

The Effects of Electoral Concerns on Presidential Foreign Policy: The Case of Ronald Reagan

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Although previous scholarship indicates that foreign policy has only a minimal impact on voter behavior, contemporary research suggests voters do act upon their foreign policy preferences. Recognizing voters' policy concerns, political leaders have frequently modified their foreign policy positions to mitigate electoral vulnerability. Ronald Reagan's policies offer an example of such a shift. Reagan maintained hawkish positions toward Central America and the Soviet Union for most of his first term but, sensing public concern over such policies, adopted more conciliatory foreign policy positions, especially towards the Soviet Union, to reduce potential vulnerabilities in preparation for his 1984 reelection campaign. Notably, Reagan did not return to more aggressive policies following his reelection. Reagan's foreign policy shift demonstrates the impact that public opinion and domestic politics may have on foreign relations.

Conventional wisdom suggests that foreign policy has minimal influence on voter behavior, but recent scholarship challenges this assumption by finding that voters may punish officials who pursue unpopular foreign policy initiatives. In response to the views of the electorate, presidents may alter their foreign policy positions with the hope of reducing the risk of electoral defeat. President Ronald Reagan's shift from an aggressive, anti-communist stance to a more conciliatory foreign policy approach in the months preceding the 1984 election provides a case in point of a president's decision to alter his positions so as to moderate his political vulnerabilities. While possibly motivated by a short-term political goal, Reagan's foreign policy shift in preparation for his 1984 reelection campaign ultimately marked a permanent change in his international dealings and brought about lasting consequences for U.S.-Soviet relations. Ronald Reagan's policies demonstrate how government leaders modify their positions for political benefit in response to public opinion and attacks from political rivals.

Public opinion plays a considerable role in presidential decision making. A president must avoid alienating the public in order to maintain popular support for policy initiatives and to help ensure reelection.¹ Presidents know that they or fellow partisans can easily be voted out of office by an unsatisfied electorate as the opposition party can readily exploit public discontent with administration policies. Public opinion thus constrains presidential decision making.² Unpopular presidents may lose support from Congress and invite strong political opponents, perhaps even primary challengers as Jimmy Carter experienced in 1980.

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The simplest reasoning suggests that public opinion may exert less influence on a president's foreign policies than domestic policies since international concerns are more distant to the electorate and thus less likely to agitate the ire of voters. Research does indicate that the American electorate seldom has serious foreign policy concerns, supporting the popular assumption that elections rarely hinge on international issues. Since foreign policy is less salient to most voters than domestic policy, national economic and social concerns, not matters of foreign policy, become the issues that significantly impact election outcomes (Hughes 1978, 92-94; Hurwitz and Peffley 1987, 236). Attesting to the primacy of domestic concerns in American politics, Illinois Governor William G. Stratton remarked to Richard Nixon in 1960, "You can say all you want about foreign affairs, but what is really important is the price of hogs in Chicago and St. Louis" (White 1962, 206). Indeed, an extensive literature review by Aldrich, Sullivan, and Borgida (1989, 123-124) on the impact of foreign policy on elections concludes that most scholars place considerably greater emphasis on domestic issues than international issues, sometimes largely discounting the impact of foreign policy on voters' preferences. Hurwitz and Peffley (1987, 237) similarly find most research indicates that foreign policy generally only slightly affects election outcomes.

Other scholars, however, have challenged this widely accepted view and suggested that foreign policy can exert a significant impact on political campaigns and elections. Criticizing the traditional use of aggregate data to assess the impact of foreign affairs on voters' decisions, Hurwitz and Peffley (1987, 238-240) assume a more psychological approach in determining the influence of foreign policy on election outcomes. They suggest that an administration's foreign policy decisions impact voters' retrospective judgments of the president; voters may partially base their evaluations of the president on his methods to accomplish foreign policy objectives or on his actual foreign policy achievements. In their analysis of voter attitudes and preferences regarding foreign affairs, Hurwitz and Peffley (1987, 251) found that voters desiring a more accommodating approach to the Soviet Union had a lower approval rating of President Reagan despite the absence of war during his administration. Reagan's tough anti-Soviet policies thus caused some voters to be less inclined to support his reelection. Nincic and Hinckley (1991, 335) propose a similar argument, suggesting that voters' overall impressions of a president are partially shaped by his foreign policy positions, thus giving foreign policy stances an indirect impact on voter behavior.

Empirical research by other political scientists supports these conclusions. Approval of a president's foreign policy and handling of the economy together accounted for over 90 percent of the variance in presidential approval during the Carter and Reagan administrations. Moreover, a ten percentage point increase in foreign policy approval during these administrations brought about an increase of three or four percentage points in the president's overall job approval (Nincic 1990, 372). Aldrich, Sullivan, and Borgida (1989) conclude that information on foreign policy is readily available to the public and that campaigns can stimulate foreign policy attitudes; they thus assign foreign policy a prominent role in elections. Criticizing conventional perceptions of voter behavior, these authors

write that “candidates do not waltz before a blind audience [when discussing foreign policy]. Ironically, it appears that the only blind audience has been a significant portion of the scholarly community” (1989, 135). Similar observations lead Hess and Nelson (1985) to conclude that foreign policy is a dominant — although not necessarily a decisive — factor in most elections.

Public officials have generally seemed aware of the political significance of international affairs and the impact of public opinion on their foreign policy decisions. Indeed, scholarly research concludes that domestic political factors play a role in foreign policy decisions. Ostrom and Job (1986) suggest that domestic considerations, such as the “misery index” and a president’s job approval rating, figure prominently in a president’s decision to employ military force. Other scholars reach similar conclusions, asserting that domestic factors play a greater role than international considerations in influencing a president’s decision to use force (James and Oneal 1991). Meernik (1994), however, dismisses these findings, noting that since these political scientists only analyzed situations in which force is actually employed, they failed to fully examine all the opportunities to use force. Nonetheless, researchers have observed definite patterns which demonstrate the connection between foreign policy decisions and domestic political concerns.

Research by Stoll (1984) on the interplay between elections and the use of military force indicates that impending elections can affect a president’s foreign policy decisions. Since domestic issues are generally of more importance to voters than foreign policy issues, he suggests that presidents typically demonstrate greater reluctance to employ force during peacetime elections, preferring to maintain focus on domestic concerns. Stoll also observes that as presidents can benefit from a “rally ‘round the flag” effect, they are more likely to increase military force for dramatic demonstrations during wartime elections when foreign affairs are of more salience to voters. Stoll’s analysis of presidents’ use of force between 1947 and 1982 demonstrates the validity of his hypothesis.

Empirical findings and anecdotal evidence support the conclusions that foreign policy affects elections and that presidents, in turn, may consider domestic politics when making foreign policy calculations. During the Cold War, several instances can be noted when presidents altered their foreign policy positions in order to satisfy the electorate or undermine political attacks. As presidents were generally better served politically by appearing hawkish toward the Soviet Union and thus avoiding criticism of being “soft” on communists, Soviet policies often became less conciliatory during election time (Nincic 1990, 374). Aggregate data demonstrate this pattern: Cold War military spending was generally highest during the fourth year of an administration, and American-Soviet summits and arms control agreements were less common in election years (Nincic 1990, 386-387).

Incumbent presidents may also modify their stance on foreign policy issues in response to their challengers’ positions. Attacks from the right may motivate a president to adopt less conciliatory foreign policies in an effort to subdue political criticisms. Presidents Ford and Carter, for example,

adopted tougher stances toward the Soviets in response to Ronald Reagan's criticism (Nincic 1990, 381-383). In contrast, presidents who faced liberal opposition sometimes minimized their anti-Soviet rhetoric in order to win more support from moderates. The 1972 election illustrates this scenario. With his reputation as a staunch anti-communist stemming from his congressional career, Richard Nixon could voice moderate views without gaining the stigma of being soft on communism. His challenger in 1972, liberal South Dakota Senator George McGovern, could only attack Nixon from the far left. Nixon could thus use his efforts on the SALT I treaty to help establish his image as a peacemaker (Miller 1984, 85). The 1972 Republican platform, moreover, aimed to develop a contrast "between moderate goals historically sought by both major parties and far-out goals of the far left" (Republican National Committee 1972, 202).

Ronald Reagan's national political career illustrates the effects of public opinion and election concerns on the development of American foreign policy. As a challenger in the Republican primaries, Reagan pushed an incumbent president to adopt tougher policies toward the Soviet Union (Nincic 1990, 381-382). As his party's nominee, he capitalized on popular frustration with the current administration's failed foreign policy (Nincic 1990, 383). As an incumbent president, however, he adopted less hawkish rhetoric so as to neutralize charges from the left that he was a war-monger (Willey, Cullen, and Bernathan 1984, 20). This policy shift proved lasting. He ultimately reached agreements with the Soviet Union he probably would have condemned earlier in his political career (Nincic 1990, 390).

Ronald Reagan first sought the presidency in 1976 when he unsuccessfully challenged incumbent President Gerald Ford for the Republican nomination. Reagan criticized Ford's more conciliatory approach to the Soviet Union. During the campaign, Reagan declared, "There is little doubt in my mind that the Soviet Union will not stop taking advantage of détente until it sees that the American people have elected a new president and approved a new Secretary of State" (Ford 1979, 377). This pressure led Ford to abandon détente and the SALT II treaty (Miller 1984, 85).

In 1980, Reagan won the Republican presidential nomination after defeating more moderate candidates, including John Anderson and George H.W. Bush. Reagan then won the presidency, defeating incumbent President Jimmy Carter after a campaign that capitalized on public frustration with the incumbent president's policies. Foreign policy concerns figured prominently in this election. Indeed, the Iranian hostage crisis was the second most important issue for voters in 1980 (Hess and Nelson 1985, 143), as evening news reports continually reminded viewers of the number of days the American hostages had been held captive. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, which effectively ended the détente of the 1970s (Wallenstein 1989, 230), drew further attention to foreign affairs. These events led to heightened criticism of Carter's foreign policy. Addressing the Carter administration's Soviet policies, Reagan stated, "The Soviet Union has bet that Mr. Carter is too weak to respond to the invasion of Afghanistan. And they were right" (*Wall Street Journal* 1980, 3).³ Widespread

dissatisfaction with Carter's foreign policies, coupled with frustration over a weak economy, provided Reagan with a sizable victory.

An aggressive anti-Soviet stance marked Reagan's first term. Tough anti-Soviet rhetoric characterized his foreign policy speeches, such as his widely publicized reference to the Soviet Union as an "evil empire" in March 1983 (Nincic 1990, 383). Reagan's anti-communism was not mere rhetoric. He called for dramatic increases in defense spending and the development of sophisticated weapons systems. In the first three years of his administration, Reagan ordered the deployment of Pershing II missiles to Western Europe and won funding for the B-1 bomber, MX missile, and Trident submarine (Willey, Cullen, and Bernathan 20). The Senate, at Reagan's urging, also approved plans to produce chemical weapons, most notably nerve gas, for the first time since 1969 (Wormser 1984, 6-7).⁴ Perhaps Reagan's most controversial defense program was the Strategic Defense Initiative, a project which would have theoretically enabled the United States to win a nuclear war with the Soviet Union by deterring Soviet strikes. This so-called "Star Wars" program would have upset the security imposed by the threat of mutually assured destruction (Kissinger 1999, 118).⁵ Little attention was given to strengthening American-Soviet dialogue: Reagan did not meet with any leading Soviet officials until late in his first term. In 1984, he was criticized for being the only president since Herbert Hoover not to have met with the leader of the Soviet Union (Willey et al. 1984, 32).

Reagan's anti-communist policies were not restricted to the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Instead of simply containing communism, the Reagan Doctrine, as administration policies came to be known, sought to use military force to topple communist regimes (LeoGrande 1998, 475). Viewing the third world as a battleground between communism and democracy, the Reagan administration supported six covert paramilitary wars (LeoGrande 1998, 5). Following a leftist coup in Grenada, Reagan feared Cuban support for the new regime and ordered American marines to the island to restore order (Brands 1988, 612-613). The United States also continued its support of Afghan rebels resisting Soviet forces by providing funds and weaponry to the Mujahideen (Walt 2005, 108). Reagan also won repeal of the Clark Amendment, thus allowing resumption of covert activities in Angola (Kissinger 1999, 833). In an effort to subvert Iran's anti-American theocratic regime, the United States supported Iraq⁶ during its protracted war with Iran (Cleveland 2000, 404-405).⁷ In addition, Reagan deployed marines to Lebanon in 1983 to maintain stability (Jordan et al. 1999, 95).

The Reagan administration focused considerable attention on the subversion of Marxist movements in Central America and organized a propaganda campaign to win support from Congress and the American public for the administration's goals in that region (LeoGrande 1998, 146). In a National Security Council meeting in November 1981, administration officials outlined a Central American policy that called for economic and military aid for American allies (most notably in El Salvador), an increased American military and intelligence presence in the region, and American support for a covert war in Nicaragua. During the Reagan years, the United States provided El Salvador with \$4 bil-

lion in assistance (LeoGrande 1998, 5) as well as military advisors to assist in the suppression of Marxist forces. Furthermore, the United States trained Salvadorian troops at Fort Benning, Georgia, and Fort Bragg, North Carolina (LeoGrande 1998, 151). In Nicaragua, the administration supported the Contra rebels in their struggle against the leftist Sandinista regime (LeoGrande 1998, 146). According to LeoGrande (1998, 109), “The only choice for the United States [in the minds of hard-liners] was to find a way to dislodge the Sandinistas from power, or acquiesce in the creation of a ‘second Cuba.’” The Central Intelligence Agency’s use of covert operations, which had fallen out of favor during the Carter administration, gained renewed support from officials in the Reagan administration. Weeks after Reagan’s inauguration in 1981, CIA director William Casey proposed covert operations not only against regimes in Nicaragua, Guatemala, and El Salvador, but in Afghanistan, Cambodia, Laos, Grenada, Iran, and Libya as well (LeoGrande 1998, 114).

Such activities alarmed some members of Congress and much of the American public. Yet Congress was sometimes reluctant, or even unable, to block Reagan’s interventionism. Concerned with reports of human rights violations by the Contras, Congress passed tougher versions of the Boland Amendment designed to restrict funding to the Nicaraguan rebels (LeoGrande 1998, 343).⁸ Representative Ted Weiss was particularly critical of Reagan. He drafted and introduced a presidential impeachment resolution following the invasion of Grenada.⁹ Weiss also sponsored a bill prohibiting American support for military operations in Nicaragua and El Salvador; among the bill’s cosponsors was future vice presidential nominee Geraldine Ferraro.¹⁰ Alarmed by Reagan’s aggressive policies, the House passed a nonbinding nuclear freeze resolution in 1983 by a 278-149 vote (Wormser 1984, 10).¹¹

Reagan, nonetheless, remained fairly popular as his reelection approached. His approval ratings averaged 44 percent in 1983 and 50 percent in 1984 (Edwards and Wayne 2003, 117). The economic malaise of the late 1970s and early 1980s had given way to an economic boom, and the public had benefited from substantial tax cuts. Furthermore, Reagan’s foreign policies had restored the image of American strength. Americans, in general, were better off than they had been four years earlier.

To many voters, however, some of Reagan’s foreign policies were disconcerting. Mindful of the Vietnam experience, citizens expressed opposition to American involvement in Central American nations which they felt posed no serious threat to the United States (Powlick and Katz 1998, 34). Citizens also voiced concerns regarding nuclear proliferation and confrontation with the Soviet Union. Fear of a spiraling arms race drew hundreds of thousands of protesters to an arms control demonstration in New York City in 1982 (Montgomery 1982, 1). Indeed, peace activists achieved strength in the early 1980s and claimed credit for Democratic gains in the 1982 midterm elections (Meyer 1999, 194).¹² By early 1984, the deteriorating situation in Lebanon appeared to cost Reagan political support. In January 1984, only 42 percent of Americans approved of Reagan’s foreign policy and, in a hypothetical race, Reagan narrowly defeated Mondale, 49 percent to 46 percent (Smith 1985, 33).

Democratic presidential hopefuls capitalized on this dissatisfaction with Reagan's foreign policies. Six of the seven Democratic candidates—Walter Mondale, Alan Cranston, John Glenn, Jesse Jackson, George McGovern, and Gary Hart—supported a freeze on the development, production, and deployment of nuclear weapons (Meyer 1999, 194). The seventh candidate, former Florida Governor Reuben Askew, proposed a “nuclear frost” in which the number of nuclear weapons would be capped but new weapons could be developed (Boyd 1984, 10). Many of Walter Mondale's advertisements during the general election criticized Reagan's foreign policy or played on fears of nuclear war. One such ad showed scenes of nuclear missile launches, troops under fire in Central America, and images of flag-draped caskets of marines killed in Lebanon as headlines such as “The Secret War” and “The Price of Failure” flashed across the screen. This ad concluded with the message, “With the whole world at stake, it's time to move on, and we must do better. Mondale for president” (Mondale/Ferraro Committee, “Failure 3” 1984). In another ad, the song “Teach Your Parents Well” by Crosby, Stills, and Nash played while images of children were juxtaposed with footage of nuclear missile launches; Mondale then discussed the importance of arms control and his concern over Reagan's acceleration of the arms race (Mondale/Ferraro Committee 1984, “Arms Control 5”).

Reagan took efforts to neutralize Mondale's attacks. James Baker and George Shultz told Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Tony Motley that his primary duty was to ensure that Central American problems did not become campaign issues (LeoGrande 1998, 348). Indicating a slight easing of his Central American policies, in January 1984 Reagan decided to forego retaliatory action against the Sandinista regime for shooting down an American helicopter (Willey, Cullen, and Bernathan 1984, 20). That month he also announced plans to resume arms control talks with the Soviets (Meyer 1999, 195). In response to Mondale's criticisms that he had not met with any top Soviet officials since entering office, Reagan held a meeting with Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko shortly before the first presidential debate (Boyd et al. 1988, 209). To diffuse concern over American involvement in the Middle East, Reagan ordered the withdrawal of troops from Lebanon in early 1984 (Jordan et al. 1999, 135). Reagan's campaign ads also conveyed dovish messages; his famous “Bear” ad ended with the slogan, “President Reagan—Prepared for Peace” (Reagan-Bush '84 1984).

The electorate, nonetheless, was in stronger agreement with Mondale on foreign policy issues (Boyd et al. 1988, 201). Partly due to the absence of large scale conflict, Mondale failed to fully exploit public fears of war (Smith 1985, 33). Reagan's conciliatory foreign policy gestures, moreover, helped to lessen the public's fear of war. By election day, Reagan had neutralized many of Mondale's attacks on his foreign policy. Reagan's affable personality and a robust economy helped secure his reelection. Even in Mondale's home state of Minnesota, citizens basing their vote on foreign policy favored Reagan 61 percent to 39 percent (Smith 1985, 299). According to exit polls, only 9 percent of voters selected Reagan or Mondale on the basis that he “would keep us out of war”; these voters, however, favored Mondale by a margin of 85 percent to 14 percent (Smith 1985, 33). Reagan won the election in a landslide, taking every state except Minnesota.

After his reelection, Reagan's foreign policy did not revert to the aggressive anti-Soviet stance of his first term. Stoll (1984, 233) writes that foreign policy decisions made for electoral gain are generally taken seriously by foreign powers and that the incumbent administration would only face greater difficulties in reversing policies. Reagan, therefore, would have trouble abandoning his more peaceful positions. Some observers also feel Reagan had a genuine change of conscience (Meyer 1999, 195).

Reagan's second administration was thus marked by remarkably different policies toward the Soviet Union. Reagan no longer referred to the Soviet Union as an "evil empire." Instead, he worked with Soviet leaders to reach agreement on the 1987 Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty and held five summits with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev between 1985 and 1988; no important U.S.-Soviet summits had been held since 1979 (Nincic 1990, 388-390). At Reykjavik, moreover, Reagan nearly agreed to abandon nuclear weapons (Kissinger 1999, 110).

Although his policies toward the Soviet Union underwent a dramatic shift, Reagan maintained many of his aggressive Central American activities despite changes in outward rhetoric (LeoGrande 1998, 146). Although the administration continued its unpopular policy of funding the Contras, public opinion prevented the grant of unrestricted aid to the rebels (Sobel 1993, 270). The Iran-Contra scandal, however, dominated headlines during much of Reagan's second term, illustrating the unscrupulous methods administration officials sometimes employed in implementing foreign policy. Reagan also maintained aggressive policies toward Libya. He ordered the bombing of the North African country in 1986 and aided Chad after its 1987 Libyan invasion (Jordan et al. 1999, 95-253).

Ronald Reagan's foreign policy changes demonstrate the impact which elections may have on American foreign policy. His administration's attitudes toward the Soviet Union underwent a dramatic shift during his second term, even though his Central American policies remained largely unchanged. Perhaps the dynamics of the 1984 presidential campaign can explain this dichotomy. Nincic (1990) notes that Soviet issues generally comprised the primary foreign policy concerns among voters during the Cold War. Studies also revealed a general fear among the American public over nuclear weapons; a majority of Americans surveyed in 1984 stated that they thought more about the possibility of nuclear war than they had five years earlier (Public Agenda Foundation 1984). The Soviet Union was a nuclear superpower that posed a legitimate threat to the United States, and a renewed arms race may have increased the risk of global nuclear annihilation. While involvement in Central America conflicted with some traditional American values and threatened to drain American resources, Central American armies could not pose any serious threat to the United States. The Cold War, moreover, was a familiar struggle to the American people. Although citizens had some knowledge of their country's activities in Central America, many of these operations were covert. A September 1983 poll showed that only 10 percent of Americans believed that a Soviet confrontation would most likely occur in Central America, while 62 percent felt that such a showdown would take place in the Middle East (ABC/*Washington Post* 1983). Such sentiments, as well as the October 1983 bombing of marine bar-

racks in Beirut, may have led to Reagan's decision to withdraw forces from Lebanon in early 1984. During the campaign, Democratic candidates seemed to focus more on arms control and the fear of nuclear war than on the possibility of the development of a Vietnam-like situation in Central America, although statistics showed a large majority of Americans actually feared a protracted involvement.¹³ Anti-nuclear protests and calls for a nuclear freeze, as well as the public nature of American-Soviet relations, seemingly drew foreign policy attention during the 1984 campaign away from Central America and more toward the Soviet Union. Reagan thus modified his foreign policies in the area that raised the greatest fears and received the greatest attention. Easing tensions with a nuclear superpower, moreover, was an effective way to build a positive legacy. Furthermore, the administration realized that dealing with the Soviet Union, the focus of most American foreign policy since World War II, would probably boost Reagan's approval more than easing tensions in Central America.

Analyzing presidential policies is inherently difficult. Presidents have their own perspectives on issues but also receive counsel from advisors and face constraints from public opinion, Congress, interest groups, and international actors. Foreign policy formulation thus often involves cooperation from other world leaders. Perhaps greater attention should be given to the fact that Gorbachev took office in 1985, just as Reagan was starting his second term (Meyer 1999, 195). Gorbachev, unlike his predecessors, demonstrated willingness to make reforms and saw a need to cut military spending. Wallenstein (1989, 230) argues that the détente of the 1980s resulted primarily from changes within the Soviet system. Evidence does indicate that Reagan's Soviet policies underwent a dramatic shift in 1984, months before his reelection and Gorbachev's assumption of power. Although nonpolitical considerations may have contributed to Reagan's changes in foreign policy, the 1984 campaign, as well as other elections (namely 1976 and 1980), indicates electoral politics can influence foreign policy.

Political scientists should further investigate this phenomenon. Future research might center on the public's reception to these policy shifts. Does a president lose support by changing policies? Does the public interpret policy changes during election season as legitimate changes or as political ploys? Research could analyze the impact of foreign policy on congressional elections and the extent that electoral politics influences the foreign policy of second-term leaders. Political scientists may analyze data to determine if the electoral connection to foreign policy has changed in the post-Cold War era.

Although external forces shape American foreign policy, many individuals do not realize the impact of domestic factors, including public opinion and electoral concerns, on foreign policy. Ronald Reagan's career illustrates the influence of domestic policies on the formulation of foreign policy. Presidents modify their stances on issues exploited by political rivals—such as the nuclear arms race—to deprive opponents of an electoral advantage. Although policy revisions reinforce the stereotype of “flip-flopping” politicians who alter their positions based on popular sentiment, these changes should be expected in a democratic society. A democracy is designed to be government by the people, and elections ensure that politicians do not stray too far from popular sentiment.

Notes

1. Geer (1996) describes two models which presidents may follow to maintain public approval – the popularity maximizer model and the reelection seeker model. The popularity maximizer tries to maintain high levels of approval throughout his administration, while the reelection seeker demonstrates a willingness to make unpopular short-term decisions that may ultimately lead to high approval ratings at election time.
2. Occasionally, rivals within the incumbent party try to capitalize on popular discontent with a presidential administration's foreign policy, as demonstrated by Eugene McCarthy in his 1968 presidential bid.
3. Carter, nonetheless, hardened his Soviet stance following the 1979 Afghan invasion. He abandoned efforts to win ratification of SALT II, increased American strategic forces, and refused to participate in the Moscow Olympics (Nincic 1990, 383).
4. The House of Representatives refused to provide funding for the production of chemical weapons, thus killing this initiative (Wormser 1984, 6-7).
5. Critics charged the "Star Wars" program violated the Antiballistic Missile Treaty. Proponents responded with a broad interpretation of the treaty (*Christian Science Monitor* 1987, 2). President George W. Bush withdrew from the treaty soon after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks (Helms 2001).
6. The United States also covertly supplied Iran with weapons during the Iran-Iraq War as part of the Iran-Contra scandal.
7. Ironically, some of these strategic efforts aided future American enemies. American support to Afghan rebels benefited a future generation of Muslim terrorists (Walt 2005, 108). By aiding Saddam Hussein in a struggle against Iran, the United States provided assistance to a future member of the "axis of evil."
8. The administration, nonetheless, circumvented this law in the Iran-Contra Affair. Administration officials illegally funneled funds, which had been generated by secret military sales to Iran, to the Contra forces.
9. United States House of Representatives, Congressional Record, November 10, 1983.
10. United States House of Representatives, Congressional Record, May 9, 1984.
11. A similar resolution sponsored by Senator Edward Kennedy failed in the Senate, 58-40 (Wormser 1984, 12, 15).
12. Democrats gained twenty-six House seats in the 1982 midterms (Smith 1985, 357).
13. A May 1984 Gallup poll indicated that 72 percent of Americans felt that a Vietnam-like situation in Central America was either very likely or fairly likely to develop (Gallup 1984).

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