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*Weak Presidents, Treaty Ratification,
and Presidential Leadership Style**

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ABSTRACT

Traditionally, the president is seen as getting his way when it comes to foreign-policy issues; however, with treaty making, an aspect very much related to foreign policy, things are different. Treaties are seen as salient, high-profile, and requiring direct positive action by the Senate. Presidents with high approval ratings would expect to have a relatively easy job at getting treaties approved by the Senate, but when a president is faced with low public approval, one of the most useful tools at his disposal to get Senate approval is not in play. The authors look at a case study of President Carter and the ratification of the Panama Canal Treaties to suggest what “weak” presidents can do to get their way.

KEY WORDS Decision Making; Presidency; Treaty Making; Public Opinion;
Panama Canal Treaties

The acrimonious debate over the Torrijos–Carter, or Panama Canal, Treaties and their subsequent ratification represents a significant juncture in the history of the United States. While the ratification of the treaties represented one of the three major foreign-policy accomplishments for President Jimmy Carter, the others being the Camp David Accords and the recognition of the People’s Republic of China, it also represented a turning point in domestic politics with the coalescence and subsequent right-wing dominance of the Republican Party (Abramowitz 2013; Clymer 2008).

More importantly, for the purpose of this paper, the ratification represents a special case study in presidential leadership. Although the literature on presidential decision making tends to argue that in foreign policy, the president usually gets his way,

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the treaty process is shared with the Senate. The members of the Senate have historically taken their role of providing advice and consent seriously. Treaties are also typically high-profile, salient events that involve organized groups and the public. The ratification of treaties presents much more of a challenge for a president than do “standard” foreign-policy issues that are typically handled within the executive branch (Wildavsky 1966). In addition, Carter inherited a weakened presidency in the wake of Vietnam and Watergate. Members of Congress were much less willing to defer to the president and more willing to openly challenge him on foreign-policy issues. The ratification of the Torrijos–Carter Treaties also involved a president whose public approval ratings were in near free fall. In mid-March of 1977, two months after his inauguration, Carter’s approval rating reached its highest point at 75 percent. By the time the treaties were signed on September 7, it had fallen to 54 percent. At the time of the Senate vote on the Neutrality Treaty on March 16, 1978, it had fallen to 48 percent, and during the Senate vote on the Panama Canal Treaty on April 18, it had fallen to 40 percent (Roper Center, University of Connecticut 2015). How was Carter, who was experiencing such a dramatic decline in terms of approval ratings from the public, able to convince two-thirds of the Senate to support two treaties that had little public support, limited initial Senate support, fewer than 30 senators in support of the treaties at the time they were signed, and a visceral opposition from many influential decision makers and the public?

If we define a weak president as one who faces low public approval ratings (below 50 percent) and who governs under divided government (the president is of one party, and one or both houses of Congress are of the opposite party), there is reason to argue that we will see more periods of weak presidencies since President Carter than before. First, the modern era has seen more periods of divided government than before the “modern presidency.” Of the 40 years that have elapsed in the post-Nixon era, 26 have been under divided government. Second, Congress has become more partisan since the Carter era (Abromowitz 2013). Finally, presidents since Carter have found themselves with lower initial public approval ratings (in the postelection “honeymoon period”) than was the case pre-Carter. Presidents Truman through Carter (with the exceptions of Nixon and Ford, the latter of whom can be counted as an anomaly) started their first terms with public approval ratings at close to 70 percent or more. Presidents since Carter have begun their first terms with approval ratings in the range of 55 percent to 60 percent, and our two most recent presidents have found themselves with approval ratings below 50 percent during significant percentages of their presidencies. This would suggest that future presidents might find themselves in extended periods of their terms in which they are “weak.” If it were discovered that there was a pattern of how weak presidents have been successful at getting treaties passed, this would provide a lesson for future weak presidents. This research suggests that a “weak” president who adopts a realist style of leadership may bring about more success in Senate passage of controversial treaties and possibly in other pieces of legislation that the president supports.

CARTER'S STRATEGY CONCERNING THE PANAMA CANAL TREATIES

Carter had to get at least 67 Senate votes to ratify the treaties. He achieved this through both indirect and direct means. His indirect means focused on shaping the opinions of both the informed and general publics. The administration initially sought to influence the informed public, those who have greater influence on decision makers and can assist in shaping general public opinion. It was not until the final three months of the debate in the Senate that he focused on leading general public opinion to support the treaties by framing the treaties in such a way as to address the specific issues about which the public was concerned.

His direct means focused specifically on relationships with the members of the Senate. According to Strong (1992:156) Carter "massaged egos, traded votes, promised favors, [and] put pressure on selected Senators ... to win a two-thirds majority in the Senate." He initially focused on gaining the support of the Senate leadership of both parties and then used these individuals, as well as other influential national and state-level individuals, to influence those senators who were undecided. A concerted education campaign took place in which the administration moved to make sure that each senator truly understood not only the mechanics and details of the treaty but also why the treaties were so important to Panama and Latin America and for the future of US-Latin American relations.

Perhaps more importantly, Carter personally led the process from the very beginning and spent an inordinate amount of time and political capital on gaining Senate passage. It was clear to all that this was the most important initiative of his young presidency. All of the participants were aware that he was staking the legitimacy and the future of his presidency to the ratification of the treaties.

FOREIGN-POLICY DECISION MAKING AND PUBLIC OPINION

Before looking at Carter's effort to ratify the Panama Canal Treaties, it is important to look at the hypothesized relationship between public opinion and foreign-policy decision making. There are essentially three schools of thought that address this. The original school, which developed during the Cold War and prior to the Vietnam War, is sometimes referred to as the Almond-Lippman consensus, the realist school, the trustee model, or the followership model. This school posits that public opinion on foreign policy is uninformed, is emotional, is nonrational, is volatile, is lacking in coherence, and has little effect on foreign-policy decision making (Almond 1950; Art and Waltz 1971; Holsti and Rosenau 1979; Lippman 1955; Morgenthau 1978:558; Rosenau 1961:35). Seymour Martin Lipset once said, "The president makes opinion, he does not follow it." Public opinion does not affect the substance of foreign-policy decisions. This school essentially argues that the president makes foreign policy and, if he deems it necessary, frames or crafts the policy in such a way that it molds or shapes public opinion to support a policy decision that has already been made (Cohen 1973:62; Entman 2003; Jacobs and Shapiro 2000:48).

The liberal school, or delegate model, stands in direct contrast to the realists. It argues that public opinion directly affects the substance of foreign-policy decision making (Monroe 1979; Page and Shapiro 1983, 1992). This school provides evidence that over time, public opinion has been both stable and rational and argues that the public is less vulnerable to framing attempts by the decision makers than the realists believe (Page and Bouton 2006; Page and Shapiro 1992).

A third school, the constraint school, bridges the realists and liberals and argues that the expectation of public opposition is a constraining factor for foreign-policy decision making (Powlick and Katz 1998; Sobel 2001). This potential for the public's views to become active during an especially salient decision serves to set boundaries or to exclude certain policy options. Policies that are deemed extreme or overreaching may not be considered because of this. It is best stated in this way: "[P]ublic opinion becomes a first cut factor in the decision making process; it conditions the choice of options that can be considered without being determinative of which option is ultimately chosen" (Powlick and Katz 1998:44).

THE CANAL AND PRESIDENTIAL DECISION MAKING

The issue of the canal and relations with Panama were faced by Presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, and Ford. Each was unwilling to address the real issue of Panamanian resentment toward the United States over the ownership of the canal when faced with substantial domestic opposition. Facing riots in Panama, Eisenhower agreed to allow the Panamanian flag to be flown in the Canal Zone. Eisenhower's decision was condemned by Congress and the American public, and he no longer addressed Panamanian resentment in his presidency. Riots led Johnson to address the issue, and he negotiated a proposal that would have turned the canal over to the Panamanians with some specific conditions. American public outrage to the proposal brought the discussions to an abrupt end. Nixon and Ford both worked on an agreement but were met with tremendous domestic political pressure. Opposition to "giving up" the canal was especially high and intense in 1976 in the aftermath of the American "defeat" in Vietnam. The canal represented a symbol of American power, ingenuity, and skill. Loss of control over the canal would be yet another indicator of what many on the political right believed to be American decline. Presidential candidate Ronald Reagan tapped into this opposition during the Republican primaries of 1976. His quip "When it comes to the Canal, we built it, we paid for it, it's ours and we should tell Torrijos and company that we are going to keep it" had dramatic appeal to the American public (Carter 1982:154). The constraint model of the relationship between public opinion and foreign-policy decision making on the issue of the Panama Canal is represented by the presidents prior to Carter concerning the Panama Canal. The debate concerning the Torrijos-Carter Treaties touched an emotional, almost primitive, nationalist sentiment among a majority of Americans and members of Congress. Both those who opposed and those who supported the treaties believed that it was crucial to gain public support for their positions (Michelson 1998:64).

Carter faced this gut-level public opposition yet, interestingly enough, did very little to attempt to lead general public opinion in the fall of 1977. The focus that fall was primarily on securing Senate votes. There were no more than two press conferences in which the president discussed the treaty, and there was an absence of a consistent message heard by the public. In fact, Carter mentioned the treaties on consecutive days only one time the entire year (Rottinghaus 2008:145–46). This lack of effort to lead broad public opinion was evident in the polls. At the signing of the treaties, 50 percent of the public opposed them. By November 1, 49 percent opposed them, and by December, almost 53 percent opposed them (Smith and Hogan 1987).

While there was an absence of focus on broad public opinion, Carter moved very quickly to influence the opinion of the decision makers and the informed public. After the signing of the treaties, Carter invited approximately 1500 influential government and public officials, business leaders, and other prominent people from 25 states who were in the public eye to the White House for briefings on the treaties (Pious 1979:327). These briefings were led by top White House officials, including Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski, Secretary of Defense Harold Brown, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General George Brown. Brown spoke to many groups of retired military officers. Carter himself also led many of these briefings. The administration quickly won the support of former President Ford, former Secretaries of State Henry Kissinger and Dean Rusk, conservative journalist William F. Buckley Jr., and legendary actor and noted conservative John Wayne. The Committee of the Americas, which represented more than 200 major corporations, met with opinion leaders (editorial writers of major newspapers) and other business leaders to increase support for the ratification of the treaties. New Directions, a newly organized foreign-policy lobby group, sent out more than one million mailings to influential liberals across the country (Strong 1992:146–47). Officials from the State Department made more than 1500 appearances to explain the treaties to business and labor leaders, Chambers of Commerce, and Common Cause and other lobby groups (Carter 1982:162).

It was December when the administration decided to step up its efforts and lead public opinion in general. This decision was based on the administration's own internal polling and a close analysis of some of the Roper and Gallup polls found in the fall of 1977. In October, Presidential Adviser Hodding Carter, in a memo to Secretary of State Vance, argued that media editorial content across the country had moved away from outright opposition to ratification. His research found that the general public was worried about threats of violence to the canal, the ability of America to defend the canal, and America's ability to maintain access to the canal (Ramamoorthy, Maanasa, and Ramamoorthy N.d.). Patrick Caddell, the White House pollster who had carefully crafted Carter's message during the 1976 election, argued that the general public simply did not have the facts on the treaties. He argued that many who opposed them did so out of ignorance; thus, he urged the administration to begin a major effort to educate the general public about the treaties (Jimmy Carter Library, CSF, PCT, 1977(3)). In particular, he found that the American public opposed the treaties because they viewed them as a "give away of American property" and the "fear of a communist take-over and the need to

protect the US” (Rottinghaus 2008:148). He identified key constituencies that could be swayed into supporting the treaties. Caddell and Chief of Staff Jordan told Carter to seize the bully pulpit, craft a consistent message to address the fears of the public concerning the treaty, and address those members of the public that were persuadable (Smith and Hogan 1987; Strong 1992:156).

Beginning in 1978, Carter began addressing the issues of the treaties over consecutive days. He held several town hall meetings in Mississippi, New Hampshire, New Mexico, and Maine in which citizens were allowed to ask questions. He addressed the treaties in his State of the Union Address and on television at key moments during the Senate floor debate. Rather than address the treaties as a whole, the language used by the president and all spokespersons addressed the key concerns that people had about the treaties, such as the guaranteed U.S. right to defend the canal against attack and access to the canal. Carter, as he had done in the presidential election, wrote the book on the political framing or crafted talk about the treaties (Rottinghaus 2008). On February 1, he held a fireside chat and spoke directly to the concerns of the American public over the treaties. A February 1978 Gallup poll found that 45 percent of the public were now in favor and 42 percent opposed and that among those who were knowledgeable of the treaties, 57 percent were in favor (Carter 1982:167). It is clear from this overview and other observers that the realist school or trustee model of foreign-policy decision making and public opinion best describes Carter’s approach to public opinion and the Panama Canal Treaties (Jones 1988:1–9).

PUBLIC OPINION LINKED TO SENATE VOTES ON THE TREATIES

McCormick and Black (1983:51–52) found that constituency attitudes, measured indirectly by the election status of the members of the Senate, toward the canal treaties did not explain the final vote. A majority of the senators who were up for reelection in 1978 and a majority of the senators not up for reelection voted in favor of ratification. This implied that constituency support was not a strong factor in explaining the vote. In Carter’s televised fireside chat on February 2, 1978, Representative Philip Crane, a Republican from Illinois, commented about Carter, “I don’t think he has been able to sell them [the treaties] to the American public ... but that’s not the point. ... I think that Senators will go along with the treaties anyway, in spite of massive public voter opposition” (NBC Today Show 1978).

Yet it is clear from the statements of the senators involved in the ratification process that they perceived public opinion to be important in their decision. On February 18, 1978, Carter held a town meeting in Nashua, New Hampshire, with 500 top high school students and their parents and teachers. The president’s statement to them that the treaties were “good” received tremendous applause. Senators John Durkin and Thomas McIntyre, who were leaning in favor of ratification but were unsure about the support from the people of their state, indicated that it was this event that assured them that they were doing the right thing (Carter 1982:166–67). Senate Majority Leader Robert Byrd spoke to his fellow senator from West Virginia, Jennings Randolph. Byrd

won a promise from Randolph that if Carter absolutely needed his vote, Randolph would vote in favor and if the president did not need his vote, Randolph was free to vote against ratification. Ultimately, Randolph's vote was not needed for ratification and he voted against the treaties. He was clearly worried about public opinion in his state. Moffett (1985:114) found that a marked shift in public opinion in favor of the treaties had occurred by February 1978 and that this "provided the critical margin of safety for undecided senators hard-pressed by vocal opponents of ratification at home." Hogan (1985:311) argued that the framing of this shift in public opinion by Carter prevailed and moved the Senate debate procedures in a way that influenced a positive outcome. Michelson (1998:75) argued that public opposition rather than public support had the greatest impact on Senate votes.

LET'S MAKE A DEAL: GETTING THE VOTES IN THE SENATE

McCormick and Black (1983) found that ideology was the primary motivating factor in the Senate vote for the ratification of the treaties. Although this may be correct, the problem with this interpretation is that it does not explain how Carter was able to overcome voting based upon ideology. Abramowitz (2013:710) found that partisan polarization increased by more than 50 percent between 1977 and 2013 in the Senate. To put it another way, in 1977, there was less party polarization, more moderates were in the Senate, and much more room existed for bargaining. Bargaining was one of the most important tools used by Carter to bring about ratification of the treaties. Senate support, measured by head count, for the Torrijos–Carter Treaties changed over the course of the debate. When the Neutrality Treaty and the Panama Canal Treaty were signed on September 7, 1977, support stood at fewer than 30 senators in favor. The number increased to 39 on November 21, to 45 at the end of November, and to 48 at the beginning of the Senate floor debate in February 1978 (Michelson 1998:68). On March 16, the day of the vote for the Neutrality Treaty, there were 67 votes in favor at 1:00 p.m. and 68 in favor by 2:00 p.m. (Carter 2010:178). The final vote that day was 68 in favor and 32 opposed, with 52 Democrats and 16 Republicans voting in favor. Support for the Panama Canal Treaty varied over the next month, beginning with 57 senators in favor as of March 17 (Michelson 1998:68). At the beginning of the day of the final vote (April 18), there were 65 in favor (Carter 2010:188). The final vote was 68 in favor and 32 opposed, with 52 Democrats and 16 Republicans voting in favor; the same senators who voted for the Neutrality Treaty also voted in favor of the Panama Canal Treaty.

The primary focus of 1977 was to gain the support of key members of the Senate and then increase the number of senators who would vote to ratify the treaties (Carter 1982:162). Arrangements were made for 42 members of the Senate to visit the Canal Zone for three to four days and be briefed by President Omar Torrijos and US Ambassador to Panama Ambler Moss. Torrijos and Moss were important in conveying to the members of the Senate why the treaty was so desperately important to the people of Panama and Latin America in general. According to Carter (1982:164) these trips did not change the minds of those senators who had already publicly indicated their opposition to

the treaties but did influence many of those who had been undecided. Carter began a process of White House briefings that targeted key members of the Senate and those who were in the undecided category as early as May. This was to be accomplished by convincing “an acceptable number of key political leaders in each state to give their senators some ‘running room’” (Carter 1982:162). In key states, lists of government leaders, newspaper editors, college presidents, political party leaders, and campaign contributors were compiled. Those on the lists were asked to lobby their senators to support ratification. For example, Carter used personal friends, executives from state banks, the Coca-Cola Company, and the Georgia Power Company to put pressure on Senators Sam Nunn and Herman Talmadge from his home state. Nunn and U.S. Ambassador to Japan Mike Mansfield were able to convince Senator Paul Hatfield, who had been appointed to replace Senator Lee Metcalf of Montana after Metcalf’s death in early January 1978, to support the treaties. Former President Ford was able to convince John Heinz of Pennsylvania to support the treaties (Carter 1982:165–66).

One of the key problems was that the language of the treaties was ambiguous in several areas. For example, after the canal was turned over to the Panamanians in 2000, could the United States intervene unilaterally to guarantee the canal’s neutrality? Carter had to agree to accept both clarifying language and some amendments to the treaties to receive the support of many senators. In the end, these so-called changes did not alter the substance of the treaties, and Torrijos agreed to them. This clarifying language and some amendments actually focused on the sources of public anxiety about the treaties. It was not until January 1978 that Carter received the full support from Senate Majority Leader Robert Byrd. Even more crucial was the support from Minority Leader Howard Baker, who agreed to support the treaties only if interpretative language concerning the ability of the United States to have immediate access to the canal in time of emergency and if guarantee of the canal’s neutrality was included. This language was incorporated into the Neutrality Treaty at the insistence of Byrd and Baker and was referred to as the “leadership amendments.” Carter agreed to this language, as he had already worked this interpretation out with Torrijos in October. In addition, Carter agreed to language that would not preclude any future agreement between the United States and Panama concerning military bases in Panama. This finally satisfied the influential Senators Nunn and Talmadge. These amendments also led Senator Edward Brooke of Massachusetts to support the treaties. Carter reluctantly agreed to the amendment proposed by Senator Dennis DeConcini of Arizona. Although Carter did not like the language in the end, it did not threaten the continued support of Torrijos and the Panamanians.

In several cases, Carter simply resorted to old-fashioned “horse trading” to gain the necessary votes. Carter promised not to veto a public-works bill that contained a desalinization plant for the state of Oklahoma. In return for this promise, Senator Henry Bellmon agreed to support the treaties (Carter 1982:172). Senator Jim Stasser of Tennessee was invited to the White House for the 20th-anniversary celebration of the Country Music Association. Sasser attended and met country music stars Tom T. Hall, Loretta Lynn, Conway Twitty, Larry Gatlin, and Charlie Daniels. Sasser voted in favor of ratification (Carter 1982:174). To gain the vote of Senator Howard Cannon of Utah,

Carter called the Mormon Church and relayed the message to Cannon that the Church had no position on the treaties. Carter then called Donald Reynolds, the editor of the *Las Vegas Review*, who was on record opposed to the treaties. Reynolds agreed to print a column that would acknowledge the courage of Cannon if he voted in favor of the treaties. Reynolds received a visit to the White House to meet Carter, and Cannon agreed to vote for ratification (Carter 1982:174). Carter agreed to read and discuss a textbook written by Senator and former college professor Samuel Hayakawa of California. Hayakawa agreed to vote for ratification (Strong 1992:150). Carter arranged for Senator James Abourezk of South Dakota to receive national publicity concerning his support for the deregulation of gas. Knowing that Abourezk was concerned about the rights of oppressed peoples, Carter arranged for LaDonna Harris, a well-known champion of the rights of women and American Indians, to speak to Abourezk. Prince Bandar bin Sultan of Saudi Arabia also spoke to Abourezk, who was of Lebanese descent. Abourezk voted to support the treaties. Carter agreed to a television appearance with Senator Dick Stone of Florida, and to a pledge not to reduce the U.S. military force in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Stone voted to support the treaties.

PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT AND PERSONALITY OF THE PRESIDENT

Richard Neustadt (1960:31–37) emphasized that the traditional command function of the presidency is likely to be successful when all are aware that the “president has spoken,” that there is clarity to his command, that the command is made public, that the order can actually be implemented, and that there is a sense that what the president wants is right. Although the successful ratification of the Panama Canal Treaties was not the result of a presidential command, the characteristics identified by Neustadt concerning command are important in any major decision made by the president. In particular, most of these characteristics focus on the personal involvement and commitment of the president. Carter’s pervasive involvement and commitment to the ratification of these treaties were obvious to all in the country. In fact, he stated several times that during the first year, the Panama Canal Treaties consumed him, often to the neglect of other issues.

Carter’s entire life had been one of personal involvement and commitment to issues in which he strongly believed. Strong (1992:158) argued that if one looked at Carter’s life story, one would find that Carter’s “tenacity, hard-work, honesty, and determination won out in almost all of his personal and political challenges and may have given him, and those around him, the impression that no task was too difficult.” It was this aspect of Carter’s personality that contributed to his success on this issue. It was also in Carter’s character for him “to view the issue in terms of what was morally correct rather than what was momentarily popular.” Jones (1988:1–9) labeled Carter as a classic trustee. Carter had been trained as an engineer. He studied an issue from all points of view, collected and analyzed the data, and then made a decision. At that point, Carter’s lifelong experience had convinced him that it was his job to convince others that this was the right decision.

ANALYSIS, QUESTIONS, AND HYPOTHESES

Carter, who faced declining public approval and an assertive post-Vietnam and post-Watergate Congress in the area of foreign affairs, was able to obtain the ratification of the highly controversial Panama Canal Treaties. He used a realist, or trustee, type of presidential leadership, which was characterized by his pervasive personal involvement and passionate commitment to what he portrayed as a moral decision; by his use of the bully pulpit; by his focus on using the informed public and well-known past decision makers and personalities to put pressure on Senators; by his ability to craft a message that addressed the specific fears and misgivings of the uninformed public; and by his unabashed horse trading to get what he wanted from some senators.

This case study raises several questions and generates several hypotheses concerning the use of the realist presidential leadership style by unpopular presidents to achieve treaty ratification. For example, one may ask if this was the style of presidential leadership exercised by Carter in his attempt to ratify other treaties. Carter submitted the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) for Senate approval in February 1978. By this time, he was in the middle of the push for the Panama Canal Treaties and was in behind-the-scenes negotiations with Prime Minister Menachem Begin of Israel and President Anwar Sadat of Egypt about the possibility of a comprehensive peace agreement. By the time the Senate took up the ICCPR, it was never voted on, because of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the hostage crisis with Iran. In other words, other issues and crises made it impossible for Carter to pursue the same leadership strategy to gain Senate support for the ICCPR as he had done with the Panama Canal Treaties. The same could be argued for his initial submission of the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty II agreement for Senate approval and the decision to withdraw it in the wake of the hostage crisis with Iran and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Thus, Carter's leadership style that led to the passage of the Panama Canal Treaties simply could not be used during the remainder of his presidency, as there were too many competing priorities and issues.

President Barack Obama faced a similar situation in his attempt to obtain Senate support for the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in December 2012. He was unable to exercise a Carteresque realist leadership strategy and failed to win Senate ratification of the controversial UNCRPD. According to John B. Bellinger (2012), Obama was so focused on avoiding the so-called fiscal cliff that he "did not give the pull-out-all-the-stops support" that was necessary to achieve Senate support for the treaty. One may then hypothesize that the use of the realist style of leadership for treaty ratification by a president working from a position of weakness and unpopularity can take place only when no other major crises or policy priorities compete with it.

There are likely to be fewer issues on the president's desk or agenda at the beginning of his presidency, as illustrated by Carter and his focus on the Panama Canal Treaties. One may then hypothesize that the use of the realist presidential style of leadership for treaty ratification is more likely to occur early in the term of a president. It

is also possible that a lame-duck session of Congress, when there is little time or inclination to focus on more than one issue, may afford a president an opportunity to zero in on a particular treaty using a realist leadership style. Carter was never able to seize such an opportunity, but a weak and unpopular Obama was able to obtain Senate approval of the New START Treaty during the lame-duck session of Congress after the 2010 midterm congressional elections. Obama, facing a 48 percent disapproval rating (Gallup 2015a) and a hostile ideological divide between parties that made it difficult to get Congress to act, used a Carteresque realist strategy to gain a 71-26 vote, including support from 13 Republicans, for Senate approval of the New START Treaty on December 22, 2010. He was able to do this despite a decline in public support for the treaty from 73 percent in mid-November to 51 percent at the time of ratification, although only 30 percent opposed the treaty at the time of Senate passage (Newport 2010). Obama, who had made this a foreign-policy priority for the lame-duck session of Congress, seized the bully pulpit with a high-profile public campaign and used former high-profile Republicans such as George H. W. Bush, Kissinger, George Schultz, James Baker, Colin Powell, and Condoleezza Rice and the informed public to influence senators to support the treaty. He addressed specific fears expressed by the general public concerning the treaty and engaged in horse trading, such as promising to spend \$85 billion to upgrade U.S. strategic nuclear forces (Baker 2010). This suggests a hypothesis that there is a possible opportunity for a president to use the realist presidential leadership style for treaty making during a lame-duck session of Congress.

Another related issue is that the Panama Canal Treaties were very controversial. One could ask if noncontroversial treaties require a president to adopt this style of leadership. For example, a weak and unpopular President H. W. Bush, who had originally opposed the ICCPR, resubmitted it to the Senate for approval in April 1992. Public support for Bush was very low in April, averaging 39 percent to 42 percent and falling to 29 percent in July (Gallup 2015b), yet the treaty was approved unanimously by the Senate, with Bush playing a limited role in the process other than fully endorsing it. The ICCPR was not seen as controversial; it was seen as consistent with the U.S. Bill of Rights and had the overwhelming support of the informed public and Senate leadership from both parties. It was seen as a vehicle to enhance America's ability to reshape the post-Cold War world. One may then hypothesize that the use of the realist leadership style is not necessary for a weak president if the treaty is noncontroversial.

SUMMARY

A president working from a position of weakness and unpopularity faces many difficulties in the American political system of checks and balances when trying to achieve Senate approval of treaties. This study suggests that the use of a Carteresque realist style of leadership can lead to Senate approval of controversial treaties. The problem is that there are certain circumstances that allow or favor the use of a realist style of leadership. There must be an absence of competing issues and priorities, which is more likely to occur early in the president's term of office. It could also occur during a lame-

duck session of Congress by an opportunistic president. This study suggests that noncontroversial treaties do not require a realist leadership style. Finally, it is important to point out that this study is important because the process of treaty ratification is more analogous to the decision-making process in domestic policy than to traditional foreign-policy making. Thus, the generalizations from this case study could possibly be applied to presidential leadership style and the domestic policy-making process.

These suggestions and hypotheses must be evaluated from a more exhaustive, comparative, and systematic study that identifies all treaties that have been passed by weak presidents and identifies the presidential leadership style used by each president. This could allow for generalizations to be made and could serve as a useful guide or lesson for the future president who finds himself in a weak political position.

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