THE PALGRAVE MACMILLAN
SERIES IN
INTERNATIONAL
POLITICAL
COMMUNICATION

Media and the Politics of Failure

Great Powers, Communication Strategies, and Military Defeats

LAURA ROSELLE

Media and the Politics of Failure

Palgrave Macmillan Series in International Political Communication

Series editor: Philip Seib, Marquette University (USA)

From democratization to terrorism, economic development to conflict resolution, global political dynamics are affected by the increasing pervasiveness and influence of communication media. This series examines the participants and their tools, their strategies and their impact. It offers a mix of comparative and tightly focused analyses that bridge the various elements of communication and political science included in the field of international studies. Particular emphasis is placed on topics related to the rapidly changing communication environment that is being shaped by new technologies and new political realities. This is the evolving world of international political communication.

Editorial Board Members:

Hussein Amin, American University in Cairo (Egypt)
Robin Brown, University of Leeds (UK)
Eytan Gilboa, Bar-Ilan University (Israel)
Steven Livingston, George Washington University (USA)
Robin Mansell, London School of Economics and Political Science (UK)
Holli Semetko, Emory University (USA)
Ingrid Volkmer, University of Otago (New Zealand)

Books Appearing in this Series

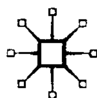
Media and the Politics of Failure: Great Powers, Communication Strategies, and Military Defeats
By Laura Roselle

Media and the Politics of Failure

Great Powers, Communication Strategies, and Military Defeats

Laura Roselle

palgrave
macmillan



MEDIA AND THE POLITICS OF FAILURE
© Laura Roselle, 2006.
Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 2006 978-1-4039-7525-6
All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles or reviews.

First published in 2006 by
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN™
175 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10010 and
Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, England RG21 6XS
Companies and representatives throughout the world.

PALGRAVE MACMILLAN is the global academic imprint of the Palgrave Macmillan division of St. Martin's Press, LLC and of Palgrave Macmillan Ltd. Macmillan® is a registered trademark in the United States, United Kingdom and other countries. Palgrave is a registered trademark in the European Union and other countries.

ISBN 978-1-349-53590-3 ISBN 978-1-4039-8360-2 (eBook)
DOI 10.1057/9781403983602

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Roselle, Laura.
Media and the politics of failure : great powers, communication strategies, and military defeats / Laura Roselle.
p. cm.—(Palgrave series in international political communication)
Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Vietnamese Conflict, 1961–1975—Mass media and the conflict. 2. Mass media—United States. 3. Communication in politics—United States. 4. Afghanistan—History—Soviet occupation, 1979–1989—Mass media and the war. 5. Mass media —Soviet Union. 6. Communication in politics—Soviet Union. 7. War in mass media. I. Title. II. Series.

DS559.46.R68 2006
070.4′333—dc22 2006041590

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Design by Newgen Imaging Systems (P) Ltd., Chennai, India.

First edition: September 2006

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Contents

Acknowledgments vii

1 Political Communication and Policy Legitimacy: Explaining Failure 1

2 War Waging and Reassessment: Vietnam 25

3 Withdrawal and Aftermath: Vietnam 49

4 War Waging and Reassessment: Afghanistan 79

5 Withdrawal and Aftermath: Afghanistan 103

6 Conclusions and a Post–Cold War Assessment 123

Appendix 141

Notes 143

Sources Consulted and Selected Bibliography 173

Index 183

This page intentionally left blank

Acknowledgments

I have been fortunate to have the support of many people while conducting my research and writing this work. Dick Brody and David Holloway were supportive at the very beginning. I also benefited enormously from the late Gabriel Almond's generosity, time, and intellectual encouragement. Alexander George's comments on case selection were also very important early on. Readers of more recent versions to whom I owe thanks include Ken Rogerson, Robin Brown, Steve Livingston, Sarah Oates, Clyde Ellis, and anonymous readers at *International Studies Quarterly.* Colleagues in the International Communications section of the International Studies Association have been consistently supportive of my work. Phil Seib took interest in the manuscript and was wonderful to work with.

At various times I have received funding to support this project from Stanford University, the Berkeley-Stanford Program in Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies, and the Stanford Center on Conflict and Negotiation. In addition, the Carter Center supported me through a Hewlett Fellowship, and a year and a half-long stint as Assistant Director of the Soviet Media and International Communications Program.

I cannot thank Ellen Mickiewicz adequately for all her gifts to me. She has been a mentor and friend for many years, and I simply cannot imagine having completed this without her. She offered advice, counsel, and opportunities for experiences and travel.

Finally, I thank my family for their support. My parents, Harry and Joan Roselle, have been unflaggingly supportive. My daughters, Savannah and Olivia, encouraged me to finish this book, and brought joy to the process. My husband, Clyde Ellis, read every word many times and offered invaluable comments. He is a wonderful partner.

CHAPTER 1

Political Communication and Policy Legitimacy: Explaining Failure

Superpowers don't always win wars. This may seem to be a perfectly obvious fact, but it is really quite surprising in light of the focus on power capabilities—that is, military weaponry and personnel—in the study of international relations. This book examines superpowers and failure, focusing on the United States in Vietnam and the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. In both cases, superpowers withdrew short of victory against much smaller, less well-equipped third world countries. This work focuses less on why these superpowers failed to accomplish their stated military and political goals in Vietnam and Afghanistan,[1] and more on the factors that affected the way leaders explained these failures to their own people and to the world. How did leaders of powerful states present a lost war, and, in particular, how did they use television to tell the story? The answers to these questions involve understanding when and why leaders believe they have to explain anything at all, and how they shape the manner in which the story is told. Because a military defeat challenges superpower identity, this discussion directly addresses the literature on constructivism and international relations. What is particularly interesting about these cases is that dramatically different political and media systems produced remarkably similar stories. This book, therefore, addresses the literature on domestic policy legitimacy and the rhetorical presidency, and the international relations literature on identity, interests, reputation, and power. Domestic and international considerations are all involved in a complicated and multilayered way. This is, of course, a book about political communication and politics, and it argues that the study of political communication allows us to transcend dominant, and often artificial, segmentations in the fields of political science, communication, and international studies.

L. Roselle, *Media and the Politics of Failure*
© Laura Roselle 2006

Many scholars have noted that political ideology and governmental structure significantly affect political communication.[2] In other words, democratic and authoritarian systems' media are structured quite differently and have different purposes. In a democracy the media are seen as an independent watchdog—the fourth estate acting as a protection against unrestrained power. In the authoritarian system media are depicted as a mouthpiece to disseminate the leadership's propaganda. Not surprisingly, scholars assume that these political systems will use media differently. For example, Soviet leaders predictably used state-controlled media to shape the coverage of Afghanistan in a way that was so pervasive that Soviet media did not even acknowledge the presence of Soviet combat troops in Afghanistan for five and a half years.[3] Conversely, American political and military leaders did not control media access and content to anything like the same degree, and journalists were relatively free to report what they saw.

Yet, if the differences in coverage are striking, it is equally striking to see how similar the leaders' stories of withdrawal were. In both cases, for example, the capabilities of allies were exaggerated. In the American case, Vietnamization—the process after 1968 by which the South Vietnamese political and military systems took over control of their own defense—was promoted as a logical and attainable step. Despite knowledge to the contrary, American leaders touted Vietnamization as the road to stabilization in the region. Because the South Vietnamese could take care of themselves, went the reasoning, there would no longer be any need for an American presence. In the Soviet case, confidence in their ally, the ruling government in Afghanistan, was expressed through the term "Afghan reconciliation," a rubric that suggested the imminent consolidation of power in the country under native-born leaders. As with Vietnamization, Afghan reconciliation would provide a plausible explanation for the withdrawal of Soviet forces secure in the knowledge that their ally was capable of defending its own homeland. Additionally, the resolution of conflict in both cases was framed to emphasize international negotiation. And, surprisingly, in both cases concern for the superpower's reputation was more important for convincing domestic audiences than it was for convincing international adversaries.

So, in light of the widely divergent political and media systems in the United States and the Soviet Union, how can we account for the similarities in the explanations of withdrawal? The work argues that difference in leadership communication strategies, including how leaders framed and explained the story of withdrawal from a failed war, can be understood to a great degree by focusing on differences in media and political systems. Similarities in explanations of withdrawal

can be explained by understanding concerns about international identity and the ability to project power. This international identity is inextricably linked to domestic considerations involving policy legitimacy and coalition building. In both cases, leaders sought to legitimize withdrawal by linking it to perceptions of international identity. Soviet and American leaders, and much of their domestic audiences, believed or accepted that their states had special responsibilities related to interests and power in the international system. As Richard Nixon put it in 1970:

> "If, when the chips are down, the world's most powerful nation, the United States of America, acts like a pitiful, helpless giant, the forces of totalitarianism and anarchy will threaten free nations and free institutions throughout the world."[4]

Gorbachev, too, in spite of his "New Thinking" also felt distinctive responsibilities associated with the Soviet Union's superpower status, saying at a Politburo meeting in February 1987:

> Of course we could get out of Afghanistan, without another thought, and claim that we don't have to answer for the mistakes of the former leadership. But we have to think about our country's authority, about all the people who've fought in this war.[5]

Changes associated with glasnost in the Soviet Union created a political environment where policy legitimacy, linked to national identity, became important.

In both cases, leaders refused to acknowledge defeat, insisting that their allies were strong enough to defend themselves. In both cases, withdrawal was framed as the story of how a great power could not and did not lose, despite failing to secure either its stated political or military goals. Indeed, in a series of events fully expected by American leaders and the public, North Vietnam took over South Vietnam in 1975, only two years after the American withdrawal. In the Soviet case, substantial shifts in the basic ideas underpinning foreign policy behavior allowed more flexibility in explaining withdrawal. Still, some crucial ideas did not change, including those that emphasized great power status and the role of the Soviet Union in the international system. So, Soviet leaders declared their mission accomplished. In April 1992, three years after the Soviets withdrew, Afghan President Najibullah's government fell, an event that confirmed Soviet military predictions. This recurrent theme of superpower invincibility transcends the Cold War and has important

consequences for subsequent foreign policy decisions and rhetoric in both the United States and the Russian Federation.

Military Failure

This book focuses on Vietnam and Afghanistan as a subset of wars of the television age—failed wars. But what is failure in war? Losing in war implies that the state has been unable to use its military power to achieve political goals. Evidence of failure can vary; an armistice that identifies winning and losing parties is one example; the taking of territory is another. Less clear are those wars that produce negotiated settlements without an unconditional surrender. Here too, however, the losing side is that which has failed to accomplish its major objectives. Military forces from one side may withdraw while the other side remains in-country, for example.

The first question in assessing explanations of military failure is whether all "losers" behave similarly. That is, do all military losers claim victory? To answer this question, Correlates of War (COW) data were used to identify wars and their outcomes between 1960 and 2000.[6] The outcomes of all wars with clear state losers, as identified by COW, were reviewed to determine whether or not leaders publicly acknowledged failure, or claimed victory.[7] These data show that there were a number of responses to military failure, and that not all losers behaved similarly. See table 1.1.

Table 1.1 List of wars, dates, and losers derived from Correlates of War project, initiated after 1960 and through 2000.

War Name	*Dates*	*Loser(s)*	*Outcome*	*Acknowledges Failure*
Sino-Indian War	Oct. 20, 1962–Nov. 22, 1962	India	China takes territory in India along border and then withdraws.	India—no, but no claim that goals were secured.
Vietnamese War	Feb. 7, 1965–Jan. 27, 1973	USA	US withdraws its troops in 1973. North Vietnam takes over South Vietnam and unifies the country in 1975.	US—no and claim that goals are secured.[a]

Continued

Table 1.1 Continued

War Name	*Dates*	*Loser(s)*	*Outcome*	*Acknowledges failure*
2nd Kashmir	Aug. 8, 1965–Sept. 23, 1965	India	Fighting over Kashmir. UN brokered cease-fire.	India–no, but no claim of goals achieved.[b]
Six Day War	June 5, 1967–June 10, 1967	Egypt, Syria, Jordan	Israel takes Gaza Strip and West Bank.	Egypt—yes[c] Jordan—yes[d] Syria—no[e]
Football War	July 14, 1969–July 18, 1969	Honduras	Cease-fire under OAS threat.	Data inconclusive.
Bangladesh War	Dec. 3, 1971–Dec. 17, 1971	Pakistan	Bangladesh is formed.	Pakistan—yes[f]
Yom Kippur War	Oct. 6, 1973–Oct. 24, 1973	Saudi Arabia, Syria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan	Great power sponsored cease-fire. Iraq did not accept cease-fire.	All—no and varying claims of goals achieved.
Iraq versus. Kurds 1974	March 18, 1974–April 3, 1975	Iran	Iran/Iraq agreement.	Iran—no.
Turco-Cypriot War	July 20, 1974–July 29, 1974	Cyprus	Turkey takes section of Cyprus, dividing it	Cyprus—yes. (Greece—yes)[g]
Vietnamese-Cambodian War	May 1, 1975–Jan. 7, 1979	Cambodia	Overthrow of Pol Pot—new government.	New govt.
Ethiopia versus Eritrean rebels	Dec. 5, 1976–May 28, 1991	Cuba	Cuba withdraws. Govt. fled, opposition took power.	Cuba—Insufficient information. Focus on Angola in Cuban press.
Ethiopian-Somalian War	Aug. 1, 1977–Mar. 14, 1978	Somalia	Somalia withdraws from Ogaden.	No, but no claim of goals secured.[h]
Ugandan-Tanzanian	Oct. 30, 1978–April 12, 1979	Uganda, Libya	Ugandan Leader Amin is overthrown.	New govt.

Continued

Table 1.1 Continued

War Name	*Dates*	*Loser(s)*	*Outcome*	*Acknowledges failure*
Sino-Vietnamese	Feb. 17, 1979–Mar. 10, 1979	Vietnam	China takes Lang Son and then withdraws.	Vietnam—no and claims China was defeated.[i]
Falklands	Mar. 25, 1982–June 20, 1982	Argentina	The British reclaim the Falkland Islands and Galtieri is overthrown.	New govt., but it does acknowledge failure[j]
Afghan War	Dec. 24, 1979–Feb. 15, 1989	Soviet Union	Soviets withdraw troops. April 1992 Afghan govt. falls.	No and claim that goals are secured.[k]
Gulf War	Aug. 2, 1990–Apr. 11, 1991	Iraq	Iraq, after attacking Kuwait, is forced to withdraw and must abide by United Nations resolutions and sanctions.	Yes, but vows to continue fight[l]

Notes:
Data on war comes from the Correlates of War Project (version 3). Data from both interstate and intrastate wars was used. Intrastate wars were used only if there was outside state intervention and the state that intervened was on the losing side. Only those wars with designated losers (rather than a draw) were used. Also, some cases were excluded because the intrastate war was caught up with interstate wars. (These include Lebanon versus Leftists [Israel], Iraq versus Kurds and Shiites 1980s [Iran], Bosnia versus Serbs [Yugoslavia]).

a. "Transcript of the President's Address Announcing Agreement to End the War," *New York Times*, January 25, 1973, 19.
b. "Shastri Welcomes Peace, Denounces Pakistan," *Foreign Broadcast Information Service*, September 24, 1965, 1–3.
c. "Text of Nasser's Speech Reviewing Course of War and Announcing his Plan to Resign as President," *New York Times*, June 10, 1967, 12.
d. "King Husayn Says Setback Worse then Expected," *Foreign Broadcast Information Service*, June 9, 1967, D1-D3; "Husayn: Setback Increases Determination," *Foreign Broadcast Information Service*, June 12, 1967, D1.
e. "Al-Atasi: Fight to Death Against Invaders," *Foreign Broadcast Information Service*, June 9, 1967, G1–G2.
f. "Yahya Khan Addresses Nation on Continuation of War," *Foreign Broadcast Information Service*, December 16, 1971, Q1–Q2.
g. David Holden and Steven Roberts, "Domestic Politics and National Pride Limit Their Options,"

New York Times, August 18, 1974, 157; Steven Roberts, "Caramanlis on TV," *New York Times*, August 18, 1974, 61.
h. "Government Issues Statement Announcing Ogaden Withdrawal," *Foreign Broadcast Information Service*, March 10, 1978, B6; "Education Minister Makes Statement to Muscat Radio," *Foreign Broadcast Information Service*, March 11, 1978, B4–B5.
i. "Nhan Dan Commentator Views PRC 'Strategic Defeat' in Vietnam," *Foreign Broadcast Information Service*, March 12, 1979, K2–K5.
j. "Defense Minister on Outcome of Falklands Conflict," *Foreign Broadcast Information Service*, June 17, 1982, B2–B3.
k. "Text of Gorbachev Statement Setting Forth Soviet Position on Afghan War," *New York Times*, February 9, 1988, A14.
l. "Saddam Hussein's Speech on the 'Withdrawal' of his Army from Kuwait," *New York Times*, February 27, 1991, A20.

The table shows that some leaders do, in fact, acknowledge failure. First, some losers are crushed by the opposing side in the conflict and new governments come to power (Cambodia in 1979; Uganda in 1979). Others are swept from office by their own colleagues who publicly recognize the failure (Argentina in 1982, for example). Some leaders stay in power and acknowledge failure, such as Pakistani President Yahya Khan who said in a speech to the nation after defeat in the Bangladesh War in 1971, "the enemy had greater weapons and had the support of a big power. Assisted by these factors, the enemy overcame us in East Pakistan."[8] Likewise, in August 1974 Greek Premier Constantine Caramanlis explained to his people that Greece could not challenge Turkey in Cyprus: "armed opposition to Turks in Cyprus was impossible by reason of distance as well as by the accomplished fact that Turkey had an overwhelming military advantage."[9] Finally, some leaders acknowledge military defeat but do not recognize a broader defeat as with Saddam Hussein in the First Gulf War in 1991.

A different rhetorical pattern is evident when leaders do not accept failure but do not claim victory either. For example, in March 1978 Somali Minister of Culture and Higher Education Omar Arteh Ghalib said that the decision to withdraw Somali troops from the Ogaden region of Ethopia "was not made from a position of weakness but signified courage and was in response to the wishes of the big powers and African states which have exerted efforts to find a peaceful solution to Somalia's just cause."[10] Likewise, Prime Minister Shastri of India said of the cease-fire of the 2nd Kashmir War in 1965 that "although Pakistan's reply was a belated one, we are nevertheless glad that it did come after all. They wanted the cease-fire no doubt. Indeed they needed it. But as it is their practice, they wanted to put up a show of resistance until the very last moment."[11]

Finally, there are those states that do not acknowledge defeat and claim, in fact, to have achieved their military and political goals. The two most striking cases of this are the American war in Vietnam and the Soviet war in Afghanistan. Of the 1973 agreement to withdraw American troops from Vietnam, Nixon said on January 25:

> Now that we have achieved an honorable agreement let us be proud that America did not settle for a peace that would have betrayed our allies, that would have abandoned our prisoners of war or that would have ended the war for us but would have continued the war for the 50 million people of Indochina.[12]

And in his February 8, 1988 speech setting out his position on the withdrawal of Soviet troops, Gorbachev cited the heroism of the Soviet armed forces and the ability of the Afghan people to resolve their own conflict: "[S]uccess of the policy of national reconciliation has already made it possible to begin withdrawing Soviet troops from portions of the Afghan territory."[13] This very broad overview of how state leaders describe and explain failure in war suggests that not all losers behave similarly. The Soviet and American cases present an intriguing subset of the cases because of the distinctive parallels in such different political systems.

Factors that Affect Political Communication

Identifying why leaders communicate is at the heart of understanding the factors that shape leadership communication strategies during war, including domestic, international, and communication considerations. Domestically, leaders may be concerned to one degree or another with securing support for withdrawal, or acquiescence to it from a variety of groups including elites, interest groups, and/or the public. International considerations include the perceived need to maintain superpower status despite a military loss, a scenario that leaders may believe would compromise reputation. Factors related to communication itself include the role of television, access to media, technique in crafting messages, and news values; each of these shape how leaders explain or frame withdrawal from a failed war. The cases of American withdrawal from Vietnam and Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan provide a test for propositions about the role of domestic and international factors in political communication during a failed war.

Domestic Factors: Policy Legitimacy

Students of American presidential communication have long emphasized the importance of domestic policy legitimacy, and of elite and popular support for it.[14] Leaders use media to explain and justify policy decisions to their constituents because in a democracy leaders rely on the public for votes, a strategy that Alexander George calls policy legitimacy.[15] Although the study of politics is replete with work on political legitimacy, the focus here is on policy legitimacy—a slightly different concept.[16] George notes that achieving policy legitimacy is important to the president in the United States so that "the forces of democratic control and domestic pressures do not hobble him and prevent him from conducting a coherent, consistent, and reasonably effective long-range policy."[17] In the United Sates, policy legitimacy is tied to the role of political elites and public opinion because these forces play a powerful role in decision making and may act as a counterweight to leaders and their agendas. Therefore, policy legitimacy is important because it creates a "fundamental consensus" which eases constraints on policymaking.[18] Moreover, the media are central to shaping the context for elite discussion of the issues and for public opinion, a notion that ties into what Jeffrey Tulis calls "the rhetorical presidency":

> Today it is taken for granted that presidents have a *duty* constantly to defend themselves publicly, to promote policy initiatives nationwide, and to inspirit the population. And for many, this presidential "function" is not one duty among many, but rather the heart of the presidency—the essential task.[19]

This "essential task" is undertaken through the mass media. Mary Stuckey concurs, arguing that "[t]he president's function has moved from being one of administration to one of legitimation as the spoken word comes to dominate written text and as electioneering and governing move ever closer together."[20] As B. Thomas Trout asserts: "the process of shaping the image of the environment in support of a given policy at a given time is both politically significant and at the foundation of legitimation."[21]

According to George, policy legitimacy has two components. First, there is a cognitive component that establishes the feasibility of the policy. A leader "must convince people that he knows how to achieve these desirable long-range objectives."[22] Second, a leader must convince others in the administration, Congress, and the public that the policy is valid, or "that the objectives and goals of his policy are desirable

and worth pursuing—in other words, that his policy is consistent with fundamental national values and contributes to their enhancement."[23] This seems closely related to Kenneth Burke's (1969) rhetorical view of identification: to persuade an audience one must argue that a particular policy "would enhance the general morality that they all share."[24] Likewise, in his study of European integration, Frank Schimmelfenning recognizes the importance of collective identity within a rhetorical action framework that emphasizes strategic behavior.[25]

National identity has been addressed in the literature as "a constructed *and* public national self-image based on membership in a political community as well as history, myths, symbols, language, and cultural norms commonly held by members of a nation."[26] Thus, national identity clearly shapes and often constrains the ways by which leaders will seek to legitimize policies. George suggests that because information about policies will be more detailed and sophisticated for elites, and less for the mass media, leaders' communication via the mass media will be more broadly consistent with dominant national values, myths, and identities. In his work on coalition building, Jack Snyder writes that because these "myths are necessary to justify the power and policies of the ruling coalition, the leaders must maintain the myths or else jeopardize their rule."[27] Moreover, these myths are not simply used strategically or cynically by groups as political instruments (although that certainly is true): "[o]ften the proponents of these strategic rationalizations, as well as the wider population," notes Snyder, "came to believe them."[28] Because these beliefs invariably affect future decisions, Snyder's work, like George's, directly addresses why international relations scholars should be concerned with the relationship between leadership explanations of policy and domestic political considerations.

But what about the Soviet Union? Is the concept of policy legitimacy applicable to the Soviet case even after glasnost? With a media system controlled exclusively by the political leadership, why would the Soviet leadership have had to explain anything to the population? Certainly prior to glasnost, Soviet leaders were less concerned with policy legitimacy than with policy acquiescence and compliance.[29] As Stephen Meyer has noted, Khrushchev, for example, set the agenda, made decisions with a small group of advisors (often cutting the military establishment out of foreign policy decisions), and used the media to inform citizens and elites alike about new policies. Brezhnev adopted an "institutional-consensus approach" in which ideas and policy options were presented by responsible organizations. Unlike the Khrushchev era, the Ministry of Defense had significant input, and Brezhnev used media for "post-decision elaborations of policy."[30]

Under Gorbachev, there were significant changes in political communication, even as the leadership maintained control of the state-owned television system that dominated the media landscape. Some aspects of policy initiation, for example, were brought into the open as the Soviet leadership moved closer than ever before to using media to pursue policy (and political) legitimacy. Glasnost— a term used to designate a different approach to information and ideas, meant openness, publicity, and coverage of events and issues in the mass media that were previously taboo.[31] Mickiewicz notes that prior to glasnost, the centralized control of mass media severely limited both critiques of Soviet policy and the ability of citizens to know of and comment on such conversations.[32] Greater coverage of the issues confronting Soviet society opened the space available for discourse and allowed a larger number of people to participate.[33] Glasnost called ordinary citizens to active participation in discussions of problems and policies, both in the domestic arena and in foreign affairs, at least in theory. Mickiewicz notes that Gorbachev, who remembered quite clearly what happened to Khrushchev and his reform attempts, claimed the "decisive mistake" occurred when the people were not involved in the process of reform.[34]

Glasnost was a means by which people could also serve as a power base for Gorbachev against entrenched political interests opposed to change. As Gorbachev wrote later in his memoirs:

> Freedom of speech made it possible to go over the heads of the apparatchiks and turn directly to the people, to give them the incentive to act and to win their support.[35]

This clearly echoes the concept of policy legitimacy because, although Gorbachev was not elected by the public, he had to consider his standing among the elite. This suggests that even in nondemocratic systems, selectorates (or specific groups) can be important for legitimizing policy. In addition, Gorbachev's decisions—even those which represented a substantial change for Soviet policy—had to fit within an understandable and accepted context. This does not mean that the Soviet media system changed to resemble the American model. There were limits to what the leadership considered acceptable, as suggested by the directives on the content of coverage on state-owned television, particularly in the foreign policy realm. But Gorbachev instituted a change as previously taboo subjects were tackled on television. People were more openly involved in policy discussions, and leaders considered television important for justifying and legitimizing new policies.

Television was absolutely essential to this process. Under this new policy, we might expect that Gorbachev, with new leadership and new policies, would simply blame previous leaders for Soviet involvement in the quagmire of Afghanistan. Doing so could have enhanced his own legitimacy, but Gorbachev and his advisors rejected this path. Why? As the following discussion suggests, Soviet leaders were motivated in part by the link between state identity and policy legitimacy, a fact that leads to an interesting discussion about the role of reputation and identity in international relations.

International Factors: Identity and Reputation

One way to understand why and how leaders communicate during war involves deterrence theory.[36] Deterrence, "[i]n its most general form, . . . is simply the persuasion of one's opponent that the costs and/or risks of a given course of action he might take outweigh its benefits."[37] Robert Jervis suggests that "[d]eterrence theory . . . assumes that states are—and should be—terribly concerned about their reputations for living up to their commitments."[38] If a state does not follow through on commitments, its reputation for resolve may be diminished, thereby encouraging adversarial threats. Jonathan Mercer, however, challenges the widely held assumption that reputation is central to international relations, and argues that adversaries "rarely get reputations for lacking resolve."[39] Ted Hopf's work supports this, arguing that the Soviets continued to view the United States as having resolve even after losses in the third world.[40]

The inability of states to achieve their political and military goals in non-proxy wars would seem to be the most damaging of all outcomes,[41] but the deterrence literature does not clearly address what happens when a great power is defeated. One might assume that leaders will focus on persuading international rivals that withdrawal does not signal weakness or a lack of resolve. Communication would be strategic, and Jervis suggests that getting out of a commitment involves decoupling, or destroying the link between the action and its previously understood meaning. This can be done "on any one of three points: *what* he said he would do to *whom* under what *conditions*."[42] This does not, however, address the broader context or normative component of why this change is valid.

Work on reputation and credibility raises the interesting issue of audience. As Patrick Morgan notes: "What is striking, then, about many occasions when officials acted to maintain the U.S. image for purposes of deterrence is that the target has often been friends and