling "change" leads to more coverage of events that undermine government legitimacy or support challenger legitimacy; in nondemocracies, the media reflects the interests of regimes that wish to stay in power, leading to bias toward coverage that privileges the status quo, such as stories that undermine rebel legitimacy. In terms of foreign economic policy, Guisinger (2017) shows that the media overrepresents bad news about trade.

Elites also have power over foreign policy through more broadly communicative acts. Elites can define narratives (Krebs 2015) or legitimate decisions (Goddard 2012). Schmidtke (2019) finds that elite debate in the media influences the legitimacy of international organizations. Elites set agendas

and shape issue salience through oversight (Fowler 2015) or political campaigns (Guisinger 2017). Elites can also influence the public through more subtle, implicit cues. For example, in a study of attitudes toward the Iraq War conducted just prior to the US invasion in 2003, White (2007) shows that an implicit racial cue opposing the war because it would detract from domestic social programs activated a connection between white racial resentment and support for the war. The implicit racial cue—rather than alternative explicitly racial or nonracial cues—polarized an ostensibly nonracial issue along racial lines.

Elites also transmit information to other elites, within and across countries. For example, new directions in political psychology and qualitative research have revived interest in face-to-face diplomacy and the effects of direct elite contact on assessments of intentions and the credibility of signals (Yarhi-Milo 2014).

Advances in textual analysis have allowed scholars to explore patterns of elite communication across and within countries. For example, in the area of private diplomacy, Katagiri & Min (2019) collected and digitized thousands of documents on the Berlin Crisis, including news reports, declassified telegrams, Foreign Broadcast Information Service reports, and documents from presidential libraries to capture White House–based elites' assessments of resolve. Using a supervised statistical learning model, automatically coding most of the documents after manual coding of a random sample of data (pp. 162–63), they show that public statements are far noisier in their distribution of predictions for Soviet resolve than are private statements, and that these more precise private statements have larger effects on elite assessments in the White House. Within the United States, Schub (2017) uses supervised machine learning and qualitative coding of declassified documents to show that bureaucratic politics is more about "what you know," i.e., the information gathered by specific agencies, than "where you sit."

Elites can also lobby other elites, and here again text analysis has helped scholars make more fine-grained assessments. Milner & Tingley (2015) examine reports from the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995, showing that the White House is more likely to be lobbied on issues that are not highly distributional, while for distributional issues, lobbyists are more likely to bypass the White House and knock on the doors of Congress (ch. 3). Unsupervised machine learning on these data allows finer-grained assessments. For example, within lobbying reports related to trade (a highly distributional issue), the White House was likely to be included in lobbying when the issue was a free trade agreement or the World Trade Organization, since these are the areas where the president is most involved in trade policy (p. 116).

In the realm of decision making, as mentioned, experimental studies on elite samples have shown how knowledge and experience allow elites to influence foreign policy through the deployment of heuristics and other tools, especially in strategic settings. But recent scholarship has also illuminated pathologies of real or perceived expertise, beyond well-known biases like overconfidence (Johnson 2004). Elites can generate and reproduce habits that lead them to approach problems the same way over time, as Howard (2015) shows in the context of US elite responses to ethnic conflicts and Porter (2018) describes in the context of US grand strategy. Studies of peacekeeping find that elites apply their own biases and preferred solutions even when they are poorly matched to the problem at hand (e.g., Howard & Dayal 2018).

Even when elites wish to represent or serve the public interest, they may misperceive public attitudes, often because of their own biases. In the US context, media elites may also be more likely than other types of elites to misperceive public preferences for internationalism (Gift & Monten 2021). Outside the United States, Pereira (2021) uses panel and experimental data on multiple issues, including international cooperation, and finds that elected officials in Sweden and Switzerland misperceive public attitudes not only because of greater exposure to high-status voters but also because elites project their own biases and attitudes onto voters. As he notes,

Cameron's decision to call the Brexit referendum—presumably because he believed a majority of voters favored remaining in the European Union—may have resulted from this type of "false consensus bias," or the "propensity to overestimate the degree to which others share our attitudes and beliefs" (Pereira 2021, p. 1310).

Measuring elite misperception of public opinion may be especially challenging given that elite cues are quite important in shaping attitudes. What the public "wants" may end up looking more like what elites think after a concerted political campaign to shape public opinion and may depend on the existing environment or distribution of elite attitudes, especially whether they are polarized (Guisinger & Saunders 2017, Myrick 2021). If attitudes about politicians dominate public opinion, then position taking or flip flopping may not matter, as Trump showed when he reversed his foreign policy stances (McDonald et al. 2019).

More generally, recent scholarship on how elites influence foreign policy confirms that elite influence can be helpful and harmful to foreign policy (a simple and common-sense view, but one worth highlighting given populist rhetoric). For example, elites engage in some behavior we normally think of as pernicious or normatively undesirable, like secretive decision making, but recent scholarship on secrecy shows that it can be a mechanism for controlling escalation in war (Carson 2018) and facilitating international cooperation (Carnegie & Carson 2020). Experienced elites may act more strategically (Hafner-Burton et al. 2013), but they can also reproduce and perpetuate pernicious habits in foreign policy (Howard 2015).

Studies of elite influence on foreign policy have three limitations worth noting here. First, many insights come from the US context—a bias that has long plagued studies in IR (Colgan 2019) and gets increasingly difficult to manage as we move from elite identities and backgrounds to processes within states that lead to foreign policy choices. Of course, if smaller or less powerful states are more constrained by the international system, their elites may have less room to maneuver in certain areas, making their attributes less salient. Still, studies rarely make such considerations explicit. More theorizing of when and how non-US elites influence their countries' foreign policy choices, or why US elites are the appropriate locus of study rather than a sample of convenience, is appropriate.

Second, while digital records and machine learning offer new sources and methods to examine the abundant data generated by foreign policy processes (Connelly et al. 2021), digitization of records, or the ease with which researchers can digitize records on their own, is nonrandom and fraught with promises and pitfalls even in the United States (Immerman 2021). As Putnam (2016) argues, historians are only beginning to grapple with the "digital turn," which offers new connections and insights on new actors and lowers the costs to obtaining sources but also means that "place-specific learning that historical research in a predigital world required is no longer baked into the process," leading historians to make "rookie mistakes" (p. 377). If it remains difficult to obtain records of elites and foreign policy in non-US or nondemocratic settings, we may generate a misleading picture of global elite influence, whether we analyze them through qualitative or quantitative methods.

Third, returning to the theme of missing politics, the study of elite influence remains heavily focused on the relationship between elites and publics at the expense of intra-elite interactions and influence. As Bendor & Hammond (1992) noted about the original bureaucratic politics approach, theorizing the hierarchy of elites inside government is not a step that can be skipped. The hierarchy influences the politics, and formal structures and decision rules can shape the options and information that elites consider and ultimately what policies they choose (Bendor & Hammond 1992, pp. 316–17). The work of Tetlock (2005) on the importance of holding experts accountable for their judgments dovetails with other recent work on individual-level biases within a principal–agent framework, which also emphasizes the importance of institutional arrangements

and accountability in dampening self-serving agent impulses (Pitesa & Thau 2013). Examining both formal and informal structures, such as leader–elite relationships or power dynamics, may change how we understand the pathways of elite influence.

TRENDS OVER TIME AND RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE FUTURE

Where to next? I highlight five areas that offer promising avenues for future research. First, the importance of leaders in foreign policy is growing, even in democracies. In the United States, the growth of presidential power is well documented and depends on many trends (Goldgeier & Saunders 2018). But one thread that cuts across regime types is the rise of new technology that enables leaders to evade the constraints of other elites. In conflicts, military technology—such as drones, which minimize casualties for the state employing them—enables leaders to evade not only public scrutiny but also other elite constraints like legislative oversight (Horowitz et al. 2016, pp. 20–21). Less visible developments, such as advances in military medicine (Fazal 2014) or evolving tools for financing war (Kreps 2018), likewise insulate leaders from accountability for their foreign policy choices.

Second, even if the ascriptive characteristics of elites have not changed much, inequality has altered the distribution of elite preferences and generated new mechanisms of elite influence. Scholarship on economic elites and the wealthy shows that their preferences and influence differ from those of other elites and from the public (Gilens & Page 2014, Jacobs & Page 2005). The very wealthy have new ways to influence foreign policy. For example, as Drezner (2017) notes, the "ideas industry" increasingly allows "plutocrats" to back intellectuals with similar views, often in think tanks. Cooley & Sharman (2017, p. 732) note the rise of "globalized kleptocrats," a new breed of transnational elites enabled by professionals and policies in Western countries, as the Panama Papers disclosure powerfully revealed. These trends make it easier to conflate foreign policy elites who have real expertise (which does not guarantee their advice or decisions will be good, of course) with the "corrupt elites" of the populist narrative.

Third, rising polarization has altered the pool of elites, their foreign policy preferences, and their mechanisms of influence (Kreps et al. 2018, Schultz 2018). Future research might examine how polarization affects elite socializing experiences, such as service in a political party's pool of executive branch or civil service officials. For example, as the Republican Party recedes from its traditional focus on the details of national security and foreign policy, will the party still nurture and promote cohorts of foreign policy experts in the executive branch, or promote congressional candidates with foreign policy or national security expertise? Will party trends in elite selection affect party brands, which in turn affect foreign policy (Trager & Vavreck 2011)? Polarization may also affect the pool of available officials on substantive issues. For example, if those who have experience with the complex politics surrounding treaty negotiations have distinct preferences (Hafner-Burton et al. 2014), what happens if polarization leads to fewer treaties (Schultz 2018), and thus fewer elites with such experience?

Polarization also makes it harder to assess the relationship between elites and public or societal preferences. If public opinion is polarized, or can be polarized, on many crucial foreign policy issues (Guisinger & Saunders 2017), then information delivered by experts may further deepen divides rather than producing consensus. This dynamic played out in real time during the COVID-19 crisis. And for arguably the major issue in IR for the next decade, namely US–China competition, polarization in the United States may be a significant factor. As Myrick (2021) shows using a variety of methods, whether external threats unify elites or the public depends on the

existing political environment. Using machine learning, she shows that congressional rhetoric during crises has become increasingly polarized over time. In a related survey experiment, she finds that highlighting the threat from China does not reduce polarization in public opinion, and partisan cues about the China threat only deepen existing divides.

Fourth, there is not only declining trust in experts and expertise (Drezner 2017, Nichols 2017) but also declining expertise in formerly crucial foreign policy elite groups. This decline is pronounced in legislatures, as the decline of expertise on foreign policy in the US Congress illustrates (Fowler 2015, Goldgeier & Saunders 2018). Among many possible effects, the decline of expertise undermines the mechanism of anticipated reactions, whereby leaders alter policy proposals in anticipation of what other elites will accept—a crucial but invisible way that Congress exerts influence over foreign policy (Howell & Pevehouse 2007). If expertise declines, whose reactions will leaders anticipate? Will leaders only consider partisan reactions? Polarization and the decline of expertise risk a mutually reinforcing spiral, which removes incentives for elites with expertise to take foreign policy roles while also removing incentives for elites without such expertise to put in the time and effort to acquire it.

Just as expertise and the incentives to acquire it may be declining, however, technology may render domain-specific knowledge and experience simultaneously more important and harder to achieve. Complexity in the financial world, which contributed to the 2008 financial crisis, has outstripped the expertise of politicians and regulators (McCarty et al. 2013, pp. 86–87). As Nelson & Katzenstein (2014, p. 373) argue, the elite-driven social conventions that undergird and stabilize markets exacerbated these problems by leading actors toward "widely shared but patently inaccurate beliefs" that the risks of new financial instruments were low. In the world of security, Horowitz & Kahn (2020) argue that the lack of technical understanding of artificial intelligence among the government and military actors making decisions about how to adopt it is "hobbling American officialdom" (Horowitz & Kahn 2020), potentially leading the United States to miss the benefits of innovation. Furthermore, empowering elites with highly specialized knowledge in the absence of monitoring by knowledgeable officials magnifies psychological biases associated with increased risk (Saunders 2017). As knowledge of elite selection and incentives deepens, research on how elites acquire relevant expertise will be valuable.

Fifth and finally, social media and digital life affect elite influence. Leaders can target ever-smaller but critical slices of the electorate directly—as when the Trump campaign attempted to mobilize the growing Venezuelan-American population in Florida by running a YouTube ad falsely tying Joe Biden to socialists in Venezuela (Merrill & McCarthy 2020). Such targeting allows leaders to activate sentiment that may have no other elite-level outlet and to put together a crazy-quilt coalition in which foreign policy can play a small but potentially crucial role. Mid-level elites, who can hold leaders accountable for their foreign policy choices and hash out political conflicts and policy disputes in institutions, are not only less willing to do so, but also less needed to generate public debate, because leaders have digital channels through which to disseminate messages. In short, experienced or authoritative elites are increasingly cut out of debates entirely. Political candidates no longer feel the need to demonstrate their foreign policy capability on television or in Washington institutions where their appearances can generate media coverage. To be sure, the foreign policy establishment comes with its own biases, habits, blind spots, and gatekeeping. But like most choices among imperfect options, evading traditional institutions entails trade-offs. Social media can empower new voices that include previously marginalized groups, but media fragmentation and polarization erode the common knowledge and shared beliefs that underpin democracy (Farrell & Schneier 2021) and can focus minds on what may or may not be good for the nation as a whole.

CONCLUSION

The Trump administration's deliberate shunning of foreign policy professionals, as well as the United Kingdom's rejection of technocratic expertise in the Brexit debate, spurred more scrutiny of the value of elites in foreign policy. New research on foreign policy and elites reinforces a middle ground that needs shoring up: Elites may not be as good as the technocrats would have us believe, but neither are they as bad for foreign policy as the populists claim. Dahl (1990, p. 23) argues that competence in authority is vital: "I should not like to be a surgical patient in an operating room governed by the principle that one person's opinion is as much entitled to a hearing as another's." But to extend the metaphor, we now know much more not only about the surgeon's strengths but also about his or her weaknesses, as well as the biased pathways that determine who becomes a surgeon in the first place.

Those who study and practice foreign policy are increasingly reckoning with these issues. Diversity can be a significant source of strength in foreign affairs. For example, Lyall (2020) shows that states that treat ethnic groups within their societies as equal citizens field militaries that perform better in battle. In business, scholars have found that diversity benefits decision making (Page 2017) and organizational resilience (Duchek et al. 2020).

As many countries make efforts to diversify foreign policy elites, the field must be attentive to how the effects of these changes manifest. We may find that under some conditions, a more diverse elite may lead to similar outcomes, but we should not necessarily conclude that diversity had no effect. Scholars will need to carefully examine whether similar outcomes arose from similar external constraints or were instead the result of more inclusive debates and processes and broader-based support for existing policies. The latter case will generate interesting comparisons for scholars of policy stability and credibility. Alternatively, potential challenges may impede diversification or prevent states from reaping the benefits of a more diversified foreign policy elite, such as the selection mechanisms and incentives discussed in this review. The path from elite identity and preferences to foreign policy outcomes is not linear, nor should we expect it to be. The politics of elite selection, incentives, and interaction are crucial to understanding the elites that make—and sometimes break—foreign policy.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

The author is not aware of any affiliations, memberships, funding, or financial holdings that might be perceived as affecting the objectivity of this review.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For comments and advice, I thank Rafaela Dancygier, Dan Drezner, Henry Farrell, James Goldgeier, Alexandra Guisinger, Susan Hyde, Joshua Kertzer, Kate McNamara, and Abraham Newman.

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