

Rallying Around The President

"A Reconsideration of the Rally Phenomenon in Public Opinion" by Richard A. Brody and Catherine R. Shapiro, in *Political Behavior Annual* (Volume 2), Westview Press, 5500 Central Ave., Boulder, Colo. 80301.

Scholars and politicians have long cited the "rally around the flag" effect: thanks to patriotic sentiment, public approval of the president always goes up in times of international crisis.

Not so, say Brody and Shapiro, of Stanford University. Such grassroots support is "far from automatic." In some cases, the president suffers a loss of public approval. Surveying media coverage and polling data since 1947, the authors note that Harry Truman dropped six points after the Soviets announced that they had an atomic bomb (1949), and three points after the Chinese Communists entered the Korean War (1950). Lyndon Johnson lost five points after U.S. destroyers engaged North Vietnamese PT-boats in the Gulf of Tonkin (1964). Richard Nixon lost six points after the controversial "Christmas bombing" of Hanoi (1972).

What shapes public reaction to the president is less patriotism in crisis than the response of "opinion leadership," as reported in the press. If the president's political foes, notably in Congress, do not criticize his performance (flawed or not), the public "rallies." If the opposition is vocal but divided, the public may not rally, but will await the outcome of events.

Two recent cases:

- Ronald Reagan's 1983 Grenada inva-

sion. U.S. troops landed on the Caribbean island on October 25; the president's overall approval rating remained at 48 percent as leading congressional Democrats voiced dismay. No "rally." On October 27, Reagan addressed the nation. Polls showed no gain in his overall rating but registered the usual initial public support for U.S. action abroad. After Reagan's speech, and the U.S. military success, the Democrats muted their criticism. The Gallup Poll in early November showed a five-point gain in public approval of Reagan.

- Jimmy Carter's 1979-80 "Iran hostage crisis." When Iranians seized the U.S. Embassy and its staff in November 1979, Carter was already facing political trouble. Senator Edward Kennedy (D.-Mass.) was ready to seek the 1980 presidential nomination, as were Ronald Reagan, George Bush, John Connally, and other Republicans. But few initially exploited the Iran crisis. (Kennedy in December 1979 spoke out against the Shah, without naming Carter; he was widely chastised for hurting Carter's efforts to free the hostages.) There was a "rally": Carter's overall approval rating in the polls went from around 33 percent to over 50 percent during the 90 days after the crisis began. Then, as the hostages' ordeal continued, he began to suffer a steady decline in the polls.

FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

Pacific Vistas

"America in the Pacific Century" by Jerry W. Sanders, in *World Policy Journal* (Winter 1988-89), 777 United Nations Plaza, New York, N.Y. 10017.

Looking west during the 1988 campaign, George Bush said that he hoped to "transform this amazing relationship [with Japan] into a new form of partnership, with the U.S. continuing to play the predominant military role and with the Japanese

becoming a major donor of aid to the Third World."

What is surprising, writes Sanders, a Berkeley political scientist, is that Bush actually seems to envision "more of the same" in Washington's links with Japan

and other U.S. allies in East Asia. Since the end of World War II, U.S. presidents have based their Pacific policy on the twin tenets of free trade—with the United States serving as “a guaranteed consumer market for [Asian] export-led economies”—and containment of the Soviet Union and its allies. Today, Sanders believes, that policy is dangerously outmoded.

Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore are no longer economic dwarfs. In 1987, the United States incurred a trade deficit of \$60 billion with Japan and \$38 billion with the other East Asian nations—together accounting for about two-thirds of the U.S. trade deficit. By the turn of the century, the “gross regional product” of these nations will equal that of North America.

Meanwhile, to “contain” the Soviets, the United States keeps 330,000 military personnel, nearly half its Navy ships, and several Air Force fighter wings in or near East Asia. The annual cost: some \$50 billion, or 18 percent of the Pentagon budget.

Trying to cope with altered economic realities of the U.S.-Asian relationship, Washington has pressed Japan and other Asian nations to open their markets to U.S.

goods. It has looked to Tokyo for increased military “burden sharing”; some Democrats in Congress want Japan to expand its defense spending from \$50 billion annually to \$100 or \$150 billion. But the Japanese have already accepted new defense burdens and are reluctant to add more. Throughout East Asia, trade disputes have fed anti-American sentiment. (One recent survey revealed that 66 percent of South Koreans favor a complete pullout of U.S. troops.) In the United States, “the mounting cost of [U.S.] political leadership and diminished economic strength is sowing seeds of resentment.” In short, Sanders argues, simply tinkering with the old formulas will not work.

With Mikhail Gorbachev in power in Moscow, he believes, there is less need for containment in Asia; the United States can safely reduce its military commitments in the Pacific and use the savings to cut the federal budget deficit. To ease trade tensions, Tokyo could use its economic power to help build up struggling Asian nations, such as the Philippines, which would become customers for the Japanese and other East Asian goods that now flood U.S. markets.

Moscow's Vote

“How Moscow Votes in U.S. Presidential Elections” by Jiri Valenta and John Cunningham, in *Orbis* (Winter 1989), 3615 Chestnut St., Philadelphia, Pa. 19104.

Since World War II, Soviet leaders have taken more than a passing interest in U.S. presidential campaigns. During the weeks before the election, that interest becomes “an all consuming . . . fever,” according to one high-level defector.

Valenta and Cunningham, professor and student at the University of Miami, respectively, argue that, during a close race, Soviet leaders “appear to believe that they have sufficient leverage to influence the outcome” through words and acts.

The Kremlin has “a certain affection for non-ideological Republicans,” and it prefers men it knows to untested candidates. In 1948, however, the Kremlin openly

backed third party candidate Henry Wallace over President Harry S. Truman and the GOP's Thomas E. Dewey. Stalin's public support (along with that of the U.S. Communist Party) may have cost Wallace enough votes to help Truman eke out a narrow victory over Dewey.

The Kremlin apparently picked no sides in the two contests between Dwight D. Eisenhower and Adlai Stevenson (1952 and '56), seeming to believe that Stevenson's defeat was inevitable.

In 1960, the Soviets saw Vice President Richard M. Nixon as “reactionary,” and looked upon John F. Kennedy as weak and likely to be “vulnerable to pressure.” That