CHAPTER EIGHT

Crises and Recent Presidents

To provide examples from all four orientations about the influence of public opinion, in this chapter I examine a crisis case from each of the Carter, Reagan, Bush, and Clinton presidencies. The realist view says that these presidents would largely ignore public opinion; the Wilsonian liberal perspective implies that leaders would be constrained by it; and the beliefs model suggests that each president discussed in this chapter would deal with and react to public opinion in a different manner. In each case, each reacted as expected based on his beliefs. After a brief review of the expectations outlined in chapter 7, I consider a significant episode for each presidency: (1) Carter's reaction to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, (2) Reagan's response to the bombing of the marine barracks in Beirut, (3) Bush's decisions regarding Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, and (4) Clinton's moves after significant American casualties in Somalia.

Executor: Carter and the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan, 1979–1980

As I argued in chapter 7, Carter favored the public's input but did not think its support was necessary. Because of these beliefs, Carter would have considered public opinion but responded to it conditionally.

If he determined that public opinion had the "right" view or if he had only weak preferences on an issue, he would likely have been constrained by it (constrain category). However, if he could not ascertain the public's opinion, disagreed with it because he thought it was wrong, or had a strong view on an issue, he would likely have relied on his own judgment in reaching a decision (no-impact category).

The Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in late December 1979 after watching the Soviet-backed regime's control over its internal situation deteriorate for several months.[1] What began as a limited intervention with airborne troops during December 24–26 expanded into a large-scale Soviet incursion on December 27. The invasion occurred in an increasingly negative domestic and international environment for the Carter administration. Iranian students had overrun the American embassy in Tehran in November 1979 and continued to hold Americans hostage in the compound. In addition to perceptions of an increasingly hostile and interventionist Soviet Union, the administration faced domestic problems with a sour economy and a challenge by Senator Edward Kennedy (D, Mass.) for the 1980 Democratic presidential nomination.

Problem Representation

Carter sensed a broad threat from the Soviet action. His view was somewhat shaped by his feeling that the invasion signaled a new direction in Soviet policy because he (incorrectly) surmised that it was the first time the Soviets had employed troops to expand their sphere of influence since they invaded Czechoslovakia in 1948. In addition to his conclusions about the Soviets' intentions, Carter believed that the takeover gave them a greater capability to threaten the region and the Persian Gulf oil fields. In all, Carter indicated in his diary that the invasion was "the most serious international development that has occurred since I have been President."[2]

As he recalled in his memoir, Carter's initial reaction was to send "the sharpest message of my Presidency" over the hot line to Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev, calling the Soviet action "a clear threat to the peace" that "could mark a fundamental and long-lasting turning point in our relations."[3] Brezhnev's response two days later, in which he defended the invasion as having been invited by the Afghans to combat armed aggression, reinforced Carter's initial assessment and deepened his emotional reaction. Carter found the Soviet message insulting because in his eyes, the Soviet claims were "obviously false," which led

him to become emotionally agitated and angry, since he felt personally betrayed by Brezhnev. In a widely reported comment, Carter intimated that the invasion "has made a more dramatic change in my own opinion of what the Soviets' ultimate goals are than anything they've done in the previous time I've been in office."[4]

Although no evidence suggests that Carter was reacting to domestic concerns, internal factors may in fact have reinforced his strategic conclusions. Despite arguing that Carter truly reacted to what he saw as the strategic implications of the Soviet invasion, several secondary sources contend that the general domestic climate limited his range of responses. These proponents point out that the administration's dreary domestic situation and the general perception of Carter as weak on communism made a tepid reaction difficult if not impossible. These analysts conclude that domestic factors reinforced Carter's own personal predispositions rather than altering his behavior.[5]

Option Generation

In response to the Soviet invasion, the State Department and the NSC staff prepared an extensive list of possible sanctions to impose on the Soviet Union. The administration's discussions about policy responses focused on (1) directly imposing sanctions on the Soviet Union and (2) strengthening American defenses both globally and regionally. Carter eventually adopted nearly all the proposed actions.[6]

Policy Selection and Implementation

Even though Carter saw many of his possible choices as potentially damaging to him politically, he later reflected that he was "determined to make [the Soviets] pay for their unwarranted aggression without yielding to political pressures here at home."[7] When the idea of a grain embargo on American sales to the Soviets was initially raised on December 30, Vice President Walter Mondale opposed it because, he argued, it would have a negative influence on the forthcoming Iowa presidential primary. Carter deferred his decision on the issue.[8] When the administration returned to it on January 4, Mondale pointed out, "We need to be strong and firm, but that doesn't mean you have to commit political suicide!"[9] However, Carter appears to have been persuaded by several factors, other than public opinion, in deciding to impose a grain embargo. An analysis of the effects of possible sanctions found that a grain embargo would be the only one that would seriously harm the Soviet economy.[10] In addition, Carter wondered, "How I am going

to lead the West and persuade our allies to impose sanctions against the Russians if we aren't willing to make some sacrifices ourselves?" He recognized that he risked electoral retribution from the farmers, especially since he had promised in the 1976 presidential election not to embargo grain except in a national emergency, but he decided, "This is an emergency and I'm going to have to impose the embargo, and we'll just have to make the best of it."[11] As a result of this and other decisions, Mondale became increasingly concerned with Carter's placing national security interests above political and electoral ramifications.[12]

A possible boycott of the summer 1980 Moscow Olympic Games was bandied about as another response that Carter thought could be damaging domestically. He wrote in his diary on January 2, 1980, that a boycott would "cause me the most trouble [domestically], and also would be the most severe blow to the Soviet Union." In his view, removing a potential public relations bonanza for the Soviets would be an extremely effective punishment of their actions.[13] The impact of this move on the Soviets appears to have been the principal reason for his decision to favor the boycott. Carter raised the possibility of a boycott on January 4 in his public address announcing the grain embargo and other sanctions and eventually made the final decision on January 18. Although he does not mention it in his memoir, some analysts have reported that domestic pressure turned in favor of a boycott after the January 4 announcement, which may have partially precipitated the need for the January 18 decision.[14] Given that Carter thought he would suffer negative domestic consequences because of the boycott, it seems unlikely, however, that he would have taken the action to gain public support.

Carter also reluctantly asked that the Senate shelve consideration of the SALT II treaty indefinitely. Although he believed that the treaty remained in the national interest and hoped to pursue ratification at a later point, his decision reflected his recognition that the Senate would not vote to approve the treaty in the aftermath of the invasion.[15] In this case, his judgment suggested that postponement of the treaty's consideration might have a better chance of achieving his policy objectives than would pressure on the Senate.

The threat to the Persian Gulf of the Soviets' action led Carter to adopt several measures to bolster American defenses. Perhaps the most controversial was restarting the peacetime registration for the draft, which he viewed as necessary to bolster American defense mobilization capabilities. In his memoirs, he wrote that he faced "a near-rebellion"

from Mondale and adviser Stuart Eizenstat because they argued that the policy, which they characterized as an overreaction, would harm his reelection campaign. Despite their objections, Carter decided to proceed with the draft registration.[16] In addition, given Carter's perception of the regional threat engendered by the Soviet action, National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski gained Carter's support for a new policy toward the Persian Gulf region. Carter announced what came to be known as the Carter Doctrine in his State of the Union address, pledging that "an attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf regions will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force."[17] By issuing such a strong statement, the administration hoped to deter the Soviets from further expansion in the region.

Summary

Carter's responses are consistent with those predicted by his beliefs. Although the general context of public opinion may have reinforced Carter's belief in the need for a strong reaction, national security interests seem to have been the main driving force for his choices. During the policy selection stage, Carter considered public opinion in weighing his response to the Soviet invasion. Although he initially deferred the grain embargo decision because of public opinion, his eventual choices across a range of policies—including the grain embargo, Olympic boycott, and draft registration—were based on national security concerns, despite the anticipated public opposition and negative electoral consequences. In these instances, he viewed public opinion as a legitimate factor in decision making, but since his better judgment suggested otherwise, he chose to act against what he anticipated would be the public's reaction. On SALT II, Carter deferred to a domestic factor, Senate opinion, over his judgment of the national interest, but public opinion appears not to have directly affected this choice (although it may have affected the Senate's opinion). The other major national security action, the Carter Doctrine, was predicated on Carter's perception of the extent of the Soviet threat after the invasion, and public opinion did not affect his consideration of this issue.

Consistent with his normative public opinion beliefs, Carter considered the public's input and did not attempt to keep public opinion out of his decision. In addition, since he believed that public support of a policy was not necessary for it to succeed, public opinion was not the

final arbiter in his choices. At several points, when he thought the public's opinion was not correct and that the nation's security interests required a potentially unpopular policy, Carter relied on his own judgment rather than the dictates of public opinion. Thus, a *causal* influence of his beliefs is suggested at the problem representation, policy selection, and implementation stages as well as for the entire case (public opinion was not considered during option generation). The overall influence of public opinion on policy is coded in the *no-impact category.*

Guardian: Reagan and the Bombing of the Marine Barracks, 1983–1984

In most cases, since Reagan rejected public input and thought that public support was unnecessary, he would have based his decisions on national security considerations and not have been affected by public opinion (no-impact category). Nonetheless, if he considered a more protracted use of force and sensed opposition, he would have been constrained by public opinion (constrain category). On October 23, 1983, a truck bomb exploded at the marine headquarters building in Beirut, claiming 241 lives.[18] In September 1982, the marines had been sent to Beirut as part of a multilateral peacekeeping force to help the Lebanese government restore its authority. After intense negotiations, the United States pinned its hopes for rebuilding Lebanon on a May 17, 1983, agreement between Lebanon and Israel, which ended the state of war between the two nations and called for the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Lebanon. But when the casualties continued into mid-1983, Congress voted in late September to authorize the marines to remain in Lebanon for an additional eighteen months. Even so, Reagan detected a public restlessness about Lebanon, noting in his diary that according to the latest polls "on foreign policy—Lebanon—I'm way down. The people just don't know why we're there." Indeed, Gallup polls in late August and early September found that 53 percent of the public preferred withdrawing the marines and a mere 36 percent "approved of the Marine presence in Lebanon."[19]

Problem Representation

Before the bombing, Reagan believed that action by the United States could help solve Lebanon's problems. Both Reagan and Secretary of State George Shultz thought American actions in Lebanon to be critical for a successful resolution of the Lebanese situation, to prevent

the Syrian and Soviet dominance of Lebanon, and to demonstrate American credibility.[20] After the bombing, Reagan's personal response was one of profound grief, which he later described as the "saddest day of my presidency, perhaps the saddest day of my life." However, his sadness soon turned to anger and a determination not to back down in the face of the terrorist attack.[21]

Option Generation

Whereas the bombing seemed to strengthen Reagan's resolve, angry reactions by both Congress and the public wilted the determination of his White House advisers, who became committed to withdrawing the marines.[22] Democrats in Congress openly criticized the administration, and Republicans privately expressed their concern. More disturbing to Reagan's advisers, James Baker and Michael Deaver in particular, were the results found by Reagan's private pollster Richard Wirthlin indicating a dramatic decline in Reagan's approval rating because of the bombing. But even while Reagan's staff wavered in their support, Reagan remained unaffected in the face of domestic opposition and continued to see the American commitment to Lebanon as a vital interest.[23] He later recalled that after the bombing,

> not surprisingly, there was new pressure in Congress to leave that country. Although I did my best to explain to the American people why our troops were there, I knew many still didn't understand it. I believed in—and still believe in—the policy and decisions that originally sent in the marines to Lebanon.[24]

Reagan's main explanation for the continued American presence in Lebanon came in his October 27 speech to the nation. He conveyed a strong anti-Communist message and linked the Beirut bombing and the recently completed American invasion of Grenada as part of the American policy to combat Soviet expansionism and compared the idea of withdrawing the marines with a surrender to terrorism.[25] Public opinion polling after the speech indicated that it had significantly increased public support for the Lebanon policy and lowered it for withdrawal.[26]

Reagan and Shultz remained adamant in their determination to hold the line, but other administration officials were just as determined to get the marines out of Lebanon. Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger and the Joint Chiefs of Staff had long opposed the U.S. intervention, and they found willing allies in the White House and Congress who now saw the specter of Vietnam looming over Lebanon. Fearing

that the intervention would seriously damage Reagan's electoral prospects in 1984, White House Chief of Staff James Baker and Senate Majority Leader Howard Baker (R, Tenn.) determined to do all in their power to extricate the marines from Lebanon, despite their fear that Reagan would not reverse himself once he had made a commitment. Unlike Reagan, who saw the October 27 speech as explaining the continued American deployment, they viewed the speech as buying the time necessary to remove the marines after a reasonable period.[27] These concerns were shared by others in the White House. A NSC staffer later recalled:

> The domestic side of the White House, James Baker, [Edwin] Meese, [Michael] Deaver, and the Vice President [George Bush], thought that the strategic interest of the U.S. was that Ronald Reagan be elected for a second term, and that if the price to be paid was humiliation in Lebanon, so be it; it would be forgotten by the summer. It was a judgment which was absolutely correct and it was supported by the JCS and Weinberger, and it was bitterly opposed by the Secretary of State.[28]

Soon after the bombing and with the exception of Shultz and the recently appointed national security adviser, Robert McFarlane, all of Reagan's major advisers turned against the Lebanon intervention and favored an expeditious withdrawal.

Policy Selection and Implementation

Even though the situation in Lebanon was worsening, Reagan remained determined to keep the marines in place. He later recalled that Lebanon, with its ineffective central government, an army incapable of restoring order, and the marines in a dreadfully exposed position, was more complex than he had initially thought. Given the loss of life in Beirut and the seemingly insurmountable problems, he conceded that the American deployment required a "second look." But with the situation deteriorating, Reagan refused to pull the marines out because it "would say to the terrorists of the world that all it took to change American foreign policy was to murder some Americans" and might even cede the region to the Soviet Union.[29]

Weinberger and other White House officials made Reagan fully aware of the growing disenchantment of both Congress and the public with the marine deployment. But those people involved in the policy discussions remember that Reagan rejected the advice of those who recommended withdrawing the troops because of concerns regarding the

1984 election. Instead, he refused to alter his policy in the face of public opposition because of the necessity of the marines' presence to support American credibility and combat Soviet influence.[30] He acknowledged the public's concern at a December 20, 1983, press conference, saying, "I can understand the public opinion [opposing the marine deployment], because they're hearing great attacks from a number of sources on our presence [in Lebanon]." Aware of this sentiment, he noted,

> There have been some suggestions made with regard to bringing [the marines] home that some of my considerations might be based on the fact that in an election year—and politics are coming up—I will tell you this: No decision regarding the lives and the safety of our servicemen will ever be made by me for a political reason.[31]

Despite Reagan's statements, support in the administration for withdrawing the marines continued to build. In January, McFarlane turned against the intervention in the face of growing public opposition, leaving Shultz the only major official beside Reagan still committed to the deployment and unaffected by the rising congressional and public opposition. But Shultz, too, had started to harbor his own doubts. He told one NSC meeting, "If I ever say send in the Marines again, somebody shoot me."[32] At the January 9 meeting, Vice President George Bush firmly supported getting out of Lebanon, which led Shultz to conclude that Bush was "panicked." After surmising that Bush's view portended an eventual withdrawal of American forces, Shultz worked to develop an alternative other than complete withdrawal and eventually settled on a plan, which Reagan supported, to replace the majority of the marines with a mobile antiterrorist force.[33]

But Reagan was not ready to give up on the mission. At a White House meeting on February 1, a virtually silent Reagan listened as Weinberger urged him to withdraw the troops, given the impossibility of implementing the terms of the May 17 agreement between Lebanon and Israel, since nearly all the Israelis had left Lebanon. Reagan remained unswayed. On February 2, he told an interviewer that "if we get out, it also means the end of Lebanon." In reference to a comment by House Speaker Tip O'Neill (D, Mass.) that the Lebanon policy had failed and the House would probably vote to withdraw the marines, Reagan commented, "Well, I'm going to respond that he may be ready to surrender, but I'm not. As long as there is a chance for peace, the mission remains the same." During his February 4 radio speech, Reagan stressed that the difficulties in Lebanon were "no reason to turn our backs and to cut and

run. If we do, we'll be sending one signal to terrorists everywhere. They can gain by waging war against innocent people."[34]

The situation in Lebanon rapidly deteriorated soon after Reagan made this statement. On February 5, the central government collapsed, and on February 6, the Lebanese army ceased to function as a cohesive unit, leaving the marines in Lebanon surrounded on all sides by hostile forces and without their original purpose, to support the central Lebanese government and army. With Reagan out of town on speaking engagements, James Baker, who was traveling with Reagan, conferred with Bush in Washington and agreed that the time had arrived for the United States to withdraw completely from Lebanon. At a meeting in Washington on February 7, without Reagan in attendance, all of Reagan's top advisers, including Bush, Weinberger, and McFarlane, agreed that the marines should be withdrawn, with Undersecretary Lawrence Eagleburger, standing in for Shultz, who was out of town, the only dissenter. Bush then spoke to Reagan in a short telephone conversation and reported that all his advisers except Shultz favored a "redeployment" (a phrase used at Weinberger's suggestion) and added that the United States would still aid the Lebanese government with air support and naval fire. Despite his earlier opposition, Reagan quickly agreed.[35] The assurances of naval and air action and the characterization of the withdrawal as a redeployment reassured him that he had stuck to his goal and not "cut and run."[36] By February 26, all U.S. troops had been removed to ships offshore.

Reagan's quick assent to a withdrawal that he had so strongly opposed only days earlier was based on his conclusion that the marines' mission in Lebanon could no longer be achieved, rather than on the domestic concerns that consumed many of his closest advisers. Reagan wrote in his memoirs that when he decided to pull out the troops, it had become clear that the Lebanese army could not or would not end the civil war, making it likely to continue for some time. Given that the marines' mission could not be achieved and that "no one wanted to commit our troops to a full-scale war in the Middle East," he rejected continuing to run the risk of more casualties for a probably unachievable goal.[37] Immediately after the withdrawal decision, unnamed administration officials supported this reasoning.[38] Reports from the administration stressed that Reagan had not responded to polling on this issue and that he had "rebuffed" his advisers when they broached the subject of the political costs of the marine deployment.[39]

Summary

Throughout the Lebanon bombing case, Reagan acted consistently with predictions based on his beliefs that he would rely on the national security requirements for a decision. He focused almost exclusively on what he perceived to be the nation's security interests and largely ignored public opinion, even though many of his key advisers pressed him to act according to these considerations. Although Reagan was aware of the public's opposition and did make some minor efforts to explain his policy, he explicitly, in both public and private statements, rejected public opinion as a basis for his decision. Even in the face of almost unanimous opposition to his policy by the members of his administration, Reagan consistently held to the policy he deemed best until he was convinced that it was no longer viable. Consistent with his view that public support was needed for a protracted use of force, public opinion may have partially reinforced his opposition to expanding American involvement into a wider military effort. Reagan's behavior was *consistent* with his beliefs during the problem representation stage, and a *causal* effect is evident in the option generation, policy selection, and implementation stages. This behavior suggests a *supportive* coding for the influence of beliefs. The influence of public opinion is coded in the *no-impact category* and perhaps a *minor constrain category,* but only in regard to involvement in a wider war.

Pragmatist: Bush and the Persian Gulf War, 1990–1991

The analysis of George Bush's public opinion beliefs in chapter 7 showed he would have focused on the nation's security requirements in making a choice and not emphasized leading the public or generating support for a policy (no-impact category). If he perceived public opposition to his policy, he would have attempted to lead the public to rectify this problem to gain the needed public support (lead category). As a last resort, if he concluded he could not change public opposition, he would have been constrained by it (constrain category).

Iraq's August 2, 1990, invasion of its small neighbor Kuwait came as a surprise to American decision makers. Even though American intelligence detected the massing of Iraqi troops on the border in advance of the invasion, most American analysts and international actors (including the leaders of Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia) concluded that Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein was using the threat of invasion as leverage in

his ongoing dispute with the Kuwaitis over oil prices. If Hussein did act, most American analysts thought he would, at most, take control of a Kuwaiti oil field and two small islands at the mouth of the Tigris River. After invading all of Kuwait, Iraq controlled 20 percent of the world's oil reserves and held a nearly unobstructed path to Saudi Arabia's oil fields, whose possession would give it control of 40 percent of the world's oil reserves.

Problem Representation

From the beginning, Bush perceived a significant threat to American national security from Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. He later remembered, "I had decided in my own mind in the first hours that the Iraqi aggression could not be tolerated."[40] At the time, Bush had been reading Martin Gilbert's *The Second World War* and noted Winston Churchill's conclusion that the war could have been prevented if the Allies had reacted forcefully to Adolf Hitler when he remilitarized the Rhineland in 1936. Accordingly, Bush was determined to respond to Hussein's aggression before he could reap further rewards from his action or attack other neighbors, and Bush also worried that other potential aggressors might follow Hussein's example.[41] Bush recalled that

> the overriding reason for this [need to respond to Iraq's aggression] was the fact that bold and naked aggression could not be permitted to stand. I worried that Saddam's intentions went far beyond taking over Kuwait. With an attack on Saudi Arabia, he would have gained control over a tremendous amount of the world's oil supply. . . . If he was permitted to get away with that, heaven knows where the world would have gone and what forces would have been unleashed.[42]

Other officials close to Bush confirmed his determination in the hours soon after the invasion to act strongly to counter Iraq's aggression.[43]

Option Generation

The NSC met early in the morning of August 2 (the invasion had occurred in the evening of August 1, Washington time). In a public statement before the meeting, Bush observed, "We're not discussing intervention," and in response to a question of whether he intended to send troops to the area, said, "I'm not contemplating such action." However, he intended to "have this invasion be reversed and have them get out of Kuwait." National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft immediately concluded that Bush did not intend to suggest that intervention had been rejected as an option. Bush later confirmed that his statement

had "inadvertently led to some confusion about my intent. I did not intend to rule out the use of force. At that juncture I did not wish explicitly to rule it in."[44]

The meeting itself consisted of a rambling discussion and led to no definite conclusions, but it did establish Bush's commitment to reversing the invasion. When Treasury Secretary Nicholas Brady began to talk about adapting Iraq's invasion, Bush cut him off, saying, "Let's be clear about one thing: we are not here to talk about adapting. We are not going to plan how to live with this."[45] He launched into a detailed assessment of Iraq's control of 20 percent of the world oil reserves, pointing out that Saddam Hussein might use his power to manipulate world oil prices and threaten the United States and its allies. He feared that higher oil prices would spur inflation and further damage the anemic American economy and perhaps drive it into recession. To respond, Bush endorsed a coalition effort to work through the United Nations to impose an economic embargo on Iraq. After hearing two military options (one entailed retaliatory air strikes and the other the commitment of 200,000 troops to defend Saudi Arabia), Bush approved preparations for the defensive option but made no definite commitments.[46]

On August 3, Bush met again with the NSC to discuss American policy responses. Scowcroft began by emphasizing the threat to the world and the U.S. economy posed by Iraq's action and strongly endorsed the use of force to confront it. After hearing comments by the assembled advisers endorsing military action, Bush stressed the need for economic sanctions and that "whatever we do, we've got to have the international community behind us."[47] Bush endorsed his advisers' sentiments in favor of a military response but observed that the real question was whether the Saudis would accept American assistance. He then asked for a presentation of the military options the next day at Camp David.[48]

Policy Selection

The NSC reconvened at Camp David on August 4 to discuss policy options. After hearing a presentation of the military options indicating that it would take several months for a significant defensive force to arrive in Saudi Arabia and even longer to muster an effective offensive force to remove the Iraqi forces from Kuwait, the meeting's participants returned to the question of what to do. Some advisers wondered whether the public would continue to support the policy if the American force suffered significant casualties or the commitment dragged on. But instead of focusing on the domestic component, Bush turned to a

comparison between Iraq's action and the weak reaction of the Allies in the 1930s to Germany's provocations. He insisted they needed to persuade the Saudis to forgo "the appeasement option."[49] After talking with the Saudi leadership, Bush agreed to send a team to brief them on the specifics of the possible American commitment.

At this point, Bush had settled on a two-pronged policy to confront Iraq's aggression. He was determined, if the Saudis agreed, to commit American ground forces to Saudi Arabia to deter further Iraqi aggression. To persuade Saddam Hussein to withdraw, he decided to pursue a diplomatic effort to isolate Iraq and institute economic sanctions.[50]

Throughout these deliberations, Bush focused on the national security implications of the Iraqi action. When these decisions were made, public opinion had not been polled on this question, and editorial opinion had been supportive of the administration's diplomatic and economic efforts but without calling for a more aggressive response.[51] Although some of Bush's advisers, anticipating possible public opposition, raised public opinion as one reason to move cautiously regarding a military deployment, Bush remained determined to confront the aggression if he thought national security requirements dictated it, regardless of the cost in terms of public opinion. Secretary of State James Baker reported a conversation he had with Bush in the Oval Office in August. Baker recalled telling Bush,

> "I know you're aware of the fact that this has all the ingredients that brought down three of the last five Presidents: a hostage crisis, body bags, and a full-fledged economic recession caused by forty-dollar oil." The President understood it full well. "I know that, Jimmy, I know that," he said. "But we're doing what's right; we're doing what is clearly in the national interest of the United States. Whatever happens, so be it."[52]

In late August, Bush took some solace in the public's support of his Gulf policy, as reflected in public opinion polls, which he attributed to a "post-Vietnam 'maturity.' " Probably related to his concerns about domestic support, Bush worried through most of August and September that Iraq might attack the arriving American forces, with either conventional or chemical weapons, before sufficient numbers could be deployed, leading to a significant number of American deaths.[53] Despite these fears, Bush continued with the actions he saw as necessary for the nation's security.

On his return from Camp David on August 5, Bush publicly stated his private decision to reverse Iraq's invasion saying, "This will not

stand. This will not stand! This aggression against Kuwait."[54] After the war, Bush explained that he saw the statement as a reflection of the internal policy deliberations and a signal of his views to the public: "I came to the conclusion that some public comment was needed to make clear my determination that the United States must do whatever might be necessary to reverse the Iraqi aggression."[55] After a presentation by American officials, the Saudis approved the defensive deployment of American troops on August 6, which President Bush authorized immediately.

Implementation

During September and October, Bush gradually moved toward increasing the number of troops to provide an offensive option. His growing impatience with economic sanctions to force the Iraqis to withdraw stemmed from his concern that the international coalition and domestic support would not continue long enough to allow the sanctions to work. Because of the harsh weather conditions in the Gulf region and the onset of Ramadan, the Muslim month of fasting, any ground war would have to take place before mid-March 1991 or be postponed for another year. Furthermore, waiting for sanctions to work would mean pushing any offensive action into 1992—a presidential election year. As one Bush adviser put it, by postponing military action until 1992, "we could have the economy in the toilet and the body bags coming home. If you're George Bush, you don't like that scenario."[56] On September 24, Bush expressed his trepidation about the staying power of international and domestic support for sanctions, "I really don't think we have time for sanctions to work."[57]

In this context, the administration saw the increased number of troops as a logical extension of their policy to drive Iraq out of Kuwait. On October 31, when Bush approved an increased deployment of around 200,000 troops to supply the offensive option, he did not see the action as tantamount to a decision for war and instead hoped that just the threat of offensive action would be enough to persuade Saddam Hussein to withdraw from Kuwait.[58]

The announcement of the troop increase led to an outpouring of congressional and public concern, at which the administration realized its failure to build public support. Beginning in October, the administration became concerned with polling results that indicated a drop in public approval of the president in general (caused in part by a domestic squabble with Congress over the federal budget) and of his Gulf policy

in particular. In searching for an appropriate explanation for American policy, Bush pollster Robert Teeter discovered that though the public was not responsive to justifications based on economics (e.g., jobs, oil, recession) or principle (e.g., responding to aggression, the Hitler analogy), the public did react positively to an explanation based on the threat of Iraq's nuclear capability. Bush agreed with Teeter's view that the administration lead the public, but he refused to act on it because he felt that his competence to handle the situation, given his previous experience, was enough to gain public understanding.[59] His implicit dismissal of Teeter's call to appeal to the public was symptomatic of Bush's inattention to building public support. In fact, when public support was eroding in November, Bush consulted public relations experts to ask them what he was doing wrong. When they told him that "he had to get out every day and explain why he was there," Bush replied that "he had made his case over and over."[60] His perception notwithstanding, the common view of his leadership efforts suggest that he did little to explain either the administration's policy or the necessity of using force.[61]

Even though he feared going to war without congressional or public support, Bush decided that he would base his choice to use force on national security alone. When the UN Security Council on November 29 approved the use of all necessary means to push Iraq out of Kuwait after January 15, Bush gave in to his advisers' suggestion that he speak to the nation to explain his policy and calm the public's fears about war. On November 30, while stressing his determination to drive Iraq out after the January 15 deadline, Bush announced that he would meet with the Iraqi foreign minister, Tariq Aziz, and send Baker to Iraq to meet with Saddam Hussein "to go the extra mile for peace." The action was viewed by Bush and his top advisers as necessary to demonstrate to Congress and the public that they had exhausted all diplomatic options before resorting to war.[62]

Because Bush thought Lyndon Johnson had made a mistake by forgoing formal congressional approval of the war in Vietnam, he wished to avoid the same error, though he was equally convinced that he did not need congressional acquiescence to act.[63] In regard to the congressional debate on relying on sanctions or the offensive option, Bush was adamant: "I'll prevail . . . or I'll be impeached."[64] Bush confirmed this view later: "I believe I would have [gone ahead if the Congress had voted against war]. I know I would have. . . . But it was far better to get congressional approval. It gave it a certain legitimacy—the president's

committing forces to battle—that it wouldn't have without it. I expect that impeachment papers would have been filed immediately if we'd gone into battle without sanction by the Congress."[65]

Over his Christmas vacation, Bush became even more sure that war was the correct action, based on reports of Iraqi atrocities in Kuwait.[66] Even so, he remained concerned about possible American casualties, remarking, "I don't think that support would last if it were a long, drawn-out conflagration. I think support would erode, as it did in the Vietnam conflict."[67] Bush was clearly aware of the domestic implications of a failure in the Gulf. On November 30, he had told an assembled group of bipartisan congressional members, "I know whose backside's at stake and rightfully so. It will not be a long, drawn-out mess."[68] Despite his concerns about congressional and public support, Bush was determined to go to war because he thought it was the best policy for American national security interests. He commented on January 2:

> For me, it boils down to a very moral case of good versus evil, black versus white. If I have to go, it's not going to matter to me if there isn't one congressman who supports this, or what happens to public opinion. If it's right, it's gotta be done.[69]

Bush faced none of these consequences. After asking for a congressional resolution of support on January 8, Congress voted to approve the use of force on January 12. Air attacks on Iraqi positions in Iraq and Kuwait commenced on January 16, and the ground attack began on February 23. After quick success on the ground in driving Iraqi forces out of Kuwait, Bush suspended the ground war on February 28 after only one hundred hours. Although the public was divided over the use of force before the war, Bush's public approval rating reached record levels immediately after the conflict, with 89 percent approving his performance. The figure remained at the 70 percent level until the end of August 1991.[70]

Summary

Bush's decisions were consistent with his beliefs that the public's input had no place in foreign policy and that the public's support was necessary (which he assumed would be almost automatic). Although he believed he would significantly damage his standing in public opinion if U.S. troops suffered significant casualties in the early going, he based his initial decisions in August on his perception of the nation's security requirements and largely assumed that public support would follow.

When he did run into trouble with public opinion, he appealed to the public, but only in a halfhearted manner after he had already determined the direction of his policy.

Public opinion did influence Bush's decision on the timing of the shift to the offensive option. Given the legacy of Vietnam, he feared that the public could not be led to support a long-term commitment and that waiting for sanctions would force a potentially divisive war into an election year. In combination with his concern that the international coalition also would not last this long, public opinion partially constrained his decision on the timing of the action, but not on policy goals or means.

Bush's behavior was *consistent* with his beliefs in problem representation and option generation. A *causal* influence can be seen in his policy selection and implementation, a pattern displaying a *supportive* influence of his beliefs on behavior. The influence of public opinion on policy development is principally in the *no-impact category,* with less influence of the *lead category* during implementation and a *moderate constrain category* influence on the timing of the shift to an offensive option.

Delegate: Clinton and U.S. Casualties in Somalia, October 1993

The analysis of Clinton's beliefs in chapter 7 suggests that he welcomes the public's input and thinks its support is necessary. This analysis also indicates that his response to public opinion relies primarily on his expectation of how the public will evaluate his polices in the future. Given his focus during crises on the public's input and support, public opinion should constrain his decisions when he anticipates that a policy might cause him political difficulties (constrain category).

The large-scale American involvement in Somalia began in December 1992 when President George Bush—reacting to pictures of starvation and the inability of humanitarian aid agencies and the UN to deliver needed supplies during an ongoing civil war—sent troops to protect the humanitarian relief effort. In 1993, during the first summer of the Clinton administration, the UN mission shifted from the provision of relief to nation building. When UN peacekeepers were killed, the UN authorized a search for the leader responsible for the attack, Mohamed Farah Aidid. Although it later distanced itself from this decision, the Clinton administration supported the UN's expanded role and sent specialized Ranger and Delta forces to Somalia to hunt for Aidid. After Aidid's forces shot down an American helicopter on September 25, Con-

gress passed a nonbinding resolution requesting that Clinton secure its approval by November 15 for continuing the deployment. Then on October 3, the administration and nation were shocked when eighteen Americans were killed and seventy-eight were wounded during an attempt to capture Aidid. Television images of Somalis dragging the body of an American soldier through the streets and of a shaken American prisoner heightened domestic outrage. In the aftermath of this attack, the Clinton administration faced the decision of what, if anything, needed to be done to respond to the changing situation in Somalia.

Problem Representation

Throughout 1993, Clinton's attention to foreign affairs had been minimal because he viewed the 1992 election as an indication of the public's desire for the president to turn instead to domestic concerns. Clinton explained that "my premise was that the American people were hungry for a president who showed that he knew that something had to be done here to address our problems at home and that had been long neglected" and that this had resulted in his "conscious focus" on domestic issues. This approach not only led to his lack of involvement in many of the Somalia decisions before October 1993 but also caused him to avoid taking action to build a public consensus for his Somalia policy.[71]

In the weeks before the October 3 attack, instigated in part by a conversation with former President Jimmy Carter, Clinton had changed the administration's policy to emphasize political negotiations over military action, because the administration had decided that forceful action was not a basis on which the Somali political situation could be stabilized. In addition, the increasingly impatient Congress, bolstered by constituents' concern, pressed Clinton to clarify, by October 15, the American mission and objectives and called for a November 15 vote on authorizing the Somalia operation. Clinton knew that the administration needed to get the Somalia situation under control, for reasons related to both Somalia and its implications for other multilateral peacekeeping efforts. He feared that congressional and public opposition to the U.S. intervention in Somalia would hinder the possibility of deploying thousands of American troops in Bosnia after a settlement there. Fearing that a dramatic public reversal of policy would undercut the UN and multilateral peacekeeping—the foundation of the administration's approach to the post–Cold War world—Clinton did not suspend the hunt for Aidid, even though it contradicted the new politically focused approach.[72]

After the October 3 killings, the public and congressional reaction reached a peak. Before October 3, 46 percent of the public disapproved and 43 percent approved of "the presence of U.S. troops in Somalia," but following the deaths, 69 percent thought the U.S. troops should be pulled out and 43 percent thought they should be removed right away. The public's approval of Clinton's handling of the situation dropped from 51 percent in June to 41 percent in September before falling to an average of 31 percent in October.[73] The public's apprehension registered in Congress as well. Spurred by the pictures of a dead American dragged through the street and the emotional public reaction, Congress erupted with calls to withdraw the American forces immediately.[74]

The Somali attack and the subsequent domestic criticism took Clinton by surprise. He pressed his advisers, asking, "How could this happen?" and complained that he had not received "a realistic assessment" of the situation in Somalia and that "no one told me about the downside." Perhaps because of his concern with the long-term ramifications in public opinion of his handling of the issue, when Clinton asked political adviser David Gergen how Reagan avoided potential damage from the bombing of the marine barracks in Beirut, Gergen told him, "Because two days later we were in Grenada, and everyone knew that Ronald Reagan would bomb the hell out of somewhere."[75] The congressional reaction in particular, which one administration official described as a "near panic," astonished Clinton, who was upset with both the situation in Somalia and the lack of consensus among his advisers over how to proceed. Given the congressional reaction, the administration focused on heading off any precipitous moves and creating some breathing space in which they could evaluate their options and formulate a policy.[76]

Option Generation

Clinton met with his top advisers on the evening of October 5 to talk over the policy options. National Security Adviser Anthony Lake presented four alternatives. First, the administration could dramatically increase the military presence and work to pacify the attacking militias, but this would entail heavy fighting. Second, they could raise the number of American troops and keep pressuring Aidid militarily while trying to negotiate a settlement. Third, they could abandon the military option and seek an honorable withdrawal. Finally, they could focus on a negotiated settlement while extending the deadline for an American withdrawal but not make much of a military effort. An immediate pull-

out was not an option because the military needed until March 31 to shift its logistics operations to other groups and to remove its supplies and personnel.[77]

Clinton found none of the options to his liking. The group agreed that the first option, increasing military forces, was too costly, and anyway, congressional opposition made this action impossible. No one favored the face-saving exit of the third option, which was also complicated by a Somali-held American prisoner. Even though the fourth option of a negotiated settlement without military costs was favored by most members, Clinton preferred a combination of this option with the second option, which placed more emphasis on military force. He did want to help Somalia's recovery, but he now thought that this objective had to be achieved faster and with an exit strategy that he could present to Congress.[78]

A meeting that afternoon heightened congressional concerns about the administration's policy. Afraid that Congress might vote for an immediate pullout, Secretary of Defense Les Aspin and Secretary of State Warren Christopher met with more than two hundred members of Congress to reassure skittish legislators. Whereas Aspin and Christopher went in to the meeting seeking Congress's views on Somalia, the legislators expected a briefing on how the administration was planning to respond to the Somalia crisis. The result, in the words of one legislator, was "an unmitigated disaster." Instead of calming Congress's fears, the meeting only increased their anxiety and led to more calls for an immediate pullout.[79]

Congressional reactions to the deaths in Somalia were fueled in large part by pressure from the public. Throughout the U.S. intervention in Somalia, Congress paid close attention to the polls, and congressional support for intervention dropped along with public support. Their demands for an expedited pullout resulted in large part from thousands of phone calls after the October 3 attack from constituents who pressed for an immediate withdrawal.[80] The congressional stampede to leave Somalia was temporarily stemmed by senior senators from both parties who brokered a Senate agreement on October 6 to delay any vote until the following week, so as to give Clinton time to formulate a policy response and present it to Congress and the public.[81]

Policy Selection

Clinton met again with his top advisers on October 6. His political advisers, including pollster Stan Greenberg and consultants James

Carville and Mandy Grunwald, all argued for a pullout date sometime before December 31. They contended that the United States should cut its loses and depart as quickly as possible. The "home-by-Christmas" option was favored because, as one person pointed out, "The worst thing that could happen would be we set a deadline and Congress immediately moves it forward." Secretary of State Christopher argued for no deadline or an early one if required by political reasons. One official recounted, "Their argument was, really, if you can't do it by Christmas, you can't do it by March and Congress won't accept March."[82]

The military, however, argued for either no deadline or an extended one because it feared that a quick pullout would cause Somalia to return to anarchy, and the military needed a longer period to finish its political and military missions. In addition, the military insisted that it needed additional military forces to protect the troops already in Somalia until they were pulled out.[83]

After hearing these arguments, Clinton split the difference between the political and military requirements, although his decision more closely reflected the argument by the military. He approved the military's request for more troops, which more than doubled the existing number. In addition, he rejected an early withdrawal deadline because it was unacceptable to the military. Instead, he chose a March 31 deadline, the earliest date the military said was possible, because of political considerations. In addition, he abandoned the search for Aidid, ordered a stop to military action except in self-defense, and sent a former ambassador to Somalia, Robert Oakley, to negotiate a settlement.[84]

This choice balanced the political and national security pressures on Clinton. In essence, he decided to pull out of Somalia as fast as the military thought possible and announced a politically motivated deadline to stave off congressional insistence on an immediate pullout. The deadline, he hoped, would communicate to Congress and the public that the United States was not involved in an open-ended commitment. Even so, he remained prepared to move the date forward if Congress wanted an earlier deadline. In the meantime, he bolstered American forces and focused their mission on avoiding additional casualties until they could be withdrawn. Presaging Clinton's announcement the following day, a senior official noted,

> The message the president will deliver tomorrow is that it is not whether the U.S. is going to leave Somalia. It is how and when the U.S. will leave, and whether we will leave in a fashion that allows for a

> reasonable chance that we can leave behind a U.N. force that can do a job or leave in a way that will virtually guarantee a return to chaos there.[85]

Implementation

Clinton met on October 7 with senior congressional leaders to explain his plan. They complained either that the March 31 deadline was not soon enough or could undermine U.S. policy by announcing the end of the American involvement. In any event, the legislators warned that Clinton needed to explain why the troops needed to remain. Despite later comments suggesting that Clinton might delay his speech on Somalia, the administration decided that Clinton had to deliver an address to the nation that evening or he would appear indecisive.[86] Although Clinton had initially been reluctant to give an evening Oval Office address for fear of drawing too much attention to the issue, his advisers convinced him that the venue would signify decisive presidential leadership on foreign policy.[87]

In addition to announcing the new policy, Clinton emphasized in his speech that "our mission from this day forward . . . is to increase our strength, do our job, bring our soldiers out and bring them home." The speech and new policy appeared to achieve Clinton's goal of mollifying congressional critics. By integrating into his speech much of the advice he had received from Congress in the previous few days and providing a clear statement of the mission and pullout date, he appeared to gain some breathing room with Congress to allow his new policy to work. Before the speech, the November 15 congressional vote on the mission seemed most likely to call for an immediate withdrawal. After the president's address, however, congressional sentiment seemed to accept the administration's plans.[88] However, the polls indicated that public opinion remained unchanged after his speech, with 52 percent disapproving of Clinton's handling of the situation.[89] In response, the administration tried to limit any public relations damage from the continual reminders of the deaths by withholding pictures of Clinton visiting the wounded and his avoiding public memorials for the troops killed. The administration also attempted to shift blame for the raid to the UN, although internal reports indicated the United States was in control of American troop actions.[90]

After visiting with constituents over the long Columbus Day weekend and noting that polls continued to show public opposition, several

lawmakers, led by Senator Robert C. Byrd (D, W.Va.), who favored cutting off funding for the Somalia mission as early as January 1, pressed for a quick vote on a halt to its funding.[91] The administration's efforts to head off this movement was assisted by senior congressional members of both parties, who brokered a compromise agreement with Senator Byrd that turned Clinton's October 7 policy into law and ended funding for the mission after March 31 except for a small security force for American civilians. The last of the American forces were removed from Somalia on March 25, 1994.[92]

Summary

Clinton's behavior in this crisis was consistent with his beliefs favoring public input and support, since public opinion partially determined the issues he saw as important and partially shaped his policy decisions. Before the fall of 1993, Clinton largely ignored Somalia because of his reading of public sentiments as expressed in the 1992 election. After the October 3 raid, congressional pressure, which the administration saw as a reaction to public opinion, played a key part in determining the administration's policy. In formulating options in response to the failed raid, Clinton decided, on the advice of the military, that he could not pull out the troops immediately because it would cause chaos and further starvation in Somalia. But he also felt the pressure from Congress and the public to do something to end what appeared to be an open-ended American commitment and believed that public opposition over the issue could harm other policy initiatives.

Clinton also knew that the military deemed March 31 as the first date it could extricate itself from Somalia in an orderly fashion. Given this state of affairs, he ordered the troop increase the military wanted to protect its existing forces, adopted their earliest date for withdrawal, and publicly announced the withdrawal date to mollify congressional and public sentiment. After making the decision, he attempted to downplay the issue (unsuccessfully) and build support for the March 31 withdrawal date (successfully with Congress, unsuccessfully with public opinion) as an alternative to what he saw as a disastrous immediate withdrawal. Although several factors affected Clinton's decision to withdraw the troops, public opinion provided one constraining factor on his policy deliberations and decision to pull out the troops. Clinton's beliefs had a *causal* influence on his behavior at all stages, and the influence of public opinion in this case is coded in a *moderate constrain category* influence.

Each of these presidents reacted in accordance with his public opinion beliefs when confronting the crises examined in this chapter. This consistency with predictions across several of the beliefs orientations shows strong support for the beliefs model and accounts for the varying reactions among the presidents examined (see table 8.1). Perhaps the comparison between Carter and Reagan is most interesting because even though public opinion had nearly the same influence on their behavior, they viewed public opinion quite differently as they made their decisions. Carter wanted to know about public preferences and allowed an open discussion of them as he made his choices. While he considered the public's preferences, he ultimately decided that he needed to act against the public's view because of national security. On the other hand, Reagan largely dismissed public opinion as a factor in his policy and wanted to have only that advice regarding the American national interests at stake in Lebanon. Although neither of these actors reacted to public opinion in his final decision, they both treated the public's view differently according to their beliefs.

Both the realist and Wilsonian liberal perspectives find support in the behaviors of certain presidents, but neither can account for the behavior of all the presidents examined in this chapter. The realist model best explains Reagan's inattention to public opinion and his focus on the national interest, as well as Bush's behavior. Although the realist

TABLE 8.1 **Crisis Cases and Recent Presidents**

	Predicted Public Influence Based on Beliefs	**Actual Public Influence**	**Influence of Beliefs**
Carter: Executor, Afghanistan	No impact *or* Constrain	No impact	Causal
Reagan: Guardian, Lebanon	No Impact/ *Constrain*	No Impact/ with lesser Constrain (minor)	Supportive
Bush: Pragmatist, Persian Gulf	No impact/ *Lead/Constrain*	No impact/ with lesser Lead and Constrain (moderate)	Supportive
Clinton: Delegate, Somalia	Constrain	Constrain (moderate)	Causal

Note: Italics indicate conditional predictions.

view may descriptively anticipate Carter's choice, it cannot encompass the decision process that produced that outcome. The Wilsonian liberal perspective is best supported by Clinton's behavior. It partially anticipates the process by which Carter reached his decision, but not the outcome of his deliberations. In the cases, these two models find mixed support in the presidents' choices. As discussed, the beliefs model provides a much more effective account of when and why presidents turned their attention toward or away from public opinion.

Decision makers also approached leading and educating the public consistently with their beliefs. Reagan (guardian) merely referred to the national interests involved in the Lebanon situation to explain his policy. Clinton (delegate) explained the policy as being responsive to public opinion on the issue. Bush (pragmatist) focused on saying whatever would build support for the policy and weighed several alternatives before settling on the nuclear proliferation argument. Even so, he made only a limited effort to get his message out. Carter (executor) did not expend much energy building support for his policy, even though he expected public opposition. Several of these decision makers thought of their actions as "explaining" their policies to the public, but the way they approached these actions differed according to their beliefs.

An interesting parallel appeared for two of the presidents. Both Carter's and Reagan's advisers reacted more strongly to public opinion than did either president. In Carter's case, Mondale was especially concerned about the potential electoral effects of some of the responses under consideration. Although Carter encouraged Mondale to express his concerns, he reacted much less strongly to public opinion than did his vice president. Reagan's main advisers also were very concerned about the electoral implications of a continued troop deployment in Lebanon, but they generally did not mention these issues to Reagan and instead used arguments related to the national interest to persuade him to respond to their position. This pattern has two implications. First, it means that even though advisers pay attention to the type of information the president wants, they still form their own opinions based on the factors they feel are important. Second, it means that the focus on the president's decisions does not provide a full account of public opinion's role in the decision process. To the extent that Reagan's advisers were swayed by public opinion and used the arguments based on the national interest only as a ploy to convince Reagan, the coding of public opinion's influence may understate its role in the decision process.

The examination of recent presidents does provide one point of comparison implying that the beliefs orientation also affects presidential advisers and that it may explain why some advisers pay attention to public opinion, even though the president is not interested in it. Bush, as vice president during the Reagan years, acted as an adviser to Reagan on policy and reacted to public opinion in line with his beliefs. Since Bush saw public support as necessary, when he thought that the public would not support the United States' intervention in Lebanon and could not be swayed, he adjusted his policy recommendation. In much the same way that Bush later approached the Gulf War, after the bombing in Beirut, he pointed to the public's intolerance of long and costly conflicts as a reason to pull the marines out of Lebanon. Although he told other administration officials his reasons for his view, he appears to have presented a national interest perspective to Reagan. This evidence is not conclusive proof that the beliefs model can show how Reagan's advisers formed their views, but it does demonstrate that they may have formulated their views consistent with their own preferences and then presented their views to Reagan in a manner to which the president would be receptive.

As this discussion suggests, the interaction between presidents and their advisers as it affects public opinion requires more attention. Such an examination should determine the extent to which presidents and their advisers hold consonant or disconsonant views regarding public opinion and the effect of this pattern on decision making and the influence of public opinion. Although an analysis of this type is beyond the scope of this book, it does suggest a potentially useful avenue of research.

Across these cases, when public opinion did have an influence, it appeared to occur through the more perceptually based factors. Polling data (in the Reagan, Bush, and Clinton cases) and congressional reactions (in the Clinton case) formed the basis for some of these assessments, but the decision makers tended to use this information mostly to assess how the public would react to these issues. Although the polls also play an important part of the policy process in the longer-term cases examined in chapter 9, these presidents continued to pay more attention to these perceptually based influences of public opinion.