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ABSTRACT

A survey was conducted to determine the extent and content of newspaper coverage of foreign policy issues in the 1980 United States presidential campaign. Fifty daily newspapers from every region of the country were selected randomly based on circulation. A list of 757 news events was divided into party and nonparty events, and the party events were then divided into campaign events and issue events. Issue events were in turn divided into economic, domestic, and foreign categories. After the campaign itself, foreign affairs subjects constituted about 15% of total events covered. Four issues generated more news than any others: (1) Iran-hostages (27 events); (2) the Stealth airplane (18 events); (3) Salt II negotiations (13 events); and (4) war and peace (10 events). The data indicates that both candidates initiated foreign affairs issues in hope of political advantage; that newspapers covered these issues more intensely than those that had more direct bearing on the campaign; that editors were more interested in the war and peace issue (while favoring the Iranian crisis on the front page); that they were least interested in the Stealth issue, perhaps because it was too complicated; and that neither they nor the politicians were willing to explore the Salt II issue in spite of clear differences between the candidates. As a whole, foreign affairs coverage was more political than substantive. (JL)

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Foreign Policy News in the 1980 Presidential Election Campaign \*

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Democracies, Alexis de Tocqueville said in the 1830s, are particularly unsuited to forming and maintaining foreign policies. "Foreign politics demand scarcely any of those qualities which are peculiar to democracy; they require, on the contrary, the perfect use of almost all those in which it is deficient," he wrote. Foreign policies need careful and secret formulation, efficient execution and patience in waiting for results. After his penetrating look at the American political and social system, the French sociologist found little that recommended democracies in dealing with global problems. He decried "the propensity that induces democracies to obey impulse rather than prudence and to abandon a mature design for the gratification of a momentary passion . . ." <sup>1</sup>

If democracies are indeed unsuitable for formulating consistent foreign policies, it follows that presidential election campaigns are not the best forums on which to discuss the nation's foreign policy. The tendency toward obedience to impulse and gratification of passion is particularly strong during the heat of a presidential election campaign. Incumbent presidential candidates are put in the position of defending their policies without revealing all that could or should be revealed about them and without offending their foreign counterparts. Challengers often criticize foreign policy decisions without having full knowledge about the decisions and without being called upon to implement a policy of their own.

Yet, discussion of foreign policy issues can often be decisive in a campaign. Dwight Eisenhower played on America's frustration with the war in Korea in 1952 by pledging that he would do something about it -- that he would "go" to Korea. Gerald Ford's highly ill conceived remark that there was no Soviet domination of Eastern Europe interrupted his comeback against Jimmy Carter and in the eyes of many lost the election for him. <sup>2</sup>

At times, of course, the role played by foreign affairs in a political campaign goes far beyond the discussion of policies. Events themselves can intrude on the process. The alleged attack on American ships in the Gulf of Tonkin in 1964, the trips of President Nixon to China and the Soviet Union in 1972, and the takeover of the American embassy in Teheran and the holding of American hostages in 1980 are a few of the many instances where foreign affairs events have had some impact on the nation's presidential campaign

Consequently, despite the supposed unsuitability of the topic in general, foreign affairs and foreign policies are often major topics of discussion during a presidential campaign. De Tocqueville and others to the contrary, there are good reasons why this should occur. Every four years Americans elect, among other things, the nation's Chief Diplomat and the Commander-in-Chief of its armed forces. The person whom they select has a wide variety of problems to face and policy options to pursue. He is the "leader of the free world," the commander of a vast and far-flung military force and the first among the diplomatic corps. He must decide on the military's deployment, weapon systems and maintenance; he must deal with vagaries of terrorism, human rights and development and the hard realities of trade agreements, defense treaties and peace-keeping.

Given the scope and importance of the president's job, the electorate might expect during the campaign a fairly thorough examination of the abilities and policies of those running for the office. Rarely does this quality of discussion occur, however. While certain foreign policy issues may make much news during the campaign, candidates are rarely asked about policies or proposals which do not have some sort of news angle. The reasons for this lack of examination are numerous:

\* There are few major differences between the two major parties on most foreign policy issues.<sup>3</sup> While the parties may differ on certain aspects of foreign policy or defense, neither questions the need for a strong defense, peace or good relations with allies.

\* Incumbent candidates for president may be reluctant to discuss foreign policy matters which have not produced some visible and positive conclusions. Such discussion might upset negotiations or strain relations with the principals involved. Thus, while Richard Nixon in 1972 could concentrate on detente and the opening of China, Jimmy Carter in 1980 could say little about the development of better relations with black African nations.

\* Challenging presidential candidates often lack knowledge and experience in foreign affairs. They may be reluctant to talk about foreign policy for fear of being labeled either too tough or too soft with the nation's adversaries, or they may fear being countered with facts from the government which make the challengers seem unknowledgeable. Above all, they do not want to be seen as "shooting from the hip," as Barry Goldwater was in 1964.

\* The public rarely demands an extensive accounting of foreign policy stances from candidates. Again, particular issues may become salient with many voters, but broader policies are not likely to stir a lot of public interest during an election campaign.

\* Finally, journalists who cover the campaign are usually political reporters, not foreign policy correspondents. They may lack the knowledge, inclination and time to demand from candidates a thorough airing of their foreign policy proposals and views.

Despite these obstacles, presidential campaigns rarely conclude without some discussion of foreign policy issues, although the issues discussed may be trivial and their treatment superficial. This study examines the role and some of the dimensions of that role which foreign policy issues played in the news reports of 1980 presidential election campaign.

#### Review of the literature

Polsby and Wildavsky, in their classic volume, Presidential Elections, noted that Republicans generally have the advantage when foreign affairs issues are

raised in a presidential campaign. The GOP is seen as the party of peace, while the Democrats have most often been in power when there has been a war. Consequently, "... if foreign affairs issues can be made sufficiently important to enough voters, the Republicans stand a better chance of winning. Republicans generally do best by building up foreign affairs and playing on the fear that Democrats are not competent in this field."<sup>4</sup> If the authors are correct, we would reasonably expect to find that Republicans are raising most of the foreign affairs issues in the campaign.

On the other hand, Hargrove maintains that a "great temptation" exists for "presidents to emphasize foreign affairs over domestic problems in their appeals to public opinion..."<sup>5</sup> Since Jimmy Carter was the incumbent in 1980, we may then find that foreign affairs news was coming from him more often than from his opponents.

The amount of foreign affairs issue coverage in presidential election campaigns has been a matter of continuous attention for researchers. Markham and Stempel, in a study of the 1956 election campaign coverage in 24 Pennsylvania, found that 39.6 percent of all news reports about the campaign dealt with defense or foreign affairs issues.<sup>6</sup> Graber noted that foreign policy led all other issues in the 1968 campaign with some 30 percent of news reports and editorials devoted to it; in 1972, however, the amount of foreign policy news reports and editorials had dropped to 17 percent and was in third place behind campaign and domestic issues.<sup>7</sup>

Foreign affairs issues have been generally silent issues for editors during presidential election campaigns. In a study of election campaign editorials in 10 major newspapers during the 1964 campaign, Myers found that an average of 35.3 percent were devoted to foreign affairs topics. That general trend held for the next three election campaigns, with percentages of 35.9 in 1968, 30.0 in 1972 and 32.4 in 1976. In the 1980 campaign, however, that percentage increased to 42.7.<sup>8</sup>

Morris, in critiquing the way reporters and editors handled foreign affairs news in the 1976 campaign, found in a "spot check of newspapers and news magazines that foreign affairs issues were getting roughly 10 percent of the coverage given to domestic issues. He went on to outline three "diseases" which afflict foreign affairs reporting during presidential campaigns: world affairs aphasia, where foreign policy becomes important to the press and the president only after the election; the Quemcy-Matsu syndrome, in which the foreign affairs issues discussed in election campaigns are relatively unimportant and disappear soon after the campaign; and mogul myopia, which is the journalistic blindness to the "largely anonymous elite who are likely to run foreign policy under any president."<sup>9</sup>

Another factor which helps determine the coverage that foreign affairs news gets during a presidential election campaign is the nature of the issues that are presented. Patterson, in his book The Mass Media Election, discusses the tendency for candidates to prefer "diffuse" issues as opposed to journalists' preference for "clear-cut" issues. Because candidates must build coalitions from diverse political elements in order to win elections, they often emphasize issues on which there is broad agreement -- even to the point of agreeing with their opponents. Journalists, however, like the issues on which there is a clear difference between the candidates and which are likely to determine the course of the campaign.<sup>10</sup> Candidates themselves are not totally adverse to raising such issues when they believe they can score some political advantage.

These research findings and critiques on foreign affairs issues in presidential election campaigns lead us to the following research questions about the 1980 election: How much of the campaign was devoted to discussion of foreign affairs issues? Which candidates benefitted in terms of news coverage from foreign policy news, and which foreign policy issues were the most salient for the candidates? What was the nature of these issues? By whom were these issues initiated? What foreign affairs issues did reporters and editors consider the most and the least newsworthy?



## Methodology

The findings presented here are based on a survey of coverage of the 1980 presidential election campaign in 50 daily newspapers. The sample of newspapers was selected randomly based on circulation and came from the 1979 Editor and Publisher Yearbook. The sample included newspapers from every region in the country, including Alaska and Hawaii, and with a wide variety of circulation sizes, from the Los Angeles Times (c. 1,018,490) to the Belle Fourche, S.D. Post (c. 3335).<sup>11</sup>

Each issue of each newspaper was coded for the entire period of the general election campaign, from September 2 to November 4. News events only were coded. (The definition of a "news event" formulated by Danielson and Adams<sup>12</sup> was used.) Included in this coding were the news event's length, placement in the paper, headline size, number of pictures, size of pictures, and source of story. Analyses, profiles, editorials, commentaries, columns and letters-to-the-editor were not included in this analysis.

This coding produced a list of 757 news events for the campaign. These events were then divided into two major categories: party and non-party events. Party events were those whose source was one of the candidates or parties involved in the campaign or whose subject matter related to the campaign in a partisan way. Non-party events were those whose source was not one of the candidates or parties involved in the campaign and whose subject matter was not partisan.

The party events were then divided into two groups: campaign events and issues events. Campaign events were those in which the major thrust of the story was the campaign itself, i.e. a candidate's prediction of the outcome, criticism of an opponent's tactics, comments about the candidate's or his opponent's character, etc. Issues events were divided into three categories: economic (stories about taxes, inflation and any governmental programs designed to affect the general economy); domestic (stories dealing with non-economic,



non-foreign affairs/defense subject, i.e. governmental programs such as social security); foreign affairs (any stories about diplomacy, treaties, defense, relationships with allies or adversaries, etc.)

The non-party events were divided into five groups: national polls, state polls, other polls, debates (those not included in the party stories) and miscellaneous.

The breakdown of the events in this way can be seen in Table I. Stories about the campaign itself clearly dominated the news coverage of the 1980 presidential campaign. Campaign events which came from party sources made up more than half of all of the events; there were twice as many campaign events of this type than issues events. Candidates and journalists were more interested in talking about the campaign itself than about the issues raised in the campaign.

The dominance of the campaign as the major subject of news increases when the non-party stories are considered. Added to the campaign events, these events outnumber issues events three to one. National polls alone accounted for nearly 10 percent of the news stories about the campaign, and all the poll stories together made up nearly 15 percent of the news stories about the campaign.

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#### Foreign affairs issues

Foreign affairs news was relatively important to both candidates and journalists in the 1980 presidential election campaign. Foreign affairs subjects were the major themes of 15 percent of all the news events during the campaign.

(See Table I) This figure is almost twice that of news events focusing primarily on domestic issues. Since most of these events were generated by the candidates or their surrogates, it is clear that, after the issues of the campaign itself, foreign policy was the dominant substantive issue of the campaign.

Such a finding is not surprising. The 1980 presidential campaign was overshadowed by the fact that 53 Americans were being held hostage in Iran. Numerous

TABLE I

News Events of the 1980 Presidential Election Campaign

PARTY EVENTS	Number of events	% of total events
Campaign events		
Comments about opponents	118	15.6
Comments about the campaign	241	31.8
Endorsements	44	5.8
Issues events		
Foreign affairs	114	15.0
Domestic	62	8.2
Economic	26	3.4
NON-PARTY EVENTS		
National polls	73	9.7
State polls	19	2.5
Other polls	18	2.4
Debates	21	2.8
Other non-party events	<u>21</u>	<u>2.8</u>
	757	100.0

foreign policy issues such as America's relations with Taiwan and China, the future of the NATO alliance, the stalled SALT negotiations with the Soviet Union and the leak of information on the Stealth airplane were raised throughout the campaign. 1980 also saw the unusual campaign tactic of an incumbent president trying to use foreign policy issues against a challenger. Jimmy Carter attempted to paint Ronald Reagan as trigger-happy, a tactic which was not without precedent but dangerous just as well. The tactic did not work for Carter as it had for Lyndon Johnson in 1964 against Barry Goldwater, and many within and without the campaigns felt that in raising this issue Carter squandered what little good feeling many people had for him.<sup>14</sup> The way in which some of these issues were covered will be examined later in this paper.

Foreign policy news was somewhat more beneficial in terms of newspaper coverage to the Democrats in the 1980 presidential election than the Republicans but not by much. The campaign contained 48 events generated by the Democrats, two fewer than the number produced by Republicans. (See Table II) The Democratic events were run in more newspapers, were given more space in those newspapers and generally had larger headlines than Republican events. The GOP-generated events, however, made the front pages more than those of the Democrats and were more likely to have pictures attached to them. The big loser in foreign affairs coverage was Independent John Anderson and the members of his campaign. No one in that campaign except the presidential candidate himself produced a piece of foreign affairs news during the campaign. The evidence is ample here and elsewhere that journalists were more interested in the Anderson campaign as a political phenomenon than as a source for ideas on campaign issues.

One of the remarkable aspects of this analysis is the equality of the coverage of the foreign policy news events generated by the two major party presidential candidates. (See Table III) While Carter's 22 events were somewhat more likely to appear in more newspapers than Reagan's 23 events, the average length of each

TABLE II

Comparison of Coverage Given to Foreign Policy News Generated by Political Parties

	Democrats (48 events)	Republicans (50 events)	Independent* (16 events)
Average number of newspapers to carry each event	10.6	7.7	
Average length of each story	436.6 words	388.5 words	
Placement			
Front page	18.76%	21.3%	
Inside page	81.24%	78.7%	
Headline size			
Greater than two columns	51.2%	43. %	
Two columns or smaller	48.8%	57. %	
Total number of pictures	158	169	
Average size of pictures	22.5 sq. in.	22.2 sq.in.	

\*The only foreign policy news generated by the Independents came from the presidential candidate, John Anderson. Those figures are presented in the following table.

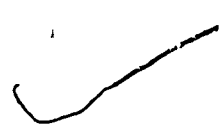


TABLE III

Comparison of Coverage Given to Foreign Policy News Generated by the 1980 Presidential Candidates

	Carter (22 events)	Reagan (23 events)	Anderson (16 events)
Average number of newspapers to carry each event	20.5	16.3	6.75
Average length of stories	428 words	429.5 words	316 words
Placement			
Front page	33.1%	35.7%	10.2%
Inside page	66.9%	64.3%	89.8%
Headline size			
Greater than two columns	62.1%	58.1%	57.2%
Two columns or smaller	37.9%	41.9%	42.8%
Total number of pictures	138	140	17
Average size of pictures	26.5 sq. in.	23.5 sq. in.	16.2 sq. in.

is almost identical. So is the number of pictures each received in connection with these events. Reagan's stories were somewhat more likely to appear on page 1, but Carter's stories were more likely to have larger headlines, and the average size of his pictures was greater. Anderson's 16 events were a distant third in every category of coverage included in this analysis, except headline size. Anderson at least got as much from the nation's layout editors as Carter and Reagan

Coverage of the foreign policy events generated by the vice presidential candidates of the major parties shows much the same pattern as that given to the presidential candidates. The comments of Vice President Mondale were more likely to be carried in newspapers and more likely to have larger headlines, but those of George Bush were more likely to appear on page 1 and had larger photos connected to them. Democratic surrogates' events received much longer stories in a few more newspapers than those of Republican. Other differences in coverage of these events are fairly minor. (See Table IV)

#### Major foreign policy themes

In order to get a better idea about the dynamics of foreign policy news coverage and the way in which it was integrated into the election campaign, we must turn our attention to the major foreign policy issues which dominated the campaign. Four such issues generated more news events than any others. They were:

Iran - hostages. (27 events) The hostage crisis lasted during the entire campaign. This issue intensified toward the end of the campaign as the Iranian parliament made some movement toward freeing the 52 American hostages.

Stealth. (18 events) The public disclosure that the U.S. was developing an airplane invisible to radar caused some controversy early in the campaign.

SALT II negotiations. (13 events) This event showed a clear difference of opinion between the two major candidates, Ronald Reagan and Jimmy Carter. Reagan advocated renegotiation of the SALT II treaty, while Carter vowed to press ahead

TABLE IV

Coverage Given to Foreign Policy News Events Generated by Vice Presidential Candidates and Party Surrogates

	Mondale (9 events)	Bush (7 events)	Democratic surrogates (17 events)	Republican surrogates (19 events)
Average number of newspapers to carry each event	4.4	2.7	4.5	4.1
Average length of story (in words)	380	392	502	344
Placement				
Front Page	7.3%	10.5%	15.9%	17.6%
Inside page	92.6%	89.3%	84.1%	82.4%
Headline size				
Greater than two columns	46%	29.5%	45.4%	41.3%
Two columns or smaller	54%	70.5%	54.6%	58.7%
Total number of pictures	10	8	10	21
Average size of pictures (in square inches)	17.4	22.1	23.5	21





with the ratification fight in the U.S. Senate.

War and peace. (10 events) This issue was initiated by Carter who warned that Reagan would likely lead the nation to war.

All of these were examined to see how many newspapers in the sample ran stories about them, how many of these stories were placed on page one, and what the source of the story was.

#### Iran and the hostages

The hostage crisis in Iran was the most enduring foreign policy issue during the 1980 presidential election campaign. Comments about the issue from the candidates or their surrogates began making the news during the second week of the campaign and intensified, though not steadily, until election day. When the issue was directly part of the campaign, news from Iran about the hostages and moves to free them served as a backdrop for the campaign. (See Table V)

The Republicans took the initiative in making the hostage crisis a campaign issue. Of the 27 events which dealt with this issue, 13 were from GOP sources. The bulk of these events came toward the beginning or middle of the campaign. The 10 events which Carter or the Democrats initiated were spread more evenly throughout the campaign. The four events for which Anderson was the source came toward the end of the campaign.

The event used by most newspapers was Carter's speculation during his mid-September Texas swing that the hostages might be released which was reported in 32 papers. Reagan's refusal to comment on the hostage negotiations two days before the election appeared in 29 papers.

The event which received the most front page coverage, however, was Carter's television appearance two days before the end of the campaign in which he said the terms outlined by the Iranian parliament provided a "positive basis" for ending the crisis. This event was carried on 15 front pages, while Reagan's response made the fronts of 14 newspapers.

TABLE V

## Use and Placement of IRAN-HOSTAGE CRISIS Events of the 1980 Presidential Election Campaign

EVENT	USAGE Number of newspapers which used the event (N=50)	PLACEMENT	
		Front page	Inside page
1. Reagan says the U.S. should agree to Khomeini's demands and gain quick release of the hostages; Washington, D.C. September 13	14	6	8
2. Carter says recent moves in Iran may lead to the release of the hostages; Corpus Christi, Tex. September 15	32	11	21
3. Secretary of State Muskie says he is not as optimistic about the Iranian proposals as Carter; Washington, D.C. September 15	2		2
4. Carter says the U.S. will not use troops in the Persian Gulf; San Jose, Calif. September 23	27	10	17
5. Reagan says he does not want a State Dept. briefing on the Iran-Iraqi war; Springfield, Mo. September 23	6	1	5
6. Reagan gets first briefing from CIA of Mideast situation; Middleburg, Va. October 4	19	1	18
7. Reagan links hostage crisis to Carter campaign; Middleburg, Va. October 5	16	1	15
8. Carter says he plans no hostage rescue attempts; St. Petersburg, Fla. October 10	3		3

EVENT	USAGE Number of newspapers which used the event (N=50)	PLACEMENT	
		Front page	Inside page
9. Reagan criticizes Carter on the hostage issue at dinner honoring Al Smith; New York, NY October 16	26	10	16
10. Reagan says Carter admin- istration owes the hostages an apology; Pawnee, Ill. October 18	10	2	8
11. Reagan blames Carter for the hostage situation; Louisville, KY. October 21	19	8	11
12. Carter, campaigning in Florida, says Reagan is making a "political football" out of the hostage situation October 21	18	9	9
13. Reagan accuses Carter of "negotiating in the press" for the hostages' release; campaigning in Missouri and Illinois October 21	18	9	9
14. Former Senator Eugene McCarthy endorses Reagan, criticizes Carter on the hostage issues; Herrin, Ill. October 21	10	3	2
15. Mondale asks Reagan to reveal his secret hostage plan; Joliet, Ill. October 21	6	1	5
16. Anderson calls on Carter to publicly release all details on the hostage negotiations; Detroit, Mich. October 23	16	1	15
17. Carter cautions against ex- pecting the release of the hostages before the election; Glouster City, NY October 24	17	7	10
18. Anderson says any deal Carter makes with Iran would be rewarding terrorism; Buffalo, NY October 24	2	0	2

EVENT	USAGE Number of newspapers which used the event (N=50)	PLACEMENT	
		Front page	Inside page
19. Carter aides insist he has not used the hostage issue for political advantage; Washington, D.C. October 26	5	3	2
20. Ex-President Ford links the hostage issue to Carter's campaign; Asheville, N.C. October 26	1	0	1
21. Anderson says State Dept. has told him there are no real negotiations going on for the release of the hostages; Washington, D.C. October 27	4	2	2
22. Carter interrupts campaign to fly back to Washington; says on TV that term set up by Iranian parliament offer a "positive basis" for ending the crisis November 2	23	15	8
23. Anderson says Iran should not be allowed to "wring concessions from us"; Portland, Ore. November 2	10	2	8
24. Reagan says the hostage situation is "too sensitive" for comment; Marietta, Oh. November 2	29	14	15
25. Bush says Iranian terms give ground for "reasonable negotiations"; Washington, D.C. November 2	6	1	5
26. Ford says Iran trying to manipulate election; Washington, D.C. November 2	4	0	4
27. Mondale says Iran taking significant step; November 3	2	1	1

The average number of newspapers using Reagan-initiated events on the hostage crisis was 17.4. Carter-initiated events averaged slightly more, appearing in 20 newspapers. Carter events were more likely to make Page 1, averaging 8.6 front pages per event. Reagan's Page 1 average was 5.7. Anderson-initiated events made an average of only 8 newspapers and only 1.25 front pages per event. <sup>15</sup>

Carter's incumbency seemed to help him some on the coverage of this issue, since his events were more likely to be run and more likely to appear on Page 1 than Reagan's events. The fact that Reagan was able to raise the issue while it was a disadvantage to Carter, that is before Carter could be seen to be doing something about it, probably helped Reagan's overall campaign.

#### Stealth

The Stealth issue involved not the airplane itself but the disclosures by the Department of Defense which made the development of the airplane public. The issue had been in the news before the general election campaign began, and the Republicans were accusing the Carter administration of deliberately leaking the information about Stealth to give the Democrats some political advantage.

Stealth was a hot issue during the early part of the campaign, but by the third week it had burned out, only to flicker once thereafter. Reagan made Stealth an issue in the campaign on the fourth day, and the GOP never lost its advantage. The Republicans initiated 9 of the 18 Stealth events; the Democrats were responsible for 8 events, and the one mention which Anderson made of the controversy which made the news was, oddly enough, knocking Reagan for going too far in his criticism of Carter. (See Table VI)

The initiation of the issue is interesting in itself. The first mention Reagan made of it was carried in 27 newspapers and on 12 front pages. The response by Secretary of Defense Harold Brown, defending the administration's actions on Stealth, made only three newspapers and no front pages. When Reagan met with former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, also on September 4, and

TABLE VI

## Use and Placement of STEALTH Events of the 1980 Presidential Election Campaign

EVENT	USAGE Number of newspapers which used the event (N=50)	PLACEMENT	
		Front page	Inside page
1. Reagan criticizes Carter's disclosure of Stealth as damaging to national defense; Jacksonville, Fla. September 4	27	12	15
2. Secretary of Defense Brown denies breach of security in Stealth disclosure; Washington, D.C. September 4	3	0	3
3. Reagan meets with former Secretary of State Kissinger and both criticize Carter on Stealth disclosure September 4	10	2	8
4. Secretary of Defense Brown says Reagan's remarks on Stealth a "reckless distortion"; Washington, D.C. September 5	8	2	6
5. Former President Ford criticizes Carter on Stealth leak September 5	2	1	1
6. Carter is reported by aides to be "super angry" over Stealth charges September 5	6	3	3
7. Anderson says Reagan went too far with Stealth criticisms; Chicago, Ill. September 7	3	0	3
8. Former Chief of Naval Operations Zumwalt says it was Carter who leaked Stealth September 10	13	4	9
9. Former President Ford says Stealth was a secret in his administration September 10	2	1	1
10. Carter denies leaking Stealth for political reasons September 9	5	0	5

EVENT	USAGE Number of Newspapers which used the event (N=50)	PLACEMENT	
		Front page	Inside page
11. Bush hits Carter for Stealth leak, says his administration lacks a "sense of honor"; Portland, Ore. September 12	5	0	5
12. Former General Singlaub criticizes Carter and Brown on Stealth September 11	1	0	1
13. Secretary of Defense Brown defends decision to disclose Stealth September 11	4	0	4
14. Zumwalt tells a House panel that it was Carter's decision to leak Stealth September 16	6	0	6
15. Former Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld says Stealth disclosure by Carter hurt national security September 19	1	0	1
16. Jody Powell says Zumwalt's charges on Stealth are false September 18	2	1	1
17. Carter orders probe of Stealth leak September 20	20	5	15
18. A Carter aide, on his orders, refuses to appear at a Congressional hearing probing the leaks on Stealth; October 1	4	0	4



they both criticized the Stealth leak, that event appeared in 10 papers and on two front pages. The next day Brown called Reagan's remarks a "reckless distortion" -- an event carried in eight newspapers and on two front pages. Soon, however, the press and the candidates got tired of this issue and moved on to others.

Republican events on this issue averaged used in 7.6 newspapers, ahead of the Democratic events which ran in an average of 6.5 papers. The Republicans also led in front page usage, with 2.2 per event, ahead of the Democrat's 1.25. Reagan's initial use of the issue netted him much more coverage at the beginning of the campaign giving him a strategic advantage in this controversy.

#### SALT II

The issue of the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty II surfaced during the fourth week of the campaign and remained a salient issue through the Carter-Reagan debate. The issue had the advantage of presenting a clear and fairly substantive difference between the two major candidates. Reagan favored renegotiating the SALT II treaty which Carter had signed the year before; Carter favored pressing ahead with ratification efforts in the U.S. Senate. Carter was in a difficult position, however, because U.S.-Soviet relations had been strained by the Russian invasion of Afghanistan.

After Reagan's remark during an interview with the Associated Press that he would renegotiate the SALT II treaty, Carter got out in front on the issue by repeatedly criticizing Reagan's position. Carter and the Democrats were the source of eight of the 13 events on this issue; Reagan and the Republicans the source of four; and Anderson the source of one. (See Table VII)

Two of the Democratic events, both related to his sharp criticism of Reagan's position on SALT, were run in more than 30 newspapers. One of these events, Carter's criticism of Reagan on October 19, appeared on more front pages than any other foreign policy event.

TABLE VII

## Use and Placement of SALT II Events of the 1980 Presidential Election Campaign

EVENT	USAGE Number of newspapers which used the event (N=50)	PLACEMENT	
		Front page	Inside page
1. Reagan, in an interview with AP, says that he favors redrafting the SALT II treaty October 1	14	1	13
2. Carter hits Reagan's SALT stance, warns of nuclear arms race; Landsdowne, Pa. October 2	35	4	31
3. Former Secretary of State Cyrus Vance says Reagan is wrong about wanting to scrap SALT October 3	3	0	3
4. Mondale says SALT treaty should be ratified, Portland, Ore. October 4	1	0	1
5. Reagan tells a fundraiser in New York that he would scrap the SALT treaty October 2	10	3	7
6. Mondale says Reagan's stance on SALT a threat to civilization; Rock Island, Ill. October 11	2	0	2
7. Carter, in an interview with AP, says he plans to seek ratification of the SALT II treaty right after the election October 17	17	5	12
8. Carter raps Reagan on SALT before leaving on trip through blue-collar areas of Pennsylvania and Ohio October 19	33	17	16
9. Kissinger supports Reagan's proposal to scrap SALT II and negotiate SALT III; Cincinnati, Oh. October 21	20	6	14

The average use for the Democratic source events was 11.3 newspapers, ahead of the 11 average use for the Reagan events. The Carter events were also ahead in average front page placement with 3.2 to Reagan's 2.25.

Carter obviously saw Reagan as vulnerable on the SALT II issue, and it is possible that Reagan felt so. Reagan did not go out of his way to mention his stance, and he never tried to force the issue on Carter. Carter's use of this issue went along with his plan of picturing Reagan as a war monger, which constituted the fourth major foreign policy issue.

#### War and peace

Carter felt that he could put Reagan on the defensive by painting him as a dangerous man, one who was unstable and quick to advocate force -- a man with his finger on the trigger. The Democrats had successfully done that with Barry Goldwater in 1964. Barely three weeks into the campaign, Carter began hitting on this theme. The choice in the election, he said, was between war and peace; Reagan was a man who couldn't be counted on to keep his head in a crisis; he would lead the world into a nuclear arms race; etc.

The reaction to Carter's statement was less, or possibly more, than he expected. Even though Carter's aides produced clippings detailing the times Reagan had advocated using force to solve diplomatic problems Reagan had made no such statements during the campaign, and he resisted responding directly to Carter's attacks. The reaction from the press and others to Carter was generally negative, and Carter soon backed off and dropped this campaign. It was all over in about two weeks. (See Table VIII)

The Democrats initiated six of the 10 events on this issue. Two of the Republicans' four events were of vice presidential candidate George Bush defending Reagan and expressing shock and disappointment that Carter would raise the issue.

An average of 20.6 newspapers used the Democratic events, while an average of only 10 newspapers used the Republican events on this issue. The average front

TABLE VIII

Use and Placement of WAR AND PEACE Events of the 1980 Presidential Election Campaign

EVENT	USAGE Number of newspapers which used the event (N=50)	PLACEMENT	
		Front page	Inside page
1. Carter tells a town meeting in Torrance, Calif. that the choice in the election is between war and peace September 22	22	5	17
2. Reagan criticizes Carter for bringing up the "war and peace" issue; Pensacola, Fla. September 23	30	9	21
3. Jody Powell provides clippings of when Reagan said he would use troops; San Jose, Calif. September 23	6	2	4
* 4. Bush hits Carter for "war and peace" rhetoric; Lansing, Mich. September 23	2	0	2
5. Carter continues to hit Reagan as an advocate of force, though Powell says Carter's words an overstatement of fact; Washington, D.C. September 24	16	1	15
6. Bush says it is Carter's policies that have helped create world turmoil; Philadelphia, Pa. September 25	1	0	1
7. Reagan stays mum over war and peace issue while campaigning in the west September 25	7	1	6
8. Carter says Reagan as president could lead to a "doomed nuclear arms race"; New York, NY September 29	34	6	28

EVENT	USAGE Number of newspapers which used the event (N=50)	PLACEMENT	
		Front page	Inside page
9. Carter says a Reagan victory would divide the nation and lead the U.S. to war; Chicago, Ill. October 6	33	11	22
10. Secretary of State Muskie warns that the U.S. could be involved in endless global wars if Reagan is elected; South Bend, Ind. October 11	13	1	12

page placement for the Democratic stories was 4.2, while that for Republican was 2.5.

Carter's statements on this issue clearly had more impact in terms of news selection and placement than did Reagan's reaction. Whatever Carter's message was in this regard, he had ample opportunity to get it across. The price Carter paid for this advantage, however, may have been fairly high, judging from the swiftness with which the issue faded from the campaign agenda.

#### Conclusion

The data here tend to confirm some of the speculations presented earlier in this study. Foreign affairs issues were indeed initiated by both the Republican and Democratic presidential candidates. Each assumed there would be certain political advantages for doing so. Foreign affairs topics made up 15 percent of the news stories of the campaign, far more than any other issue outside of the campaign itself. Finally, newspapers did tend to cover, and cover more intensely, the issues which had the most direct bearing on the campaign itself.

How did the newspapers fare in this last regard? (See Table IX). On the whole, editors and reporters were more interested in the war and peace issue; they were more likely to use events concerning that issue in their papers than any other. Editors favored the Iranian hostage crisis for their front page coverage, however, possibly because of its non-political as well as its political connections.

One of the reasons why editors liked the war and peace issue -- even though many papers criticized Carter for bringing it up -- is because it presented a sitting President defying conventional political wisdom in a couple of important ways. First, it had an incumbent issuing a strong, personal attack on his opponent, something usually not found in American politics. Carter also seemed to forget or ignore the maxim that Republicans are generally seen as the party of peace and are generally stronger in the foreign policy areas. Carter's well

TABLE IX

Average use and Page One Placement of Foreign Affairs Issues of the 1980  
 Presidential Election Campaign

	Average number of newspapers using events in this category	Average number of times events in this category were placed on Page One
Iran-Hostage Crisis (27 events)	12.4	4.3
Stealth (18 events)	6.7	2.4
SALT II (13 events)	11.46	3.0
War and Peace (10 events)	16.4	3.6



planned attack on Reagan as a war monger and as a leader of a nuclear arms race seemed to fascinate editors, but this fascination was not converted into any political advantage.

Reporters and editors seemed least interested in the Stealth controversy. It was a complicated and somewhat confusing story and to look beyond its political ramifications required an expertise that many reporters and editors lacked. The politicians were content to use it for their political advantage, and reporters were content to let them.

The SALT II issue presented a clear cut difference between the candidates, but neither the politicians nor the reporters and editors were willing to explore too deeply the implications of that difference.

On at least two of these issues, reporters fell prey to the Quemoy-Matsu syndrome which Morris had suggested in referring to issues that become meaningless after the election. The Iranian hostage crisis resolved itself without the active participation of the president-elect and was no longer a major issue once he was in office. The war and peace issue died a quick death, most reporters unwilling to entertain the possibility that the person elected to the presidency would be a war monger.

Coverage of these foreign policy issues emphasized their political nature and not their substantive nature. Their news value seemed to lie in the effect they were having on the political process and not in the importance these issues have for the future of the nation. More than 150 years ago Alexis de Tocqueville noted the tendency of Americans "that induces democracies to obey impulse rather than prudence and to abandon a mature design for the gratification of a momentary passion" in dealing with foreign policy matters. That tendency still exists in American's political campaigns and once again was reflected in the press coverage of a presidential election.

## Footnotes

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<sup>1</sup> de Tocqueville, Alexis. Democracy in America. Vol. 1 (New York: Vintage), 1945, pp. 243-244.

<sup>2</sup> For a fullest discussion of this event and its repercussions on the campaign, see Jules Witcover, Marathon: The Pursuit of the Presidency, 1972-1976. New York: The Viking Press, 1977, pp. 594-608.

<sup>3</sup> Page, Benjamin I. Choices and Echoes in Presidential Elections. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978, p. 60.

<sup>4</sup> Polsby, Nelson and Aaron Wildavsky. Presidential Elections. New York: Scribner's, 1971, p. 187.

<sup>5</sup> Hargrove, Erwin C. "What Manner of Man?" in James David Barber (ed), Choosing the President. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1974, p. 10.

<sup>6</sup> Markham, James W. and Guido H. Stempel III. "Pennsylvania Daily Press Coverage of the 1956 Election Campaign: A Measure of Performance." Monograph, School of Journalism, Pennsylvania State University, August 1957, p. 29.

<sup>7</sup> Graber, Doris A. "Press Coverage Patterns of Campaign News: the 1968 Presidential Race." Journalism Quarterly, 48: 502-512 (1971). "The Effect of Incumbency on Coverage Patterns in the 1972 Presidential Campaign." Journalism Quarterly, 53: 499-508 (1976).

<sup>8</sup> Myers, David. "Editorials and Foreign Affairs in the 1964 Presidential Campaign." Journalism Quarterly, 45: 211-218 (1968). "Editorials and Foreign Affairs in the 1968 Presidential Campaign." Journalism Quarterly, 47: 57-64 (1970). "Editorials and Foreign Affairs in the 1972 Presidential Campaign." Journalism Quarterly, 51: 251-257: 296. "Editorials and Foreign Affairs in the 1976 Presidential Campaign." Journalism Quarterly, 55: 755-760 (1978).

<sup>9</sup> Morris, Roger. "Foreign Policy Reporting: Quarantined for the Campaign." Columbia Journalism Review, November/December 1976, p. 19.

<sup>10</sup> Patterson, Thomas E. The Mass Media Election. New York: Praeger, 1980, pp. 31-32.

<sup>11</sup> A list of the nearly 1700 daily newspapers and their circulation figures was drawn from the ESP Directory. The papers were listed by state alphabetically and by city alphabetically within each state. This information was processed by

computer and a running total was produced from the circulation figures. The final total was divided into 50 intervals. The figures occurred at these intervals of the running total.

The newspapers included in this study are Anchorage Times, Camarillo Daily News, Los Angeles Times, Oakland Tribune, Sacramento Union, San Gabriel Valley Daily Tribune, New Haven Register, Boca Raton News, Miami News, Panama City News-Herald, Honolulu Star-Bulletin, Clinton Daily Journal, Bicknell Knox County News, New Albany Tribune, Webster City Daily Freeman Journal, Henderson Gleaner, Somerset Commonwealth Journal, Springfield Morning Union, Detroit News, Muskegon Chronicle, St. Paul Dispatch, Kennett Daily Dunklin Democrat, Lincoln Journal, Hackensack Record, Vineland Times Journal, Kingston Daily Freeman, New York News World, Nyack Journal News, Charlotte Observer, Moorhead Forum, Cleveland Press, Lake County News Herald, McAlester News-Capital & Democrat, Portland Oregonian, Roseburg News Review, Lansdale Reporter, Philadelphia Inquirer, Washington Observer Reporter, Belle Fourche Daily Post, Del Rio News-Herald, Laredo News, Salt Lake City Tribune, Aberdeen Daily World, Charleston Daily Mail, Milwaukee Sentinel, Denver Post, Chicago Tribune, Baltimore Evening Sun, Boston Globe, Washington Post.

<sup>12</sup> Danielson, Wayne and John Adams. "Completeness of Press Coverage of the 1960 Campaign." Journalism Quarterly, 38: 441-452 (1961).

<sup>13</sup> This breakdown of events is explained more fully in Charles Arrendell and Jim Stovall, "An Analysis of News Events of the 1980 Presidential Election Campaign," a paper presented to the Southwest Symposium on Mass Communication, Fort Worth, TX., October 25-26, 1981.

<sup>14</sup> Even newspapers which endorsed Carter's reelection could not countenance his attacks on Reagan. For instance, at least three of the newspapers in this study which endorsed Carter specifically mentioned this campaign tactic in their editorials announcing the endorsement. The Washington Post castigated Carter for the "meanness" of his campaign; the Boston Globe said Carter had shown that he was "petty, mean and small minded" by these attacks; and the Baltimore Sun said it did not "subscribe to the stereotypes about Ronald Reagan." The attacks on this campaign tactic came from many other newspapers. See Editorials on File, 11:20, October 16-31, pp. 1203-1220.

<sup>15</sup> These figures were derived by taking the total number of times the Republican-, Democratic-, and Independent-initiated events were run in the newspapers and dividing by the number of events. For instance, in the Iran hostage crisis, there were 13 events initiated by the Republicans. Those events appeared in a total of 175 newspapers. Consequently, the average usage for each event was 13.4. The average Page 1 usage was figured in the same way. The total number of times a Republican-initiated Iran-hostage crisis event appeared on Page 1 was 57; that divided by 13, the number of events, gives an average of 4.3.