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**Public opinion and Reagan foreign policy-making**

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**The Pennsylvania State University, 1991**

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The Pennsylvania State University  
The Graduate School  
Department of Political Science

PUBLIC OPINION AND REAGAN FOREIGN POLICY MAKING

A Thesis in  
Political Science

by

William A. Marjenhoff


Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements  
for the Degree of

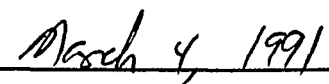
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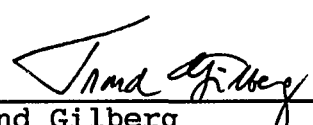
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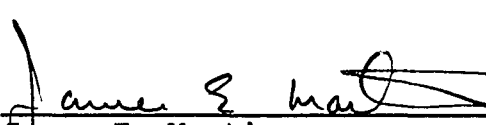
  
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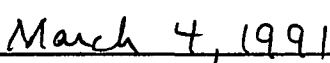
  
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## ABSTRACT

The role of U.S. public opinion in foreign policy making during the Reagan presidency is examined. A broad range of foreign policy issues is covered, with explanatory discussions relating the power or impotence of public opinion to specific areas such as the joint Iran-contra objectives, nuclear arms control negotiations, and South Africa policy.

The Reagan administration's polling, public relations, and public diplomacy operations are described in support of the notion that this administration was genuinely sensitive to public opinion in the formulation and conduct of foreign policy.

The influence of public opinion surveys on presidents since FDR is reviewed, and the impact of foreign policy issues on presidential elections since 1960 is discussed. Foreign policy issues played an uncharacteristically important election role in the 1980 presidential campaign. In 1984, although the Democrats thought they could take advantage of Reagan's somewhat low foreign policy approval rating, foreign policy issues proved to be losers for Walter Mondale.

Public opinion on foreign affairs issues on the eve of Ronald Reagan's election in 1980 is assessed as being generally conservative. The effect of cross-cutting variables on public opinion is discussed with particular regard to Reagan's Central America policy. Opinion volatility, the misuse of polls and phenomena resulting in poll inaccuracy are

discussed, although these factors are not found to negate the usefulness and informative nature of polls.

Ronald Reagan's job approval and foreign policy approval ratings are discussed, with particular reference to the effects of Central America, Middle East and South Africa policy, and with respect to relatively short-term changes in public opinion on defense spending and the Soviet threat.

Public opinion in democratic theory is reviewed. Congress as a vehicle for public opinion is discussed with particular reference to its major foreign policy battles with the Reagan administration. Interest groups, particularly the Israeli and pro- and anticontra lobbies are assessed as vehicles for public opinion during the Reagan years.

An overview of communication theory is presented, concluding with a discussion of the relationship between public opinion, the media of mass communication and the Reagan White House.



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## INTRODUCTION

To say that public opinion generally counts in the making of American public policy is axiomatic. Popular attitudes set limits, for example, on what a president can do at home and abroad. But in what ways, how often and how much public opinion counts, on which issues, to which policy makers, and to what effect--such quantities are clearly problematic.

Public opinion on national policy issues, however ignored or influential in given circumstances, is communicated to governmental decision makers through a variety of institutions and media. Most prominent among these conduits are elections and referenda, representative institutions (i.e., Congress), interest groups, the media of mass communication, and opinion polls. Assigning an order of importance to these vehicles of opinion is more likely to be a normative rather than an empirical exercise.

Of all these vehicles, public opinion polling--scientific polling--is the most recent addition to the democratic armamentarium. George Gallup, Sr., and other early pollsters, as well as modern proponents of "teledemocracy," have touted polling for its potential in bringing about direct democracy, as opposed to the established (indirect) representative system of American democracy. Understandably, perceptions of public opinion seem to vary from the extreme of being ultimate truth/ultimate good on one hand, to the extreme of being a

primal and fearsome force, dangerous to rational decision making, on the other.

Public opinion as a factor in U.S. foreign policy making has traditionally been weak, relative to domestic policy making. The public has generally been less informed and less interested in this arena than in domestic politics. Foreign policy elites, particularly those engaged in diplomacy, have been generally loathe to consider public opinion in the course of decision making. But this traditional view of public opinion vis-a-vis foreign policy making has been undergoing considerable change in the last several decades (see below, pp. 16-17), a change that lost no momentum during the Reagan years.

Foreign policy issues were hotly debated in the 1980 presidential election campaign, a rare phenomenon in peacetime. Pollster Richard Wirthlin not only acted as a Reagan campaign adviser, but remained active in the White House inner circle through both terms, meeting with the president almost daily to keep him informed about public opinion on a wide variety of issues. Wirthlin employed the latest market research techniques in coaching the president for achieving maximum effect in televised debates, news conferences, and speeches. Elaborate arrangements were made by the White House to help ensure good press relations and public relations, which were used (with mixed results) in the administration's legislative battles with Congress. A public

diplomacy apparatus coordinated by National Security Council (NSC) staff sought to sway public and congressional opinion on foreign policy issues, primarily Central America policy. Pro-contra interest group activities were actively encouraged and sometimes even financed and coordinated by administration officials. The president's popularity rating was jealously guarded by White House staffers, especially by Wirthlin and Reagan's chiefs of staff, who reputedly counselled him on some occasions to act in particular ways on particular issues with an eye toward preserving his great popularity with the American people. If public opinion cannot be claimed as the primary motivating force in making foreign policies or in adjusting preferred policies, it undoubtedly weighed in on a variety of policy decisions. Among those issues were the president's appeals to Congress for contra aid, the withdrawal of the U.S. contingent of a peacekeeping force from Lebanon, the imposition of sanctions on the government of South Africa, and the development of policy toward General Manuel Noriega and Panama. The NSC commissioned secret public opinion polls to determine the parameters of public support for retaliatory strikes against Libya, and to determine the various foreign policy "attitude types" among the public so that more effective appeals could be made in support of the president's preferred foreign policies. Even when public opinion was "ignored" by the Reagan administration, as in the pursuit of the joint Iran-contra objectives, public opinion was a major

concern. Avoiding adverse public reaction was one of the motivating factors in pursuing those objectives in secret.

Instances of public opinion figuring in foreign policy making, however, continue to surprise many analysts and, as a result, may even be magnified in their eyes. Eight months into the Bush administration, *Newsweek* (October 2, 1989) reported without qualification that the "conventional wisdom" was that the president was conducting U.S. foreign policy based on opinion polls.

Like all modern presidents before him, George Bush is assuredly concerned about public opinion as he and his administration officials make foreign policy. As Barry Sussman (1988) has pointed out, political leaders are equally cynical, manipulative, contemptuous and fearful of public opinion. Sussman, who was for many years the director of polling for the *Washington Post*, contends (pp. 35-36) that they "generally treat public opinion as something to keep off their backs . . ." and use polls "to alert themselves to rising storms."

Having served as vice-president for eight years in an opinion-conscious Reagan administration, President Bush might be particularly inclined to pay close attention to the polls. Certainly that was the expectation of many Democrats, who predicted that poll-watching by the Bush administration would be substituted for "vision."

Ronald Reagan, on the contrary, was elected with the help of many voters who perceived him as being a man with a very

clear vision, a man who knew full well where he wanted to lead this country. Reagan's clearest set of priorities related to ending economic stagflation, restoring national self-confidence, and rebuilding American power, especially military power. When, as a candidate, he spoke of the need for leadership, the term undoubtedly had foreign policy implications in the minds of many voters. Yet his foreign policy turned out to be essentially defensive and largely bereft of diplomatic ambition. Until the final year of his presidency, his foreign policy goals remained largely shrouded in the climate and rhetoric of the cold war. "We meant to change a nation," he admitted in his farewell speech to the American people (Reagan, 1989), "and instead, we changed a world." Reagan's foreign policy style and focus remained constant throughout his eight years in office. It was his style to very often concentrate on unilateral coercive means to achieve desired ends. The focus of his foreign policy was primarily on the Soviet Union, whether as an "evil empire" to be contained or, in his second term, as a partner in the search for arms reductions and regional disengagement.

If Reagan's foreign policy style and focus were largely constant, its content was not. Major changes in Reagan foreign policy occurred after the relatively pragmatic George Shultz took over from the more dogmatic Alexander Haig as secretary of state in the summer of 1982.

Shultz steered U.S. Middle East policy away from Haig's



anti-Soviet concept of "strategic consensus" toward resolution of the Arab-Israeli dispute and increasingly toward "strategic cooperation" with Israel. The Shultz objectives would eventually prove to be mutually exclusive. Shultz was widely credited with being the principal architect of Reagan's September 1982 Middle East initiative that, while reaffirming U.S. support for Israel, called for Palestinian self-government of the West Bank in association with Jordan.

Before the Shultz appointment, the administration publicly blamed and imposed economic sanctions on Poland and the Soviet Union for the imposition of martial law in Poland in December 1981. (Haig did privately object to this action.) The most important of these sanctions was a prohibition on U.S. exports of equipment for construction of a natural gas pipeline from Siberia to Western Europe. The sanctions were expanded in June 1982 to include pipeline-related exports by foreign subsidiaries of U.S. firms or by foreign firms holding U.S. licenses. The June action particularly angered U.S. allies in Europe, who ordered their firms to fill Soviet equipment orders in spite of Reagan's sanctions. While 48 percent of "aware" respondents to a Gallup Organization poll approved the Reagan administration's position on sanctions, 64 percent said they saw no advantage (23 percent) or offered no opinion on advantages (41 percent) to the action.<sup>1</sup> The most

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<sup>1</sup>Poll results, unless otherwise noted, are taken from the

frequently cited disadvantage was that sanctions were causing bad relations with our allies (21 percent). U.S. firms lost millions of dollars worth of Soviet contracts, and in September, the House of Representatives--the "people's chamber"--tried unsuccessfully (by a vote of 206-203) to overturn the sanctions. Six weeks later, Secretary Shultz quietly negotiated an end to the sanctions with European leaders with a minimum of embarrassment to the Reagan administration. (Another Gallup poll found 53 percent of those interviewed approving the removal of the sanctions.) The sanctions were lifted in the context of a study on future controls on trade with the Soviet Union.

Shifts in Reagan foreign policy were also apparent after the 1984 election. By the beginning of his second term in office, the president and his officials had seemingly learned how to shift policies or tactics just enough to avoid outright defeat in Congress. When his foreign policies encountered obstinate opposition, Reagan would maneuver abruptly and cleverly, managing to get more political credit for acknowledging "reality" than blame for having made mistakes in the first place. There had been instances of this as early as 1983, when the president agreed to remove the Marine contingent of a multinational peace-keeping force from Lebanon. In

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summaries of opinion regularly published in the journals *Gallup Reports*, *Public Opinion* and *Public Opinion Quarterly*.

1985, facing impending Senate action, he imposed sanctions on the white minority government of South Africa. Mild though the sanctions were, the president's action reversed the administration's policy of "constructive engagement," which had been intended to persuade the South African government, in a friendly way, to give blacks more political rights and economic opportunities. When he faced overwhelming congressional opposition to a 1985 proposal to sell advanced weapons to Jordan, Reagan readily agreed to postpone the sale. The president seemed to have developed a nose for compromise that rescued him from what might have been humiliating defeats. But as his second term wore on, he seemed less willing to make the necessary compromises, and was left behind as Congress often established foreign policy on its own with regard to South Africa, the Philippines, arms sales to the Middle East, priorities in foreign aid spending, and other issues.

Shifts in Reagan foreign policy were also apparent after the "pre-summit meeting" in Reykjavik and the summit meetings in Geneva, Washington and Moscow, and they were apparent after the Iran-contra affair. Once America's premier anti-communist, the president appeared to develop a deep respect, and possibly even a little personal affection for Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev. Reagan acknowledged to reporters that he no longer viewed the Soviet Union as an "evil empire."

The shifts that occurred in the wake of the Iran-contra affair were largely effected as a result of wholesale changes

in the administration's foreign policy apparatus. White House Chief of Staff Donald Regan was ousted and replaced by Howard Baker. Frank Carlucci succeeded John Poindexter as national security adviser and was, in turn, replaced by Lt. Gen. Colin Powell. Carlucci became secretary of defense upon the resignation of Caspar Weinberger. Weinberger's departure removed from the Cabinet the last senior official with consistently hardline views on foreign affairs.

Shifts in policy were partially driven by experience in foreign affairs pushing policy toward pragmatism, partially driven by turnover in staff, and partially driven by a mellowing of dogmatic preconceptions as public opinion moderated.

Despite widely publicized gaffes, misstatements, and policy failures, Ronald Reagan was perceived by the American people as providing strong, credible public leadership. Although he sometimes adopted positions he previously had opposed, President Reagan was widely perceived as leading, rather than following. Dubbed the "Great Communicator," he frequently embarked on all-out efforts to persuade the American people to support his conservative policy vision. In these efforts, he brought to bear formidable media skills, honed by a radio, film and television career, and by what he called "the mashed potato circuit." He enjoyed enormous personal popularity, and was the only two-term president since the advent of public opinion polling to leave office more

esteemed than when he arrived. This was true in spite of having suffered low approval marks for the better part of two years following the Iran-contra revelations. Although he was almost always more popular than his policies, his personal standing rubbed off on and greatly facilitated his policies, even when they were unpopular. His only serious political problems in foreign policy occurred when he could not make an effort to persuade the public for reasons of secrecy (i.e., trading arms for hostages), or when an effort to persuade had manifestly failed (e.g., contra aid).

The purpose of this study is to examine the role of public opinion in foreign policy making during the Reagan presidency. Where possible, attempts have been made to relate specific policies to the power or impotence of public opinion.

While it is entirely healthy that divergent views on the value and efficacy of public opinion as a factor in foreign policy making continue to be debated in a modern democratic society, this study is not intended as polemic. I confess to a certain Jeffersonian-democratic bias, holding public opinion to be a generally positive force that has the potential to direct the nation and its government along the best path to valued goals. The objectives of this dissertation, however, are to add to the growing body of knowledge about foreign policy making in the U.S. and to contribute to the development of a coherent theory of public opinion.

## Chapter 1

## POLLS, PRESIDENTS AND POLICIES

The word "poll" not only describes a canvassing of persons to report trends in public opinion but also the broad end of a hammer or similar tool used to shape other objects. J. R. Lowell (Roll and Cantril, 1972, p. x) described the force of public opinion as being "like the pressure of the atmosphere: you can't see it, but all the same, it is 16 pounds to the square inch."

The power of polls is a testament to the power of democratic collective action. In the waning days of the Reagan administration, a democratic revolution was beginning to sweep across the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Democratic man, a relatively new phenomenon on the face of the earth, seemed to be discovering his capacities and flexing his muscles on yet another stage. Democracy appears to be a work of political creation that is visibly accumulating power and momentum throughout the world (see the Fall 1990 special issue of *Foreign Affairs*, especially D. A. Rustow's "Democracy: A Global Revolution?").

Robert MacIver wrote in *The Web of Government* (1947, p. 175):

All the characteristic systems of democracy that the world has seen have evolved through processes in which the instruments of government have gradually been brought under the control of the body of citizens as a whole.

MacIver described democracy as a relative, not an absolute, quality in a political system. Democracy is never completely achieved; it may only be said to expand and grow.

The institutions and processes in the American democratic system that have traditionally been viewed as being the **least** affected by public opinion have been those concerned with the making of foreign policy.<sup>2</sup> No compelling mechanism for continuous public input into U.S. foreign policy making exists. Foreign policy making has generally been seen as an activity of elites far removed from public pressures. But there are many indications that even the instruments and processes of American foreign policy making have been subject to a relentless process of democratization.

This is not to say that our presidents, our elected representatives and other governmental decision makers are bound to carry out the will or whims of the American people. They do not anxiously await the latest poll results before acting. If this were the criterion for measuring the potency of public opinion, then public opinion would probably count for very little.

On the other hand, presidents and other public officials have little interest in flouting the will of the American

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<sup>2</sup>The term "public opinion" is now generally accepted to mean a collection of individual opinions on an issue of public interest (Davison, 1968, p. 188), or the aggregation of individual attitudes by pollsters (Gollin, 1980).

people. Most elected officials are particularly aware of the opinions of their constituents. If we consider the power of public opinion as having the potential to deflect decision making behavior, if we consider that decision makers prefer to seek accommodation with public opinion, then public opinion as reported in survey results must be said to have considerable influence.

Senator Warren Rudman (R-N.H.) told Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North during the Iran-contra hearings that public opinion polls had been running 75 percent to 25 percent against contra aid and that Congress had been appropriately reflecting this public sentiment. No one challenged either the accuracy of his figures or his claim that the voice of the public was the basic authority on which representatives acted. (What some of Rudman's colleagues later challenged was the obligation of members of Congress to follow public opinion they consider erroneous, as opposed to leading opinion to a correct position.)

There is no reason to expect perfect congruence always between public opinion and policy outcomes, but various quantitative studies have shown a considerable degree of congruence (e.g., Miller and Stokes, 1963, although these analysts found the correlation between constituent opinions on foreign policy and members' voting records to be very low; Verba and Nie, 1972; Page and Shapiro, 1983). Public opinion polls had a great deal to do with Lyndon Johnson's decision



not to stand for reelection in 1968. Studies examining issue congruence between voters and candidates for representative office tend to show that winners display much higher congruence with their districts than do losers (P. Converse, 1987). Whether sensitivity to public opinion has resulted in improved governance is another and most assuredly moot question.

The debate over the appropriate place of public opinion in determining the course of U.S. national affairs is an old one. It continues to raise contentious questions that confront the American political system. Determining public opinion's place in the actual formulation of U.S. foreign policy has been and continues to be an especially thorny problem for analysts.

Domestic and foreign policy, the two components of public policy, are not neatly separable as national and global economies tend to merge. They do sometimes display distinctive differences, however, in addition to sharing common characteristics. Both involve the authoritative allocation of resources and the promotion or protection of values through governmental institutions and processes. Elites have characteristically made foreign policy, however, against a background of public deference or indifference. These elites include administration leaders and other political officeholders, bureaucratic "experts," the leaders of vigorous interest groups, and a sizeable band of academics, private pundits, and the directors of the mass media and a

variety of think tanks and research centers. Domestic policy often has more obvious distributive, redistributive and regulatory aspects than foreign policy. Perhaps for this reason, domestic policy is usually made with more political controversy, more group conflict and more public debate than foreign policy.

Understanding how and why foreign policies take the form they do requires much analysis. Among the factors to be assessed are the political process with its structures and mobilized groups, economic trends and expectations, the role of foreign pressures, as well as the perspectives and dynamics of domestic elite and public opinion.

The American foreign policy machine is particularly intricate and complex. Its operation is subject to many variables, of which domestic public opinion is only one. As one former State Department official put it (Elder, 1960, pp. 145-146),

Each policy fired into the murky atmosphere of international relations by the machine must be related to thousands of earlier policies already in orbit, both of our own and foreign design, many of which have been deflected by variables and factors unforeseen at the time of their launching.

Much of foreign policy making, as another analyst (Sondermann, 1977) has pointed out, is "accidental, *ad hoc*, fortuitous." Many processes are at work that may act to deaden the impact of American public opinion on the formulation of U.S. foreign policy. These include the increasingly

close relationship between foreign and domestic policy, the harsh realities of national and international politics, and the interests and opinions of foreign governments and publics.

Not surprisingly, a common view on the subject of "democratized" foreign policy making has been that the general and intellectually unsophisticated public is far removed from the elites who formulate U.S. foreign policy, and that therefore public opinion has not greatly influenced policy (Almond, 1950; Rosenau, 1961; Benson, 1967-68; Cohen, 1973; Levering, 1978).

That view, however, is increasingly being challenged. Political scientists Bruce Russett and Thomas Graham (1988) have concluded that public opinion may have a more important and intricate relationship to foreign policy decision making at the presidential level than analysts have previously suggested.

In his exhaustive study of U.S. public opinion and America's China policy, Leonard Kusnitz (1984, pp. 177-178) wrote that

the view of the state as autonomous of public pressures is certainly insufficient to explain the course of America's China policy. This insufficiency may very well hold for other areas of international concern. . . . Opinion . . . does affect the substance and conduct of American foreign policy.

Leslie Gelb (1972, p. 459) described American public opinion as "the essential domino" in "Washington's will" to continue pursuing the war in Vietnam. John Sigler (1982-83,

p. 18) wrote that the basic foreign policy problem facing any president is "the need for an active policy that can be made acceptable . . . to the American public." Thomas Graham (1988, p. 321) has concluded that

the current paradigm in the field of public opinion and American foreign policy must be overhauled to meet the demands of today's political realities and intellectual challenges where polling has become an ever-present element in presidential decision making.

Richard Beal and Ronald Hinckley (1984) have argued that public opinion polls have gained such acceptance in recent years that "opinion polls are at the core of presidential decision making." Hinckley (1987, p. 298) wrote that "[f]oreign policy and political rhetoric are adjusted and even made on the basis of what the polls say."<sup>3</sup>

Reagan speechwriter Peggy Noonan wrote (1990, p. 249):

Polls are the obsessions of every modern White House and every political professional. . . . In every political meeting I have ever been to, if there was a pollster there his words carried the most weight because he is the only one with hard data, with actual numbers on actual paper. . . . Everyone else has an opinion; the pollster has a fact. . . . Every modern president has kept an eye on his approval ratings, but in the eighties it reached critical mass. When I left the Reagan White House I felt that polls are now driving more than politics, they are driving history.

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<sup>3</sup>Other analysts who consider public opinion to be influential in the formulation of U.S. foreign policy include Monroe, 1975 and 1979; Page and Shapiro, 1983; and Foster, 1983.

Particularly during the last decade, a consensus has emerged that public opinion even influences military policy (Mullady, 1978; Hosmer, 1984; Lorrell and Kelley, 1985; Kernell, 1986; Weinberger, 1986).

Legal philosopher Edmond Cahn (1961, pp. 186-187) wrote that the democratic process provides for

a continual flow of opinion mutually between citizen and citizen and reciprocally between citizenry and officialdom, culminating at intervals in the formal mandates of the ballot box. . . . When true to itself, [the democratic process] not only derives the just powers of government from the consent of the governed . . . it also draws on the governed and their consent to warrant the just applications and exercises of the powers. On these terms, law, government, and official compulsion are provided with an unexceptionable moral basis. Freedom of inquiry and discussion on one side and justice of administration on the other are the twin pillars that together support the moral authority of a representative government.

It was that great democrat Thomas Jefferson who wrote in the Declaration of Independence that the just powers of government are derived from the consent of the governed. Now, it seems to many, scientific polling, coupled with democratic institutions, rightly or wrongly draws on the consent of the governed to sanction the policies and acts of government.

Most Americans tend toward political apathy, however. Voter turnout in the U.S. is notoriously low. In 1980, 47.5 percent of the voting age population did not cast ballots for or against Ronald Reagan. On election day 1988, a record 91

million Americans who could have voted for or against Ronald Reagan's vice-president and successor did not. The turnout rate--50.16 percent--was the lowest in a U.S. presidential election in 64 years.

Such apathy is distressing for those who place high normative values on public participation. In *Man's Hope*, Andre Malraux (1938, p. 398) wrote,

Every door's open to those who are set on forcing it. The quality of one's life is like the quality of one's mind. The only guarantee that an enlightened policy will be followed by a popular government isn't our theories but our presence, now and here. The moral standard of our government depends on our efforts and on our steadfastness. Enlightenment . . . will not be the mysterious outcome of some vague aspiration; it'll be exactly what we make it.

George Gallup, Jr. (1984, p. 139) attributes much voter apathy to politicians' "lack of response to the opinion of the majority." Americans are not apathetic, however, if a particular issue catches their interest, Gallup contends. He cites a Gallup Organization poll in which a significant number of people said they would be more inclined to vote if they could vote on national issues as well as candidates. Gallup estimates (p. 136) that voting turnout would increase to about 80 percent of eligible voters if they had "a more direct voice in government--a purer form of democracy than they have now."

Issue polling as an instrument for direct democracy poses some very serious problems for the American political system, however. Technologically, the U.S. is on the threshold of an

electronic era in which frequent and direct participation of the people in their government could be possible. In January 1991, the Federal Communication Commission moved to reserve certain radio bands for an interactive television system that would not require special cables or the use of a telephone or personal computer to transmit responses to on-screen questions back to a central source.

Yet Gallup and enthusiasts of "teledemocracy" (Becker, 1981) seem to ignore the representative nature of the American political system, which was designed by the Founding Fathers to prevent majority tyranny. *The Federalist Papers* Number 10 discusses this issue at length, and calls on representatives to form majorities out of multiple factions by "refining and enlarging the public views"--that is, by deliberating, modifying and compromising proposals before voting on them. Referenda and initiatives sometimes may be useful in small countries, or on state or local issues where citizens may know about as much about the issues as their representatives. More often than not, voters are largely ignorant of ballot issues they are asked to decide. Certainly on most complicated national and international issues, there is an ever present danger that the public is even less likely to have fully deliberated the issues or be well enough informed to produce sound decisions.

Even the unrefined results of issue polls, however, are vital to the public's political representatives. Polls not

only provide valuable information for making campaign decisions, but also reveal whether elected officials have retained their constituents' support. Polls also provide clout in legislative battles.

In an interview (B. Wattenberg, 1986) with Jeane Kirkpatrick, Ronald Reagan's appointee as U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, the interviewer remarked that Reagan staffer Patrick Buchanan and pollster Richard Wirthlin had purportedly disagreed on whether the president "should spend his political capital" on a contra aid request to Congress, with Wirthlin arguing that the president should not risk his extraordinary appeal. "Polls," the interviewer suggested, "can act as a damper on leadership. Is this a problem?"

Kirkpatrick (p. 61) responded that

polls are a very useful tool for political leaders. No one is going to forego them, least of all presidents. The notion that a president would use the polls as a guide to policy actions is, in most cases, appalling because we elect as presidents people who want power for something, not just power for themselves.

Interviewer: But don't White House stafflings try to push the president in that direction?

Kirkpatrick: Some of them try.

Interviewer: Do they succeed?

Kirkpatrick: . . . This president does not make his decisions on that basis. I have had much opportunity to observe the decision-making process in this administration . . . [and] I do not believe on the basis of what I saw that they were generally made by the president on the basis of short-range political popularity. There are some people who are more inclined than the president to make



decisions on that basis.

Interviewer: Would you give us their initials?

Kirkpatrick: I don't think so.

Reagan speechwriter Peggy Noonan (1990, p. 239) wrote at length about a split that cleaved the Reagan administration from the beginning: that of conservatives versus pragmatists, "[t]he ideologues versus the Republicans, the young guys versus the old guys--whatever you called it. . . ." Noonan also characterized the two sides (p. 245) as "small c conservatives [who] believed that action must follow consensus," and "big C Conservatives [who] said consensus follows action." White House staffers Michael Deaver and Richard Darman were among the "small c conservatives" who generally supported the notion that the president's stance on most issues should reflect the will of the majority, and they generally equated taking unpopular stands with squandering political capital. Nancy Reagan was also in the pragmatist camp, and although she was not always successful in persuading the president to her way of thinking, she was not without influence. Noonan wrote (p. 163) that Mrs. Reagan "worried about the effects of the deficit on her husband's popularity. . . [s]he disliked SDI and the defense buildup because they were not popular in the polls."

Although he was the champion of the ideologues, President Reagan often sided with the pragmatists, or at least used their arguments when it served his purposes. In a meeting

with Paul Weyrich and other conservative activists, the White House was chided for having missed an opportunity to get contra aid by not moving after the public ground swell of support following Oliver North's testimony. The president responded that public opinion wasn't behind more contra aid even after North's testimony (Noonan, 1990, p. 246): "Dick Wirthlin's polls--and he's the best, most accurate pollster in the country--showed that we didn't have the popular support even after Ollie." Another participant at the meeting said the president should announce his support for immediate deployment of SDI. The president, Noonan reported (p. 247), shook his head, and said that again, he had to note that "we just lack public support for SDI."

Some decision makers may be tempted to make policy on the basis of what would be popular, and some of President Reagan's advisors, from time to time, may have favored taking that course. Perhaps more dangerous to democratic processes, however, is the temptation of some staffers and political consultants, in this age of media politics and the marketing of candidates, to use poll results as tools for the manipulation of public passion.

The techniques for such manipulation were constantly being refined during the 1980s. There were valid fears that the marketing of candidates had come to differ little from the marketing of soap, petfood, or other commodities. (A polling question by Video Storyboard Tests, a New York advertising

firm, asked if respondents agreed with the statement, "Products/candidates don't perform as well as commercials claim" [Farhi, 1989].)

One marketing technique that was increasingly adopted by political consultants during the decade of the '80s was the use of "focus groups"--one- or two-hour sessions in which a group leader asks a group of voters a series of political questions, or shows them political commercials and asks for comment. Participants are usually paid. Democratic pollster Stanley Greenberg explained the value of focus groups (Taylor, 1989):

In an age when voters are so fluid on matters of ideology and party, so much of getting the message right becomes a matter of tapping the right emotions and using the right language. That's what focus groups get you that polls don't. You get the texture.

Measuring public response to a political message can be done via tracking polls, which record changes in attitude periodically. The other is post-testing of the message, in which pollsters arrange for targeted voters to listen to the message on radio or watch it on television, then survey them in person or by telephone and compile a score card on such criteria as saliency, credibility and empathy.

During his second term in office, Ronald Reagan and his advisors took this kind of market research a step further. Whenever the president participated in a televised debate, or gave a televised speech or news conference, pollster Richard

Wirthlin, known as "Numbers" to White House staffers, would assemble a 40-member focus group and provide them with "people meters." These are push-button electronic devices that are used to register a running commentary from approval to indifference to disapproval. Results were tabulated at six-second intervals by a computer. In a debriefing session the following day, Wirthlin would give the president and his staff a chart--much like an electrocardiogram--indicating, down to the word, gesture and second, exactly what had and had not drawn positive responses. Phrases that drew positive responses were repeated by the president in future speeches. Phrases that drew negative responses were discarded (Taylor, 1989). More than 50 focus group sessions of this kind were conducted by the national Republican polling operation in the last five months of the 1984 presidential campaign to assist with the selection and development of campaign issues (Bogart, 1985).

Focus groups, or more properly, focused group discussions, add a qualitative dimension to quantitative survey research. As a research method, group discussions have been used since World War II. Army psychologists used them to study methods of boosting morale. In the 1950s, the technique was adopted by commercial marketing researchers. Qualitative methods declined in the 1960s as quantitative methods advanced, and only came back into vogue during the early 1980s (Libresco, 1983).

Wirthlin was one of the first political consultants to use focus groups, and their application by the Reagan administration might well give further pause to those who see potential dangers in using opinion polls as factors in the formulation of public policy.

Peggy Noonan wrote (1990, pp. 283-284) that it was while sitting in on Wirthlin's postmortems, that she "began to have a recurrent vision of a woman throwing her apron over her head and running screaming from the kitchen." In analyzing one of Reagan's State of the Union speeches, Wirthlin noted that the president's statements about the freedom fighters in Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia and Nicaragua had not elicited positive responses. Focus group members didn't know where these countries are, Wirthlin said. One person in the group said it sounded like the administration was launching a five-point war. The language, Wirthlin said, was so powerful that it put the focus group members on edge. "It made them feel 'down.' It wasn't positive. . . . Now when we talk about tax reform. . . drum it in. It's pro-family, pro-jobs, pro-future, pro-America. Pro is positive." Noonan wrote that at this point, she found herself fingering her skirt as if it were an apron.

Early in the president's first term, writer Dom Bonafede (1981) concluded that

[p]erhaps more than any other administration, the Reagan White House uses polling and public opinion analyses and media and marketing resources as contributory

elements in the decision-making process and the selling of the presidency. This is probably not surprising considering the high state of the art and the fact that Ronald Reagan, the 'Great Communicator,' is president.

In a Reagan administration that was more realistic than idealistic in its world view, one might have expected an undervaluation of the role of the public in the formulation and conduct of U.S. foreign policy. In an administration that placed a high value on symbolism, it might be imagined that policy makers would have given only ritual deference to public opinion. Indications are, however, that the Reagan administration was genuinely sensitive to public opinion vis-a-vis the formulation and conduct of foreign policy.

Polls were routinely used by some administration strategists to bolster their policy positions in opposition to the positions of rivals. For example, the Reagan administration sought to focus its early agenda on economic policy, but Secretary of State Haig seemed determined to redirect the focus toward Central America. Within weeks of taking office, Haig had DOS issue a white paper on Soviet, Cuban and Nicaraguan aid to leftist guerrillas in El Salvador. He talked privately about escalating Central America conflicts into a global confrontation with the Soviets, and urged President Reagan in an NSC meeting to be bold in El Salvador: "This is one you can win, Mr. President." He urged an increase in U.S. forces in the Caribbean and talked about taking action against Cuba--possibly a naval quarantine or

even a bombing campaign. Haig's public pronouncements contributed to reviving public and congressional concerns about Reagan's supposed "warmongering" tendencies, and some slippage in Reagan's popularity was attributed to those concerns. White House strategists discovered that Central America was getting more television news coverage than Reagan's economic policy. Chief of Staff James Baker secretly asked pollster Richard Wirthlin to conduct a rush survey of public reaction to Haig's anti-Cuba rhetoric. The March poll showed a negative public reaction to Haig's bellicosity and found a majority opposed to an embargo or military action against Cuba. The poll provided valuable ammunition to Baker in persuading the president to muzzle Haig on the issue (H. Smith, 1988).

Weak parties in internal policy disputes often seek to widen discussion to include administration and congressional allies, and the public (Schattschneider, 1961). This tactic accounts for many leaks to the news media, and is a tactic that has been used to one degree or another by insiders in every administration since Lyndon Johnson's. Johnson would even personally leak information to reporters "off the record."

The Reagan administration policy makers also used leaks to enlist congressional and public opinion in their foreign policy battles. Journalist Hedrick Smith (1988) notes Senator Richard Lugar (R-Ind.) was instrumental in changing Reagan

administration policy toward Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos. Among Lugar's allies in opposing administration support for Marcos was Secretary of State George Shultz. Lugar played up Marcos' vote stealing in the 1986 Philippine election, says Smith (p. 81), and his "deliberate play to public opinion changed the balance of forces inside the administration and eventually changed the policy."

In 1984, internal administration critics of the CIA's covert war against the Sandinista government of Nicaragua began to leak embarrassing information to congressional allies. Again, the tactic of "widening of the circle" was instrumental, in this case, in the decision of House Democrats to block further military aid to the contras.

All pretense at maintaining the covert nature of the war was now abandoned, and President Reagan, himself, widened the circle still further by appealing to the public directly for support. If Central America were lost to communism, he said, the blame would lie with the opponents of his policies. Military aid was revived in 1986, partly because some swing voters in Congress feared a political backlash among voters.

Leaks by internal critics of the administration's military buildup fed public outrage over the cost of spare parts and faulty weapons, and reinforced congressional attempts to slow the growth of military spending. To put an end to arms deals with Iran and wrest control of policy away from Poindexter and North, Secretary of State Shultz "went



public" about continued arms dealing with Iran six weeks after the initial disclosure.

Public opinion figured heavily in administration foreign policy making, though not always in the straightforward manner one might expect. For example, the administration created a sophisticated public diplomacy apparatus intended, in part, to change American attitudes on various foreign policy issues to bring them more in line with the administration's preferred policies. This is an indication that public opinion mattered to the administration. The covert war in Nicaragua was launched by the administration not because it was necessarily the best policy option, but largely because the White House feared that overt military action in Central America would damage the president's popularity. Again, public opinion was an important factor in policy making, but not in the sense that the public's preferences were routinely translated into administration policy.

The administration's most notable lapse in leading, heeding, or compromising with public opinion was its pursuit of the joint Iran-contra objectives.

The president appointed the Tower commission in the wake of the Iran-contra affair to review the formulation and execution of national security decision making. The commission determined that the National Security Council (NSC) process under Reagan had not prevented bad ideas from becoming presidential policy. It also faulted the president's

detached management style for allowing free-lancing by key NSC staff members, who could short-circuit discussion of key issues. This resulted, the commissioners said, in incomplete advice and subsequent ineffective and dangerous policies.

In addition to the Tower Commission, an independent counsel was appointed by a three-judge panel at the administration's request. By October 1990, special prosecutor Lawrence Walsh and his staff had won convictions against eight persons involved in the Iran-contra affair, including former national security advisers Robert McFarlane and John Poindexter, and NSC aide Oliver North. (North's convictions were set aside in 1990 by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit on the grounds that his limited immunity testimony before a congressional committee had tainted the judicial proceedings. In January 1991, prosecutor Lawrence Walsh asked the U.S. Supreme Court to review the appellate court decision.) Because of his possible involvement in the Iran-contra affair, Robert Gates, who was William Casey's deputy at the CIA, failed to get Senate approval to be Casey's successor. Several other CIA officials linked to questionable contra activities took early retirement, were reprimanded, or forced to retire when William Webster took over as CIA director.

The Iran-contra affair caused enormous political damage to the president. After first denying reports about arms sales to Iran, the president was compelled by probes and leaks

to acknowledge that he had allowed shipments of a "small quantity" of "defensive" weapons. As the affair unravelled more and more, he was battered with press reports about secret deals in which the administration had used Israel and shady financiers to sell weapons to Iran in exchange for the freedom of American hostages held by pro-Iranian factions in Beirut. Before the arms deal furor could die down, the president was forced to acknowledge that his aides might have diverted profits from those sales to the contras. A foreign policy blunder suddenly became a scandal, with the possibility that illegal acts had been planned in and carried out from the basement of the White House. The president suffered a huge drop in prestige and popularity and lost momentum at a crucial moment in his presidency. He and his aides spent the better part of 1987-88 battling the damage cause by the affair. Televised congressional hearings during the late spring and early summer of 1987 exposed the inner workings of the Reagan administration. The inquiries essentially blocked both the administration and Congress from accomplishing much of significance until autumn. The affair undid Reagan's earlier achievement of getting Congress to restore direct U.S. military aid to the anti-Sandinista guerrillas (contras) in Nicaragua. While aid to the "freedom fighters," as Reagan styled the contras, was heatedly debated throughout 1987, Congress took few votes on the issue, effectively postponing a decision until 1988. The House, in February 1988, turned

aside the president's request for renewed military support for the contras.

The Iran-contra affair also undermined, to some extent, U.S. positions overseas, especially in the Middle East. The administration's decision in 1987 to escort Kuwaiti tankers through the Persian Gulf appeared to be influenced by a perceived need on the part of the administration to reassert a visible American role in opposing the Iranian regime.

President Reagan was shown to be a person willing to compromise his principles, and the arms-for-hostages revelations damaged the credibility of the president's anti-terrorism policy. Much time and effort were spent by the administration trying to patch up credibility in this area and to demonstrate its willingness to confront terrorism. In April 1987, President Reagan ordered the bombing of several locations in Libya, ostensibly in retaliation for Libyan involvement in a terrorist bombing in West Germany in which U.S. servicemen were killed.

The Iran-contra affair had many ill effects, but perhaps none was so significant as this: because of their secret and extra-legal nature, the Iran-contra policies were largely relegated to execution by private individuals outside government. This privatization of policy was arguably the most unsettling outcome of the Iran-contra affair because of the potential danger such privatization poses to the American democratic system.

Public policy, including foreign policy, is most likely to enjoy success when it is worked through openly and completely by all relevant institutions of government. This includes not only the executive departments, but key congressional committees.

During some periods of his tenure in office, Ronald Reagan seemed generally unwilling to consult on many foreign policy issues with the legislative branch, especially a Democratic-controlled House of Representatives and, after 1986, with a Senate dominated by Democrats. There was a natural, adversarial relationship between the Reagan White House and a Democratic Congress, particularly regarding aid to the contras.

Such conflicts between the White House and Congress may actually have enhanced the strength of many of the public's foreign policy preferences as the executive and legislative branches sought to enlist public support for their views in policy disputes.

The conflict in Nicaragua actually had low salience for most Americans, but the administration and its congressional opponents were ever mindful that issues of low salience are liable to rapid shifts. Republicans worried about massive opposition to direct military action. Democrats worried that a crisis would allow Reagan to act decisively, prompt the public to "rally 'round the flag," and leave them politically vulnerable. When the swing votes in the House supported the

president's contra aid requests, it was largely because the president's job approval rating was especially high at the time of the vote (LeoGrande, 1990).

Public antipathy to direct military action in Central America led the Reagan administration to pursue its preferred policies there largely in secret.

"When a specific desired policy runs into an obstacle in public opinion," wrote analyst Ronald Hinckley (1987, p. 57), "administrations will be tempted to implement that policy in secret." Analysts at the National Strategy Information Center, who conducted secret polls for the NSC in 1986, concluded in their final report to the NSC that the American public does not support secret deals with other countries, even for national security reasons:

While the public might accept some form of confidentiality from the public at large for a while, the fact that the Iranian contacts were kept secret from other agencies of the government and the legislative branch for so long was unacceptable to most Americans (quoted in Anderson and Van Atta, 1988b).

Analyzing what he perceived as traits in American character, Sir Dennis Brogan wrote in 1944 (p. 134):

A world in which great decisions were made by kings or oligarchies in secret, and the results communicated to docile subjects, this was the world against which the founders of the American Republic revolted. True, great things have been done in secret even in America. The Constitution was made in secret--it could not have been made in public even if the art of eaves-dropping had in those days been practiced as expertly as it is now.

But it was presented, quickly and in its final form, to the American people, presented to be accepted, or rejected or amended. Only so could 'We the People of the United States' be committed. Only so can they be committed today.

The public can understand, even if it opposes, executive secrecy in presidential negotiations with foreign powers or in diplomatic initiatives. Executive secrecy, however, is subject to abuse, as the Iran-contra affair showed. More recently, President Bush and some members of the White House press corps have had heated discussions about the president's right to secrecy as opposed to his and other administration officials **deceiving** the public (Devroy, 1990b).

In 1980, political scientist Thomas Cronin (p. 225) asked,

How is it possible to prevent the use of secrecy to cover up obstructions of justice while permitting its legitimate use for diplomatic purposes? Many Americans feel that even at the risk of a less effective foreign policy, what is needed is a greater sharing of power with Congress over foreign policy. And some indeed have doubts whether the exclusive power of the president is more likely to produce good policy than sharing power with Congress.

Although he was writing about the consideration of nuclear policy, the remarks of former Secretary of Defense Harold Brown (1983, pp. 26-27) may be generally applicable to foreign policy debates:

Public officials responsible for national security will have to be prepared to address the entire complex of nuclear policy and related issues. . . . Public

debate will be necessary with those who have various concerns or contrary views. . . . The debate will have to be carried out in public at a level comprehensible to publics and to conclusions they can afterward support.

Robert McFarlane was President Reagan's national security advisor at the time the administration initiated the arms-for-hostages negotiations. It is something of a paradox that McFarlane, who in 1988 would plead guilty to withholding information from Congress about aid to the contras, wrote in 1984 (p. 269):

. . . [O]ne of the key lessons of national security policy learned over the past decade is that close contacts with the Congress must be established and nurtured throughout the policy process. One of the key functions of the NSC staff is to work with the White House office of congressional relations to ensure that these requirements are met. At a broader level, the staff also ensures that congressional concerns are considered in the policy development process, that the Congress is kept informed of policy decisions, and that the Congress has the information and arguments it needs to judge adequately the administration's recommendations on security issues.

The pattern of publicly debating foreign policy devolves from official and elite circles to journalistic and public circles, with appropriate feedback from opinion polls. The Reagan administration may have been most successful in seeking and maintaining public support for its foreign policies when it openly debated policies and couched policy debates in terms that were understandable to the public. Perhaps this is axiomatic in the American democratic system. As historian



Dennis Brogan (1944, p. 90) suggested many years ago, ". . . only when an issue has come home to the hearts and minds of local people, in a local voice, in terms intelligible to Kokomo and Paducah, is it wise for an American government to act."

David Calleo (1983, pp. 14-15) wrote, "If the American public is unschooled in world politics, its leaders have never presented a suitable curriculum." A suitable curriculum presented by the Reagan administration, it may be argued, would have included more convincing public instruction regarding the broad ethical ideas upon which the administration based some of its less popular foreign policies.

When Reagan policy was perceived as deviating from broad ethical values, the administration might have been well advised to explain the reasons for those deviations, as well. Explaining the administration's strategic and tactical rationale for pursuing preferred policies was not always enough to gain public support. The Bush administration would face similar problems in its early attempts at rallying public support for the Gulf War in 1991. A major problem in maintaining public support for U.S. involvement in Vietnam, according to Nathan Tarcov (1984, p. 60), was that American officials gave **too many** reasons for American involvement:

Was it to build democracy in Vietnam? To stop aggression from the North and prevent Hanoi from imposing a government on the people of the South? Was it to fulfill a pledge? To maintain our credibility? To preserve our strategic posi-

tion in Asia? Or, finally and pathetically, to get back our POWs?

If our military objectives were unclear, wrote Tarcov, it was in part because

we did not know which principle we were supposed to be obeying in our effort. Without clarity in principle, we could not achieve clarity in strategy; the different principles invoked dictated different strategies and required different sets of facts to be true in order to be relevant.

"Even . . . with all possible clarity about principle," Tarcov concluded, "we still need prudence to judge whether we can truly use force to serve our principles."

In spite of a resurgent and widely prevailing internationalist mood in the United States, a broad and enduring foreign policy consensus of the type that prevailed after World War II was unlikely to emerge during the Reagan administration. (At the end of the Reagan years, however, there did appear to be a moderation of the extremes of public foreign policy opinion.) Despite the relaxation in East-West tensions that originated in the Reagan-Gorbachev summits, no broad and enduring foreign policy consensus did emerge from the Reagan years, nor is one likely to emerge in the foreseeable future, unless there is an extensive and protracted war. As James Chace has written (1978, pp. 15-16),

American interests are too diverse and American power now much less predominant. . . . Most issues may have to be taken up on a case-by-case basis, and the president will have to look for support

for his foreign policies much as he might seek to do for his domestic programs.

Consensus views on the various foreign policy issues are unlikely to exist among elites, among the public, or between elites and the public (Holsti and Rosenau, 1979a, 1979b; Mandelbaum and Schneider, 1979; Wittkopf, 1981). While both elites and the public express strong support for some general principles of U.S. foreign policy, there is rarely agreement on the strategic and tactical applications of general principles. If foreign policy decisions are to be supported by the public, however, they must be made within the boundaries of generally accepted principles. Only then can an administration seek support for more specific actions.

Even half-informed, the American people are reasonably sensible observers of the global environment. The broad foreign policies preferred by the American public, based as they may be on broad normative values, are generally neither unrealistic nor unreasonable.

Most people who attended White House foreign affairs briefings during the Reagan presidency probably would attest to their persuasiveness. The president, while he made good use of his "bully pulpit" to seek public backing for his foreign policies, might have done a better job concerning Central America policy. Coupled with the testimony of his subordinates, many of whom were articulate and persuasive, the administration had more than adequate means to affect the national debate in this arena. In retrospect, rather than

countenancing what degenerated into official duplicity within the public diplomacy apparatus it established, the Reagan administration would have been well advised to have unleashed Oliver North and other enthusiastic administration policy makers sympathetic to the president's preferred foreign policies in coordinated efforts to educate the public regarding the efficacy of those policies. Political analyst Charles Krauthammer (1991) notes that President Bush was able to lead American public opinion not by rhetoric, but by "creating facts." Krauthammer wrote that

As a shaper of public opinion, the bully pulpit is overrated. The powers of the presidency, if skillfully deployed, are enough to move the nation. Bush managed to rally a reluctant nation to a successful war not with inspiring words or soaring visions, but with a series of shrewd and forcing actions.

If it is to work at all in leading public opinion, rhetoric usually must be passionate. Enthusiasm was a major strength of Oliver North's testimony in the congressional Iran-contra hearings. Michael Ledeen (1983, p. 118), reputed to have acted as a liaison between the U.S. and Israel in the arms-for-hostages negotiations with Iran, suggests that

. . . no administration since John Kennedy's has enthusiastically presented its case to the public. There have been exceptions, and they suggest that if the government accepts the rules of the game and takes its case to the people, it will do very well indeed. Thus President Carter overcame considerable hostility and got the Panama Canal treaties passed, and President Reagan beat back a major challenge of his second-year budgets.

These victories in the face of intense domestic opposition and, in the case of President Reagan, media hostility as well, show that the government can achieve many of its objectives if it defends itself with passion and continuity. Most of the time, unfortunately, our officials content themselves with single media 'events' rather than conducting extended campaigns. It is the latter that work. . . .

## Chapter 2

## POLLS AND PRESIDENTIAL POLITICS

Analysts have traditionally considered public opinion to be too varied and dispersed to be effective unless organized. Thus, the party system and the aggregation of interests have been seen as the elements most essential to U.S. democracy. In appealing to the public on grounds of policy, political parties and interest groups have also served to educate the public. In turn, they have been the primary agencies by which public opinion has had an impact on governmental policy making.

Beginning in the 1930s, however, and especially after 1940, the government had a new, direct and increasingly reliable method for gauging trends in public opinion.

Franklin D. Roosevelt seemed to have a keen sense of his countrymen's moods and attitudes. He also made good use of the information he received on public attitudes from news reports, his widely-travelled wife, party activists, members of Congress and others. Roosevelt also had a regular flow of survey research information coming into the Executive Office, particularly regarding public opinion about the war in Europe. Dr. Hadley Cantril of Princeton University's department of psychology conducted the polling (c.f. Cantrill, 1967; Burns, 1970). Roosevelt was said to have made his key foreign and domestic policy announcements only after careful consideration

of the tenor of public opinion. Roosevelt's administrations also pioneered the systematic manipulation of public opinion through close monitoring of opinion, censorship, and publicity releases (Jensen, 1980). The Office of War Information was helpful in this respect. It commissioned polls from private concerns and from the Agriculture Department, which had done some pioneering work in opinion research under Secretary Henry Wallace. In 1943, conservative congressmen, perceiving their roles as the legitimate interpreters of national opinion and representatives of the public as threatened, pushed legislation through Congress that drastically reduced the scope of government polling and publicity. Congressional efforts were not, however, entirely successful.

In the same year as the conservative revolt against government polling, the Public Studies Division was created within the Department of State (DOS). In 1959, the Division became the present Public Opinion Studies Staff of the DOS Bureau of Public Affairs. Its specific function is to find out what the character of public opinion is as it concerns the formulation and conduct of foreign policy.

Predictions of a Thomas Dewey win over Harry Truman in 1948 shattered the confidence of many in the science of opinion polling. As president, however, Truman was an avid poll watcher and fully accepted his role as the shaper of public opinion, viewing himself essentially as a public relations man (Landecker, 1968).

Dwight Eisenhower closely watched private polls conducted during his campaign. He also had a keen interest in weekly reports on worldwide public opinion delivered to him during his presidency by Lloyd Free (c.f. Roll and Cantrill, 1972).

The Nixon and Kennedy presidential campaigns set up extensive polling operations in 1960. Nixon used Claude Robinson, the head of the Opinion Research Corporation and a former partner of George Gallup, Sr. The Kennedy campaign brought pollster Louis Harris to prominence.

Lyndon Johnson, wrote Harris (1973, p. 23), was "the truest believer of polls, but only when they tended to support what he was doing." When they did not support his policies, Johnson stressed the need to do what was right, despite what the public believed. Harris' assessment of Johnson's attitude as president differs from that of biographer Robert Caro (1990, pp. 191-192) of Johnson as congressman. In his 1948 Senate campaign against incumbent Coke Stevenson, Johnson had nearly identical statewide, in-depth polls conducted weekly by not one firm, but two or three. He wanted polls, wrote Caro, "that revealed not only voter preferences, but the depth of those preferences, how the preferences were changing--and how they might be changed." Johnson, according to Caro, did not care about any issues himself, but simply tested one after another until he found one that influenced voters.

Within the Johnson White House, many kinds of polls were collected and analyzed regularly. Results of major polls were



made available to the president several days before publication so that publicity or rebuttals could be prepared to coincide with their release (Harris, 1973). Johnson used several methods to counter unfavorable poll results. They included reinterpretation of the results in a more favorable light, leaking private polls that were more favorable, and cultivating the pollsters, themselves. Bruce Altschuler (1986, p. 298) found evidence that

Johnson and his aides expended considerable effort attempting to influence the perception of his popularity, as measured by polls, but despite a few positive news stories and some sympathy from pollsters, in the long run these efforts were of no avail. . . . The only real counter is to do something that will, in fact, change public opinion.

Johnson, like Kennedy, recognized the potential value of secret polls. During their administrations survey research began to play an even greater role in politics.

Political scientist Eugene Burdick published a telling science fiction novel in 1964, titled *The 480*. Based on a model of the 1960 presidential election (Poole et al., 1964), Burdick's novel deals with the relevant strata ("480") into which the electorate could be divided and manipulated for purposes of elections and social control.

If the public sometimes fears newly emerging science, including the science of public opinion polling, the broad publicizing of polls has made survey research more familiar and acceptable to the public and to government officials.

Polling has now become institutionalized in American society.

Since 1960, every presidential candidate has hired a polling organization. The use of hired pollsters quickly spread to state, local and congressional district races.

The apogee of American acceptance of polling is perhaps best symbolized by pollster Richard Wirthlin having daily taken the national pulse on a variety of issues for the Reagan White House. Significantly, the name of Wirthlin's company is Decision Making Information. Besides having an in-house pollster, the Reagan administration had an extensive public relations operation, or White House "outreach program," as it was called by administration staffers. It included a public liaison office, a political affairs staff, and a separate White House Planning and Evaluation Office. The latter, which reported to presidential counsellor Edwin Meese, Jr., examined polls and portions of polls related to foreign policy issues, correlated the broad trends it charted in public attitudes with the NSC, and sought to integrate that information into governance (Salamon and Abramson, 1984; Hinckley, 1988a). That integration had been recommended by the Reagan transition team, whose report (Wirthlin et al., 1981, p. 4) said that for the new administration to be successful in governing the country, it "must practice the art of accommodating a variety of public aspirations to public goals."

During the first two years of the Reagan administration, the Reagan White House developed an infrastructure and

techniques to appeal directly to the public over the heads of politicians. When the president made major television speeches, the White House organized positive responses in advance with conservative groups, business groups and the party apparatus. They were primed to set off an avalanche of calls to Congress (Devroy, 1990c).

The public education efforts of the outreach staffers, on the other hand, were largely scattered and uncoordinated. Strategy papers began to circulate within the administration on the need for domestic public diplomacy, a concept generally attributed to CIA Director William Casey. In January 1983, President Reagan signed a national security decision directive (NSDD 77) formally authorizing a public diplomacy apparatus. The directive created a Public Affairs Committee chaired by the president's communications assistant and deputy assistant for national security affairs. A special planning group, the office of International Communications and Information Policy (something of a misnomer) was created within the NSC to direct public diplomacy campaigns.

Walter Raymond, Jr., a former CIA propaganda expert, had overall responsibility for NSC staff coordination concerning public diplomacy. The purpose of the public diplomacy apparatus, according to Raymond (1989), was "to strengthen the ability of the U.S. government to communicate its foreign policy views more effectively to foreign and domestic audiences. . . ." In fact, as the congressional Iran-contra

report suggests, the apparatus became a tool primarily intended to reshape American perceptions of Central America (Senate Report No. 100-216, 1987). Reagan speechwriters and Office of Public Liaison staff also attended some of the public diplomacy group meetings. Speechwriter Peggy Noonan (1990, p. 235) wrote that the purpose of the weekly meetings was to discuss "how to drum up public support for the anti-Sandinista resistance in Nicaragua."

Raymond headed the Central American Public Diplomacy Task Force, an interagency committee that met weekly. It included representatives of the State Department (DOS), the U.S. Information Agency, the Agency for International Development (AID), the Defense Department, the CIA, and the NSC staff. The task force took its policy guidance, according to Raymond, from the Central American restricted interagency group, whose principals were CIA Central American Task Force chief Alan Fiers, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Elliott Abrams, and NSC aide Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North (Parry and Kornbluh, 1988).

Another interagency group chaired by the NSC was the Foreign Opinion Review Advisory (FORA) group (also something of a misnomer), which included representatives from the NSC, the U. S. Information Agency, and the Departments of State and Defense. The group directed various research activities toward foreign policy areas of interest to the administration and brought NSC-level policy makers together to be briefed on

the latest foreign and domestic public opinion polls (Hinckley, 1988a).

The most viable component of the apparatus may have been the DOS Office of Public Diplomacy for Latin America and the Caribbean (S/LPD), headed by a former AID official, Otto Reich. Reich's executive officer and five other S/LPD staffers were Army psychological operations specialists. The office produced and disseminated publications on Nicaragua and El Salvador, gave briefings to prominent journalists, and booked speaking engagements for administration policy advocates, including radio, television and editorial board interviews. In its first year alone, S/LPD distributed materials to 1,600 college libraries, 520 political science faculties, 122 editorial writers, and 107 religious organizations. The S/LPD also planted stories in the media while concealing their government sponsorship. In a deposition before Iran-contra investigators, former S/LPD Deputy Director Jonathan Miller argued that this "white propaganda" was "actually putting out truth, straight information, not deception." But in a September 1987 legal opinion, the General Accounting Office concluded that the articles amounted to "prohibited, covert propaganda activities designed to influence the media and the public to support the Administration's Latin American policies." (Parry and Kornbluh, 1988, p. 20.) In March 1987, the House Foreign Affairs Committee concluded that in awarding no-bid contracts to private

organizations for drafting briefing papers, setting up press conferences for contra leaders, and creating a computerized mailing list for S/LPD publications, DOS may have violated "prohibitions against lobbying and disseminating government information for publicity and propaganda purposes." In December 1987, Congress decided to shut down the S/LPD, the only governmental body scrapped in light of the Iran-contra scandal. Representative Jack Brooks (D-Tex.) denounced the S/LPD as "an important cog in the Administration's effort to manipulate public opinion and congressional action (Parry and Kornbluh, 1988, p. 28)."

Toward the end of the Reagan presidency, and based on his perception of the importance of polls in White House decision making, analyst Ronald Hinckley (1988b) concluded that there had been a fundamental change in presidential politics. The focus, he wrote, had shifted from a president dealing with interest groups to a president dealing directly with the public. Instead of being the embodiment of the "bargaining society," *a la* Dahl and Lindblom (1960), the president had become the embodiment of the "public debate society."

Not only the White House, but nearly all executive departments and branches of the armed forces now have offices that are, at a minimum, devoted to analyzing national polls as indicators of opinion trends in the public.

In retrospect, the atomic genie was not the only force to be released in the 1940s, never to be returned. Another was

the force of public opinion polls.

Recognition that issue polling has become accepted and commonplace in American society must be tempered, however, with a realization that politics and political issues are not normally the most important things in the lives of U.S. citizens. In September 1988, a Harris poll found that 49 percent of the public did not know that Senator Lloyd Bentsen (D-Tex.) was the Democratic nominee for vice president. Thirty-seven percent of Americans of voting age could not identify Senator Dan Quayle (R-Ind.) as George Bush's running mate (Oreskes, 1990).

Even in the nation's capital, movie rental outlets reported that the Democratic National Convention in 1988 was better for their business than bad weather. Erol's, Inc., a chain of rental stores with, at the time, 74 outlets in the Washington, D.C. area, reported that video rentals were up over the corresponding days for the previous year by 38 percent on Monday of convention week, 43 percent Tuesday, 46 percent Wednesday, and on Thursday--the night of Michael Dukakis' acceptance speech--49 percent (*Washington Post*, July 31, 1988).

Personal and family problems usually take precedence over national and international problems in the minds of Americans. The major concerns of U.S. citizens change little. They want good health, a better standard of living, peace, the achievement of aspirations for their children, a good job, and a

happy family life (Cantrill and Roll, 1971; Cantrill, 1965; Free and Cantrill, 1967). In particular, foreign policy issues, barring a war in which U.S. soldiers (especially drafted soldiers) are dying, have usually been less important as voting issues than domestic issues.

Foreign policy issues are not unimportant to voters, however. Nor is a majority of the American public isolationist or opposed to foreign commitments. Particularly in close national elections, such as the presidential elections of 1960, 1968 and 1976, foreign policy issues played an important role, if only because in very close races, everything matters.

In the 1960 election, many voters thought that Kennedy, a war hero, consistently took a harder line on defending the islands of Quemoy and Matsu from Chinese attack. He was also perceived as more vigorous than Nixon in promising to close the U.S.-Soviet "missile gap."

In 1968, public disenchantment with the Vietnam War and Democratic candidate Hubert Humphrey's waffling on the war issue figured significantly in Richard Nixon's victory.

In 1976, Gerald Ford's refusal to receive Russian emigre writer Alexander Solzhenitsyn in the White House emerged as an issue in the Republican primaries. In the election campaign, his advantage over Jimmy Carter in the opinion polls ended after his televised debate gaffe that the Soviet Union did not dominate Poland. Some analysts considered the 1976 presiden-



tial campaign to be a watershed for foreign policy opinion trends. It brought detente to the fore, an issue over which there was fundamental disagreement (Mandelbaum and Schneider, 1979).

In the landslides of 1964, 1972 and 1984 and in the election of 1988, foreign policy issues may have been less critical. Nonetheless, foreign policy issues did emerge in those elections and contributed to the defeat of the losing candidates.

In the 1964 election, Goldwater's hardline positions on foreign and defense policy made him vulnerable to charges of extremism. While the Democrats netted more votes than they lost on foreign policy issues in that election, it was the only presidential election with that result since 1944 (Fingerhut, 1985).

In 1972, George McGovern's willingness to settle the Vietnam War on terms that seemed to amount to surrender, his vows to make massive cuts in defense spending, and his perceived hostile attitude toward the role of U.S. power in the world persuaded many voters that he was far too liberal to elect to the presidency.

Ronald Reagan's election in 1980 was something of an anomaly in that foreign policy emerged as a critical concern. Reagan was successful in the campaign at portraying President Carter as weak on foreign policy and defense issues. The seizure of American hostages in the U.S. embassy in Teheran by

Iranian mobs and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan emerged as critical issues in the 1980 election, and upset, to a large extent, conventional wisdom that foreign policy counts for relatively little in peacetime presidential elections. In January 1980, a CBS/*New York Times* survey found 42 percent of respondents thinking foreign policy was the most important problem facing the country. Only three percent had thought that a year earlier. The same polling organization found 64 percent of respondents in January and 65 percent in March thinking stronger actions were called for to get the hostages released from Iran. In May 1980, 59 percent of those surveyed by *Time*/Yankelovich worried "a lot" about the possibility of a world war. Twenty-eight percent were worried a little. The same organization found 65 percent of those surveyed thinking the country's prestige had suffered from the way the U.S. was handling the Iranian situation. NBC/AP polls from May through October 1980 consistently showed over 60 percent of voters disapproving of Carter's handling of the situation in Iran. Surveys by the same organization from March through September found about 70 percent of voters thinking Carter had done a poor or only fair job of handling foreign affairs.

Gallup surveys did find that Carter was preferred by more respondents over Reagan for "keeping the peace" and for dealing with the Arab-Israeli conflict. But Reagan was preferred over Carter as being more capable of increasing respect for the U.S. overseas and for strengthening defense.

A *Los Angeles Times* poll taken in mid-summer 1980 found Reagan preferred as the best candidate for dealing with the Soviet Union.

The Reagan campaign made "leadership" a critical issue. This is a vague term and open to debate. It is not unreasonable to suggest, however, that in accord with Ronald Reagan's rhetoric, the public equated "leadership" with a strong president who would see to it that the country was no longer "pushed around" and would not hesitate to take action, including military action, in defense of the national interest. A D/M/I poll found 61 percent of respondents perceiving Reagan as having "the strong leadership qualities this country needs." Only 18 percent thought Carter possessed those qualities. For voters who ranked strong leadership high among many attributes desired in a president, two out of three voted for Reagan (Ranney, 1981).

Reagan's major themes in the closing weeks of his campaign were that Carter was an ineffective, error-prone leader, and that Carter was unsteady in foreign policy, creating an unnecessary climate of crisis (Wirthlin et al., 1981).

Concerned about the possibility of an event-driven election, the Reagan campaign attempted to blunt any possible damage by having key campaign personnel sprinkle their conversations with the press with references to Carter's "October Surprise." They did not define the surprise, but let

the media speculate. Speculation centered, quite naturally, on the possibility of a hostage release. The Republicans were actually able to turn the possibility of a release to their advantage. Republican pollster Richard Wirthlin found that the number of Americans agreeing with the premise that "Jimmy Carter is controlling the timing of the hostage release for political purposes," rose from 19 percent in late October to 44 percent on November 2 (David and Everson, 1983). That same day, the newspapers carried stories about new Iranian negotiating conditions. Democratic pollster Pat Caddell found that Carter's poll standings dropped five points on the 2nd and another five points on the 3rd before Election Day (Stacks, 1981).

Foreign policy and national security themes were winning themes for Reagan, who defeated the incumbent president by 51 to 41 percent. The Republicans gained a majority in the Senate with a net gain of 12 seats. It was the first time since 1954 that the Republicans had dominated the Senate. The party also posted a net gain of 33 seats in the House.

Four years later, a popular Ronald Reagan, whom the public perceived as having provided strong leadership, had little difficulty in defeating Walter Mondale. Relative to his popularity ratings, President Reagan had low approval ratings on his handling of foreign policy and he had been bloodied more than once in foreign policy disputes with Congress, particularly in the Democratic-controlled House of

Representatives. But the voters generally perceived that Mondale would be even less adept at handling foreign affairs than Reagan had been. During the election campaign, President Reagan tried to avoid making hard choices on arms control, the Arab-Israeli dispute and other pressing matters, and was extremely savvy in using the symbols of the presidency. In April 1984, he made a much-televised trip to China, and he held a pre-election meeting with Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko in September. Mondale in many ways epitomized the more hesitant post-Vietnam ethos of the Democrats.

Democratic strategists had counted heavily on exploiting what they perceived to be a serious Republican weakness in foreign affairs in 1984. Gallup surveys showed that the president's prime area of vulnerability, in terms of voter support, was in the area of foreign policy. Reagan's Central America policy was a key element in the public's generally negative assessment of the president's handling of foreign policy. In May, a Gallup survey found 72 percent of "aware" Americans feeling it was either very or fairly likely that U.S. involvement in Central America could turn into a situation like Vietnam, with the U.S. becoming more and more deeply involved as time went on. A total of 61 percent of Republicans, 79 percent of Democrats, and 72 percent of Independents shared that view.

Reagan's foreign policy approval rating in January 1984

was 42 percent, according to an ABC News/*Washington Post* poll (Figure 2, p. 122). His foreign policy rating remained low as the Democrats pounded him on Central America, Lebanon, and the nuclear freeze. But by mid-August, a 50 to 33 percent majority told Gallup Organization interviewers that Reagan would handle foreign affairs better than Mondale; in mid-October, a 52 to 39 percent majority told ABC News the same thing. Asked which candidate was better able to keep the nation at peace and prosperous, Gallup poll respondents chose Reagan by a 42 to 37 percent and 54 to 30 percent margin, respectively.

In a June 1984 survey in the swing industrial states, only 7 percent of voters named any foreign policy issue as the most important problem facing them. Even so, to the extent that foreign policy issues did impact the campaign, Reagan dominated. In a July survey, only 32 percent of the electorate believed that "Reagan just is not committed to slowing down the arms race. If we want a more peaceful world, we should vote for Mondale." Among "soft" Reagan supporters--a key element the Mondale-Ferraro campaign needed to woo--only 20 percent agreed with the proposition. This swing group also rated Reagan (64 percent) as better than Mondale for "keeping peace" (Fingerhut, 1984). Though Reagan had been unable to rally strong public support for his Central American policies during his first administration, an August 1984 Gallup poll indicated that the public still saw him as better for "dealing

with the situation" there than Mondale (41 to 35 percent). Reagan boasted that during his four years in office, "not one inch of soil has fallen to the Communists."

In a late October 1984 survey by CBS News/*New York Times*, only 16 percent of Reagan supporters and 21 percent of Mondale supporters said military/foreign affairs were most important in their voting choice. To the extent that they mattered at all, foreign affairs issues were losers for the Democrats in 1984. Reagan almost doubled his 1980 margin of victory, thrashing Mondale 59 to 41 percent.

The economy was the most frequently given answer when Reagan voters were asked what **specific** issue persuaded them to vote for the president in 1984. Reagan's strong leadership was often found to be the most **general** factor, however (Kemble, 1985). White males, who voted for Reagan by a two-to-one majority, said (77 to 20 percent) that Reagan had strong leadership qualities. "Strong leadership" may have correlated with foreign policy in the minds of many voters. Republican pollster Robert Teeter told the *Washington Post* (November 12, 1984) that the perception of Reagan's strong leadership owed a great deal to the president having "made it clear he doesn't want the United States to get shoved around by other countries--not by the Soviet Union and especially not by lesser powers."

## Chapter 3

## POST-CARTER PUBLIC OPINION ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

At the close of the Carter administration, public opinion on most major foreign policy issues was firmly in the conservative camp. Norman Podhoretz, editor of *Commentary* magazine and father-in-law of Reagan's Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Elliott Abrams, pointed out (1980) that the issues of Iran and Afghanistan served to crystallize a public mood that had already been taking shape for at least five years. Public support for increased defense spending had been rising steadily since 1971 and reached a record high of 60 percent before the Iranian hostage crisis erupted. During the same period, there was a parallel increase in public support for the use of force in defense of key American interests, even in the wake of Vietnam and Kissingerian detente.

Public opinion polls have usually confirmed majority and at times consensus support for using American troops against a Soviet attack in Europe. A post-Vietnam low in the support rate (48 percent) was recorded in 1974-75, with 34 percent opposed to using U.S. troops (Calleo, 1983). A postwar high of 74 percent in favor of using American troops against a Soviet attack in Europe, with only 19 percent opposed, was recorded in July 1980, following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the taking of American hostages in Iran. (In



1982, polls showed a more normal 56 percent in favor with 25 percent opposed.)

Podhoretz and others also contend that the debate over limiting strategic arms (SALT II) revealed a high degree of anxiety over the slippage of American power in relation to the Soviet Union. A "new nationalism" greatly affected the 1980 election, Podhoretz wrote, to the extent that even the liberal Senator Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) favored an increase in the defense budget.

"What I suspect we are seeing," wrote Podhoretz (p. 5),

is a return of the repressed strain of internationalist idealism in the American character that Woodrow Wilson appealed to in seeking to 'make the world safe for democracy' and that John F. Kennedy echoed when in his inaugural address he vowed that we would 'pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardships . . . to assure the survival and success of liberty.'

Opinion surveys after the mid- to late 1970s tended to support Podhoretz' view. National polls taken by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations between 1974 and November 1978 showed a 22 percent increase--from 33 percent to 55 percent--in the numbers of Americans who thought the U.S. "ought to play a more important role as a world leader in the future." In June 1978, a 53-30 percent majority in a CBS News/*New York Times* poll thought the U.S. "should get tougher in its dealings with the Russians." Gallup Polls taken between 1977 and the spring of 1979 showed rising support (from 40 to 49 percent) for reinstatement of the draft.

Free and Watts (1980) reported that a Civic Service, Inc. survey taken in February 1980 found 61 percent of those polled qualifying as "internationalists," with young people (18-29 years old) more internationalist (61 percent) than people over age 60 (54 percent). Those who classified themselves as liberals proved to be somewhat less internationalist (56 percent) than those who said they were moderates (63 percent) or conservatives (62 percent). Fewer women (57 percent) qualified as internationalists than men (64 percent). As educational attainment increased, so did internationalist sentiment, from 48 percent among those completing grade school to 79 percent among those with post-graduate educations. While 64 percent of whites were internationalists, only 39 percent of blacks were.

A November 1978 Chicago Council on Foreign Relations poll found that the three most important goals of U.S. foreign policy for those surveyed related to improvements in life at home: keeping up the value of the dollar, securing adequate supplies of energy, and protecting the jobs of American workers. All three goals ranked above 80 percent. "Containing communism" ranked fifth (64 percent); protecting weaker nations against foreign aggression ranked twelfth (37 percent). Nationalism would appear to be a particularly salient cross-cutting variable in measuring internationalist sentiment.

Events in Iran and Afghanistan strengthened and acceler-

ated the internationalist trends that were already underway. In March 1980, 76 percent of those surveyed in a Harris poll favored "President Carter's call for the registration of young people to be available for a military draft." A Gallup poll taken in February found public support for increased defense spending at the highest point recorded in Gallup surveys in more than a decade (Free and Watts, 1980). An ABC/Harris poll taken in the same month showed 69 percent of those surveyed supporting the "Carter Doctrine," that any use of outside force to try to gain control of the Persian Gulf oil area would be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the U.S. and would be repelled by American military force.

In 1980, a sizeable majority of the American people seemed willing to commit U.S. military power around the globe. A Harris poll in late January 1980 showed 61 percent of those surveyed favoring "the establishment of U.S. military bases in Somalia, Oman, Kenya, and Egypt." The Iranian and Afghan events also triggered an upsurge of concern about foreign affairs. Polls taken in January 1980 showed that for the first time since 1972, foreign policy was the number one concern in the country, although by the following month the public preoccupation with foreign affairs was slipping and economic concerns reasserted themselves (Gergen, 1980).

A rekindled but more cautious interventionist public mood continued, for the most part, during the Reagan presidency. In October 1980, on the eve of Ronald Reagan's election, a CBS

News/*New York Times* poll showed 58 percent of Americans thinking that U.S. military strength should be superior to that of the Soviet Union. On election day, a CBS exit poll found a majority of voters believing the U.S. should be more forceful in its dealings with the Soviet Union, "even if it increases the risk of war." A year later, in late 1981, an NBC/AP poll found 60 percent of the public agreeing that President Reagan had set the right tone in U.S. dealings with the Soviets, with 23 percent saying he was "not tough enough."

The interventionist intent of the Reagan administration, though somewhat vague, was voiced early by various administration officials. President Reagan's first secretary of state, Alexander Haig, said (Reichley, 1982, p. 543) the U. S. should "seek actively to shape [world] events and, in the process, attempt to forge consensus among like-minded peoples." President Reagan's first national security advisor, Richard Allen, wrote (Reichley, 1982, p. 543) that

[w]hile the U.S. does not assume global responsibility for international peace and stability, no area of the world is beyond the scope of American interest if control or influence by a hostile power threatens American security.

But if they were somehow unaware, administration policy makers would soon discover that Americans are not generally so interventionist that they condescend to bellicose activity, unless U.S. interests are seen as truly vital and are clearly defined.

Almost every time in the last 50 years that the American

public has been asked if they want to see the U.S. become involved in some foreign military conflict, they have said no. This was true of World War II, Korea, Vietnam, and, during the Reagan presidency, of Central America.

Six months before the U.S. entry into World War II, a Gallup poll asked how Americans would "vote" on the question of U.S. entry into the war against Germany and Italy. An overwhelming majority (79 percent) said they would vote to stay out. A month before the bombing of Pearl Harbor, 63 percent of Americans polled said Congress should not pass a resolution declaring that a state of war existed between Germany and the U.S. Only 26 percent favored the resolution.

Americans generally feared and disapproved of the Reagan administration's pursuit of military objectives in Central America, and particularly disapproved of military aid to the contras. In one respect, it is a tribute to Reagan's personal popularity that he could pursue overt military options in the region to the extent that he did without having broad popular support for such policies.

Regional conflicts in Central America seemed to bring to the public mind the "lessons of Vietnam." The conflicts made the public less deferent in allowing foreign policy elites to define "the national interest" in that arena. Polls did indicate an abiding public concern about the stability of the Latin American region and a majority of Americans agreed that Central America was vital to the U.S. national interest.

According to Robert Parry, former *Newsweek* national correspondent, overcoming the American public's "Vietnam syndrome" was a primary purpose of the Reagan administration's public diplomacy apparatus. However, specific remedies for U.S. problems in Central America--particularly military remedies--never gained the kind of support that abstractions did.

For example, in 1982, eight in ten Americans interviewed in an ABC/*Washington Post* poll said they disapproved of the U.S. sending any troops to fight in El Salvador. Those polled were split 42 percent to 42 percent when asked if they thought the Reagan administration was telling the truth when it stated it had no intention of sending in troops. So adamant was public sentiment against direct U.S. intervention in El Salvador, which the American public suspected Reagan had chosen in 1981-82 as his arena to "get tough," that a majority in another survey (51 percent) supported the defiance of military conscription if troops were called up for deployment there (Kaagen, 1983).

The notable exceptions of public support for military action by the Reagan administration were the invasion of Grenada and the bombing raid on Libya.

On October 25, 1983, some 4,600 U.S. Marines, Army rangers and paratroopers landed on the Caribbean island of Grenada. Within a few days, all leaders of the Marxist-led Grenadan government had been arrested and 700 Cuban construction workers, who put up an unexpectedly fierce resistance,

had been overwhelmed.

President Reagan announced that he had sent the troops on a "rescue mission" to safeguard nearly 1,000 Americans who were studying at a U.S.-run medical college on the island. The medical students had been threatened, Reagan said, by radicals within the Grenadan government who had overthrown Prime Minister Maurice Bishop on October 12 and later killed him. Further, the U.S. troops had been requested by Grenada's neighboring nations, members of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States.

The invasion brought an immediate chorus of approval from most Republicans in Congress and prompted widespread soul-searching among Democrats. Two weeks after the invasion, most members of a House delegation returning from an inspection trip to Grenada said the invasion was justified and, having seen public approval of the invasion registered in the opinion polls, most Democrats reluctantly agreed.

The impact of the invasion was perhaps greater on the American public than on Congress. The polls showed a large majority of Americans approving of the operation, apparently demonstrating a hunger for a military victory after the embarrassments of the Vietnam War and the Iranian hostage crisis.

Unlike the post-invasion public relations campaign that successfully justified to the American people U.S. action in Grenada, careful opinion survey research by the Reagan admini-

stration, coupled with historical events, helped assure public support for the 1986 bombing raid on Libya.

In President Reagan's first year in office, he declared Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi to be a major source of arms and money for international terrorists and a military threat to Libya's neighbors. The administration ordered the Libyan diplomatic mission in Washington closed in May 1981. The following month, in response to Libyan military operations in Chad, the administration pledged money to aid African nations that wanted to resist Libyan interventionism. In August, the U.S. Navy held maneuvers in disputed waters off the coast of Libya and Navy jets shot down two Libyan fighter planes that challenged them. Toward the end of the year, Reagan publicly ascribed truth to reports that Qaddafi had dispatched assassination squads to the U.S. to try to kill the president and other top officials.

While the Libyan sore continued to fester, terrorist acts from other quarters captured the attention of the Reagan administration and the American public, particularly in 1985. In June of that year, radical Shiite Lebanese Moslems hijacked a TWA jet, killed a Navy seaman and held 39 other passengers captive in Beirut. President Reagan vowed never to negotiate with the hijackers and threatened to retaliate. Days passed and the threats produced no response. Finally, he negotiated with Syria for the peaceful release of the hostages.

Four months later, in October, Palestinians hijacked the



Italian cruise liner *Achille Lauro* in the Mediterranean and killed a handicapped passenger from New York City. They held the ship for two days before surrendering to authorities in Egypt. Egypt put the hijackers on a plane bound for Tunisia, but U.S. Navy jets intercepted the escape aircraft and forced it to land in Italy. Italian authorities put the hijackers on trial, but allowed mastermind Abu Abbas to escape.

Americans were again victimized by terrorism in December, when members of a Palestinian faction staged simultaneous attacks on Israeli airline counters at the Rome and Vienna airports. Nineteen persons, including five Americans, died. Reagan accused Libya of giving training and support to the terrorists, and in January 1986 he ordered a complete U.S. trade embargo against that country.

The NSC, in an unprecedented move, commissioned a private think tank, the National Strategy Information Center, to conduct secret polls in 1986 to assist "presidential decision-making in policy formulation and crisis management" (Anderson and Van Atta, 1988a). Results of the secret polls were presented to the NSC Crisis Management Center in quarterly reports.

Among the public concerns tracked in the NSC polls was the public reaction to terrorism and the public's support for a military attack on state-sponsored terrorism. A Wirthlin poll in January 1986 found that 49 percent of those surveyed

would support a military strike against a state that supported terrorism.

Two months later, the NSC-commissioned poll found that 66 percent would support such an attack if the strike were "reluctant"; if the terrorism had not resulted from U.S. provocation; if the strike were focused, limited and defensive; and if it were perceived as necessary because nothing else had worked.

In addition, the poll indicated that a strike would be supported more if other countries helped the U.S. in the strike and if the administration appeared publicly united on the operation.

On March 23, 1986, less than two weeks after the secret NSC poll was taken, Libyan anti-aircraft batteries fired at U.S. military planes in the Mediterranean. On April 5, a bomb exploded in a West Berlin discotheque, killing two people, including a U.S. serviceman, and injuring 204 other people, 64 of them Americans. U.S. intelligence and the Reagan administration blamed the bombing on Libya. The claim came to be disputed, but has more recently been confirmed by an East German Stasi defector (Cody, 1990). In a televised news conference, Reagan called the Libyan president the "mad dog of the Middle East." U.S. planes took off from British bases on April 14 and bombed "terrorist-related targets" in Tripoli and Benghazi. Various media polls indicated strong public support for the raid, as did a June survey by the NSC's private

pollsters (75 percent). A Gallup poll found 80 percent approving additional strikes if Libya were found to be sponsoring terrorist acts again.

Less effective, but nonetheless instructive, was President Reagan's confidence in his ability to lead public opinion in the administration's handling of General Manuel Antonio Noriega and Panama.

In mid-1987, Secretary of State George Shultz concluded that despite Noriega's long association with U.S. intelligence agencies, his alleged drug trafficking and increasing abuse of human rights required an American effort to oust him from office. Shultz's Assistant Secretary Elliott Abrams was given the task of designing a plan against Noriega (Pichirallo and Tyler, 1990).

From the beginning of the effort, it was apparent that the Departments of State and Defense were at odds over the best way to approach the Noriega problem. The conflict was further complicated when, in February 1988, General Noriega was indicted on federal charges of allowing narcotics to be shipped through Panama to the U.S. The indictments were made public and Noriega quickly became a target of what pollsters in the 1988 presidential race were finding to be a growing public concern about drugs.

In April, Abrams authorized his deputy, Michael Kozak, to begin secret negotiations with Noriega. Although the indictments were supposedly non-negotiable, Noriega insisted

that they be part of any agreement, and the Department of State tentatively agreed to the outlines of a deal. News of the secret offer to drop the charges leaked publicly, and Michael Dukakis, George Bush's likely Democratic opponent, accused him of being part of an administration that was willing to bargain with a drug-trafficking dictator. Bush felt compelled to announce his opposition to dropping the drug charges, breaking publicly with Reagan for the first time.

In a May 22 meeting of principals in the president's White House quarters, Bush and Secretary of the Treasury James Baker, soon to be Bush's campaign chairman, argued that the Republicans would lose the high moral ground on the drug issue in the presidential campaign if the indictments were dropped. A July Gallup Poll indicated that 53 percent of the American people disapproved of the way President Reagan was handling the situation in Panama. Only 27 percent approved. Chief of Staff Howard Baker, who had supervised the president's tracking polls on drugs, Panama and Noriega, told the president that the American people were opposed to dropping the indictments.

In the late stages of the Reagan administration, drugs often topped the list when the public was asked the most important issue facing the country. As fears of the arms race and America's military position vis-a-vis the Soviets receded, new foreign priorities seemed to be taking precedence in the public mind. They included not only drugs, but terrorism and

the nation's place in the international economy. President Reagan's approval rating on these emerging issues were uniformly low. The public increasingly regarded the war on drugs as a legitimate task not only for domestic law enforcement, but also of foreign policy. In one Americans Talk Security survey, a plurality of respondents even said that fighting drug smuggling should be the top goal of U.S. national security policy. The goal drew twice as many positive responses as containing Soviet aggression (Brownstein, 1988).

Shultz, however, argued for going ahead with dropping the Noriega indictments, and won Reagan's approval. Reagan said he thought he could explain the decision to the American people and lead opinion by telling the public that Panama and U.S. interests were better off with Noriega out, even if it meant he would escape justice.

Kozak returned to Panama to conclude the deal. In their final negotiating session, Noriega told Kozak that he needed a few days to prepare his troops before stepping down. Kozak had earlier offered a transition period, but was now under orders to conclude the negotiations that day. Neither man would yield on this point. Kozak was in the process of reporting to his superiors from the U.S. Embassy when Noriega telephoned to say he had changed his mind. If Kozak would come back, Noriega said, he would sign the document as requested. Patience had run out in Washington, however.

Secretary Shultz suggested that Noriega was "diddling us," and the negotiations collapsed.

At that point, contingency plans began to be prepared for a covert military solution. In July 1988, the House and Senate intelligence committees were briefed on the plans by Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Michael Armacost, Assistant Defense Secretary Richard Armitage, CIA clandestine services chief Richard Stolz, and Elliott Abrams. Committee members were not supportive of the plans presented, and for the remainder of Ronald Reagan's term and for the first several months of the Bush administration, Panama policy was largely on hold (Pichirallo and Tyler, 1990).

But the seeds for Noriega's ouster by U.S. direct or indirect military force had been planted. The American public could be expected to approve of such actions, largely because the ouster was framed as being necessary to protect Americans from the drug-running activities of General Noriega. Illicit drugs were the overriding concern that would make the military option acceptable to the American public.

Since World War II, much U.S. foreign policy has depended upon current relations with the Soviet Union. Popular perceptions of the Soviet threat and U.S. preparedness to cope with that threat have been important in determining the broad thrust of relevant foreign policies.

Although personalities and domestic policies played the major roles in the 1980 presidential election, the public's

perception of the U.S. as "a helpless giant" helped boost the candidacy of Ronald Reagan, whose campaign promises included a massive increase in defense spending for modernization and expansion of U.S. armed forces.

Just three years earlier, in 1977, a large majority of Americans had perceived the U.S. as being ahead of the Soviet Union in military power. Sixty-three percent of Americans polled felt that military spending should be maintained at the current level or **reduced** (Fromm, 1983, p. 31). By 1981, despite moderating and cross-cutting attitudes on the nuclear arms race, 89 percent favored the current level or an **increase** in military spending, with no fewer than 61 percent supporting higher defense outlays.

The changes in public perceptions and attitudes reflected in the polls at the beginning of the Reagan presidency are widely ascribed to four events that occurred in 1979: (1) the Senate debate on the SALT II Treaty, which focused at least as much national attention on the shortcomings of American defense as on the virtues of arms control; (2) the fall of the Shah of Iran, which brought home the vulnerability of Persian Gulf oil supplies and an apparent powerlessness on the part of the U.S. to save her most valued ally in the Persian Gulf; (3) the Iran hostage crisis, seen by most Americans as humiliating evidence of an inability to protect American diplomats or to rescue the hostages; and (4) the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

On the eve of Ronald Reagan's assumption of the presidency, despite the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the Soviet threat that had provided the U.S. a rationale for much of its foreign policy was perceived by the American public as being much weaker than it had been during the 1960s and 1970s. It was opposition to communist values that had provided much of the foreign policy consensus in the U.S. during the Cold War. Americans were still overwhelmingly anticommunist, but cross-cutting variables had the effect of diminishing ideological consensus and commitment to the policy of containing communism.

One variable that resulted, during the Reagan presidency, in further diminishing the public's fear of the Soviet Union and of nuclear war was Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev's adoption of Western forms of political communication, particularly in taking his message directly to the American people. In August 1987, the Gallup Organization found that 54 percent of the American people gave Gorbachev a favorable rating. By comparison, Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev never won a favorable rating from more than 10 percent of the U.S. populace in the 7-year period between 1957 and 1964. In 1987, a Gallup poll showed Gorbachev becoming the first Soviet leader to rank among the ten men most admired by Americans (wife Raisa, despite a much publicized spat with Nancy Reagan, made the top ten list of most admired women, tying for eighth place with Elizabeth Dole, Geraldine Ferraro and Coretta



King). Soviet spokesmen under Gorbachev, suggested *Washington Post* staff writer Charles Paul Freund (May 23, 1989), "are all trained--and even dressed and coiffed--for maximum television impact here."

## Chapter 4

## CROSS-CUTTING VARIABLES

The public's view of the Reagan administration's Central American policies offers a good case in point about the ambivalence that devolves from the tensions of cross-cutting variables.

During the Reagan presidency, polls revealed that Americans were concerned about the spread of communism in Central America, but simultaneously appeared to be extremely reluctant to sanction American involvement there.

Leftist guerillas had attempted a "final offensive" against the government of El Salvador in the days before Reagan took office. Secretary of State Haig declared that the U.S. would "draw the line" in El Salvador against communist interference in Central America. In February 1981, the Reagan administration, expanding on last-minute actions of the Carter administration, announced that it would send more arms aid and U.S. military advisers to El Salvador. That announcement galvanized Reagan's political opponents, who charged that the proposed policy was ill-advised since the Salvadoran government had failed to improve its human rights record by reining in its security forces (the "death squads"). The administration countered with Secretary Haig soliciting key support by showing some members of Congress evidence that communist nations were funneling arms to leftist guerillas in El

Salvador. The State Department issued a "white paper" detailing Cuban interference in Central America.

Congress did stop short of undercutting the president's support for the El Salvador government. The administration won a narrow victory in the House Appropriations Foreign Operations Subcommittee in March 1981, when the committee voted 8-7 to honor the administration's request to shift \$5 million in fiscal 1981 funds from other accounts to El Salvador's. Later in the year, Congress set conditions on further U.S. aid to that country, including a presidential certification that those conditions had been met. The tone Congress adopted vis-a-vis the administration's policy toward El Salvador was generally one of skeptical acquiescence.

The open, often acrimonious discussion of U.S. policy toward El Salvador had a telling effect on public attitudes. A month after President Reagan announced his aid intentions, a Roper Organization poll reported that only 34 percent of those surveyed favored sending "non-combat military advisers to help train the El Salvador government troops in their fight against leftist guerrillas there," while 50 percent opposed the proposition. (A Gallup poll taken about the same time found more balance between support and opposition among the informed public. Among the 63 percent who had heard or read about El Salvador and knew which side the U.S. supported, 29 percent thought the U.S. should "stay out," and 28 percent thought the U.S. should help the El Salvador government.)

A Harris poll, taken in March 1981, found 60 percent of those surveyed against sending military aid to El Salvador (27 percent favored such aid); 65 percent opposed sending economic aid (28 percent favored economic aid); and 52 percent opposed sending military advisers (43 percent favored sending military advisers). The only supportive activity approved by most of those surveyed in the poll was a naval blockade to "prevent shipments of arms to the guerrillas." This proposition was approved by 51 percent of those surveyed.

Similar high levels of disapproval appeared in polls taken a year later. A Roper survey (February 1982) found 56 percent opposed to sending increased economic aid (33 percent for); 71 percent opposed sending U.S. troops "if this is the only way to prevent the government of El Salvador from being overthrown by leftist guerrillas" (20 percent for); and 57 percent were against using air and naval forces as a blockade (32 percent for). The only option favored by a majority (50 to 41 percent) was keeping "U.S. military advisers in El Salvador to help train the . . . government troops in their fight against leftist guerrillas there." An ABC News/*Washington Post* poll (March 1982) found 59 percent disapproving of the U.S. having sent advisers (35 percent approved), and objecting to the U.S. sending troops to fight even if that seemed to be the "only way to save the current [Salvadoran] government." A *Newsweek*/Gallup poll (February 1982) reported

89 percent opposed to the use of American troops in El Salvador.

Ben Wattenberg (1982, p. 19) wrote that the lack of support for American involvement in El Salvador was because President Reagan "did not use his podium to tell his story . . . in a way that would have made the public opinion polls bounce."

Although Secretary of State Haig had taken a firm stand that El Salvador was the place to show that America was not a paper tiger, that posture was not backed up by the White House. White House Chief of Staff James Baker, reacting in part to the public's largely negative attitude, insisted that the public relations offensive on Central America be temporarily curtailed. Instead, the president used his podium in prime time to urge the American people to support his proposals for tax and budget cuts. Meanwhile, "the television folks," as Wattenberg put it, reported negative news about the El Salvador domestic scene and recounted U.S. imperial history in Central America. Not surprisingly, he concluded, the American people were negative about U.S. involvement. "The American politicians, who read polls, said: Who me? The journalists," wrote Wattenberg (p. 19), "reported what the pollsters and the politicians said--and the snowball rolled down the mountain."

Between November 1981 and early 1982, the administration again threatened direct U.S. military action in Central

America, and again, the public reacted negatively. The president's approval ratings, already beginning to decline because of an economic downturn, fell even lower.

A March 1983 Gallup poll showed that "aware" respondents (87 percent of the total), were three-to-one against a Reagan request for an additional \$60 million in military aid to El Salvador and two-to-one against increasing the number of U.S. advisers to the Salvadoran government. The administration, on the heels of having established its public diplomacy program, launched a major campaign to build public support for its aid requests for both El Salvador and the Nicaraguan contras. Reagan made an extraordinary speech to a Joint Session of Congress on April 27, marking the first time the president himself had taken the lead in bringing the administration's case to the public. The Gallup poll on approval of Reagan's handling of the situation in Nicaragua bounced from 21 percent in April to 44 percent in May. A Harris poll during the same period found an 11 point jump in approval of Reagan's handling of El Salvador. Opposition remained solidly in the mid-40 percent range, with gains being made from those voicing "no opinion" in the earlier polls. But the new support soon eroded, and within a few months, approval levels fell back to about the same as those prior to the president's speech. Seventy-five percent of "aware" respondents to a June 1983 Gallup Poll thought it was very, fairly or somewhat likely that "U.S. involvement in El Salvador could turn into a

situation like Vietnam." An ABC News/*Washington Post* poll taken in July/August 1983 found 59 percent disagreeing with Reagan that Congress should approve additional military and economic aid to Central America.

Judging from the above data, one might naturally conclude that the American public was reluctant to see the U.S. become deeply engaged in aiding the government of El Salvador combat leftist guerrillas. And one would be right.

Yet during the same period of time, polls also suggested that the American public was opposed to the U.S. sitting back while Soviet- and Cuban-backed communist insurgents threatened the stability of El Salvador and Latin America, generally. Undoubtedly, the wording of pollsters' questions generally tends to drive the answers (Schuman and Presser, 1981; Krosnick, 1989; Morin, 1991). Still, conflicting characterizations of the public mood are accurate reflections of the unresolved paradoxes that can exist in individual and collective attitudes.

A March 1982 Harris poll found 66 percent agreeing that "if the U.S. does not stop Russian and Cuban efforts to set up a Communist government in El Salvador then Honduras, Guatemala and other countries in Central America will be next."

In ABC News/*Washington Post* polls taken during the same period, 64 percent thought a pro-communist government in El Salvador would endanger U.S. security, and 81 percent thought it very or somewhat likely that "if the rebel forces succeed

in taking over the government in El Salvador . . . the same kind of thing will happen in other Latin American countries." ABC/*Washington Post* polls found that 56 percent believed that Cuba and Nicaragua were interfering in El Salvador more than the U.S. was; 77 percent believed that Cuba was interfering improperly in the internal affairs of other countries in Latin America; and 63 percent thought Cuba was a threat to the U.S. An NBC News/*Wall Street Journal* poll taken in September 1986 found that a third of the public felt a highly popular Ronald Reagan was "not tough enough" in dealing with the Soviet Union.

Similar ambiguities can be found in polls related to U.S. policy in Nicaragua. With wording varying slightly over the years, CBS/*New York Times* polls asked voters if the U.S. should provide military assistance to the contras. Opposition to providing assistance varied from a low of 44 percent (with 30 percent approving aid) to a high of 66 percent (with 24 percent approving). Similar ABC/*Washington Post* polls ranged from 46 percent disapproval (with 43 percent approving) to 70 percent disapproval (with 22 percent approving). The ABC/*Washington Post* poll showing the highest rate of approval (43 percent) was taken a week after Oliver North began testifying before the select congressional committee investigating the Iran-contra affair. North's testimony had the general effect of boosting support for contra aid among the public, but it was still not sufficient to produce a majority



approving contra aid. NBC/*Wall Street Journal* polls ranged from 58 percent opposition before North's testimony (with 29 percent approving) to 43 percent (with 40 percent approving) after his testimony began.

Yet when the question of contra aid was coupled more closely with the spread of communism, poll results could be quite different. A *Time*/Yankelovich Clancy Shulman survey taken in April 1986 asked if "The United States should aid the rebels in Nicaragua in order to prevent Communist influence from spreading to other countries in Central America." By a margin of two-to-one, respondents agreed (58 percent to 29 percent). This stands in contrast, however, to a Gallup poll question asked in August 1985 and again in December 1986, "In your opinion, should the U.S. government be giving assistance to the guerilla forces now opposing the Marxist government in Nicaragua?" Here, the figures were reversed, with 58 percent saying the U.S. should not give assistance, and 29 percent saying the U.S. should give assistance.

Support for or opposition to contra aid was correlated with partisanship (Reiter, 1987), and opposition reflected to a large degree a general and recurring opposition to foreign assistance programs (Ladd, 1985 and 1987). A 1980 Louis Harris survey, for example, asked respondents to evaluate spending on a list of 20 programs. Respondents favored cuts in foreign economic aid (82 percent) and military aid (77 percent) more than any other program, including welfare

spending (69 percent) and food stamps (65 percent). It is interesting, in light of the strong public opposition to foreign assistance programs, that the Reagan administration pressed Congress for, and usually was successful in obtaining, large increases in foreign aid.

## Chapter 5

## POLL INACCURACY AND OPINION VOLATILITY

There is a relationship between interest in a subject and knowledge about the subject. Despite the information explosion and advent of television, the public often seems to be ill informed, particularly about foreign policy and international issues. When facts are of little interest to them, people have an exceptional ability to ignore them (Lachman et al., 1979). Simply increasing the amount of information available will not automatically increase public knowledge (Hyman and Sheatsley, 1947).

Elite reactions to the relative political unsophistication of the larger public often seem to range only from indifference to ridicule. Yet the Founding Fathers had no illusions about the knowledge and political sophistication of the masses. They structured the American democratic system to function without requiring extraordinary decision making capabilities from the citizenry. Representative democracy, it may be argued, does not require citizens to know a great deal beyond what is needed to perform ordinary mundane tasks. Is name recall, for example--whether of one's congressman or of some distant land--crucial for intelligent voting or the expression of a valid opinion? Certainly one need not be informed to hold an opinion, nor must one be informed to influence decision makers.

The general ignorance of the American public is an old and belabored subject. It is also a paradox, as Dennis Brogan (1944, p. 145) observed:

There is no country in the world where discussion of the world's affairs is carried on at such a high level as in the United States. Serious discussion, in great newspapers and magazines, in forums and on the air, in universities and institutes is incessant. And it is discussion by real experts. Unfortunately, it is often discussion for experts, not for the people.

In a Gallup Poll conducted in 1988 for the National Geographic Society, 50 percent of the 10,820 American adults canvassed could not name any Warsaw Pact nation; 32 percent could not name any member of NATO. Seventy-five percent were unable to locate the Persian Gulf on a map. One out of seven --a figure that would project to 24 million Americans--could not identify the U.S. on a world map. Half could not name Nicaragua (from a list of four countries) as the country in which the Sandinistas and contras were fighting. Those canvassed scored at the same level on one set of questions as American adults did in a 1947 study using the same questions. Eighteen- to 24-year-olds did worse than the same age group tested in 1947 (Vobejda, 1988).

Gilbert Grosvenor, president of the National Geographic Society, said in response to the poll results:

Our adult population, especially our young adults, do not understand the world at a time in our history when we face a critical economic need to understand foreign consumers, markets, customs,

opportunities and responsibilities. If we don't understand places and location, then the consequences of events lose meaning.

Despite the public's lack of geographic and political knowledge, an argument can be made for the idea that reasonable and rational foreign policy views can be based on general conceptions of right and wrong (Hurwitz and Peffley, 1987), without the sophistication that may accrue from knowing the name of the current U.S. secretary of state, being able to locate Saudi Arabia on a world map, or knowing which two countries were involved in the INF talks. In a universe of many foreign policy issues and modest public interest, input based on normative values is to be expected.

As part of aggregated opinion, public opinion as expressed in surveys was weighed by the Reagan administration, is weighed by Reagan's successor, and will no doubt continue to be weighed by decision makers as a part of the policy making process.

Many analysts have suggested typologies that purport to identify and define American attitudinal types regarding foreign policy.<sup>4</sup> Whatever their differences, most analysts

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<sup>4</sup>See, for example, Galtung, 1964; Gamson and Modigliani, 1966; Verba et al., 1967; Hamilton, 1968; Hahn, 1970; Patchen, 1970; Modigliani, 1972; Wright, 1972; Mueller, 1978; Chace, 1978; Lurch and Sperlich, 1979; Mandelbaum and Schneider, 1979; Holsti, 1979; Wittkopf, 1981; Wittkopf and Maggiotto, 1981, 1983a and b; Wittkopf and Kegley, 1982-83; and DeHaven, 1986.

have shared a belief that a foreign policy consensus was the norm in the U.S. before the Vietnam war, though that consensus shifted from time to time between isolationism and internationalism. Many of these analysts suppose that the wrenching experience of Vietnam split the nation, creating a dissensus.

Analyst Cristoph Bertram (1983, p. 1) said that many reasons can be advanced for the decline of political consensus in the West, as a whole. "On a general level," he wrote, "our societies have become more skeptical, more half-informed, and hence more prone to doubt and question than to accept and agree."

As part of its public diplomacy program, the Reagan administration sought to delineate various foreign policy attitude groups among the American people that could be targeted tactically and rhetorically to support the administration's preferred policies. Secret NSC-commissioned polls conducted in 1986 included questions designed to measure fundamental foreign policy attitudes among the American public. Aggregate data included responses from six segments of the population whose internationalist orientation varied from "hardline" to "restrained isolationism." Based on the data collected, Ronald Hinckley (1987, pp. 55-57), who was responsible for the project, concluded that

[a]s the substance of particular issues vary, the different dimensions of the [various] predispositions interact in various ways to produce ever shifting coalitions and opinion majorities.

What this means is that the generation of broad-based public support for all foreign policies developed by any administration is unlikely. As Hinckley suggests (p. 57), the public debate

will focus on one specific policy after another with opinion coalitions forming and shifting on the basis of whether the particular issue involves the U.S. in international affairs, how it involves America in those affairs, and what the military implications of that involvement are.

As understood by most survey research analysts, in a liberal democracy, public opinion manifests itself through individual attitudes. The purpose of much public opinion analysis is to discover what kinds of people have what kinds of "public" opinion. The typology Hinckley developed (pp. 20-31) from the data collected for the NSC includes two groups that tend to be on opposite sides of an issue and that tend to hold their beliefs with particular intensity. He calls these groups the "hard" unilateralists and the accommodationists. He identifies as hard unilateralists those who think the U.S. should pursue its national security interests regardless of the interests of other nations, and who support the use of military force abroad for foreign policy objectives. Accommodationists think the U.S. should modify its national security interests to take into consideration the interests of other nations, and oppose the use of military force to pursue foreign policy objectives.

Until the inauguration of Ronald Reagan in 1980, wrote

Hinckley, the hard unilateralists were poorly represented among foreign policy elites. Data collected and analyzed by Eugene Wittkopf (1986) largely confirm Hinckley's thesis. The data show that most foreign policy leaders have either been accommodationists (45 to 46 percent) or internationalists (36 to 47 percent), with "hardliners" (similar to Hinckley's hard unilateralists) representing only between six and 13 percent during the 1970s.<sup>5</sup>

President Reagan, Hinckley contends, appointed more hard unilateralists to foreign policy leadership positions. This gave the public with these predispositions a greater opportu-

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<sup>5</sup>Wittkopf's "internationalists" favor involvement in international affairs, believe that cooperation with other nations has its limits, and believe that it may be necessary in particular cases to unilaterally use military force. This differs somewhat from Charles Krauthammer's definition (1986, p. 14) of "liberal internationalism, which, from Franklin Roosevelt through Lyndon Johnson, dominated American foreign policy thinking," and also differs from what he calls "neo-internationalism." Krauthammer says

[Liberal internationalism's] vision was that of an activist, internationalist America; its aim was the promotion abroad of both freedom and world order; and its preferred means were to be international institutions (such as the U.N.), the rule of law, and collective security.

Vietnam resulted in a split within the internationalist school into "soft inclusionist internationalism stressing universality," and a harder exclusionist internationalism pledged to the defense of the West and replacing the means (international institutions) with unilateral Western and, if necessary, unilateral American action. Krauthammer calls the latter "neo-internationalism."



nity to see their views reflected in policy decisions.

"Juxtaposed against the accommodationists, who predominated in public opinion and policy making in the immediate post-Vietnam period," Hinckley wrote (pp. 56-57), "the hard unilateralists have been at the center of the struggle for foreign policy predominance in the 1980s." He concludes that "the election of Ronald Reagan brought a public opinion group into foreign policy decision making that had been generally excluded in the past."

As Hinckley and others have shown, public opinion on foreign policy is fractured along many dimensions. Cross-cutting variables can produce ever-shifting pluralities, majorities, and occasional consensus, none of which may be easily predicted. Although knowledge of public opinion through public opinion polls is gaining greater acceptance as being important for foreign policy formulation, polling is a complex science that must constantly be scrutinized to assure the accuracy of its results.

Despite steady improvement in polling techniques, polls and pollsters are still subject to searching criticism.

The pollster's nemesis, according to telecommunications professor Barry Orton (1982), is a media-based opinion technique--an old-fashioned straw poll--that violates the precepts of scientific sampling. Respondents are self-selected, and yet such "pseudo-polls" are often mislabeled as "public opinion surveys."

Following the October 28, 1980 debate between Ronald Reagan and President Jimmy Carter, ABC News invited viewers to select the "winner" by calling one of two telephone numbers. Some 700,000 calls were placed at 50 cents each, and Reagan "won" by a two-to-one margin. Much to the contempt of professional pollsters and to the horror of ABC's own capable survey research staff, the network treated the "victory" as a major news story.

Lindsay Rogers (1949) was an early critic of the science of polling. Many of his arguments, now more than 40 years old, still have merit. Rogers had a nagging suspicion that pollsters may have hidden agendas.

In a 1984 round-robin interview, Democratic pollster Patrick Caddell, president of Cambridge Survey Research, said (Goldhaber, p. 50)

[t]he role of polling has changed dramatically in the last decade. We used to just gather our numbers and make presentations. In 1976, I became more of a strategist and tactician.

Other pollsters agreed that their changing roles might present conflicts of interest. Reagan administration pollster Richard Wirthlin said he had separated the data-gathering and strategy functions in his company. Republican pollster Robert Teeter said there may be a technical conflict, "but not in practice, hopefully." Charles Roll saw the conflict as being more obvious:

It seems to be a conflict when you're presenting data and then asked to produce

a strategy and then go back and collect more data to assess your strategy. If that's not a conflict, I don't know what is.

Lindsay Rogers was particularly critical of George Gallup, Sr., who claimed that scientific polling was leading to a new stage in the development of democratic government. That stage, Gallup wrote (1940, pp. 17-21), was essentially direct democracy, characterized by the expectation that the *vox populi*, properly measured, should be heeded by democratic governments. Elections, Gallup said, were not adequate expressions of popular will. A continuous process of citizen participation and leadership response was required, he believed, for true democracy. He especially distrusted interest groups that purported to represent labor, agriculture, consumers or the public. Legislators, Gallup wrote (1940), must have access to a truly "public" opinion, containing the views of all the groups in America's complex society.

Yet pollsters, according to Rogers' estimation, do not "feel the pulse of democracy," as Gallup and others insisted. Instead, Rogers contended, they "listen to its baby talk": yes, no, and don't know. It is not possible to measure accurately intensity of opinion, he maintained. "A public opinion poll," he wrote (p. 47), "tells us nothing about the eagerness or enthusiasm of those who wish that something be done, or about the indifference or bitterness of those who do not want it done."

Polling methods may be suitable for predicting election results, Rogers wrote, but the methods are not suitable for measuring public opinion on issues.<sup>6</sup> Each opinion registered is the equal of every other opinion. "But who are the people who favor certain policies," Rogers asked? "How influential are they? Whom do they represent? How well are they organized? How much do they care?"

Rogers (p. 46) feared that the government may take action "when conscious, informed, and vigorous minorities demand it, and are able to have their way because the majority, although not in favor of the action, is confused and indifferent."

Another drawback to the use of polls as accurate measurements of public opinion is that unscrupulous pollsters can always alter the results, use a biased sample, or ask loaded questions. Even honest polls may be carelessly reported in

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<sup>6</sup>Even the reliability of polls for predicting election results can be questioned. The faulty predictions of the 1948 presidential election results are often cited as an example of this. Pollsters were unable to predict that Violetta Chamorro would win over Daniel Ortega in the 1990 Nicaragua elections. Warren Mitofsky and Martin Plissner (1980) analyzed 51 U.S. presidential primary polls and found that more than half "were off by more than 14 points on the margin between first and second place. Fourteen had the wrong candidate winning. Eight others had the wrong candidate in second place." Between August 6 and August 16, 1988, seven national polls were released by various polling organizations giving substantially different numbers regarding the Bush-Dukakis race (Dionne, 1988). Analysts attributed the confusion to faulty polling methods, the public's uncertainty, or some combination of these. One political reporter remarked that "On the face of it, none of this should matter, since polls conducted in August [of election years] are less meaningful than the third-inning score of a baseball game."

the news media and may be subject to inaccuracies due to cheating by interviewers and lying by those interviewed. There may be no compelling reasons for people to lie to pollsters, but neither are there strong sanctions against lying to interviewers. Typically, when people do lie in polls, it is to conform to their impressions of social acceptability (Lewis and Schneider, 1982). A person will not necessarily voice as public opinion elements of private opinion. Private opinions, born of complex, often conflicting attitudes, may be withheld for many reasons (Harrison, 1940; Doob, 1948). People who are less interested in the news and less well informed may disproportionately refuse to be interviewed.

Poll questions may be poorly worded or poorly read. Errors in coding, tabulation and data entry can contribute to inaccurate results. There are also inherent problems related to poll length and methods of polling. For example, minorities, the poor and non-English-speaking people may be excluded or underrepresented, due to the elimination of nontelephone households in telephone surveys.

Opinion polls related to foreign affairs may have special limitations. Jean Converse (1976) studied high nonresponse rates and found that the single best predictor of "don't know" or "no opinion" responses is education. Better educated respondents are more likely to have opinions. She also found that the subject of certain questions also predicts high

nonresponse rates. The volume of opinions recedes as the poll topic recedes from people's immediate, personal concerns. The less educated were nearly as likely to hold opinions as the well educated on questions related to such topics as morality, religion, quality of life and crime. As the subject matter becomes more remote, including questions regarding the environment, the economy, domestic politics and foreign affairs, responses are likely to be more random.

There is also a tendency of poll respondents to regard the interview situation as a "test," and to give "the right answer" despite actual feelings or to guess, rather than confess ignorance (Lewis and Schneider, 1982). George Bishop and his colleagues (1980) studied opinion responses to nonfiltered questions (no "no opinion" response option available) about a fictitious Act of Congress. They found that those low in self-esteem (nonwhites, the poorly educated, the mistrustful) were least likely to acknowledge that they do not have an opinion about something that sounds important.

Sometimes, as Philip Converse (1987) has pointed out, there are disjunctures between what one reads in the published results of opinion surveys and what one senses is true from other sources. He cites the example of the John Birch Society emerging on the national scene in the period leading up to the 1964 presidential campaign. The Birchers, says Converse, began to contest the hegemony of New Deal ideology and contributed much to Goldwater's capture of the Republican

nomination. Yet national survey data did not detect the force of this new "radical right." Likewise, vocal opposition to the Vietnam war and media treatment of the war seemed to give a very different picture of the national mood than what one read in the polls or, for that matter, in election returns. A beleaguered Nixon administration popularized the phrase "the silent majority" to dramatize this disjuncture.

The use of raw data, including poll results, to "prove" anything must be suspect. Neither facts nor tables speak for themselves, as a rule. Polls must be analyzed and interpreted to avoid faulty inferences (Moser, 1976). Public opinion researcher and consultant Irving Crespi (1981, p. 49) concludes that treating polls as "unqualified expressions of the will of the people" is an all-too-common practice. Crespi says

[p]ublic opinion is far too complex and dynamic to be fully encompassed in mere percentages. Constrained by the precept that they must report 'the facts,' journalists have unwittingly abetted the use of polls as plebiscites. By stressing percentages to the virtual exclusion of interpretive analysis, they give the raw numbers an apparent significance out of all proportion to their real meaning.

The correct role of polls is for use as back-up data for thoughtful analysis. As an illustration of how raw data can mislead analysts, leftist Michael Parenti (1986) has argued that the media were largely responsible for "inventing" the nation's emerging "conservative mood" they began reporting in the mid-1970s. He based his conclusion primarily on a variety

of long-term survey data that suggest most Americans are firmly liberal.

Much of the raw polling data Parenti cited do seem to suggest an overarching national liberal attitude. Yet a closer analysis of the survey questions might have led Parenti to a different interpretation. The form survey questions take largely determines responses. There are four basic forms that survey questions take: (1) assertive, asking respondents to agree or disagree; (2) dichotomous, posing two choices; (3) multiple choice, presenting several alternatives, and (4) open-ended, allowing respondents to give their own replies.

The questions most frequently used to measure public opinion, according to political scientist Donald Devine (1983), rely on the simple assertion form and contain an affirmative "response set" bias. People tend to say yes to positively worded questions. And regardless of whether the question is worded affirmatively or negatively, if it contains two or more ideas, one positive or negative symbol can determine the answer. Most respondents tend to support whatever means are presented, as long as they are linked with approved goals. When questions contrast two alternatives, opinions tend to divide more equally (Morin, 1991). Multiple choice and open-ended questions provide for a range of opinions from support to opposition, though this perspective tends to emphasize the middle of the range. "Closed questions"--simple assertion, dichotomous and multiple choice--



have limitations compared to open-ended questions. Findings based on closed questions are distorted by the constraint of choices, even when a no opinion option is offered to respondents. The wording of open questions may also constrain respondents by not legitimating types of responses that the investigator had intended to include (Schuman and Scott, 1987).

Popular support or opposition at the ideological level may be quite different at the policy level, and this may be another place Parenti went astray. Devine, a conservative activist, concludes that most Americans are not liberal, as Parenti and others presume based on their reading of poll data. Rather, Americans hold an older "bourgeois liberalism," with conservative values, says Devine, and this represents a much more credible interpretation of poll data. In a Gallup poll taken in September 1982, respondents described themselves as follows: 21 percent left of center, 43 percent in the center, and 36 percent to the right of center (Lichter and Rothman, 1983). But Gallup's findings present yet another danger--that of self-selection or the assignment of oneself to a vaguely defined category or to a position one does not fully understand.

There are also potential problems in the use of polling data by government agencies. For example, for 14 years, from 1943 to 1957, the Public Studies Division of the U.S. Department of State had periodic polls conducted for it by

public opinion research centers in leading universities. In 1957 these contracts were terminated because of congressional opposition. Poll results had been leaked to the press through public information officers in the International Cooperation Administration, allegedly for purposes of publicity or propaganda, which was prohibited by Section 701 of Public Law 603. By law, appropriated funds may not be used to generate propaganda "designed to influence a Member of Congress." Congressional opposition to the polls in the 1950s reportedly centered on a fear that the executive branch would use poll results to influence opinion, perhaps bringing public pressure to bear on Congress for appropriations to implement programs enjoying strong public support (Elder, 1960, pp. 145-146). The earlier concerns of Congress about the use of polls were echoed in the executive summary of the 1987 congressional Iran-contra report, which criticized the activities of the public diplomacy apparatus established by the Reagan administration.

National Strategy Information Center analysts told Jack Anderson and Dale Van Atta (1988b) that in retrospect, it is clear that then-national security advisor John Poindexter and his aide Oliver North "were looking for public support [for their policy preferences] by shaping the questions asked in the [1986 NSC-commissioned] polls," presumably to bolster their arguments in debates with other decision makers.

In spite of many known sources of error, opinion polls

are useful and informative. If individual polls provide only fragments of information, polls pieced together often provide far greater insights. One does not have to believe in the total accuracy of survey results to make good use of them. Most often, they can be relied upon as relatively accurate "snapshots" of opinion at a given moment in time.

Public opinion is sometimes volatile and subject to sudden change, depending on the issues. In 1950, Gabriel Almond wrote in *The American People and Foreign Policy* that public opinion on foreign policy issues was highly unstable. In a new introduction to the 1960 edition of his book, however, he concluded (p. xxii) that more recent data suggested "a real moderation in the fluctuation of American moods." Other analysts have suggested that although individual opinions may be volatile (Converse, 1964), aggregate opinion is generally stable and changes slowly (Key, 1961; Erikson and Luttbeg, 1973; Monroe, 1975; Erikson et al., 1980). Benjamin Page and Robert Shapiro (1982), using an extensive data base, found considerable stability in public opinion, including public opinion on foreign policy issues. Responses to half of 613 items asked with identical wordings at two or more points in time showed no significant change at all. Approximately half of detectable changes were less than 10 percentage points, and preferences were rarely found to fluctuate significantly within a short period of time.

Rapid shifts in public opinion do sometimes occur,

however, generally coinciding with major events in the economy or in international affairs. Perhaps the most dramatic foreign affairs shift in public opinion to occur during the Reagan years related to Americans' attitudes toward the Soviet Union. According to Gallup poll data, in 1982, only 21 percent expressed positive views about the Soviet Union, while 74 percent held negative opinions. Shortly after Reagan left office, in May 1989, the polls were showing 62 percent with positive views to 29 percent negative.

The "inattentive public," which comprises the vast majority of Americans, may be more susceptible to changes of opinion than is the attentive public. Efforts to provide a systematic explanation of changes in American public opinion on foreign policy, however, have not been very successful (Peterson, 1972; Kriesberg and Klein, 1980). John Mueller (1979) found a small but significant relationship between opinion and what was reported as major international events on the front page of the *New York Times* (c.f. also Erbring et al., 1980). Russett and DeLuca (1981) noted that the Iranian hostage affair and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan immediately preceded a peak in both the salience of foreign affairs to the public and in public sentiment favoring increased defense spending. They went on to warn (pp. 395, 399) that

[i]t is easy enough to imagine other foreign-affairs events that might have triggered a strong popular response as measured by the polls--the Yom Kippur War

and oil embargo of 1973, the fall of the Shah in January 1979, or the 'discovery' of the Soviet brigade in Cuba in the summer of 1979--but they did not. . . . [A]nalysts should be impressed by how much they do not know about the cause or stability of foreign-policy attitudes.

Page and Shapiro (1982, p. 40) likewise conclude that

[a] considerably more sophisticated analysis than just matching events and preference changes is required if we are to understand fully such important aspects of opinion dynamics as the impact of event stimuli, the role of the media, and the nature of time lags and diffusion processes. . . . [P]ublic opinion, especially on foreign affairs, [is] subject to leadership or manipulation by politicians, interest groups, and others. . . . [P]ublic opinion . . . is created or molded, as well as responded to.

Public opinion on foreign policy issues is generally conceived as being led by those most likely to be attentive to international affairs--an upper stratum of society occupying high economic, educational and occupational status (Rosenau, 1961; Devine, 1970; Calleo, 1983). Thus, for example, it was the upper stratum that turned against the Vietnam War earlier and more sharply than did the general public. Likewise, when military preparedness became popular in the late 1970s, the attentive public was the first to shift opinion.

A January 1980 Gallup poll showed 49 percent of the public in favor of increased military spending, while 52 percent of college-educated people favored it, as did 55 percent of those with incomes over \$23,000 a year. Later polls showed stronger support by the broad public. Such data

tend to confirm that changes in public opinion on foreign affairs issues generally follow debates initiated among elite foreign policy makers, private experts, and the attentive public.

In 1986, the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations polled foreign policy leaders and the public and found that the foreign policy elite, like the mass public and attentive public, was generally critical of the Reagan administration's approach in Nicaragua. The leaders, drawn from government, business, labor, education, the media, the religious community, and interest groups, were even more strongly opposed to "U.S. efforts to overthrow the leftist government of Nicaragua" than the general public. The policy was judged fair or poor by 60 percent of the public, compared to 79 percent of the leaders. Of the leaders who were not Reagan administration officials, 85 percent rated the policy negatively. Thirty percent of the Reagan administration officials polled rated it negatively.

Not all analysts are convinced of the relationship between elite and public opinion. Robert Oldendick and Barbara Ann Bardes (1982), for example, found virtually no evidence from the data they studied that elites (in this case, political officeholders, directors of the mass media, and leaders of major interest groups) have any influence over mass opinions. Identical surveys taken in 1974 and 1978 showed no closing of the gap between elite and mass attitudes regarding

military aid, foreign policy goals or support for human rights. President Carter's leadership of public opinion regarding human rights, a cornerstone of his foreign policy, was found to be insufficient to increase public support for the concept. In contrast to Carter's emphasis on peacemaking and arms reduction as national goals, both elites and the public shifted toward a more hawkish stance. If the president's powers of persuasion were lacking, what might account for this shift in elite and public attitudes? Oldendick and Bardes suggest (p. 380) the strong influence of external events and "media interpretations of the relative military strength of the United States." The lack of leadership effect, they speculate, also might be because of the long-term nature of some issues on which opinion in both groups may have crystallized, because some issues may have passed the "critical stage" at which they were susceptible to leadership effects, or because a four-year span may be insufficient for measuring elite influence.

These two analysts have also taken issue with other commonly held views. For example, Luttbeg (1968), Prothro and Grigg (1960) and others have suggested that community leaders and elites of political parties tend to have greater consistency and coherence of policy attitudes--their policy attitudes are less volatile. Yet Bardes and Oldendick (1978) concluded that with particular reference to foreign policy, more variables than the number generally used are necessary

for accurate measurement. Their analysis of data from a large base of variables suggests that public attitudes are more complex and more closely related to political philosophy than the earlier studies had suggested.

In a 1981 study, however, Oldendick and Bardes did find elites to be more supportive than the general public of an activist role for the U.S. in world affairs and to show greater understanding of interdependence concepts. Elites were also more favorable toward detente, toward advancing human rights positions, and more likely to believe that the U.S. should be a leader in solving world problems. The public tended more toward nationalism.

Gamson and Modigliani (1966) proposed three models that could be used in testing the relationship between knowledge of foreign affairs and foreign policy opinions. The enlightenment model, which the analysts described as amounting to "wishful thinking" by social scientists and others, sees knowledge as an indicator of foreign affairs sophistication. The more knowledgeable people are, the more likely they are to see the complexity of foreign affairs and the less likely to choose simplistic aggressive approaches to the solution of international problems. The mainstream model sees knowledge as a correlate of conformity with official foreign policy. Rather than being better analysts, mainstreamers are more aware of official government positions and more susceptible to government influence. The third model, the cognitive



consistency model, sees knowledge as an indicator of people's conceptual ability to integrate the specific with the general --the more knowledge, the stronger the relationship between general attitudes and specific policy stands.

Sigelman and Conover (1981) tested these models using people's knowledge and opinions about the takeover of the American embassy in Teheran and seizure of hostages in November 1979. The more knowledgeable respondents were found to have both a greater attachment to official governmental policies and to tend toward attitudinal consistency as knowledge increased. They found no definite tendency for more knowledgeable people to support conciliatory, nonbelligerent foreign policy options. Less knowledgeable respondents were much more likely to approve the least belligerent policy option offered by the analysts. Yet the most belligerent policy option also found the greatest support among the least knowledgeable. The analysts suggest that those with the least knowledge may tend to favor less complex, more immediate and more extreme policy options that have the potential to resolve crises totally and quickly.

Mueller (1973) also found that support for both immediate withdrawal and large-scale escalation as policy preferences during the Korean and Vietnam wars was inversely related to levels of education and income.

William Schneider (1982) has contended that before the late 1960s, the attentive public could be generally character-

ized as supportive of administration initiative and leadership in foreign affairs, mirroring the effective bipartisan consensus that existed among foreign policy leaders in the 1950s and early 1960s. He cited research showing that the attentive public was consistently more favorable about American involvement in the Korean War, for example, or about American involvement in the rest of the world, and about trade and treaties, than the rest of the public.

Until the late 1960s, the inattentive public, which Schneider characterizes as noninterventionist (isolationist being too strong a term), generally got involved in foreign affairs debates only in election years, and could be generally discounted between elections.

In the late 1960s, however, the relationships between the attentive and inattentive publics and foreign affairs broke down. The attentive public split. Schneider characterizes one segment as "conservative internationalists," seeing the world primarily in East-West terms, with the U.S. the assertive, sometimes interventionist leader of the anticommunist alliance. The other segment is comprised of "liberal internationalists," dissenters from the Cold War interventionism that had previously characterized U.S. foreign policy. They have a stronger North-South orientation and are more likely to think in terms of global interdependence and cooperation, with the U.S. taking the lead.

The inattentive, noninterventionist public can be

expected to ally with the liberal internationalist segment of the attentive public on issues of foreign aid, troop involvement, and anything that smacks of foreign entanglement.

On the other hand, the inattentive, noninterventionist public often allies with the conservative internationalists in their orientation toward a strong military posture. This "tough" posture of the noninterventionists is essentially defensive.

Both segments of the attentive public tend to be slow to change opinions, tend to have strongly held opinions, and new information tends only to bolster their views. The inattentive public is more volatile in changing opinions, and has more weakly held opinions. The inattentive public, according to Schneider, is the object of competition by attentive elites, as opinion leaders, for support on various foreign policy issues.

Russell Neuman (1986) has claimed that roughly 75 percent of the public is politically unsophisticated and uninterested, despite many within the group being well educated. Another 20 percent of the public is totally apolitical, with little awareness of and concern with politics. The remaining five percent, Neuman says, is knowledgeable, interested, politically sophisticated and active. They come disproportionately from families with deep political interests.

According to Roper Organization single news-source data, 70 percent of Americans say they rely on television as their

principal source of news. Interestingly, the other 30 percent (which relies primarily on print media) includes the upper strata of American society--the wealthiest and most educated--and thus presumably the most effective in terms of influencing national policy as elites, in influencing elites, and in leading mass opinion (Fromm, 1983).

Despite its inattention to foreign affairs, the broad public may be becoming increasingly more important to foreign policy making precisely because its members have become potential foreign policy issue allies of the liberal and conservative segments of the attentive public.

The public has some internalized political predispositions born of cultural socialization that are usually stable. Various socializing agencies, including family, school, peer groups, the workplace and media, help to implant a set of conditioned responses, particularly on certain "grand issues" such as peace, the efficacy of capitalism versus socialism, etc.

Socialization results in a generally acquiescent disposition among the public that, as Reinhard Bendix (1964) has noted, often borders on or blends with indifference. In the words of Judge Learned Hand (1929, p. 46),

[u]ntil something is so irritating as to tease men into action, they go along with what is usual, not consciously accepting it, having no opinion and therefore no will about it.

Other, more media-oriented explanations for change or

stability in people's beliefs include "media system dependency theory," and "belief system theory" (Mark, 1986). The first theory posits that media exposure occurs largely because people expect a particular message or messages to have some relevance and utility for one of their goals (e.g., self-understanding). The greater the person's dependency on the media for meeting a goal, the stronger the media effects.

Belief-system theory holds that both change and stability can be explained by people's need to maintain and enhance their sense of competence and morality. Hierarchically arranged values are central in belief systems, and when people become dissatisfied with their values, value change is followed by change in beliefs and behaviors. Satisfaction with a value makes one more likely to believe and act in ways consistent with it.

In the absence of force, effective authority depends on cumulative acts of compliance with or confidence in political leaders by the public. Authorities implement policies on the assumption that they possess an implicit mandate that will become manifest through the public's willingness to let them proceed. Opinion held over a long period of time without critical examination leads to opinion inertia, which generally operates with conservative effect.

Alexis de Tocqueville (1835, pp. 271-272) perceived this general trend among Americans during his travels across the United States:

I hear it said that it is in the nature and habit of democracies to be constantly changing their opinions and feelings. This may be true of small democratic nations, like those of the ancient world, in which the whole community can be assembled in a public place and then excited at will by an orator. But I saw nothing of the kind among the great democratic people that dwells upon the opposite shores of the Atlantic Ocean. What struck me in the United States was the difficulty of shaking the majority in an opinion once conceived of . . . .

Based on the Gallup survey series on the most important problems facing the U.S. for the period 1935 to 1949, Gabriel Almond (1950) thought that "instability of mood" characterized American attitudes about foreign policy. By 1960, Almond found that survey data was suggesting greater stability and "responsibility in the American foreign policy mood," which he equated with American mass public maturation (pp. xxii-xxiv). A study by William Caspary (1970) and more recent analyses tend to confirm that at least on central, continuing issues, public opinion on foreign policy is not especially volatile. After reviewing public opinion over a five year period, Everett Ladd (1983, p. 41), senior editor of *Public Opinion* and director of the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research at the University of Connecticut, was "struck by how little the nation's attitudes and values have shifted in the face of the kaleidoscopic changes in the political setting." He noted a distinction between the underlying structure of public opinion and assessments of current performance or events. Although American attitudes on questions of national defense

have remained remarkably constant since World War II, a Roper Organization poll in December 1980 found 56 percent saying the U.S. was spending "too little" on "the military, armaments, and defense," whereas a Roper poll exactly two years later found only 19 percent saying "too little." But the public's basic attitude about defense had not changed, Ladd contends. The public, he wrote, was sending what it concluded were appropriate "messages" to policy makers. Core values are rarely revised or rejected, but are instead applied in different ways or to different situations. Ladd concluded (p. 41) that

[p]ublic opinion does change, but . . . stability, not sudden lurchings this way and that, is the norm. When shifts in underlying attitudes do occur, they do so gradually, in response to lasting transformations of social organization and the reapplication of old values therein made necessary. . . . Public opinion is likely to remain the anchor, not the sail, of American democracy.

## Chapter 6

## RONALD REAGAN'S APPROVAL RATINGS

In a political system dedicated to the principle of popular sovereignty, it is not surprising that public opinion polling should find a place, albeit indirect, in governmental policy making.

Before the introduction of "scientific" polling in the mid-1930s, elections were the primary method of measuring the prevalence of opinion in the U.S., as in other Western democracies. Elections have historically determined not only the choice of government, but the general direction of government policy as reflected in party platforms. Political parties, groups organized for electoral purposes, have therefore been the major political vehicles of opinion. The party, as an association organized to support a line of policy, seeks to enlist public opinion on its side and to fight by constitutional means for victory in elections. While elected representatives are expected to look after the interests of their particular constituencies, they have been preeminently members of parties with national policies.

In theory, opposition political parties, ever vigilant critics of the government, search out weaknesses in the hold of the dominant party on the public. They compel it to defend and justify its policies before the court of public opinion (Schattschneider, 1961).



Since the early 1950s, however, the American public has been drifting away from the two major parties. By 1980, the parties were perceived with indifference by a large percentage of the population.

Further, during the Reagan presidency--particularly the first term--partisan foreign policy debates may have been uncharacteristically subdued. The Democrats, according to analyst Mark Hertsgaard (1988), were intimidated by the president's popularity or their exaggerated impressions of his popularity. Hertsgaard believes that they "repeatedly shrank back from challenging Reagan's basic premises, thus ceding the command position in the battle for public opinion to the White House."

Samuel Kernell (1986), in his study of executive leadership, seems to confirm this conclusion, at least as it applies to the invasion of Grenada in 1983. Immediately following the invasion, the public, he said, was "confused and ambivalent." Democratic spokesmen were critical. President Reagan went on television to defend his actions and subsequent polls showed a highly favorable response by the public, which "hushed up" the critics. Senator Daniel P. Moynihan (D-N.Y.) had originally declared the invasion to be an "act of war." Two weeks later, he conceded that "[t]he move is popular and therefore there's no disposition in the Senate to be opposed to it." Kernell (p. 148) quotes another (anonymous) Democratic senator as saying, "Most people, once they saw the polls

come out, went underground."

Most Americans hold a high regard for the institution of the presidency and generally hold a sitting president in high regard. Decades of research indicate, however, that a president's approval rating usually drops steadily, though with some fluctuations caused by specific events, after his first few months in office. In cases of international crisis, and despite the nature of presidential actions, the immediate effect is for his approval rating to rise. If the long-term effect of the crisis is bad, then his approval rating reverses and drops sharply (Roper, 1983).

Political scientist Richard Brody (1984) notes that when international crisis events are breaking, the administration has a virtual monopoly on information about the situation. Opposition leaders either tend to refrain from comment or make vaguely supportive statements. In the absence of criticism, the media often report the events without seeking out negative comment for its own sake. "The public," says Brody, "responds accordingly." When criticism of presidential actions (or inaction) does emerge and is reported by the media, the president's job and policy approval ratings drop.

President Reagan's job approval rating, for example, was sharply higher immediately following the destruction of a Korean Air Lines passenger plane (KAL 007) by a Soviet fighter pilot in September 1983 (see Figure 1, p. 120). The rally stalled, however, when conservatives began to criticize what

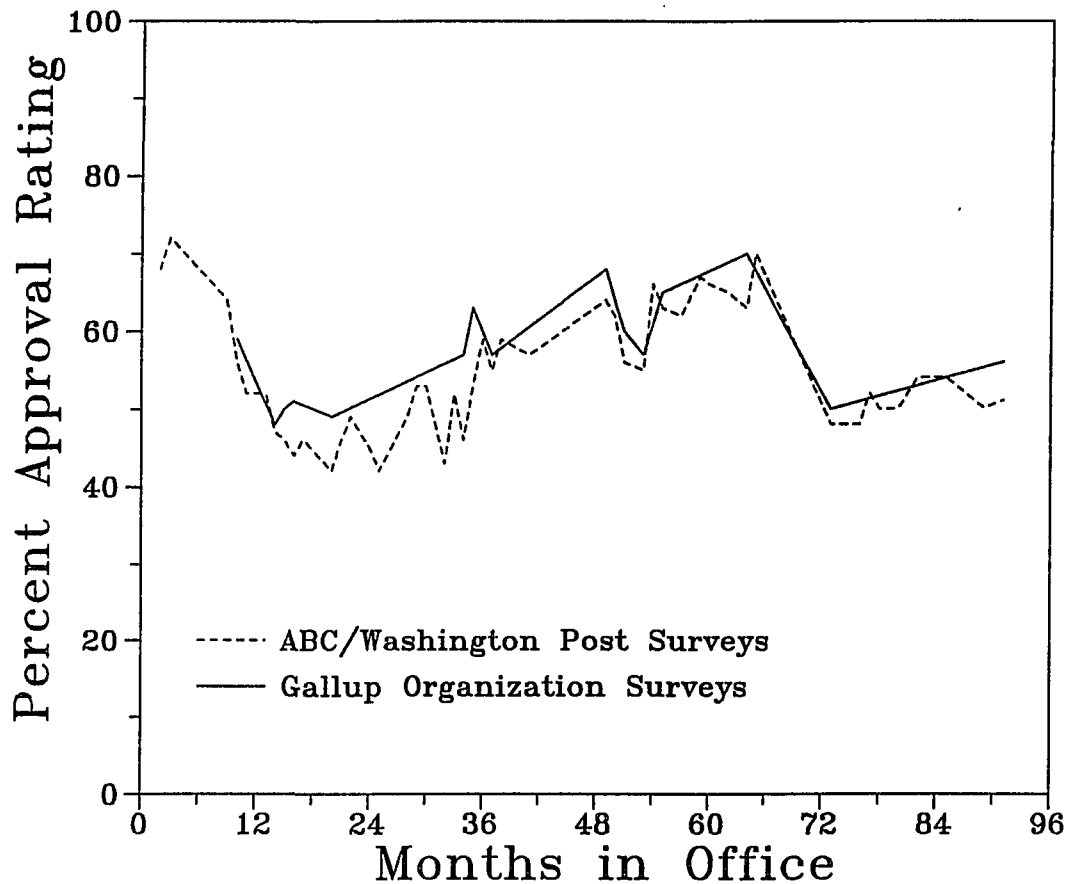


Figure 1

RONALD REAGAN'S JOB APPROVAL RATINGS, 1981-1988

Legend: \_\_\_\_\_ = Gallup Polls

----- = ABC/Washington Post Polls

Wording of survey questions and numerical data by year and month may be found in the appendix.

they perceived as Reagan's moderate or weak response to the crisis. Brody contends (pp. 43, 60) that

[a] comparison of trends in media coverage of the president's critics and trends in his job approval during this period shows the two moving in tandem. When the media broadcast criticism, the president lost support; when criticism was absent, he gained public approval.

When U.S. troops landed on Grenada on October 26, 1983, President Reagan's job approval rating stood at 46 percent and persisted at that level while congressional Democrats voiced opposition to the invasion. On October 27, Reagan spoke to the American people on television. His general job approval rating did not increase immediately following the speech, but there were gains in approval for his sending troops and in public confidence of his handling of the crisis. Brody (p. 60) says that "Democratic leadership responded to the speech, to the polls, and to the apparent success of the operation in Grenada by muting its opposition." The public, Brody continues, responded to the change in the Democrats' stand, and the president's general job approval rating for the first two weeks in November jumped to 53 percent. Undoubtedly, the public also responded to media events like the ground-kissing ceremony that took place at Charleston Air Force Base when the first wave of American medical students returned to the U.S. The public also responded to person-on-the-street interviews with grateful Granadian locals (M. Robinson et al., 1984).

Richard Neustadt (1960) pointed out in his classic study,

*Presidential Power*, that a president's public standing is a source of influence for him. It has a direct bearing on the willingness of Congress and the bureaucracy to support his policies. Exceptions to this general rule did occur during the Reagan administration and, more recently, occurred when Congress rejected a budget plan negotiated between its leadership and the staff of President Bush, who enjoyed a 75 percent approval rating at the time.

The public perception of Ronald Reagan's image and job performance were strong throughout much of the Reagan presidency. Such long periods of high marks had not been seen since the Eisenhower years. This often helped Reagan's familiar strategy of appealing directly to the public in the administration's protracted policy conflicts with congressional Democrats, a strategy that worked particularly well during his first term, but was not as successful in his second term.

The Iran-contra affair especially tarnished the Reagan image. Both his foreign policy ratings (Figure 2, p. 123) and popularity ratings plunged. While the events, themselves, may have been generally upsetting to the American public, even more so were the revelations about the president's management style and behavior, which so clearly conflicted with his distinctive reputation for decisiveness, strength and self-confidence.

Ronald Reagan did not come into office in 1981 with particularly high public approval ratings. His victory over

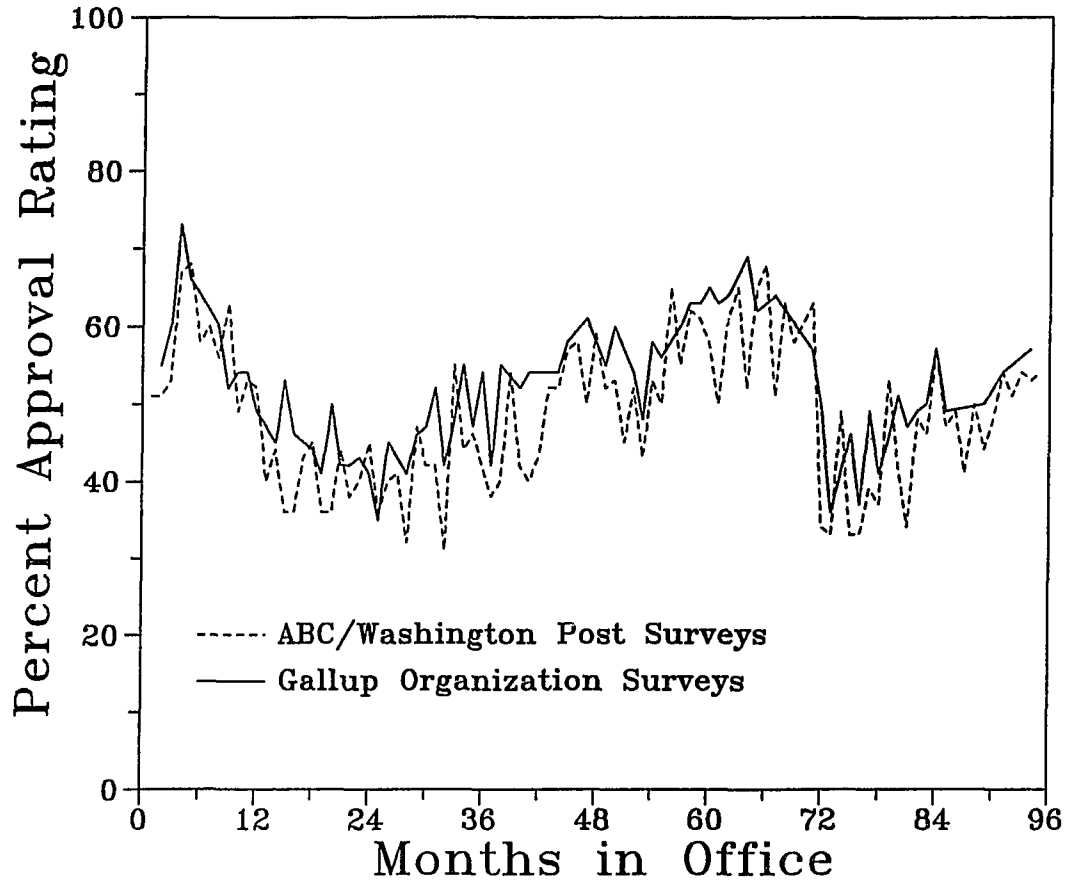


Figure 2

RONALD REAGAN'S FOREIGN POLICY APPROVAL RATING, 1981-1988

Legend: \_\_\_\_\_ = Gallup Polls  
 ----- = ABC/Washington Post Polls

Wording of survey questions and numerical data by month and year may be found in the appendix.

Jimmy Carter in 1980 said more, perhaps, about Carter's extreme weakness (and, perhaps, the third party candidacy of John Anderson, who garnered seven percent of the popular vote) than about Reagan's established strength. True to form, however, Reagan's approval scores soared during his first few months in office, especially after his attempted assassination by John Hinckley in March 1981. His rating declined during the 1982-83 recession, but with returning prosperity his popularity rose. Most pollsters found approval ratings in the 50 to 60 percent range, even soaring to 70 percent in ABC/*Washington Post* polls in April and May 1986.

In October 1986, a month before the Iran-contra affair was made public, President Reagan's job performance rating was slightly higher than it had been when he was reelected. His approval rating closely followed trends in the economy as opposed to other issues (Gergen and King, 1985). Even on the heels of the Iran-contra revelations, he continued to receive positive ratings for his management of the economy (a February 1987 *Los Angeles Times* poll showed a 53 percent approval rating).

In general, however, the president's monthly approval ratings plunged after November 25, 1986, when the diversion of funds to the contras from arms sales to Iran became public knowledge. John Poindexter and Oliver North left the White House, and the president admitted that he had not been in full control of his foreign policy. A survey by the Center for

Political Studies at the University of Michigan in May and June 1987 found a net decline of 20 percentage points in the public perception of Reagan as "intelligent" or "able to provide strong leadership."

Even before that darkest day of the Reagan presidency, the public's strong esteem for Reagan, the man, hid a growing weakness in public support for many of his programs.

While a majority of the public approved of Reagan's handling of foreign policy during his first six months in office, it took a dip in October 1981 and averaged less than 40 percent until his reelection in November 1984, when public approval rebounded to 50 percent. It remained at majority levels until the Iran-contra revelations and did not pass 50 percent again until July 1988.

Besides pre-election public attitudes that were at odds with some foreign policies the Reagan administration pursued, there may have been several other factors that could help to explain these low ratings.

During the early days of the administration, many Democratic critics contended that Ronald Reagan had no foreign policy at all, just a vague notion that a hard line against Moscow and more defense spending were needed. Further, the first foreign policy team Reagan fielded was plagued by controversy.

The nomination of Alexander Haig to be secretary of state sparked fierce initial opposition from some senators. His



confirmation hearings before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee took five days--the longest on record for a secretary of state. Haig's strong performance and expertise on foreign affairs ensured his confirmation, however, and he was confirmed by an overwhelming margin of 93-6. But Haig remained controversial, declaring himself Reagan's foreign policy "vicar" and engaging in vocal turf fights over policy formulation with other members of the foreign policy team. Reagan implicitly rebuked Haig by naming Vice President George Bush as head of "crisis management" in foreign policy. Haig was widely ridiculed when, minutes after the attempted assassination of Reagan, he declared in a quavering voice that belied his words, "I am in control here at the White House." He openly complained that someone in the White House (presumed to be national security advisor Richard Allen) was waging a political "guerilla campaign" against him. Reagan had to lecture Haig and Allen in the Oval Office about their feuding.

Haig and other administration foreign policy makers also publicly contradicted one another at times on what U.S. policy was. When he resigned in June 1982, he complained that the administration was shifting from what he described as a "careful course" in foreign policy. He later admitted that his resignation was not entirely voluntary and was partly caused by his disagreement with Reagan's economic sanctions against the Soviets after the Polish government reacted to social unrest by instituting martial law. Haig had also run

afoul of William Clark and Caspar Weinberger on Middle East policy, particularly regarding policy toward Israel and Lebanon. According to Haig (1984, pp. 317-352), Arabists in the foreign policy establishment had the president's ear and interfered with his (Haig's) ability to communicate his own alternate views to the president.

The public's perception of the Reagan administration's handling of foreign policy during its first year in office may also have been affected by questions about the conduct of national security advisor Richard Allen and CIA Director William Casey. Allegations of wrongdoing on Allen's part led to his forced resignation in January 1982, despite being cleared of illegal or unethical conduct by Justice Department and White House investigations. He was replaced by Reagan's longtime confidant, then-Deputy Secretary of State William Clark. A California judge, Clark's competence had been an issue during his earlier confirmation hearings because of his limited knowledge of foreign affairs.

With regard to William Casey, the media had reported that some of his past business dealings had involved him in a number of civil suits. Then, in July 1981, Max Hugel, whom Casey had named to head the CIA's clandestine services, resigned after being accused of unethical and illegal business practices in the past. That same month, Barry Goldwater (R-Ariz.), chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, declared that Casey should resign. A committee probe

eventually found Casey "not unfit to serve."

Reagan did not really enjoy the public relations advantages of having a stable and united foreign policy team until very late in his presidency. Secretary of State George Shultz, who replaced Haig in 1982, and Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger at times seemed to be speaking for different administrations. Shultz generally advocated an activist approach to Third World conflicts, while Weinberger counselled caution on the use of troops overseas. They disagreed over arms control, responding to terrorism, and several other issues, creating confusion not only in Congress, but among the public about where the Reagan administration stood.

The administration also faced an open foreign policy revolt from the right wing of the Republican Party, led by Senator Jesse Helms (R-N.C.). The Helms faction used every opportunity to undermine Shultz, with the apparent goal of getting him fired. Helms and his allies delayed Senate approval of key State Department nominations and sought to block administration compromises with Congress on controversial matters. Helms made speeches denouncing administration policies with which he disagreed and had aides selectively leak information that might damage those policies. He and his allies launched whispering campaigns highlighting Shultz' alleged failures and predicting his impending departure.

This intraparty warfare helped lead to the December 1985 departure of national security advisor Robert McFarlane, a

Shultz ally. McFarlane abruptly quit two weeks after Reagan's Geneva summit meeting with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev. The apparent reason for his resignation was his losing bureaucratic battles with White House Chief of Staff Donald Regan. McFarlane was succeeded by his deputy, Admiral John Poindexter, who became Reagan's fourth national security advisor in five years.

After the midterm elections in 1986, when the Democrats took control of the Senate, Senator Helms decided to challenge Senator Richard Lugar (R-Ind.) for the senior Republican position on the Foreign Relations Committee. Although Lugar had the backing of the other committee Republicans, a secret-ballot election by Republican senators in January 1987 confirmed Helms' claims that he deserved the slot by virtue of seniority. Although they had joined the committee on the same day in 1979, Helms had seniority over Lugar because he had served longer in the Senate. The action of Republican senators in this matter put the two committee leadership positions in the hands of men often publicly at odds with Reagan administration foreign policy: the liberal Chairman Claiborne Pell (D-R.I.), and the extremely conservative Helms.

A growing weakness in public support for the Reagan agenda was a common theme in the press coverage of the 1984 election. In late 1984, Harris polls showed the public giving Reagan positive marks for his handling of only two issues--inflation and the overall economy. On every other issue,

including foreign policy, his marks were negative.

The issue of nuclear arms control caused more political difficulty for the Reagan administration during its first two years than any other foreign policy issue. The anti-nuclear movement was reborn during the Reagan presidency. It was reborn in a generally more aggressive nuclear and conventional arms atmosphere fostered by the Reagan administration in pursuit of its campaign pledges and conservative agenda.

Carter administration policy regarding conventional arms sales was overturned in the first year of the Reagan administration. Under Reagan, the burden of persuasion would be on the opponents, rather than the advocates of specific arms sales, and while human rights would be considered in approving or disapproving specific sales, the issue would not be emphasized as it had been under President Carter. Reagan policy also allowed embassy personnel to assist arms dealers, which Carter had forbidden.

On July 9, 1981, the Reagan administration announced that its policy on conventional arms sales would be one of dealing with the world as it is, rather than as we would like it to be. Arms transfers would hitherto be considered on a case-by-case basis and would be an essential element of U.S. global strategy. Congress was asked to repeal restrictions on arms sales to Argentina and other countries.

It was well into Reagan's first year in office before he unveiled his nuclear non-proliferation policy, which negated

President Carter's largely unsuccessful policy of invoking sanctions against nations trying to acquire nuclear weapons.

U.S. aid to Pakistan, for example, had been banned since 1979, under a law that banned aid to nations suspected of trying to develop nuclear weapons. The Reagan administration was seeking warmer relations with Pakistan as a counter to the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, and argued that if nations felt sufficiently secure, they would forego the expense and trouble of developing nuclear weapons. The administration proposed to give Pakistan \$3.2 billion in economic and military aid over six years and to sell Pakistan 40 high performance F-16 fighter planes. Part of the sale was to be financed by Saudi Arabia. Congress was asked to modify the law to permit the aid, and after surprisingly little opposition, it did so. Congress did, however, add a provision that gave it the right to veto the president's action.

President Reagan and Secretary of State Haig heightened the concerns of arms control advocates when they declared that future arms negotiations with the Soviets would depend on Soviet behavior around the world, although the administration did go ahead with scheduled U.S.-Soviet talks on reducing nuclear forces in Europe.

Reaction to the Reagan administration's arms build-up and early strident rhetoric, however, may have been paramount in reviving the anti-nuclear lobby. Reagan set the tone of U.S. relations with Moscow as early as his first presidential press

conference, when he said he firmly believed that the goal of the Soviets was world domination, and that they "reserve unto themselves the right to commit any crime, to lie, to cheat, in order to attain that. . . ." Secretary Haig hinted at various times that the U.S. was contemplating military action against Cuba and Nicaragua for their aid to El Salvador's leftist guerrillas. Some analysts (Kaagen, 1983; Calleo, 1983; Butterworth, 1982) have suggested that it was the bellicose pronouncements of several of the administration's nuclear policy "experts," including Secretary Haig, the president, and Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger, that gave particular impetus to the anti-nuclear movement.

Beginning in 1981, the American public was confronted with Reagan administration statements containing talk about nuclear "demonstration shots" and "warning shots," "limited" nuclear war, a European nuclear battlefield, and potentially "winnable" extended exchanges. These ideas apparently had little or no credibility with a public accustomed to a strategic discussion centered on mutual assured destruction (MAD). A May 1982 AP/NBC poll showed only 17 percent of those interviewed thinking that a "limited" nuclear war was both possible and winnable (a proposition often presented by the administration). A 1982 Harris poll showed most of those surveyed (52 percent) worried about President Reagan "getting the country into war," with 45 percent not worried. A majority (53 percent) also gave the president "negative marks

on his nuclear weapons negotiations with the Soviets," with 41 percent positive.

Although public support for American defense of Europe against Soviet attack had traditionally been strong, that support waned considerably when questions of European defense were coupled with nuclear weapons. In October 1981, 52 percent of those polled by NBC opposed using nuclear weapons in response to a Soviet nuclear attack on Western Europe. Only 29 percent favored a nuclear response; 78 percent said neither side could win a nuclear war.

Most of the growing public support for the nuclear freeze movement and other nuclear arms control formulations was not based on a reversal or softening of an essentially assertive public posture regarding U.S. foreign policy. Rather, the renascent anti-nuclear movement was based primarily on a substantial erosion of consensus regarding what a valid national security stance should be and what was in the national interest (Kaagen, 1983). The public supported a strong defense posture and a tough line with the Soviets, but simultaneously was simply not convinced that a build-up of the U.S. nuclear arsenal would actually increase national security. Further, the American public has a well-documented nuclear anxiety. The solution to this anxiety, in the minds of many people, has been negotiations with the Soviets to reduce tensions and to control, if not ultimately eliminate,



nuclear weapons.<sup>7</sup>

Most of the public seemed to have had a sense early in the Reagan presidency that the administration may not have been seriously interested in reducing the threat of nuclear war. Forty-eight percent of those surveyed in an April 1982 ABC/*Washington Post* poll said they felt the president had not done all he should to reduce the international build-up of nuclear weapons. The administration's early, seemingly bellicose nuclear rhetoric may have contributed to some loss of public confidence in President Reagan's grasp of foreign policy and handling of foreign affairs in general (Kaagen, 1983).

Tom Smith (1988) found data showing that expectations of war, particularly nuclear war, rose significantly in the late 1970s and early 1980s, peaking in 1982-83. After that came the succession of Reagan-Gorbachev summits that culminated in the signing of the INF treaty. That, coupled with a diminution of spot crises, played a part in a subsequent and notable

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<sup>7</sup>There is no simple relationship between nuclear anxiety and support for disarmament, however (Mueller, 1979; Diamond and Bachman, 1985). Reflecting deeply ingrained mistrust of the Soviets and long-term concerns over Soviet expansionism, the American public has wavered over whether a nuclear build-up or falling behind the Soviets is more likely to lead to war (Smith, 1988). Graham and Kramer (1985) found most of the public believing that the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) would make the world safer. Many people believe that fundamental improvements in U.S.-Soviet relations are a better way than nuclear treaties to make the world safer.

decline in the public's belief in the probability of nuclear war.

Arms control negotiations are never easy, and the Reagan administration quickly discovered the historic difficulties entailed in dealing with the Soviets on two separate levels-- nuclear arms negotiations and all other bilateral issues. Administration officials insisted that arms control negotiations be linked to all other aspects of Soviet behavior, but linkage proved to be more rhetoric than reality. The difficulties inherent in arms control negotiations were compounded by the often bellicose statements of Reagan administration officials, and with the successive deaths of Communist Party general secretaries Brezhnev (November 1982), Andropov (February 1984), and Chernenko (March 1985).

In November 1981, Reagan tried to set the agenda for arms negotiations with a "zero option" proposal to ban all nuclear weapons from European soil. In May 1982, he proposed cuts in both U.S. and Soviet intercontinental missile fleets. Reagan earned some political capital for his proposals at home. So, too, were his proposals welcomed abroad, particularly by West Europeans, who were increasingly nervous about the approaching December 1983 deadline for installation of U.S. nuclear missiles on their territory. But he quickly lost the initiative to Andropov, who presented a series of counter-proposals that were calculated to undermine support in Europe for U.S. negotiating positions.

Lawrence Kaagen wrote in 1983 that the nuclear advocates in the Department of Defense and the anti-nuclear interest groups took it for granted that they were speaking in the best interests of the American public and had the will of the nation behind them. Both sides, he maintained, were wrong. A third actor--the general public--shares some perspectives with each, but is broadly represented by neither. "There is not likely to be a national consensus on nuclear arms policy," he concluded (p. 23), "until three, not two voices are listened to."

A September 1984 Gallup poll found a startling 78 percent of respondents favoring an agreement between the U.S. and the Soviet Union for an immediate, verifiable freeze on testing and production of nuclear weapons. Proponents included 74 percent of Republicans, 82 percent of Democrats, and 78 percent of Independents. At least 70 percent support had been found in five previous Gallup polls. By a two to one margin the public supported a negotiated arms limitation agreement with the Soviets and opposed the president's plans to abandon the existing arms limitation agreements between the U.S. and the Soviet Union (*Washington Post*, September 7, 1984, and June 10, 1986; Yankelovich and Doble, 1984; *New York Times*, April 15, 1983).

Arms control negotiations were not revived until November 1985, when the first U.S.-Soviet summit meeting in six years was held in Geneva between President Reagan and Soviet General

Secretary Gorbachev. They agreed on the broad principle of a 50 percent cut in nuclear weapons, on accelerating a new round of arms talks, and on holding follow-up summits in 1986 and 1987.

Public support for arms control negotiations never congealed for specific proposals, which left the administration's prerogatives open at the negotiating table. Public deference to "experts" deciding the proper national posture in reducing the threat of nuclear weapons was, nonetheless, substantially reduced by public expressions of opinion. In the spring of 1986, a Gallup poll found 87 percent of respondents believing that a nuclear arms treaty was very important (62 percent) or important (25 percent), compared to 8 percent thinking it would be unimportant or very unimportant. Between 1982 and 1986, a significant shift took place in public opinion regarding U.S. nuclear parity with the Soviets. In 1982, only 32 percent felt there was nuclear parity between the superpowers, whereas four years later, 54 percent believed that parity existed (Table 1).

	United States	Soviet Union	About Equal	No Opinion
1986	17%	23%	54%	6%
1985				
October	21	27	40	12
February	24	23	44	9
1983	15	42	35	8
1982	17	40	32	11

Table 1

## NUCLEAR SUPERIORITY

Tom Smith (1988) found that in evaluating Reagan's nuclear policies, particularly his arms negotiations with the Soviets, the public consistently increased their performance approval rating of the president when summits and START/INF talks showed promise. This was particularly true following the Geneva summit (November 1985) and when the Intermediate Nuclear Force (INF) treaty was signed at the Washington summit (December 1987). In a nationwide in-person Gallup poll completed just prior to the signing, 76 percent were in favor of the treaty, 13 percent opposed and 12 percent had no opinion. Republicans (75 percent) backed the pact as solidly as Democrats (75 percent) and Independents (78 percent).

The 1987 summit, wrote conservative columnist Fred Barnes (1988b), was a "p.r. summit." The INF treaty had been finalized weeks before, and the Reagan-Gorbachev conferences "consisted of boilerplate." The main events of the two-day summit were public events--eight hours worth. Barnes wrote that Richard Wirthlin had studied public reaction to summits as far back as the 1950s and found that, on average, presidents gained 1.5 percent in approval ratings in the week following a summit. "Reagan and his aides had hoped for a blip in the polls," wrote Barnes. "They got an eruption." Reagan's approval rating went from 49 percent in a Wirthlin survey on November 3, 1987, to 54 percent on November 30, as summit fever grew, to 67 percent following the summit, on December 13.

The Reagan administration's negotiations with what the president had once called the "evil empire" can only be understood by considering the relevant public attitudes as championed by anti-nuclear groups. Unlike the early days of tentative protest against the war in Vietnam, there were indications in this movement that the American public had begun to reject the notion that it does not know enough to be concerned about foreign policy or have a valid opinion about what constitutes the best policy in a given situation. An April 1982 ABC/*Washington Post* poll showed a 57 percent majority saying that the public could not trust government officials to make the "right decision" about a nuclear freeze policy without being subjected to public pressure. An even larger majority (64 percent) said that it was pressure for a freeze that had given arms control negotiations a higher priority within the Reagan administration.

The voting behavior of the electorate in 1980 and 1984 reflected the continuing weakness of political parties. There is a tendency toward cognitive consistency that generally takes place during any decision-making process, including voting decisions. Because of that tendency, one might have expected consistency between liking Ronald Reagan and his policies, but this was not always the case, particularly during and after 1984. "In an age of electoral disaggregation . . ." explained analyst Martin Wattenberg (1987, p. 59),

where the focus of attention is on the candidate's performance rather than their

party's promises, this kind of rationalization may no longer be necessary. Why worry too much about Reagan's policies if one is voting just for Reagan and not for an entire partisan team to accomplish the proposed policies?

Throughout 1985, Reagan was extraordinarily popular, and his first cancer surgery that year seemed to solidify favorable opinion of him. The Office of Presidential Correspondence answered a record 8.2 million letters that year (McAllister, 1988). Reagan's agenda was falling apart in Congress, though, with the public generally supporting Congress in executive-legislative battles (Gergen and King, 1985).

The president was always personally popular, but many of his policies--particularly foreign policies--were not. His policies in Central America, South Africa, and the Middle East earned him particularly low approval ratings, which had the effect of skewing the approval ratings for his foreign policy, in general.

Gallup Poll findings of the public's approval of Reagan's "handling of the Middle East situation" were relatively low during his first term but had begun to improve in his second term until the arms-for-hostages revelations caused them to dip to an all-time low (Table 2, below). The survey instrument, it should be noted, only sought to measure opinion on a subject that was, at best, vague. The wording of the survey question did not delineate among the wide variety of Middle East issues with which the administration was

contending, nor did it register opinion as to why respondents might disapprove of Reagan policy. For example, some respondents may have disapproved of Reagan policy in Libya or Lebanon, with others disapproving of AWACS sales to Arab states, or U.S. support of Israel, and their disapproval may have been for a variety of reasons, reflecting a broad range of positions on foreign policy attitude scales.

	Approve	Disapprove	No Opinion
1986			
December 4-5	27%	59%	14%
July 11-14	47	34	19
April 11-14	47	36	17
January 10-13	43	40	17
1985			
October 11-14	42	35	23
1983			
January 14-17	35	38	27
1982			
October 15-18	36	40	24
1981			
October 2-5	44	29	27
July 31-Aug. 3	39	25	36

Table 2

PUBLIC APPROVAL/DISAPPROVAL RATINGS OF REAGAN'S  
MIDDLE EAST POLICY

Although congressional Democrats often capitulated in supporting the contras, few Americans wanted to go much farther with military aid to either the Nicaraguan "freedom fighters" or to Central American governments. Although survey



data show that through the Reagan years the public grew more aware of which side the U.S. was supporting in Nicaragua, public approval of contra aid never enjoyed majority support, let alone approval bordering on consensus.

In the Reagan years, no other foreign policy devoured so much time, energy and emotion on the part of the administration and Congress as aid to the contras. After mid-1981, public disapproval was almost always higher than public approval of Reagan's performance in Central America--particularly in El Salvador and Nicaragua. Public approval for the president's foreign policy, in general, was skewed by the public's generally low approval rating of the president's handling of Nicaragua and Central America (Tables 3 and 4, below).

In December 1981, the media reported that the president had signed an executive order authorizing covert actions by the CIA to disrupt arms shipments into Nicaragua and to harass what the order called the "Cuban-Sandinista support structure in Nicaragua and elsewhere in Central America." Reports about the Honduras-based CIA operation began to trickle out early in 1982, and by the end of the year had reached flood proportions. In December 1982, congressional liberals proposed legislation to prohibit any CIA paramilitary operations against Nicaragua, but administration lobbyists quashed the legislation. Direct CIA efforts to overthrow the government of Nicaragua were banned, however, in the fiscal 1983

	Approve (excellent or pretty good)	Disapprove (fair or poor)	Not sure
1987			
January	28%	66%	6%
1986			
August	34	60	6
April	39	53	8
March	39	58	3
1985			
November	38	58	4
September	32	64	4
July	36	60	4
May	32	63	5
March	34	59	7
January	37	59	4
1984			
October	40	55	5
September	41	56	3
August	31	66	3
July	32	64	4
May	30	61	9
April	33	61	6
March	30	62	8
February	30	64	6
January	34	58	8
1983			
December	33	58	9
November	40	52	8

Table 3

PUBLIC APPROVAL/DISAPPROVAL RATINGS OF PRESIDENT REAGAN'S  
CENTRAL AMERICA POLICY, 1982-88 (HARRIS POLLS)

	Approve	Disapprove	No Opinion
1988			
March	25	59	15
1986			
December	23	64	13
July	34	46	20
April	35	42	23
1985			
July	29	45	26
May	29	40	31
March	26	43	31
1984			
July	27	45	28
June	28	49	23
April	29	48	23
March	29	48	23
February	28	49	23
1983			
December	36	44	20
October	27	49	24
August	24	51	25
June	25	46	29
May	44	42	14
April	21	49	30
1982			
March	33	49	18

Table 4

PUBLIC APPROVAL/DISAPPROVAL RATINGS OF PRESIDENT REAGAN'S  
NICARAGUA POLICY, 1982-88 (GALLUP POLLS)

continuing resolution.

News reports in late 1982 and early 1983 stated that the contra operation, which had started as small-scale harassment, had mushroomed into a full-scale war with some 10,000 contras battling the 25,000-man Nicaraguan army. By the summer of 1983, guerrilla units were launching air and naval attacks against major Nicaraguan oil storage facilities.

Democrats in the House, particularly members of the Intelligence Committee, grew increasingly alarmed about the legitimacy and aims of expanded administration support for the contras. In May 1983, the Democratic majority of the committee broke with Reagan, approving a bill (HR 2760) to prohibit further U.S. aid to the contras after a certain (classified) date. The full House passed the legislation on July 28 by a vote of 228-195, after negotiations between the administration and Democrats broke down.

HR 2760 was a strong symbolic rejection of the president's Nicaraguan policy, but its impact was undermined by the reluctance of key Senate Democrats to press for similar action in their chamber. The House initiative was then lost when, in September, a Soviet fighter plane downed KAL 007 carrying 269 persons, including a member of the House. The incident heightened anti-Soviet sentiment in the U.S., and precluded any action that could be seen as a favor to the Soviet Union or its allies, i.e. Nicaragua.

In November 1983, House-Senate conferees on the defense

appropriations bill (HR 4185-PL 98-212) adopted a compromise that prohibited the CIA and other intelligence agencies from spending more than \$24 million in fiscal 1984 to support the contras. Although the compromise placed a ceiling on contra aid, it allowed the aid to continue. When the \$24 million ran out, the Reagan administration made two attempts to get Congress to appropriate additional funds. In the wake of revelations about the CIA's bungling of a campaign to mine Nicaraguan harbors, House Democrats refused to compromise on the contra aid issue and blocked both moves, giving President Reagan his most serious first term foreign policy defeat on Capitol Hill. The first funding attempt sought \$21 million for the contras for fiscal 1984. But House Democrats were firmly opposed, and the Republican-controlled Senate, to free up unrelated funds for summer youth job programs, dropped the contra money from a supplemental spending bill. Reagan sought another \$28 million for the contras in his regular fiscal 1985 budget. Again, House Democrats were obstinate, and the president had to settle for a one-sided compromise under which Congress approved \$14 million under such strict conditions that the money was unlikely to ever be spent.

Part of the Reagan counter-offensive in his contra aid war with Congress was the appointment of a bipartisan commission in 1983 to recommend solutions to the problems in Central America. The commission, headed by former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, reported in January 1984, but failed

to produce a consensus. The commission reflected many of the uncertainties and disagreements about Central America that were running deep in Congress and in the American public. In footnote dissents that garnered as much attention as the basic text of the report, two commission Democrats objected to aiding the contras and Kissinger dissented against the commission's recommendations for stiff human rights conditions on aid to El Salvador. If the Kissinger report received a tepid reception in the Democratic-controlled House, it was, interestingly, received even less charitably in the Republican-controlled Senate. The Foreign Relations Committee deadlocked on Central American issues because Senator Helms refused to endorse commission recommendations on land reform and other issues he viewed as "socialistic." In its continuing appropriations resolution for fiscal 1985, Congress ultimately adopted only a skeleton of the commission's recommendations for increased aid to Central America.

In early 1985, Reagan sought "humanitarian" aid for the contras, promising that the U.S. was not trying to overthrow the Nicaraguan government. The House rebuffed the request in April, with Democrats remarkably united in opposition to the president. Six weeks later, after Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega "shot himself in the foot" with an ill-timed trip to Moscow, the House reversed itself, approving \$27 million in nonmilitary aid to the contras and dismantling a 1984 absolute prohibition against CIA military backing for the contras.

The supplemental spending bill that included the \$27 million in contra aid also established a procedure for rapid congressional consideration of a presidential request to replenish those funds when they ran out in early 1986, ensuring renewed debate on the issue.

Partly as a result of the activities of the administration's public diplomacy apparatus, public approval of the president's handling of Nicaragua grew from 26 percent to 35 percent between early 1985 and the opening of the 1986 contra aid campaign in February, although the approval rating was still lower than his foreign policy approval rating (which had grown from 31 to 56 percent), and much lower than his overall job approval rating (growing from 61 to 68 percent).

In February 1986, the president asked for \$100 million in military and non-military aid for the contras, along with permission to spend the money as he saw fit, with no strings attached. The House rejected the request by a narrow margin in March, but the president and his allies lobbied hard and managed to reverse the vote in June. The Republican-controlled Senate approved the aid package in August. Although Democratic leaders managed to delay final appropriation of the money until October, the crucial House vote in June appeared at the time to break the back of congressional resistance to supporting the contras. Weeks before the House vote, the "Contadora" discussions of the leaders of five Central American countries failed in an apparent last-ditch peace

negotiations effort. President Reagan's persistence appeared to be paying off, and congressional critics seemed to be running out of viable alternatives to presidential policy on Nicaragua. Still, 1986 Gallup polls showed that a large majority of the public preferred to discontinue aid to the contras until the success or failure of the Contadora peace plan could be determined (Table 5).

	Continue	Wait	No Opinion
Oct. 23-26	20%	70%	10%
Aug. 24-Sep. 2	20	71	9

Table 5

## CONTINUING CONTRA AID

The Iran-contra revelations in November 1986, coupled with the signing of the Contadora peace accord engineered by Costa Rican President Oscar Arias that same month, sealed public and congressional opposition to the president's Nicaragua policy. Public approval declined from 34 percent in July 1986 to 23 percent in December, and remained in the mid-20 percent range throughout the remainder of Reagan's presidency (Table 3, p. 143). The House of Representatives rebuffed Reagan's last contra aid request in February 1988 and, to the great frustration of the contras' most fervent allies on Capitol Hill, the president never again expressed an interest in pressing Congress for more aid to the "freedom



fighters." Bush campaign advisors had no desire to provoke a major political battle over Nicaragua in the months before the November presidential elections. Campaign chairman and future secretary of state James Baker noted that the public opposed contra aid by about a two-to-one ratio.

Ultimately, it seems that neither the persuasiveness of Reagan administration advocacy nor the specter of communism in Central America could fundamentally alter the public's disposition to avoid direct intervention there.

Even when American hostages were seized in Lebanon, few Americans showed an interest in retaliating. What had become of that wave of American tough-mindedness that Reagan had ridden into the White House in 1980?

Concerning military matters, the American public is more willing to adopt militaristic postures in the abstract than to translate those postures into specific military actions (Prothro and Grigg, 1960; Oldendick and Bardes, 1982). Further, the lack of success the Reagan administration had in gaining public support for much of its second term agenda might be attributed to the substantial success the Reagan agenda enjoyed during his first term in office.

On the fundamental issues of war and peace, the public gave Reagan high marks. An Americans Talk Security survey in May 1988 found 75 percent of respondents giving Reagan good or excellent marks on "standing up to the Soviets." He got a 73 percent approval rating for keeping the U.S. out of war and

for working for arms control. Seventy-one percent gave him high marks on developing a sound national defense. Sixty percent of Democrats gave Reagan good or excellent marks on those issues (Brownstein, 1988).

But the conservative revolution that seemed so likely in November 1980 was never fully consolidated. It was the Republican party, not conservatism, that made the greatest gains during the Reagan presidency (M. Wattenberg, 1987).

The Louis Harris Organization regularly surveys the ideological temper of the country. Those surveys tend to show a philosophical stability that did not change significantly during the Reagan presidency. The average results of 207 Harris surveys taken between 1968 and 1984 show 34 percent of those polled describing themselves as conservative, 40 percent as middle-of-the-road, and 17 percent as liberal. In late 1984, the figures were 36 percent conservative, 40 percent middle-of-the-road, and 18 percent liberal--hardly a revolution. In 1985, a CBS News/*New York Times* poll even found people drifting out of the conservative camp. In 1981, when asked "on most political matters, do you think of yourself as liberal, moderate, or conservative," 37 percent said conservative, 40 percent said moderate, and 16 percent said liberal. In 1985, only 30 percent said conservative, with 42 percent saying moderate, and 19 percent saying liberal.

Ronald Reagan, like Jimmy Carter, was elected to office at a time when public confidence in government was extremely

low. By 1984, according to Harris polls, public faith in government institutions had made the greatest gains since 1966. Confidence in the White House stood at 42 percent, up 17 percent over 1981. Confidence in congressional leaders was expressed by 28 percent, up 12 percent. Although trust in government during the Reagan presidency never reached the levels that existed before Vietnam, it was considerably higher than it had been since the early 1970s. In surveys conducted by the University of Michigan and CBS News/*New York Times* on trust in the federal government "to do what is right," 25 percent responded "always" or "most of the time" in 1980, with 69 percent saying "only some of the time." At the close of Reagan's first term, 45 percent said the government could be trusted always or most of the time, with 51 percent saying only some of the time.

As might be expected, there was a decline in public trust in "the people running the White House" after the Iran-contra affair was publicly revealed. According to a Harris survey, only 19 percent still had "great confidence," compared to 30 percent in the previous year. General trust in government remained steady, however, with a negative trend only for institutions and actors involved in the Iran-contra scandal (Brody and Shapiro, 1987). A bipartisan majority of the public showed an interest in the Iran-contra hearings (Citrin et al., 1987). Media coverage of the affair might have reinforced, instead of eroding, confidence in government by

showing that the system worked.

Ronald Reagan came into the presidency promising spending cuts and, according to Gallup polls, 44 percent of the public supported lower domestic spending in 1980. By late 1984, approval of spending cuts had dwindled to 20 percent. ABC/*Washington Post* surveys in February 1982 and March 1985 discovered the same trend. In February 1985, after Reagan's new budget was made public, 63 percent of respondents told CBS News/*New York Times* interviewers that they were fearful additional cuts would hurt them personally or hurt the nation.

With specific regard to foreign policy issues, Ronald Reagan's success in his first term also may have doomed his second term agenda. For example, Americans' attitudes on military spending changed dramatically during the Reagan years. In January 1981, 61 percent of respondents to a CBS News/*New York Times* survey favored increasing federal spending on military and defense programs, with 28 percent wanting to keep it about the same and 7 percent favoring a decrease. By February 1985, only 16 percent favored an increase, with 51 percent wanting to keep spending about the same and 30 percent favoring a decrease in spending. An NBC News poll found a similar trend, with 65 percent favoring an increase in defense spending in 1981, compared to only 19 percent favoring an increase in 1985. Table 6 (below) shows Gallup poll figures for 1976, 1981-83, and 1985-87.

	Too much	About right	Too little	No opinion
1987	44%	36%	14%	6%
1986	47	36	13	4
1985	46	36	11	7
1983	37	36	21	6
1982	41	31	16	12
1981	15	22	51	12
1976	36	32	22	10

Table 6

## DEFENSE SPENDING

No doubt concern over the deficit and adverse media reports about Pentagon procurement practices contributed to the change in attitude regarding military spending. It may be true, however, that the more the Reagan administration invested in defense, the more secure Americans felt and the less they wanted to spend in the future.

Another result of increased military and defense spending during Reagan's first term may have been an easing of Americans' concerns about the Soviet threat. U.S. opinion about the Soviet Union can shift with startling speed. In 1984, less than a quarter of the respondents in an Americans Talk Security poll saw the Soviets as a minor threat or no threat. In December 1988, most American voters saw the Soviets as a minor threat or no threat (*Washington Post*, May 8, 1989). A CBS News/*New York Times* poll in January 1985 found 69 percent of respondents believing that Reagan had significantly strengthened U.S. military defenses (23 percent disagreed) and 57 percent gave him credit for increasing other

nations' respect for the U.S. (34 percent disagreed). In April 1981, an ABC News/*Washington Post* poll reported 41 percent of respondents feeling the Soviets were ahead of the U.S. militarily, with 54 percent saying the U.S. was equal or stronger. By January 1985, only 22 percent felt the Soviets were ahead, and 73 percent felt the U.S. was equal or stronger. In the same polls, 31 percent said in 1981 that they would like the U.S. to strive for military superiority, but by 1985, that figure had dropped to 19 percent.

As Americans felt more secure, their interest in negotiating an arms accord with the Soviets also increased. In January 1985, an ABC News/*Washington Post* poll found 76 percent of respondents agreeing that the U.S. should negotiate an arms limitation agreement with the Soviets, even if there were some risk that the Soviets would cheat (and 72 percent thought they would).

Even if national defense values remained largely unchanged during the Reagan presidency, these significant changes in public opinion over a short period were unusual. Administration officials must have sorely felt the ironies of first term successes leading to public opinion on preferred administration foreign policies that was less than supportive during Ronald Reagan's second term.

## Chapter 7

## PUBLIC OPINION AND DEMOCRATIC THEORY

Public opinion has historically played a much larger role in the democracies than in communist and totalitarian states. A tension between what Reinhard Bendix (1964) describes as the "plebiscitarian ideal" and group representation endures in the representative institutions characteristic of the West European tradition. In totalitarian regimes, the plebiscitarian principle alone is instituted under the aegis of a one-party state. All intermediary agencies between the individual and the state are destroyed.

Historically, communist parties and states have tried to control the principal channels of public communication and to prevent free assembly and association among the citizenry. These policies have made it difficult for individual opinions to become related and for consensuses to develop. Democratic and pluralistic pressures and trends began to gain momentum as the Reagan administration was coming to a close. The new revolutionaries in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe have challenged such control and, although the democratic movement may be subject to obstructionism and even reverses, ongoing challenges to remaining controls on communication and assembly will very likely prevail.

It has been fashionable, particularly since World War I, for most, if not all governments to claim to be democratic.

The term is meant in the sense that the acts of government officials and majority opinion are claimed to be highly correlative.

In the "people's" democracies, it has been generally held that the will of the nation, whether defined as monolithic or preponderant, is known or available only to the ruler or the party. That will is purported to be subsequently embodied in the acts of the ruler or party. Only such information and views the ruler or party find to be necessary or appropriate have been legitimate matters for public knowledge and discussion. The channels of public communication and conditions of group association have therefore been stringently limited and controlled by governmental and party officials.

The democratic revolution that is occurring in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe is making both representative institutions and public opinion polls politically fashionable. Poland established a center for the study of public opinion in 1983. In 1988, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and the Soviet Union established national opinion research centers.

Sociologist Tatyana Zaslavskaya, director of the Soviet Union's Center for the Study of Public Opinion, has said (Dobbs, 1988) that

[u]nder the old administrative-bureaucratic system, nobody cared what the people thought. As we build a democratic system, our leaders are finding that they must keep a finger on the popular pulse.

In the U.S. and other "constitutional" democracies,



opinions on matters of policy are constitutionally sanctioned and are freely exercised. Constitutional means by which the changing currents of citizen opinion can find political expression are institutionalized.

Government, the policy making organ of the state, is an agent of the nation, or citizenry, who hold it to account. In this sense, democracy is not a way of governing, whether by majority or not. It is primarily a way of determining who shall govern and, broadly, to what ends. It is founded on the principle that major trends of public opinion can register themselves in the character and in the policies of government. It is through the operation of this principle of popular sovereignty that the nation becomes the master of government and makes the political system responsive to its dominant desires.

If there are dangers inherent in a lack of national consensus, there are also dangers inherent in too much consensus. One need only consider the ready acquiescence, connivance and cooperation of the German masses with the Nazi regime in the systematic extermination of peoples the regime designated as undesirable.

Yet the American public is rarely, if ever, united in any matter of policy. The government can nearly always claim to represent, or at least be backed by, some portion of the people. For public opinion to be effective in the policy making arena, it must approach consensus, or at least

represent a large majority. These are subjective terms, difficult to define. Walter Lippmann (Safire, 1968, p. 89) concluded that "[i]n the American political tradition, a very big majority is taken to lie between 60 and 75 percent. An American consensus is more than a bare 51 percent." But Bendix (1964, p. 21), an authority on nation-building, maintained that "nothing like a nationwide consensus is either possible or necessary." Public deference to elites, he wrote, "already encompasses substantial disagreements which may be ignored simply because they are not articulated in a politically significant way."

Whether or not consensuses exist, the majority does not have its will effected by government policies on every occasion. Democracy purports to place the national interest, however vaguely defined, above the diverse interests of individuals, groups, and even on occasion, above majority interests.<sup>8</sup>

Some analysts and policy makers perceive tendencies toward cyclical moods in public opinion as well as tendencies toward radical shifts in public opinion in response to extra-

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<sup>8</sup>For a discussion of the debate and ambiguities regarding the concept and term "national interest," see Sondermann, 1977, pp. 121-138. See also papers from a symposium on interest in *Political Theory*, vol. 3, no. 3 (August 1975); and Douglass, 1980. Walter Lippmann (1955, p. 40) said, "The public interest may be presumed to be what men would choose if they saw clearly, thought rationally, acted disinterestedly and benevolently."

ordinary events. They cite these tendencies as potentially damaging to the effective conduct of U.S. foreign policy and as therefore inimical to the public interest.

The traditional view of government in the public interest has been challenged in recent years by "public choice" theorists, particularly James Buchanan, winner of the 1986 Nobel Prize in economics. Buchanan and other public choice theorists start with the assumption that people act in all spheres of life as they do in the marketplace. They maintain that self interest, not the desire to choose good public policy, motivates behavior in politics, including foreign policy making. As early as 1957, Anthony Downs postulated the self-interest axiom in politics in his book, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. It was repeated by Buchanan and Gordon Tullock in *The Calculus of Consent* (1962). William Niskanen applied the self-interest assumption to the behavior of government workers in *Bureaucracy and Representative Government* (1971).

Public interest informing the traditional view of public good was further challenged in the 1970s by David Mayhew (*Congress: The Electoral Connection*, 1974) and by Morris Fiorina (*Congress: Keystone of the Washington Establishment*, 1977). Mayhew presented the idea that members of Congress are "single-minded seekers of reelection," which leads to "credit claiming" and "position taking" behavior, both of which have negative consequences for public policy. Fiorina argues that

members of Congress turn constituent dissatisfaction with government programs to their electoral advantage. They help constituents with the problems they encounter in dealing with the bureaucracy--a bureaucracy whose size the legislators increase by voting for new government programs.

Self-interest is no stranger to politics, but what public choice theorists seem to ignore is that values beyond self-interest can inform both attitudes and policy making. Ideas can have consequences; powerful ideas can have powerful consequences. Foremost among the values democracy accepts as being superior to self-interest, group interests, and even to majority interests, is the right of citizens to their opinions and the preservation of that right. This, with other individual rights that limit the power of the state, is arguably the most civilized political idea ever developed.

"An open society," wrote Reinhold Niebuhr (1959, pp. 175-176), "winnows truth from error partly by allowing a free competition of interests and partly by establishing a free market of competing ideas." Democracy implies the rule of opinion and makes opinion the basis of government. The rule of opinion requires the continuous existence of opposing opinion, and dogma is not cherished to the extent that contrary dogmatism is destroyed by force. The right to object freely and vehemently to the policies pursued by government is an *a priori* condition of democracy. Edmond Cahn (1962, p. 110) wrote that collective responsibility in a democracy

requires "continual demonstrations of protest." Citizens, officials and the press must "courageously expose and denounce every official misfeasance," and the state must "staunchly defend the rights of public discussion, communication and criticism. . . ."

Another critical concept in democratic theory is that of representation. Unfortunately, as Hanna Pitkin has pointed out in a survey of rival views (1969, pp. 6-17), there is no consensus on what representation is or means:

. . . [T]he literature contains a number of nagging, persistent controversies which never seem to get resolved or even clarified. . . . [W]riters disagree on the appropriate role or conduct for a representative: should he act on his own judgment or what is in the national interest, or should he be a faithful servant of his constituency's will? . . . [T]heorists seem to talk past each other, and the controversies continue.

Many political theorists have struggled with distinctions between the importance of the popular will and the dangerous opinions of the masses. On the one hand was the ideal of the perfect, or perfectible, citizen of the new age, and on the other hand was the reality of destructive revolutionary crowds. The competing philosophic traditions are shown in the political attitudes of the Founding Fathers of the U.S., as well as in contemporary political opinion.

The French *philosophe* Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) expounded the principle that social order can and should be based on the general will, that sense of common interest that

people recognize as something different from their selfish private interests. It is the general will that must be the source of a state's sovereign power. Rousseau's idea of the general will became a touchstone of the Western democracies that began to emerge during the late eighteenth century. But Rousseau considered representation to be a fraud, fatal to liberty. Representatives, he wrote (p. 85), often develop special interests that can be at odds with those of the community at large. Therefore,

[t]he deputies of the people . . . are not and cannot be their representatives; they can only be their commissioners, and as such they are not qualified to conclude anything definitely. No act of theirs can be a law, unless it has been ratified by the people in person; and without that ratification nothing is a law.

Accordingly, Rousseau was critical of English representative traditions:

The people of England deceive themselves when they fancy they are free; they are so, only during the election of members of parliament; for as soon as a new one is elected, they are again in chains, and are nothing. And thus, by the use they make of their brief moments of liberty, they deserve to lose it.

Normative discussions of representation have primarily been dominated by two images: the delegate and the trustee. The delegate acts on direct instructions from constituents, and acts according to the wishes of constituents. The trustee is allowed to act more independently on the behalf of constituent interests, according to personal judgment.

In an often-quoted parliamentary reelection speech to his constituents in 1774, Edmund Burke (1729-1797) said that

[a representative's] unbiased opinion, his mature judgement, his enlightened conscience, he ought not to sacrifice to you, to any man, or to any set of men living. These he does not derive from your pleasure--no, nor from the law and the constitution. They are a trust from Providence, for the abuse of which he is deeply answerable. Your representative owes you, not his industry only, but his judgement; and he betrays, instead of serving you, if he sacrifices it to your opinion.

Further, what was good for his Bristol constituency, Burke said, was not necessarily good for the nation as a whole. A representative could not be expected to support local interests at the expense of national interests. (Burke was not, incidentally, reelected.)

Following Burke's arguments, the Federalists emphasized government's responsibility for the public interest over responsibility to public desires. *The Federalist Papers*, Number 71, which content analysts have attributed to Alexander Hamilton, states:

The republican principle demands that the deliberate sense of the community should govern the conduct of those to whom they intrust the management of their affairs; but it does not require an unqualified compliance to every sudden breeze of passion, or to every transient impulse which the people may receive from the arts of men, who flatter their prejudices to betray their interests. . . . When occasions present themselves, in which the interests of the people are at variance with their inclinations, it is the duty of persons whom they have appointed

to be guardians of those interests to withstand the temporary delusion, in order to give them time and opportunity for more cool and sedate reflection.

George Washington supported this view (Fitzpatrick, 1931-44, p. 289). "The wishes of the people," he wrote, "may not entirely accord with our true policy and interest."

The Federalists also argued (*The Federalist Papers*, Number 63) for the indirect election of U.S. Senators "as a defense to the people against their own temporary errors and delusions." The Federalists agreed, though, that the U.S. House of Representatives should be directly elected by the people (*The Federalist Papers*, Number 52): "As it is essential to liberty that the government in general should have a common interest with the people, so it is particularly essential [that the House] should have an immediate dependence on, and an intimate sympathy with, the people."

At the opposite political pole was Thomas Jefferson, a champion of the pure democracy espoused by Rousseau. Those entrusted with the administration of public affairs, he wrote to John Jay (Ford, vol. 4, 1896, p. 89), have a duty "to conform themselves to the decided choice of their constituents." Jefferson had an abiding faith in the collective good sense of the people. In a letter to William Findlay (Ford, vol. 8, 1896, p. 27), he wrote, "It is rare that the public sentiment decides immorally or unwisely, and the individual who differs from it ought to distrust and examine well his opinion."

It is not surprising that the American Declaration of



Independence, written by Jefferson, should uphold the principle of government being ultimately rooted in public opinion. Justice, the Declaration said, has an objective basis, and men possess equally a moral sense by which they can discern its dictates. Thus, "a decent respect to the opinions of mankind" demanded a clear exposition of the moral reasoning and the principle of political legitimacy underlying the break from England.

Yet Jefferson recognized that Rousseau's ideal must be tempered by reality. The ideal republic, he wrote to John Taylor (Ford, vol. 10, 1896, pp. 27-31), would have to be constrained "to very narrow limits of space and population." This, he wrote, was hardly "practical beyond the extent of a New England Township." He believed that "the nearest approach to a pure republic, which is practicable on a large scale of country or population" would be one where

the powers of the government, being divided, should be chosen by the citizens either *pro hac vice* [for one occasion only], or for such short terms as should render secure the duty of expressing the will of their constituents.

Frederick Grimke, though not well known today, was a widely read and highly regarded spokesman for nineteenth century democrats who equated citizenship with suffrage, emphasized the removal of privilege and monopoly in the operation and policy of government, and stressed the idea of the will of the majority as the vehicle of government. Following closely upon the thought of Jefferson, Grimke

focused on the external check of public opinion. He wrote (1848, p. 4) that all governments, and especially democracies, are "to a great degree dependent upon the manners, habits and dispositions of the people among whom they subsist."

Representative democracy, according to Grimke, is based on a balance existing between government and public opinion. That balance, he believed, was a "new fact" in the history of political science that had previously escaped attention.

In 1836, while running for a seat in the Illinois legislature, Abraham Lincoln promised (Nicolay and Hay, vol. 1, 1905, p. 15) that

[w]hile acting as their [the people's] representative, I shall be governed by their will on all subjects upon which I have the means of knowing what their will is; and upon all others, I shall do what my own judgement teaches me will best advance their interests.

In 1848, as a Whig representative in Congress, he scolded the Democrats (Nicolay and Hay, vol. 2, 1905, p. 69) for their vigorous support of the Mexican War:

You violated the primary--the one great--living principle of all democratic representative government--the principle that the representative is bound to carry out the known will of his constituents . . . we hold the true republican position. In leaving the people's business in their hands, we cannot be wrong.

Theodore Roosevelt articulated a synthesis of the delegate and trustee views of representation (Hagedorn, 1923-26, pp. 93-95), one that closely corresponds to that held by

many contemporary elected officials:

If on any point of real importance he finds that he conscientiously differs with them, he must, as a matter of course, follow his conscience, and thereby he may not only perform his highest duty, but also render the highest possible service to his constituents themselves.

The official "should be prepared to go out of office rather than surrender on a matter of vital principle," Roosevelt said. "Normally, however,"

he must remember that the very meaning of the word representative is that the constituents shall be represented. It is his duty to try to lead them to accept his views, and it is their duty to give him as large a latitude as possible in matters of conscience, realizing that the more conscientious a representative is the better he will in general represent them.

Roosevelt exemplified what has been described as the "politico" role, a skillful combination of delegate and trustee that many contemporary members of Congress have adopted.

In remarks to newly elected members of the 102nd Congress Rep. Henry Hyde (R-Ill.) said (1990) that the institution needs more members "willing to look beyond the biennial contest for power," and who recognize that there are "things worth losing elections for."

Let me put the matter plainly: If you are here simply as a tote board registering the current state of opinion in your district, you are not going to serve either your constituents or the Congress of the United States well. . . . You must

take, at times, a national view, even if, in taking that view, you risk the displeasure of your neighbors and friends back home.

Delegate, trustee and politico do not, however, exhaust the possibilities for representational roles or legislative styles. David Mayhew (1971, pp. 260-263) delineates between representatives from homogeneous districts, who "represent by reflection," and those from heterogeneous districts, who "represent by authorization." The former, he explains, are products of their environment who think and act like their constituents between elections, returning periodically to have their mandate renewed. The latter, who occupy "marginal seats," are empowered by a constituent majority in one election to promote its views and interests until the next election, when a new majority may have formed.

Other legislative styles that have been identified, or at least postulated (Wahlke et al, 1962), include representatives as "brokers," "ritualists," "opportunists," "inventors," and "tribunes." In relation to bureaucratic agencies, a representative may even become a "hustler" (Eulau and Karps, 1977).

The focus of some representatives may be partisan, rather than geographical. Some representatives may be primarily responsive to a particular social class or interest group. Indeed, the concept of "responsiveness" of representatives has come to augment, if not replace, the delegate/trustee model in contemporary representation literature (Eulau, 1969).

"Transmission belt" theory sees representatives, acting independently or in partisan "teams," serving as communicators between the people and their government. The nation's wishes are aggregated into acceptable compromises, and where the public's wishes conflict with their interests, the discrepancy is explained (Schwartz, 1988).

Among the 535 members of Congress, there is undoubtedly every possible permutation and shade of representation theory. The institution is large enough to accommodate them all without policy suffering significant consequences. Perhaps more important than theories of representation is the philosophical question asked by Charles Beard (1959):

Can a great society, confronting difficult technological problems, retain the loyalty of its people without drawing them into intimate cooperative relations with its government and national economy?

Regardless of representation theory, such "intimate cooperative relations" with government, let alone control of government by the nation, are more often general than specific, more often sporadic than continuous. It is especially difficult for the nation to assert its superiority versus the state. This is particularly true concerning foreign policy making, which, until recent decades, has been conducted by government elites with relative autonomy and without particular reverence for public participation or opinion.

It has been argued that armed conflict, a traditional

instrument of foreign policy, played a significant part in the trend toward democratized foreign policy making.

In general, until the late eighteenth century, wars were fought by specialists who answered to absolutist governments. The less the public was involved, the better. Good citizens were required to support the war effort, accept wartime hardships philosophically, and refrain from voicing any opposition. The experience of the Napoleonic Wars, in particular, offered challenges to such traditions. Karl von Clausewitz' classic, *On War*, published in 1831, held that in war, three elements come into play: government, which sets the objectives for the war; armies, which fight it; and the people, who support it.

In the late eighteenth century, the growth of standing armies and the institution of conscription resulted in changes in the character of military force and international conflict. These changes, in turn, resulted in popular involvement becoming a more intrinsic factor in war (Ginsberg, 1986).

In the United States, such popular involvement may have reached a high-water mark during World War I. "In that conflict," said analyst Michael Howard (1983, p. 19), "popular passion rather than military skill, much less political wisdom, determined the course of the war and ultimately its outcome."

The war experience convinced many Americans that active involvement in world affairs, not isolationism, was the

appropriate response to international problems. A challenge was leveled at the traditional manner of making and executing U.S. foreign policy--that is, by a social, economic and educational elite who showed little regard for opinions of the masses. Specifically, elitist control of foreign policy making was challenged because of its failure to prevent the war's outbreak or curtail its destructiveness. The war also gave rise to movements in the U.S. and elsewhere to end traditional secretive foreign policy practices. These movements found expression in Woodrow Wilson's plea for "open covenants of peace, openly arrived at," and in the conference negotiations of the League of Nations. Wilson's philosophy in general, and Points One and Fourteen specifically, were accommodating to the idealistic desire for greater public participation in, and control over, foreign policy making. As Lord Strang, later undersecretary in the British Foreign Office, said (Graebner, 1983, p. 12), "In a world where war is everybody's nightmare, diplomacy is everybody's business."

"Popular diplomacy" was an idea championed by many Western writers and statesmen after Versailles. They believed that an informed, culturally mature people was emerging, one that was destined to exert its will through democratic procedures. Elihu Root, elder statesman of the Republican party, wrote in the very first issue of *Foreign Affairs* (1922, p. 5):

When foreign offices were ruled by autocracies or oligarchies the danger of war

was in sinister purpose. When foreign affairs are ruled by democracies the danger of war will be in mistaken beliefs. The world will be the gainer by the change, for, while there is no human way to prevent a king from having a bad heart, there is a human way to prevent a people from having an erroneous opinion. That way is to furnish the whole people, as a part of their ordinary education, with correct information about their relations to other peoples, about the limitations upon their own rights, about their duties to respect the rights of others, about what has happened and is happening in international affairs, and about the effects upon national life of the things that are done or refused as between nations; so that the people themselves will have the means to test misinformation and appeals to prejudice and passion based on error.

Idaho's William E. Borah (1927) said, "There is no guarantee of peace like the guarantee which springs from the common sense of the people in those matters which contribute to peace or war."

World War II shattered many of these illusions. First, the rise of Naziism through the vote and complicity of the German public raised questions about the assumed "goodness" of public opinion. Further, although the importance of the Allied publics to the war effort was apparent in the early stages of the war, it was scientists and technical experts who ultimately won the war. And since the dawning of the nuclear age, "the people" have been largely relegated to secondary and even less consequential strategic and tactical roles in war contingency plans.

The demands of national political and military strate-



gies, and requirements for secrecy imposed by those demands, have militated against foreign policy making being completely assimilated into working principles and practices of a more direct American democracy.

Information is often available to governmental elites concerned with foreign policy making that for security or diplomatic reasons may not be widely distributed to Congress, the news media, private organizations and interest groups, or to the public.

The Wilsonian emphasis on ideals, morality and a broader base of foreign policy making was largely replaced, after World War II, with a new realism based on the theory and practice of an international balance of power. The new realism began to emerge at the outset of the war and even before the war in response to appeasement policies, but it was popularized in the 1950s and 1960s by Reinhold Niebuhr, George Kennan, Hans Morgenthau, Walter Lippmann, Robert Osgood, and Henry Kissinger, its foremost advocates. Concomitant to the new realism was a relative decline in the popularity of notions about a heightened place for public opinion in the formulation of U.S. foreign policy.

Realists tend to empirically view the state as being relatively autonomous of public pressures, except in instances of overwhelming societal opposition to the policy preferences of the policy making elites (Nordlinger, 1981). They view the policy process as primarily bureaucratic and technical, and

therefore more responsive to data than opinion. Where opinion does impact on diplomacy and foreign policy making, realists are likely to see it as a hindrance to compromise.

The pendulum began swinging from realism back toward idealism as a consequence of what Samuel Huntington (1981) characterized as "Vietnam, Watergate, and the democratic surge and creedal passion of the 1960s." Democratic presidential nominee Jimmy Carter (1976) gave indications that he would support the new idealism and accused President Ford of believing "that there is little room for morality in foreign affairs, and that we must put self-interest above principle."

A strong recommitment to democratic, liberal and populist values was reflected in President Carter's moving human rights to a central position in American foreign relations.<sup>9</sup>

The Reagan administration leaned toward realism in foreign affairs, particularly in reinvigorating military and intelligence capabilities, but it also showed a commitment to human rights. There was a discernible human rights policy shift, however, with the nascent Reagan administration rejecting Carter's holding anti-communist authoritarian governments publicly accountable by withholding aid to those

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<sup>9</sup>Jeane Kirkpatrick (B. Wattenberg, 1986, p. 19) noted that Senator Henry Jackson (D-Wash.) first developed the idea of linkage, which was essential to human rights policies, in the Jackson-Vanik bill. She says Jackson "forced it on the Carter delegation at the 1976 Democratic pre-convention hearings."

with unsuitable human rights records. Reagan said his administration's foreign policy team would promote human rights through "quiet diplomacy" instead, relying on the carrot rather than the stick to foster human rights in countries whose rulers recognized the Soviet threat. The policy was greeted with suspicion and outrage by the president's critics and contributed to one of Reagan's few defeats in Congress during his first year in office.

President Reagan's nomination of Ernest Lefever to be assistant secretary of state for human rights was withdrawn under pressure. Lefever was criticized for voicing a belief in a controversial theory put forward by U.N. ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick that made a distinction on human rights between totalitarian and authoritarian regimes. The latter, she postulated, held out more hope for reform.

In November 1981, the administration adopted a new and stronger human rights policy that implied an even-handed approach to totalitarian and authoritarian governments alike. But the administration continued to suffer the slings and arrows of liberals and human rights groups, especially during its first two years, for its reluctance to criticize publicly the human rights records of close allies like El Salvador, the Philippines and Indonesia.

If the Reagan administration had a somewhat different conception of human rights than the Carter administration, human rights considerations nonetheless remained a major

consideration in the formulation and conduct of foreign policy. Human rights were defined by the Reagan administration less in terms of protecting individuals against arbitrary punishment by the state and more in terms of promoting democratic and capitalist systems abroad. Thus, the administration could cite the success of "quiet diplomacy" on human rights in the March 1982 elections in El Salvador, and a decline in killings by government forces in Guatemala and improved treatment of East Timor by the Indonesian government by the end of that year. So, too, authoritarian regimes in Chile and Paraguay were subjected to tough and increasingly public action by Reagan foreign policy makers. The governments of South Korea and Pakistan were pushed toward democracy and the Reagan administration assisted in removing dictators in the Philippines and Haiti.

Public and congressional concerns about human rights in El Salvador continued to dog the Reagan administration throughout its tenure. Although skeptical, Congress provided all the economic and development aid the administration requested in 1983. But Congress cut military aid requests to El Salvador by 40 percent in fiscal 1983 and by 25 percent in fiscal 1984.

President Reagan continued to reject the notion of linking human rights and aid, and in December 1983, he vetoed a bill (HR 4042) that would have extended a 1981 requirement for semi-annual certifications to Congress that El Salvador

was making enough progress on human rights to warrant continued military aid. Reagan's critics were outraged, saying the veto demonstrated his insensitivity to human rights. Secretary Shultz later gave a more practical explanation, telling reporters that, given the situation in El Salvador at the end of 1983, the president would not have been able to sign such a certification. The long and contentious debate over El Salvador cooled considerably in May 1984 with the presidential election of centrist Jose Napoleon Duarte, who promised to end human rights abuses, control the military and investigate right-wing death squads. That same month, five former Salvadoran national guardsmen were convicted for the 1980 murder of four U.S. churchwomen. In the weeks and months that followed, Congress approved nearly all of Reagan's requests for military and economic aid to El Salvador, and approved them without the human rights certifications attached to aid legislation in 1981 and 1983.

The dichotomy between idealism and realism illustrated by the human rights debate would not have been accepted by the Founding Fathers, according to Nathan Tarcov (1984, p. 48). They would have offered the more complementary relation of principle and prudence:

From their perspective the relation is not dichotomous but complementary, a relation of application and judgment. Principles are not self-applying: They do not tell you what to do. They require prudence and judgment for their applica-

tion. Prudence is not self-sufficient either; it requires principles for guidance.

Regardless of the relative strengths of idealistic and realistic strains in formulating U.S. foreign policy, a major obstacle to greater public participation in foreign policy making has been the weak interest in and lack of information about foreign policy exhibited by the American public, and the concerns of decision making elites about these shortcomings.

Still, the idea of democratizing foreign policy making that received such a boost following World War I--including larger roles for Congress and interest groups and more public debate of foreign policy issues--has continued to evolve, with only occasional setbacks.

Some critics of traditional elite control of foreign policy making call for mechanisms whereby public opinion might be more freely admitted into foreign policy making circles, and for foreign policy decisions to be made by politically responsive or responsible individuals or groups (McCauley et al., 1977; Toffler, 1980; Becker, 1981; Gallup and Proctor, 1984).

In 1977, for example, congressional hearings were held on instituting a national initiative and referendum process. Advocates, whose cause was championed by Rep. Guy Vander Jagt (R-Mich.) and Senators James Abourezk (D-S.D.) and Mark Hatfield (R-Ore.), seemed confident in the ability of the public to extend its participation in government. Amending

the Constitution to allow direct popular votes on statutory (and even constitutional) issues was the logical next step, they said, in the process of democratizing national government (Van Horn et al., 1989, pp. 148-153). There are good arguments on both sides of the issue, but especially in the case of foreign policy decision making, it seems highly unlikely that provisions will be made in the foreseeable future for national referenda and initiatives as mechanisms of public input.

Despite the fact that no enthusiastic or compelling response was elicited from the public or its representatives by the 1977 congressional hearings on national referenda and initiatives, and despite the realities that militate against broader public participation, demands were still heard during the Reagan years and are still heard today from some quarters for even greater democratic control of foreign policy making, including a more active role by congressional representatives, opportunities for broader public debate in policy formulation, and more direct input from interest groups.

If they cannot support such radical concepts for direct public participation in foreign policy making, even practitioners of *Realpolitik* seem to agree with, or at least give lip service to, the premise that the foreign policy of a democratic society is stronger and more viable when it is supported by the public.

For example, during testimony before the Senate Foreign

Relations Committee, which was considering his nomination to be Richard Nixon's secretary of state, Henry Kissinger was asked to weigh public opinion as a strength in attaining foreign policy goals versus being a hinderance in formulating foreign policy. Kissinger (1973, p. 199) confessed that, as a government official, he had probably had occasions when he felt concerns for public opinion were a nuisance, but that

. . . while the process of achieving decisions in a democracy is much more complex and much slower than it is in other forms of government, once a policy is achieved through a national consensus it is then much more reliable and can be carried through on a much more effective basis. So I believe that over a historical period, over decades, a democracy, a democratic way of making decisions, is far to be preferred, even if one sacrifices some flexibility of action in the process. . . .

At the same time, government officials realize that a "civic disposition," or a tradition of consensus has existed regarding the authority of the central government to tax, draft soldiers, and enforce the law. Likewise, the American public has been generally content to leave the formulation and conduct of foreign policy to government elites, particularly those in the executive branch.

If the public has been generally deferent, strong challenges to executive authority in this area have nonetheless been launched from time to time by the people's representatives in Congress. Such challenges have frequently occurred during periods of "divided government," when the White House



is controlled by one party and Congress by the other. During the Reagan years, the House of Representatives was controlled by the Democrats and the Senate was lost to the Democrats in the midterm elections of 1986.

## Chapter 8

## REAGAN, CONGRESS AND PUBLIC OPINION

The U.S. Constitution briefly deals with the apportionment of powers regarding foreign policy. The treatment lacks detail, particularly regarding the executive branch.

Article I assigns to Congress most of the explicit powers. These include responsibilities for providing for the common defense; regulating commerce with foreign nations; defining and punishing piracies and felonies committed on the high seas and offences against the law of nations; declaring war, granting letters of marque and reprisal, and making rules concerning captures on land and water; raising and supporting armies; providing and maintaining a navy; making rules for the regulation and government of land and naval forces; setting tariffs; and controlling immigration. The Constitution also gives Congress the general power to tax and make appropriations and the right to "make all Laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into execution the foregoing powers, and all other powers vested by this Constitution in the Government of the United States, or in any Department or Officer thereof."

The designation of the president as commander-in-chief of the armed forces gives him immense control over foreign policy. But the only other foreign policy power given by the Constitution to the president alone is receiving "Ambassadors

and other public ministers." The executive shares powers of treaty-making and official appointments with the Senate. Otherwise, the president must rely on the general "executive power" vested in the office by Section I of Article II.

The third branch of government, the judiciary, has seldom addressed foreign policy issues, but has acted on several occasions in ways that have affected the power of the president and Congress with regard to foreign policy.

The power of the president to act as an instrument of the federal government in international relations, particularly in executing executive agreements, was considerably strengthened by a Supreme Court ruling that the powers of external sovereignty are not dependent on affirmative grants of the Constitution. The majority in *U.S. v. Curtiss-Wright Export Corp.*, 57 S.Ct. 216 (1936), sanctioned the use of executive agreements by its reasoning that the doctrine that the federal government can exercise only powers enumerated in the Constitution, or powers implied from enumerated powers, is categorically true only in respect of internal affairs.

In *Baker v. Carr*, 369 U.S. 186, 211 (1962), the Supreme Court stated, "It is an error to suppose that every case or controversy which touches foreign relations lies beyond judicial cognizance."

In a key Watergate decision, *U.S. v. Richard M. Nixon*, 418 U.S. 683-716 (1974), the Supreme Court lent support to the idea of "executive privilege" and the right of the president

to withhold certain information from the Congress, especially regarding military and diplomatic affairs.

The legislative veto has been used by Congress since 1932 to both grant the executive branch broad rule-making powers and to assert congressional control over executive branch agencies by reserving the right to reject those rules and halting what it considers to be unwise or impolitic applications of the broad regulatory authority it grants. Legislative veto provisions were frequently used in the 1970s by Congress to increase its control of foreign affairs and national security policies. Of the more than 200 pieces of legislation containing legislative veto provisions, more than half were passed after 1970 (Barilleaux, 1988). Legislative veto provisions were inherent in the War Powers Resolution and in bills authorizing Congress to block defense contracts, disapprove international agreements concerning nuclear technology, and terminate a presidentially-declared national emergency. Congress also required that actions involving export policy be subject to congressional approval before implementation.

During the Reagan administration, in *Immigration and Naturalization Service vs. Chadha*, 103 S.Ct. 2764 (1983), the Supreme Court overturned the legislative veto, ruling that it violated the "presentment clause" (Article I, section 7) of the Constitution and the doctrine of separation of powers.

Congress quickly found ways around the court decision,

such as requiring congressional approval for proposed regulations and delaying the implementation of rules. And although the *Chadha* decision held legislative vetoes to be unconstitutional, Congress continued to pass legislation containing such provisions during the Reagan years without further court challenges. In fact, just three months after the *Chadha* decision, in September 1983, Congress passed a resolution extending the Marines' participation in the Lebanon peacekeeping force--a resolution that invoked key provisions of the War Powers Resolution (see below, p. 197).

The Constitution, by its very ambiguity, invites struggle over the formulation and direction of foreign policy. The executive branch has certain advantages in this struggle. A lack of vigor by the president, however, is likely to create a partial vacuum certain to be filled by a vigorous Congress. Even an active president can expect foreign policy struggles with a Congress dominated by the opposition party. A creative tension exists between the president and Congress in the area of foreign policy making, as in all public policy making. This tension comprises a part of the system of checks and balances for which the American federal government is noted.

The struggle over the formulation of foreign policy is particularly acute during periods of divided government. Throughout Ronald Reagan's presidency, the House of Representatives--the "people's chamber"--had a substantial Democratic majority, and the Senate was controlled by Democrats after the

midterm elections of 1986. "In a functioning democracy," wrote Time Inc. Editor-in-Chief Henry Grunwald (1984-85),

the major issues of how a country deals with other countries, how it copes with questions of war and peace, cannot for long be excluded from the political process. For these matters are close to a nation's sense of self, its perception of its values and its meaning.

Former White House aide Oliver North described his then-impending trial (Lardner, 1988) as one "which could well determine who will control the foreign policy of the United States of America: the president, who is constitutionally empowered to do so, or 535 members of Congress. . . ." Colonel North's detractors, while acknowledging a tradition of executive primacy in foreign policy making, have continually defied him to find language supporting executive exclusivity in foreign policy making in the Constitution.

Which governmental institutions control or even influence U.S. foreign policy is debatable. In any case, there remains a need to understand better under what circumstances, if ever, policy makers follow, lead, educate, cajole, or simply ignore public opinion.

Anthony Downs (1957) and like-minded theorists emphasize the economic aspects of politics. They tend to expect representatives to act exactly in accord with the policy preferences of their constituents out of economic self-interest. Others, essentially arguing that economic man is not political man, see legislators as generally free of

popular control. These analysts see legislators as making their own judgments and as largely influenced by key staff, interest groups, party loyalties, and peer pressures.

Miller and Stokes (1963) systematically examined linkages between sampled public opinion and roll call voting in Congress. Similar studies (Cnudde and McCrone, 1966; Achen, 1977 and 1978; Erikson, 1978; Karpis and Eulau, 1978; Weissberg, 1976 and 1978; and Stone, 1979) have been increasingly sophisticated. All have been limited, however, by poor sampling within congressional districts (Page et al., 1984).

Benjamin Page, Robert Shapiro and their colleagues (1984), used more reliable data from 1978 National Election Studies constituency surveys. They found a substantial amount of correspondance between congressmen's roll call votes and their constituencies' policy preferences. The issues studied were essentially domestic in nature, and the analysts' conclusions cannot be assumed to hold true for foreign policy issues. The data led them to conclude (p. 753) that "[r]epresentation may work best on issues that are institutionalized in party cleavages and linked to broad ideology among the public."

Senator Warren Rudman (R-N.H.), in a summation at the conclusion of Oliver North's testimony in the Iran-contra hearings (*New York Times*, July 14, 1987), said:

It's interesting that the national polling data over the course of the last three years have shown that--in the latest Harris poll in June--[by] 74 to 22

[percent] people in this country oppose aid to the Contras. . . . And I can tell you myself, Colonel North, from campaigning in New Hampshire, a fairly conservative state . . . [that] the people in this country just don't think [contra aid is] a very good idea. And that is why this Congress has been fickle and vacillating. Now, you may suggest that some of us voted [for contra aid] anyway, even though it's against what our constituents believe. But I want to point out to you, Colonel North, that the Constitution starts with the words, 'We the people.' There is no way you can carry out a consistent policy if 'We the people' disagree with it, because the Congress represents the people. . . . You know, Colonel North, I go back to Korea in 1951. . . . Harry Truman and Dwight Eisenhower, who succeeded [him], recognized that although it was a crime to leave the North Korean people to the subjugation of North Korea, we walked away. We could have won that war at that point. We could have liberated the North, and many of us who were there wanted to. But the people didn't. They had enough of the killing--550,000 casualties. . . . the American people have the constitutional right to be wrong. And what Ronald Reagan thinks or what Oliver North thinks or what I think or what anybody else thinks makes not a whit if the American people say 'Enough.' . . . There comes a point that the views of the American people have to be heard.

As early as 1958, the House of Representatives was studied as a foreign policy making institution (Carroll). Robert Dahl (1950) also made important contributions to understanding the representative role of Congress in the field of foreign policy. There have historically been ebbs and flows regarding congressional power over foreign policy making. Particularly since the Vietnam war, the executive



branch has been fighting a rear guard action in this regard. It has been forced to surrender much of its foreign policy making autonomy to the legislative branch (Haas, 1979; Cronin, 1980a).

The institution of Congress serves as a vital link between the American people and their government. It serves as a medium that often introduces and explains foreign policies to the public. It is also a vehicle for conveying popular feelings and opinion to the other, often isolated ranks of policy makers, most of whom work "inside the Beltway." It often serves as an alternate voice to the executive branch on foreign policy. Hearings provide a forum for new ideas and resolutions can act as trial balloons for policy departures.

Perhaps the most dramatic instance of congressional lead-taking during the Reagan years occurred in 1986 over the issue of South African sanctions. In October 1986, Congress overrode President Reagan's veto of legislation imposing a wide range of economic and political sanctions on South Africa. It was the first veto override on a foreign policy issue since 1973, when Congress enacted the War Powers Resolution into law over President Nixon's objections. Senate Majority Leader Robert Dole (R-Kan.) and others complained that Congress was reacting more to domestic political concerns than to the realities of South Africa. Indeed, as the midterm elections approached, it had become clear that President

Reagan was out of step with the American public on this issue.

South Africa had been almost a nonissue during most of Reagan's first term. But racial violence in South Africa began escalating early in 1984. Later that year, an eloquent black Anglican bishop, Desmond Tutu, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his non-violent opposition to apartheid. During a visit to the U.S., Tutu asked Congress to support sanctions against South Africa as a way of pressuring the government into negotiations with black leaders. A majority of Americans in 1985-86 told Gallup Organization surveyors that they were following events in South Africa fairly closely or very closely. Among this "aware" group, American sympathies were overwhelmingly with the black population of South Africa (Table 7).

	Sep. 86	Mar. 86	Oct. 85	Aug. 85
Black population	73%	73%	63%	67%
S.A. government	12	12	13	11
both, neither	9	10	18	8
no opinion	6	5	6	14

Table 7

AMERICAN SYMPATHIES IN SOUTH AFRICA

An October 1985 Gallup poll found 33 percent of the public approving of Ronald Reagan's handling of the South

Africa issue, with 39 percent disapproving. A plurality of 47 percent of "aware" respondents felt the U.S. should put more pressure on the government of South Africa to end apartheid. That opinion predominated in most key population groups, including Republicans (39 percent), Democrats (57 percent), Independents (45 percent), whites (42 percent), and especially blacks (74 percent).

The House passed sanctions legislation in 1985, and the Senate was poised to do so when President Reagan headed off congressional action by signing an executive order imposing his own milder sanctions.

Congress took up the issue again in 1986 in response to domestic concerns about Pretoria's brutal tactics in enforcing racial laws, especially its imposition of strict press censorship and a state of emergency. Richard Lugar (R-Ind.), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, urged President Reagan to take a tough stand on South Africa.

Reagan's response was not what Lugar and other Republicans had hoped for on the eve of midterm elections. In a nationally televised daytime speech, Reagan chastised black radicals and barely mentioned the repression of the white South African government.

By his seeming defense of a repressive regime, the president lagged well behind an aroused public, and Congress felt itself bound to respond. In this case, perhaps more than any other during the Reagan years, foreign policy making

responded to public opinion and foreign policy making was thus democratized in the broadest sense of that term.

As the primary institutional representative of the people, Congress itself has undergone considerable democratization in the form of decentralization in recent years. This has made individual members more susceptible to pressures from individuals, constituency groups and others with foreign policy preferences. Congressional decentralization has been partly the result of structural reform and partly the result of huge increases in personnel and information sources available to members.

Congressional involvement in foreign policy goes far beyond the activities of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and House Foreign Affairs Committee. The legislative responsibilities of these committees are shared with appropriations committees and subcommittees and their proposals are sometimes heavily amended by the full membership "on the floor." A House report titled *Congress and Foreign Policy* (1977) concluded that national security matters are dealt with by 16 Senate and 19 House committees and an even larger number of subcommittees. Often, the same foreign policy issue is considered by two or more committees. Compromise becomes a paramount concern, and the policies that emerge from such compromises can, and sometimes do conflict with the requirements of a sensitive and comprehensive foreign policy.

The weakening of party leaders and committee chairmen has also affected congressional involvement in foreign policy making. Power now flows primarily to individual members, *ad hoc* groups and coalitions. Central authorities can rarely coordinate the initiatives of these diverse sources (Ripley, 1967; Waldman, 1980; Cavanaugh, 1982-83). House member Dennis Eckhart (R-Ohio) remarked that (Alter et al., 1989, p. 34), "You shout 'Mr. Chairman' in the hallway and 75 heads turn." In the 99th Congress, 132 of 253 House Democrats were chairmen of committees, subcommittees or select committees. *Newsweek* reporters concluded (Alter et al., 1989, p. 28) that "[s]horn of significant party connections, each member is his own political and policy operator." Richard Haas (1979) drew a similar conclusion. He wrote (p. 31) that increases in staff and support agencies

have assured individual members of resources adequate for the preparation of initiatives and serious challenges to executive policy. Every member has become a potential source of independent policy.

Several factors have facilitated an expansion of congressional capacity. They include a huge increase in staff assistance; an enlargement of existing support agencies and the creation of new ones; and a greater capacity to benefit from the information and expertise of the executive branch.

In 1947, congressional committee staffs totalled nearly 500 people, and personal staffs 2,000. In 1979, committee staffs numbered 3,000 and personal staffs more than 10,000

(Haas, 1979). By 1989, the number of congressional aides had risen to some 15,000 (Alter et al., 1989). Until recently, an information gap existed between the Congress and the president, to the clear advantage of the latter. The growth in congressional staff and the information, analysis, and guidance available from various congressional support agencies have largely overcome that gap. These agencies include the Congressional Research Service, the Office of Technology Assessment, the General Accounting Office, and the Congressional Budget Office.

Besides increased staff support and institutional resources, congressional policy oversight responsibilities provide members opportunities to question executive officials. The hearing process, combining questions and testimony and opportunities for publicity, has become an intrinsic part of the foreign policy making process. Political scientist Burton Sapin (1966) saw this congressional oversight function as more helpful than the functions of policy initiation and formulation. Woodrow Wilson (1885, p. 195) held a similar view of Congress at large:

Just as important as legislation is vigilant oversight of administration; and even more important than legislation is the instruction and guidance in political affairs which the people might receive from a body which kept all national concerns suffused in a broad daylight of discussion.

Formal and informal briefings, both authorized and otherwise, by intelligence agency staffs have transformed

those agencies, to some extent, into additional support agencies by many in Congress. Access to information by members and, more generally, by the public, has also increased because of the Freedom of Information Act.

As the Iran-contra hearings and subsequent litigation showed, the Reagan administration was not always forthcoming with information that it deemed potentially harmful to national security or, as more cynical analysts might suggest, potentially compromising to administration officials.

The Reagan administration also sought to restrict the flow of information from other sources. Michael Parenti (1988) says the administration expanded the restrictive classifications of documents and blocked out increasingly more information on the documents that were released. It also imposed long delays on releasing materials and charged "exorbitant" copying fees. To control the leaking of information to the press, the administration instituted polygraph tests for public employees to find out who was responsible for unauthorized disclosures. President Reagan issued a directive that forced some two million federal workers to take a pledge of secrecy. He required almost 300,000 past and present federal employees to agree to submit to lifetime government censorship of their writings and speeches. In 1985, 14,144 books, articles and speeches were submitted to government censors for advance review (Karp, 1985; Weinberg, 1985; Pell, 1985; *New York Times*, October 19,

1983, and October 23 and 29, 1986).

Despite such restrictions, problems of too much information have largely replaced problems resulting from a lack of information. Besides the sources noted, information flows from research organizations, universities, lobbyists and the media. Even more information has been made available through legislation requiring reports about certain foreign policy initiatives of the president. Arms transfer, nuclear export, and assistance program initiatives must be accompanied by reports detailing their justification and impact on local stability, nuclear proliferation and human rights, respectively.

The treaty power is, according to the Constitution, shared by the executive and Senate. Traditionally, the former was responsible for negotiation and the latter passed final judgment. Yet in recent years, the Senate's advisory function has increased, as has its function of granting (or withholding) consent. This "recovery" of treaty power by the Senate has been partly accomplished by the passage of nonbinding resolutions that urge the executive to pursue a particular course of action. Such resolutions were passed before the Partial Test Ban, the Non-Proliferation Treaty negotiations and SALT I negotiations. The Senate can also use nonbinding resolutions to constrain executive fiat, as it did before the Panama Canal and SALT II negotiations. The Senate has also recently added "understandings" or "interpretations" to



clarify certain treaty provisions without changing their legal effect. It also can add "reservations" that act to limit, rather than clarify, treaty effects, and amendments that alter treaty terms and require renegotiation. Congress has also sought to limit the executive's ability to cancel a treaty without the approval of a majority in Congress, or at least two-thirds of the Senate.

Although Congress as an institution has recently sought to recoup its foreign policy powers, individual members have often declined to become active in foreign policy issues where the domestic political benefits are small. Senators are concerned about elections every six years and Representatives every two years. Therefore, members' perspectives are often short-term and attuned to what is popular in the home district or state. One aspect of this phenomenon is that members are inclined to "check their spines in the cloakroom," as Representative Patricia Schroeder (D-Colo.) has suggested (Alter et al., 1989, p. 28). On Capitol Hill, the noun "cover" means a position on an issue that is structured to avoid political cost. The timidity of members may also imply that they are more inclined to heed the concerns, including the foreign policy concerns, of constituents and interest groups that can deliver votes.

British historian Sir Dennis Brogan (1944, p. 119) wrote in *The American Character*:

The Senate waits till it sees whether the American people is off on a real cam-

paing, or one of those short-distanced crusades to which 'Mr. Dooley' noted his countrymen's addiction. It is this attitude of watchful waiting that earns the Senate such hostile criticism when it is applied to problems of international relations. . . .

There are other considerations that have constrained congressional foreign policy initiatives, especially during the tenure of an assertive and popular president. Particularly at the beginning of Ronald Reagan's second term, some members were urging a larger role in foreign policy for Congress. Others were concerned about what shape that foreign policy should take. "If it looks like more of the same McGovern/Carter brew," suggested Penn Kemble (1985, p. 58), chief operative of PRODEMCA, a pro-contra lobby, "they might think twice: sooner or later the public will begin to hold Congress accountable for the responsibilities that Congress assumes."

Executive initiatives in foreign policy are more common, eased by the president's traditional role as representative of the country abroad, by his control of the negotiating process, and his command of the armed forces. Further, because the public is relatively unconcerned about foreign policy, the president may feel less constrained about initiating foreign, as opposed to domestic, policies (Wildavsky, 1966; Cronin, 1980b). Since the public is less concerned and less informed about foreign affairs, it may be that the president is better able to set the agenda. He also may be better able to

persuade opinion leaders and to lead public opinion regarding his foreign policy objectives. The president, though subject to bureaucratic limitations, can act alone with relative speed and secrecy. Certain key officials, including the national security advisor, cannot be compelled to testify before Congress.

International agreements other than treaties (IAOTT), known as "executive agreements," are frequently treaties in every way but name, and have become increasingly common. They permit the president to enter arrangements and sometimes undertake commitments, without Senate approval or with only a simple majority in both chambers. Treaties, which require ratification by the Senate, have become less common, and executive agreements more common. In 1969, the U.S. recognized adherence to 909 treaties and 3,973 executive agreements. During the first Nixon administration, 1,087 more executive agreements were concluded, as opposed to only eight treaties. According to the DOS Treaty Office, 120 treaties were concluded between 1980 and 1988, compared to 2,839 executive agreements.

The Case Act, P.L. 92-403 (1972), requires the secretary of state to transmit to Congress the text of any IAOTT within 60 days of its coming into force. Yet the president may, if he wants, transmit the text under an injunction of secrecy to the House Foreign Affairs and Senate Foreign Relations Committees.

Congress has passed legislation limiting presidential discretion in the realm of foreign economic and military assistance, with assistance requests being subject to specific authorization and appropriation. Congress has also legislated specific country restrictions and prohibited aid to countries nationalizing American property, defaulting on loans for more than one year, harboring terrorists, or permitting discrimination based on religion, race, national origin or sex against U.S. citizens involved in the relevant assistance programs (Haas, 1979).

Congressional control of the purse strings was felt by the Reagan administration on many occasions, particularly with regard to the formulation of U.S. policy toward Central America.<sup>10</sup>

In 1983, the president vetoed a bill that would have extended the requirement for semi-annual certifications of El Salvador's progress in promoting human rights before military aid could be extended. Congress was able to keep the issue alive, however. The continuing appropriations resolution for fiscal 1984 made 30 percent of El Salvador's military aid conditional on progress in the trial of five former Salvadoran national guardsmen accused of murdering four U.S. churchwomen

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<sup>10</sup>For treatments of Congress's role in shaping U.S. policy in Central America, see Arnson, 1989; Blachman and Sharpe, 1987-88; Brenner and LeoGrande, 1989; and LeoGrande, 1987.

in December 1980. Ten percent of the military aid also was held up pending a presidential certification that the Salvadoran land reform program was still on track.

Likewise, Congress used its control of the purse to influence U.S. policy in Guatemala. Under the Carter administration, the U.S. had blocked military aid and arms sales to that country because of alleged human rights abuses by its military government. In late 1982 and early 1983, the Reagan administration moved to restore U.S. military ties to Guatemala, and congressional liberals protested. Provisions attached without fanfare to appropriations bills for fiscal 1983 and 1984 banned all U.S. aid to Guatemala except for humanitarian assistance provided through private voluntary agencies.

President Reagan and Congress were at odds over foreign aid for years. The president was successful, at first, in getting huge increases in military aid for friendly countries and in cutting long-term economic development programs for Third World countries. But, as with defense spending, Congress eventually reacted against the president's demands for increases in military aid. In both 1985 and 1986, Congress slashed overall totals for foreign aid while mandating minimum spending levels for specific items that were politically popular, i.e. aid to Israel and Egypt. Unprotected programs were subjected to extraordinary cuts, reaching 50 percent in some parts of the 1987 appropriations. While

Secretary of State Shultz complained that Congress was shirking U.S. duties around the world, administration critics insisted that Congress was merely trying to cut the budget deficit and that the president was to blame for refusing to raise taxes to pay for the programs he wanted.

Having little control over the basic foreign policies the Reagan administration chose to pursue, such as the administration's pattern of military involvement in Central America, Congress generally chose to nibble at the edges of policy by attacking presidential requests for specific elements, such as foreign aid and arms sales that required congressional approval.

Another prime example of congressional attempts to constrain the president in foreign policy is the War Powers Resolution (PL 93-148), passed over Richard Nixon's veto in 1973. The act is highly controversial, and has lost the backing of many who were once its ardent proponents. Still, it is an important symbol of congressional influence and is a real constraint on the ability of the president unilaterally to wage unauthorized war. It suggests that the U.S. is less likely, than it might once have been, to assume open-ended commitments.

Following an Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and the ouster of several thousand Palestinian guerrillas from Beirut, the Reagan administration set out to bring stability to war-torn Lebanon. At first, Congress was cooperative, offering

little or no resistance to stationing 1,200 Marines in a peace-keeping force in Beirut, along with troops from Italy, France and Great Britain. Leaders of the Senate Foreign Relations and House Foreign Affairs committees did express their concern that President Reagan was evading requirements of the War Powers Resolution by refusing to seek congressional approval for his decision to station the Marines in Lebanon, but most congressmen seemed less concerned about the sanctity of the War Powers Resolution than they were about avoiding any action that might upset the chances for a peaceful settlement in Lebanon. Likewise, Congress approved a Reagan administration request for \$251 million in developmental and military aid for Lebanon.

In September 1983, after the first Americans were killed in combat in Lebanon, Congress gave its reluctant approval to keeping the Marines there for another 18 months. This was a major event in the history of executive-legislative relations, since by passing a resolution (S J Res 159-PL 98-119) authorizing the Marines to remain for up to 18 additional months, Congress for the first time invoked key provisions of the 1973 War Powers Resolution. No president had ever acknowledged the constitutionality of the War Powers Resolution, and while President Reagan signed the bill invoking it, he questioned its constitutionality and said he would not be bound by its terms. But in signing the 1983 bill, Reagan gave the War Powers Resolution more political validity than it had

acquired during the previous decade of its existence.

Congressional-executive agreement on the deployment of the Marines began to unravel on October 23, however, when a truck carrying more than 10,000 pounds of explosives rammed into a building being used to house U.S. servicemen at the Beirut airport. The death toll of 241 was the biggest one-day casualty of U.S. military forces since the Vietnam War. In early December, there was a clash between U.S. and Syrian forces in Lebanon. By the end of the year, Congress and the American public were putting pressure on the Reagan administration to withdraw the U.S. contingent of the peace-keeping force, which had by then grown to include 1,600 Marines. The administration was increasingly receptive to that pressure, and suggested that the Marines would probably be pulled out some time in 1984 regardless of whether there had been much progress toward unity and peace in Lebanon. In February, when political pressure had mounted to the point that Congress seemed likely to force his hand, the president moved to withdraw the Marines. The House was ready to pass a resolution calling for the "prompt and orderly withdrawal" of the Marines, and the president was by no means certain that he could head off a similar resolution in the Senate.

In addition to enacting initiatives and exercising its powers of the purse, Congress has also moved in recent decades to gain further control over the activities of U.S. intelligence agencies and the export of nuclear materials and



technology.

The upshot of these congressional constraints and initiatives is that an atmosphere has evolved that is less tolerant of unilateral executive power to enter agreements with foreign governments. This has occurred both as a consequence of democratization processes and because of Congress' recurring assertion and extension of its foreign policy powers.

On the other hand, the very size and procedures of Congress hamper congressional initiatives. Not surprisingly, Congress has been the more reactive of the two branches. Where the president and Congress have disagreed on foreign policy, Congress has often been too divided or too slow to contain the executive branch.

In 1983, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and House Foreign Affairs Committee began losing much of their considerable political power when they failed to secure floor action on the foreign aid authorization bills (S 1347, HR 2992) that had taken months to write. Senate committee chairman Charles Percy (R-Ill.) and House committee chairman Clement Zablocki (D-Wis.) were repeatedly rebuffed by party leaders who were inclined to avoid lengthy and divisive foreign aid debates. The Democratic-led House committee in particular was side-stepped on important foreign policy decisions, and the administration instead directed its lobbying efforts toward the appropriations committees. The appropriations committees

made most foreign aid decisions in continuing appropriations resolutions, and cemented into place an administration shift in foreign aid priorities that cut economic and development aid and boosted military aid.

This breakdown in congressional procedures continued in 1984 when, for the third consecutive year, Congress failed to pass regular bills authorizing and appropriating foreign aid funds. The authorizations bill has traditionally been an important piece of annual legislation because Congress can use it to put its imprint on foreign policy. In 1981, for example, Congress had used a foreign aid authorization bill (PL 97-113) to impose human rights conditions on aid to El Salvador.

The House passed its version of the authorizations bill (HR 5119) in May 1984 after the Reagan administration won a bruising fight over aid to El Salvador. But in the Senate, the badly divided Foreign Relations Committee deadlocked over Central American aid issues and reported out a bill without any provisions for aid to that region. The committee bill also restricted aid to NATO ally Turkey, a provision strongly opposed by the administration. After several months of indecision, Senate leaders decided to kill the bill by not allowing it to reach the floor. The House and Senate Appropriations Committees did not even make serious efforts to get floor action on their fiscal 1985 foreign aid spending bills, assuming that the bills they produced would be included

in an omnibus continuing resolution. Congress was not able to pass a separate foreign aid appropriations bill until 1988. That action was made possible by a 1987 budget summit agreement between the president and congressional leaders that settled the bottom line figures for fiscal 1988 and 1989 foreign aid, greatly reducing the amount of political battling over the issue.

Usually, Congress has only dominated in policy disagreements with the executive branch when it has had clear constitutional authority to frustrate the executive or enact its own will. Such situations, as when the Senate refused to ratify the Versailles Treaty and frustrated Woodrow Wilson's hopes for U.S. membership in the League of Nations, have been the exception.

Generally, the executive branch has dominated foreign policy making, particularly since World War II and the growth of what Arthur Schlesinger (1973) dubbed the "imperial presidency." As Richard Haas (1979, p. 38) wrote:

Reinforced by the general consensus over the wisdom of the containment policy, Congress acquiesced in the establishment of a large, executive-branch national security apparatus and the conduct of major covert activities, and to requests for a broad delegation of authority in a series of "blank cheque" resolutions including Formosa (1955), Cuba (1962) and the Gulf of Tonkin (1964).

In the mid-1970s, Congress began reacting to what seemed to many to have become a presidential abuse of the war power, the use of secrecy to protect and preserve his national

security power, and an imbalance of power that had developed between the executive and legislative branches. Reformers blamed an unassertive Congress as much as power-hungry presidents for the evolution of the imperial presidency. Congress discovered that it had been misled on the particulars of the Gulf of Tonkin incident (Congress repealed the resolution in 1971). It found that secret military operations had been conducted in Cambodia and Laos (1969-70) without formal congressional authorization or knowledge. Congress found that the White House had not told its committees about vital executive agreements signed with Ethiopia (1960), Laos (1963), Thailand (1964 and 1967), and Korea (1966). It was not informed about secret pledges of American assistance apparently made by President Nixon to South Vietnamese President Thieu in 1973, at the time of the signing of the Paris Peace Accords (Mondale, 1975).

Mismanagement of the war in Vietnam, coupled with perceived and proven abuses of executive power (i.e., Watergate), alienated many in Congress and injured the credibility of the presidency. Many analysts have also cited the war in Vietnam for discrediting executive control of foreign relations and undermining the consensus that had for a generation supported the tenets of containment. Public opinion polls taken during the late 1960s and early 1970s revealed a national drift toward isolationism. Public support for defense spending fell. Foreign aid joined welfare

spending as the most unpopular items in the federal budget. Support for the draft waned, and the concept of an all-volunteer army gained support. Detente, not containment, became the national byword.

Partially in response to public opinion (Cronin, 1980), Congress not only began challenging presidential prerogatives regarding the war in Vietnam, but launched several national security and foreign policy initiatives. Various challenges to presidential prerogatives in conducting the war in Southeast Asia culminated in 1975 when Congress refused to provide requested assistance to South Vietnam in the final months of the Saigon regime's existence. In 1972, Congress passed the Case Act restricting executive agreements, and in 1973, Congress passed the War Powers Resolution. In 1974 it passed the Hughes-Ryan Amendment, requiring the administration to advise eight congressional committees of its plans for clandestine operations. The amendment also forbade such clandestine operations unless specifically approved by the president. A coalition of Senators led by Majority Leader Mike Mansfield (D-Mont.) began pressing for unilateral American troop reductions in Europe. There was strong resistance in the Senate to funding the anti-ballistic missile proposals of the Johnson and Nixon administrations. The "Byrd Amendment" permitted the importation of chrome from Rhodesia, despite United Nations sanctions and the impact of sanctions violations on U.S. policy toward Africa. Led by Senator Henry

Jackson (D-Wash.), Congress denied to the Soviets large government-subsidized credits and most-favored nation status, affecting the state of detente. It rejected President Ford's foreign aid bill and trimmed his defense appropriations. An arms embargo imposed by Congress on Turkey altered U.S. policy toward that country and Turkey's role in NATO. In 1976, Congress amended the Defense Appropriations Bill to end U.S. covert intervention in Angola. The National Emergencies Act of 1976 defined the emergency powers of the president and provided for regular congressional review of presidential emergency actions.

The foreign policy making relationship between Congress and the executive branch during the Reagan presidency was often characterized by mutual skepticism. There were some fairly intense foreign policy struggles early in the Reagan presidency, beginning in 1981 with the president's unsuccessful nomination of Ernest Lefever to be assistant secretary of state for human rights.

But congressional challenges to the president in foreign policy making from both conservatives and liberals very often resulted only in compromises that had the effect of postponing decisions on basic issues. For example, Congress forced President Reagan to justify in public virtually every step he took in El Salvador, and gave him some, but not all, the aid resources he asked for. In this way, Congress limited Reagan's options and forced him to follow a more moderate

course than he might otherwise have taken. The State Department complained that the U.S. embassy in San Salvador was spending so much time collecting information for twice-annual certifications on El Salvador's eligibility for aid that it had little time for routine responsibilities. In 1983, President Reagan vetoed legislation that would have extended the certification requirement, but Congress continued to constrain the president with amendments to continuing appropriations resolutions.

President Reagan faced foreign policy challenges from both political extremes. Congressional challenges from the right, led by Senator Jesse Helms (R-N.C.), constantly reminded the foreign policy bureaucracy of the need to respect Ronald Reagan's ideological roots. In August 1982, the U.S. signed a joint communique with the People's Republic of China, and in it the U.S. said for the first time that it eventually would end arms sales to Taiwan. Helms expressed bitter disappointment that Reagan could betray Taiwan, and the president felt obliged to call CBS News anchorman Dan Rather to deny the charge.

Opposition from the ideological right also held up, and eventually killed Reagan's nominations of Robert Grey and Norman Terrell to top posts at the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA). Conservative opposition to these appointments, and to that of former *New York Times* reporter Richard Burt as assistant secretary of state for European

affairs, helped focus public attention on conservative criticisms of administration arms control policy.

Opposition from the ideological left forced the administration toward moderation in such areas as arms control negotiations and U.S. military aid to countries not adhering to basic standards of human rights. For example, a handful of liberals in the House blocked for more than a year the administration's plan to resume arms sales to the right-wing government of Guatemala.

During his first year in office, President Reagan did enjoy two major foreign policy successes in Congress. The first was getting approval of an AWACS sale to Saudi Arabia. It was a stunning victory for the president, because 50 senators--one less than the majority needed to block the sale--had cosponsored the resolution of disapproval. In the end, Reagan's initiative prevailed when he persuaded seven first-term Republican senators among the cosponsors to change their positions on the issue.

The second foreign policy victory for President Reagan during his first year in office was getting House action on two stalled foreign aid authorization and appropriations bills. The president, with the assistance of Secretary of State Haig, made personal appeals to Republican opponents of foreign aid to strike the necessary compromises to get passage of the legislation. The authorization bill (PL 97-113) set foreign aid authorizations for fiscal years 1982 and 1983, and



gave the president permission to provide arms aid to Argentina, Chile and Pakistan. (It left intact, however, limits on U.S. aid to warring factions in Angola.) In 1982, Reagan sought supplemental foreign aid funding, especially for military assistance. Most of the 1982 supplemental request was rejected by the appropriations committees. Both the House Foreign Affairs and Senate Foreign Relations committees drafted fiscal 1983 supplemental authorizations bills that included some of the president's requests, but neither bill was given floor consideration. Compromises were made in 1981 foreign aid appropriations regarding the ratio of military-to-development aid, a sticking point between conservative Republicans and liberal Democrats. The ratio also caused problems the following year in the fiscal 1983 continuing resolution (HJ Res 631-PL 97-377) that appropriated funds for foreign aid, and remained an issue throughout the Reagan presidency.

An overdue authorization of \$3.24 billion to the International Development Association (IDA), a World Bank arm that makes no-interest loans to poor countries, was also passed in 1981 with Reagan's support. Conservative critics of the IDA were able to stretch out the appropriations needed to make actual payments, however, thus thwarting the president to some extent in his qualified support for the financial institution.

Both congressional liberals and conservatives complained

that the administration was promising additional aid to various foreign countries and then turning to Congress with a demand that it fulfill the promises. The administration did promise substantial military aid increases for El Salvador, South Korea, Spain, Thailand and Turkey in 1982, and it then chastized Congress for being irresponsible when the fiscal 1983 continuing resolution failed to provide enough money to carry out those promises. But the Reagan administration usually got its way, particularly during its first term, on foreign aid, substantially increasing the U.S. commitment to friendly countries around the world. In fiscal 1981, the last budget over which President Carter had primary control, the U.S. spent \$9.4 billion on foreign economic, military and development aid. By fiscal 1985, the total had risen by 79 percent to \$16.7 billion. Most of the increased spending was for military aid, with the biggest increases going to friendly countries in Central America (especially El Salvador) and the Middle East (especially Israel and Egypt). Congress was generally willing to appropriate huge sums for foreign aid for several reasons. "Hiding" foreign aid authorizations and appropriations in omnibus spending bills offered members political cover; conservatives, who usually opposed foreign aid, were willing to go along because Ronald Reagan was making the requests for increases; and many members succumbed to Reagan's rationale in lobbying for increases on grounds of "national security."

Congress in 1985 passed a foreign aid authorization bill for the first time since 1981. It authorized nearly \$13 billion for foreign aid annually in fiscal years 1986-87. The passage of a two-year bill meant that Congress would not have to deal with the always unpopular measure in 1986, an election year. The bill authorized direct or indirect aid for administration-supported guerrilla groups in Afghanistan, Cambodia and Nicaragua, and lifted a mid-1970s ban on U.S. aid to Jonas Savimbi's rebels in Angola.

Congress still failed in 1985 to pass a separate appropriations bill for foreign aid. As it had done annually since 1982, it tucked those funds into an omnibus continuing resolution, once again shielding foreign aid spending from floor fights and public scrutiny.

The fiscal 1986 foreign aid appropriation put a halt to the Reagan administration buildup of military aid to friendly countries. Representative David Obey (D-Wis.), the new chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Foreign Operations, joined with other liberals in Congress to argue that the administration put too much emphasis on security concerns and failed to heed the need for economic development in Third World countries. At Obey's insistence, foreign aid was cut across the board, both from the Reagan request and from the previous year's levels. The main weight of the budget ax fell on military aid. Congress slashed \$3 billion from the president's fiscal 1987 foreign aid request, forcing

the State Department to retract promises it had made to dozens of countries for aid programs. Some established, but legislatively unprotected, aid programs were cut by as much as 50 percent.

In spite of congressionally-imposed cutbacks in foreign aid during Reagan's second term, the administration's relentless campaigning had helped to plant the idea that foreign aid was in the U.S. national interest, and not just a giveaway program for ungrateful foreigners. Between fiscal years 1981 and 1987, annual spending on foreign aid and related programs jumped from \$10.1 billion to \$14.3 billion annually. The fiscal 1988 appropriation was \$13.6 billion.

While President Reagan was generally successful in persuading Congress about foreign aid, battles over other foreign policy issues were beginning to heat up as early as 1983. At issue was the direction of U.S. policy in Central America, and the continued presence of U.S. Marines in Lebanon, especially after the shock of the suicide truck bombing at the Beirut airport.

At the bottom of nearly every foreign policy dispute between Congress and President Reagan in 1983 and, indeed, in the years that followed, was the use of military force to address foreign policy questions.

Not only were U.S. military forces fighting in Lebanon in 1983, but they were used during the year on the Caribbean island of Grenada and were sent on maneuvers (Operation Big

Pines) to Central America as a signal to Nicaragua, Cuba and the Soviet Union of U.S. resolve to prevent the spread of communism. Congressional anxiety about the use of military force was neither unanimous nor consistent, however. Most Democrats, for example, supported the October invasion of Grenada once opinion polls showed clearly that the American public was cheered by the success of the operation.

Another congressional challenge to the Reagan presidency in 1983 came from the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. The committee made a significant claim to power when it asserted its right to review and veto the administration's "reprogramming" of funds from one account to another. Previously, only the two appropriations committees had demanded a right to block such transfers of funds. When the president sought to move \$60 million to El Salvador, the Foreign Relations Committee insisted it had the same right to block the transfer that the appropriations committees had. The administration reluctantly agreed.

During President Reagan's second term, a primary instrument in congressional attempts to assert its foreign policy making prerogatives was the Boland Amendment. The provision was not an amendment at all, but rather a section of the House-passed 1985 continuing resolution agreed to in the House-Senate conference on the legislation. It was intended to end U.S. support for the covert war in Nicaragua, and was enacted after Congress discovered that the CIA had mined

Nicaraguan harbors in January 1984 without informing the Senate and House Intelligence committees. Wording of the provision changed slightly in subsequent legislation, but the intent was clear, even if legal interpretations by the Reagan administration sought to weaken it. The most precise and toughest version of the Boland Amendment said that "no funds available" to any agency "involved in intelligence activities" could be used to aid the contras, "directly or indirectly."

Advocates of a strong presidency chafed under these congressional initiatives and restrictions to executive power. The presidency, they maintained, was less imperial than imperilled. In 1976, a Gallup poll had found the public preferring by a margin of only 49 to 44 percent strong presidential leadership "without worrying about how Congress or the Supreme Court might feel." A year before Ronald Reagan's election, opinion was more pronounced: the same question received a 63 to 30 percent response favoring strong presidential leadership. The major 1980 presidential challengers, particularly Republicans George Bush and Ronald Reagan, called for stronger, more effective presidential leadership. In the Republican primaries, Bush and Reagan both condemned the restrictions that Congress in the mid-1970s had placed upon overseas intelligence operations (Cronin, 1980).

Ronald Reagan struggled to set the pendulum back in motion toward a stronger executive. A more critical analyst might suggest that the seeds of an imperial presidency, with

their potential for abuses of secrecy and war powers, had sprouted again after lying dormant during the tenures of distinctly unimperial Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter. In any case, Reagan's foreign policy battles with Congress brought mixed results, with the president generally succeeding in setting broad policies and Congress acting to moderate the pursuit of those policies.

## Chapter 9

## INTEREST GROUPS AND REAGAN FOREIGN POLICY

From the foregoing discussion, it might seem easy to conclude that the executive and legislative branches are titans grappling independently for control of foreign policy formulation. But group theorists, or pluralists, see things differently. David Truman (1951, p. 408) pointed out that "The actual competing structures on each side are made up of elements in the legislature and in the executive, reflecting and supported by organized and unorganized interests." The picture is further complicated by logrolling--groups supporting groups on issues in which they may have no vital interest, but which exchange their support for the promise of reciprocal support at some point in the future. And coalitions formed by mutual interests and logrolling are very often arrayed against other coalitions pursuing alternative policies.

As national economies become more integrated in a global economy, and as the media of mass communication increasingly focus on foreign news, domestic issues seem to merge more frequently with international issues, and foreign policies more often appear to have domestic consequences. Powerful interest groups, representing sizeable portions of the public, become more involved in the foreign policy making process as domestic issues overlap. When economic conditions deteriorate and domestic economic goals compete with foreign commitments,



the vigor and competitiveness of the economic interest groups increase. The more domestic considerations become apparent in foreign policy formulation, the less deferent the public is to foreign policy elites, and the less indifferent toward foreign policy issues. The more domestic and foreign policies overlap, the more the public, either directly or indirectly, becomes involved (Piper and Terchek, 1983).

Although public opinion is generally understood to be the aggregate of individual attitudes, the idea that opinions can be characteristics of social units also has traditional support. John Dickinson (1930, p. 29) expressed this essentially pluralist view with some clarity:

The larger number of members of any political society have no opinion, and hence no will, on nearly all the matters on which government acts. The only opinion, the only will, which exists is the opinion, the will, of special groups. . . . The task of government . . . is not to express an imaginary popular will, but to effect adjustments among the various special wills and purposes which at any given time are pressing for realization.

Conservative activist Paul Weyrich took President Reagan to task once for not pushing harder for contra aid. The president responded that the issue lacked public support. Weyrich answered (Noonan, p. 246),

If public opinion was the decider in this country you'd have gun control and prayer in the schools. In fact, public policy is driven by small, concentrated, highly motivated groups of activists who focus their political energies on these questions. If you had moved, we would have moved--and we would have won.

Sociologist Herbert Blumer (1948) expressed a similar idea. Public opinion is not simply the summation of individual opinions, he insisted. It is a kind of complex organic whole, mirroring the organization of society into hierarchically structured functional groups. Complex communication patterns and interrelationships exist between those groups, and the only thing worthy of the name public opinion is that which is generated by those group interactions and which is "effective" in the sense that decision makers judge it to be worth considering.

Interest groups can be characterized as representative mechanisms supplementing the electoral process. They represent citizens who seek to express their views on more issues more frequently than the electoral process can accommodate. Further, they may allow the political process to be more responsive to the realities of social and economic power differences within the populace. This helps to ensure that the government will not form policies that the nation will not support. In short, interest groups are mediating structures between the executive and legislative branches of government and between the state and the individual.

But if interest groups serve as vehicles for public opinion, the public is mostly alienated by its perceived power of interest groups, generally seeing interest groups as perverting public policy (Etzioni, 1982). Most of the early public opinion luminaries, including George Gallup, Sr., Elmo

Roper and Archibald Crossley in the private sector, and Henry Wallace and Rensis Likert in the government, had strong democratic sentiments and were generally pleased to give voice to the people at large in competition with the power of special interests (J. Converse, 1987).

An ABC News/Harris poll taken in May 1980 found 84 percent agreeing that "special interests get more from government than the people do." Only ten percent disagreed. In 1978, the Roper Organization asked people which (listed) reason, if any, they thought was "the main reason our system of government doesn't work better than it does." The response "too much influence on government by special interest groups and lobbies" led all others with 42 percent. Second was "too many people vote without thinking" at 19 percent. An ABC News/Harris poll taken in January 1980 found 71 percent agreeing that political action committees (PACs) "are pouring too much money into the whole political process." Only 19 percent disagreed. This public concern echoes, to some extent, the fear of "faction" voiced by James Madison and others of the Founding Fathers.

Public choice theorists like James Buchanan may find in the political activities of interest groups their most convincing arguments against public spirit, or the search for the common good, as a motivating force in producing public policy. Economic interest groups, often representing sizeable portions of the public, can have a particularly significant

impact on foreign policy. Labor unions have increasingly become a source of protectionist pressures, as have single-industry communities whose livelihood is threatened by particular imports. Many of these groups were hostile to President Reagan's free trade policies and lobbied against them.

But convincing arguments can also be made that even personified as interest groups, economic man is not political man. It is interesting that although AFL-CIO members preferred Walter Mondale to Ronald Reagan on basic economic issues in 1984, when it came to foreign policy and defense, they preferred Reagan by solid majorities (Kemble, 1985). And while 64 percent rated economic issues among the one or two "most important issues facing the country," foreign policy was very close behind with 59 percent.

According to Penn Kemble (1985), the *AFL-CIO News* reported that

[w]hen it comes to 'having sound defense policies' or 'dealing with Soviet-Cuban aggression,' the Democrats fare worse than on any other issues tested. Members as a whole prefer Republicans to deal with defense by a ratio of 42 percent to 29 percent. One out of four Democrats said the Republicans would do a better job on this issue. Democrats who voted for Reagan, and Carter voters who switched to Reagan, give their defense preference to the Republican party by ratios as large as 15 to 1.

AFL-CIO households voted for Mondale by 57 to 43 percent, and union households in general stayed Democratic by 54 to 46

percent. The margins would undoubtedly have been much wider, however, had labor been less supportive of Reagan's foreign policy and "strong leadership."

Like their counterparts in labor unions and other economic interest groups, businessmen are not always motivated by self-interest. Bruce Russett and Elizabeth Hanson (1975) found that the views of corporate executives on domestic liberal-conservative issues such as civil rights were better predictors for their foreign policy views than whether their company had investments overseas or defense contracts.

The influence of interest groups--particularly business and economic groups--has been particularly significant since campaign finance reform legislation encouraged the rise of PACs in the mid-1970s. Campaign money had traditionally been raised and distributed by political party organizations, which were consequently put at a disadvantage. By 1980, most candidates were standing as individual entrepreneurs, courting, or being courted by special interests with money to contribute to campaigns in exchange for access and legislative support. The expense of campaigning had risen, and continues to rise, dramatically, primarily because of high costs associated with the "packaging" of candidates and buying media space--in particular, television time.

The number of corporate PACs rose from 89 in 1974 to 1,415 in 1982. Trade association PACs brought the total of all business-related PACs from 1,235 in 1978 to 2,028 during

Ronald Reagan's second year in office.

Congressional structure reforms, such as the abolition of the seniority system in selecting committee chairmen and the proliferation of subcommittees, has made individual members more autonomous. Yet the reforms likewise increased interest groups' access to and power over individual members. The reforms freed members to make deals with other members, but it also made them freer to respond to direct pressure from interest groups (Calleo, 1983).

Likewise, concludes Thomas Cavanagh (1982-83, p. 636),

[t]he rules opening committee and subcommittee sessions to the public have been of most benefit to interest group lobbyists, the only constituency with a consistent interest in the proceedings.

Besides economic and business groups, other interest groups that have inherent interests in U.S. foreign policy are those that claim to represent ethnic groups. Of these groups, the Israeli lobby is particularly ambitious and effective. This loose coalition of diverse agencies and individuals has historically been effective in helping to shape U.S. policy in the Middle East and toward the Soviet Union. The Israeli lobby was kept especially busy during Ronald Reagan's first term, when U.S.-Israeli relations seemed to go from bad to worse.

The Reagan administration initially launched a "strategic consensus" policy in the Middle East, admonishing Arabs and Israelis to set aside their differences and unite against what

the United States perceived as the real threat in the area, the Soviet Union. The policy virtually ignored the American-managed peace process begun with former Secretary of State Kissinger's disengagement agreements and reinforced by the Camp David accords brokered by President Carter. The policy hurt U.S.-Israeli relations, as the Begin government, uneasy with administration efforts to woo Arab states, unilaterally pursued increasingly aggressive policies that embarrassed the U.S.

The Israeli lobby was unable to halt an \$8.5 billion arms sale, including five sophisticated Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) radar planes, to Saudi Arabia in 1981. There was a bitter battle in Congress over the issue, first suggested in the Carter administration, which Reagan barely won. A congressional veto of the arms sale was only avoided when Reagan personally lobbied the Senate. It was the first major test for Reagan in Congress, and he won his way largely by arguing that a congressional veto would impair his ability to conduct foreign policy. The Senate failed to disapprove the sale by a dramatic 48-52 vote. The House had voted 301-111 against the sale two weeks earlier.

The AWACS sale left a bitter taste in the mouths of some pro-Israel congressmen, and contributed to at least a temporary decline in U.S.-Israeli relations. Relations were further strained in June 1981 when Israeli Prime Minister Begin sent eight U.S.-supplied F-16 and six F-15 fighters,

carrying U.S.-supplied munitions, to bomb the Osirak nuclear reactor in Iraq. A Gallup poll found that of the 86 percent of U.S. respondents who had heard or read of the bombing, 39 percent said the raid was not justified; 25 percent said it was justified. Reagan responded by delaying delivery of four more F-16s already bought by Israel and the administration said it was examining whether U.S. laws had been violated by the use of U.S.-supplied weaponry for purposes other than defense. Though many administration officials may have been secretly relieved by the Israeli action, the U.S. would spend the next several months working with Iraq and other Arab states on various U.N. resolutions condemning Israel.

An even more controversial raid was staged by Israeli jets in July against the headquarters of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in Beirut, killing more than 200 civilians. The raid occurred on the very day the State Department was going to release the F-16s withheld after the Iraq raid. Instead, Reagan extended the suspension of four F-16 deliveries to six more planes. Although the suspension was lifted in August, sour feelings on both sides remained.

The Reagan administration did make efforts to improve relations with Israel after the AWACS issue was resolved. But a negotiated plan for "strategic cooperation," including special arrangements with Israel regarding the use of U.S. military aid, was threatened when Prime Minister Begin got the Knesset to vote to extend Israeli law to the Golan Heights,



the strategic territory captured from Syria in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war.

In the summer of 1982, when George Shultz replaced Alexander Haig as secretary of state, the president was induced to sign off on a plan for a Palestinian entity in federation with Jordan. The long-running Lebanese crisis derailed that policy, however.

In June 1982 Israel invaded Lebanon, despite public appeals by the U.S. not to. Israel's stated purpose was to create a 25-mile wide buffer zone in southern Lebanon free of Palestinian guerrillas. Israeli troops continued to push north, again in spite of U.S. objections, and eventually surrounded thousands of PLO fighters in West Beirut. American sympathies for Israel were weakening as the Israeli government pursued its more aggressive policies in 1982 (Table 8, below).

A Gallup poll taken in July 1982 found 49 percent of Americans disapproving of Israel's invasion of Lebanon, with only 23 percent approving. Sixty-four percent of respondents said Israel should use U.S.-supplied weapons for defense only. U.S. Special Envoy Philip Habib was able to negotiate an agreement under which the PLO fighters were shipped out of Lebanon, Israel withdrew its troops from Beirut, and a peacekeeping force of American, French, Italian and British troops was temporarily introduced into Lebanon.

In September 1982, Lebanon's president-elect, Bashir Gemayel, was assassinated. In apparent retaliation, the

	Israel	Arab Nations	Neither
1982			
July	41%	12%	31%
June	52	10	29
April-May	51	12	26
January	49	14	23
1981			
July-August	44	11	34
1979			
January	40	14	31
1978			
November	39	13	30
September (late)	42	12	29
September (early)	41	12	29
August	44	10	33
April-May	44	10	33
March	38	11	33
February	33	14	28

Table 8

## AMERICAN SYMPATHIES IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Christian militia massacred hundreds of Palestinian civilians. Habib was sent back to Lebanon for new negotiations, and once again, the multinational peacekeeping force was dispatched to Lebanon. The Reagan administration found itself in the unenviable position of trying to shore up the fragile Lebanese government while orchestrating negotiations for the withdrawal of 60,000 Israeli, Syrian and Palestinian troops from Lebanon.

Although it had opposed Israel's invasion of Lebanon, the Reagan administration reluctantly accepted Prime Minister Begin's argument that the eviction of the PLO from southern Lebanon created a new opportunity for peace in the region. In

September 1982, President Reagan made a speech outlining specific proposals for at least temporary solutions to some of the key Middle East issues. He called on Israel to halt further construction of Jewish settlements on the West Bank and proposed an association between the Palestinians and Jordan to govern the West Bank. Further negotiations, he said, would be required to determine the final legal status of the West Bank and Jerusalem. Israel immediately rejected the Reagan initiative.

Begin's angry rejection of the president's proposals marked a low point in U.S.-Israeli relations, made even lower when, toward the end of 1982, the Reagan administration actively opposed a move in Congress to increase aid to Israel beyond the president's request. The aid increase, said administration lobbyists, would upset other countries in the Middle East, especially Egypt and Jordan, and would be seen as a reward to Israel for pursuing policies the U.S. had opposed. Congress eventually gave Israel an increase in military aid that was substantial, but far short of what Israel had sought.

In 1983, Reagan proposed to finance, equip and train a Jordanian rapid deployment force that could respond to military crises in the Middle East. The proposal alarmed Israel, whose supporters on the congressional appropriations committees killed \$200 million in funding for the plan.

But 1983 also saw some improvement in U.S.-Israeli relations. Prime Minister Begin resigned for health reasons

in September. When his successor, Yitzhak Shamir, visited Washington, President Reagan proposed closer military relations with Israel and offered major economic advantages, including expanded military aid and a two-way free-trade zone.

In March 1984, bowing to pressure from Israel, the Israeli lobby and Israel's friends in Congress, President Reagan withdrew a proposal to sell Jordan and Saudi Arabia Stinger missiles. Israel had argued that the hand-held anti-aircraft missiles could fall into the hands of terrorists and jeopardize all air traffic in the Middle East, if not the entire world. This was the first time in the 16-year history of direct congressional involvement in arms sales that a president had withdrawn an arms sales proposal without stating that he would resubmit it to Congress at a future date (although in May, Reagan sold Saudi Arabia 400 Stingers using his emergency power to avoid review by Congress). Jordan's King Hussein bitterly attacked the U.S. in a *New York Times* interview, and said that in "choosing" Israel, the U.S. could no longer serve as mediator between Israel and its Arab neighbors.

At the end of 1984, Israel, suffering an economic crisis, turned to the U.S. for massive infusions of emergency aid. Reagan agreed to a substantial boost in military aid, but on the advice of Secretary Shultz postponed a decision on increased economic aid until Israel's fragile coalition government agreed on, and began to implement, austerity

measures to ease inflation and reduce government spending.

The Middle East's moderate Arab leaders pronounced 1985 to be the last chance for real progress toward peace with Israel. They realized that it would probably be the last full year of Israel's shaky coalition government. Prime Minister Shimon Peres, the Labor Party leader who seemed willing to pursue the peace process, was scheduled to give up his post in October 1986 to hardliner Yitzhak Shamir, the Likud coalition leader who opposed any concessions to Arabs.

King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, and King Hussein of Jordan all traveled to Washington early in 1985 and asked President Reagan to give urgent attention to the Middle East peace process. In February, Hussein signed an accord with Yasir Arafat, chairman of the PLO, pledging to work toward peace talks. But the agreement did not address directly the main condition Israel and the U.S. had placed on a PLO role in any talks: PLO acceptance of two U.N. resolutions that imply Israel's right to exist.

Reagan sent Richard Murphy, assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern and South Asian affairs, on a year-long mission to try and develop a Middle East consensus on how to get negotiations underway among Israelis, Jordanians and Palestinians. By year's end, there seemed to be little evidence that chances for peace talks had substantially improved.

Lack of substantial progress on the peace front did not

deter President Reagan from seeking to fulfill a promise to King Hussein that the U.S. would help meet Jordan's economic and security needs. In September, Reagan announced plans for a \$1.5 to \$2 billion arms sale to Jordan, including advanced warplanes (either Northrop Corporation's new F-20 or a stripped down version of General Dynamic's F-16), missiles and other items.

The Israeli lobby went into action again, and pro-Israel members of Congress argued against the sale on the grounds that Hussein was avoiding the peace table. By early October, nearly three-fourths of all senators had cosponsored a resolution to block any arms sale to Jordan until peace talks were underway. Richard Lugar (R-Ind.), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, spared the president an outright defeat by engineering a resolution to defer the sale until March 1986, unless Jordan and Israel had begun "direct and meaningful" negotiations. The Senate passed the measure 97-1, and the House followed suit in November.

While Congress was taking a budget ax to foreign aid in 1985, aid to Israel was increased, again thanks largely to Israel's influential lobby and the congressional enthusiasm it helps create. With little debate and no open dissent, Congress in mid-1985 approved \$1.5 billion in emergency aid to prop up Israel's ailing economy. Authorized over fiscal years 1985-86, that money was on top of Israel's regular annual allotment of \$3 billion in U.S. economic and foreign aid.

Congressional committees began approving the new aid even before the administration had requested it. Secretary Shultz had asked Congress to withhold the aid until the Israeli government implemented anti-inflation economic reforms, but Congress voted the aid and directed the administration to spend it before all the reforms Shultz wanted were in place.

In 1986, President Reagan was obliged to withdraw \$89 million worth of Stinger anti-aircraft missiles from a major arms sale to Saudi Arabia to persuade the Senate to sustain, by a one-vote margin, his veto of a bill that would have blocked the sale altogether.

The Israeli lobby managed to reestablish its clout after a period of seeming weakness at the beginning of the Reagan years. But Israeli militancy in the Middle East was strident at the beginning of the Reagan presidency and hardly moderated in the subsequent years. In its aggressive actions, the Israeli government seemed to pay little heed to the Reagan administration's advice or requests. Concurrently, the American public's antipathy toward the Soviet Union abated, particularly during President Reagan's second term. As a result, popular support in the U.S. for Israeli militancy began to wane, even among American Jews.

Meanwhile, the administration's credibility as an honest broker in the Arab-Israeli peace process was compromised as the administration increasingly embraced the policy of strategic cooperation with Israel, especially after Reagan's

reelection in 1984. In early 1988, Secretary Shultz began a flurry of diplomatic activities aimed at resurrecting a U.S.-brokered peace plan. He called for a U.N.-sponsored international conference that would give Jordan's King Hussein political cover for his direct negotiations with Israel. But the efforts were too little and too late to make up for what was essentially seven years of American neglect of the peace process. By July 1988, the Shultz plan was collapsing. A sharply divided Israeli government could not agree to accept the plan, and Hussein seemed unable to act on behalf of Palestinians who were newly energized by the political success of their uprising (*intifada*), which had begun in December 1987. Hussein renounced Jordan's claim to the occupied West Bank and said Arafat should negotiate for the Palestinians there. When all of the standard attempts to restart the Arab-Israeli peace process had failed, the Reagan administration opened a last-minute dialogue with the PLO. This marked a clear change in U.S. Middle East policy and broke an age-old domestic political taboo against any official dealings with that organization. A Gallup poll found the large majority of Americans endorsing the Reagan administration's decision to initiate the talks, and most believed negotiations with the PLO would improve the chances for peace in the Middle East. Instrumental in making such talks possible was a largely negative mood among the American public resulting from Israel's invasions of Lebanon and the graphic televised



actions of Israeli soldiers against rock-throwing Palestinian youths in the occupied territories. In a March 1988 survey, the Gallup Organization found 43 percent of Americans considering the tactics used by Israel to counter riots by Palestinians too harsh, with 32 percent considering it about right. Disapproval of Israel's handling of the demonstrations was also reflected in a substantial loss of respect for that country. About a third of Americans (30 percent) viewed Israel less favorably as a result of its anti-riot efforts, with 61 percent saying their opinion had not changed.

If the influence of the Israeli lobby was somewhat diminished by various events, it was never ineffectual. Throughout the administration's roller-coaster relationship with Israel, the Israeli lobby remained a valuable administration ally in its foreign aid battles with Congress. Further, it always exerted considerable influence over arms sales to Arab countries, in opposition to administration goals. The last instance of this came during the president's final year in office, when he proposed selling F/A-18 warplanes and missiles to Kuwait to help protect its oil fields against possible attack by Iran. The Israeli lobby and its congressional allies had previously forced the administration to make significant compromises on arms sales to Jordan and Saudi Arabia, and in the Kuwaiti deal worked out between House members and the administration, the sale was only allowed to proceed when several changes were made in the battery of

missiles that would arm the planes.

The historic clout of the Israeli lobby and the traditional sympathy the lobby helps foster in Congress and among the American people is indicative of the fact that interest groups, properly organized, can often give minority views greater weight in the political arena than the dispersed views of a broader public. Indeed, as pluralists often note, references to "the public" may be too simplistic, since there are many publics. Official actions usually involve some publics rather than the general public, and any given public is likely to be involved in only some of its interests rather than in all.

The Israeli lobby and other interest groups, not surprisingly, are becoming more sophisticated in their approach to the executive and legislative branches, and in the face they present to the American public. During the 1980s, many began turning to public affairs consultants for advice on tactics and strategy in policy confrontations.

Polling and focused group discussions have been used to help groups determine the critically important issue of how a controversy is presented to the public. Political consultant Stanley Greenberg advised peace activists during the Reagan years that it was more effective to make an "America first" case against contra aid (by arguing that the money should be spent in this country) than to couch their arguments in terms

of broader national security considerations (Edsall, 1989).<sup>11</sup>

The most numerous and effective groups arrayed against Reagan administration policies in Central America were religious groups. Rather than taking the approach recommended by Greenberg, these groups usually combined a non-interventionist critique of U.S. foreign policy with ethical concerns based on religious values. Nearly all of the major Protestant denominations, as well as numerous Catholic orders and national organizations, maintain Washington offices, linking congregants to the national political process, educating their constituencies on public policy issues, communicating denominational views to policy makers, and activating networks to influence particular votes in Congress. The combined membership of the Protestant groups, alone, numbered over 70 million people in the mid-1980s, and although only a fraction ever became directly involved in foreign policy issues, the positions adopted by the governing boards of the various churches could be seen as those of the church membership.

Other groups mobilized against Reagan Central American

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<sup>11</sup>A CBS poll in April 1986 asked contra aid opponents the main reason for their opposition: 44 percent said the money should be used at home; 14 percent said it was none of our business; 9 percent said it was too expensive; only 8 percent expressed explicitly anti-war sentiments. A 1988 Market Opinion Research poll found 27 percent thinking the U.S. should not get involved; 21 percent favoring spending the money at home; 14 percent opposed to military aid; and 9 percent opposed to contra aid because they feared Nicaragua could become another Vietnam.

policy in general, and contra aid, in particular, were public interest groups like the American Civil Liberties Union, Common Cause, SANE, and OXFAM America. Various "solidarity groups" not only lobbied Congress, but pressed their demands outside the political system, raising money to send supplies to Nicaragua, for example.

The principal forum and umbrella for all of these groups was the Coalition for a New Foreign and Military Policy. The Coalition's Central America Lobby Group sponsored weekly informational meetings, produced legislative updates, maintained computerized lists of key activists in congressional districts, and helped coordinate the activities of its member groups. House of Representatives leadership staff often attended the weekly meetings of the Central America Lobby Group, providing the member groups with access and information about which way members of Congress, especially the "swing votes," were leaning. Key group strategists also met frequently with Chief Deputy Majority Whip David Bonior (D-Mich.), who chaired the House Task Force on Nicaragua.

In opposition to these groups was a coalition of well-financed pro-contra groups buttressed, encouraged, and sometimes even coordinated by the White House. This is something of a paradox, because the pro-contra groups felt they were waging a "two-front war"--in Congress, and in the White House, where they perceived Chief of Staff Donald Regan as an enemy of contra aid (Arnson and Brenner, 1990).

The key groups in the pro-contra coalition included Citizens for Reagan, Citizens for America, Free the Eagle, Council for Inter-American Security, American Security Council, Concerned Women of America, College Republicans, National Center for Public Policy Research, National Defense Council, Eagle Forum, American Conservative Trust, International Business Communications (IBC), PRODEMCA, and the National Endowment for the Preservation of Liberty (NEPL). Some of the groups--and their membership often overlapped--focused on raising money for pro-contra candidates, while others were involved in illicit contra support activities and grassroots lobbying (Starobin and Gaunt, 1986).

The most notable example of the latter was the NEPL, whose director, Carl "Spitz" Channell, raised more than \$10 million from private donors by bringing them to hear patriotic appeals from NSC aide Oliver North, White House communications director Patrick Buchanan, and to meet with President Reagan himself. Channell was the first person convicted in the Iran-contra debacle, having pled guilty to using his non-profit organization to raise more than \$2 million to arm the contras. In July 1990, he was sentenced to two years' probation for conspiring to defraud the government of taxes due on the money he and Colonel North raised for the contra cause.

Other NEPL funds were devoted to lobbying Congress in support of contra aid. The organization hired two congressional lobbyists, and launched a series of television spots in

Washington, D.C. in support of the president's 1986 request for \$100 million in contra aid. It also targeted 30 "swing" House members in their districts during the midterm elections, and funded tours for pro-contra speakers.

NEPL also channelled money to PRODEMCA, directed by Democratic activist Penn Kemble. PRODEMCA placed pro-contra ads in Washington, D.C. newspapers, worked with swing Democrats and helped design a rationale for contra aid that would help guarantee their support (Senate Report No. 100-216, 1987).

International Business Communications (IBC) also received funds from NEPL for pro-contra public relations work and, like its benefactor, was engaged in private fundraising to send military aid to the contras. Richard Miller, who headed IBC, pled guilty in federal court in May 1987 to conspiring to supply the contras with military equipment financed by tax-deductible contributions. Like Channell, Miller was sentenced in July 1990 to two years' probation for conspiring to defraud the government of taxes.

The Reagan administration's public diplomacy apparatus recruited outside groups like IBC for its campaigns at home and abroad. By using outside groups, the administration circumvented legal prohibitions against executive branch lobbying and domestic propaganda. IBC, for example, received contracts totalling \$500,000 between May 1984 and September 1986 from the State Department's Office of Public Diplomacy

for Latin America and the Caribbean (S/LPD). IBC wrote papers that were distributed by the S/LPD, drafted speeches, prepared op-ed articles, and coordinated the visits of Central American exiles engaged in pro-contra "public education" activities (Arnson and Brenner, 1990). Other groups recruited by the administration to influence public policy included NEPL, Accuracy in Media, and Freedom House (Parry and Kornbluh, 1988).

In August 1986, Congress approved \$100 million in contra military aid and reauthorized CIA paramilitary support for the contras, support that had been banned by Congress in October 1984. S/LPD chief Otto Reich said in a memo (Parry and Kornbluh, 1988, p. 27) on public diplomacy efforts to CIA Director William Casey that

[i]t is clear we would not have won the House vote without the painstaking deliverative effort undertaken by many people in the government and outside.

Like the Central America Lobby Group, the less formal pro-contra coalition, which included more than 50 groups at its height (1985-86), held weekly strategy meetings. Their principal ally among House Republicans was Minority Whip Trent Lott (R-Miss.), who sent a staffer to the weekly meetings. Members of the Conservative Opportunity Society such as Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.), Jack Kemp (R-N.Y.) and Robert Dornan (R-Calif.), were also helpful, as was the Republican Study Committee (Arnson and Brenner, 1990).

Both anti- and pro-contra coalitions claimed to have

secured victories for their lobbying efforts by concentrating on swing voters in Congress. Public opinion polls might show a majority of Americans opposing contra aid, but the key opinions were those of the Washington elite. Parry and Kornbluh (1988) quote a senior public diplomacy official as saying that he always argued that contra aid was an "inside the Beltway issue." How effective the anti- and pro-contra lobbies were in reality is a debatable question, but at a minimum, the groups did enable legislators on both sides to claim that there was grassroots support for their positions.



## Chapter 10

## REAGAN AND THE MEDIA OF MASS COMMUNICATION

Contrary to democratizing trends, several factors militate against the voice of public opinion being a compelling force in the formulation of public policy, particularly foreign policy.

First, and perhaps foremost, only a small minority of people are informed about or regularly show a serious concern for public affairs. Most people pay surprisingly little attention to political personalities and issues, even when the mass media feature them. Nearly 50 years of polling data on public attitudes toward foreign policy questions suggest that a large majority of Americans are generally uninterested in and uninformed about foreign policy.

Traditionally, the public's lack of knowledge and inability to judge the costs and benefits of alternate policies have heightened the tendency of elite policy makers to exclude foreign policy making from normal democratic processes. Although he was writing in 1939, political scientist Charles W. Smith, Jr. might well have been addressing a present-day audience of elites: "In our time," he wrote (p. 21),

government is growing increasingly complex, and specialized knowledge is becoming increasingly essential in administration. Correspondingly, the range of questions on which the public is incapable of forming an intelligent opinion is

rapidly increasing. Most citizens, for instance, are not adequately equipped, except as to general principles and broad outlines, to form an intelligent opinion on the foreign policy of the United States. . . . And the mass of the people will not spend much effort mastering facts that do not affect their daily lives or seem to touch their own interests in some significant way. Even if they had the desire to inform themselves on all the matters of government that are concerned with the general welfare, they would find it a sheer impossibility. More and more the details must be left to experts and not to public opinion. The public can pass judgment only on the results and on the principles that furnish the guides for action.

This attitude persists among many elites, and perhaps most noticeably among lower level bureaucrats and technocrats. Even if "details must be left to experts and not to public opinion," experts must understand the dynamics of public opinion to lead opinion, to compromise with prevailing opinion, or, failing these, to fall in line with prevailing opinion. To act otherwise is to ignore opinion or act contrary to public opinion, which may risk policy failure and is dangerous to democratic processes.

Understanding the dynamics of public opinion involves communications research, although the field was, unfortunately, largely abandoned by political scientists in the early 1960s. Political studies comprised much of the pioneering communications research of Paul Lazarsfeld, Hadley Cantril, Frank Stanton and others. They primarily sought to understand the effects of propaganda and the role of mass communications

in the making of decisions, including decisions about voting and about changing an opinion. Lazarsfeld directed the Office of Radio Research, funded by a Rockefeller Foundation grant in 1937 "to study what radio means in the lives of the listeners." In 1940, Lazarsfeld and his colleagues found a home at Columbia University as the Bureau of Applied Social Research (Morrison, 1978).

The Bureau's early decision studies found that processes of selectivity in attention, perception and recall mitigated the effects of the media. These processes are, in turn, a function of predispositional and situational variables such as age, family history, and political affiliation. The idea of a person's "primary group," represented both as a network of information and a source of social pressure, formed the basis for various hypotheses concerning the "two-step flow of communication." The culmination of this early research was the publication of Joseph Klapper's revised and expanded 1949 doctoral dissertation as *The Effects of Mass Communication* (1960). That seminal work and more recent studies (Katz, 1980b; Schudson, 1984; McGuire, 1986), contend that the media have limited effects in inducing change in opinions, attitudes and actions.

The introduction and general acceptance of the limited effects model resulted in, among other things, many political scientists losing interest in the study of mass communication. Research in that area became largely separated from that of

public opinion.

Beginning in the mid-1960s, several scholars began to challenge, or at least avoid the findings of, the limited effects model. Rather than viewing the media as agents of persuasion, some studies began to emphasize the public service role of the media as providers of information and agendas. McCombs and Shaw (1972) contended that by preempting the public's attention, the media constrain the public to evaluate a president, for example, in terms of one issue or one group of issues, rather than another. For instance, if the media were to emphasize domestic issues and allude to presidential responsibility for the success of domestic public policy, while deemphasizing foreign affairs and the president's ability to influence external events, the public would be more likely to evaluate the president in terms of domestic policy than foreign policy.

Other critics of the limited effects model say it mistakenly substitutes voting for politics, thus underestimating the role and influence of the media. They claim that as party affiliation has declined, the influence of the media has risen (Chaffee and Hochheimer, 1982). Many point to television, in particular, as having transformed political campaigning and as having reframed the party convention as a media event. Further, the media may frame political conflict by communicating to the public a sense of order. They may impose rules on political contestants and refuse admission to certain

political players (Coleman, 1957; Glasgow, 1976; Crain et al., 1969; Adoni et al., 1984).

Proponents of critical theory (Habermas, 1974, 1981, 1984; Gouldner, 1976), less convinced of the public service role of the media, see the media's agenda-setting role as a hegemonic imposition. Others (e.g., Gitlin, 1978) portray the media in more sinister and even conspiratorial terms. The measure of the power of the media is not in producing change, these critics contend, but in slowing change and maintaining the status quo.

Technological theorists like Marshall McLuhan (1964), began emphasizing the media's role in connecting the "global village," rather than the messages the media convey. Such theorists see technologies of communication as causal agents having powerful effects on the organization of institutions. For example, Harold Innis (1964) argued that the invention of papyrus had much to do with the successful extension of the Egyptian empire. Elizabeth Eisenstein (1979) studied the printing press as an agent of change in Renaissance Europe. More recently, James Carey (1983) has studied the impact of the telegraph on creating a nationwide market for American business. Katz (1987, p. S33) contends that "the imperial presidency began with the fireside chat [of Franklin Roosevelt] that addressed the nation [via radio] over the heads of Congress." Audio cassette recordings of speeches of the exiled Ayatollah Khomeini played a significant role in the

overthrow of the Shah of Iran. Before the 1991 Gulf War, because mail was censored and phones were not secure, cassette recordings of news reports and anti-regime speeches were also being used in Saudi Arabia by opponents of the Saudi royal family and the American military presence in that country (Caesar, 1990). Facsimile transmissions (FAX) played an important role in the 1989 Chinese student movement for democracy.

An effect of television since the late 1950s has been to expand the audience for foreign policy news. The television audience is exposed to a much wider range of information than the news-reading public would normally select for itself. If we still cannot speak of an informed public vis-a-vis foreign affairs, we can at least postulate the existence of a better informed public or perhaps a more half-informed public. Iyengar and Kinder (1987) concluded on the basis of 14 diverse field experiments that television news is "an educator virtually without peer." It "shapes the American public's conception of political life in pervasive ways," they asserted.

As early as 1960, Gabriel Almond could conclude (pp. xxiv-xxvi) that radio and television were producing greater homogeneity in American foreign policy opinion. Not only was there greater homogeneity in standards and values, but the media tended to provide all groups in society with "the same minimum of political and foreign affairs information. . . ."

He wrote (p. xxvi) that

[the media's] effects may be viewed as in some sense comparable to the effects of the welfare state on the lower economic groups. They have raised the floor of information and communication, which may in part be responsible for the trend toward maturation among the mass public.

The media of mass communication are the interpreters of the world to the vast majority of Americans. As such, they would appear to have powerful potential as shapers of opinions on public policy, particularly foreign policy.

Precisely because international issues are remote for most Americans, foreign policy is a prime candidate for what Donald Kinder (1981; Kinder and Kiewiet, 1979) has termed "symbolic" or "sociotropic" politics. The media may have particular relevance when issues (such as foreign affairs) have low salience for people and are infrequently discussed in everyday conversation (Segal, 1975). In the 1950s, research by Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955) suggested that Americans, besides depending on newspapers and other media, depend heavily on personal contacts with "opinion leaders" who relay information and interpretations from elites to the masses. Sociologist Jurgen Habermas (1981, 1984) has conducted a deeper exploration of this subject. He has developed an elaborate theory of "communicative rationality" based on speech, conversation and interpretive understanding. "In the electronic era," concluded political scientists Bruce Russett

and Donald DeLuca in 1981 (p. 398), "John Chancellor, Dan Rather, and Frank Reynolds occupy key pumping stations for a more direct flow."

What came to be called the theoretic model of mass society largely subsumed the scientific study of public opinion, which had emerged in the U.S. during the mid-1930s. This mass society model, which largely paralleled developments in communication theory, dominated the study of public opinion formation and change well into the 1960s.

The central themes of the mass society model include the idea of a major social transformation through increased contact and interaction among people of all nations. Such contact was originally through urbanization, but is increasingly through direct or unmediated mass communication technologies and mass feedback technologies, particularly public opinion polling. Other theoretical ideas of the mass society model include the eclipse of elite by mass political and economic power; an increase in the importance of mass media and public relations for societal control; vague alarm about such centralized control, or about uncontrolled masses, or both; and a sense of impending extreme results, particularly the triumph of mass democracy or of totalitarianism (Beniger, 1987).

As the limited effects model came to dominate communication theory, the hold of the mass society model on the



American study of American public opinion was loosened. Yet not all analysts abandoned the propositions of the mass society model. In the early 1960s, major papers by Philip Converse (1962, 1964) suggested that if, as most research concluded, most citizens are politically unsophisticated, and if they have no specific policy agenda, then they might well be mobilized or otherwise manipulated by centralized media. Minimal effects findings, said Converse, could be simply an artifact of improper measurement, or the result of measuring the wrong effects.

Others, turning away from persuasion, continued to investigate the possibility that the media might determine what the public takes to be important. Walter Lippmann may have been the first to suggest this. He wrote in 1922 (p. 229) that

[t]he press . . . is like the beam of a searchlight that moves restlessly about, bringing one episode and then another out of the darkness into vision.

Bernard Cohen (1963, p. 16) was more to the point:

The mass media may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but the media are stunningly successful in telling their audience what to think about.

Research by McCombs and Shaw (1972) on the media's agenda-setting role represented a further attempt to avoid the findings of minimal effects. They found substantial correlation between what political problems voters thought most

important and those given greatest attention in their media.<sup>12</sup>

Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann (1974; c.f. also Glynn and McLeod, 1984) wrote that besides setting the public agenda, the media may influence people's inclinations to speak up or keep quiet by suggesting which views would meet with social approval and which might be disapproved or even condemned. Thus, a "spiral of silence" could be created by centralized, controlling media, threatening interpersonal sanctions. Gerbner and Gross (1976) postulated that television has largely replaced the family, play group, neighbors and teachers in "cultivating" people from infancy into the "mainstream" of a common symbolic environment. The analysts conclude that socialization now results mostly from mass-produced images and messages under centralized control. Howard Gardner (1985) traced the emergence of the "process" paradigm during the 1960s and 1970s that was fed by these, and other currents of theory and research. The paradigm focuses on cognitive processing, media framing, and active audience engagement in mass communication. Scholars giving voice to this interdisciplinary process research generally supplement

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<sup>12</sup>For a literature review on the agenda-setting effects of the media, see Roberts and Bachen, 1981. Anthony Downs (1972) made attempts to assess the influence of the media on the policy agendas of decision makers; see also Molotch and Lester, 1974; Blanchard, 1974; Lambeth, 1978; Protess et al., 1985; and D. R. Leff et al., 1986. For a theoretical account of the connections between the media, public opinion, and policy information, see Molotch et al., 1982.

attitudinal survey methods with other data collection methods, including content analysis and focused group discussions.

While psychologists were generally eager to adopt the process paradigm in their studies of cognition, political scientists were mostly slow to do so. The process paradigm did eventually lead to the elaboration of a model of "political schemata," or interpretive structures. The media "frame" public events with schemata, such as metaphors, and people often adopt them to understand policy questions.

Charles Tilly, a historian interested in collective action, described the political applications of process research (Beniger, 1987, p. S53). He wrote that they were concerned with the "framing and reframing of public issues as both a product of and a limit on debate and decision making."

Beniger (1987) suggests that wider acceptance of the process paradigm might lead to a shift from the popular definition of public opinion as the aggregation of individual attitudes by pollsters back to the sociological idea of public opinion as diverse manifestations of social control--the means by which we simultaneously control and are controlled by one another through public communication.

The shift from a focus on persuasive communication to a focus on processes like framing has also led, says Beniger, to a corresponding shift in research focus from partisan advocates (e.g., political parties) to the "objective" and potentially more influential communicators like professional

news reporters and commentators (c.f. Page et al., 1987). Many scholars (Epstein, 1973; Altheide, 1974; Roshco, 1975; Schudson, 1978; Tuchman, 1978; Gans, 1979; Gitlin, 1980; and Bennett, 1983) portray these communicators as active shapers or framers of public opinion.

Although this perspective is reminiscent of the mass society paradigm's image of a powerful media, the process paradigm abandons mass society's passive audience. The audience is no longer made up of Lazarsfeld and Merton's (1948) "narcotized" nonparticipants. Contrary to Gerbner et al. (1980), the audience is not adrift in a "mainstream," repetitive pattern of mass-produced images.

The mass audience that process analysts see plays an active role. Its members adopt media-framed schemata for purposes of understanding issues and what should be done about them, and flesh out the schemata as they use them over time (Neuman, 1987). In their study of the California "tax revolt," Sears and Citrin (1982, p. 78) suggest that the schematic thinking of voters makes them "more resistant to influence, and more likely to deduce attitudes on new issues from pre-existing attitudes."

The importance of people as information sources was demonstrated in studies of political communication effects in the mid-1950s by Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955; c.f. also Tichenor et al., 1973; J. Robinson, 1976). Mason (1963) and Rogers (1983) discussed their importance in the diffusion of

innovations. The idea of people as interpreters of "major" news stories has been dealt with by Troidahl and Van Dam (1965), Greenberg (1964), and Gantz (1983). Doris Graber (1984, p. 209) concluded that

[p]olitical communication is very much a transactional process. Mass media messages are not imprinted on the minds of media audiences in the precise manner in which they are offered. Rather, audience members condense the offerings in their own ways, select aspects of interest, and integrate them into their own thinking.

Besides research on agenda setting, the "spiral of silence," and cultivation analysis, several other areas of investigation are relevant to the process paradigm. Gratifications research (Blumler and McQuail, 1969; Katz et al., 1973; Blumler and Katz, 1974) establishes the audience of mass communication as an active processor of information in pursuit of individual needs. The media might be said to supply information to think with (Katz, 1987). Studies of the "knowledge gap" (Tichenor et al., 1970, 1973) show that people who get information are the most likely to get still more. This may be because information creates cognitive structures that require "fleshing out." An important macrosocietal effect of this is that the knowledge-rich get richer while the knowledge-poor remain somewhat poor. Convergence and co-orientation models (McLeod and Chaffee, 1973; Chaffee and Choe, 1980) emphasize that people exchange information, including media information, and in doing so converge at least partially on shared schemata. Work on political cognition

(Axelrod, 1973, 1976; Becker et al., 1975; Lau et al., 1979; Modigliani and Gamson, 1979; Sears et al., 1980; Bennett, 1981; Fiske and Kinder, 1981) helps supply the microdynamics of the process paradigm, studying small groups and using detailed data collection. Various approaches to audience decoding, focusing on individual "negotiations" within the constraints of message and text, also supply microdynamics to the process paradigm (Worth and Gross, 1974; Hall, 1974; Turner, 1977; Bourdieu, 1980; Csikszentmihalyi and Kubey, 1981). Some of these decoding approaches emphasize the importance of information exchange within "interpretive communities" for cognitive processing, which, as gatekeepers, exercise the control of public opinion and culture. This idea plays a central role in hegemonic models (Hall, 1977; Hall et al., 1978; Gitlin, 1979, 1980). Studies of "media events" (Katz, 1980a; Katz et al., 1981) suggest that sometimes, television can even frame social reality globally.

In 1963, the Roper Organization reported that television had finally surpassed newspapers in public surveys as "the source of most news." Already by 1960, television had become the most common household appliance in America. Yet Roper's data may be misleading. Other surveys bring "single source" results into question (Carter and Greenberg, 1963; Stone, 1969-70; J. Robinson, 1971; Stevenson and White, 1980). People's news habits may be more complicated than single source surveys would tend to suggest. In 1982, for example,

64 percent of Americans said they rely on television as their principal news medium, compared to 44 percent relying on newspapers and 18 percent relying on radio. The percentages add to more than 100 because many people rely on more than one source (Witt, 1983). A February 1985 *Los Angeles Times* survey found 64 percent of respondents agreeing that "although there is some bias in the news media, the average person has enough sources of news to be able to sort out the facts." A 1981 *Los Angeles Times* survey found that most people relied on television for world news, but on newspapers for local news. On average, 62.4 million newspapers are sold in the U.S. every day, and readership figures are considerably higher than circulation figures. According to Evans Witt (1983), one study of 37 major markets put the average number of readers per paper at 2.7. As noted above, until 1963, newspapers were the primary source of news and information for most Americans. This is significant because the reading public may be assumed to edit out articles that are not of interest. Many analysts would contend that since most Americans are not interested in foreign affairs, most Americans simply pass over written articles on foreign affairs.

If this were true in the past, it is not necessarily true today. Data collected by Audits & Surveys, Inc. (Bogart, 1984) indicated that most of the public and three-fourths of the college graduates polled said they were more interested in international and national news than in local news. In 1961,

most of the public had said they were more interested in local news. The more recent data also suggest that the high level of interest in international news cuts across all segments of society. Interest dipped only slightly among people aged 18 to 24, among those with low income and education levels, and among those living in rural communities. Eighty-four percent of newspaper readers said they usually read international or world news.

The impact of television on its audience is generally conceded to be greater than that of newspapers, but the impact continues to be measured and debated. Perhaps as many as 50 million Americans tune in the three major networks' evening news programs on a given weeknight (Witt, 1983). Shanto Iyengar and his colleagues (1982), by experimentally manipulating the content of news programs viewed by volunteer audiences, found that people considered specific issues to be of greater importance as exposure to those issues in news reports increased. The analysts also found that television news usually bolsters the views of politically knowledgeable people, and often creates opinions among the less knowledgeable.

Whether it bolsters or creates opinions, television has made the public a more critical element in foreign policy making. It has done so by expanding the foreign policy audience and by increasing the standing of various foreign policy issues with the public (Schneider, 1982). The sheer



volume of exposure to new information, particularly that which is violent or otherwise dramatic, assures a more involved, albeit sometimes inadvertent, viewing public.

In most American households, according to the Nielsen Organization, the television set is on more than six hours a day. A large portion of the public watches television news daily, and regular news breaks provide continual exposure to news. News as entertainment has emerged as an American societal phenomenon. CNN, which was first aired in 1980, and other 24-hour news channels, have gained significant shares of the viewing public. Exposure to television news may create appetites among many viewers for further information, to be fed by other media.

Leo Bogart (1984, p. 719), executive vice-president and general manager of the Newspaper Advertising Bureau, argues that

[t]he issue of [news source] preeminence is . . . meaningless in a society where half the public is exposed daily both to newspapers and to television news.

Newspapers are part of the life of nearly nine out of ten Americans and touch two out of three on a typical day. Besides doing research on media exposure, the Roper Organization has, since 1959, tried to determine the relative credibility of news sources. Since 1961, television has come out on top in Roper polls asking people which source they would believe if the media offered conflicting versions of the

same event. In 1982, 53 percent said they would believe a television news version of a story, compared to 22 percent accepting the newspaper version (Witt, 1983). Political scientist Michael Robinson and Andrew Kohut, president of the Gallup Organization, found data (1988) suggesting that (1) the overwhelming majority of the public believes most of what it hears, sees, or reads in the nation's news media; (2) "believability" of the news media is not closely related to the political and demographic variables that typically divide public opinion in America; and (3) although the public does group the news media in terms of believability, the groupings are not drawn between television and print journalism. The grouping is not a simple dichotomy, according to Robinson and Kohut's data, but varies according to what respondents perceive as "routine" news sources (e.g., major networks, local broadcasts and newspapers), "special" news sources (e.g., newsweeklies and the *Wall Street Journal*), "soft" news sources (e.g., *Parade* and Paul Harvey), and media "personalities."

According to the Nielsen Organization, the three major television networks carried 37.5 hours of news per week in 1982, up from 29.5 hours in 1971. The three networks' share of the television audience during the early evening network newscast period was 66 percent in 1984 (Bogart, 1984).

Watching television news and comprehending that news are

two different things, however.<sup>13</sup> A study by John Robinson and Mark Levy (1986) found that the public appears to comprehend the main point of only about a third of stories published and broadcast over the course of a week. The major predictor of news comprehension was education (see J. Robinson, 1967; Hyman et al., 1977 for similar results). Other, less powerful, correlates were interest in the news; sex (men tended to have higher comprehension scores); age (an increase in comprehension with age, with some tendency for scores to be lower in old age); and number of media to which exposed. The analysts also found that conversation about the news is a clear correlate of comprehension. They wrote (p. 160) that "interpersonal channels may play at least as important a role in the public's awareness and understanding of the news as exposure to the news media." This last finding seems to bolster both the limited effects and the process paradigms.

Although television and the other media of mass communication are not among the main players in foreign policy making, their influence is important as a conveyor belt of

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<sup>13</sup>Additional studies on news recall and comprehension studies are O. Findahl and B. Hoijer (1976); E. Katz, H. Adoni, and P. Parness (1977); and B. Gunter (1980). Studies of recall and comprehension of a single evening's news include W. R. Neuman (1976); and J. P. Robinson, H. Sahin, and D. Davis (1982). On cumulative exposure to the news over a week, see L. Bogart (1981); and W. D. Woodall, D. Davis, and H. Sahin (1983). On the interpersonal utility of the news as an enhancement to recall and comprehension, see M. Levy (1978a and b).

information, ideas and arguments that may influence the principal players and contribute to popular perceptions on foreign policy issues.

Michael Ledeen (1984, p. 5), formerly a senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, contends that

[i]n Washington, the first document that most top government officials read each day is the set of press clippings that every agency prepares. The press clips have more influence on policy than even the most secret intelligence, for they determine the day's political agenda and provide the starting point for the evening news.

Herbert Stein (Wattenberg, 1986, p. 60) said that when he was in government, he found a tendency among policy makers to

think that what Dan Rather says is what the public thinks. Or you read *Time* and *Newsweek*. . . . We had the impression of what the country was thinking because we were reading *Time*, *Newsweek*, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and watching all the news shows. . . .

Although they were dealing with a domestic, as opposed to a foreign policy issue, Cook et al. (1983) found that actual policy changes following a televised report resulted more from direct pressure by the journalists themselves than from demands by the public or political constituencies.

At the other end of the conveyor belt is the public and, as noted above, the role of the media in shaping the public's foreign policy attitudes has long been debated. It is still

largely a matter of intelligent speculation than of demonstrable fact.

The decision studies conducted during the late 1940s concluded that the impact of the media on voting choices was small (Lazarsfeld et al., 1948; c.f. also Hero, 1959). Campaign propaganda, instead of altering the public's preferences, was usually found to reinforce preferences. People were found to give more credence and attention to media appeals that bolstered their established predispositions.

Yet more recent studies suggest that, contrary to having a minimal effect, the news media may be full-fledged opinion managers. They can both direct public attention to certain issues and shape opinion about issues. Fluctuations in public concern for various national problems during the 1970s and 1980s have been found to correlate closely with the attention paid to those problems by the major media (Funkhouser, 1973; MacKuen and Coombs, 1981). Iyengar et al. (1982, p. 855) concluded that by ignoring some problems and attending to others, television news programs profoundly affect which problems viewers take seriously. Television, with its often graphic and dramatic footage of events touching U.S. foreign policy, has great power to capture attention, which in turn may lead to greater influence. Surveys have consistently shown the news media to be regarded as more honest than political leaders (*Los Angeles Times* Poll, 1981; ABC Viewpoint Poll, 1984; M. Robinson and Kohut, 1988). Even before the

Iran-contra affair erupted, President Reagan's believability rating was lower than that of Giraldo Rivera and lower than all other news media personalities except Phil Donahue, Jack Anderson and Ann Landers (M. Robinson and Kohut, 1988).

Presidential Counsellor (later Attorney General) Edwin Meese told a group of journalists in 1982 that the impact of the media on foreign policy is especially noticeable (Fromm, 1983, p. 29):

The press acts as intermediary between the public and the government as a national interpreter of events. The very fact that the press keeps asking if the President is going to send troops to El Salvador makes it an issue even though Mr. Reagan has stated he is not planning such action.

A February 1985 *Los Angeles Times* nationwide survey found journalists to be more liberal than other college-educated professionals and the public on both social and foreign policy issues, including the nuclear freeze, sanctions against South Africa, and covert aid to the contras. In 1984, journalists voted two-to-one for Walter Mondale. Yet the public does not generally perceive a liberal bias in the media. In the *Times* survey, liberals tended to describe the newspaper they read as liberal; conservatives described their newspaper as conservative. To some extent, people may read newspapers they agree with, but more likely, they assume that the newspaper they read shares their outlook (Schneider and Lewis, 1985, p. 8). In any case, newspaper readers do not feel they are being

indoctrinated. When the *Times* survey asked respondents to describe their paper's position on specific economic, social and foreign policies, two-thirds, on the average, did not know.

Aaron Wildavsky (1987) suggests that it is not liberal or conservative bias that makes its way into the news so much as an egalitarian bias. Most journalists, he concludes, believe in greater equality of condition and see themselves as battling against entrenched and unworthy authority. Defense, he says (p. 96), is viewed as an egalitarian issue

because it takes resources away from social welfare, because rich governments should not gang up on poor ones, and because the established authorities deliberately over-estimate the Soviet threat in order to perpetuate an unjust (i.e., inegalitarian) system.

The authors of *The Media Elite* (Lichter et al., 1986) found more than half the journalists employed by the major national media believe that American exploitation causes Third World poverty, that the goal of American foreign policy is to protect business, and that use of its resources abroad is immoral.

Public perceptions and attitudes were influenced by the manner in which the Iranian hostage situation was projected by the media in 1979-80. They were perhaps even more influenced by the torrent of photographs and film that brought the distressing news in its most graphic form into almost every home.

The influence of television on the decisions of government has yet to be accurately measured, although most analysts agree that it played a significant role in the success of the civil rights movement and anti-Vietnam War movement. Analyst Joseph Fromm (1983) contends that the nuclear freeze movement only became a political force when it was "discovered" by the press and television early in 1982. This was many months after it had established itself at the grassroots level across the country. Only then, concluded Fromm, did the political leadership in Washington take note and react by showing greater enthusiasm for renewed strategic arms negotiations with the Soviet Union.

Television coverage of Israel's invasion of Lebanon and siege of West Beirut in 1982 also had a dramatic effect on U.S. public opinion and, apparently, on that of Ronald Reagan personally (Fromm, pp. 34-35). The videotapes helped to erode traditional support for Israel and contributed to pressure being brought on Israel to halt the attacks (Thimmesch, 1982).

U.S. foreign policy makers are sensitive to the potential impact of television. This was illustrated in discussions within the Reagan administration over the American commitment to keep a peace-keeping force in Lebanon. A participant in a National Security Council meeting on the subject reported that much of the meeting was devoted to a discussion about how the public would react if the Marines were caught up in hostilities that were screened live on television (Fromm, 1983). The



discussion was prophetic: television footage of the aftermath of the bombing of the Marine barracks at the Beirut airport was instrumental in the Reagan administration's decision to withdraw U.S. troops from the area.

The impact of televised warfare is a particular concern of General William Westmoreland, who commanded American forces in Vietnam. He noted (Fromm, 1983, p. 35) that

Vietnam was the first war ever fought without any censorship. Without censorship, things can get terribly confused in the public mind. Television is an instrument which can paralyze the country.

Even television commentator Roger Mudd has wondered (Fromm, 1983, p. 35) whether a "democracy which has uncensored TV in every home will ever be able to fight a war, however moral or just." Such concerns were undoubtedly in the minds of Reagan administration officials when they restricted media access during the invasion of Grenada in 1983.

Political leaders often have the potential to lead public opinion by conducting what amounts to successful propaganda campaigns. The most successful at developing a common will among masses of disparate individuals may be those most adept at manipulating concepts and symbols (Lippmann, 1922; Lasswell, 1927, 1935). Publicist Edward Bernays (1923) described the task of public relations experts as the "crystallization" of public opinion--transforming individual attitudes into a collectivity that can exert influence on public behavior and policy decisions.

The idea of an adversarial relationship between the media and the government seems irresistible to members of both institutions. But the truth is that the news media often follow the official administration view of things. They generally report, at face value, the administration line, and may suppress some stories at the urging of the administration. Through news conferences and speeches, the president can convert the media into platforms from which he can press his point of view.

Ronald Reagan, the "Great Communicator," was often adept at using the electronic media in winning support for his policies. Other Reagan administration officials also had easy access to the media to argue their case, an advantage not equally shared by their opponents. Leslie Gelb, formerly employed by the Defense and State Departments and subsequently the *New York Times* national security correspondent, said (Fromm, 1983, p. 33) that "any halfway competent and disciplined administration can get its story published pretty much the way it wants."

Writing about Reagan's "press honeymoon," the director and assistant director of the George Washington University Media Analysis Project (M. Robinson and Sheehan, 1981, p. 58) noted that

[i]n years past, presidents tended to seek a honeymoon with Congress, not the press. As the nature of politics has changed, however, presidents have found that they have more immediate and contin

uous ties with the press corps than the Hill. Most important, the media offer a much tighter link to public opinion than does Congress.

A journalistic philosophy of objectivity and concern for not taking sides in reporting the news may often obviate adversarial news coverage by the media. Yet an overreliance on official sources of information also leads to one-sided reporting. A more useful perspective of the relationship between the media and the government may be one of symbiosis: government officials use the media to get their message across, and the press use officials as irreplaceable sources. As *New York Times* columnist James Reston noted, "What we [journalists] do most of the time is, we really are a transmission belt" (Hertsgaard, 1988).

Mark Hertsgaard (1988), author of *On Bended Knee: The Press and the Reagan Presidency*, wrote that

because of government manipulation and voluntary self-censorship, the major American news organizations too often abdicated their responsibility to report what was really going on in Washington during the Reagan years. Indeed, there were many instances where network and newspaper executives actually stifled their own reporters.

The Reagan White House established extensive public relations and press relations apparatuses. The administration was the first to establish an Office of Communications that sought to coordinate the "message" flowing from the White House to the outside world, including speechwriting, press

relations, and related activities. The White House director of communications superceded the president's press secretary in the administration's hierarchy of influence.

In morning meetings, the "line of the day" would be set, later to be fed to the press, particularly the three major television networks. Former CBS News senior producer and now syndicated columnist Richard Cohen claims (Hertsgaard, 1988) that White House influence over his network's reporting was so pervasive that former White House deputy chief of staff Michael Deaver "should have been listed as the executive producer on all of our political stories in 1981."

Leslie Janka, a former Reagan deputy press secretary, has said that the president's media team practiced a strategy of "manipulation by inundation." They operated, said Janka, on the assumption that the media would take what they were fed. This would be particularly true if the stories were well-packaged, "pre-masticated," and in the format the media wanted (Hertsgaard, 1988).

Michael Deaver and Reagan's director of communications from 1981-84, David Gergen, have suggested (Barnes, 1988a) that media deference was particularly great toward President Reagan because "the press felt guilty about having trashed Carter." Perhaps less credible is the opinion of Ben Bradlee, executive editor of *The Washington Post*, who said (Barnes, 1988a, p. 60) that the press applied a different standard to Reagan than they had to Carter and Nixon, partly because of

the unconscious feeling we had . . . that we were dealing with someone this time who really, really disapproved of us, disliked us, distrusted us, and that we ought not give him any opportunities to see he was right.

The Reagan White House was determined that press relations would be conducted on the White House's terms, not those of the press corps. President Reagan held fewer than 30 news conferences in his first term, roughly half the number conducted by Carter. Reagan's press conferences were conducted in a more controlled atmosphere and followed specific rules. Outside of press conferences, the president refused to answer questions during "photo opportunities," and chose to answer or ignore reporters' shouted questions as he left or arrived at the White House via helicopter. The president, who wore a hearing aid, sometimes pretended not to hear the press (Barilleaux, 1988).

Juan Williams of *The Washington Post* has said that the White House had a policy of denying access to critical reporters, and that the strategy worked well (Barnes, 1988a).

No doubt the Reagan administration's coordinated strategy for dealing with the media helped tip the balance of reporting in the president's favor, especially where the context and structure of presidential television appearances were concerned. Even if a speech or appearance did not include a direct appeal for public support of the president's policies, the visual settings for presidential speeches or announcements

imparted a message. For example, on the 40th anniversary of D-Day, the president stood on the beach at Normandy with Francois Mitterand and spoke of defending freedom.

Robert Parry, a former national correspondent for *Newsweek*, has written that the Reagan administration used its public diplomacy apparatus to pressure the press (Parry and Kornbluh, 1988, p. 16):

To be sure, previous administrations have tried to impose their political wills on the news media, dissembling and lying when necessary to protect foreign-policy misadventures. But the Reagan White House appears to be the first to have institutionalized the process. Employing the scientific methods of modern public relations and the war-tested techniques of psychological operations, the administration built an unprecedented bureaucracy in the NSC and the State Department designed to keep the news media in line and to restrict conflicting information from reaching the American public.

In a 1985 speech in Seattle, National Public Radio's (NPR) foreign affairs correspondent Bill Buzenberg said Otto Reich, the State Department's public diplomacy chief, had informed NPR editors that he had a consultant service monitoring all NPR programs on Central America and that he considered NPR reporting to be biased against U.S. policy in the region. Buzenberg recalled that Reich said he had made similar visits to various newspapers and television networks and had gotten some media organizations to change some of their reporters in the field because of a perceived bias (Parry and Kornbluh, 1988).

When Reagan administration policies fell into disfavor with the public, administration officials were sometimes tempted to blame the press, according to administration critic Michael Parenti (1986, p. 208):

. . . if the public does not support a policy, the [Reagan] administration concludes it cannot be because of anything wanting in the policy, but in the way the media packaged it.

More recently, *New York Times* columnist Walter Goodman (1990) remonstrated against Vice President Dan Quayle advancing the notion that a decline in George Bush's popularity, which had been attributed to his changeability on budget issues, could be traced to the way Washington correspondents covered the story. Goodman wrote,

Despite the reputation for liberal leanings of journalists in Washington and New York, they have proven themselves willing to pick on all residents of the White House, whatever the party label. . . . Skepticism is in the nature of the job, and the President exists to be the national target for praise and censure. More often than not, however, journalists, like politicians, take their lead from the public. They pick up on inchoate dissatisfactions and then feed them back in a form that both confirms and exacerbates.

Liberal activist William Dorman (1985a, 1985b) took the press to task for parroting the administration line when President Reagan denounced the Soviets as perpetrators of international terrorism, despite what Dorman said was no supporting evidence and a good deal of evidence to the

contrary. Also, he said, the press implicitly accepted Reagan's characterization of the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) as a "defensive shield," and gave short shrift to opposing viewpoints that SDI could be part of an offensive, first-strike arsenal. When Reagan announced, after twenty years of denouncing the idea of trying to negotiate arms agreements with the Soviets, that he was for arms control and nuclear disarmament, the press took him at his word, said Dorman. The press continued to report the new line, he said, though Reagan refused to join the Soviets in a moratorium on nuclear testing, refused to join them in a nuclear freeze or in a no first-use pledge, and dismissed most Soviet arms offers as publicity stunts.

Fred Barnes (1988a), senior editor of *The New Republic*, takes a very different view. He insists that the press were not "pussy-cats" toward Reagan. On the contrary, he says, White House reporters were tireless in pointing out Reagan's personal flaws and the shortcomings of his policies. Barnes agrees that it may have been the intention of "Deaver and friends" to make reporters "wholly owned subsidiaries of the White House press operation." But he said it didn't work:

They put out a 'line of the day.' Reporters scoffed. They controlled access to Reagan. Reporters found other sources who revealed, often with juicy, unflattering details, what Reagan was up to.

For the most part, wrote Sidney Blumenthal (1983), the press was not derelict in holding President Reagan to strict



standards. Every error was publicized, he wrote, at least by the leading reporters of the leading newspapers. But his misstatements rarely became a public issue. He earned the moniker "teflon president" precisely because negative press about his gaffes and misstatements rarely seemed to "stick." This was extremely frustrating for many journalists, for whom getting the facts wrong is a cardinal sin. Indeed, a series of lapses would likely lead to a reporter being fired. "The central story about Reagan," wrote Blumenthal (p. 14), "is not that he misses facts. It is that he has a world view to which facts are not important. Facts are pawns of his vision." Lou Cannon, of *The Washington Post*, believes that Reagan's mistakes were unintentional and spontaneous, so even if the press caught Reagan on inaccuracies, he wasn't caught. Blumenthal (1983, p. 14) wrote:

The kinds of mistakes Reagan makes are the kinds we all make--the wrong name, the wrong date. People identify with it. It's a function of his humanity. We could double the number of Reaganisms a week and it wouldn't change anything.

David Paletz and Robert Entman (1981, p. 197), emphasized the agenda-setting role of the media in their criticism of the media for its tendency to toe the administration line:

By misrepresenting public opinion, by emphasizing some opinions at the expense of others, the press deprives the unorganized masses of some of their potential power. The media short-circuit the process by which public preference may otherwise be translated into government policy.

President Reagan argued (Hallen, 1982) that the media should "show responsibility . . . exercise self-censorship," and hold back stories "that will result in harm to our nation." He voiced mixed emotions about the openness of the democratic process (*New York Times*, October 23, 1986) when he said, "You can't let your people know [what the government is doing] without letting the wrong people know--those who are in opposition to what you're doing."

Whether presidential administrations and the media are confederates or not, administrations and news reports about administration pronouncements largely frame the perceptual reality around which public opinion takes shape. They generally set the issue agenda, choosing what to emphasize and what to ignore or suppress. In doing so, they largely limit public discourse, public understanding, and public opinion.

Previously established mental predilections (conditioned perceptions) filter much of our informational and opinion intake. American concerns about drugs influenced public thinking about General Noriega. Decades of Cold War events and rhetoric helped to shape American attitudes toward communism. Yet there are many issues about which people have little or no predetermined opinion. Lacking competing information, new opinions may be implanted, although they seldom conflict drastically with established biases or fall upon completely open minds.

For example, exposure to Reagan administration pronounce-

ments and media reports, rather than direct contact, largely formed unfavorable public opinion toward the Sandinista government of Nicaragua. The war of words with Nicaragua began during Reagan's first year in office, with the administration openly warning Nicaragua to stop aiding and abetting the leftist guerrillas seeking to overthrow the government of El Salvador. The administration suspended \$15 million of \$75 million in economic aid Congress had voted for Nicaragua in 1980, and the aid was never resumed. The "implanted" negative view of the Nicaraguan government was persuasive largely because it was congruous with a long-standing climate of opinion in the U.S. against communism.

This negative view of the Sandinistas, however, did not translate into a consensus or even a majority of Americans backing an administration policy of direct military aggression against Nicaragua. Other strongly held opinions militated against direct U.S. intervention: fear of loss of American lives, fear of a broadening conflict, opposition to the draft, opposition to higher taxes to support a war, and perhaps many other cross-cutting variables. Yet the negative image propagated by the government and media reports did leave policy makers broad discretion to carry out aggressive measures short of direct intervention by U.S. troops. Even if public support for a military solution was not generated, a climate of opinion had been created that allowed for some flexibility. It also acted to prevent competing opinion about

Nicaragua from occupying the political high ground. Opposition views, particularly those of congressional Democrats, did not go unreported in the media, however. What seems paradoxical is that with liberal newspaper journalists outnumbering conservative newspaper journalists by more than three-to-one (Schneider and Lewis, 1985), there was not more of an anti-contra bias in the press.

## CONCLUSION

Whether viewed as being a cyclic, linear or random phenomenon, evidence suggests that the democratization of foreign policy making was generally strengthened during the Reagan presidency. As a general trend in the American democratic system, this seems unlikely to be reversed in the foreseeable future.

Public opinion vis-a-vis foreign policy issues played an uncharacteristically important election role in the primaries and in the Republicans' successful 1980 presidential campaign. In January 1980, 42 percent of the public thought foreign affairs was the most important problem facing the country. Only 3 percent had thought that a year before. The public's perception of Jimmy Carter's weakness in the conduct of foreign affairs, especially regarding the hostage situation in Iran, and Reagan's promise to provide "strong leadership" were important election factors. While inflation and the economy topped the list of most important issues for Reagan voters (40 percent), the combined issues of U.S. prestige around the world (19 percent) and the crisis in Iran (nine percent) were more important to them than balancing the budget (26 percent), unemployment (20 percent), reducing federal income tax (13 percent), or abortion (5 percent). Unemployment topped the list for Carter voters (29 percent), followed by inflation and the economy (23 percent), with the crisis in Iran running a

close third (21 percent). Among those who took an issue position on the crisis in Iran, 63 percent voted for Reagan. In 1984, foreign policy issues were less important to voters, and although the Democrats thought they could take advantage of Reagan's somewhat low foreign policy approval rating, foreign policy issues proved to be losers for Walter Mondale. Reagan boasted that during his administration, not one inch of territory had fallen to the communists. White males, who voted for Reagan by a two-to-one ratio, cited Reagan's strong leadership (77%) as a factor in their voting decision.

Ronald Reagan broadened the foreign policy opinion pool by bringing an opinion group into foreign policy making that had generally been excluded in the past. And there is some evidence to support the notion that Reagan was adept at molding and manipulating public opinion, though his efforts to create broad support for his preferred policies in Central America and South Africa were less successful than he would have liked. The "Great Communicator's" line of the day was consciously and carefully orchestrated by his media advisors for maximum public effect. Reagan's "leadership effect" could make foreign policy issue polls bounce following major speeches or public relations events. But lacking enthusiastic, sustained public education efforts on his part and on the part of other administration spokespersons, poll numbers would very often slip back to previous levels within a matter of weeks or months.

The impact of public opinion on foreign policy making was not always direct, and it would be difficult, if not impossible, to show direct correlations between survey numbers and policy outcomes during the Reagan years. Rather, public opinion most often acted at the edges of policy formulation, constraining or promoting given policies that very likely were primarily driven by other factors. In general, however, there was a remarkable degree of harmony between opinion and policy during the Reagan presidency.

By the time he had one term of office under his belt, President Reagan seemed to have perfected the technique of shifting his own policies or tactics just enough to avoid defeat at the hands of Congress. Repeatedly, upon encountering public and congressional opposition to his foreign policies, Reagan maneuvered abruptly and deftly, managing to gain more political credit for acknowledging reality than blame for having made mistakes in the first place. In some cases, he simply surrendered to his political adversaries and adopted their position. That happened in 1983 when he withdrew the Marines from Lebanon, and again in 1985 when he imposed sanctions on the white minority government of South Africa. Later in his second term, he appeared reluctant to compromise with Congress, and he was often left behind as Congress, supported by prevailing public opinion, established policy on its own.

If Congress was not always tractable, the president was

always personally popular with the American people, administration policy generally converged with opinion, and the public was generally deferent to the administration on most strategic and tactical facets of policy implementation. Although most respondents may have been thinking along economic lines, it is not unreasonable to assume that foreign policy figured in a June 1986 Gallup poll that found 69 percent of Americans satisfied with the way things were going in the United States; 76 percent had "quite a lot" of confidence in the future of the country.

The public gave the president high approval ratings for developing a sound national defense, standing up to the Soviets, and keeping the U.S. out of war. According to a July 1988 Gallup poll, 77 percent of the American people approved of President Reagan's handling of this country's relations with the Soviet Union. If administration policy was slow to act on the public's antinuclear sentiments, at the end of Reagan's tenure, the public gave him high marks for his pursuit of arms control.

High presidential popularity ratings and a generally supportive public mood were typical of the Reagan years, and may have led the emboldened and determined president to act contrary to public opinion vis-a-vis negotiating with hostage takers and, more particularly, providing covert military aid to the contras. On those issues, a divergence between opinion and policy remained, with opinion serving, perhaps, only to



slow the pace of the administration's preferred policies. The administration pursued those preferred policies despite the preponderance of contrary public opinion, and pursued them secretly at least partially because of contrary public opinion.

This is something of a paradox, because the Reagan administration was opinion-conscious. The mobilization of public support for the president's preferred policies was a key element in the Reagan administration's strategy of governance.

The White House set up an extensive "outreach program" for public relations and the administration established a sophisticated public diplomacy program. Outreach staffers in the public liaison office organized, before the fact, positive responses to the president's televised speeches from party, conservative and business groups. More questionable, perhaps even criminal, were the activities of some of the administration's public diplomacy operatives. Diplomacy, which had never before been so pointedly directed at a domestic audience, was expanded by the Reagan administration to include the persuasion of the American public of the correctness of administration foreign policies. The public diplomacy program, established by a national security decision directive (NSDD 77, January 1983), created a Public Affairs Committee chaired by the assistant to the president for communications and the deputy assistant to the president for

national security affairs. One part of the apparatus was the NSC Office of International Communications and Information Policy, which, despite its name, planned and monitored both the NSC's foreign and domestic public diplomacy campaigns. The NSC also chaired the Foreign Opinion Review Advisory (FORA) group, also a something of a misnomer, in that domestic opinion was critical to its deliberations. FORA directed various research activities in policy areas of interest to the administration and brought NSC-level policy makers from the NSC, the U. S. Information Agency, and the Departments of Defense and State together for briefings on the latest foreign and domestic public opinion polls. Perhaps the most effective agency within the public diplomacy apparatus was the Office of Public Diplomacy for Latin America and the Caribbean, housed in the State Department and intended to sell administration policy to the American public. Secret NSC polls were commissioned toward defining the parameters of foreign policy actions acceptable to the public. These polls also sought to divide the American public into foreign policy attitude groups that could be targeted for support.

U.N. Ambassador Jeanne Kirkpatrick asserted that President Reagan did not generally make foreign policy based on how popular given policies might be. But some Reagan staffers were avid poll-watchers who constantly weighed the political ramifications of policy decisions.

An Office of Planning and Evaluation, originally

reporting to Edwin Meese, Jr., was created within the White House to examine polls and portions of polls related to foreign policy issues, correlate its work with the NSC, and integrate that information into governance. The succession of White House chiefs of staff were often among the group that sought to relate polls to policy decisions, as was pollster Richard Wirthlin, who was an important Reagan advisor through both terms of office.

Wirthlin kept the president informed daily about public opinion on a variety of foreign policy issues and worked to improve the president's ability to mold public opinion. This included modifying the substance and style of Reagan's speeches based on information derived from technique refinements associated with focused group discussions.

Opinion and policy generally adjusted to each other during the Reagan presidency, with one leading the other on some occasions, and vice-versa. The president's job approval rating was nearly always higher than his foreign policy approval rating, however, especially in his second term.

Reagan's success in fulfilling his 1980 electoral mandate to provide strong leadership, correlating in the minds of many voters with national security, defense and foreign policy, may have paradoxically led to waning support for his policy preferences in his second term of office. As Americans felt more secure, their fear of Soviet communism lessened, their support for increased military spending weakened, and their

interest in negotiating an arms accord with the Soviets increased.

The fact of divided government during the Reagan presidency (the House was controlled by Democrats through all eight years, and the Senate after 1986) assured, to some extent, the potency of public opinion as the executive and legislative branches vied with each other to enlist public support for their foreign policy positions. The Boland Amendment and other attempts by the Democratic leadership to constrain unilateral presidential action in foreign affairs also acted as incentives toward greater democratization in foreign policy making.

The influence of interest groups, especially those with well-heeled political action committees, continued to strengthen during the Reagan years. The transactional phenomena typical of group-government relations were especially apparent in the case of pro-contra groups, as the White House (especially the NSC) buttressed, encouraged and even, on occasion, coordinated the activities of these groups.

A prominent place was assured for public opinion in foreign policy making during the Reagan years through the aggregation of interests. If corporate interests were especially strong in the conservative Republican administration of Ronald Reagan, the influence of more liberal groups was also felt, particularly that of the anti-nuclear lobby. The Israeli lobby had a rocky start with the Reagan adminis-

tration, but in time recovered much of its traditional strength, proving to be a forceful ally in the administration's foreign aid battles with Congress, and a formidable foe in its efforts to sell arms to Arab states.

The results of communications research are sometimes ambiguous and communications studies sometimes conflict with each other. It would behoove political scientists to renew their interest in this field as they seek to understand the intricacies of policy formulation.

Various components of the mass society model also remain fertile fields of investigation. During the Reagan presidency, two of the model's components were given greater credence. First, the contact of people through direct mass communications and mass feedback technologies was increased. Second, the likelihood of the triumph of democracy over totalitarianism was strengthened during the Reagan years, whether because of administration policies, the strength of democratic principles, the weakness of communist systems, or all three. In any case, that triumph was becoming most apparent toward the close of the Reagan presidency.

Considerable research also remains to be done regarding the contributions of the communications media to popular perceptions on foreign policy issues, and regarding media conveyance of information, ideas and arguments that may influence foreign policy decision makers. Several media phenomena occurred during the Reagan years that are of

particular interest in this regard. What might have been the impact of the increased number of hours per week of network news coverage during the Reagan years? What was the foreign policy issue awareness effect, if any, of the 1980 establishment of CNN as a 24-hour news channel and the growth of its audience share in subsequent years? What was the effect on public opinion during the 1980s of the plethora of television programs presenting the news as entertainment? What might be the impact of the fact that larger percentages of people in all segments of American society began expressing an interest in international news? Television may well have made the public a more critical element in foreign policy making by expanding the foreign policy audience and by increasing the standing of foreign policy issues with the public. This may have been especially true when those issues were illustrated with dramatic film footage.

Evidence from the Reagan years seems to confirm the conclusion that whether led or followed, public opinion has an impact on foreign policy. It is rarely ignored. Great political peril is likely when, on those rare occasions, it is ignored. Public involvement in foreign policy making is a fact in the American political system and public discussion of foreign policy issues is likely to continue, perhaps intensifying as domestic issues increasingly overlap foreign policy considerations. Unless some restriction is imposed on democratic processes, it would appear that the American

federal government, as the agent of the people, has little choice but to live with that involvement and act to help the public understand foreign policy issues and current administration positions on those issues.

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Appendix

REAGAN'S JOB AND FOREIGN POLICY APPROVAL RATINGS

## I. Ronald Reagan's Job Approval Rating

A. Source: The Gallup Organization Surveys (\_\_\_\_\_)  
 Question: Do you approve or disapprove of the way  
 Ronald Reagan is handling his job as president?

	1981	1982	1983	1984
Jan	51%	47%	35%	55%
Feb	55	47	40	55
Mar	60	46	41	54
Apr	67	44	41	52
May	68	45	46	54
Jun	58	44	47	54
Jul	60	41	42	52
Aug	60	42	43	54
Sep	52	42	48	57
Oct	56	42	46	58
Nov	54	43	53	61
Dec	49	41	54	59

	1985	1986	1987	1988
Jan	64%	63%	48%	49%
Feb	60	64	49	49
Mar	56			
Apr	52	63		50
May	55	62	49	50
Jun	58	68		48
Jul	63	64	53	51
Aug	65	63	51	51
Sep	60			
Oct			49	53
Nov	63	63		54
Dec	65			

B. Source: ABC/Washington Post Surveys (-----)  
 Question: Do you approve or disapprove of the way  
 Ronald Reagan is handling of his job as President?

	1981	1982	1983	1984
Jan		52%	42%	57%
Feb	68%	48	45	59
Mar	72	50		
Apr	73	51	49	
May	66	46	53	57
Jun			53	
Jul	62		52	54
Aug		49		
Sep	64	46	52	58
Oct	59	49	57	
Nov	52		63	
Dec	52	45	59	

	1985	1986	1987	1988
Jan	68%		50%	54%
Feb	62	65%		
Mar	60	65	46	
Apr	54	70	48	
May	57	70	52	50
Jun	66		50	
Jul	65			56
Aug			50	
Sep	62		52	54
Oct	63		54	57
Nov	67	57	50	
Dec	66	49	57	



## II. Ronald Reagan's Foreign Policy Approval Ratings

- A. Source: The Gallup Organization Surveys (\_\_\_\_\_)  
 Question: Now let me ask you about some specific foreign and domestic problems. As I read off each problem, would you tell me whether you approve or disapprove of the way President Reagan is handling that problem: Foreign policy?

	1981	1982	1983	1984
Jan			36%	38%
Feb	51%	44%		40
Mar	53	36		
Apr		36	32	
May		43		40
Jun		45		
Jul		36		
Aug	56	36	31	
Sep				
Oct	49	38	44	
Nov			46	50
Dec				

	1985	1986	1987	1988
Jan	52%	50%	33%	
Feb				
Mar	45			41%
Apr		52	33	
May	43			
Jun			37	
Jul	50	51		54
Aug				
Sep			34	
Oct				
Nov				
Dec		34		

B. Source: ABC/Washington Post Surveys (-----)  
 Question: Do you approve or disapprove of the way  
 Reagan is handling foreign affairs?

	1981	1982	1983	1984
Jan		52%	45%	42%
Feb		40		42
Mar		45		
Apr		53		
May		46		42
Jun			47	
Jul			42	43
Aug				
Sep		50	42	52
Oct	63%	44	55	
Nov	54		55	
Dec	53	40	47	

	1985	1986	1987	1988
Jan	55%		36%	47%
Feb	53	61%		
Mar	57		33	
Apr		69	37	
May	48	65	39	44
Jun	53		41	
Jul	56			54
Aug			42	
Sep	55	58	47	
Oct	62		48	
Nov	61		46	
Dec	58		57	

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