

Chapter 3

PRESIDENTIAL PERSUASION: DOES THE PUBLIC RESPOND?

PART II: RONALD REAGAN

In contrast to his immediate predecessors, the public viewed Ronald Reagan as a strong leader, and his staff was unsurpassed in its skill at portraying the president and his views in the most positive light. This seeming love affair with the public generated commentary in both academia and the media about the persuasiveness of "The Great Communicator." Reagan's views were notable for their clarity and there is little doubt that the public knew where the president stood on matters of public policy. The question for us is the degree to which the public moved in Reagan's direction.

Reagan's Coming to Power

In his farewell address on January 11, 1989, Reagan reflected on his tenure in office: "They called it the Reagan Revolution, and I'll accept that, but for me it always seemed more like the Great Rediscovery: a rediscovery of our values and our common sense."¹ Reflection on the public on inauguration day, Haynes Johnson declared, "In believing in him they were reaffirming a belief in their nation and in themselves."² The question for us is whether Ronald Reagan moved the public to support his clearly identifiable political views. Or was he the agent around whom already existing conservative thought coalesced?

The evidence suggests that Ronald Reagan, like presidents before him, was a facilitator rather than a director. The basic themes Reagan espoused in 1980 were ones

he had been articulating for many years: government was too big; the nation's defenses were too weak, leaving it vulnerable to intimidation by the Soviet Union; pride in country was an end in itself; and public morals had slipped too far. In 1976 conditions were not yet ripe for his message. It took the Carter years, with their gas lines, raging inflation, high interest rates, Soviet aggression in Afghanistan, and hostages in Iran, to create the opportunity for victory. By 1980 the country was ready to listen.

Martin Anderson, Reagan's first chief domestic policy advisor, agrees:

What has been called the Reagan revolution is not completely, or even mostly, due to Ronald Reagan. He was an extremely important contributor to the intellectual and political movement that swept him to the presidency in 1980. He gave that movement focus and leadership. But Reagan did not give it life.³

Anderson goes on to argue that

Neither Goldwater nor Nixon nor Reagan caused or created the revolutionary movement that often carries their name, especially Reagan's. It was the other way around. They were part of the movement, they contributed mightily to the movement, but the movement gave them political life, not the reverse.⁴

As journalist Haynes Johnson put it, Reagan

was the vehicle around which conservative forces could and did rally, the magnet that attracted a coterie of conservative journalists and writers and

ambitious young economic theorists who proclaimed sacred dogma and argued theoretically pure positions.⁵

William Niskanen, one of the members of Reagan's Council of Economic Advisers, agrees with Anderson, writing that several developments in the generation prior to Reagan's election set the stage for substantial change in economic policy. As he saw it,

Lower economic growth, rising inflation, and increasing tax rates led to a popular demand for some change in economic policy reduced popular confidence in the government increased the appeal of policy changes that would reduce the role of government in the American economy. Several complementary changes in the perspectives of economists and an increasing number of empirical studies shaped the choice of policies to meet these concerns [Thus,] there was broad bipartisan agreement in Congress by the late 1970s for the direction of change in each of the major dimensions of federal economic policy.

All that was missing was a president who could shape a coherent economic program and articulate the rationale for this program to Congress, the press, and the American public. For most voters Ronald Reagan was the logical candidate and the logical president for the time. For over fifteen years he had articulated a quite consistent set of views that appealed to an increasing share of the electorate. . . . There are few periods in American history for which a president so closely matched the

current demands on this role. Few presidents have had a greater opportunity to guide and shape federal economic policy.⁶

More systematic data support the view that Reagan had a receptive audience. Stimson concluded that "movements uniformly precede the popular eras." The conservative winds of the 1980s were "fully in place before the election of Ronald Reagan" (just as the liberal winds of the 1960s were blowing in the late 1950s). He was the beneficiary of a conservative mood, but he did not create it.⁷ Similarly, Page and Shapiro found that the right turn on social welfare policy took place before Reagan took office and ended shortly thereafter.⁸ Davis also found that pro-defense and anti-welfare conservative trends had occurred by the late-1970s - before Reagan's nomination.⁹ Mayer produced similar findings,¹⁰ while Smith found that liberalism had plateaued by the mid-1970s.¹¹

There is another aspect of Reagan's coming to power that is of direct interest to us. Although he was the preferred candidate of the American people in 1980 and 1984, Reagan was also the least popular candidate to win the presidency in the 1952-1988 period. His supporters displayed an unusual degree of doubt about him and those who opposed him disliked him with unprecedented intensity.¹²

Reagan Governing

Reagan arrived at the White House on the crest of a preexisting tide of conservatism that he helped to articulate but not to create. What happened after he took office? Was he able to use the bully pulpit to move the public to support his policies if it was not already inclined to do so? Reagan knew better.

Aid to the Contras

In his memoirs, Reagan reflects on his efforts to ignite concern among the American people regarding one of his principal preoccupations: the threat of communism in Central America. At the core of his policy response to this threat was an effort to undermine the "Sandinista" government of Nicaragua through support of the opposition Contras. Reagan required congressional support to obtain aid for the Contras, and he made substantial efforts to mobilize the public behind his program of support for the Contras. Yet he consistently failed.¹³ As he lamented in his memoirs,

Time and again, I would speak on television, to a joint session of Congress, or to other audiences about the problems in Central America, and I would hope that the outcome would be an outpouring of support from Americans who would apply the same kind of heat on Congress that helped pass the economic recovery package.

But the polls usually found that large numbers of Americans cared little or not at all about what happened in Central America - in fact, a surprisingly large proportion didn't even know where Nicaragua and El Salvador were located - and, among those who did care, too few cared enough about a Communist penetration of the Americas to apply the kind of pressure I needed on Congress.¹⁴

The problem of which Reagan spoke is reflected in Tables 3.1-3.3. The three tables contain the responses to questions inquiring about support for aiding the Contras during Reagan's second term. No matter how the question was worded, at no time did even a plurality of Americans support the president's policy of aiding the Contras.

Because the questions represented in the three tables have somewhat different wording, we must be cautious about inferring trends in opinion. Nevertheless, it is difficult to conclude that Reagan's rhetorical efforts moved opinion in his direction. (The unusually low level of support in January 1987 polls is undoubtedly the result of the Iran-Contra scandal that had just broken.)

Insert Tables 3.1-3.3

Richard Wirthlin provides additional evidence of the limits of Reagan's persuasive powers on aid to the Contras. In a memo to the president on April 20, 1985 – at height of Reagan's popularity, Wirthlin advised against taking his case directly to the people through major speeches. The president's pollster told him that doing so was likely to lower his approval and generate more public and congressional opposition than support.¹⁵

Table 3.4 provides the results from National Election Studies on the broader question of the level of U.S. involvement in Central America, and Table 3.5 provides a time series of public evaluations of the president's handling of foreign policy in Central America. In every case, a majority of the public opposed Reagan's policy of greater U.S. involvement and of his handling of the issue of Central America. Moreover, there is no trend toward greater support for the president on his high-priority policy.

Insert Tables 3.4 and 3.5

Defense Spending

One of Ronald Reagan's highest priorities was increasing defense spending. Indeed, during his first term, he oversaw the greatest peacetime increase in defense

spending in U.S. history. In Tables 3.6 and 3.7, we find that public support for defense expenditures was decidedly *lower* at the end of his administration than when he took office!¹⁶

Insert Tables 3.6 and 3.7 here

Upon closer examination, the data is even more interesting. Support for increased defense spending was unusually high *before* Reagan took office. The Reagan defense buildup represented an acceleration of change initiated late in the Carter administration. A number of conditions led to broad partisan support of the defense buildup in both the Carter and Reagan administrations, including the massive Soviet increase in their strategic nuclear forces, a series of communist coups in Third World countries, followed by revolutions in Nicaragua and Iran, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. American hostages held in Iran, Soviet troops controlling a small neighbor, and communists in power in the Western Hemisphere created powerful scenes on television and implied that American military power had become too weak.

Nevertheless, public support for increased defense expenditures dissipated by 1982, only a year after Reagan took office. Indeed, in his second term, a plurality of the public thought the U.S. was spending *too much* on defense. Although it may appear that this declining support for defense spending may have been the unintended consequence of the military buildup that did occur, this is unlikely. Opinion changed by 1982, long before increased defense spending could have influenced the nation's military security. In addition, pressures inevitably increase to spend on butter after periods of spending on guns. The point remains, however, that while Reagan wanted to continue to increase defense spending, the public was unresponsive to his wishes. As a result, Reagan suffered another

disappointment, as Congress did not increase defense spending in real dollars during his entire second term.

Interestingly, when Reagan's chief public relations adviser, Michael Deaver, wrote his memoir of the Reagan years, he presented quite a different picture of the president's leadership of the public on defense spending. According to Deaver, distressed about the lack of public support for defense spending,

Reagan pulled me aside one day; "Mike," he said, "these numbers show you're not doing your job. This is your fault; you gotta get me out of Washington more so I can talk to people about how important this policy is." I did, and he would systematically add his rationale for more military spending to nearly every speech, and eventually his message would get through to the American people.¹⁷

One does not have to challenge the sincerity of the author's memory to conclude that such commentary contributes to the misunderstanding of the potential of the permanent campaign.

Strategic Defense Initiative

One of Ronald Reagan's most notable proposals in national security policy was the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), often referred to as simply "Star Wars." Reagan first broached SDI in a national address on national security in March 1983. This distinctive proposal, designed to protect the U.S. against nuclear attack, was also unique in that it is an issue on which public opinion appears to have changed in the president's direction. The figures in Table 3.8 show that public support for SDI increased 12 percentage points over a two-year period from 1984 to 1986.

Insert Table 3.8

It is possible that SDI was distinctive because public opinion had not crystallized on the issue, providing more potential for presidential leadership. We must be cautious in our interpretations of these findings, however. The results in Table 3.9 are from Reagan's own pollster, Richard Wirthlin and tell a somewhat different story than the results in the previous table. The results of Wirthlin's surveys show that support for SDI actually *fell* during the president's second term. The president still had majority support for his initiative, which was important for the White House, but we cannot conclude that Reagan was effectively building a supportive coalition for his defensive shield.

Insert Table 3.9**Grenada**

On the evening of October 24, 1983, President Reagan ordered U.S. troops to invade the island nation of Grenada. His goals were to prevent a communist takeover of the island and to rescue U.S. medical students studying there. Initial media coverage and congressional response was, in the words of Secretary of State George Shultz, "snide, scathing, and condemnatory."¹⁸ The first public responses to the invasion were split, as Table 3.10 shows.

Insert Table 3.10

On October 27, Reagan made a nationally televised address on Grenada. Following the address, public support increased. The CBS/*New York Times* Poll is especially interesting, as part of it occurred before and part of it immediately after the president's speech. We must be cautious in concluding that it was the president's speech

that was responsible for changing public opinion, however. In a memorable scene, the first American student to descend the steps of the transport plane at Charleston Air Force Base spontaneously fell to his knees and kissed American soil. All three major television networks carried live this act of gratitude. The emotional scene was replayed repeatedly on the news prior to the president's speech.

Thus, it is difficult to determine whether it was the apparent success of the operation, the joy of the rescued students, or the president's speech that increased support for the invasion. It is reasonable to speculate that the television coverage alone would have increased public support, especially when we note that most of the increase in support appears to have come from those who initially withheld judgment rather than from those who initially disapproved of the president's actions.

Members of Reagan's own staff concur with this view. According to press secretary Larry Speakes: "My staff and I were watching when the first students arrived in Charleston, and when we saw how happy they were to be home, we started cheering and pounding the Table. 'That's it! We won!' I shouted."¹⁹ Edwin Meese adds that it was lucky having one of the students kneel down to kiss the ground after getting off the plane in Charleston. "With that simple gesture, the debate about Grenada was effectively over."²⁰

Other National Security Issues

We have examined in detail five national security issues that were central to the Reagan administration. There are many other foreign and defense policy issues, of course. Most of these issues are less clear-cut than spending on offensive or defensive weapons or aid to a specific group and thus do not lend themselves readily to measuring public opinion

over time. Nevertheless, capable scholars have studied both the trends and the nuances of public opinion in the 1980s. They have found that whether the issue was arms control, military aid and arms sales, or cooperation with the Soviet Union, by the early 1980s public opinion had turned to the left—and *ahead of* Reagan.²¹

Domestic Policy Spending

Limiting spending on domestic policy was at the core of Reagan's domestic policy. For many programs, spending *is* policy. The amount of money spent on a program determines how many people are served, how well they are served, or how much of something (land, employees, vaccines, and so on) the government can purchase. Because, as he often declared, "government is the problem," Reagan was eager to limit government spending. Table 3.11 provides responses to a question on spending for government services that specifies by way of example health and education policy. As the data in the table show, Reagan never obtained majority support for reducing spending. Only in 1982 did a plurality of the public favor reducing spending (despite the recession of that year). Indeed, support for Reagan's preference for reducing spending declined during his tenure, and in his second term pluralities actually favored *increasing* spending.

Insert Table 3.11

Numerous national surveys of public opinion have found that support for regulatory programs and spending on health care, welfare, urban problems, education, environmental protection, and aid to minorities increased, rather than decreased, during Reagan's tenure.²² In each case, the public was moving in the *opposite* direction to that of the president. Tables 3.12-3.15 show that increasing majorities of the public wanted

the federal government to spend more on health care, education, and environmental protection, and substantial pluralities supported spending more on food stamps.

Insert Tables 3.12-3.15

Conservative orthodoxy demands a balanced budget. Balancing the budget was also attractive to Reagan because it would constrain government spending. As Table 3.16 shows, support for a balanced budget amendment declined during Reagan's tenure - even as deficits spiraled upward.

Insert Table 3.16

Taxes

Few issues were as important to Ronald Reagan as taxes. Taxes extracted resources from private individuals and they provided the government with resources to spend on policies of which he was skeptical. Thus, he consistently argued that taxes were too high, even after the 25 percent tax cut passed in 1981. As the data in Table 3.17 show, few people ever think that their taxes are too low. The real debate is between those viewing taxes as too high and those who feel that they are paying about the right amount of taxes. Ironically, public support for the view that income taxes were too high peaked just after the first stage of the 1981 tax cut took effect at the beginning of 1982. From that point, the view that taxes were too high lost support throughout the remainder of Reagan's tenure.

Insert Table 3.17

Environmental Protection

A hallmark of Reagan's domestic policy was his administration's antagonism to environmental protection legislation.²³ One of the first scandals of the administration

focused on the director of the Environmental Protection Agency and her close relationship with regulated interests. The data in Table 3.18, which covers only Reagan's first term, show that the public did not follow Reagan's lead on environmental protection. Instead, the public never wavered from its strong support for strictly enforcing laws designed to protect the environment.

Insert Table 3.18

Helping Minorities

Civil rights and a special concern for minorities have been core issues in American politics for decades. The Reagan administration came to office largely opposed to according special attention to aiding minorities, whether through civil rights laws or social welfare legislation. As Table 3.19 shows, there was a modest change in public opinion regarding helping minorities during Reagan's tenure, and that change was in the more liberal direction of aiding minorities.

Insert Table 3.19

Ideology

Presidents are also interested in influencing people's general ideological preferences. Success in affecting ideological preferences may translate into changing the premises on which citizens evaluate policies and politicians and thus be especially significant. Ideological self-identification may also influence the kinds of political appeals to which one is attuned.

Reagan did no better in moving citizens' general ideological preferences to the right than he did in influencing their views of specific policies.²⁴ The data in Table 3.20

represent how individuals characterized their own ideology and how they viewed liberals and conservatives more generally. The readings of public opinion were taken at the time of Reagan's first election in 1980, his reelection in 1984, and at the end of his term in 1988. It is clear that there was very little change in either dimension between 1980 and 1988.

Insert Table 3.20

One prominent study concluded that rather than conservative support swelling once Reagan was in the White House, there was a movement away from conservative views almost as soon as he took office.²⁵ According to another scholar, “Whatever Ronald Reagan’s skills as a communicator, one ability he clearly did not possess was the capacity to induce lasting changes in American policy preferences.”²⁶

Defensive Efforts

Like Bill Clinton, sometimes Ronald Reagan’s public relations focus was defensive. Was the Great Communicator more successful in resisting criticism than he was in creating positive support?

Lebanon. One of the low points of the Reagan administration occurred on October 23, 1983, when 241 Marines were killed while they slept in their barracks at the Beirut airport. The president addressed the nation about the tragedy and America’s peacekeeping role in Lebanon in the same address in which he discussed the invasion of Grenada, which took place the next day. The goal of the Lebanon portion of the speech clearly was damage control.

David Gergen, who served in the Reagan White House, has argued that Reagan’s speech was “an immense success,” buying the president time to work things out. He cites

polls by Richard Wirthlin that found a 20-percentage point swing in public opinion on Lebanon.²⁷ Our data do not support such a positive picture, however. The figures in the top half of Table 3.21 show responses to Gallup Poll questions regarding the president's handling of Lebanon. Although there was a modest boost in public approval of the president's handling of Lebanon in the weeks following the speech, the effect was small and, more importantly, short-lived. Before long, public opinion reverted to the same level of approval as before the speech. Moreover, the level of disapproval increased. At no time did more than a third of the public support the president.

Insert Table 3.21

The bottom half of Table 3.21 presents results from a similar question asked by Richard Wirthlin. There appears to be no significant change in opinion, and at no time did a plurality of the public support the president. By December 1983, Wirthlin found that 50 percent of the public disapproved.

The Bitburg Cemetery Visit. On May 5, 1985, President Reagan visited a German war cemetery at Bitburg. The visit caused a storm of protest, especially among Jews, because some Nazi Waffen SS soldiers were buried in the cemetery. Reagan had given his word to Chancellor Helmut Kohl, however, and would not change his visit. He did add a visit to a concentration camp the same day, however. Richard Wirthlin told the president that his words and actions during the visit had turned public opinion in his favor.²⁸ In Wirthlin's poll of April 25-27, he found that 49 percent of the public supported the president's visit while 47 percent opposed it. He reinterviewed 75 percent of that sample on May 6-8 and he found that while 39 percent of the public opposed the visit, 60 percent felt the president should have visited the cemetery to show the post-war friendship

between the United States and Germany.²⁹ An 11 percentage point increase is indeed an impressive change in public opinion.

These results are somewhat suspect as an indicator of public opinion, however, because only 4 percent of the public failed to register an opinion in the first poll, and only 1 percent failed to do so in the reinterviews. Conversely a CBS/*New York Times* poll taken the day following the visit found that the public was evenly split at 41 percent each on whether or not the president should have visited the military cemetery at Bitburg. In a poll on May 29-June 2, those supporting the visiting fell to 36 percent and those opposing it rose to 47 percent. In each case there was a substantial percentage of the public undecided on the issue.³⁰

Iran-Contra. The greatest crisis of the Reagan administration began in November 1986 when it was revealed that the president had decided to sell weapons to Iran secretly in return for its aid in freeing American hostages. Many saw this move as foolish (it did not work) and contrary to long-standing U.S. policy of not negotiating with terrorists. Soon, officials also learned that some of the money from the sale of missiles was diverted in an illegal effort to fund the Contras in Nicaragua. The president's approval rating in the Gallup Poll dropped 16 percentage points after the scandal was unearthed and did not rise to his pre-Iran-Contra heights until two years later, after the election of his successor.

Clearly, the White House had some explaining to do. How convincing was it to the public? In the post-Watergate period, it is not surprising that two important questions regarding Iran-Contra were whether the president was telling the truth and whether he was involved in a cover-up of the scandal. The White House protested its innocence in 4

nationally televised addresses on November 13, 1986, December 2, 1986, March 4, 1987, and August 12, 1987.

Table 3.22 shows public responses to questions about Reagan's truthfulness. Over the period of the heart of the scandal, there was little change in public opinion and no increase in the percentage of the public who felt the president was telling the truth. Similarly, Table 3.23 shows that the president did not make much headway in convincing the public that he had not engaged in a cover-up. Over the same period covered in the table, Gallup found that 75 percent of the public felt that Reagan was withholding information on Iran-Contra.³¹

Insert Tables 3.22 and 3.23

A second issue related to Iran-Contra was its impact on how the public viewed Reagan as a president. Table 3.24 displays public evaluations of Reagan's handling of Iran-Contra. There was very little change in the approval rates of the president's performance during the entire period, despite the four presidential nationally televised addresses on the subject. Only a third of the public approved his handling of the crisis. Potentially more serious were questions raised about Reagan being up to his job. The figures in Table 3.25 show that only a bare majority of the public did not see the scandal as evidence for doubting that the president could handle the presidency. Moreover, the White House's public relations efforts were not successful in increasing this percentage.

Insert Tables 3.24 and 3.25

Comparing Reagan with Margaret Thatcher

The conclusion that Ronald Reagan was not successful in moving public opinion is likely to take most readers by surprise. This is especially likely to be true for his admirers. It is important readers understand that our concern is empirical, not ideological. The findings are in no way a criticism of Reagan. We began by noting that we were using Reagan as a best-test case. The point is not that he was poor at leadership. Instead, it is that even the most skilled leaders face insurmountable obstacles in moving the public.

We can increase our confidence in the validity of these findings by briefly examining the experience of another strong conservative leader in office at about the same time as Reagan: Margaret Thatcher. We find that the prime minister's experience was similar to Reagan's. In a series of studies, Ivor Crewe has analyzed the support for Thatcherite values, policy beliefs, and leadership style, using opinion polls by MORI, Gallup, and the British Election Surveys (1970 to 1983). He concluded that with the exception of privatization, there was no evidence that Prime Minister Thatcher converted the electorate on the central values of strong government, discipline, and free enterprise during her first term.³² In addition, there was no increase in the Conservative vote, partisanship, or party members in the 1980s.³³ John Rentoul³⁴ and John Curtice report similar findings.³⁵

Reagan in Perspective

Ronald Reagan was less a public relations phenomenon than the conventional wisdom indicates. He had the good fortune to take office on the crest of a compatible wave of public opinion, and he effectively exploited the opportunity the voters had handed him. Yet when it came time to change public opinion or mobilize it on his behalf,

he typically met with failure. As press secretary Marlin Fitzwater put it, "Reagan would go out on the stump, draw huge throngs and convert no one at all."³⁶

Interestingly, in the same memo that Richard Wirthlin wrote to the president discouraging him from going public on aid to the Contras, he listed the conditions under which Reagan had been successful in marshaling public support for programs³⁷:

1. When public was misinformed about an issue (air traffic controllers' strike).
2. When raised policy stakes on an issue (budget and tax in 1981).
3. When increased press coverage raised the saliency of the issue to the public.
4. When the president could ask people to write their senators and representatives, amplifying the public's voice.

What is especially interesting here is that the president's pollster did not list conditions when the president had increased support for his policies. Except for the first condition (when people were confused and did not have crystallized opinions), Wirthlin listed conditions that presumed that the public had already made up its mind. On the second point, Wirthlin added that raising the stakes of an issue was helpful *only* (his emphasis) when the issue already had strong grassroots support. Similarly, on the third condition, he added that increasing the saliency of an issue could bring popular pressure on Congress if the issue *already* had broad support. The clear implication of the fourth condition is that the public *already* had its voice.

In addition, Reagan's performance regarding the air traffic controllers strike was not universally lauded. Despite a well-known predisposition among the public to oppose strikes by public employees, Table 3.26 shows that the president attained the support of a bare majority of the public approximately 6 months following the strike.

Insert Table 3.26

Clearly, there was a disjunction between what the polls said and what the press and Washington insiders believed about Reagan's relationship with the public. Perhaps those inside the beltway had such a strong belief in the power of a person of Reagan's skill and charm on television and were so impressed with Reagan's communications skills that they took it for granted that he was able to move the America people. These premises made it easy to attribute the president's early legislative victories to his skill as a communicator. On closer examination, the insiders appear to have been wrong. Once the themes had been established, however, they were difficult to adjust to the reality of years of stalemate and budgets declared "Dead on Arrival." In retrospect, Reagan's image as the Great Communicator appears to owe more to his early success with Congress than with his ability to move the public in a reliable fashion.

Reconsidering Presidential Leadership of the Public

We began Chapter 2 by inquiring whether there was evidence that the president could move public opinion to support him or his policies. We have found that even able communicators like Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton were not able to move the public much on their own. This finding poses a direct challenge to the faith that many have in the broad premise of the potential of presidential leadership of the public. At the very least, it is appropriate to rethink the theory of governing based on the principle of presidential success in exploiting the bully pulpit to achieve changes in public policy.

Chief executives are not directors who lead the public where it otherwise refuses to go, thus reshaping the contours of the political landscape. Instead, presidents are

facilitators who reflect, and may intensify, widely held views. In the process, they may endow the views of their supporters with structure and purpose and exploit opportunities in their environments to accomplish their joint goals. Ronald Reagan did this brilliantly in 1981.

At this point, we have described the movement of public opinion in relation to the president's policy positions. Our next step is to explain why the public is not more responsive to the president. To explore the obstacles to presidential leadership of the public, we must examine both the stimulus and the response in the communications chain. We begin by focusing on the president as the messenger and then move to examining voters as receivers of communications.

Table 3.1
Public Support for Aid to the Contras, 1985-1986

Date	Support Aid	Oppose Aid	Don't Know
06/85 (1)	34%	59%	6%
07/85 (1)	28	64	7
03/86 (3)	34	59	8
03/86 (3)	30	54	16
03/86 (4)	35	60	4
03/86 (2)	42	53	5
03/86 (5)	37	44	19
04/86 (7)	33	62	5
04/86 (8)	39	54	7
04/86 (6)	28	65	7

Note: Numbers in parentheses are question numbers (under "Sources").

Sources:

1. Harris question: "Recently, President Reagan has had some serious disagreements with Congress. Now who do you think was more right — Reagan or Congress — in their differences over sending military aid to the Contra rebels in Nicaragua, which is favored by Reagan and opposed by Congress?"
2. ABC News question: "As you may know, President Reagan has asked Congress for new military aid for the Nicaraguan rebels known as the 'contras.' Do you agree or disagree with Reagan that Congress should approve that money?"
3. ABC News question: "President Reagan is asking Congress for new military aid for the Nicaraguan rebels know as the 'Contras'. Do you agree or disagree with Reagan that Congress should approve that money?"
4. ABC News question: "The House of Representatives has refused Reagan's request for 100 million dollars in military and other aid to the contra rebels in Nicaragua. Do you approve or disapprove of that action by the House?" [Because the question asks respondents whether they approve of the House's negative action, a response of "approve" means opposing aid to the Contras. Thus, we have reversed the results to make them consistent with the portrayal of the results from the other questions.]
5. *USA Today* question: "Do you favor or oppose military aid to the Contras fighting the Sandinista government in Nicaragua?"

6. ABC News/*Washington Post* question: “Do you generally favor or oppose the U.S. granting \$100 million dollars in military and other aid to the Nicaraguan rebels known as the 'contras'?”
7. Harris question: “Do you favor or oppose the U.S. sending \$100 million in military and non-military aid to the Contra rebels in Nicaragua?”
8. Harris question: “Do you favor or oppose the U.S. sending just \$30 million in non-military aid to the Contra rebels in Nicaragua?”

Table 3.2
Public Support for Aid to the Contras, 1987

Date	Approve	Disapprove	Don't know
01/87	22%	70%	7%
07/87	43	46	12
07/87	35	54	14
07/87	41	49	11
08/87	36	59	5
08/87	40	56	4
09/87	33	61	5
10/87	33	63	4

Source: ABC News/*Washington Post* question: "Do you generally favor or oppose the U.S. Congress granting military aid to the Nicaraguan rebels known as the 'Contras'?"

Table 3.3
Public Support for Aid to the Contras, 1987-1988

Date	Approve	Disapprove	Don't know
01/87	28%	60%	12%
07/87	33	51	16
07/87	40	49	12
08/87	33	49	18
10/87	35	53	12
01/88	30	58	12
03/88	39	48	14

Source: CBS/*NY Times* question: "Do you approve or disapprove of the United States government giving military and other aid to the Contras who are fighting against the government of Nicaragua?"

Table 3.4
Public Support for Involvement in Central America

Date	More Involved	Middle of the Road	Less Involved
1984	25%	20%	55%
1986	24	22	54

Source: National Election Study question: “Some people think that the United States should become much more involved in the internal affairs of Central American countries. Others believe that the US should become much less involved in this area. Where would you place yourself on this scale...?”

Note: Help = 1-3, Middle of the Road = 4, Not help = 5-7 on NES’ 7-point scale.

Table 3.5
Public Approval of Reagan's Handling of Central America

Date	Positive	Negative	Unsure
10/83	33%	58%	9%
11/83	40	52	8
12/83	34	59	7
1/84	30	64	6
2/84	30	61	9
3/84	29	61	10
5/84	31	62	7
6/84	33	63	4
7/84	31	66	3
9/84	41	57	2
10/84	42	53	5
12/84	37	59	4
3/85	34	59	7
5/85	32	63	5
5/85	32	63	5
6/85	39	55	6
7/85	36	59	5
9/85	32	64	4
11/85	38	57	5
1/86	39	58	3
4/86	40	54	6
8/86	33	59	8
1/87	27	66	7
8/87	31	67	2
10/87	33	63	4
12/87	26	68	6
6/88	33	63	4

Source: Harris question: "Now let me ask you about some specific things President Reagan has done. How would you rate him on . . . Handling the situation in Central America - excellent, pretty good, only fair, or poor?"

Note: Positive = excellent/pretty good; Negative = only fair/poor.

Table 3.6
Public Support for Defense Spending

Date	Too Little	About Right	Too Much	Don't Know
1/1980	49%	24%	14%	13%
1/1981	51	22	15	12
3/1982	19	36	36	9
3/1983	14	33	45	8
1/1985	11	36	46	7
3/1986	13	36	47	4
4/1987	14	36	44	6

Source: Gallup Poll question: “There is much discussion as to the amount of money the government in Washington should spend for national defense and military purposes. How do you feel about this: do you think we are spending too little, too much, or about the right amount?”

Table 3.7
Public Support for Defense Spending

Date	Decrease	About the Same	Increase
1980	11%	18%	71%
1982	34	33	33
1984	32	32	36
1986	39	29	32
1988	35	32	33

Source: National Election Study question: “Some people believe that we should be spending much less on money for defense. Others feel that spending should be greatly increased. Where would you place yourself on this scale?”

Note: Decrease = 1-3, About the Same = 4, Increase = 5-7 on NES’ 7-point scale.

Table 3.8
Public Support for the Strategic Defense Initiative, 1984-1987

Date	Favor	Oppose	Unsure
10/84	40%	47%	12%
8/85	45	47	8
1/86	47	44	9
12/86	52	40	8
4/87	52	36	12

Source: Gallup Poll question: “Some people feel the U.S. should try to develop a space-based 'Star-Wars' system to protect the U.S. from nuclear attack. Others oppose such an effort because they say it would be too costly and further escalate the arms race. Which view comes closer to your own?”

Table 3.9
Public Support for the Strategic Defense Initiative, 1984-1987

Date	Good Idea	Bad Idea	No Opinion
09/19/86	62%	36%	2%
10/12/86	73	25	2
11/15/86	68	29	2
12/15/86	64	33	3
03/07/87	69	29	2
10/25/87	60	34	5
04/04/88	65	31	4
07/28/88	63	31	7
08/27/88	56	39	5

Source: Wirthlin question, “Some people say that research on a defense against nuclear-armed missiles, such as SDI, is a good idea because it will help deter a soviet attack, increase the chance of reaching another, more comprehensive, arms control agreement, and reduce the risk of war. Other people say that research on a defense against nuclear armed missiles, such as SDI, is a bad idea because it will upset the balance of power between the U.S. and the USSR, accelerate the arms race, and increase the risk of war. Which statement is closer to your own opinion . . . that a research on a defense against nuclear-armed missiles is a good idea or a bad idea?”

Table 3.10
Public Support for the Invasion of Grenada

Date	Poll	Approve	Disapprove	Don't Know
10/25/83	ABC/Washington Post	53%	33%	14%
10/26/83	Gallup	53	34	13
10/26/83	ABC/Washington Post	53	37	10
10/26/83	CBS/NY Times	46	42	12
10/27/83	<i>Reagan's National Address</i>			
10/27/83	CBS/NY Times	55	31	14
10/28/83	ABC/Washington Post	63	31	6
10/28/83	Harris	60	36	4
11/03/83	ABC/Washington Post	69	24	7
11/09/83	Harris	63	32	5
11/18/83	NY Times	63	27	10

Sources:

- *ABC/Washington Post* question: "Do you approve or disapprove of the way Reagan is handling the situation in Grenada?"
- Gallup Poll question: "Do you approve or disapprove of the participation of U.S. military forces--along with those of several Caribbean nations--in the invasion of Grenada?"
- *CBS/NY Times* question: "U.S. troops have been sent to **Grenada**. Do you approve or disapprove of sending U.S. troops there?"
- Harris question: "Now let me ask you about some specific things President Reagan has done. How would you rate him on ordering the invasion of Grenada - Excellent, pretty good, only fair, or poor?"
Approve = "excellent" and "pretty good."
- *NY Times* question: "U.S. troops have been sent to Grenada. Do you approve or disapprove of sending the troops there?"

Table 3.11
Public Support for Government Spending

Date	Reduce Spending	Spend the Same	Increase Spending
1980	34%	20%	47%
1982	41	29	33
1984	34	36	30
1986	26	28	46
1988	32	29	39

Source: National Election Study question: “Some people think that government should provide fewer services, even in areas such as health and education, in order to reduce spending. Other people feel that it is important for the government to provide many more services even if it means an increase in spending. Where would you place yourself on this scale?”

Note: Reduce Spending = 1-3; Keep the Same = 4; Increase Spending = 5-7 on NES’ 7-point scale.

Table 3.12
Public Support for Health Care Spending

Date	Reduce Spending	Spend the Same	Increase Spending	No Opinion
08/01/80***	12%	37%	47%	5%
01/12/82**	10	34	52	4
01/30/84	5	28	63	3
01/29/86	5	27	64	3
04/25/87*	3	23	72	2
06/24/88	4	24	67	5

Source: Gallup Poll question: “Now I am going to ask you a question about government spending. In answering, please bear in mind that sooner or later all government spending has to be taken care of from the money you and other Americans pay in taxes. As I read each program, tell me if the amount of money being spent for that purpose should be increased, kept at the present level, reduced, or ended altogether. . . . Improving medical and health care for Americans generally.”

* “If you had a say in making up the federal budget this year, for which of the following programs would you like to see spending increased, for which would you like to see spending decreased or for which should spending be kept the same? . . . Improving the nation's health care.”

** “Do you think federal spending in the following areas should be cut further, increased or remain the same? . . . Medical and health care.”

*** “Here are some of the things the federal government spends money on. For each one, would you please tell me whether you think the government should be spending more money than it is now, less money than it is now, or should the government continue spending about the same amount as now? Health.”

Table 3.13
Public Support for Spending on Food Stamps

Date	Reduce Spending	Spend the Same	Increase Spending	No Opinion
08/01/80**	58	25	13	4
01/12/82*	40	36	17	7
01/30/84	12	37	48	3
01/29/86	11	35	46	5
06/24/88	15	35	44	6

Source: Gallup Poll question: "Now I am going to ask you a question about government spending. In answering, please bear in mind that sooner or later all government spending has to be taken care of from the money you and other Americans pay in taxes. As I read each program, tell me if the amount of money being spent for that purpose should be increased, kept at the present level, reduced, or ended altogether. . . . Providing food programs for low-income families."

* "Do you think federal spending in the following areas should be cut further, increased or remain the same? . . . Food stamps."

** "Here are some of the things the federal government spends money on. For each one, would you please tell me whether you think the government should be spending more money than it is now, less money than it is now, or should the government continue spending about the same amount as now? Welfare."

Table 3.14
Support for Federal Spending for Education

Date	Reduce Spending	Keep the Same	Increase Spending	No Opinion
08/01/80**	15	32	49	5
01/12/82*	17	32	47	4
01/30/84	5	27	65	2
01/29/86	7	26	63	3
06/24/88	7	22	66	5

Source: Gallup Poll question: "Now I am going to ask you a question about government spending. In answering, please bear in mind that sooner or later all government spending has to be taken care of from the money you and other Americans pay in taxes. As I read each program, tell me if the amount of money being spent for that purpose should be increased, kept at the present level, reduced, or ended altogether. . . . Federal money to improve the quality of public education."

* "Do you think federal spending in the following areas should be cut further, increased or remain the same?" . . . Aid to education/college loans."

** "Here are some of the things the federal government spends money on. For each one, would you please tell me whether you think the government should be spending more money than it is now, less money than it is now, or should the government continue spending about the same amount as now? Education and Training."

Table 3.15
Public Support for Environmental Spending

Date	Decrease Spending	Keep about the Same	Increase Spending
1982*	12	41	47
1984	8	55	36
1986	4	45	51
1988	3	34	63

Source: National Election Study question: "Should federal spending on improving and protecting the environment be increased, decreased, or kept about the same?"

Note: In 1982 the categories were "too little, about right, or too much."

Table 3.16
Public Support for a Balanced Budget Amendment

Date	Favor	Against	No Opinion
4/81	65	21	14
9/81	67	19	14
9/82 ⁺	75	25	
8/85*	49	27	24
7/87	62	21	17
1/89	59	24	17

Source: Gallup Poll question: "A proposed amendment to the Constitution would require Congress to approve a balanced federal budget each year. Government spending would have to be limited to no more than expected revenues, unless a three-fifths' majority of Congress voted to spend more than expected revenues. Would you favor or oppose this amendment to the Constitution?"

*"Under this proposed (balanced budget) amendment, any Federal budget passed by Congress would have projected tax REVENUES that are equal to projected government SPENDING, unless a three-fifths' majority of Congress voted not to do so. Would you favor or oppose this amendment to the Constitution?"

⁺Gallup did not offer respondents the "no opinion" option, inflating support for the remaining options.

Table 3.17
Public Opinion on Federal Taxes

Date	Too High	About Right	Too Low	Don't Know
2/1980	68	27	0	5
2/1982	69	26	0	5
2/1984	63	33	1	4
2/1985	60	32	0	7
2/1987	59	35	1	6
2/1988	55	39	1	5

Source: General Social Survey question: "Do you consider the amount of federal income tax that you have to pay as too high, about right, or too low?"

Table 3.18
Public Support for Environmental Protection

Date	Favor	Oppose	Unsure
3/11/82	83%	14%	3%
7/09/82	85	10	5
12/27/83	84	13	3
3/08/84	88	9	3
5/16/84	84	10	6
7/02/84	85	9	6
7/20/84	84	10	6

Source: Harris question, “Do you favor or oppose ... strict enforcement of air and water pollution controls as now required by the Clean Air and Water Acts?”

Table 3.19
Public Support for Aiding Minorities

Date	Should Not Aid	Middle	Should Aid
1980	49	29	22
1982	45	30	25
1984	37	31	32
1986	40	31	29

Source: National Election Study question: “Some people feel that the government in Washington should make every effort to improve the social and economic position of blacks and other minority groups. Others feel that the government should not make any special effort to help minorities because they should help themselves. Where would you place yourself on this scale?”

Note: Should Aid = 1-3, Middle = 4, Should Not Aid = 5-7 on NES’ 7-point scale.

Table 3.20
Trends in Political Ideology

Self-Placement Scale	1980	1982	1984	1986	1988
Conservative	23.1%	22.5%	20.8%	19.3%	23.6%
Slightly conservative	21.0	19.8	20.1	20.1	21.7
Moderate	30.6	34.9	33.4	36.9	31.3
Slightly liberal	13.5	11.7	12.9	14.2	13.1
Liberal	11.8	11.1	12.7	9.5	10.3
Mean Feeling Thermometer Ratings of:					
Conservatives	62.7	53.3	59.9	58.6	61.1
Liberals	51.7	45.7	55.9	53.3	51.7

Source: National Election Studies ideological self-placement question: “we hear a lot of talk these days about liberals and conservatives. Here is a seven-point scale on which the political views that people might hold are arranged from extremely liberal to extremely conservative. Where would you place yourself on this scale, or haven’t you thought much about this?”

The National Election Studies “feeling thermometer” question: “I’d like to get your feelings toward some of our political leaders and other people who are in the news these days. I’ll read the name of a person and I’d like you to rate that person using this feeling thermometer. You may use any number from 0 to 100 for rating. Ratings between 50 degrees and 100 degrees mean that you feel favorable and warm toward the person. Ratings between 0 and 50 mean that you don’t feel too favorable toward the person. If we come to a person whose name you don’t recognize, you don’t need to rate that person. Just tell me and we’ll move on to the next one. If you do recognize name, but don’t feel particularly warm or cold toward that person, you would rate that person at the 50 degree mark.”

Note: In order to reduce the NES ideology scale from seven to five points, Liberal combines those who selected themselves to be either “extremely liberal” or “liberal;” Conservative combines those who indicated they were either “extremely conservative” or “conservative.”

Table 3.21
Public Approval of Reagan's Handling of Lebanon

Date	Approve	Disapprove	No Opinion
10/7-10/83	28%	53%	19%
11/18-21/83	34	52	14
1/13-16/84	28	59	14
2/10-13/84	28	60	12

Source: Gallup question: "Now, let me ask you about some specific foreign problems. As I read off each problem, would you tell me whether you approve or disapprove of the way President **Reagan** is handling that problem?) . . . The situation in Lebanon."

Date	Strongly Approve	Somewhat Approve	Somewhat Disapprove	Strongly Disapprove	No Opinion
9/23-27/82	16	23	16	24	21
11/25-29/83	20	24	17	29	10
12/14-17/83	19	24	17	33	7
2/2-4/84	14	19	19	43	5
3/7-11/84	12	20	18	40	10

Source: Wirthlin question: "I am going to read you a list of issues. For each, I would like you to tell me whether you strongly approve, somewhat approve, somewhat disapprove, or strongly disapprove of the way Ronald Reagan is handling each of these issues. . . . the situation in Lebanon."

Table 3.22
Reagan Truthfulness on Iran-Contra

Date	Yes	No	Don't Know
11/25/86*	40%	56%	4%
12/2/86*	47	49	4
1/11-13/87**	42	53	5
1/18-20/87**	33	60	7
7/15/87*	34	60	6
8/12/87*	39	58	4
8/16-17/87**	42	55	3
9/19-22/87**	37	60	3

*Source: ABC News/*Washington Post* question: "Generally speaking, do you think Reagan has been telling the public the truth about the Iran/Contra situation or not?"

**Wirthlin question, "As you may know, Ronald Reagan said he knew nothing about funding the Contra effort with money from the Iranian arms deal. From what you have heard and read, do you believe he is telling the truth?"

Table 3.23
Reagan Covering-up Iran-Contra

Date	Yes	No	No Opinion
2/26/87	38	57	5
3/5-9/87	48	48	4
5/28-6/1/87	51	47	2
6/25-29/87	50	48	2
7/11-12/87	45	49	6
7/15/87	45	49	6
8/3-5/87	43	52	5

Source: ABC News/*Washington Post* question: “Do you think Ronald Reagan himself participated in an organized attempt to cover-up the facts about the Iran/Contra arms affair or not?”

Table 3.24
Reagan's handling of Iran-Contra

Date	Approve	Disapprove	No Opinion
12/15-18/86	36%	61%	3%
1/11-13/87	33	63	4
1/18-20/87	32	64	3
11/28-30/87	34	63	3

Source: Wirthlin question, "Do you approve or disapprove of the way Ronald Reagan is handling the Iranian situation?"

Table 3.25
Iran-Contra and Reagan's Ability to Govern

Date	Serious	Not Serious	Don't Know
12/27/86-1/4/87	42	53	5
1/28-29/87	43	49	9
2/27/87	47	43	10
3/5-6/87	40	55	6
3/14-18/87	38	53	9
6/8-14/87	42	53	5

Source: Gallup Poll question: "Do you think the Iran-Contra affair is so serious that it makes you doubt Ronald Reagan's ability to run the country or is it not serious enough to make you question Reagan's ability to do his job?"

Table 3.26
Reagan's Handling of Air Traffic Controllers Strike

Date	Approve	Disapprove	Don't Know
8/6-8/7/81 ¹	57%	30%	13%
8/10-11/81 ²	64	27	9
8/14-17/81 ³	59	30	11
11/16-17/81 ²	66	26	8
12/14-15/81 ²	64	28	8
1/22-30/82 ⁴	53	42	5

Sources: ¹ Gallup/*Newsweek* question: "Do you approve or disapprove of the way President Reagan is handling the strike (by air-traffic controllers)?"

² NBC News/Associated Press question: "Do approve or disapprove of the way President Reagan is handling/handled the (air traffic controllers) strike?"

³ Gallup/AIPO question: "Do you approve or disapprove of the way Reagan is dealing with the air traffic controllers strike?"

⁴ ABC News/*Washington Post* question: "As you know, Reagan fired all the air traffic controllers who went on strike last summer (1981). Did you approve or disapprove of his firing them?"

Notes

¹ "Reagan Bids Nation Farewell: 'We've Made a Difference,'" *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*, January 14, 1989, p. 95.

² Haynes Johnson, *Sleepwalking Through History* (New York: Norton), p. 167.

³ Martin Anderson, Martin. 1990. *Revolution: The Reagan Legacy* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press), p. 7.

⁴ Anderson, *Revolution*, pp. xviii-xix.

⁵ Johnson, *Sleepwalking Through History*, p. 49. Johnson (p. 79) also argued that Reagan's election as governor of California in 1966, during the period of discord over the war in Vietnam, civil rights, and campus unrest, occurred because "Through Reagan the public had a vehicle to express resentment at both national disorder and political leadership."

⁶ William A. Niskanen, *Reaganomics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 22.

⁷ James A. Stimson, *Public Opinion in America: Moods, Cycles, and Swings* (Boulder, Col.: Westview, 1991), pp. 64, 126-127.

⁸ Benjamin I. Page and Robert Y. Shapiro, *The Rational Public* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 127, 136.

⁹ James A. Davis, "Changeable Weather in a Cooling Climate," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 56 (Fall 1992): 261-306. In a survey of 42 items in the General Social Survey from 1972 through 1989, Smith found that crime was the only issue that changed in conservative direction.

¹⁰ William G. Mayer, *The Changing American Mind* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 1992), p. 123.

¹¹ Tom W. Smith, "Liberal and Conservative Trends in the United States Since World War II," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 54 (Winter 1990): 479-507. He also found no general trend to more conservative opinion occurred in 1970s.

¹² Martin P. Wattenberg, *The Rise of Candidate-Centered Politics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), chapt. 4.

¹³ Ronald Reagan, *An American Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), pp. 471, 479; Richard Sobel, ed., *Public Opinion in U.S. Foreign Policy: The Controversy over Contra Aid* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1993); Page and Shapiro, *The Rational Public*, p. 276. See also CBS News/*The New York Times* Poll, December 1, 1986, Table 5; CBS News/*The New York Times* Poll (News release, October 27, 1987), Table 17; "Americans on Contra Aid: Broad Opposition," *New York Times*, January 31, 1988, sec. 4, p. 1.

¹⁴ Reagan, *An American Life*, p. 479.

¹⁵ Memo from Richard Wirthlin to Ronald Reagan, April 10, 1985. My thanks to Lawrence R. Jacobs and Robert Y. Shapiro for sharing a copy of the memo.

¹⁶ This may have been the result of the military buildup that did occur, but the point remains that while Reagan wanted to continue to increase defense spending, the public was unresponsive to his wishes. Larry M. Bartels, "The American Public's Defense Spending Preferences in the Post-Cold War Era," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 58 (Winter 1994): 479-508; Lipset, "Beyond 1984," p. 229; Mayer, *The Changing American Mind*, pp. 51, 62, 133. See also "Defense," Gallup Report, May 1987, pp. 2-3; "Opinion Outlook," *National*

Journal, June 13, 1987, p. 1550; CBS News/*The New York Times Poll*, October 27, 1987, table 15.

¹⁷ Michael K. Deaver, *A Different Drummer: My Thirty Years with Ronald Reagan* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), p. 154.

¹⁸ George P. Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph* (New York: Scribner's, 1993), p. 339.

¹⁹ Larry Speakes, *Speaking Out: The Reagan Presidency From Inside the White House* (New York: Avon Books, 1988), p. 198.

²⁰ Edwin Meese III, *With Reagan: The Inside Story* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Gateway, 1992), p. 220.

²¹ Page and Shapiro, *The Rational Public*, pp. 271–281; John E. Reilly, ed., *American Public Opinion and U.S. Foreign Policy 1987* (Chicago: Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, 1987), chaps. 5, 6; Mayer, *The Changing American Mind*, chaps. 4, 6.

²² Seymour Martin Lipset, “Beyond 1984: The Anomalies of American Politics,” *PS* 19 (1986), pp. 228–229; William G. Mayer, *The Changing American Mind* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), chaps. 5, 6; Benjamin I. Page and Robert Y. Shapiro, *The Rational Public* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 133, 136, 159; William Schneider, “The Voters’ Mood 1986: The Six-Year Itch,” *National Journal*, December 7, 1985, p. 2758. See also “Supporting a Greater Federal Role,” *National Journal*, April 18, 1987, p. 924; “Opinion Outlook,” *National Journal*, April 18, 1987, p. 964; “Federal Budget Deficit,” *Gallup Report*, August 1987, pp. 25, 27; Davis, “Changeable Weather in a Cooling Climate.” See also CBS News/*The New York Times Poll*, October 27, 1987, Tables 16, 20; Robert Y. Shapiro and John T. Young, “Public

Opinion and the Welfare State: The United States in Comparative Perspective,” *Political Science Quarterly* 104 (Spring 1989): 59-89.

²³ See, for example, Robert F. Durant, *The Administrative Presidency Revisited* (SUNY Press, 1992); Dan B. Wood, "Principals, Bureaucrats, and Responsiveness in Clean Air Enforcement," *American Political Science Review* 82 (March 1988): 213-234.

²⁴ See, for example, John A. Fleishman, "Trends in Self-identified Ideology from 1972 to 1982: No Support for the Salience Hypothesis," *American Journal of Political Science* 30 (1986); p 517-541; Martin P. Wattenberg, "From a Partisan to a Candidate-centered Electorate," in Anthony King, ed., *The New American Political System* (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 1990), p 169–171; Wattenberg, *The Rise of Candidate-Centered Politics*, p 95–101.

²⁵ James A. Stimson, *Public Opinion in America: Moods, Cycles, and Swings* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1991), pp. 64, 126-127.

²⁶ Mayer, *The Changing American Mind*, p 127.

²⁷ David Gergen, *Eyewitness to Power: The Essence of Leadership* (New York: Simon and Schuster 2000), p. 220.

²⁸Memorandum by Richard Wirthlin, May 9, 1985. My thanks for Lawrence R. Jacobs and Robert Y. Shapiro for a copy of the memo.

²⁹ Wirthlin poll, May 6-8, 1985.

³⁰ CBS/*New York Times* polls of May 6, 1985 and May 29-June 2, 1985.

³¹ "Do you feel that President Reagan has told the public everything he knows about the Iran-Contra affair or that he is holding back certain information?" in polls of January 16-19, 1987 and August 24-September 2, 1987.

³² Ivor Crewe, "Values: The Crusade that Failed," in Dennis Kavanagh and Anthony Seldon, eds., *The Thatcher Effect: A Decade of Change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 241. See also Ivor Crewe, "Has the Electorate Become Thatcherite?" in Robert Skidelsky, *Thatcherism* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1988); Ivor Crewe and Donald Searing, "Ideological Change in the British Conservative Party," in *American Political Science Review* 82 (June 1988): 361-384.

³³ Ivor Crewe and Donald Searing, "Mrs. Thatcher's Crusade: Conservatism in Britain, 1972-1986," in B. Cooper, Allan Kornberg, and William Mishler, eds., *The Resurgence of Conservatism in Anglo-American Democracies* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1988).

³⁴ John Rentoul, *Me and Mine: The Triumph of the New Individualism* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), p. 158.

³⁵ John Curtice, "Interim Report: Party Politics," in Roger Jowell, Sharon Witherspoon, and Lindsay Brook, *British Social Attitudes: The 1987 Report* (Aldershot Hants: SCPR\Gower, 1986), chapt. 8, 171-182. See also John Curtice, "Political Partisanship," in Roger Jowell, Sharon Witherspoon, and Lindsay Brook, *British Social Attitudes: The 1986 Report* (Aldershot Hants: SCPR\Gower, 1986), chapt. 3, 39-53.

³⁶ Quoted in R. W. Apple, "Bush Sure-Footed on Trail of Money," *New York Times*, September 29, 1990, p 8. See also Reed L. Welch, *Tuning In or Tuning Out: The Influence of Televised Presidential Addresses on Public Opinion* (Ph.D. dissertation, Texas A&M University, 1997).

³⁷ Wirthlin memo to President Reagan on April 20, 1985.