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Negotiating in the Public Eye: The Impact of the Press on the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Force Negotiations

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inaccurate picture of the applicable war-time legal prescriptions.

My main concern, then, is that this work fails to fill adequately a very real void in survey materials for those who might be seeking a quick introduction to the topic. The novice will be left with a distorted impression of the issue.

An important opportunity to convey effectively an even more critical message has, alas, been lost.

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Genest, Mark A. *Negotiating in the Public Eye: The Impact of the Press on the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Force Negotiations*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford Univ. Press, 1995. 189pp. \$29.50

This small volume has an importance beyond its relatively narrow topic and terse academic prose. Since the Vietnam War, critics have argued that the media have acquired the capacity to determine—not simply report or influence—American foreign policy. However, up to now there has never been an irrefutable “smoking gun” to prove that press and broadcast journalists (reflecting their own agenda rather than that of the American public) could effectively limit the policy options available to government officials. Through content and quantitative analysis backed by after-the-fact interviews, researcher Mark Genest has gone the farthest in demonstrating that at least in the particular case of Intermediate-Range Nuclear Force (INF) negotiations between the Reagan administration and the Soviet Union,

the media did indeed attempt to force a policy result.

In retrospect, the INF agreement that removed SS-20s and U.S. Pershings and GLCMs (ground-launched cruise missiles) from Europe may not have had the strategic impact of the Strategic Arms Limitations Talks (SALT) or the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START), but ironically it received more concentrated press attention than any other treaty in history. Genest points out that over a seven-year period attention to this single subject included over 4,800 articles in the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* and two thousand minutes of major network evening news. The tone of the majority of these reports was that the Reagan administration was not doing enough to reach an agreement. Given all other world events, this is truly a staggering amount of time to devote to the ongoing negotiation of one treaty.

Genest opens his study by outlining three models of the impact of the media on policy: agenda-reflecting, agenda-building, and agenda-setting. A simple translation of these models is that the press can “report about,” “suggest,” or “significantly influence,” respectively, the outcome of policy making. However, his content analyses appear to point to a fourth model, agenda-dictating; but Genest is unwilling to take his theory that far, admitting that “most academics . . . refuse to take the leap from the agenda-setting theory to agenda-dictating.” Yet the book’s actual conclusions, based on a graphical comparison of the author’s content analysis of each press report, come very close to suggesting a potential for dictation: the “evidence . . . suggests that press opinion became a surrogate for public opinion.”

Manifesting its distrust for official reports, the press focused on the treaty's relatively small number of opponents, developing the appearance of national pressure for an agreement at almost any cost. The reality was that only 28 percent of the American public professed any knowledge of INF (even after it was signed), and those actually opposed to Reagan's cautious approach numbered in single digits. An administration official admits, however, that policies were designed to placate press concerns: "The reality in Washington every morning is the *Washington Post*. It arrives at your door and defines your reality." The result, according to the chief negotiator of the treaty, made the situation "very difficult. . . . The press editorials would call for rapid results, so it would put pressure on us to move faster, make more concessions." Genes's interviews of the journalists involved produced denials of special agendas but evidenced a certain degree of pride in stimulating, or as one authority put it, "fast forwarding," the results.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union has turned the era of superpower arms control negotiations into history, arguing press proclivities may seem moot. But the book's primary lesson for politico-military decision makers is that they should anticipate and beware of the unrelenting pressure of a media that will show little respect for the particulars of patient policy making. In such an environment, personalities and conjecture drive out plain facts, and "fair play" should not be expected. James Timbie, technical advisor for the INF negotiation team, describes what the press attention was like during negotiations: "Fair is not the first word that comes to mind. . . . Reporters were trying to uncover the 'political

dimension' of INF—Republican versus Democrat, White House versus the Congress, or State Department versus Defense Department. The press emphasized personality and the political dimension over factual accounts of the negotiations."

While such may be growing folk-knowledge in Washington, this book does a sound scholarly service in demonstrating that the political power of the media, even in the absence of public opinion, is very real and can be measured.

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Fry, John. *The Helsinki Process: Negotiating Security and Cooperation in Europe*. Washington, D.C.: National Defense Univ. Press, 1993. 411pp. (No price given)

"Long before the Paris meeting, the Helsinki Process had begun to unravel Soviet hegemony over Eastern Europe," writes John Fry. The Helsinki process also figures prominently in European accounts of the end of the Cold War, whereas U.S. commentators tend to focus more on how the Reagan arms buildup bankrupted and intimidated the Soviet Union. Whichever version triumphs, the story of how the "two Europes" commenced a dialogue that contributed to peace is a fascinating one. Countries whose foreign officials initially could not agree to hold a meeting eventually succeeded in agreeing to full human rights protections in the Helsinki Final Act of 1975. Citizens in Eastern Europe then appealed to their own