The Guns of November

PRESIDENTIAL ReeLECTIONS AND THE USE
OF FORCE, 1947-1982

RICHARD J. STOLL
Department of Political Science
Rice University

A number of recent studies have investigated relationships between the presidential election cycle and the implementation of various policies. This article falls in this tradition, and asks whether a link exists between the reelection efforts of presidents, and the visible use of military force by the United States. After outlining why, and under what conditions, such a connection can be expected, a multivariate statistical model is tested for the time period 1947-1982. Despite the presence of several control variables, the results indicate that there is a connection, with fewer visible uses of force associated with presidential reelections in peacetime, and a slight increase in uses of force associated with presidential reelections during wartime.

In recent years, researchers have claimed that there is a connection between the implementation of various U.S. governmental policies and the presidential election cycle (Tufte, 1978; but see Brown and Stein, 1982, for a more cautious view). The bulk of this work has dealt with the link between domestic economic policies and the electoral cycle; the small number of studies that have examined foreign policies have concentrated on patterns of military spending (Nincic and Cusack, 1979; Cusack and Ward, 1981; Nincic, 1982). In this article, the possible links between the presidential election cycle and another component of foreign policy—the visible use of military force—will be explored for the 1947-1982 time period.

ELECTIONS, FOREIGN POLICY, AND
THE USE OF FORCE

Let me begin by stating the obvious: Presidents seek to be reelected. No matter how noble the individual who occupies the office, he knows
that he cannot accomplish his goals if he fails to win reelection. This suggests that while a president is seeking reelection, he may devote less effort to those policies and issues that will not help his chances of winning, and that he may manipulate those policies and issues that can aid his chances of winning. These consequences have been noted repeatedly in an informal manner (i.e., statements to or by the media that a president is "playing politics" with various policies, or ignoring his duties in the quest for reelection), and the second has been the subject of the quantitative studies noted above. How does foreign policy, specifically the visible use of military force, fit into a president's reelection plans?

Note that in many respects, the president has more freedom to act in foreign policy than in domestic policy. In part, this is due to the Constitution, which gives certain powers to the president for the conduct of foreign and defense policy, and to custom and tradition that allows the president more latitude in these matters than in domestic policy (this applies particularly to the president's role as commander in chief). The tendency to give the president a good deal of leeway in foreign policy has been most pronounced in the post-World War II era. Of course, the Vietnam war led to some attempts to Congress to curb what were seen as presidential abuses of these powers and customs. But even then, the president still retained considerable freedom of action. For example, the legislation most relevant to the use of military force—the War Powers Act—has never been invoked by Congress; not even after President Carter secretly ordered a military incursion into Iran to rescue the American hostages (Carter claimed it was not a military mission, but a humanitarian act, and Congress did not challenge him). Most recently, Congress negotiated a compromise with President Reagan concerning the presence of U.S. Marines in Lebanon that carefully avoided invoking the act.

Another reason that the president can act more readily in foreign affairs is that many actions do not require specific funding and/or legislation; in some cases, policy can be made simply by issuing a statement or an order. Much of domestic policy requires funding or statutory authority. Consequently, a president must secure passage of a bill through Congress before he can make domestic policy—a process that can take a great deal of time, and may well be thwarted by the legislative branch.

Despite the greater flexibility allowed a president in the conduct of foreign policy, he faces one great internal handicap when trying to make use of it in his quest for reelection: In many elections, voters are more
concerned about domestic issues (Hughes, 1978: 92-94). It would be foolish to assume that presidents are unaware of this tendency; so, during most elections we can expect that a prudent incumbent would devote less attention to foreign policy and more attention to those policy areas that have a higher expected payoff in votes.

Of course, there are times when foreign policy issues are of significant concern to the electorate; and during these elections, an incumbent could derive a reelection advantage by manipulating foreign policy to win votes. Elections held when the United States is involved in a war are one obvious situation in which foreign policy would be of some concern to the electorate. Use of military force during these times could create a useful "rally 'round the flag" effect (Mueller, 1973; MacKuen, 1983): The American people responding with increased popular support for a period of time after a decisive foreign policy action has been taken.

But if foreign policy can be used directly or indirectly to gain a reelection advantage, these manipulations are not without external costs. Even if the president intends his actions (or lack of actions) to have only an internal impact, the governments of other nations are likely to treat them as if they were intended as "normal" foreign policy acts, and may in fact respond to them. In turn, a president may be forced to continue what he has started, since a sudden shift in U.S. policy may create further difficulties. Thus, policies set in motion for electoral benefit may persist for a period of time longer than a successful reelection campaign.

Let me summarize the implications of these arguments for the link between use of military force and presidential reelections:

(1) Presidents seeking reelection will manipulate foreign policy, including the use of military force, to increase their chances of winning.

(2) In most elections, foreign policy issues are not very salient to the electorate; under these circumstances, presidents seeking reelection will refrain from using military force and instead concentrate on other actions (i.e., policies and/or campaign activities) that will be of more aid to their reelection.

(3) During elections in which foreign or defense policy is of some concern to the electorate (especially if the U.S. is involved in a war), presidents will undertake actions, such as using military force, to create a "rally 'round the flag" effect to increase their chances of reelection.

(4) Although foreign policy actions during presidential campaigns, such as the use of military force, may be dictated primarily by the goal of reelection, they are likely to have an impact on other governments; the result is that policies begun merely to aid reelection may have to be continued to avoid creating further foreign policy problems.
HYPOTHESIS, RESEARCH STRATEGY, AND OPERATIONALIZATION

Formally, the hypothesis to be tested in this paper is the following:

In the year of re-election, and the first year of a president's second term,

1. If the United States is not engaged in or close to a war, the number of visible uses of military force will be low, controlling for other factors.

2. If the United States is engaged in or close to a war, the number of visible uses of military force will be high, controlling for other factors.

RESEARCH STRATEGY

The strategy to be used to test this hypothesis will involve the explicit coding of two variables to represent the above-noted electoral cycle effects. But clearly, concerns other than reelection play an important role in presidential decisions to use military force. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to develop a complete model of presidential decisions to use force, some consideration should be given to other factors, to guard against the possibility that any link uncovered between presidential re-elections and use of force is spurious. For this reason, the multivariate statistical model to be tested will include both the electoral cycle variables and a number of other control variables. As a matter of course, the overall fit of the model will be reported, but the reader is reminded that any such measure includes the effect of the control variables (which are of little theoretical interest here) as well as the effect of the electoral cycle variables.

The time frame of the study is 1947-1982, a period that includes the reelection campaigns of Truman, Eisenhower, Johnson, Nixon, Ford, and Carter, as well as the Korean and Vietnam war. Most of the data are taken from a pair of parallel studies of the use of military force by the United States (Blechman and Kaplan, 1978), and by the Soviet Union (Kaplan, 1981). Unfortunately, the U.S. data set ends in December 1976, and the Soviet data set in December 1979. To extend the time frame through 1982, I supplemented these data by coding equivalent events from the chronologies contained in the Strategic Survey, published annually by the International Institute for Strategic Studies.1

During the period under study, 81 visible uses of military force were

1. Combining different data sources into a single data series is a tricky business, but the benefits of extending the time series outweigh the problems it creates. To get some idea of what, if any distortions, would be introduced by coding events from the Strategic Survey, I coded U.S. and Soviet uses of force for those years in which the two series overlap
undertaken by the United States (the term "visible use of military force" is defined below). To facilitate the analysis of such a small number of events over the duration of the study, these uses were aggregated into six-month time periods; consequently, the dependent variable is the number of visible uses of military force initiated by the United States in each six-month period. The number of uses ranges from 0 to 5 in a period. Since the dependent variable is bounded at the low end of its range (it cannot be less than 0), Tobit analysis (Tobin, 1958) will be used to estimate the model. Two other multivariate statistical techniques—Probit analysis and ordinary least squares—will also be used to check if the results are sensitive to the use of a particular method; these additional results will be reported only if there is some divergence of findings by method.

OPERATIONALIZATION

The datasets used to create the variables for this study share the following definition of a political use of the armed forces, and this is the starting point for the dependent variable of this study:

A political use of the armed forces occurs when physical actions are taken by one or more components of the uniformed military services as part of a deliberate attempt by the national authorities to influence, or to be prepared to influence, specific behavior of individuals in another nation without engaging in a continuing contest of violence [Blechman and Kaplan, 1978: 12].

Five elements make up a political use of the armed forces:

(1) A physical change in the disposition of at least part of the armed forces.
(2) Behind this activity there had to have been a consciousness of purpose.
(3) The decision makers must have sought to attain their objectives by gaining influence in the target state, not by physically imposing their will.
(4) The decision makers must have sought to avoid a significant contest of violence.
(5) A specific behavior had to have been desired of another actor (Blechman and Kaplan, 1978: 12-14).

(1975-1976 for the U.S. data, and 1975-1979 for the Soviet data). Comparing the list of events I generated with the lists supplied by Kaplan, and by Blechman and Kaplan, I found that all the events from their lists were in the chronologies. Of course, this is no guarantee that a similar correspondence will exist for the extension period, but it is encouraging. Further, the U.S. series, to which I add six years, must only contain highly visible events (see footnote 2) that are unlikely to be overlooked in the chronologies. As for the Soviet series, although lower level events must also be included, this is done for only a three-year period. As a final check, the analysis was repeated for the 1947-1976 period, and I found no significant difference in the findings using the shorter series.
All military operations that were an integral part of the Korean and Vietnam wars are excluded from the collection of U.S. events, but not actions (such as the bombings after the Tonkin Gulf incident) that took place before the U.S. was fully involved in a war.

Although the primary concern of the original investigators was the external causes and consequences of these actions, the types of events in their data collections are appropriate building blocks for the dependent variable of this study. Let me now turn to the specific operationalization of the outcome, control, and predictor variables.

The Outcome Variable: Visible Use of Military Force

The outcome variable of this study is the number of times the United States engages in a visible use of military force in each half year from January 1947 through December 1982. A visible use of military force occurs when physical actions involving combat are taken by one or more components of a nation's uniformed military services, or when these components are deployed such that combat becomes a distinct possibility. Such actions are serious and likely to attract the attention of the media and the general public.

Visible uses of military force were identified as follows: For each situation coded by Blechman and Kaplan in which the U.S. used military force for political purposes, the specific type or types of action undertaken by these forces were also coded. Their coding scheme encompasses 13 different types of activity. I scaled these activities and collapsed them into two categories: low and high level of activity. The number of high level of activity events in each six-month period serves as the outcome variable for this study. The types of activity that were considered high level (and hence, visible uses of military force) were (1) establishment of selective or complete blockade; (2) interposition of U.S. forces between two foreign actors; (3) emplacement of ground troops; (4) patrol, reconnaissance, or surveillance; (5) firepower used or other violent action. This variable will be called VISUSE.

The Control Variables

As discussed under research strategy, it is necessary to control for some of the other factors that account for uses of military force in order

2. The scaling procedure used was as follows. First, I assumed that activities of relatively equal level would be undertaken in the same situation. That is, if the United States was involved in a very serious situation, most of the activities undertaken would be at a high level; if the situation was less serious, the activities undertaken by the U.S.
to increase our confidence that any connection uncovered between reelection and the outcome variable is not spurious. I will consider two different factors that are expected to have an impact on the use of force, and their effects will be assessed separately for war and non-war periods. The effect of war involvement itself will also be included in the analysis. This yields a grand total of five control variables.

**Previous use of military force by the United States.** During the post-World War II era, United States foreign policy has exhibited a great deal of consistency, with few sharp breaks from established policy (Kegley and Wittkopf, 1982). Therefore, we should expect that a good predictor of the level of visible use of military force in any given six-month period would be the previous amount of use of force, regardless of the reelection cycle. To control for this tendency, the average number of uses of force by the United States over the two previous six-month periods will be entered into the Tobit estimation (note that the Blechman and Kaplan data set actually begins in January 1946; the one year lag of this variable necessitates beginning this study in 1947). This variable will be designated PREVUSA.

**Previous use of military force by the Soviet Union.** Another factor that influenced U.S. use of force during the post-World War II era was the behavior of the Soviet Union. In particular, recent Soviet uses of force would appear to be one obvious factor to use as a control variable in this study. Kaplan's (1981) data set on Soviet uses of military force for political purposes and my supplemental collection provides a set of data
government would be at a lower level. I then arbitrarily defined the category of “firepower or other violent action” as the highest point on the scale. Next, I computed the Kendall's tau B coefficient of between use of firepower and each of the other types of activity. Given my assumption about what activities were likely to occur together, the action that has the highest positive correlation with the use of firepower is the next-to-highest point on the scale, the activity with the second-highest positive tau B value represents the third-highest point on the scale, and so on. This allowed me to rank order all 13 activities from highest (use of firepower) to lowest (presence in or near area). See the list below for the order of the activities. The particular cutting point between the high and low is arbitrary, but it does appear reasonable. It is quite close to that used by Blechman and Kaplan (1978: 57) in their distinction between manifest and latent activities. Their manifest activities are the same as my high level of conflict, except that the patrol, recon, and surveillance activity in my grouping is replaced with the category of exercise right of transit in their grouping.

**Low levels of activity:** (1) forces made present in or near area; (2) exercise or demonstration; (3) visit to foreign nation; (4) exercise right of transit; (5) transport equipment to a foreign actor; (6) escort foreign actor forces, equipment, or operatives; (7) transport foreign actor forces, equipment, or operatives; (8) evacuation.

**High levels of activity:** (9) establishment of selective or complete blockade; (10) interposition between two foreign actors; (11) emplacement of ground forces; (12) patrol, reconnaissance, or surveillance; (13) firepower used or other violent action.
that uses the same definitions as does Blechman and Kaplan's data set of
U.S. actions. The impact of recent Soviet behavior is measured from
Kaplan's data set by counting all the Soviet uses of force in each
six-month period preceding the U.S. uses. A single six-month period is
used since any U.S. response to Soviet activity is likely to take place only
a short time after the Soviet behavior. This variable will be designated
PREVSOV.

War. During the time period under study, the United States was
involved in two wars: Korea and Vietnam. Both had a strong impact on
U.S. domestic and foreign policy, and part of this impact is crucial to the
hypothesis to be examined. But the presence of an ongoing (or
imminent) U.S. war involvement itself may have an impact on U.S.
actions, and it seems prudent to control for this possibility. The years
1950-1953, and 1964-1973 will be coded as war years in a dummy
variable to be designated WAR.3

War interactions. War involvement by the United States may also
effect the impact of the two control variables for previous U.S. and
Soviet uses of force described above. To take this possibility into
account, two additional control variables will be created by multiplying
the two initial control variables by the war variable. The resulting
variables will be called WPREVUSA and WPREVSOV.

3. The decision to code 1964 as a "war year" deserves explanation. Clearly, the U.S.
government did not commit ground troops to Vietnam until after Johnson was reelected,
although the level of U.S. involvement was dramatically increased during the year.
Remember that U.S. war involvement is a surrogate for concern among the electorate
about foreign and defense policy; more correctly, it is a surrogate for the president's belief
that foreign and/or defense policy is of concern to the electorate (and, therefore,
worthwhile to manipulate for electoral gain). In this light, I believe the decision about 1964
makes sense. Foreign policy issues intruded on the public's consciousness more than in any
election since 1952 (Stokes, quoted in Hughes, 1978: 92). There is also evidence that the
political parties sought to use the public's concern for foreign and defense policy to win
votes. In a coding of party platforms from 1844 through 1968, Ginsberg (1976) found that
on the international cooperation category ("open-ended cooperation with and friendship
toward foreign objects," the only foreign policy category in his scheme), the difference
between the two parties was an order of magnitude larger in 1964 than in any other election
during the time period of this study; the average absolute value of the difference in the
platforms on this category from 1948-1968 was .006; the difference in 1964 was .020. To
sum up, I feel that the 1964 reelection does fit the requirements of a "wartime reelection"
for purpose of this study. However, in note 5, I will discuss results for two alternative
research strategies, allowing the readers to assess for themselves the sensitivity of the
results to the treatment of these two years. Note that Figure 1 shows that no other year in
the study contains more events than 1964 and 1965, so a coding decision on these years is
likely to have some impact on the findings.
TABLE 1
Descriptive Statistics of Variables Used in Analysis
(N = 72)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VISUSE</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PREVUSA</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PREVSOV</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WAR</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WPREVUSA</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WPREVSOV</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECYCLE</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WECYCLE</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Predictor Variables

To test the hypothesis, it is necessary to construct two variables—one for the reelection effect when there is no war, and one for the reelection effect during (or just prior to) a U.S. war involvement.

Reelection effect during peacetime. The nonwar reelection effect is measured by a dummy variable coded "1" during the year of an incumbent president’s campaign for a second term and during the first year of his second term, and "0" otherwise. This variable will be called ECYCLE.

Reelection effect during wartime. The wartime reelection effect is constructed by multiplying the reelection dummy variable by the war dummy variable. The resulting variable will be called WECYCLE.

In the next section, the results of the Tobit analysis will be presented. Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations for all variables are presented in Tables 1 and 2, and a plot of the dependent variable over time is shown in Figure 1 (this plot has a single yearly value for number of visible uses of force; all analysis was conducted using the six-month temporal aggregation period noted above).

RESULTS

Results of the complete model are presented in Table 3. The overall fit of the equation, as measured by the R2, is reasonable, but not
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PREVUSA</th>
<th>PREVSOV</th>
<th>WAR</th>
<th>WPREVUSA</th>
<th>WPREVSOV</th>
<th>ECYCLE</th>
<th>WECYCLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VISUSE</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PREVUSA</td>
<td>-.18</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>.38</td>
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<tr>
<td>PREVSOV</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.36</td>
<td></td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>.66</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WPREFSOV</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>ECYCLE</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>.39</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
outstanding. Although as noted above, this is not of primary concern to the question at hand, a poor overall fit would indicate that there was no electoral cycle effect on the visible use of military force.

Let me turn first to a consideration of the impact of the control variables. Both the previous use of force by the United States (PREVUSA), and by the Soviet Union (PREVSOV) have a positive impact on current visible uses of force by the United States; neither of these findings is very surprising. U.S. war involvement has little direct impact on visible uses of force; the t-ratio is very close to zero. But the relationship between the past uses of force by both superpowers and current visible uses is different during these wartime periods than during peacetime. These effects are calculated by adding together the two coefficients representing each country’s uses of force in war and nonwar periods. Previous Soviet uses of force during wartime periods have only a negligible impact on subsequent visible uses of force (the resulting coefficient is .021). By contrast, the impact of recent U.S. uses is slightly

4. Tobit analysis produces two sets of coefficients—a standardized (or normalized) set, and an unstandardized (or regression) set. Since the computation of expected values for the dependent variable is very straightforward using the standardized coefficients, this set will be reported in Table 3. For a discussion of these two sets of coefficients, see Tobin (1958) and White (1982: 66-67).
more positive when the U.S. is involved in a war (.219 versus .168 when the U.S. is not involved in a war).

As for the two variables representing the reelection effects, the coefficients for both are signed as the hypothesis indicated; the nonwar electoral cycle variable (ECYCLE) is negative, and the war electoral cycle variable (WECYCLE) is positive. When the two are added together to produce the total war impact, the effect is still positive (.95), as expected.

In sum, the Tobit analysis presented in this section offers support for the hypothesis. The coefficients for the electoral cycle effects are large and in the predicted directions. Further, the electorial effects are strong enough to persist despite the impact of several of the control variables, strengthening our confidence the reelection effect is not spurious.5

To illustrate the magnitude of the reelection effect, let me calculate the expected value of the number of visible uses of military force for several sets of predictor variable values. A description of each set, and the expected value for VISUSE, is given in Table 4. For the first set, I substituted the values for no reelection, no war, and the average number of previous uses of force of the U.S. and the Soviet Union for the entire data set (3.38 and 2.22, respectively). The calculated value for VISUSE

5. As noted in the text, the same analysis was repeated using ordinary least squares and n-chotomous probit analysis, producing results very comparable to the Tobit analysis reported above. Overall fits were similar, and the signs of coefficients were identical to those in the Tobit analysis. As an additional precaution, a set of dummy variables representing various stages of the cold war were added as additional control variables to
### TABLE 4
Estimated Values for VISUSE Under Various Conditions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conditions</th>
<th>$E(\text{VISUSE})$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Average number of previous U.S., Soviet uses of force,</td>
<td>1.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no reelevation, no war</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Average number of previous U.S., Soviet use of force,</td>
<td>.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reelection, no war</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Average number of previous U.S., Soviet uses of force,</td>
<td>1.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reelection, war</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

is 1.26. This provides a baseline to illustrate the effects of reelection during peacetime and war. Holding the values for previous U.S. and Soviet uses of force constant, the second set of values assumes that a president is running for reelection. The expected value of VISUSE under these circumstances is .55, a rather dramatic drop. The third set of values assumes that the United States is engaged in war during the reelection campaign. As you can see, the expected value of VISUSE is much higher than the nonwar reelection, and is even a bit higher than the baseline conditions (1.66).

These values provide a better understanding of the reelection cycle effect. During wars, there is only a slight increase in the number of visible use of military force over a “typical” nonwar period. However, since these are dramatic events, their impact on presidential popularity may not be trivial (see Mueller, 1973, and MacKuen, 1983, for estimates of the size and duration of these effects). Further, since dramatic foreign test whether the apparent reelection cycle effects were due to a shifting of phases in the cold war. The dates and phases were taken from Kegley and Wittkopf (1982: 57-69). They were as follows: 1947-1952: belligerence; 1953-1962: tough talk, accommodative action; 1963-1968: competition with cooperation; 1969-1978: detente; 1979-1982: contestation.

The effects of the reelection variables are virtually unchanged from those reported in Table 3. Similar results emerged when these dummy variables were used with the OLS and probit equations.

As noted above, the impact of the coding of the 1964-1965 election was also assessed. The appendix compares the results when 1964-1965 is considered a wartime reelection period, when it is considered a nonwar reelection period, and when these two years are dropped from the analysis.

As can be seen, the decision on the 1964-1965 election has some impact on the results. But although the relationship between reelection and visible use of force is weaker when 1964-1965 is coded as a nonwar reelection, the signs of the reelection variables are still as hypothesized, and the t-ratios (although not statistically significant) are still of a reasonable size.
policy actions that are part of the war itself are not part of the data, these results may understate the degree to which a president uses force during these periods to enhance his chances for reelection. But it is in nonwar reelections that the effect of use of force is most striking. There is a large drop-off in the tendency of a president to initiate visible uses of military force; if we round off the predicted value, we can expect that the U.S. government will initiate only one such event in the year of his reelection. Although the direction of this effect may appear to be desirable, the thought that very serious foreign policy actions are so heavily influenced by presidential reelect ions is sobering. The impact of this self-imposed isolation (and, by implication, later activism) on other nations may be significant and may contribute to a sense that the United States is inconsistent in its behavior—a complaint that has been made more than once by our allies.

Although this exercise is useful in clarifying the magnitude of the reelection effects, the reader should be cautioned that it assumes that the estimated model is an accurate one. Since a little more than one-half of the variance in VISUSE is unaccounted for by this model, this assumption is open to question.

**SUMMARY**

Recent findings by a number of researchers have linked a variety of presidential policies and actions to an electoral rhythm. Most of these studies have dealt with domestic economic policies, and a few have extended the analysis to U.S. military expenditures. This article represents a further step by linking presidential reelections to large-scale (and potentially dangerous) uses of military force.

Clearly, the effects of reelections are not the only determinants of the use of force, but the findings of this article indicate that there is a link. Of course, no causal connection has been established, but the strength of these results is enough to give one pause. Commentators have long accused presidents of “playing politics” with foreign policy if it suited their purposes, so the existence of a statistical connection should not be considered unprecedented. Certainly, however, the links between a president’s reelection efforts and his policies deserves our close and continued attention.
APPENDIX

Results for Various Codings of 1964-1965 Time Period

<table>
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REFERENCES


KARL W. DEUTSCH AWARD
IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
AND PEACE RESEARCH

The International Studies Association will present, at its March
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Political Science Department
Lincoln Hall
University of Illinois Champaign-Urbana
Urbana, Illinois 61801

Nominations must be received by November 15, 1984.